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Religious place attachment, squatting, and “qualitative” research: A commentary

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Abstract

Religious place attachment (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 1993, in press) can lead people to long for particular places, go on pilgrimage, develop preferences regarding where to live, and take actions related to places. This commentary points out how the religious basis for place attachment can be identified, and how the actions people take to settle in specific places, as well as emergence of conflict among groups, though not inevitable, can be understood. Finally, it describes how “qualitative” methods, if done well, can be useful in answering questions dealing with understanding place attachment and place loss.

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1. Introduction

The subjects of place attachment, the longing people have for particular places, and the actions people take to reach and settle in such places, have not been fully understood. The literature informs us that many people develop mild to strong attachment to place, and that particular places can become part of one’s identity (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983; Feldman, 1990; Cooper Marcus, 1992; Relph, 1976; Rubinstein, & Parmelee, 1992; Rowles, 1983; Tuan, 1974, among others). How place attachment occurs is described by Altman and Low (1992). Loss of place and breakdowns in place attachment have been researched by Erikson (1976), Mazumdar (1992), and Brown and Perkins (1992). Psychological aspects of individual place identity have been described (Proshansky et al., 1983) though the social and cultural dimensions of place attachment are relatively less explored (Low, 1992; Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 1993, in press). Though there is a fairly large and growing literature on religion and place (see Eliade, 1959; Sopher, 1967; Eck, 1982, Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 1993, in press, 1999, 2001; Perez & Goldberg 2001; and

others), religious place attachment has received only infrequent attention (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 1993, in press). Clearly, the subject area described above could benefit from additional research. This is one attempt in that direction. This piece, however, is not based on empirical research. Rather it is an invited commentary on an anonymized manuscript sent to me that took up some of these issues (the author’s name was substituted after my commentary was submitted).

The subject of Possick’s (2004) paper is very interesting because it offers a rare opportunity to view and understand the world of squatters who squatted in particular places outside their region. The subject is somewhat unusual in that these were “affordability-independent”, “place-discriminating” squatters who seemed to have a drive to settle in a particular place, and this kind of activity does not occur very often nor is it very widespread. This latter point does not, however, diminish the importance of the subject. These squatters, it turns out, later experienced eviction and loss of place.

For reasons outlined above and the perfunctory and sporadic coverage of settlements in the West Bank, Israel, in the news over the past few years, it is useful to research the subject and to ask: can environmental psychologists and environmental design researchers learn lessons from studying these settlers? Possick

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(2004) provides hope that a number of themes of interest to environmental psychology and environmental design research can emerge from this study.

In writing about these I shall rely on the data and information provided by Possick in that paper. I will take up the following six themes: can the place attachment being discussed be religious rather than ideological place attachment? Next I shall take up place attachment and longing for place, longing and action, visions of life and conflict, squatting and place loss, and “qualitative” research.

Briefly, Possick’s (2004) study context was the following. In December 1975, 30 families in Israel were given permission to temporarily settle in the Kadum military camp which came to be known as K’dumim, also known as Tel Haim, from where 15 families chose to move and settle in Rujeib/Itamar in 1977. Eight months later, these 15 squatting families were evicted and offered a place in Mt. Cabir/Alon Moreh, an offer four rejected and were forcibly evicted. Eleven of these families were the focus of the study.

2. Religious place attachment?

What kind of attachment to places did the participants feel? Is this a case of ideological place attachment as claimed in Possick’s (2004) paper or an example of religious place attachment? The attachment to place described I recognize as a form and example of religious place attachment. This conclusion is based on information supplied in that paper, which contains over a dozen statements that provide clues to this. I shall draw on examples and quotes from Possick’s paper to demonstrate that a case can be made for religious place attachment from the data supplied in the paper.

What constitutes religious place attachment? The way to recognize whether the attachment exhibited is religious or not is to examine if there are any connections to religion, religious beliefs and ideas. On this, from that paper we learn the following.

The squatters selected a specific place for squatting:

The goal of the group of the original Samaria settlers was to settle in and around Shechem/Nablus (Possick, 2004, p. 54).

The significance of the place selected is described in the quote below:

Shechem was the first place Abraham laid claim to in the Promised Land. In addition, many important Biblical events took place there. Dina, the daughter of Jacob was raped and avenged in Shechem. Joseph’s remains were brought from Egypt and interred there. Joshua assembled the tribes for a great covenant in Shechem and built an altar on the

site. The Priests stood on the two mountains on either side of the city (Mt. Grizim and Mt. Eival) and delivered God’s blessings and curses to the Nation of Israel who were congregated in the valley below (Possick, 2004, p. 54).

The above story comes from the Bible. There is a clear reference to God, and beliefs regarding God’s actions, blessings, and curses toward the Nation of Israel. The characters in it are important personages credited with starting the religion of Judaism. The events and occurrences described happen to these important persons in places considered significant in the religion. There is mention of a “Promised Land”. This story, and the characters, events, actions, and places, have special significance and meaning to Jews and have little meaning to followers of other religions, especially the nonAbrahamic religions, such as Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and others. The significance of the place and its selection therefore seems to be tied to and derived from religion.

In Judaism, belief in the Messiah is one of the thirteen basic principles, according to Maimonides, and the Messiah, it is believed, will come and deliver the followers to the land of Israel (*Eretz Yisrael*) (Jacobs, 1984, p. 221). This day of deliverance and redemption is an important theme:

The length of their residence and their age mitigate against further moves, but they remain faithful to a place ideology which requires eternal readiness to move for the sake of actively settling The Land of Israel. The structure of their narratives are characterized by an almost seamless progression through time; past, present, and future are one undivided unit. They postpone closure until “the ultimate redemption” (the coming of the Messiah) (Possick, 2004, p. 64).

Attempts are made at staying faithful to the religious beliefs regarding the coming of the Messiah and preparing for that ultimate redemption as stipulated in the religious principles. From this perspective, squatting may be seen some as an act in the service of that ideal in the religion:

Their squatting was in the service of an ideal—the reclamation of the Land of Israel by the Jewish people. In addition, the *derech* was a kind of serial squatting as the original Samaria settlers moved from one squatter settlement to another in an attempt to expand Samaria settlement and to reach Shechem (Possick, 2004, p. 67).

The importance of spirituality derived from religious principles is seen in the following:

In the Samaria settlers’ case, the ideologically motivated relocation or return to a place with pre-existing ancestral roots and *spiritual* ties going back

to *biblical times*, may have engendered a no less intense and full attachment. In fact, the incorporation of the historic experience of loss/exile and subsequent reclamation creates a new and profound form of person-place bond. (In this respect, Samaria settlement may be viewed as a microcosm or a re-enactment of the Israeli Zionist experience in general.) (Possick, 2004, p. 66, emphasis added).

Some can be expected to be more active, and others less active. A more active stance is the following:

Disciples of Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook, a proponent of an activist messianic version of religious Zionism, formed what became known as “Gush Emunim”, a group that developed into a national religious movement. They believed that the holiness of the Land of Israel required possessing it after its liberation from foreign rule. Gush Emunim claimed that this goal could be attained only via massive Jewish civilian presence in all of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, even in opposition to government policy. This process of radical political change was viewed as a spiritual, cosmic mission that would ultimately lead to the messianic era (Possick, 2004, p. 55).

Whether these actions can be seen as politically or ideologically motivated, the idea has its roots in religion. The group studied followed an active “religious Zionism” with the following objective:

The “nationalist” and the religious Zionist camps advocated Jewish reclamation of these territories through the establishment of settlements (Possick, 2004, p. 55).

Tamar, an interviewee, confirms that the vision is derived from religious beliefs regarding the coming of the Messiah and the Nation of Israel:

...Really, and that is what we are crying about, that is what we are hurting about. But the Nation of Israel will remain in the Land of Israel. And the Nation of Israel will arrive, and the Temple will be rebuilt, and everything will be...The question is what will we change. And I, if then I thought we would do such that Rujeib would change the world and all that is in it, today I know that we are a small screw, and the Holy One Blessed Be He is managing the business today. But that doesn't heaven forbid, doesn't absolve me of responsibility. We discovered that we don't have to be short of patience. Then we were short of patience in Rujeib...like, redemption now... (Tamar in Possick, 2004, p. 64).

In the above quote, Tamar is also emphasizing that individual Jews have a responsibility to think about and even act on the religious principles enunciated.

Other interviewees, such as Moish, describe the decision regarding the holy Biblical city of Shechem as being the ultimate goal:

Eventually the community decided that the group who felt strongly about continuing on to Shechem would do so, while the majority would remain in K'dumim. A total of 15 families were set to settle closer to Shechem. At this time Moish selected a site for the new Shechem/Alon Moreh settlement, near the Arab village of Rujeib. He based his selection on ideological factors (proximity to Shechem), topographical considerations (a high plateau with mountains forming a wind-shield to the east), and legal ownership issues (state-owned land) (Possick, 2004, p. 60).

Moish saw Shechem as “*Hamakom*” or the holy place. On the way to reaching this ultimate goal, the squatters felt the need to settle in other places they believed were important, but not as important as Shechem. This being “on the way” or *derech* (Hebrew) was clearly important not only as a concept in Judaism, but also as a way of taking intermediate action.

Thus, the *derech* approach incorporates a tension between traveling (squatting, i.e., moving, struggling, and building) and arriving, between temporariness and permanence. In the Israeli context, the word settlement implies both a transient place and a location where one can settle down or settle in (Possick, 2004, p. 67).

Might these actions be a form of pilgrimage to important sites but ones that include settling? Settling and pilgrimage are different, but settling during or after pilgrimage occurs; for example, many Hindus go on pilgrimage to Banaras and settle there till their deaths (Bowen, 2002). I do not know. Connections to religion, however, can be found not only in Possick's (2004) text, but also in the settler interviewee's statements.

It is possible for a sceptic to ask, if the drive for squatting is religious would not all Jews participate? This is unlikely as it is imaginable and known that not all followers of a religion will have the same level of devotion, be equally religious, or engage equally in acts connected with religion. As one finds with followers of other religions as well, there are the more active (such as Rabbi Kook's followers), and those who are less active, and believe that they need not take specific action except to live a religious life. However, even devoted ultra orthodox Jews who do not take action grant that if they fail to live a good religious life, or engage in inappropriate actions, they are likely to incur the wrath and curse of God (Abrahamson, 1996), which might delay, interrupt, or otherwise negatively affect the coming of the Messiah.

So far the focus has been on those Jews who were active about the Messianic vision in the religion, who

chose to act as part of a group that saw such actions as necessary to set the stage for the coming of the Messiah, as well as those who saw individual responsibility to help pave the way for the vision to be fulfilled and even aid earlier fulfillment. It appears that the settlers studied in this paper are religious Jews, some of who may be Zionists. Not all Zionists are seen as religious, and some are seen as secular (Possick, 2004, p. 65), and not all Zionists deem settling to be appropriate. If secular Zionists do not derive their ideas directly or indirectly from religion, then the case may be made for ideological place attachment devoid of religion. But failing this unlikely scenario, the hand of religion—visible or invisible—in these squatters's actions cannot be ignored.

Many Jews believe that the land of Israel is holy (Zion) and consider its soil sacred (Sopher, 1967, p. 48). The Talmud points out that some Jews kissed the land when they landed in *Eretz Yisrael* (Jacobs, 1984). Eliade (1959, p. 45, 58) indicates that the world grows from the navel and that the rock at Jerusalem is that navel. However, some Jews believe that God is everywhere and therefore they do not subscribe to the idea of sacred soil or holy land (Jacobs, 1984, p. 158). Such Jews may view those taking action on their beliefs as being “ideological” rather than religious. However, this is not a case of ideology bereft of religion nor is it one in which nonJews participate. For these reasons the overbearing weight of evidence on the connection to religion cannot be overlooked.

3. Place attachment and longing

Place attachment, as a concept, points to the connection and desire people have for particular places (Proshansky et al., 1983; Feldman, 1990; Altman & Low, 1992; Relph, 1976). This refers to places people have lived in or experienced (Marcus, 1992; Rubinstein & Parmelee, 1992; Rowles, 1983; Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 1999). But it can also refer to places people have never been to or experienced. Even in this age of easy travel on planes, trains, ships, buses, and automobiles some people have not ventured beyond their home places. On the other hand, many people have traveled a great deal, or have lived in many places. Some have been living in exile from their places.

Though a sense of longing can have many origins, religion and religious socialization can be important sources for images and views leading to longing to visit, live in, or die in particular places (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, in press). The places featured in religion may be actual places, may be mythic, imagined, envisioned places, and those residing in the psyche of the people (Rubinstein, in press, 1993). Many Hindus long to live in the holy city of Benares in the later stages of their lives and many long to die in Benares because

they believe that will bring them peace and salvation (Eck, 1982). Budh Gaya is a place of longing for many Buddhists. Muslims are exhorted by their religion to visit Mecca at least once. For many, this remains an imagined place, until they travel there.

The phrase “Next year in Jerusalem” used during Jewish Seder services, for example, provides one such imagined as well as a physical place (see also Elon, 1989). For some diasporic Jews, Israel and Jerusalem remain sought-after imagined places. Some Jews prefer to cling to the hope of achieving a mythic imagined place than to inhabit the physical place in part because the imagined can be so much more (Rubinstein, in press).

4. Place attachment, longing, and action

Religion-induced longing for places can lead followers to take action toward achieving the ideal presented. It is understood that the ideal itself may be not well defined or fixed, but may change as one gets closer to the ideal. For example, though the ideal is for Muslims to go on *haj* pilgrimage to Mecca once in their lifetimes, many who have been once, plan to return, which then becomes the new ideal. For many Jews, action meant moving to Israel after the formation of that state. It is also understood that the ideal may not be achievable through one set of actions or one attempt but may require a set of sequential steps or many attempts. If the latter, the steps may be seen as intermediate stations necessary for reaching the ultimate ideal. The latter seems to have been the settlers' plan. From this perspective, it is possible to understand the need to be on the way (*derech*) to *Hamakom*, to have started the journey rather than not have acted at all. Without the attachment to place and longing to be there, the actions to move or squat there may not have occurred.

5. Visions of life and conflict

Religion and visions of the ideal scenario sometimes lead to conflict. Although there can be conflict within the religious group, there can also be conflict with other religious groups. One such cause of conflict may be due to differing views. Another cause of conflict may be due to visions that involve the same geographical area. A third may relate to that idealized geographical space being within the boundaries of a nation where the adherents may not have free access. An example is the difficulty faced by some Muslims, such as those from Indonesia and Malaysia, in having unfettered access to Mecca, a place they are exhorted to visit. Barriers in visiting their sacred places currently in Pakistan for Sikhs is another example. Similar difficulties arise when religious spaces and buildings of one religion have been converted by another.

Examples are the conversion into a mosque in Istanbul of the Hagia Sophia, a Christian church, and:

...the siting of early medieval churches on the sacred sanctuaries of pre-Christian Europe and the Islamic construction of mosques atop Christian churches and Jewish synagogues... (Friedland & Hecht, 1992, p. 28).

The question of who now has access to that place considered sacred by two religions comes up and can lead to dissatisfaction if not to conflict. The Wailing Wall and Al Aqsa mosque have been sites of conflict between Muslims and Jews (Friedland & Hecht, 1992; Wilkinson, 2001). It is possible for more than one religion to peacefully access a site both consider sacred, as exemplified by Mannan (1994) for Hindus and Muslims, and the use of several buildings of worship in Irvine, California, by more than one religion. And, some have envisioned structures that would accommodate more than one religion (Mazumdar, 1971). Conflict, therefore, is not the only possible outcome, nor a foregone conclusion. But deeper understanding of the causes of conflict and possible avenues of peace can and needs to be undertaken. Overlooking or burying these differences and concerns is not likely to help.

Undertones of some of these differences can be detected in this case under study. Because the focus is on Jewish settlers, the full extent of the conflict is not easy to grasp. To the Jewish squatters, Shechem is replete with Jewish history and religious significance. Palestinian Muslims would like control over this area because it is seen as having been (at one time) under Muslim control. Shechem is located in territory now under Palestinian control. This may be one reason, among many, for conflict. Though there may be ideological aspirations and political ambitions on both sides, and though religion and politics may be mixed and not entirely distinct and separable (Friedland & Hecht, 1992), religion and religious notions of the sacred, the ideal, and proper life have important bearing on obtaining a deeper understanding of the case and actions taken by individuals and groups, sometimes irrespective of the participant proffered reasons, interpretations, and justifications for their actions.

6. Squatting and loss

This is a tale about squatters. Unauthorized settlement building or squatting is not uncommon in places with segments of the population lacking the basic minimal resources to afford to live in the most inexpensive housing available (see for example Oliver, 1987; Caminos, Turner, & Steffian, 1969; Caminos & Goethert, 1978; Turner, 1976; Turner & Fichter, 1972; Harms, 1972; Suttles, 1968; Peattie, 1968), and is common in countries with large poor populations. Such

squatter settlements arise largely from the economic need for people to somehow subsist with jobs that do not pay enough to afford minimal housing. In order to identify them better, let us call them “affordability-dependent” squatters. These squatters tend to choose locations on convenient public land, where they do not have to pay rent, where policing may be less stringent, and political exigencies may delay or disable eviction, though they can exist on private land as well. Other than affordability and convenience, they are not very discriminating in the selection of the place and so they may also be described as “place-indiscriminating”.

Unfortunately, in environmental psychology there has been little interest in studying either affordability-dependent squatters or poorer segments of the population. Here the squatters studied chose to leave their earlier abodes to settle in a place that led to a “tremendous drop in their standard of living” (Possick, 2004, p. 67). They were not squatting due to affordability considerations and were “affordability-independent”. They were particularly selective in the choice of place and were “place-discriminating”. This place discriminating behavior makes this case special and makes the reason for the choice of place of much theoretical interest. As discussed earlier, the selection of the place seems to have been important to these squatters and seems to have been influenced significantly by religion.

Affordability-dependent squatters are not immune to varying or constant threat of eviction and pressure to move. Many know that they are likely to be evicted and live under pervasive worry of not only eviction but also of losing their meager belongings and even their jobs due to such eviction (e.g., Oliver, 1987; p. 220). Many were evicted by agents of their own governments (e.g., courts and police).

The settlers in the study experienced eviction. They had occupied privately owned land in Rujeib/Itamar (I am not sure which place name is appropriate to use, see Possick, 2004, pp. 54, 60) and were evicted by the Israeli government. Rujeib was seen as a religious place and its physical characteristics were not seen as very important, at least in their recall from memory some twenty years later. Eviction was seen as a setback, and even though it made them question their role and efficacy, it was not viewed as the end. Thus, even in the eviction experience one finds references to religion.

7. Research method—“Qualitative” research

The research method ideally suited for seeking the kind of deeper understanding (*verstehen*) necessary to apprehend a phenomenon as complex as the one under study is “qualitative” or nonpositivistic research.

Nonpositivistic research provides unique opportunities and strengths (Mazumdar, 2002).

The names “qualitative” and “quantitative” though common as colloquial names are not very good, and can be misleading (Mazumdar, 2002). What is commonly referred to as “qualitative” research is not simply that it is of high quality, or speaks only of quality characteristics, or lacks quantification. Neither is it that quantitative is unable to speak to quality, and only quantifies. For example, if a researcher selects not to quantify does that then qualify that research as qualitative research? Though such claims are not uncommon, the answer mostly is no. Conversely, if a researcher provides only simple counts (e.g. the number of interviews), or does rather rudimentary quantitative analysis (e.g. calculation of means and standard deviations (only descriptive statistics) or chi squares) does that automatically qualify as quantitative research? The answer again is most likely no. Other names in use are unfortunately not apt descriptors. Positivistic and anti-positivistic are oppositional terms and not very good. Positivistic and interpretivistic though not oppositional and preferred by some are not accurate descriptors either and therefore can be just as misleading as qualitative and quantitative. Both kinds interpret data, though they do so differently. For want of a better name, here I am using “nonpositivistic” even though it is not accurately descriptive.

Nonpositivistic research removes the importance of and focus on concerns regarding generalizability, nature and size of sample, uniqueness of subject, and others. A case study, for example, is not usually expected to subscribe to or meet these considerations (Mazumdar & Geis, 2001). The subject of the case study needs to be clearly specified as it is possible to focus the case on different subjects. For example, the case can be about the settlement at Rujeib or about squatting, which could include several settlements by various people, or about the Gush Emunim (the group) and its squatting activity, or about a smaller subset of Gush Emunim.

Nonpositivistic research instead has other considerations and criteria. The most important, and perhaps the most common, is the one mentioned above—that of deep understanding (*verstehen*). This is an important criterion for distinguishing a well-executed case study from one not done well (Mazumdar & Geis, 2001). For other forms of nonpositivistic research, different considerations apply. For example, ethnography can be expected to chart (graph) or describe the ethnos, i.e., provide a detailed delineation and good understanding of the culture of the group.

Another important feature can be to provide a rich description of the phenomenon or group. Provision of the emic view describing as closely as possible the views of the members or local folk, and/or their “story” is another important concern. This would entail providing

a fairly complete understanding of the actions and rationale for those actions by the members of the group, so much so that the reader can obtain a very good sense of the group and the calculus it uses in its decisions. In this study this would include detailed and rich description of Gush Emunim, including how the group makes its decisions, the way they see the world, why they feel the need to squat, whether they see it as a religious act, a political act, or one involving following a nonreligious ideology. How differently would they act if Shechem were located within Israeli territory? Would there be other sites they would have chosen to settle in or would the need to build these kinds of settlements disappear?

Rigor is an important consideration for nonpositivistic methods. Qualitative or nonpositivistic research is not simply a lack of quantification; there is no inherent rigor or special skill requirements in that. Rigor in nonpositivistic research involves systematic-ness (though not in the same way as in positivistic research), completeness, thoroughness in data collection, being as unbiased as possible, and consideration of logic of inquiry (there are however some exceptions). It requires paying close attention to the rationales for action, and being careful and thoughtful in arriving at conclusions. Superficial and partial inquiries, especially in data collection, will compromise the rigor of a study. It is not unusual to find publications that appeared in print because of an interesting observation or finding that casts light on a problem. Social commentaries can be similar, but they may not require research and therefore may not come under the purview of non-positivistic research (Mazumdar, 2002). For most nonpositivistic empirical research, rigor will remain an important consideration. Without it, it may become difficult for readers to find the conclusions compelling or convincing.

Transferability is an important consideration in nonpositivistic research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It replaces generalizability, which is seen as not being applicable to nonpositivistic research. Transferability of the learning from nonpositivistic studies can be detailed by the researcher. Transferability can be arrived at using several means. Glaser and Strauss (1967) offer one possible approach to transferability through the development of grounded theory (see also Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Schutz (1967/1962) and later Van Maanen (1979) offer another possibility—that of abstracting to several levels of constructs. Presentation of the emic view can be seen as the basic level. A second level of abstraction might cast the learning from the study in more abstract terms so that it can be transferred elsewhere. Constructs, concepts, and models, can be proposed. This level leads to mid-level constructs or mid-range theory as pointed to by Merton (1967/1949). A third level abstraction may lead close to grand theory. One caveat is that with each

level of abstraction there will be loss of richness of detail so essential to the lower levels. In a discussion on transferability (even if under a different name such as theoretical implications) a researcher can help the reader understand the implications beyond that study, especially if the study is of a special or unusual circumstance or case.

In the context of the above and abstractions, concepts, models, and theories developed by the researcher, it is useful to ask at what level are member check interviews useful. Member check interviews can be useful in clarifying information that may have remained unclear, in corroborating information provided by that member or others, and in checking the researcher's understanding of the language or information offered. Its utility in checking abstractions, constructs, concepts, models, and theories may be limited.

Presentation of different points of view is enabled by nonpositivistic research. Some of the "massive complexity" (Garfinkel, 1967) of the social and physical world can be described by the researcher. Such features as different points of view of actors, participants, or members can be delineated. Presentation of this complexity and richness is useful. The current subject clearly is complex even if the focus is solely on understanding squatting by a group. Adding to the complexity are the religious views of the group, their choice of place, threat of eviction, actual eviction, relocation and resettlement. In the understanding of attachment to place how important are these activities and events? For the reader, this is difficult to judge. But a roadmap with these markers would help.

8. Concluding discussion

In the above I raised the question of whether it was ideological place attachment, as claimed in that paper, or religious place attachment. I have indicated, based on data in that paper, that what was observed was an example of religious place attachment. The actions taken, the places selected, and the rationale proffered by participants are not those by nonJews. The question that may remain is why did not all Jews take such action. As explained, it is known that the followers of religion are not all equally devoted, follow the values and directives equally, or are all equally willing to act. Terms such as fundamentalist, orthodox, progressive, reformist are used to indicate differential commitment to religious ideas and principles. Thus, it can be expected that not all Jews will see the need to or be equally motivated to take such action. One cannot expect that all members even of Gush Emunim will have the same level of commitment. To some the ideas of Gush Emunim might appear to be ideological. The group has an objective or "ideology" of taking action to hasten the coming of the Messianic

world. The important question here is whether their actions can be set apart from religion and religious beliefs. In reading that article I was strongly moved by the weight of the evidence supporting the idea that what is being described is a form and example of religious place attachment.

Connection between religion and politics can be due to political action by religionists as argued by Friedland and Hecht (1991), and religions can have political motivation (perhaps more valid for proselytizing religions), though religions are not inherently political nor can all actions be seen as political. Whether the actions of the squatters in this example were solely religious, religious and political, or solely political is hard to answer based on the data.

Does it matter whether this place attachment is religious or ideological? Aside from the obvious problems of incorrect attribution (which is important enough) there are other implications. The selection of the places was not entirely random or devoid of religious connections. Seeing it as religious place attachment enables us to look to religion, textual and therefore direct influences, or indirect and practice based (Mazumdar, 1981), to understand the actions fully. Religion and religious socialization provide visions of an ideal life, of what the adherents ought to yearn for, even if they are unable to achieve them all, and provides the drive and desire to live life in a manner felt suitable and in places considered appropriate. It is the belief that matters most. The ideal or preferred life or place expressed in religion can be compelling. It appears that the driving feature undergirding the actions of the settlers was religion and not some secular ideology free of religion. Not paying attention to the primary driving force would be misleading and provide an incomplete, if not an incorrect, picture.

From the point of view of methods, many environmental psychologists will be inclined to automatically and unthinkingly question the utility of studying a singular case, a highly unusual case at that, no matter how interesting, and would not see the value in singular studies of this sort focusing on the actions of only 11 families who chose to settle in Rujeib. They might wonder about the validity of the conclusions and the generalizability of the findings from this study. Though unusual, a well-researched case study of an unusual case of this sort seems not only justifiable, for the reasons mentioned earlier, but also important and needed. The Chicago School of Sociology has made major contributions to our understanding of society by focusing on segments of the population, such as the urban poor (see for example Suttles, 1968). It therefore would not be appropriate to dismiss off hand case studies of unusual and nonrecurrent phenomena; it would be appropriate to question their utility if they do not meet the hallmarks or requirements of a good study.

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