

MAPPING JORDAN THROUGH TWO MILLENNIA. By JOHN R. BARTLETT. (Palestine Exploration Fund annual X). pp. xii, 163. Leeds, Maney, 2008.
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The lands west of the River Jordan, being the location of Jerusalem and the setting of the stories of the New Testament, have historically received much attention from western explorers, geographers and map-makers. Indeed, Jerusalem and the Holy Land were anciently regarded in the Christian mindset as not just the spiritual but also geographical centre of the world, as many medieval world maps bear witness. By contrast, the lands on the east of the River Jordan garnered relatively little attention. Aside from being eclipsed in terms of sheer glamour by the lands to the west, they were less well-documented by early geographers, in general they fell somewhat outside the sphere of the crusaders and were difficult for Europeans travelling through the Ottoman Empire to access. It was only in the course of the nineteenth century that anything in the way of a proper understanding of the geography of the area was developed once maps could be compiled on a scientific basis.

Bartlett's work concentrates on the area east of the Jordan and the Wadi Arabah, and from Damascus in the north to the Gulf of 'Aqabah in the south. It is a pioneering attempt to compile from a wide variety of sources what was known in the western world about these territories, how the western understanding and conception of them changed throughout time, which sources were used for map-making, and even what bearing contemporary European politics had on the portrayal of these territories in western maps.

Bartlett gives an impressive and complete view of the available sources. He begins in the first two chapters with the classical and medieval sources, such as the *Notitia Dignitatum* and the *Tabula Peutingeriana* – itineraries and administrative documents from the late imperial Roman period – and also patristic sources, in particular Eusebius' work on biblical geography, the *Onomasticon*. The accounts and itineraries of western pilgrims and travellers from the late classical to the period of the crusades are also considered. Of great use to scholars is his painstaking work in tabulating and comparing the mention of places and the use of place-names between these various sources. Particularly with the medieval and early renaissance geographers, it allows us to discern clearly not only the extent of practical knowledge about the territories, but also to consider in depth the concerns of the geographers, and the sources to which they referred. We are able to consider trends, such as the increasing integration of classical sources with biblical authority in the early Renaissance by scholars such as Jacob Ziegler, or else the strong preference, particularly in the case of scholars strongly influenced by the ideals of the Reformation, of biblical testimony to the classical sources or the witness of travellers.

In later chapters, Bartlett goes on to look at the appearance of the first printed maps, for example Lucas Brandis of Lubeck, or more famously Lucas Cranach the Elder, before the explosion of cartographical representations of the Holy Land on the continent in the sixteenth century. He charts the development, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of a movement away from an emphasis on seeing the region purely in biblical terms, and the evolution of an interest in the area purely for its own sake. Wealthier Europeans find themselves able to travel to the area for the first time after the fashion of the grand tour, and cultivate an interest – unknown to the earlier geographers whose interest in the area was a function of their interest in Holy Scripture – in the appearance of villages, flora and fauna. Their practical testimony feeds back into the creation of maps, increasingly prepared after a more rigorous fashion with careful attempts to refine the co-ordinates of settlements, and increasingly bereft of earlier biblical features, such as the conjectured route taken by the Israelites out of the Egyptian captivity.

The later chapters are concerned with the work of the more scientific explorers of the nineteenth century such as Seetzen and Burckhardt, the trigonometric surveys of the late nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries, and finally contemporary attempts to use modern data to pinpoint the locations of biblical sites – a mission that would be dear to the hearts of the earlier Renaissance scholars. Bartlett includes summary biographical information on the various travellers and the means whereby the range of surveys were brought about, to specific details about the technicalities of the survey – for example the compilation of Arabic place names or the reckoning of distances calculated by the average speed of the camel.

Bartlett's work is both comprehensive and painstaking, introducing us to the full breadth of possible sources as well as analysing them in great depth. It is also fully and beautifully illustrated, with a great number of colour and black and white plates of the various maps described. These are a great aid to clarifying the somewhat, though necessarily, dense prose. It is a valuable and indeed path-breaking addition to the understanding of this area of geography and history.

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THE BALAWAT GATES OF ASHURNASIRPAL II. Edited by J. CURTIS AND N. TALLIS. pp. 264. London, British Museum Press, 2008.

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This volume presents the publication of two pairs of gates set up by the Assyrian King Ashurnasirpal II (884–859 BC) at the site of Balawat, ancient Imgur-Enlil, 16 km northeast of Nimrud, 27 km southeast of Mosul, in northern Iraq. The first pair were excavated by Hormuzd Rassam in 1878 and come from a palace of the king; these are now in the British Museum. The second pair come from a temple of the god Mamu and were excavated by Max Mallowan in 1956; these are now in the Mosul Museum though sadly many pieces were looted in 2003. A third pair of gates from Balawat set up by Ashurnasirpal's son Shalmaneser III (858–824 BC) and discovered by Rassam are also now in the British Museum. These were first published in 1905 and are well known.

The surviving pieces consist of long bands or strips of bronze which were mounted on wooden doors. They have embossed and chased decoration showing scenes of warfare, the presentation of tribute and the hunting of lions and bulls. The volume under consideration publishes these decorations and their highly important accompanying cuneiform epigraphs in the form of both line drawings and photographs of the originals. Each pair of gates consisted of 16 bronze bands (8 each side). They covered both the door leaves and the doorposts, and careful reconstruction of the sequence of strips has demonstrated that the posts tapered towards the top. Both sets have tribute bearers and scenes of warfare but the palace gates show in addition scenes of hunting and files of captives which are missing on the set from the temple of Mamu.

The project of publishing these gates was initiated by R. D. Barnett, Keeper of the Department of Western Asian Antiquities in the British Museum from 1955 to 1974. Barnett never finished this work and it was taken up by Curtis and Tallis using the drawings made by Marjorie Howard (which are superb) and with contributions by Sollberger, Walker, Finkel and Davies. The introduction which Barnett prepared is however published in full, and rightly so. In addition to some reflections on the importance of gates in ancient Mesopotamian on the psychological and mythical level, Barnett also gives an excellent technical description of the different parts of these gates, how they were constructed and how they operated. There follows a section by Curtis on the site of Balawat, reviewing the results of archaeological activity there and the strategic significance of the location. Curtis draws attention to the fact that Balawat lay at the effective junction of three major roads and also to the significance of the temple of Mamu, the