

# Review

## Among the New Books

N. JAMES

### Islamic cities

PAUL WHEATLEY. *The places where men pray together: cities in Islamic lands, Seventh through the Tenth Centuries*. xviii+572 pages, 28 figures, 2 tables. 2001. Chicago (IL): University of Chicago Press; 0-226-89428-2 hardback \$65 & £41.

PAUL WHEATLEY's last, posthumous, work appraises the symbolism, functions and forms of cities in the early Islamic world. Among more than 2000 cities between the Yemen, Central Asia and Spain, most of them much older than Islam, there were variations of tradition, purposes and plans. With an eye to the sociology and topography of aggregation and access — and taking account of archaeology in the few cases, such as Susa or Samarra or the Diyala (R. Adams), where data were available to him — Wheatley adopted and developed the analysis of a 10th-century geographer which identified 13 regional patterns of metropolises and satellites.

What, then, was 'Muslim about the so-called Islamic city' (p. 337)? The forms for government, trading and industry varied. The sacred hierarchy of centres in the Arabian heartland was better defined than any other but, as an urban pattern, it was looser. The period saw marked growth right across the vast region and the invasive Arab impact was sharp in many places but it did not produce a uniform signature. There was no general planning policy. PAUL WHEATLEY's proposal is that the space of the mosque itself, for worshippers to serve God together, was the key feature in common.

### War

Is war ever more likely to be felt in common around the world? Introducing their 25 papers (details below), Dr SCHOFIELD *et al.* argue that, although archaeological attention to it is patchy — stronger in Britain and the USA than elsewhere — technological sophistication distinguished the 20th century's from earlier war. They argue too that archaeologists should consider not just the material remains as such but also the 'values and significance' (p. 7) of them, with an educational commitment to warn against arming again. In fact, the contributors cover a range of conflicts, by no means all sharing that 20th-century characteristic. Are not the bitterest associations, indeed, those attaching to earlier forms of violence? How, for that matter, could these writers — predominantly middle-aged northwest European and US —

begin to tackle the 'values and significance'? They expound a variety of approaches which do help to define issues but, on the whole and wisely, stay shy of treating others' experiences directly.

J.G. Beech argues that, eventually, mid 20th-century European concentration camps will see more or less equanimous tourism. On this article, the reviewer's cousin, B.A. James — veteran whose *Moonless night* recounts exploits among some of the camps — remarked (pers. comm.) on the 'coldness' (Beech's own comment — p. 206) of the argument but strongly concurred that we should 'not forget'. Historically closer, and therefore, perhaps, somewhat more compelling, are papers on monuments to apartheid in South Africa, 'terror tourism' in Ulster, and the Berlin Wall. Opposite them is an essay on a grandfather's medal; or N. Saunders on the 'culture of shells' from World War I, some perched later on mantelpieces. Yet further off, W.G. JOHNSON argues (inconclusively) that there was 'a reactionary cultural response to the threat of nuclear war' in Nevada. On the other hand, there are discussions of policy on preservation by English Heritage and other agencies (J. SCHOFIELD and others), technical accounts of sites ranging from the Nevada Test Site (C.M. BECK) or radars in Alaska (*cf.* pp. 664–5, above), to Finland's defences against the Soviet army, and Japanese bases in Micronesia. There are four papers on recovery of bodies — of servicemen in Vietnam and civilians in Cambodia and Latin America. J. Carman and an archivist contribute on presentation of battlefields and documents, respectively. Reflecting on it all, R. Fletcher concludes (p. 310) that 'How sociality lost and is beginning to regain ascendancy is the real agenda of historical archaeology' . . .

JOHN SCHOFIELD, WILLIAM GRAY JOHNSON & COLLEEN M. BECK (ed.). *Matériel culture: the archaeology of twentieth century conflict*. xx+328 pages, 76 figures, 6 tables. 2002. London: Routledge; 0-415-23387-9 hardback £80.

Note too republication of BARKER, 'Also received', below.

PAUL HILL & JULIE WILEMAN. *Landscapes of war: the archaeology of aggression and defence*. 224 pages, 104 figures, 27 colour plates. 2002. Stroud & Charleston (SC): Tempus; 0-7524-1963-3 paperback £17.99 & \$29.99.

The authors of *Landscapes* restrict themselves more to archaeology as such. With illustrations from