

Armenia. Edessa was never part of Armenia, although it did have a sizeable Armenian population. The addition of a short paragraph describing the Kingdom of Cilician Armenia and Armenia proper as well as bibliographic references would have been sufficient discussion in a book of this type. Also, the index does not refer to his mention of Cilician Armenia (referred to simply as "Armenia") on p. 179.

In recent years, books on the Crusades have proliferated. This book is accessible to students and allows them to do further research on various topics connected with crusader military activities. Despite the caveats expressed in the review here, the book is readable and has been well researched. The references

to books at the end will allow the interested reader to pursue further research, and it is these books that will provide them with more complete bibliographies. It is clear that Madden knows a great deal about the topic and is interested in imparting this knowledge to the reader. As a scholar of the Crusades, it is perhaps inevitable that I might have different opinions about what should or should not be included in a short text of this type. Indeed, writing a "concise" history is often far more difficult than writing a long one because the author is forced to include only what is critical and to discard everything else. Madden has written a readable and useful book that will, hopefully, spur students to do more research on the topics raised here.

Early Islamic Syria: An Archaeological Assessment. By Alan Walmsley. Duckworth Debates in Archaeology. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 2007. Pp. 176 + 12 figs. \$22 (paperback).

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The field of Islamic archaeology over the last thirty years has come into its own, largely as a subfield of Near Eastern archaeology. In the last decade alone, there has been a sharp increase in the number of excavations targeting Islamic sites or Islamic occupations overlaying other sites, more surveys by Islamic specialists, and special sessions in major archaeology conferences (such as ICAANE and ASOR). From all this research there is now a sizeable body of publications. However, with such rapid growth comes the need to define the field (not only as a subfield of Islamic history or art history), to establish theoretical and methodological parameters, and to present a set of challenges for investigative inquiry. Further, insights offered by recent research in the field of Islamic archaeology should be accessible to students and non-specialists alike. These criteria have all been met by Alan Walmsley's recent *Early Islamic Syria*, a volume in the Duckworth Debates in Archaeology series. This volume has a narrow focus: the area of Syria-Palestine (including also Lebanon, Jordan, and part of southeastern Turkey) from the seventh to tenth centuries. Yet, within this focus, Walmsley charts the development of Islamic archaeology, and places it within a framework of important debated issues, such as seventh century or Abbasid decline, the use and interpretation of material culture, and the underdeveloped study of rural

landscapes. These issues have trailed the discipline from its very inception. The author's approach is advantageous as the book is neither a review nor a general survey of the field. Walmsley gathers most of the previous research in the field of Islamic archaeology and confronts the debates headlong with a steady, yet comprehensive and positivist momentum, resolving most issues, elaborating on others, and constructing newer ones. Further, Walmsley increases the relevance of Islamic archaeology by charging it with an implicit obligation to correct contemporary misconceptions of Islam in Western culture.

The slim size of the volume and clear organization of subjects and arguments is appealing to students and non-specialists alike. It presents specific detailed data on current and past research without weighing down the reader with too much jargon or extensive references. As such, the book is perfect as a textbook not only for Islamic archaeology but also for Islamic history or art history as it inclusively bridges the divides too often created among these disciplines. Walmsley organizes the chapters around central issues unique to the field. In chapter 1, he traces the history of the discipline using its major debates. First, he provides a concise overview of the major pioneers in the field, their contributions, and the earliest work done in key sites. These early excavations focused on the decora-

tive and architectural or monumental forms of material culture (such as stucco, mosaics, and painting), focusing on the discipline's art history. Walmsley does not critique these approaches for failing to discuss socio-economic issues, the causes and explanations for settlement and occupational histories, and analysis of more "bread and butter" typological material culture (i.e., ceramics, glass, coins). These key elements were part of the agenda of the "new archaeology" implemented in the 1960s, reflected in most other archaeological disciplines. Rather, he acknowledges that agendas for the early stages of Islamic archaeology were reflective of their early- to mid-twentieth-century contexts and lauds their achievements as foundational to the field.

The main debate introduced in chapter 1 and continued in chapter 2 is the question of decline—in either the seventh century with the Islamic conquests or in the mid-eighth century with the collapse of the Umayyad dynasty. Although he reviews the basic claims of decline, Walmsley does not spend too much time retracing the dialogue. He emphatically states that former theories of violent decline in Christian civilization due to the Muslims or to economic decline and abandonment, though pervasive in earlier scholarship, are consensually rejected today. Decline theories for before the Islamic conquest (in the Byzantine period or with the Persian invasion) or for after the Umayyad period should similarly be seriously questioned. A case in point is Antioch, which suffered from a litany of natural and human-caused disasters in the sixth century. Walmsley critiques the former work of historians, who in the past have argued for a decline of the city and tried to match excavated coins and evidence for fire or destruction with specific historical events. A more recent and important criticism of these works by Magness redates the main colonnaded street to the mid- to late-seventh century.¹ Urban and rural decline (or de-evolution) with the Persian invasion or the collapse of the Umayyad dynasty in the mid-eighth century was pervasive in literature of the 1950s to the 1970s. Walmsley correctly points out that the motivation for these theories may have come from excavations that revealed churches surviving into the

early eighth century that were funded by institutions interested only in early Christian sites.

According to Walmsley, rather than decline, economic prosperity was visible in the eastern Jordanian steppe (*badiya*). These sites comprised clusters of houses, often organized around churches, creating isolated groups within the larger community. However, Walmsley's example of the *badiya* raises three important questions. First, while the rural evidence is compelling for an argument against decline, it comes close to the trap outlined earlier by the author—the danger of focusing on one type of architecture (such as churches) to determine the fate of society. As such, the evidence must be qualified, showing not necessarily economic prosperity during (and, by default, attributed to) certain emperors' reigns as implied in Walmsley's text, but the agency of local church leadership and the restructuring of administrative economies during this time. Walmsley briefly alludes to the increasing role of the church, but not in relation to the loss of imperial hold in the rural areas. Second, Walmsley interprets these sites as transitional, reordering public to private space, and inhabited by tribal Arab or Arab-Christians communities. Though this is distinctly possible, the assumption that the *badiya* was composed only of Christianized Arab sites is as problematic as the assumption that all sites with churches elsewhere were inhabited by Byzantine Christians. These assumptions sublimate the existence of a culturally diverse region (particularly a peripheral frontier such as the *badiya*) or even diverse communities within a single site. The determination of the ethnic or religious character of a site is a challenging theme for Islamic archaeologists that should be added to Walmsley's presentation of new directions in the field. Finally, it should not be assumed that all regions in Syro-Palestine experienced the same level of economic prosperity. Rather, regions transformed unevenly. Walmsley's overemphasis of Jordanian sites does not consider evidence from surveys in northern Syria that do not show an increase or seamless continuity in settlement from the Late Roman period, but rather a decrease in the late seventh to eighth centuries that, in some cases, remains low until the mid-tenth century² or grows slightly only from the mid-eighth

¹ J. Magness, *The Archaeology of the Early Islamic Settlement in Palestine* (Winona Lake, 2003), 344.

² G. Algaze, G. Breuninger, and J. Knudstad, "The Tigris-Euphrates Archaeological Reconnaissance Project: Final Report

century.³ That these patterns developed unevenly is demonstrated by the counter-example of the Balikh River area, which showed a massive increase in settlement (twice the number of the Late Roman period) and land use activities, although only from the mid-eighth century.⁴

In chapter 3, Walmsley discusses the topic of Early Islamic material culture. He raises the foundational issue in Early Islamic archaeology: a clearer presence of eighth- and ninth-century material as compared to seventh-century material because material culture is slower to evolve. He also discusses the problem of misdating ceramics to the Umayyad period and how this resulted in arguments of Abbasid decline. Without delving too deeply into the cavernous world of ceramics, Walmsley succinctly outlines the major types and chronological shifts of ceramics. His discussion is typologically well balanced and makes mention of poorly known areas in southern Jordan and the Negev. It is, however, geographically restricted to the southern Levant. Research on key sites in northern Syria—such as Resafa and Raqqa—shows a local ceramic industry (producing wares such as brittlewares and yellow-glazed wares) that was widely disseminated and differed greatly from southern styles. Although a complete overview is impossible, a focus on the southern Levant implies that the ceramic industry of Early Islamic Syria was fueled from Jordan and Palestine. On the subject of numismatics, Walmsley provides an excellent discussion on Early Islamic coinage, the dangers of relying on them in excavation, and particularly, how they can beneficially inform about social processes. His discussion on glass and other crafts is similarly strong, only missing some plates to augment the

of the Birecik and Carchemish Dam Survey Areas,” *Anatolica* 20 (1994): 1–96.

³ T. J. Wilkinson, *Town and Country in Southeastern Anatolia*, vol. 1: *Settlement and Land Use at Kurban Höyük and Other Sites in the Lower Karababa Basin* (Chicago, 1990). See also, most recently (and following the publication of *Early Islamic Syria*), F. Gerritsen, A. U. de Giorgi, A. Eger, R. Özbal, and T. Vorderstrasse. “Settlement and Landscape Transformations in the Amuq Valley, Hatay: A Long-Term Perspective.” *Anatolica* (2008): 241–314.

⁴ K. Bartl, “Balih Valley Survey: Settlements of the Late Roman/Early Byzantine Period and Islamic Period,” in *Continuity and Change in Northern Mesopotamia from the Hellenistic to the Early Islamic Period: Proceedings of a Colloquium Held at the Seminar für Vorderasiatische Altertumskunde, Freie Universität Berlin, 6th–9th April, 1994*, edited by K. Bartl and S. Hauser (Berlin, 1996), 333–48.

text. Walmsley gathers the material culture evidence and outlines three main periods of technological and stylistic change that gained in momentum: the seventh century, late seventh–early eighth century, and late eighth–early ninth century. Expanded trade networks, a middle class, and new industries are all social elements that contributed to these increasingly rapid changes. Walmsley’s argument parallels more broadly an increase in rural settlements and expansion of urban centers, the subject of the following chapter.

Chapter 4 describes the various categories of sites that have been ably studied, citing well-balanced examples in the southern and northern Levant of cities, desert castles, and *qusur*. Walmsley also discusses their archaeological profiles, transformations, or morphological differences by profiling preexisting sites that contained new extramural settlements and/or abandoned areas in formerly occupied zones and new foundations that may have been used intermittently. At the same time he is careful not to make any firm settlement classifications, such as differentiating towns and villages, particularly as the transformations were uneven and elude strict categorization. Further discussion could also include sites that were temporarily occupied (by transhumant groups or mobile caliphs) or the structural and cultural impact of sedentarization on sites, seen at Abu Suwanna, Sweyhat, and Qinnasrin.⁵

However, the central issue Walmsley outlines in chapter 4 is the overdrawn connection of Islamic archaeology as urban and the lack of studies on rural settlement and land use. The inclusion of this problem is essential; unfortunately, however, Walmsley’s tone shifts significantly for the first time. He adopts a rather pessimistic view of the primary methodology of examining the rural landscape, archaeological survey, which contrasts sharply from his earlier optimistic approach to achievements in the field of excavation. This privileging of excavation over sur-

⁵ For Abu Suwanna: J. Magness, “Khirbet Abu Suwanna and Ein ‘Aneva: Two Early Islamic Settlements on Palestine’s Desert Periphery,” in *Changing Social Identity with the Spread of Islam: Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. D. Whitcomb (Chicago, 2004), 23; For Qinnasrin: D. Whitcomb, “Archaeological Research at Hadir Qinnasrin, 1998,” *Archéologie Islamique* 10 (2000): 27; For Sweyhat: D. Whitcomb, “The Ceramic Sequence from Surveyed Sites,” in *On the Margin of the Euphrates: Settlement and Land Use at Tell es-Sweyhat and in the Upper Lake Assad Area, Syria*, T. J. Wilkinson (Chicago, 2004), 99.

vey exacerbates the traditional urban-centric view of Islamic archaeology. After undermining the theoretical and methodological advances made recently by advocating landscape and survey approaches, the author provides a short précis of current work that very briefly describes general settlement patterns, such as preference for lowland, river valley sites and differentiation of upland settlement in various regions. Though accurate at times, he is inconsistent and writes that Early Islamic settlement expanded from a “deliberate development of unproductive land through the building of new infrastructure [such as canals or farm estates] and only secondarily through the implementation of new agricultural regimes.” This differs from his earlier arguments in favor of more classical continuity and against an implied postclassical decline or Islamic Green Revolution. Although the seventh century witnessed a contraction of rural settlement in some areas, inherited land was certainly not unproductive, and agricultural regimes such as canal systems were not innovations.⁶ Extensive cultivation of the landscape, canal building, and farm estates were important components of a continuous classical landscape. More relevant to the discussion, the rural landscape is the social process of settlements, for example, how rural sites interrelated and managed water and land rights, and to what degree they were self-sufficient or dependent on an urban core.

Adaptation to other landscapes such as the shift from uplands to lowlands was significantly determined by environmental change, specifically erosion, which affected cultivation on the upland slopes. Walmsley, although mentioning this briefly, also adopts a dim view of the contributions made by geo-morphological, archaeobotanical, and archaeozoological studies in environmental reconstruction. He localizes his criticism in another archaeological debate: the causes of environmental change, whether anthropogenic (due to activities such as deforestation and upland cultivation) or natural (due to climate change). Unfortunately, he views this problem as an either/or issue. This contrasts starkly from the tone that he establishes throughout the book that explicitly argues against viewing such

debated problems as black or white. Recent evidence⁷ indicates that a combination of causes contributed to changes in the landscape and subsequent settlement shifts. At the end of his discussion, however, Walmsley accepts the multi-causal explanation. The connections between rural settlement and environmental change need to be prominently included in assessments of Islamic archaeology.

While Walmsley lays several debates to rest, he presents new challenges in the last section of the book. Some would advance the field significantly, such as the archaeology of pre-Islamic Arabic culture and the Umayyad/Abbasid transition; however, others, like Qur’anic archaeology, seem to reinforce certain “validations” that, as seen in the field of biblical archaeology, have not propelled the field forward in any meaningful way. Turning to the archaeology of Islamic religious spaces, pilgrimage sites, etc., might prove more useful.

Facing the field in midstride, *Early Islamic Syria* presents the issues that have risen from Islamic archaeology with a generally positive momentum. The problems are few and mainly associated with omissions rather than errors in argument. The book is decidedly Jordan-centric and focused on excavation and material culture. North Syria, rural settlement, and environmental evidence are less developed. Nevertheless, the text serves the field well and could be used as an introductory textbook. Perhaps the best feature of Walmsley’s volume is that it does not attempt to present Islamic archaeology as entirely new or give a final word or summary of what has been done in the field to date. *Early Islamic Syria* provides the reader with an overall sense that the field of Islamic archaeology is well defined and has made significant achievements, while allowing for plenty of room to grow. A significant amount of evidence has now been amassed in Islamic archaeology, which should no longer be considered either a brand-new field or an appendix to history.

⁶ See T. J. Wilkinson, “Water and Human Settlement in the Balikh Valley, Syria: Investigations from 1992–1995,” *Journal of Field Archaeology* 25/1 (1998), 63–87.

⁷ See J. Casana, “Mediterranean Valleys Revisited: Linking Soil Erosion, Land Use, and Climate Variability in the Northern Levant,” *Geomorphology* 101 (2008): 429–42; T. Beach and S. Luzzadder-Beach, “Geoarchaeology and Aggradation around Kinet Höyük, an Archaeological Mound in the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey,” *Geomorphology* 101 (2008): 416–28; T. J. Wilkinson et al., “The Geoarchaeology of a Lake Basin: Spatial and Chronological Patterning of Sedimentation in the Amuq Plain, Turkey,” *Recherches en Archéométrie* 1 (2001): 211–26.

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