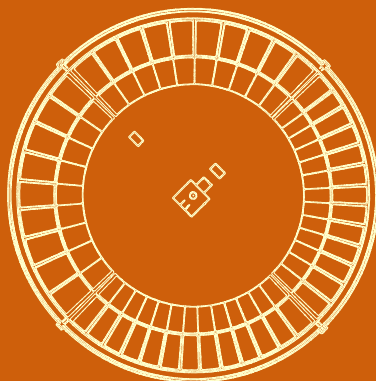


# ISLAMIC CITIES IN THE CLASSICAL AGE

a symposium sponsored by The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT (AKPIA@MIT)



**MAY 6, 2005**

2:00 - 5:30

**MAY 7, 2005**

10:00 - 12:30 & 2:00 - 6:00

**MIT room 6-120**



# ISLAMIC CITIES IN THE CLASSICAL AGE

## FRIDAY, MAY 6

**2:00 NASSER RABBAT**

Introduction

### FIRST SESSION

**2:15 MODERATOR: MOHAMMAD AL-ASAD**

**2:30 IRFAN SHAHID**

Georgetown University

The Arab Background, Islamic and Pre-Islamic,  
of Umayyad Urbanism in Bilad al-Sham

**ANNABEL WHARTON**

Duke University

Classical Jerusalem  
and its Post Classical Apparition

**3:30 BREAK**

**3:45 HUGH KENNEDY**

University of St Andrews

From Shahristan to Medina

**FRANK TROMBLEY**

Cardiff University

Towns and their Territories in Egypt and Syria:  
An Interregional Comparison

**4:45 DISCUSSION**

## SATURDAY, MAY 7

### SECOND SESSION

**10:00 MODERATOR: LARA TOHME**

**10:15 DONALD WHITCOMB**

The University of Chicago

Archaeology in  
"The Places where Men Pray Together"

**CLAUS-PETER HAASE**

Museum of Islamic Art, Berlin

Early Islamic Urban Foundations  
in the Light of Archaeological Evidence from  
Madinat al-Far/Hisn Maslama in Northern Syria

**11:15 BREAK**

**11:30 ALAN G. WALMSLEY**

University of Copenhagen

Mosques-Money-Memory. The Placement  
of Mosques & their Impact on Towns  
in Early Islamic Bilad al-Sham

**12:00 DISCUSSION**

**12:30 LUNCH**

### THIRD SESSION

**2:00 MODERATOR: NASSER RABBAT**

**2:15 STEFAN HEIDEMANN**

Friedrich-Schiller-Universitaet, Jena

Shaping an Imperial Metropolis:  
Al-Raqqa - Al-Rafiqqa

**MARCUS MILWRIGHT**

The University of Victoria

Industrial Zones and the Urban Space in the  
Early Abbasid Period: The Case of Raqqa, Syria

**3:15 BREAK**

**3:30 ALASTAIR NORTHEGE**

Université de Paris I (Panthéon-Sorbonne)

'Askar al-Mu'tasim:  
An Analysis of the Central City of Samarra

**4:00 DISCUSSION**

**4:30 BREAK**

**4:45 GENERAL DISCUSSION  
AND CONCLUDING REMARKS**

# ISLAMIC CITIES IN THE CLASSICAL AGE

**This symposium will bring together leading historians, archaeologists, art and architectural historians of late Antiquity and Early Islam to assess the current state of our knowledge on the context of urbanism in that transitional period. The focus will be on the urban development and cultural climate of the nascent Islamic world from the eve of the Islamic conquests through the early Abbasid period (7-10 century).**

## ABSTRACTS AND BIOGRAPHIES

### **CLAUS-PETER HAASE**

Museum of Islamic Art, Berlin

Early Islamic Urban Foundations in the Light of Archaeological Evidence from Madinat al-Far/Hisn Maslama in Northern Syria

#### **ABSTRACT**

Madinat al-Far/Hisn Maslama was first excavated by a Syrian team under Nassib Saliby and published in 1983. Its size over nearly 2km in length and 800m at its greatest width make it appear as one of the more impressive archaeological ruins in the Balikh region. As was proven in nine campaigns with over 30 field excavations, it consists of only two main occupation periods in the early Islamic centuries, without traces of any earlier constructions beneath it and vague traces of periodic Bedouin presence. Its tripartite topography is immediately recognizable on the surface - a walled square of c. 330m a side to the North, some scattered elevations to the South of it and an extension of loosely spread constructions laterally and more to the South which were walled in a secondary construction period. The main finds date the latter to the end of the 8th century until about the middle of the 9th century C.E., while large building traces found beneath it remain more or less undefined and seem to have been heavily destroyed, probably by an earthquake. They date from the Umayyad period, as some coins and a few scattered ceramic fragments show.

The plan of the urban foundation is clear: the Northern square shows four gates in the orthogonal axes following the Roman castra structure, with streets and "insula"-like constructions with extended courtyards. But the center is occupied by a large building with a lavish Northern entrance, as it also blocks the center in the smaller compound of Ayla in Jordan. Very interesting are the house or "mansion"

types to the South of this square, which apparently belong partly to the earlier construction period and were later on included into the secondary wall extension. One of them shows a single Arab bayt plan, another one is a double palace of two large courthouses set next to each other.

The suggestion is that the city belongs to a series of Umayyad foundations like Anjar, Ramla and the smaller so called desert castles that date to the period between the reigns of the caliphs al-Walid I. to Hisham in the first half of the 8th century. In this region, the most famous foundation was Hisn Maslama, built by a son of Abd al-Malik, and it is with this that we identify the site of Madinat al-Far.

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Claus-Peter Haase has been the Director of the Museum of Islamic Art, State Museums of Berlin, since 2001, and is an honorary professor of Islamic art and archaeology at the Freie Universität Berlin. In 1998 he taught Islamic art and archaeology at the Carsten Niebuhr Institute, Copenhagen University. Since 1987, he has led archaeological excavations at Madinat al-Far/Syria. He has also been a collaborator in the project of cataloguing the Oriental Manuscripts in Germany since 1985, and has taught at Kiel University. He has studied Islamic studies and art, Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Hamburg, Rome, and Istanbul.

#### **STEFAN HEIDEMANN**

Friedrich-Schiller-Universitaet, Jena

*Shaping an Imperial Metropolis: Al-Raqqa - Al-Rafiq*

#### **ABSTRACT**

Al-Raqqa/al-Rafiq was the largest urban agglomeration west of Baghdad until the foundation of Samarra in the Abbasid period. It served as the seat of the Caliph Harun al-Rashid and one of the founding fathers of the Hanafi-law school, Muhammad al-Shaibani taught here. Al-Raqqa/al-Rafiq is quite different from all previous palace-cities as imperial residence built by the Abbasids before Harun al-Rashid. The development of the sub-cities and the origins of their population will be studied, beginning with the Christian, Jewish and Pagan-Sabian city of Kallinikos/al-Raqqa and its monasteries, the foundation of the fortified garrison city al-Rafiq for Muslims from Khurasan loyal to the Abbasid cause, the development of the commercial and industrial city of al-Raqqa al-Muhtariqa in between, and finally the palace area itself will be explored. After looking at each sub-city and its function as a whole, the juridical concept of 'madina' will be applied to them. This leads to the discussion of the difference between the palace area to that of the imperial residences, and to its function within the entire metropolis.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Stefan Heidemann received his Ph.D. from the Free University in Berlin in 1993. He also received a Habilitation in Islamic Studies from the Jena University (2001). Since 2004 he has held a Hochschuldozent (C2-Professorship) at the Friedrich-Schiller-University in Jena, where he had held an Oberassistent (C2-Professorship) between 2001 to 2003. He has also been a temporary C4-Professor for Islamic History and Culture in the Arabic World at the Leipzig University between 2001-2002. He publishes on development politics, Islamic history (*Das Aleppiner Kalifat (AD 1261)* 1994, *Die Renaissance der Städte in Nordsyrien und Nordmesopotamien* 2002), and numismatics (*Islamische Numismatik in Deutschland*, 2000), and archaeology (*Raqqa II - Die islamische Stadt* 2004). He has taken part in and co-operates with several international archaeological missions mainly in Syria, but also in Egypt, Turkey, Iraq and Mongolia.)

## **HUGH KENNEDY**

University of St Andrews

From Shahrīstan to Medina

## **ABSTRACT**

There is now considerable literature on the transition from late antiquity to early Islam in the cities of greater Syria. By contrast, very little work has been done on the transition between Sasanian and early Islamic cities in Iran. In this paper I shall try to define issues which are essential to the Iranian question, as opposed to the Syrian one, and suggest some further avenues of research. The first topic to be discussed will be the nature of the evidence, archaeological, epigraphic and literary and the ways in which this affects and constrains the sorts of questions we can ask. The paper then moves on to look at the general form of Sasanian and early Islamic cities, stressing the variety of forms and noting that the classic tripartite mode of *quhandiz* (citadel), shahrīstan/madina (inner city) and *rabad* (suburb), though widely applicable in greater Khurasan, is not to be found with the same consistency in the cities of Media (al-Jibal) or Fars. The planned cities of the Sasanian period will also be discussed, especially the round cities associated with Ardashir I (r. c.224-40 C.E.) (Cteisphon, Junday Shapur, Gur/Firuzabad). It will be argued that the coming of Muslim rule in Khurasan resulted in a process we might call decastellamento, that is the abandonment of the old quhandiz, both as fortification and centre of government and frequently of the shahrīstan as well and the movement of the centers of urban life, the Dar al-Imara (Government House), mosque and markets into suburbs which were frequently extensive and unwallled. Following the research of Whitcomb, it will be suggested that the changes in cities of Fars were significantly different.

Next, the paper will examine the commercial centres of the cities of early Islamic Iran. Neither archaeology nor the written sources provide much useful information about the markets of Sasanian cities. In the absence of these sources, an attempt will be made to discuss early Islamic markets by a close reading of the Arab geographers. It will be shown that the classic forms of the Persian bazaar, the Chaharsu or cross-road market, the khans and funduqs and the qaysariyya are established by the beginning of IV/X century. It will be shown that extra-mural fairs were also important, especially in the Zagros uplands and Azerbaijan and the suggestion will be made that this pattern may have been inherited from the Sasanian period.

Finally an attempt will be made to discuss the monumental city. Two central questions will be posed. The first is whether the Sasanian city had any public or religious monuments and, especially, whether the fire temples provided the same sorts urban focus that churches did in the cities of Syria. The second will be to look at the early Islamic mosques of Iran, buildings which have left little in the way of physical traces, but of which we have some description in the literary evidence.

It must be emphasized that much of this is extremely speculative and that the paper will raise many more questions than it answers, but I hope it will provide food for thought and discussion.

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Hugh Kennedy has lectured at the University of St Andrews, Scotland since 1972 and has been Professor of Middle Eastern History since 2000. He has published widely on Islamic History including *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphate* (1986, new ed. 2004); *Muslim Spain and Portugal: a Political History of al-Andalus* (1996) and *The Armies of the Caliphs* (2001). His popular history of the Abbasid Caliphate *When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World* will be published by Da Capo in May 2005. He has had a long-standing interest in the relationship between written and archaeological evidence on which he has published, among other things, "From Polis to Medina" *Past and Present*, 1985.

#### **MARCUS MILWRIGHT**

The University of Victoria

Industrial Zones and the Urban Space in the Early Abbasid Period: The Case of Raqqa, Syria

#### **ABSTRACT**

In the last quarter of the eighth century CE work started on the construction of a new city named al-Rafiqā ('the Companion') to the west of Raqqa in northeastern Syria. This massive walled compound formed part of a larger enterprise that included a complex of palaces to the north and an extensive industrial zone to the east. This paper traces the evolution of this industrial zone in the late eighth and

ninth century with a particular emphasis on its spatial relationship to the urban and palatial zones of the city. The paper considers the infrastructure required to facilitate the movement of raw materials, people and manufactured goods within Raqqa-Rafiq. It is argued that the case of Raqqa-Rafiq illustrates the ways in which the creation and maintenance of industrial areas formed an integral part of the process of urban design in the Abbasid cities. In the conclusion, the results from archaeological research in Raqqa-Rafiq are assessed in the wider context of urbanized industrial activity during the Late Antique and Early Islamic periods.

The paper integrates historical data, the results of recent excavations conducted by Syrian, German and British projects in Raqqa, and the evidence provided by aerial and satellite photography in order to provide a picture of the interconnected nature of industrial activity and urban growth in the early Abbasid period.

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Marcus Milwright is Assistant Professor in the Department of History in Art of the University of Victoria, B.C., Canada. He is responsible for the teaching of Islamic, Early Christian and Byzantine Art History. His research interests include the archaeology of the Early and Middle Islamic periods in the Middle East, the architecture of Pre-Mongol Iran, cross-cultural exchange, and the history of medicine. He received his doctorate from the Oriental Institute, University of Oxford in 1999 and has held research fellowships with the Wingate Foundation, the Warburg Institute (University of London) and the British Academy. He is involved in the publication of the excavated ceramics from Raqqa in Syria and Mudaybi' in Jordan. He is currently completing a monograph on the history and archaeology of Karak in Jordan from Crusader to early Ottoman rule entitled, *The Citadel of the Raven: Karak in the Middle Islamic Period*. He has been commissioned to write a book entitled, *The Archaeology of the Islamic World: An Introduction* for the New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys series (Edinburgh University Press). His publications include: "Fixtures and Fittings: The Role of Decoration in Abbasid Palace Design," in C. Robinson (ed.), *A Medieval Islamic City reconsidered: An interdisciplinary Approach to Samarra*, Oxford University Press (2001); 'Balsam in the Mediaeval Mediterranean: A Case Study of Information and Commodity Exchange,' *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 14.1 (2001).



**ALASTAIR NORTHEGDE**

Université de Paris I (Panthéon-Sorbonne)

'Askar al-Mu'tasim: An Analysis of the Central City of Samarra

**ABSTRACT**

Samarra was founded by al-Mu'tasim in 221 A.H./836 C.E. as a royal city, that is, a residence for the court, and the main military base of the Abbasid field army. The presence of these consumers evidently stimulated the growth of an organic commercial city. The present paper studies the extent to which this happened, and how much can be seen in the archaeological evidence, before the city contracted again with the abandonment by the caliphs in 279 A.H./892 C.E.

**BIOGRAPHY**

Alastair Northedge is Professor of Islamic Art and Archaeology at the Université de Paris I (Panthéon-Sorbonne). Previously he was a Maître de Conférences at Université de Paris IV (Paris-Sorbonne) between 1991-1998. He received his PhD from SOAS, and his dissertation, "Qal'at Amman in the Early Islamic Period." Was published as *Studies on Roman and Islamic Amman*, British Academy Monographs in Archaeology no. 3, (1993). He participated in the rescue excavation at Ana, which was published as Northedge, Bamber & Roaf, *Excavations at Ana*, (1988). He is also the author of the *Survey of Samarra*, (1983 onwards). The first volume of the final publication, the *Historical Topography of Samarra*, will appear in mid-2005, and the second, the *Archaeological Atlas of Samarra*, in 2006. Recent fieldwork has been in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

**IRFAN SHAHID**

Georgetown University

The Arab Background, Islamic and Pre-Islamic, of Umayyad Urbanism in Bilad al-Sham

**ABSTRACT**

The Umayyads were the first Arab Muslim Dynasty, and their headquarters and capital, Damascus, were in Bilad al-Sham, previously Byzantine Oriens. Islam, the religion to which they belonged, was a very urban religion, born and bred in Makka. Its Prophet, Muhammad, and its Sacred Book, the Quran, both stood for the urban way of life and both animadverted, even thundered, against Nomadism. Makka was a city, indeed, a metropolis, the mother of cities, as the Quran calls it. Its inhabitants were urbanites, of whom the Umayyads were the leading clan. Islam only enhanced their urban way of life. The Makkan clan soon became the first Dynasty of Islam in Bilad al-Sham. Their secular establishments, their Qusur, were to be found mostly in the area which the pre-Islamic dynasty of the Ghassanid Arabs

had occupied. These, too, were not nomads, but a highly sedentary group, who had hailed from the highly sedentary part of Arabia, the Southern, known to the Classical authors as Arabia Felix (Arabic, al-Yaman). The Ghassanids were *philoktistai* addicted to building; and during their occupation of the long zone of steppe-land that extended from the Euphrates to the Gulf of Eilat, they contributed much to its urbanization. The Umayyads continued the work of their predecessors, the Ghassanids, in this steppe-land - the Byzantine limitrophe, but on a much larger scale, since they were the masters of the region and not vassals, as the Ghassanids had been: hence their resources were immeasurably superior.

The paper will discuss in detail the two periods and processes of urbanization, the Umayyad and the Ghassanid: how they were related to each other, against the background of urbanity in Byzantine Oriens, which after the Muslim Conquests, became Umayyad Bilad al-Sham.

### **BIOGRAPHY**

Irfan Shahīd is the Oman Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Georgetown University. His formation was in Classics and Ancient History at Oxford University and in Islamic Languages and History at Princeton. His researches and publications comprise three areas: Qur'anic studies, Arabic poetry (Classical and Modern), and Roman / Byzantine – Arab Relations in Bilad al-Sham (Oriens), on all of which he has published several books and many articles in English and in Arabic. Of these three areas of research, the third is the relevant one to this symposium, on which he has authored six volumes published by Dumbarton Oaks, Harvard University's Research Institute in Washington. All of these volumes are contributions to Late Antiquity but they are also Prolegomena to the third and climactic part of his Trilogy, namely, Byzantium and Islam in the Seventh Century. The last volume in this series devotes some 500 pages to the toponymy, monuments, historical geography and frontier studies of Bilad al-Sham in the Sixth Century, - the eve of the rise of Islam and the Arab-Muslim Conquest of the region. It pays special attention to the Ghassanid – Umayyad relationship in the urbanization of Bilad al-Sham.

### **FRANK TROMBLEY**

Cardiff University

[Towns and their Territories in Egypt and Syria: An Interregional Comparison](#)

### **ABSTRACT**

A key research area is the relations between the eastern Mediterranean cities and their territories. In terms of sources, the archaeological data, inscriptions and papyri fill out the picture given in literary sources such as Byzantine chronicles, Muslim *Futuh* narratives and the works of the Arab geographers.

The paper will concentrate on two regions in Late Antiquity and the early Islamic period (ca . 501-900 C.E.), Egypt and northern Syria, with some reference to Roman Arabia and Palestine for comparative purposes. The discussion will center on the Late Roman and early medieval epigraphic evidence in the territories of Antioch, Apamea, Busra, Damascus and Hims, and look at the trades and types of economic activity that are reported in the Aphrodito, Kurra and Apollonos Ano papyri in Egypt. The discussion will also consider particular collections of documents suggestive of relations between towns and territories, and the types of activity that engaged Arabs, Copts, Greeks and Syrians on the road networks between the Near Eastern towns, among them long distance transit trade, pilgrimage, haulage of agricultural produce to markets and endemic warfare. The most significant axes to be considered will be the Nile River, the route across the Massif Calcaire from Antioch to Halab-Beroia and the Euphrates steppe, and Orontes river valley. Of particular importance are the rural networks, religious and economic, that were linked to large cities and underpinned urban wealth through their agricultural surpluses, subsidized building projects and wider cultural life. The comparative analysis will contrast regional ecologies, agricultural production, artisan work and agricultural activity. Papyrus archives from Khirbet al-Mird, Nessana, and Petra, and the *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum Palaestinae*, will also be considered in mapping the intervening geographical spaces between Syria and Egypt. The documentary evidence will be considered in light of the wider picture apparent in the works of the Arab geographers.

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Frank Trombley holds a Ph.D. in Byzantine History from the University of California, Los Angeles (1981), and is now Reader in Byzantine and Early Islamic History at Cardiff University. He is the author of *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c. 370-529 A.D.*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1993-94; 1995, 2001) and has collaborated with John W. Watt in the translation and commentary *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite* (Liverpool: Translated Texts for Historians, 2000). He is currently working on a book entitled *War in Byzantine Culture and Society* (Blackwells, Oxford). His various articles deal with such subjects as the impact of endemic war on Byzantine culture and society, Greek and Arabic epigraphy in the villages of Syria, and towns and their rural territories in early medieval Greece and Asia Minor.

**ALAN G. WALMSLEY**

University of Copenhagen

Mosques-Money-Memory. The Placement of Mosques and their Impact on Towns in Early Islamic Bilad al-Sham

**ABSTRACT**

The centrality of congregational mosques in an early Islamic urban context is generally agreed, based upon our current understanding of city topography in the first Islamic centuries. The mosque, both as a building and by way of its social function, became an increasingly potent marker of Muslim hegemony and, when partnered with a *dar al-imara*, an unconcealed proclamation of the indisputable right to rule. The famous monuments of Damascus and Iliya/Jerusalem can, in part, be interpreted in this way, but does the same explanation also hold for the other towns of Bilad al-Sham which, while serving administrative functions, were not 'imperial' cities in the same league?

**BIOGRAPHY**

Alan Walmsley is an archaeologist specializing in the East Mediterranean during the first millennium C.E., with a particular focus on social and economic continuity and change in Late Antique and Islamic Syria-Palestine (c. 6th–11th centuries).

He began his career as an archaeologist in New Zealand, where he worked on Maori prehistoric sites. He studied at the University of Auckland, gaining a BA and MA (Hons) in Ancient History, archaeology and anthropology. Later he studied Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Sydney before commencing a PhD in the urban and administrative structure of early Islamic Bilad al-Sham (Syria-Palestine). In his dissertation he combined written sources, mostly geographical writings, with archaeological discoveries to map out the continuing urban history of the region into the Fatimid period.

Currently Associate Professor of Islamic Archaeology and Art at the University of Copenhagen, Alan Walmsley has worked in the Middle East for over 25 years, directing four major field projects including Pella, where he excavated extensive early Islamic remains. In 2002, he instigated the Danish-Jordanian Islamic Jarash Project with the intention of revealing Jarash's Islamic heritage, discovering a large Congregational Mosque and associated structures in the process. In addition to his fieldwork, Walmsley has successfully organized conferences and workshops, and in July 2001 convened the Eighth International Conference on the History and Archaeology of Jordan at the University of Sydney, attended by 115 participants from 15 countries. He has presented papers at many meetings, lectured in many countries, and has published over 50 titles including three books.

**ANNABEL WHARTON**

Duke University

Classical Jerusalem and Its Post Classical Apparition

**ABSTRACT**

The “Classical” Jerusalem of Herod, Hadrian, and Constantine and the Islamic Jerusalem of Abd al-Malik are familiarly described in this paper in terms of their shifting spatial axes of center/sacred and periphery/profane. This historical topography of the city offers a pragmatic foil for a discussion of the ahistorical topography of Jerusalem in the Western imaginary. The remarkably consistent form of the West’s conception of Jerusalem is documented by its reproductions of the city - from the Templar enclaves in the Middle Ages through the Sacri Monti of Early Modernity and great panoramas of Jerusalem in Modernity to the Holy Land Experience theme park in Orlando. The paper ends by suggesting how the actual Jerusalem has been haunted by the faux Jerusalem that the West desires.

**BIOGRAPHY**

Annabel Wharton, William B. Hamilton Chair of Art History at Duke University, was trained as a Byzantinist at the Courtauld Institute of the University of London. Her work, including *Art of Empire: Painting and Architecture of the Byzantine Periphery* and *Refiguring the Post Classical City*, has focused on Late Antique and Byzantine art and culture. She has also investigated the effect of modernity on the medieval past and its landscapes, first in her study of the first generation of Hilton International Hotels (*Building the Cold War: Hilton International Hotels and Modern Architecture*, U. of Chicago Press, 2001) and now in a book titled *Selling Jerusalem* (U. of Chicago Press, 2006). Professor Wharton is a co-editor of the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*. She has received fellowships from the ACLS, Dumbarton Oaks, the National Humanities Center, the Center for the Advanced Study of the Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. and the Graham Foundation for the Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts.

**DONALD WHITCOMB**

The University of Chicago

Archaeology in “The Places where Men Pray Together”

**ABSTRACT**

The study of the historical geography of the early Islamic city was the subject of a comprehensive monograph published in 2001, entitled *The Places where Men Pray Together: Cities in Islamic Lands, Seventh through the Tenth Centuries*. The author is the late professor of geography and social thought,

Paul Wheatley, who was otherwise known for his studies on the Chinese city as well as other urban traditions. As with his immersion in Chinese language and literature, Wheatley approaches the Islamic city with a philological command of Arabic geographic and historical resources.

This paper will reflect its author's association with Wheatley for over twenty years, as his student and later his "archaeological conscience." This book is the codification of geographical knowledge of the entire early Islamic world, explicitly following the example of al-Maqdisi (al-Muqaddasi). One specific contribution is Wheatley's concept of the early city as ceremonial center, as an ideological or cosmological construct. This is a subject in which archaeological information from Arabia and other regions may significantly amplify the conclusions reached through geography toward a more comprehensive understanding of the early Islamic urban tradition

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Donald Whitcomb has his PhD in Anthropology from the University of Chicago, an M.A. from the University of Georgia, and B.A. in Art History from Emory University. He holds the position of Research Associate (Associate Professor) at The Oriental Institute and the Middle East Center, University of Chicago, since 1981. Before this, he was Assistant Curator at the Field Museum of Natural History from 1979-1981 and has held research fellowships at the Smithsonian Institution (1981-82) and at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1977-79). He was also a fellow at the American Center for Oriental Research, Amman (1985-86) and at the American Research Center in Egypt, Cairo (1983). Whitcomb's archaeological research includes direction of the excavations at Quseir al-Qadim, a Roman and Mamluk port on the Egyptian coast of the Red Sea (1978-82), and at Luxor, stratigraphic soundings into the medieval, Roman and Pharaonic mound of the city (1985-86). He has been director of the Aqaba excavations in Jordan from 1986 to present, an investigation into the early Islamic port of Ayla. Most recently he has begun excavations at Hadir Qinnasrin, the early Islamic capital of north Syria near Aleppo. His earlier fieldwork included excavations and surveys in Jordan, Oman, Syria, and Iran, as well as training in Georgia. Whitcomb has received grants for the Aqaba excavations from the van Berchem Society (1993, 1995), from USAID (1987-93) and the National Geographic Society (1987-89). His excavations at Luxor, Egypt were supported by the National Geographic Society and the American Philosophical Society (1985). He is a fellow of the American Numismatic Society seminar (1975) and received a Ford Foundation traineeship (1972-73).



Symposium sponsored by The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT (AKPIA@MIT)  
and organized by Nasser Rabbat, AKPIA@MIT