

## Medieval

*The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion.* By Richard Hoggett. Anglo-Saxon Studies 15. Boydell. 2010. 222pp. £50.00.

A regional study of the archaeology of East Anglia between *c.*550 and *c.*750 is a worthy and welcome undertaking. Worthy because there was a wealthy and literate kingdom of the East Angles, whose existence makes the regional focus meaningful and whose history is not well served by surviving written sources. Welcome because no such study exists of the kingdom's archaeological record. For Richard Hoggett, conversion to Christianity is the social process responsible for producing the observable patterns in that archaeological record. Three essential frameworks facilitate his study. Combining the ideas of Birkelli, Foote and Insoll, he suggests that conversion may be understood not as a moment but rather as a three-phase social process. Drawing on recent work in 'cognitive archaeology', he uses Colin Renfrew's model to underpin his attempts to identify the reflex of religious ritual and belief in material culture. Reviewing the written evidence for kings, episcopal sees and missions, he sets out a historical narrative of conversion and the building of an institutional Church as a backdrop for analysing patterns in the archaeological record. Having set out this foundation, he builds his case through a study of 'mission stations', mortuary ritual, and the relationship between cemeteries and settlements.

Crudely, Hoggett's case may be summarized thus. A network of 'mission stations' was founded across the kingdom. The documented 'mission stations' at Roman sites demonstrate that such places existed, but archaeological finds in a series of prehistoric and Roman enclosures suggest there may have been more. The impact of these may be observed through changing aspects of mortuary ritual and the relationship between settlements and cemeteries. Because cremation can be connected with pagan beliefs and because Christianity required the preservation of a body intact, the end of cremation cemeteries reflects the geography and chronology of conversion, but only for those communities that had previously used cremation cemeteries. Because individuals buried with multiple objects including Christian imagery represent individuals holding Christian beliefs, a number of the 'Final Phase' cemeteries of the seventh century may be described as Christian cemeteries and this allows us to chart the geography and chronology of conversion amongst communities which did not practice cremation. Finally, because Christians believed in resurrection and the power of post-mortem prayer, this prompted Christians to keep the dead close by; hence the development of settlements with cemeteries reflects the chronology and geography of conversion amongst the rest of the population.

To build his case, Hoggett provides up-to-date descriptions of the finds from prehistoric and Roman enclosures, the geography and chronology of cemeteries, the incidence of Christian imagery in grave goods, and the spatial relationship between settlements and cemeteries. Within his discussion of settlements and cemeteries, he deploys the results of the excellent field-walking and landscape surveys of East Anglia, with admirable maps, in an attempt to use pottery finds to establish how many Anglo-Saxon settlements and cemeteries might underlie modern churchyards. In establishing and laying out these patterns and attempting this new technique on churchyards, he provides us with a wealth of invaluable information and a method to replicate elsewhere. In suggesting inter-

pretations he makes some stimulating bold claims deserving further consideration. Nevertheless, there could be more attention to the full range of socio-economic and cultural factors that may lie behind the archaeological record. After the brief review of Renfrew's model, little space is given to the question of how to distinguish other types of human activity from religious activity: finds within prehistoric and Roman enclosures or beneath modern churches could represent a range of different activities at those sites, not just 'mission stations' or settlements with cemeteries. Cremation is acknowledged to be a resource-expensive rite, expressing a range of cultural beliefs, and cremation cemeteries are accepted to serve multiple communities, so a number of socio-economic or cultural changes could have brought about its demise. Inhumation with multiple grave-goods including Christian imagery does provide some weight for the idea that a person's kin-group wished to project Christian associations for them amongst the local community, but how we get from there to the beliefs of an individual or of a whole cemetery population is a complex problem. Gradual association of settlements and cemeteries might result from changes in landscape exploitation or the relationship between lordship and local communities: how the impact of these potential forces can be distinguished from the impact of Christian beliefs about the afterlife requires further exploration. Richard Hoggett deserves sincere thanks for marshalling up-to-date archaeological evidence from early Anglo-Saxon East Anglia, for presenting it to a wider audience and for putting out some bold hypotheses about conversion and the archaeological record: the evidence for East Anglia is now available alongside that from other regions as a dataset with which to test these hypotheses.

*University of York*

THOMAS PICKLES

*Alfred's Wars: Sources and Interpretations of Anglo-Saxon Warfare in the Viking Age.* By Ryan Lavelle. Boydell. 2010. xx + 378pp. £60.00.

Readers looking purely for a discussion of late ninth-century warfare in Ryan Lavelle's new book will be in for a bit of a surprise, since this book covers far more than simply the wars of Alfred's reign, although these, inevitably, loom large. Lavelle's book is part of a Boydell series 'Warfare in History' and as its long title suggests, deals not just with the historiography of Anglo-Saxon warfare, but the evidence for it as well. The format of the book consists of historiographical essays, interspersed with extensive selections (and even, in the case of Hollister's underrated discussion of the Select Fyrd, full reprints) from key discussions of Anglo-Saxon warfare, extracts from some of the major sources, all introduced by much new work by the author on Anglo-Saxon warfare. There has been little treatment of Anglo-Saxon warfare in a single volume since Abels's *Lordship and Military Obligation in Anglo-Saxon England*, and the present book goes a significant way towards redressing this. It needs also to be stressed at the outset that although the book's focus is warfare in the Anglo-Saxon world, pure and simple, it does not retreat into the silo marked 'military history', devoid of meaningful context; here Lavelle has located his discussion of war and the important role it played in late Anglo-Saxon society in a wider social, political and even geographical/landscape context.

As such, the book has chapters on 'Friends and Foes'; 'Organisation and Equipment: Land'; 'Organisation and Equipment: Maritime'; 'Campaigns and