

Matériel Culture

The archaeology of twentieth century conflict



Edited by John Schofield, William Gray Johnson and Colleen M. Beck

ONE
WORLD
ARCHAEOLOGY

44

**Also available as a printed book
see title verso for ISBN details**

MATÉRIEL CULTURE

The twentieth century probably saw no more conflict than in previous centuries; increased global communication and media coverage have, however, heightened our awareness of it. The scale and intensity of war was greater than anything before and the human cost reached unprecedented and previously unimaginable levels. Following the end of the century the materiality of these many conflicts – from local skirmishes to world wars – is becoming accepted on to the heritage agenda as a valid form of cultural resource for the benefit of future generations. *Matériel Culture* describes these recent developments, and documents why the study of conflict is important – and to whom.

The term ‘matériel culture’ encompasses the material remains of conflict, from buildings and monuments to artefacts and militaria, as well as human remains. This collection of essays, from an international range of contributors, illustrates the diversity in this material record, highlights the difficulties and challenges in preserving, presenting and interpreting it, and above all demonstrates the significant role matériel culture can play in contemporary society. Archaeologists have led the way in understanding these remains, as the fantastic selection of case studies in this volume suggests. Among the many studies are: the ‘culture of shells’, the archaeology of nuclear testing grounds, Cambodia’s ‘killing fields’, the Berlin Wall, the biography of a medal, the reappearance of Argentina’s ‘disappeared’ and Second World War concentration camps.

In presenting this collection the editors challenge our perception of what constitutes cultural heritage, what is significant about it, and what is worthy of record and preservation. This new and exciting field of archaeology has a wide relevance for academics and professionals in many disciplines, most certainly in archaeology, heritage management, history and anthropology.

John Schofield is an Inspector for English Heritage’s Monuments Protection Programme. **William Gray Johnson** and **Colleen M. Beck** are Associate Research Professor and Research Professor respectively at the Desert Research Institute in Nevada, USA.

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MATÉRIEL CULTURE

The archaeology of
twentieth-century conflict

Edited by

John Schofield, William Gray Johnson
and Colleen M. Beck



London and New York

First published 2002 by Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004.

Selection and editorial matter © 2002 John Schofield, William Gray
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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN 0-203-16574-8 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-203-26030-9 (Adobe eReader Format)

ISBN 0-415-23387-9 (Print Edition)

Dedication

During the course of this project we have become increasingly aware of the degree to which our interest and enthusiasm for matériel culture have been shaped by our own lives, and by the experiences of close friends and family. It is almost as though the very act of studying modern military archaeology has become an encounter with our lives; our own pasts. No doubt this will also be the case for numerous of our contributors: it clearly is for Jody Joy and Gabi Dolff-Bonekämper, whose contributions are arguably the most intimate of this collection. It is for this reason that we dedicate this volume to those whose experience has contributed in a significant way to shaping our own interest in the past:

For JS, Group Captain Arthur Schofield (1920–2001); for WGJ, PFC W.M. Johnson (1924–) and Capt O.G. Rucker, Jr (1928–); for CMB, Lt Col, USAF, W.R. Beck (1919–), W.R. Beck (1924–) and MM2, USN, W.K. Kolb (1944–).

Without them our enthusiasm for and commitment to this subject would never have materialized, and this book, and other related articles, would not have been written.

JS, WGJ and CMB
July 2001

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Material culture has again become a central concern for anthropology, but now the focus is on the cultural and personal meanings of things as commodities. Objects serve to objectify cultural meanings in individual experience; individual identities are constructed through the consumption of commodities. Material culture definition is - the totality of physical objects made by a people for the satisfaction of their needs; especially : those articles requisite for the sustenance and perpetuation of life.Â : the totality of physical objects made by a people for the satisfaction of their needs especially : those articles requisite for the sustenance and perpetuation of life. Love words? The Center for Material Culture Studies at the University of Delaware helps to integrate and enhance the Universityâ€™s rich resources for the creation, study, and conservation of material culture.Â CMCS aims to promote and support scholarship and innovative pedagogy in the study of material culture. The Center has emerged as a hub for faculty and graduate students in Art, Art Conservation, Art History, CHAD, English, Fashion, Geography, History, Museum Studies, Preservation Studies and WPAMC, among others.