

**Rezension zu:**

**Stefano Anastasio/Lucia Botarelli, *The 1927-1938 Italian Archaeological Expedition to Transjordan in Renato Bartoccini's Archives* (Oxford 2015).**

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‘The 1927-1938 Italian Archaeological Expedition’ is a notable monograph which sheds new light on unpublished sets of archival records. The study is relevant to the history of twentieth-century Italian archaeology<sup>1</sup>, focusing on Renato Bartoccini’s research in the Transjordan region, in particular between 1927 and 1938. Anastasio’s and Botarelli’s work fits into a well-established scholarship on Italian archaeological missions in foreign countries between the nineteenth and early twentieth century<sup>2</sup>, and the history of archaeology during Fascism<sup>3</sup>. However, the pivotal originality of this monograph is to present and outline an entire archive and archaeological mission for the first time.

Born in 1893 in Rome, Renato Bartoccini graduated in ancient numismatics in 1917, while he was joining the Italian Army during the First World War. He started his brilliant career working as an archaeologist in Egypt in 1920 on behalf of Roberto Paribeni (1876-1956). A few years later, he became Inspector of Tripolitania (1923-28), Director of Excavations, Monuments and Fine Arts in Ravenna (1929-33), Director of the Archaeological Museum of Taranto (from 1933) and even Superintendent of Antiquities in Rome (1955-56), where he died in 1963.

Anastasio and Botarelli introduce Bartoccini’s biography and his private archive (pp. 3-5), both surveyed between 2011 and 2013. The aim of the monograph is to ‘provide an overview of the history of expedition’ in the Transjordan region, according to archival records and ‘reports drawn up by Bartoccini’ (5). Before outlining the archaeological mission, the authors provide an introduction on the Amman Citadel, focusing on *The Natural Setting* and *The Occupational Sequence* (9-11), and a general outline on the history of excavations before 1927 (*Research in Amman prior to the Italian Expedition*, 15-19).

*The 1927-1938 Italian Expedition* (25-30) is a central chapter of this book, because it offers a description of Bartoccini’s missions. Nevertheless, in the first section (*The Birth of the Expedition*), Anastasio is quite lacking in contextualising the events in the historical context (the Fascist period), which he only illustrated in three short paragraphs (26). Short sections outline the archaeological missions by year (1927, 1929, 1930, 1933 and 1938) and identify a gap in archival documentation. A substantial collection of pictures (figs. 16-52) enriches this chapter.

Bartoccini excavated targeted areas of the site, as the authors summarize in the following chapters: *The Lower Terrace* (55-56), *The Fortifications* (65-66), *The Roman Temple* (75-77), *The Water Cisterns* (97-98), *The Byzantine Church* (101-102), *The Audience Hall* (109-12), *The Umayyad Palace* (123-25), *The Theatre* (163-64), *The Odeon* (177) and *The Nymphaeum* (183). Bartoccini also performed investigations in the bordering areas (*The Surveys Outside Amman*, 189-92). A collection of Islamic pottery, discovered by Bartoccini, is now kept at the Museo

<sup>1</sup> BARBANERA 1998; DE HAAN ET ALII 2008. See also DE FRANCESCO 2013 on the historical context.

<sup>2</sup> LA ROSA 1986; MAURINA AND SORGE 2010; GRECO 2012: 375-87.

<sup>3</sup> MANACORDA 1982; BRACCO 1983.

Internazionale delle Ceramiche in Faenza (209-10); the authors provide pictures and drawings of vases and pottery fragments (figs. 376-88).

The section *Conclusions* (215-16) offers a short, critical examination of Bartoccini's work. Anastasio and Botarelli stress how Bartoccini did not publish most of his research results; in fact, he 'published some articles during the expedition, [and] the information provided was very concise'. However, the authors highlight Bartoccini's research method, which lastly produced a quite detailed documentation (215).

The *Appendixes* show a beneficial *Synthetic Catalogue of the Perugia Archive* (219-35). Scholars can easily trace and eventually consult all records on Bartoccini's archaeological mission, kept at the Dipartimento di Lettere, Lingue, Letterature e Civiltà Antiche e Moderne (Università di Perugia). The last section of the volume is a substantial *Bibliography* (237-42), also reporting on some relevant articles by Bartoccini himself.

The book also contains approximately 400 high-quality pictures, which could be considered the strong point of this volume. They mostly comprise illustrations, maps, drawings of pottery and archival records (both documents and sketches). It is useful to note how authors sometimes have re-photographed some ancient monuments to document their current preservation state *in situ* (see, for instance, fig. 390 on page 217). Unfortunately, the volume does not have a list of figures and an index of places and names. The latter would have been useful to navigate through the volume and trace key words quickly.

In conclusion, this study is a valuable piece of work for two main reasons. First, it presents new, outstanding documentation, revealing much information on a targeted period of Italian archaeology in foreign countries during Fascism. Second, it shows significant data to reconstruct Renato Bartoccini's activity as an archaeologist operating in the Transjordan region. Undoubtedly, the book is a useful tool for archaeologists and historians who are interested in that specific period and research area. Lastly, it is hoped that further archival investigations can improve our knowledge on the history of Italian archaeology, which needs up-to-date and constant publication of records.

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