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Oxford and Oakville*

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Section: Book review

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Paul Johnson and Martin Millett. 2013. *Archaeological Survey and the City*, Oxford and Oakville.

The motivation of this monographic collection is to stimulate the debate on the use of the archaeological survey for the study of now-abandoned ancient cities as well as to trace a state of the art on this theme which has evolved since 1988, when John Bintliff and Anthony Snodgrass published in *Antiquity* the key paper ‘Mediterranean survey and the city’. In this long time it made a genuine revolution of the archaeological research. As specified in the Introduction, the volume complements other strands of current scholarship which address similar issues, whether through conferences, like those held in Rome in 2007 and 2009 and published in 2012 in the book edited by Frank Vermeulen, G-J. Burgers, Simon Keay and Cristina Corsi (*Urban Landscape Survey in Italy and the Mediterranean*) or in the study of individual sites. In the end of their preface the editors provide a selected bibliography of projects, which represent a sample of current and recent studies focused on ancient cities.

The understanding of the topography of ancient sites without excavating, is one of the results of the discipline next to the possibility to design aware strategies of research, protection and modern territorial planning. In several cases the integrated survey approach allowed a new and more complete topographic interpretation of sites and ancient cities, fostering the comprehension of the motivations that led to their genesis and subsequent development.

This book is the result of a 3-day meeting at the University of Cambridge, where researchers and scholars discussed together the progress, in theoretical and practical aspects, of the archaeological survey. The aim of the papers included in the volume is to explore in depth the relationships between technical and methodological advances in survey archaeology alongside a re-evaluation of the research questions which urban surveys can and should address. In all the contributions emphasis is on the integration of different strands of evidence and issues of archaeological interpretation for exploring now-abandoned ancient cities rather than the technicalities of particular methodologies.

The articles collected here have been organized in several thematic lines,

- Approach and methods
- Surface collection
- Integrating geophysics

On the first topic (Approach and Methods) three papers bring in evidence the issue of the perceptions of ancient urbanism and the influence on archeological survey strategies. The role of geophysics and

of the evolution in archaeological aerial reconnaissance are also considered and discussed. The role of geophysics contributions by the editors of the volume Paul Johnson and Martin Millet focus on the deploying of geographical survey and how it can contribute to understanding of ancient urban traditions. Following these, Geer J. Verhoeven presents a review of the new advances in aerial photography with a reflection about the same main issue of the understanding of ancient urbanism.

The second section (Surface Collection) deal with some problems and prospects in collecting cities in the Mediterranean region (by Todd Whitelaw), the re-evaluation of Philosphiana in Sicily using GIS analysis (Emanuele Vaccaro), the methodological possibilities concerning urban pottery data in the case study of the ancient town of Sagalassos in the South-Western Turkey (by Jeroen Poblome, Rinse Willet, Nalan Firat, Femke Martens and Philip Bes).

The third topic (Integrating Geophysics) focus on the integration of geophysical techniques with other data sets - Aerial Photography, Cartography and Archaeological Digs -, in order to reconstruct ancient cities starting from the contribution of the geophysical archaeological prospections. On this way the section includes several cases of study which shows the potentialities of applied geophysics by means of impressive results and images. These are: a Pharaonic town in Northern Sudan (by Neal Spencer, Sophie Hay), the ancient Roman Town of Carnuntum in Austria (by Wolfgang Neubauer, Michael Doneus, Immo Trinks, Geert Verhoeven, Alois Hinterleitner, Sirri Seren and Klaus Löcker), the Roman Colony of Mariana in France (with a paper by Cristina Corsi and another paper by Lieven Verdonck), the Roman Town of Trea in the ancient Augustan region of Picenum (by Frank Vermeulen, Bozidar Slapsak and Dimitrij Mlekuz), the ancient Latin city of Gabi (by Stephen Kay), the challenges of landscape of the ancient sites of Portus and Isola Sacra near Rome (by Simon Kay, Graeme Earl, Gareth Beale, Nathan Davis, Jessica Ogden and Kristian Strutt, with Fabrizio Felici, Martin Millet, Stephen Kay and Roberta Cascino).

Avoiding a comprehensive description of single articles, which each one should be read and meditated, we can generally say that all the non-destructive techniques exposed can be adopted with potential fruitful results for a wide range of archeological realities and aims: not only for exploring abandoned sites, but also cities with a continuity of life or very complex and well preserved ancient landscapes.

The collection of a large number of datasets, through new or more traditional techniques, as digitization of data and following manipulation through specific programs, gives the opportunity to identify aspects of urban life and industrial development. This is new field of investigation whit impressive developing possibilities.

The application to the discussed survey techniques to multiple sectors of investigation is another way to spread the archaeological knowledge, instead of visual comparison (as statistic method of data fusion and three-dimensional survey data), contributing on the development of new perspective in interpretation of findings.

In the past 30 years the development of the archaeological field survey has brought to the affirmation of the role of non-invasive archaeology in approaching the challenges involved in the investigation of formerly-urban sites. In particular, unquestioned is the contribution of non-destructive prospection methods in the interpretation and understanding of the various sites in terms of their size, overall layout, urban structure and interconnection with suburban areas in the context of their natural setting and broader landscape.

This multi disciplinary and innovative approach freed archaeologist from cataloguing shreds and pottery for a more comprehensive interpretation of everyday life, giving new life to ancient cities and people.