

*Ruth and Asher Ovadiah: Mosaic Pavements in Israel.* Bibliotheca archaeologica, 6. "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, Roma 1987. 276 p. 192 plates. ITL 500.000.

In the preface of the present work it is stated that: "This catalogue of the mosaic pavements found in Israel is a continuation and extension of the indispensable work of the late Michael Avi-Yonah who compiled, classified and catalogued the mosaics known up to 1935. We have continued the record to include later discoveries until 1975, our source material being culled from publications on the subject to which we had access, and some personal inspection." I am not competent to judge what the latter, somewhat enigmatic expression implies, in other words, what has possibly not been included, but at any rate one might ask why no more than "some" personal inspection was carried out. It might be suggested that there are more urgent problems to solve in present-day Israel than the ancient mosaics, and it is indeed of interest to read the preface, which continues: "The work will include coloured mosaic pavements which have been found west of the Jordan. The clear geographical boundaries of the country in the west, south and east limited the area of the study to within these boundaries; as the north boundary we have used the international line of the present political frontier." There are probably different opinions about the clarity of at least some of the boundaries, and at any rate it is interesting in such a work to be reminded of the contemporary problems of the area.

The mosaic pavements of each building or complex are listed with a consecutive number in alphabetical order according to the name of the site (usually the one used in publications, other names or forms of each site being mentioned in the list of sites). The catalogue lists 248 numbered mosaics (+ three addenda) from 132 sites. Map reference, date of excavation, a very concise description, a dating proposal and bibliographical reference is given for each mosaic. As far as the various publications have allowed, information is given of details of the patterns, the colours, size of tesserae and inscriptions. The geometric patterns are represented in very clear drawings (pp. 227-258) and referred to by abbreviations, which is partly responsible for keeping the catalogue to a reasonable size (pp. 11-147). In the "Summary and conclusions" (pp. 147-184) the writers discuss the technique and materials, mosaic art during various periods, composition and subjects, artists and workshops as well as the inscriptions and dating. The bibliography as well as the abundant indices seem thorough, but there are no maps.

As the authors confess in the preface: "The work is unfortunately incomplete in parts, as full details are not always given in the publications, and also because we were not in a position to examine the pavements for

ourselves." Nevertheless, the publication is undoubtedly useful as a concise and easy to use reference work giving an overall view of what has been published about the mosaics in Israel.

*Antero Tammisto*