

Wilkinson, T. J., Peltenburg, E. J., Wilkinson, E. B., & British Association for Near Eastern Archaeology (Eds.). (2016). *Carchemish in context: the Land of Carchemish Project, 2006-2010*. Oxford: Oxbow Books.

Book Review

Few scholars have influenced landscape archaeology in the Near East and beyond as the late Tony Wilkinson have. This work presents one of his last great projects in the Near East and his last edited volume. Typical of Wilkinson, the book combines an interdisciplinary team that integrates archaeological, historical, geographical, and geoarchaeological data to best understand Carchemish in its environmental context and landscape. This book is the type of volume one would expect from a landscape archaeology project led by Wilkinson. Having known about the primary editor's declining health, it is also a testament of his diligence and scholarship in the face of his circumstances. From the onset, it is clear we are lucky to have this volume completed and so thoroughly presented.

The work itself focuses on an archaeological landscape survey for the area around Carchemish to the south of the Syria-Turkey border. While most of the site of Carchemish lies within Turkey, large parts of the outer town are within the Syria side to the south. Perhaps a distant memory now in the region's conflict, but at the time of the survey the improved ties between Syria and Turkey enabled demining in the area and cooperative research to commence on the site that otherwise would have been too sensitive in the past. Understanding the ecological and landscape context of one of the larger Near East sites outside of the alluvium in Mesopotamia was one major goal of the project.

After the introductory chapter, Hawkins and Weeden discuss the enigmatic transition between the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age at Carchemish and the larger regions once dominated by the Hittites. Much of the discussion still leaves a lot of uncertainty between the 12th and 10th centuries BCE, although events surrounding Carchemish's demise were likely to have been overstated in the past. The city may have declined in parts of this period, but it largely withstood the upheavals of the era to continue as an important Iron Age centre. Brown and Smith in Chapter 3 apply settlement, offsite feature, and historical data to chart the transition of Carchemish throughout the Iron Age, as it becomes a strong independent state and then eventually being subsumed by the Neo-Assyrian Empire in the late 8th century BCE.

Chapter 4 presented by Lawrence and Ricci covers the long-term settlement trends, covering the Neolithic to the Islamic periods, in the region and surrounding areas that have been surveyed in past decades. The benefits of remote sensing are made evident, where far more sites can now be located more efficiently than earlier surveys undertaken. Chapter 5 by Wilkinson integrates the surrounding geology and archaeological data related to on and offsite features to recreate the landscape surrounding Carchemish, largely complementing Chapter 4.

Chapter 6 by Eidem looks at the landscape south of Carchemish through a historical-archaeological lens of understanding the types of settlements or sites located there. Chapter 7 discusses some of the results of the Jerablus Tehtani excavations, which help us understand Carchemish when historical data about the region were scarce in the third millennium BCE. Chapter 8 by Eleanor Wilkinson and Andrea Ricci looks at the outer town with a focus on the Iron Age period, although later periods are also discussed. Newson's Chapter 9 looks at the changing nature of the Carchemish landscape from the Hellenistic to the early Islamic period. The final data chapter, Chapter 10 by Cunliffe, looks at the site of Carchemish as it has been affected by increased urban encroachment and looting over the last 60 years. This is a useful chapter in particular, as it does give a sense of what is being or has been lost.

The discussion chapter, Chapter 12 by Tony Wilkinson and Peltenburg, put the previous chapters together to present Carchemish and its landscape in its totality from what has been learned by the survey and landscape project, historical analysis, and geoarchaeology. Professor Wilkinson helps us to better understand the changing nature of the region and how it shifted through key historical events. The Appendix of the book contains descriptions of sites surveyed along with their coordinates, which will be useful for others interested in applying the data from the book for their own work.

There are data that the work could have added to improve this work in my opinion. In particular, microarchaeological and analytical techniques, including diatom studies, pytoliths, residue analysis, and micromorphology all could have been applied to understand the past environment and landscape in greater detail (e.g., see Haslam et al., 2009 for some relevant techniques). Such techniques could help understand both on and offsite contexts. Geophysical prospection on features, particularly in determining outer features of Carchemish, paleochannels, or water features could have been methods to improve our understanding of the landscape and region (e.g., see Afshar et al., 2015). While remote sensing above ground has revolutionized archaeology in the Near East, we sometimes forget below ground prospection could be as or even more revealing for many regions. The relative ease of remote sensing has perhaps made projects overly dependent on these data source with not enough resources of time and money applied to other techniques that could prove very useful.

Ultimately, the work is a testament not just to the late Professor Wilkinson's great efforts but the entire team and set of authors. It represents a true interdisciplinary effort that now has become the standard in understanding past social and social-ecological landscapes. The volume allows us to learn a great deal about a fascinating region, why it developed the way it did in different periods, and helps to make sense of the context in which the site is located. I would highly recommend this volume as a resources to understand not only the region but also as an example of how interdisciplinary efforts can be put together to improve archaeological understanding.

References

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