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Turco-Italian Archaeological
Expedition at Karkamış Höyük



KARKEMISH AND ITS REGIONAL CONTEXT: CELEBRATING 15 SEASONS ON THE FIELD

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ABSTRACTS

Iron Age Clay Figurines from Karkemish and the Northern Levant

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The paper presents the research results on the doctoral study of Iron age coroplastic assemblages from Karkemish and the Northern Levant on the basis of new data collected by the joint Turco-Italian Expedition at Karkemish (2011-2015 campaigns) and the author's post-doctoral research on the wider region. The coroplastic production under consideration is a uniform corpus composed by two main subjects: the Handmade Syrian Horse and Riders (HSHRs) and the Syrian Pillar Figurines (SPFs). These figurines are part of the Middle Euphrates coroplastic tradition, a territory in which Karkemish seems to have been the main coroplastic productive center. Several aspects of these figurines are dealt with in the paper, from the definition of types to the manufacturing techniques, from the contextual to the iconographic analysis. Costumes, gestures, and subjects portrayed in the coroplastic repertoire represent values and social roles at Karkemish under the Neo-Assyrian domination. Some closing remarks are then offered on the different micro-regional traditions in the wider region: the Middle Euphrates Valley, the Amuq Valley, the Northern Phoenician coast, the Aleppo Plateau, the Upper Orontes Valley, and the Khabur Basin. The heterogeneity of these traditions reflects the multi-cultural character of the Syro-Anatolian region in this period.

Preliminary Observations on the Stone Vessels from Iron Age Karkemish

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The data presented in this paper presents the many stone artifacts recovered during the archaeological investigations conducted at Karkemish by the Turco-Italian Expedition. The stone objects recovered during the excavation campaigns from 2011 to 2021 are more than 1200, coming from both surface collections and stratified contexts, the latter dating from the Late Bronze age down to the Islamic period. They have been divided into five macro-categories: stone tools, stone weapons, textile tools, stone vessels, other. In this paper, a special focus is placed on the Karkemish stone vessels from the Iron Age. After briefly defining the chronological framework, pivotal aspects of vessel production are investigated. Raw materials and their provenance are discussed first. Then, stone vessel typologies are presented. The classification system follows morphological criteria. However, some problems must be highlighted:



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limited comparative studies on stone artifacts, the lack of a standardized terminology, the multifunctionality of these objects, their long period of re-use, and their relatively small numbers makes it difficult to define their chronological and typological seriation. Through comparisons with previous studies and materials from different sites, an attempt is made to present a clear classification system of the Karkemish stone vessels through the Iron age. Finally, a distribution analysis is carried out to investigate the consumption of stone vessels at Karkemish.

Karkemish and the Settlement Patterns in the Middle Euphrates Valley during the Iron Age IV (530-330 BCE)

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The Iron Age IV (530-330 BCE) represents a period of profound changes at the site, both as regards the political role of Karkemish and its regional context. Our understanding of the settlement patterns and of the distribution of material culture during IA IV outside of Iran is still very partial and poses severe archaeological as well as socio-political problems. This is especially true in regard to the situation in the Euphrates Valley area. This paper considers the analysis of settlement patterns, ceramic artefacts and other findings in an attempt to define the anthropic landscape in this peripheral area of the Achaemenid empire and to make an assessment of the type of control that the central administration may have exerted, mainly because the imperial imprint is not easily traceable, as we see a marked regionalization of the material culture.

Yesemek Sculpture Workshop and Taşlıgeçit Höyük in the Light of the Recent Excavations

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During the excavations carried out in recent years by Gaziantep Museum and Gaziantep University at the Yesemek Hittite Sculpture Workshop and at Taşlıgeçit Höyük located in the İslahiye district of Gaziantep, new and significant findings have been reached in terms of the Hittite and political history of the region. While the studies carried out at Yesemek, which is the largest and oldest known sculpture workshop of the Ancient Near East and where hundreds of sculptural works and architectural elements were produced, and its immediate surroundings date it to the later Hittite Imperial Age, the ruins of a large unfinished top-hill settlement discovered near the workshop indicate the purpose of the latter's establishment. The ceramic materials and gabbro hammers unearthed during the excavations carried out in the workshop and in the top-hill settlement revealed that the workshop should probably be dated to the end of the 13th century BCE and the beginning of the 12th century BCE, and new knowledge was obtained about the production techniques and stages of the workshop. The administrative center managing the workshop and



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top-hill settlement building site - where probably hundreds of stonemasons and workers worked - must have been Taşlıgeçit Höyüğü, approximately 3 km northwest of the workshop. The findings within the LB II settlement built outside the city wall, identified in the rescue excavations carried out since 2021, show strong connections with Yesemek.

A Shared Cultural Network: Ceramic Imports at Karkemish in the Classical Period

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Around the end of the 3rd century BCE, Seleucus Nicator settled a new colony named Europos on the previous ruins of the ancient site of Karkemish. Nowadays placed on the southern border of Turkey on the west bank of the Euphrates, it was located in the middle of a prosperous trade area. Influences from East and West crossed here and the material culture reflects these encounters. The pottery assemblages from the Hellenistic and Roman layers are highly characteristic and reveal that the city was fully part of this network of exchanges and influences.

No one used to fill Kubaba's granary: Public Storage Strategies at Karkemish after the Fall of the Hittite Empire

Gabriele Giacosa
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Excavations carried out at Karkemish in Area S (2015-2019) provided an insight on the monumental construction policy undertaken by the rulers of the city between the fall of the Hittite Empire in the early 12th century BCE and the re-building program of Katuwa at the end of the 10th century BCE. A large, above-ground storage structure was uncovered at the western margin of the Lower Palace Area, unparalleled for features and size at the site and neighbouring settlements. The paper aims at addressing the architectural and economic value of the building, placing it in its historical context and underlining the connection with models from the earlier Hittite world. This evidence is an additional element to confirm that Karkemish not only experienced limited change at the very beginning of the Iron age (due to the lack of any destruction at the site) but could still afford large building programs within the core of the city.



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On the Hurrian Element at Karkemish during the Late Bronze Age

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During the Late Bronze age, Karkemish was subjected to the two main political powers of that period, first to the Kingdom of Mittani and then to the Kingdom of Hatti. It is assumed that during the period of the Mittanian hegemony there was a strong process of hurritization in the area of Karkemish, but unfortunately no direct documentation has come down to us from this phase of the city's history. However, the sources of the following phase of Hittite domination are at our disposal, in order to assess the actual presence of Hurrian elements at Karkemish. In addition to the onomastic data, in my paper I explore other possible linguistic as well as cultural evidence that can be linked to the Hurrian element.

Magnetometric Survey in the Outer Town of Karkemish

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In 2019, the Turco-Italian Expedition conducted a non-invasive mapping of the buried archaeological deposits at Karkemish (Gaziantep, Turkey). The geophysical survey was conducted using an optically pumped potassium magnetometer-gradiometer, which yielded substantial evidence hinting at various structures such as buildings and potential graves. These findings, integrated with Woolley's data, allowed for a reconfiguration of the Outer Town's layout and corroborated information regarding the Neo-Assyrian city wall. Additionally, the results find support from the features visible on the 1960s CORONA images. Lastly, a smaller grid survey conducted around the Halaf Yunus Kilns area revealed elevated magnetic values, possibly associated with furnaces or production remnants. This discovery further substantiates the proposed location of Woolley's 1913 soundings, which uncovered circular kilns and furnaces constructed on pebble foundations.

Portraits of Forgotten Kingdoms: Investigating Small-Scale State Formation and Imperial Interaction in Southeastern Turkey

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The development of a refined, and widely accepted, chronological and cultural sequence has eluded the study of the Iron Age in Southeastern Anatolia and the Northern Levant, despite more than a century of archaeological exploration and research. The effort has been complicated by methodological issues, in particular, with the chronological implications of the rich art historical record preserved on the citadels of the Neo-Hittite royal cities that have been excavated. The renewed investigations at Karkemish and Tayinat (ancient Kunulua), capital of the Neo-Hittite Kingdom of Palastin/Walastin, have resulted in tightly constructed stratigraphic and chronological cultural sequences, or 'local histories', for this period.



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The refined Tayinat (or Amuq) sequence indicates a number of culturally and historically significant transitions, including the transition from the Iron I to the Iron II (ca. 900 BCE), and the possibility of close comparisons with the Karkemish sequence offers the prospect of forging a consensus regarding the cultural and chronological periodization of the broader Iron Age in the region.

The forthcoming “Corpus of Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions. Volume III Inscriptions of the Hittite Empire and New Inscriptions of the Iron Age”

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The third volume of David Hawkins' *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions*, edited by Junko Taniguchi, is set to appear in the next few months with DeGruyter. The main focus of this volume is on the inscriptions of the Hittite Empire period, as a follow-up to volumes I and II which dealt with the Inscriptions of the Iron Age. However, in the 25 years since the closure of that manuscript numerous new Iron Age inscriptions have also appeared (as the new Karkemish material), which are also mostly included in this volume. Advances in the reading and understanding of the Hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions, in large part enabled by the publication of all Iron Age inscriptions up to that point in one place, mean that many of the transliterations published in Vols I-II are out-of-date. Two sections thus also contain revised transliterations and translations, which take account of these new developments, as well as Addenda and Corrigenda. There is also a Signary, which presents the evidence for the readings of the signs found in the Inscriptions, and a Glossary, as well as 114 plates with illustrations.

The Diachronic Development of Urban Complexity at Sirkeli Höyük from the Middle Bronze to the Iron Age

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The paper provides an overview of the urban development of Sirkeli Höyük in Plain Cilicia from the Middle Bronze to the Early Iron age through the fine-tuned stratigraphical sequence of the site connected to regional chronology. The site, located 40 km east of the modern city of Adana, demonstrates the development of an urban settlement during this time span, illustrating both the flourishing town around 1950 BCE, its alterations around 1550, 1500 and 1400-1350 BCE, its decline during the crisis at the end of the Bronze Age, and its recovery from the 10th century BCE onwards until its new urban heyday in the 8th century BCE. Sirkeli Höyük was connected to the main land routes from Syria to Central Anatolia and via the Ceyhan River to the Mediterranean coast and the maritime trade to Cyprus and the Aegean. These trade connections left their traces in the material found at the excavations. Sirkeli Höyük developed during



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the Iron Age into a complex urban structure with citadel, upper and lower town, suburb and extramural workshops. Although less investigated, it has now become evident that the site comprised already in the Middle Bronze age a citadel and a lower town on both sites of the Ceyhan River together with possible river harbors. In contrast, Late Bronze Age levels were confined mainly to the citadel, showing a diachronic development of the monumental architecture. Chronological results rely on stratigraphy and pottery as key elements that are supported by sequential models obtained from C14-samples. In addition, we attempted to compare the chronological sequence with historical events aiming to reconstruct the possible cultural and political connections through changes in architecture, urban layout and materials.

Game or Food? The Role of Hunting Practices at Karkemish throughout its History

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Eleonora Serrone
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The systematic zooarchaeological study, conducted on approximately 10,000 osteological fragments dating from the Late Bronze to Iron IV, illuminates the intricate relationship between humans and animals at Karkemish. In particular, wild animals seem to have played a very different role than domestic animals, which predominate in all chronological periods. Throughout its history, Karkemish has relied heavily on pastoralism, emphasizing the use of animals for both immediate needs, such as meat, and long-term benefits, such as milk, wool, and labour. Domesticated species, particularly sheep, goats, cattle, and equids, dominated the livestock economy. The transition from the Late Bronze to the Iron age marked significant shifts in animal composition, reflecting wider political and social transformations. Horses emerged as status symbols and were used in warfare, while cats and camelids made their presence felt. Hunting practices, particularly of gazelles, increased, possibly indicating aristocratic hunting as a cultural pastime. Wild species, although always scarce, became more important towards the end of the Iron age. Fallow deer, gazelles, hares, and other wildlife appeared in increasing numbers, possibly serving both utilitarian and symbolic roles within the community. Exotic animals like lions and elephants added a layer of intrigue to the Karkemish narrative, hinting at the site's cultural diversity and cosmopolitan influences.

The Cuneiform Texts from Karkemish: Overview and Assessment

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A number of cuneiform texts of various genres from the Middle Bronze and Iron ages were found at Karkemish by the British and the Turco-Italian expeditions. It is time to make a comprehensive assessment of this epigraphic evidence, highlighting how it has contributed to our knowledge of Karkemish and its history. An overview of these texts – some published, others still unpublished – is offered, and the information they provide is discussed and evaluated.



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The Karkemish Project: Changing Materialities and Contexts

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A multi-year strategy of excavation and research on an archaeological site necessarily leads to delineate not only the occupational history of the urban center but also to grasp its structuring and functional development in diachrony, albeit with significant variations in its knowledge due to the stratigraphic accessibility of the different periods attested and also to the main objectives set for the excavation (thus privileging the exploration of one or more periods in respect of others). At Karkemish, the British excavations between 1878 and 1920 obtained significant exposures of monuments attributed to the Iron Age, which have been subsequently widely cited in the literature, but which today – following the new investigations begun in 2011 and still ongoing by the Turco-Italian Expedition by the Universities of Bologna, Istanbul and Gaziantep (with the support also of the Italian Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of the University and Research, as well as of the Sanko Holding) – must be profoundly revised in their chronology and in their functional understanding. In addition to these precisions, we have started a systematic investigation both topographical (aiming at exploring different functional sectors of the city) and chronological (with many operations aimed at reconstructing the full sequence of occupation there). Geophysics and remote sensing investigations have greatly expanded our understanding of the structure of the outer town. An articulated program of bioarchaeology (anthropology, zooarchaeology and paleobotany) has now reached a stage in which we do get an integrated picture of how life went on over three millennia at this urban center on the Euphrates, while archaeometrical analyses provide insights into the materiality and organization of ancient productions. Further, our program of public archaeology is an ongoing one, based on a dynamic approach of continuous production of new contents for visitors.

The Iron Age Fortification System along the Northern Side of Karkemish in Its Regional Context

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The excavations carried out between 2016 and 2019 in area P investigated anew the area of the “North-Western Fort” previously excavated by the British Museum Expedition at the beginning of the 20th century under the direction of C. L. Woolley. The renewed excavations brought to light part of the Northern Fortification system of the city, of which five structural phases from the Late Bronze II to the Iron II have been detected. The architectural and structural analysis of the fortification systems in the Northern and Southern Levant, in comparison with the fortifications revealed at Karkemish, provide an overview of the main characteristics of these defensive systems at the beginning of the 1st millennium BCE.



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Defining the Borders of a Kingdom. Inscriptions from the Countryside of Karkemish

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In this paper, the distribution of published and unpublished inscriptions that can be associated with the Late Hittite kingdom of Karkemish - on the basis of various internal common features and of their provenance taking into account the geographical limits which can be inferred for that kingdom after the end of the Hittite Empire - is discussed.

Early Bronze Age Karkemish in Context: Stratigraphy, Chronology, and Interregional Connections

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University of Milan

The Early Bronze age occupation at Karkemish has been extensively debated in archaeological literature and the main narrative was based on a scarce amount of data coming from scattered soundings carried underneath later Bronze and Iron age buildings. The recent excavation of a deep sounding on the Acropolis has revealed a long and seamless sequence of architectural phases spanning the entire 3rd millennium BCE. This evidence allows for a novel reconstruction of the Early Bronze age occupational history of the site, as well as for an evaluation of the Karkemish regional and interregional connections based on the analysis of the material culture correlates.

Unfolding the past. Iron Age mortuary practices at Karkemish

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Fifteen campaigns of excavation at Karkemish have produced a number of cremation urns and inhumation graves dating to the Iron II, III, and IV periods. These new discoveries have helped to better understand the complexity of the mortuary practices that accompanied the burial of the dead at the site. What is present in the archaeological context is the end result of ritualistic processes, involving the treatment of the dead and ending with the burial of the cremation urn. Several of these processes are unknown, as they leave no detectable traces in the archaeological context. During the Iron II and III periods, the recovered cremation urns revealed that individuals of various ages were being cremated and then interred within the urns. The arrangements of the bones, the selection of bone elements, and the burial objects all indicate variations in the treatment of the dead. These variations might be related to differences in ideology in



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relation to age and sex, along with possible social status. During the Iron IV period, there was a shift to inhumation graves at Karkemish. The burials of the Achaemenid period exhibit elaborate burial goods, especially observed for adolescent females.

Ceramic assemblages of the Middle Bronze and Iron Age at Zincirli and their relationships with the Karkemish region

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This paper presents a selection of the material culture from the Middle Bronze II and Iron II and III at Zincirli Höyük in relationships with the area of Karkemish and the Euphrates region. Recent excavations at Zincirli carried out by the Chicago-Tübingen Expedition have revealed new outstanding sets of data which allow to establish good chronological parallels in a comparative regional framework. The new assemblage from well preserved Middle Bronze II contexts is especially relevant, since it revealed a complex pottery inventory to be dated to the mid-17th century BCE, showing elements of an entangled network and long-distance trade stretching from central Anatolia to the Euphrates and to the eastern Mediterranean. After a long gap with very discontinuous data, the material culture of Zincirli shows in Iron II and III a strong continuity with North Syria and the 'Amuq, with an increasing influence of Assyrian shapes and types. After the annexation of the kingdom of Sam'al into the Assyrian empire in the second half of the 8th century BCE, some specific elements seem to point at the area of Karkemish and the Euphrates as the region from where such influences were elaborated and spread out towards the West.

From Topographic Surveying to the WebGIS: The Management of Spatial Data at Karkemish

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Francesca Cavaliere

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Since the first campaign in 2011 at Karkemish, we have always considered of crucial importance to be able to locate, accurately, within the archaeological site the various finds, whether manufactures, ecofacts, contexts or structures. Right from the start, thanks to a team of topographers and engineers, a series of fixed points (polygonal) was created around the excavation areas, expanded and checked year by year also through GNSS. This starting point of 12 years ago has now allowed us to have a truly substantial amount of data with a very high rate of accuracy that allowed us to begin the creation of a webGIS with relative ease.

Information gathering and excavation documentation followed a parallel path always with the aim of creating an integrated system between geometric/spatial data and tabular data. The introduction of the digital excavation diary with various associated digital tables for different categories made it possible to



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speed up the process of creating an integrated GIS and, above all, facilitated the interactive search of all excavation data thanks to an online, public data-base. Through this integrated system, it is possible to digitally recreate the archaeological excavation in 2D (for now, but Jacopo Monastero has recently made significant progress on 3D visualization), with the possibility of breaking down each SU and investigating the materials contained in each one.

Tracing the settlement history of a Middle Euphrates city in the early 1st millennium BCE: integrating absolute dates, pottery sequences and historical sources

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Fifteen campaigns of excavations at Karkemish provided a wealth of fine-tuned data to reconstruct the complex history of the city during the Iron I-III periods (1175-530 BCE). The remarkable settlement continuity documented in numerous areas of the site allowed to obtain detailed pottery sequences and a rich corpus of radiocarbon dates stretching the entire period. This data coupled with the numerous historical sources available offers an unprecedented opportunity to better understand the history of the city during the Iron Age period. Similar approaches recently applied at neighbouring sites like Tell Tayinat, represent an opportunity to frame the evidence from Karkemish in the wider regional scenario. By integrating radiocarbon determinations and pottery assemblages from the well-stratified and uninterrupted sequences of areas C, G and S with the available historical dates for the Iron age, this paper aims to trace a new reconstruction of Iron age chronology at Karkemish in the context of the urban trajectories of the Northern Levant and the Middle Euphrates.