

BOOK REVIEW

A Review of Archaeology in the 'Land of Tells and Ruins'. A History of Excavations in the Holy Land Inspired by the Photographs and Accounts of Leo Boer

Edited by Bart Wagemakers, Oxford: Oxbow Books, 264 pages, 2014, ISBN: 9781782972457

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This is a splendid snapshot of the history of archaeology in what has become present-day Israel and Palestine. It is a snapshot in more than one sense. At its core is the publication of an archive of photographs taken by the late Leo Boer, together with a detailed account of his travels as a young man in the area, when he was a student at the Ecole Biblique et Archaeologie Francaise de Jerusalem between 1953 and 1954.

Boer's archive records an archaeological (and political) world that has ceased to exist. This is part of the attraction of this book, but Bart Wagemakers and his colleagues have used the small temporal window of the mid 1950s to review the history of archaeology in this region both before and after Leo Boer's interaction with it. What follows is a really engaging intersection between his photographs and the records of his travels and the historiography of Biblical archaeology.

Various specialists discuss that historiography in terms of sites that Boer himself visited – many of which such

as Jerusalem, Megiddo, Jericho, Caesarea and Khirbet Qumran – occupy the pantheon of significant archaeological sites in the region. All authors acknowledge the dramatic changes that have affected the socio-politics of the archaeology of this most contested of places.

This is a handsome, at times beautiful book. The photographs (both old and new) do much more than document place and space in time, a world that spoke volumes to a young Catholic priest. There are casual images of people at work, of visitors, of landscape and of the towns and villages through which Boer and his colleagues of the Ecole Biblique passed. All evoke a world that has been changed by the activities of archaeologists as well as by politicians. This is a book about the future as well as the past.

Wagemakers and his expert collaborators have done Leo Boer proud. The production values of this book are high, matching the quality of the text and photographs. I found it engrossing.

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