

Book Review

Iman Jacob Wilkens. *Where Troy Once Stood*, revised and expanded edition

Gopher Publishers, 2005; 428 pages

Reviewed by Robert R. Prechter

The medieval historian Geoffrey of Monmouth recorded that Brutus, a great-grandson of the Trojan warrior Aeneas, founded London and named Britain after himself. An epic poem of twelve books titled *Albions England*, published from 1586 to 1596 under the name William Warner, celebrated English history dating from the early times of the gods to the Trojan War to England's monarchs from Brutus to Elizabeth. I had long presumed that the history connecting England to Trojans and their descendants was mythological.

Elizabethan literary works that refer to London as *Troynovant*, meaning New Troy, or England as Brutus's land include *The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England*, a Shakespeare-precursor play (composed 1563-1573 and published anonymously in 1591); *No-body and Some-body. With the true Chronicle Historie of Elydure* (composed in the 1570s and published anonymously in 1606); *A Posie of Gilloflowers* by Humphrey Gifford (1580); *Truth's Complaint Over England* by Thomas Lodge (1584); *The Second Tome of the Travailes and adventures of Don Simonides* by Barnabe Riche (1584); *A Farewell. Entitled to the famous and fortunate Generalls of our English forces* by George Peele (1589); *Descensus Astraeae* by George Peele (1591); *Sir Francis Drake* by Charles Fitzgeoffrey (1596); and *Alba* by Robert Tofte (1598).

My book *Oxford's Voices* proposes that the Earl of Oxford wrote six of the ten above-cited poetic and dramatic works: *The Troublesome Raigne of John*,

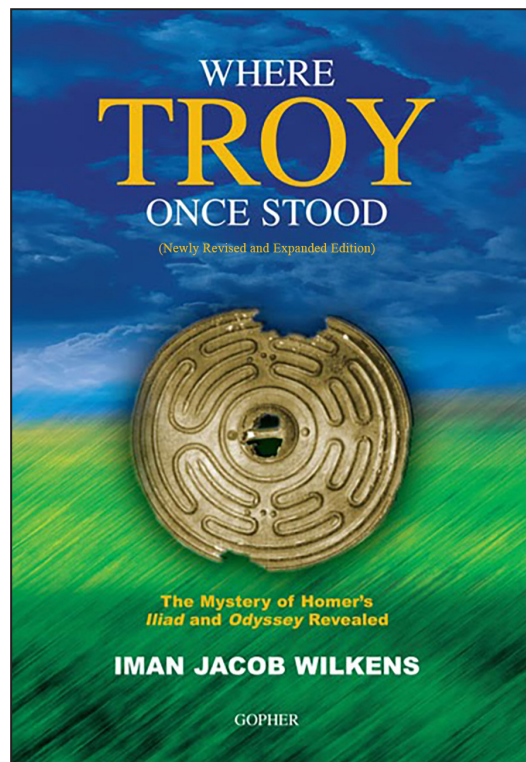
No-body and Some-body, *Truth's Complaint Over England*, *Albions England*, *A Farewell* and *Descensus Astraeae*. If so, Oxford was among those who accepted, or at least entertained, the idea that London was founded by a descendant of Trojans. Oxfordians have demonstrated that "Shakespeare" was right about everything Stratfordians declared was erroneous in the canon. Were Geoffrey, Oxford and others right about Troy's link to England?

Iman Wilkens's *Where Troy Once Stood* reconsiders the site of the Trojan War. According to his research, it was fought not on a plain in northwest Turkey across the Aegean Sea from Greece but rather in an area of England now known as the Fenlands, which millennia ago was a salt-water bay. The bay was fed by ten modest rivers, all whose modern names contain remnants of the ancient names cited in Homer's *The Iliad*. Wilkens places the site of the city of Troy

on the Gog Magog Hills several miles southeast of modern-day Cambridge. In the battle zone toward the northeast are remnants of defensive dykes akin to those mentioned in *The Iliad*, and numerous bronze-age artifacts of war have been unearthed in the area. Nothing comparable has been found at the purported site in Turkey. According to Wilkens, none of Homer's descriptions of the weather, the foliage, the look of the people, the color of the sea, and the hot and cold springs, fit Turkey, whereas all of them fit England.

Wilkens challenges the idea that the Trojans fought Greeks because of a purloined queen. Rather, seafaring Celts with kingdoms on the shores of continental

Europe banded together to break England's tin cartel, which controlled the tin mines in Cornwall. Tin is a metal indispensable to making bronze, no less important to the Bronze Age than crude oil is to us today. The



tin mines of Brittany—a region that was adjacent to Cornwall in the time of Pangaea, before continental drift—had become exhausted by 1200 BCE, so the continent was suffering a supply crisis. Diplomacy failed to reach a peaceful solution, making Troy, the capital of the Troad, now called England, a target of conquest, igniting the Trojan War. Over ensuing centuries, tin remained a major English commodity to the extent that the Earl of Oxford spent years trying to convince Queen Elizabeth to grant him a monopoly on the tin trade. Today, eastern Asia is the main source of tin.

When the Trojan war ended around 1185 BCE, Troy was ruined. Ovid reported about the old site a millennium later, “Now there are fields where Troy once stood” (*Heroides*, 1,1,53). Brutus, according to legend, returned to England to establish a new capital, this one similarly strategically situated on a river that led to the sea: the Thames.

According to Wilkens, survivors scattered, many settling in Greece. When Trojans and Achaeans and their descendants sailed to Greece, they brought their panoply of gods with them and named towns after their homelands’ cities, much as we find place names imported from England in North America today, such as Boston, Manchester, Salisbury, Oxford, Lancaster, Bristol, Richmond, New York and New Jersey. Homer reported the correct place names on the English isle from Celtic times; they were simply transported to towns in and around Greece centuries later, replacing the very different names used in the area during the time the Trojan War was fought. Oral transmission of the events at Troy, perhaps set to verse for easy memorization, became the poetry of Homer, who recorded the epic events in Ionian Greek.

Where Troy Once Stood is so well-researched and convincing that it garners many five-star reviews. Naturally, I wondered if orthodoxy had crafted a pithy response to Wilkens’s thesis, which, after all, has been around since 1990, when the first edition of his book came out. As far as I can tell, after a period of thirty-six years, aside from scattershot objections to this or that claim by Wilkens, no substantive rebuttal has appeared, either to the standard story’s numerous problems or to Wilkens’s extensive geographical analysis. Instead, the current Wikipedia page on the book reports the same

kind of response (and lack thereof) generated by J. T. Looney’s book on Shakespeare:

...*Where Troy Once Stood* was largely ignored by academics. Isolated exceptions were a casual dismissal by A. M. Snodgrass and gentle mockery by Maurizio Bettini. Paul Millett, in a 2001 review of the *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World*, remarked that the geographers’ decision to place Troy in northern Turkey rather than East Anglia was “presumably resolved without much difficulty.” (Wikipedia: *Where Troy Once Stood*)

Wilkens devotes half his book to explaining *The Odyssey*, whose actions, he shows, could not have taken place in the Mediterranean Sea, where few of the distances and land descriptions match. He reconstructs Odysseus’s journey from the English Channel to various shores, inlets and islands of the Atlantic Ocean. Wilkens explains that much of the text is designed to be a covert guide to navigating the Atlantic by landmarks and constellations. I am too poorly versed in astronomy and mythology to render an opinion on this portion of the book.

Wilkens’s analysis of *The Iliad* resonates as no less brilliant a reframing of prior assumption than J. T. Looney’s “*Shakespeare*” *Identified* was seventy years earlier. I do not know if his thesis is *true*, but it is well researched and well argued. If you decide to obtain a copy, make sure to buy the revised edition, not a used copy of the first edition, to which the author added much compelling material.

Open Library provides a good synopsis of the book: https://openlibrary.org/works/OL15709251W/Where_Troy_Once_Stood.

Robert Prechter has authored dozens of Oxfordian papers, articles and speeches. His online bookset, Oxford’s Voices (oxfordsvoces.com), explores Elizabethan-era authorship. A bio is available at robertprechter.com.

