Sophia Schliemann, Wife of Heinrich Schliemann, Wearing Pieces from “Priam’s Treasure”
The Role of Archaeology in Determining the Historicity of Homer’s *Iliad*

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Troy, the famous city of Homer’s *Iliad*, is a key site in Greek and Roman mythology, but also the subject of many modern scholarly debates. These debates range from whether the siege of Troy even occurred, whether the Achaeans and Trojans actually existed, whether Hisarlık is truly the location of ancient Troy, to even which city stratum of Hisarlık is the Troy of Homer’s epic poem. For several years scholars believed that Troy was only a figment of Homer’s imagination, and literary critics, while acknowledging the *Iliad*’s poetic genius, marked it as a work of pure fiction of questionable origins. But even now, after Heinrich Schliemann began his quest to prove Troy’s existence, archaeologists are still trying to answer the mysteries of Troy. Troy remains shrouded in the mists of the past and in archaeological blunders, which have further complicated positive identification of the historic city of Troy. Even though literary criticism has led scholars to question the authenticity of Homer's *Iliad*, archaeological excavations at Hisarlık, particularly those initiated by Schliemann have ultimately proven the book’s historicity; however, while these excavations have
proved the general historic truth of the *Iliad*, the Troy of Homer's time has yet to be positively identified.

Literary criticism of the *Iliad* began, in depth, during the eighteenth century. However, during that time, scholars concerned themselves more with “the literary aspect of the poems and less with the historical and archaeological” aspects of the poem.¹ Scholars studied Homer’s works only as literature, as a sort of “gentleman’s hobby,” and the poems were never taken as anything more than fiction. This opinion originated from how the *Iliad* was composed. Scholars knew that Greeks had handed the epic down as an oral tradition, and later generations began writing it down. Unfortunately, the versions the Greeks produced of these epics were in “an extremely haphazard way.”² Even as singers compiled the poems into a written work, having a manuscript would not have necessarily been useful; many different forms and versions of the poem existed, so writing them down would have actually been very impractical. Many of these different versions came from *rhapsodes*, professional Greek performers, who actually wrote their own additions to the epic. “Another source of divergent texts was the school; two anecdotes about Alcibiades preserved by Plutarch…mention the schoolmaster who took his pupils through Homer ‘without book,’ and the even more dangerous type of pedagogue who had a text of Homer revised by

himself.” There were even societies that claimed to “recite Homer’s poems ἐκ διαδοχῆς (‘by right of succession’).”

De Camp writes:

A seventeenth-century French Homerist, the Abbe d’Aubignac theorized that there had not been any Iliad or Odyssey until the time of Peisistratos, a tyrannos or dictator of Athens in [the sixth century B.C.].…According to Cicero…and later writers, Peisistratos gathered a group of poets to edit this mass of material, choosing certain lays [poems or stanzas] and combining them to make the two [modern] Homeric poems.

But even later, during the reign of Ptolemy II, “many texts of Homer which had been collected…from all over the Greek world showed remarkable divergences, not only in the wording of individual lines but in the number of lines devoted to various episodes.” Given the creative liberties rhapsodes took with the poems, it is no wonder that so many versions existed; thus the fact that some eighteenth and nineteenth century scholars believed the Iliad and the Odyssey were written by two separate authors is not surprising. Even some two hundred years after Peisistratos, ancient scholars were still sorting through divergent texts.

But the questionable origins of the Iliad, while the main reason for scholars’ doubt, were not the only reason. Scholars also found that the Greeks

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3 Davison, 218-219.
5 Davison, 219.
6 Sprague L. de Camp and Catherine Crook de Camp, Ancient Ruins and Archaeology (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964), 72.
7 Ibid., 222.
8 Ibid., 72.
portrayed in the *Iliad* did not synchronize with their own view of classical Greek culture:

Those myths, so the scholars believed, represented the childish stage of Hellenic culture; far more appealing was the image of Classical Athens, an elegant community of philosophers, orators, and art lovers – which was...the way that the aristocrats and intellectuals of Europe liked to think of themselves. The violence, the plunder, and the greed of the Homeric heroes impressed the conservative classical scholars as disturbingly ‘un-Greek.’ So the Trojan War of the *Iliad* was dismissed as a fable, having little basis in fact.  

This situation is a classic example of scholars who let their own worldview inhibit their research. If Greek culture did not glorify oratory skills and violence both, then the *Iliad*, which combines the two, would never have been popular enough for generations to continually repeat and pass the epic down through time. While the purpose of literary criticism was not to prove historical validity of the text, literary criticism inadvertently led to the discrediting of the *Iliad* as anything more than poetic fiction.

While literary criticism changed the way scholars viewed the *Iliad*, archaeology took a different approach for a different goal: proving the existence of Troy as a real place. Archaeology, like literary criticism, began as a gentleman’s pastime, as a respectable way to earn money. But while archaeology was motivated by the “desire to corroborate literary works... [and] the rise of neoclassicism...[it] was evolving from a nobleman’s hobby into a science.”  


Troy and prove that both Trojans and Achaeans actually existed. Proof of the Achaeans’ existence comes from modern scholarship and discoveries in Hittite cities. Professor Calvert Watkins of Harvard hypothesized that letters found at “Bogazköy, the ancient Hittite capital near modern Ankara…contained instructions for a cult ritual, accompanied by epic verses to be chanted by a choir. In one of the verses…the choir sang, ‘When they came from steep Wilusa,’ a phrase uncannily similar to steep Ilios.” While this connection between Hittite epic poetry of the sixteenth century B.C. to the Greek epic poem of eighth century B.C. is tenuous, more concrete evidence does exist. Denys Page, a classical scholar from Cambridge in the mid twentieth century, points to the repeated mention of Achaea as a sign not only of Achaea’s existence, but as a sign of prominence and high esteem among the Hittite emperors. There is also evidence of the Achaeans’ existence from ancient Egypt. In the annals of Tuthmosis III, who was pharaoh in the fifteenth century B.C., there are records of a gift he received from the ruler of Danaya, and:

Another inscription, from a statue base in the temple of Amenophis III (who ruled 1390-1352) mentions a country, Danaya, with place names, including Mycenae, Thebes, Messene, Nauplia, Kythera, Elis and probably Amyklai…Homer indiscriminately calls the Greeks Achaioi (Achaeans) and Danaoi…a term used already in the Bronze Age.

However, despite finding proof of the existence of the Achaeans, scholars have yet to find definitive proof of Troy or the Trojan people’s existence within Hittite

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11 Silberman, 47.
literature. Instead, all that is known about Troy has come from the excavation of the city.

For most of the nineteenth century, scholars could not agree on the location of Troy, for several reasons. Most ancient sources, such as Herodotus and Xenophon, “believed that Troy lay under the Greek and Roman city of Ilion, or Ilium,” and the majority of classical world agreed; Alexander the Great made offerings to “Trojan Athena, and dedicated his full armor in the temple” there; Julius and Augustus Caesar, who traced their genealogy to the Trojan prince Aeneas, both patronized the town, even rebuilding it after a siege, naming it Ilium Novum (New Ilium).\(^1\) Only one dissenting source seems to exist: Strabo. Strabo, a geographer during the time of Augustus, followed Demetrius of Scepsis, an earlier geographer “from the town of Scepsis in the Troad who had lived around 180 B.C.,” who apparently had “pretensions of being the home of Aeneas and therefore coveted lucrative Roman patronage,” writing that Homer’s Troy “lay ‘some thirty stades higher up to the east.’”\(^2\) This single dissenting account, which Strabo repeated, became the epicenter of arguments and hypotheses among modern scholars.

In the quest to prove the existence of a historical Troy, Jean-Baptiste Chevalier was the first to hypothesize that Troy was located at modern day Pinarbasi, which is about nine miles from the Hellespont in Asia Minor. Marie Gabriel Florent August, Comte de Choiseul-Gouffier, the French ambassador to

\(^{14}\) Allen, 38-40.
\(^{15}\) Ibid., 40.
the Sublime Porte in 1784, appointed Chevalier as his personal secretary, to carry out investigations of ancient sites on the ambassador’s behalf. Chevalier’s first investigation centered on the hot and cold springs Homer placed beside the gates of Troy. Chevalier, after questioning locals, visited Kirk Göz, “Forty Eyes,” near the modern village of Pinarbasi. Chevalier was convinced that the forty springs, for which Kirk Göz is named, were those described by Homer and placed Troy on a nearby cliff, the Balli Dag. “But in order to claim that Troy lay near Pinarbasi, Chevalier had to rearrange the rivers rather arbitrarily.”

Essentially, Chevalier renamed all of the rivers, so that the local river, the Menderes, was the Simois, and another stream, the Pinarbasi Cay became the Scamander. Chevalier then made the claim that he was the “first to reconcile perfectly the present topography of the Troad with Homer’s text!” One unfortunate pattern in the beginning of archaeological studies at Troy, or for Troy, is that many of those who contributed to the search for Troy were not actually scholars. Fortunately, as archaeology grew into a more scientific discipline, real scholars contributed to help refute the claims of those like Chevalier. For example, Edward Clarke, a professor of mineralogy at Cambridge, not only recognized that Chevalier had not accurately depicted the rivers, but also measured the temperature of the springs at Pinarbasi. Not only were the springs

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17 Allen, 41-42.
18 Ibid., 42.
not both hot and cold, they consistently measured the same temperature.\textsuperscript{19} Major James Rennell, a geographer and surveyor from India, was another such scholar:

Rennell never visited the Troad, [but] he published an account of the Trojan topography in 1814 comparing the claims made by Chevalier, Clarke, and others... [and also] dismissed the claim that Pinarbasi was Homer’s Troy for three chief reasons: because of its distance from the sea, because it was ‘entirely hilly’ on the Balli Dag, whereas Homer described Troy in the midst of a plain, and because Homer had described only two springs and at Pinarbasi there were many, all of the same temperature.\textsuperscript{20}

Peter Brönsted, after studying the ruins at Pinarbasi, stated, “absolutely nothing...[indicated] that there ever was a very old town in this area, not...any walls stylistically similar to the Cyclopiam style so well-known from the ruins of Mycenae, Tiryns, and Ithaca.”\textsuperscript{21} But in the absence of an alternative location, none of the scholars that rejected Chevalier’s work voiced a new hypothesis. Many scholars, however, did accept Chevalier’s claims and based their own hypotheses and research on his work. One scholar, Nassau W. Senior, believed Pinarbasi was an ideal site. Indeed, the only factor that bothered Senior was that the location was too big for Achilles to have chased Hector three times around the walls, but he contributed that to Homer’s poetic exaggerations. Even the distance from the sea, some nine miles, was not an “insurmountable objection because it was known that the land had encroached on the sea.”\textsuperscript{22} Because literary criticism had already determined the uncertain origins of the \textit{Iliad}, many

\textsuperscript{19} Allen, 45.  
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 46.  
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 74-75.
scholars overlooked holes or flaws in theories, simply stating that Homer had taken several poetic liberties with his story and there were sure to be parts of the Iliad that did not match physical remains.

While Chevalier was surveying Pinarbasi, Franz Kauffer, an engineer also employed by Choiseul-Gouffier to survey the interior of the Troad, a region in northwest Asia Minor, discovered Hisarlık, and was the first to include it on a map in 1793. When conducting his investigations of Chevalier’s theory, Edward Clarke also visited the Hisarlık and identified the ruins as Ilium Novum, Roman New Ilium. However, because of Strabo’s singular dissenting description of the Troad, Clarke did not make a connection between New Ilium and Troy. The majority of scholars continued to follow Chevalier’s hypothesis, even if his evidence was dubious. This was simply because Pinarbasi, specifically the summit of the Balli Dag, was a sound strategic position, because there were springs nearby, albeit many more than just the two Homer describes, and because of the “compelling presence below the acropolis of four heroic tumuli, two known…as the “Tomb of Hector,” … [and] the “Tomb of Priam.” The tel, at Hisarlık, however, is only about fifty to sixty-five feet tall; it does not appear to be a very strategic position. But this did not seem problematic for Karl Schuchhardt and Eugénie Strong, who point out that “Homeric Troy was

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23 Allen, 42.
24 Ibid., 45-47.
25 Ibid., 72.
26 A tel is an artificial, man-made mound, created when a civilization or people build their settlement on top of the ruins of a previous settlement.
above all things a maritime city, a characteristic which comes out clearly in the story of the rape of Helen."^27 Schuchhardt argues:

A number of passages in the poems prove that the distance from the camp to Troy was not great. As a rule, every night after the battle the Trojans go back to their city, the Greeks to their camp. Messengers go early from the city to the station of the ships, and are back before sunrise. In one and the same day the battle often surges to and fro along the whole distance. Priam journeys during the night to the hut of Achilles, to ask for the body of his son, and when his sorrowful quest is ended...he enjoys in his enemy’s hut the sleep so long denied to him, and yet is back in Troy before break of day.^28

If Troy were located at Pinarbasi, which is nine miles from the Hellespont, these journeys between camps would not be possible. Furthermore, Schuchhardt argues, Hisarlík would have been a more strategic position than Pinarbasi during the period that the *Iliad* is set, because it would have been at the “confluence of two rivers in order to receive protection from their streams.”^29 Despite these arguments, it was not until some fifty or sixty years after Chevalier first asserted his hypothesis that Hisarlík was identified as the site of Homer’s Troy.

While Heinrich Schliemann is credited for the identification of ancient Troy at Hisarlík, it was actually Frank Calvert who first conducted preliminary investigations of the site in the mid 1800’s. Calvert came from a family of consuls, and his older brother Frederick was the acting British consul in the Dardanelles. Unlike some of his predecessors, specifically Chevalier, Frank Calvert had a scientific method of inquiry: he began with ancient sources,

^28 Ibid., 18-19.
^29 Ibid., 28.
analyzed modern scholarship, and then explored the geography of the area he was studying to note important features, while also asking about locals’ knowledge of sites. Calvert did not immediately discount Pinarbasi as a possible location of Homeric Troy, and like many others he believed that Clarke had only discovered New Ilium; he did not connect New Ilium with ancient Troy. Calvert actually excavated at Pinarbasi first, looking for definitive proof that it was the site of Homeric Troy by digging into the tumulus, or burial mound, known as “the tomb of Priam.” After those excavations proved futile, however, in 1863 Calvert published his own refutation of Pinarbasi. While labeling “the tomb of Hector” as “‘heaps of refuse stone thrown out during quarrying,’” Calvert went a step further than his contemporaries by providing an alternative identification for the ruins at Pinarbasi: Gergis, “a town settled by Trojans who had emigrated to Cyprus and had returned ‘to colonize their ancient fatherland.’” Calvert may have been influenced by a family friend and scholar, Charles Maclaren, who believed New Ilium was built on ancient Troy, because he then began his study of Hisarlık, the eastern half of which his family had just purchased, along with some of the surrounding fields. Unfortunately, around the same time that Frank Calvert was preparing to excavate Hisarlık, his older brother Frederick was caught up in a well-publicized political scandal; not only did Frank now lose the family funds supporting his research, but he also lost

30 Allen, 64.
31 Ibid., 73-75.
32 Ibid., 81-83.
33 Ibid., 75.
support among his peers. It was at this point that Calvert met Heinrich Schliemann, a self-made millionaire eager to increase his own social prestige through the gentleman’s hobby of archaeology.

Calvert may have only intended a financial partnership, but a very different relationship developed. Regardless of what Calvert had planned when introducing Schliemann to his new hypothesis, that Hisarlik was the site of fabled Troy, Schliemann took the task of excavating the site upon himself and quickly made it into his own personal quest. According to Allen, “Schliemann’s efforts to minimize Calvert’s role in the discovery of Troy in order to maximize his own [prestige] began immediately after their first meeting,” in August of 1868. Allen also states that Schliemann “back-dated not only the diary entries, but also a letter to his father from Pinarbasi…and the letter he wrote to his sister and brother-in-law…conveniently omit[ting] any mention of Calvert.” Allen suggests that Schliemann may not have slighted Calvert out of malicious intent, but that, most likely, he wanted to distance himself from the Calvert family; he wanted to increase his social prestige among other nineteenth century Europeans, and the Calverts were now in a very precarious position, due to political scandals. Yet the truth of the matter is that Schliemann’s claim that his lifelong dream was to find and excavate Homer’s Troy was a fabrication. Schliemann never mentioned this goal in any of his diaries until after his meeting with

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34 Allen, 85.
35 Ibid., 120-121.
36 Ibid., 121.
Calvert that year, and it is apparent from his correspondence with Calvert that he knew nothing about Hisarlık except what Calvert told him.37

Not only did he not know about Hisarlık, Schliemann also knew nothing about archaeological techniques or methods, and Schliemann’s inexperience was evident in his excavation methods. De Camp states that if Schliemann belonged to any particular school of archaeology, he “belonged to the ruthless school. At Troy he drove a huge trench into the northern side of Hisarlık. This trench, together with his other diggings, removed half the hill.”38 Among the normal excavation equipment, Schliemann also used “battering rams, as well as screw-jacks, chains, and windlass.”39 Schliemann often wrote about the dangers of the excavations, apparently not realizing that his rough, impatient methods were the root cause. On August 14, 1872, Schliemann wrote, “In spite of every precaution, excavations in which men have to work under earthen walls of above 50 feet in perpendicular depth are always very dangerous…Many stones roll down the steep walls without the workmen noticing them.”40 Cave-ins and rocks slides seem to have been very common. Earlier that year, Schliemann wrote, “In spite of every precaution, however, I am unable to guard my men or myself against the stones which continually come rolling down, when the steep wall is being picked

38 De Camp, 81.
40 Ibid.,184.
away. Not one of us is without several wounds in his feet.”41 But Schliemann’s methods, while rough and dangerous, did produce results. In 1882, Schliemann discovered the hot and cold springs “in a very ancient rock channel at the foot of Hisarlık, near to the gate which may fairly be identified with the Skaian.”42 Thus, Hisarlık was now definitively identified not only as Ilium Novum, but also as ancient Troy. Nevertheless, Schliemann’s most famous discovery was not the infamous hot and cold springs. Rather it was what he later called “Priam’s Treasure.”

The story of how Schliemann discovered the treasure is well known; while excavating, he saw something metallic, and after realizing that what he saw was gold, he immediately had his wife dismiss the workers. They were then able to sneak the treasure out of the site by hiding the various items in Mrs. Schliemann’s shawl. Schliemann recorded the event in his diary, writing:

> In excavating [a] wall further and directly by the side of the Palace of King Priam, I came upon a large copper article of the most remarkable form, which attracted my attention all the more as I thought I saw gold behind it…In order to withdraw the treasure from the greed of my workmen, and to save it for archaeology, I had to be most expeditious, and although it was not yet time for breakfast, I immediately had ‘paídos’ [time for rest] called.43

Schliemann claimed the find as the “treasure of Priam,” saying:

> As I found all these articles together, forming a rectangular mass, or packed into one another, it seems to be certain that they were placed on the city wall in a wooden chest…such as those mentioned by Homer as being in the palace of King Priam. This appears to be the more certain, as

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41 Deuel and Schliemann, 180.
42 Schuchhardt and Strong, 25.
43 Deuel and Schliemann, 205.
close by the side of these articles I found a copper key above 4 inches long, the head of which...greatly resembles a large safe-key of a bank.\textsuperscript{44}

For Schliemann, who dug down to the very bottom of the tel, this treasure was proof that the stratum later designated as Troy II was indeed Homeric Troy. Further proof came from evidence that the Troy II was “suddenly...stormed and destroyed by the enemy,” which was proved by “the skeletons of men with arms, and by the finding of innumerable hand-made terracotta vases, with splendidly incised whorls.”\textsuperscript{45} Homer’s work inspired Schliemann’s “overall excavation plan, which...rested on two assumptions derived from the \textit{Iliad}, namely that the temple of the Trojan Pallas Athene occupied the highest point of the hill, while the defense wall with Priam’s citadel...had to be at the very bottom.”\textsuperscript{46} When Schliemann smuggled the treasure to Greece, however, the Turkish government sued him and revoked his firman, or digging permit.\textsuperscript{47} After three years of excavating Hisarlık (approximately 1871 to 1874), Schliemann was then forced to excavate elsewhere.

After two years of litigation, which ended when Schliemann paid a hefty fine to the Turkish government, the Turkish government lifted the ban on Schliemann and he returned to the site. When Schliemann resumed excavations at Hisarlık, he brought an assistant, William Dörpfeld, who was an architect by trade and also an experienced archaeologist. Dörpfeld remapped Schliemann’s

\textsuperscript{44} Deuel and Schliemann, 207.
\textsuperscript{45} Bacon, 73.
\textsuperscript{46} Deuel and Schliemann, 166-167.
\textsuperscript{47} John and Elizabeth Romer, \textit{The History of Archaeology} (New York: Checkmark Books, 2001), 110.
seven cities into nine different cities in the strata at Hisarlık, the second of which, henceforth known as Troy II, Schliemann claimed as Homeric Troy.\textsuperscript{48} Even though he continued claiming Troy II as Homeric Troy, Schliemann began doubting his own conclusion. During his ban from excavating Hisarlık, Schliemann dug at the Greek sites Mycenae and Ithaca, but found no cultural remains similar to those found at Hisarlık; no similarities or connections seemed to exist between the two civilizations.\textsuperscript{49} Later that year, however, Schliemann uncovered “two large rectangular rooms of stone and some broken potsherds…different from anything else that he had found at Troy; but he knew the type well, from many Greek sites he had excavated.”\textsuperscript{50} This type of pottery, which modern scholars call Gray Minyan Ware, did not exist in the same stratum of Troy II, but in Dörpfeld’s sixth city, Troy VI.\textsuperscript{51} Dörpfeld believed Troy VI was the true Homeric Troy, and shortly before his death, Schliemann admitted that his original conclusions might have been too hasty, telling Dörpfeld before leaving Hisarlık for the last time that he “had been mistaken in his identification of Homer’s city.”\textsuperscript{52} Schliemann died a few months later, however, and thus never had a chance to study Troy VI.

After Schliemann’s death, his widow hired Dörpfeld to continue the excavations. Despite Schliemann destroying much of Troy VI and subsequent

\textsuperscript{48} Romer, 118.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{51} De Camp, 83.
\textsuperscript{52} Romer, 119.
layers in his dig to Troy II, enough of the site remained intact for Dörpfeld to continue excavations and form his own conclusions. Besides the discovery of Grey Minyan Ware in the level of Troy VI, Dörpfeld also supported his claim that Homer’s Troy was Troy VI based on the massive fortified walls and the terraced layout of the citadel.\footnote{Herbert Cushing Tolman and Gilbert Campbell Scoggin, \textit{Mycenaean Troy} (New York: American Book Company, 1903), 38. The wall was fifteen to twenty feet high and measured about sixteen feet thick.} According to Dörpfeld, this sort of construction was what Homer had described in the \textit{Iliad}. Dörpfeld also concluded that the houses in Troy VI were just like the house of Paris, or Alexandros, as Homer described. These houses contained three distinct rooms: a courtyard, reception room, and living quarters.\footnote{Ibid., 41.} Like Schliemann’s Troy II, Dörpfeld claimed, Troy VI showed “traces of an extensive conflagration.”\footnote{Ibid., 85.} Dörpfeld published his work in 1890 before going on to work at other Mediterranean sites.

An excavation team from the University of Cincinnati, led by Carl Blegen, resumed work at Hisarlık in 1932, about forty years after Dörpfeld finished his excavations. Since Dörpfeld and Schliemann’s excavations, the site had fallen into further disrepair due general neglect and damages from World War I. The Cincinnati team “did not do much drastic excavation, but they cleaned up the older diggings and minutely studied their stratigraphy.”\footnote{De Camp, 83.} Even with such damage, Blegen and his team concluded that the damage of Troy VI’s walls resulted from an earthquake, because the “jagged cracks in some of this
city’s massive towers and the precarious, backward tilt of a section of the citadel walled seemed...beyond the power of an invasion force armed mainly with bronze spears and swords.”

Blegen himself wrote:

The debris seems far too extensive to have been pitched over wantonly by the hand of man, and, considering other supplementary evidence, we may safely conclude that the end of Troy VI was brought about by a severe earthquake, which rendered the houses uninhabitable and caused serious damage to the superstructure of the fortress itself.

Blegen’s new theory stated that Homer’s Troy was Troy VIIa, the earliest distinguishable layer of the seventh city. Blegen based his theory on two ideas. The first was that, while smaller, the city of Troy VIIa contained “tightly packed houses along the inside of the fortification walls,” which suggested “the presence of a much larger population seeking shelter, and in many of the modest houses of this stratum were an unusually large number of storejars and silos – apparently for emergency supplies.” These storejars, Blegen said, were evidence that a siege had taken place, and the people tried to store as many supplies as possible. However, the pottery Blegen’s team found in Troy VIIa held more significance than as simple evidence of a siege; the pottery of Troy VIIa was a fully developed style, whereas the pottery of Troy VI was not. Blegen believed that “the Trojan War took place at the height of Mycenaean power... [and] it seemed significant to him that Troy VIIa contained examples of pottery of the fully

57 Silberman, 44-45.
59 Ibid., 379.
developed Late Bronze Age Mycenaean style. The second claim that supported Blegen’s hypothesis was that, while an earthquake had destroyed Troy VI, Troy VII showed clear signs of destruction by fire. Blegen wrote, “The state of the ruins indicates that the whole citadel, after a relatively short existence, was in fact destroyed by a devastating fire, with suggestions of accompanying violence (human bones lay unburied in the streets just inside the South Gate and were also found in two houses).” While Troy VI may have been more prosperous and longer-lived than Troy VIIa, Blegen argued that evidence did not support its destruction by siege; therefore it was impossible that Troy VI was Homeric Troy. Rather, Blegen pointed to the unburied remains of Troy VIIa’s citizens and its destruction by fire as evidence that, though smaller than Troy VI, Troy VIIa was Homeric Troy.

The Cincinnati excavations ended in 1938, after only six years of excavations, and it was another forty or fifty years before Troy entered the spotlight again, when Michael Wood, an English historian and broadcaster for the BBC, made a documentary about the excavations at Troy. Just as pottery analysis had advanced in the time between Dörpfeld and Blegen, it advanced further in the latter half of the twentieth century. Since Blegen’s excavations, further analysis of the pottery found at Hisarlik showed that “Troy VIIa contained some pottery types that postdated the destruction of the Mycenaean

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60 Silberman, 45.
61 Blegen, 379.
This meant that Blegen’s hypothesis, which was based on the idea that Troy VIIa would have fully developed Mycenaean pottery, no longer fit, because Troy VIIa had pottery that appeared after the fall of the Mycenaean civilization. Wood supported his claims with evidence that Troy VI actually showed signs of destruction by fire, after all, while also hypothesizing that an earthquake certainly would have helped any invaders attacking Troy VI. It is clear, however, that Wood did not support the hypothesis of Troy VI’s ruin via earthquake. Wood argued that men could have destroyed the walls of Troy VI, pointing to Euripides’ *Trojan Women*, in which the Achaean’s demolition of Troy’s towers is described as an earthquake. Wood stated:

> They [siege engines] certainly existed in Near Eastern warfare at this time: powerful ‘wooden horses’ containing many men to operate the ram, which opened city walls, they were developed most effectively in Assyria from the twelfth century B.C. onwards, but we have no indication that such devices were used in thirteenth century Aegean.

Wood admits his theory was inconclusive, but insists it remain a possibility, because the earthquake damage was not enough to completely ruin the walls and make them wholly useless.

Furthermore, Wood argued, Blegen had made a false assumption by letting his experiences during World War I interfere with his interpretation of the evidence, having “inferred a war economy like the soup kitchens during the Blitz

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62 Silberman, 46.
65 Wood, 77-78.
of London, the images of his own day."\(^{66}\) However, Silberman critiques Wood’s own theories about the motivation for the Trojan war, saying that both of Wood’s hypotheses were colored by modern events: “Wood’s ‘Plausible Hypothesis No. 1’ suggested that the sack of Troy may have come as the result of imperialistic aggression of an ominously modern kind…’Plausible Hypothesis No. 2’ suggested an equally modern situation: a superpower conflict between the Mycenaean and the Hittites of Asia Minor.”\(^{67}\) Wood’s own objectivity is questionable, but many scholars have provided similar explanations for why the Trojan War occurred. Another scholar, Walter Leaf, believed that “Helen was the excuse, but the real objective was the control of the land and sea trade-routes which converged on Troy.”\(^{68}\) Leaf theorized that sea currents forced ships to land at Troy, where the king forced them to pay tribute and sell their goods, which explains Troy’s wealth despite the unfriendly geographical location. Other scholars believe that there was no trade at this time, and that the Trojans and Greeks of this period were more interested in fighting. One such scholar is Thomas W. Allen, who argued the Achaeans wanted to “remove the last power which dominated the Asiatic coast and prevented settlement.”\(^{69}\) The problem with this theory, however, is that the location of Troy is not a very hospitable region, and there is very little to make it a candidate for colonization. Nor do any of the theories about Achaean motivation connect any of the layers of Hisarlık to

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\(^{66}\) Silberman, 46.
\(^{67}\) Ibid.
\(^{68}\) Bowra, 180.
\(^{69}\) Ibid., 181.
the Troy of Homer.

Part of the problem with determining which Troy is Homeric Troy is the lack of accuracy in dating methods and of material evidence to test. The pottery that Schliemann found in his last dig season cannot be analyzed due to an unfortunate incident. During World War I the pottery was stored in a castle in Prussia for protection. De Camp writes:

Now, a quaint peasant custom in those parts is the Polterabend, when men assemble of an evening to get soused on beer and to break a lot of cheap crockery by throwing it against a wall. Some of the natives wanted a Polterabend because one of them was getting married. But there was no spare crockery, cheap or otherwise, to be had until somebody remembered the crates in the castle...So drunken peasants smashed to smithereens every last piece of the collection of Trojan pottery.70

Thus the story of modern excavations and investigations at Troy seems to continue the same tragic narrative of Homer’s *Iliad*. There is no way to compare the pottery Schliemann and Dörpfeld found with the pottery from the Cincinnati excavations, complicating the dating of Troy. However, based on other evidence found at Hisarlık, archaeologists have at least been able to date the different cities, placing Troy VI from about 1280-1240 B.C. and Troy VII from 1220-1180 B.C.71 Bowra places the end of the Heroic Age, which, according to ancient sources, ended after the Siege of Troy and with the return of the Heraclids, or Doric invasion, in the twelfth century B.C.72 Thus the Heroic Age encompasses

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70 De Camp, 82.
71 Raaflaub, 386. For reference, Mycenaean culture is dated from about 1600 to 1200 B.C., so both of these cities would have existed at the same time as Mycenae.
72 Bowra, 169-170. Bowra bases his dates off of Greek genealogical records, allowing for forty years per generation, with the Heroic Age lasting about five to six generations.
the destruction of both Troy VI and VIIa. The genealogies cannot rule out either
city, and there is no material evidence to clearly show favor of one city over the
other. Furthermore, although other material remains from the site can help
establish a rough date, not enough evidence exists to establish a concrete date,
because during his own excavations, Schliemann destroyed everything in his path
and made no records of the layers he dug through on his way down to Troy II.

While most scholars agree that the site of Hisarlık is Troy, there is still
no definitive evidence linking any one city to the city described in Homer’s *Iliad*.
Because of Schliemann’s rough methods, definitive proof may never be found,
because his excavations destroyed much of the middle strata of the tel.
Schliemann’s character, too, has been called into question, and if not for the work
of scholars after him, such as Dörpfeld and Blegen, all of his research might be
discredited. Instead, Dörpfeld and Blegen’s revisionist approach and publications
helped to justify Schliemann’s work, because they worked from the basis
Schliemann’s excavations provided. Despite the increased knowledge provided
by subsequent archaeologists who followed Schliemann, because of the
destruction and deterioration of the site, both from time and Schliemann’s
haphazard methods, definitive proof of the Trojan peoples’ existence will most
likely come from Hittite texts, similar to how Achaeans have been discovered
and proven in Hittite correspondence.