

# ON THE TRAIL OF THE LOST CITY OF TROY

## A City that Was Abandoned in the Middle Ages

- After Christianity was adopted as the official religion of the Roman Empire, less significance was ascribed to the epics *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. In addition, a major earthquake in 500 AD destroyed the settlement of Troy, after which the city was abandoned.
- In medieval Europe, there was remarkably little interest in Troy and the Homeric epics. On the other hand, we know that in 1464 Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror went to the city, then believed to be Ilium, and visited the tombs of the heroes of *The Iliad*.

## The Enlightenment, the Grand Tour, and Increased Interest in Troy

- In the 18th century, the Age of Enlightenment began in Europe, a period that prioritised the application of reason and science to every aspect of human life. In the wake of the French Revolution of 1789, there was increased interest in the cultures of Ancient Greece and Rome, on which science, art and philosophy were based. This paved the way to the discovery of the city of Troy.
- During this period, contemporary sources on Troy, as well as ancient sources, were studied carefully by those researchers who wanted to find Troy. These researchers were guided by what they read.
- Having learned about ancient Greek and Roman culture, Europeans started to embark on "**the Grand Tour**", which involved them visiting ancient cities and scrutinising Greek and Roman artefacts in Italy, Greece and the Ottoman Empire.
- More and more people came to believe that Troy had actually existed and was not just an imaginary city that was the stuff of legends.

● **The Grand Tour:** In order to get to know the Ancient Greek and Roman world, upper class Europeans visited the territories where these civilisations had dominated.

## The First Research on Troy

- In 1767, the English traveller and scientist Robert Wood (1742-1750) set out on the "Grand Tour", which would include an exploration of the territory of Troy. Believing that Homer had been a very accurate observer of the natural environment, Wood was the first person to visit the places depicted in the Homeric epics.
- Robert Wood identified changes that had occurred over time in the shape of the surface of the land. In years to come, the work he carried out would serve as a model for research by other researchers and scientists.
- At the time he started his first exploratory work in Troy, it was believed for a long time that the city was **Alexandria Troas**.

In *The Iliad*, it is stated that Troy was located on the coast. However, centuries before the epic was written, the city had become separated from the sea because the alluvium carried

- by Dümrek Stream and the Karamenderes River had filled up the harbour of Troy. This is why, although researchers were intrigued by Hisarlık Tepe, they rejected the idea that Troy could have been located here. Instead, they speculated that the lost city of Troy could possibly have been located in the vicinity of places such as Pınarbaşı and Ballıdağ.

● **Alexandria Troas:** Founded in the Hellenistic Period, this settlement was situated next to the sea in the Troad. Today, Alexandria Troas is located in the village of Dalyan, in Ezine district.

## Frank Calvert, and the First Excavations of Troy

- The first excavations at Troy were carried out by the British consul Frank Calvert, who actually owned a large proportion of the land at Hisarlık. Calvert recognised that the lost city of Troy might have been located at Hisarlık, and between 1863 and 1870 he conducted excavations in that area.
- What led Calvert to follow this path was an article that one Charles Maclaren had published about Troy in 1822. In this article, which Maclaren wrote even before he had had the chance to come to Hisarlık Tepe, he emphasised on the basis of his analysis of the maps of the region that Hisarlık Tepe was where ancient Troy could be found.
- Maclaren first visited the Troad about 40 years later and explored the area together with Calvert. In 1863, this led him to publish a book in which he presented his view that Hisarlık Tepe was none other than Troy.
- Calvert recognised that Hisarlık Tepe was a tell and predicted that it would turn out to be the location of the lost city of Troy. However, since he did not have the financial means to excavate it himself, he provided guidance to Heinrich Schliemann (1822-1890), who was responsible for the first large-scale excavations in Troy. In this way, Calvert still played a key role in resurrecting Troy.

## Schliemann, the Troy of the Epics, and the Lost Heritage

- In 1868, Heinrich Schliemann came to conduct research in Pınarbaşı, with the aim of finding Troy. When he failed to achieve this aim, he bought a ticket for a ship travelling to Athens. However, he actually missed the ship and decided to stay in the area for a while.
- This was when Calvert and Schliemann met, and Calvert shared the details of his own research with Schliemann.
- Calvert's research helped to steer Schliemann in the excavation he conducted at Hisarlık Tepe. In 1871, Schliemann began the first large-scale excavation to take place at Troy. Until he died in 1890, Schliemann continued to excavate at Troy at various intervals.
- Schliemann was able to discover the treasure of Troy, but he not only smuggled this treasure out of the country but also did great damage to the archaeological layers at the site. Schliemann claimed that these treasures belonged to the wealthy city of Troy depicted in *The Iliad*, which was also the scene of the Trojan War. Research has revealed, though, that these items can be dated back 1200 years prior to the period that Schliemann had proposed; that is, they have been found to belong to the years 2250-2250 BC.
- Heinrich Schliemann played a remarkable dual role: on the one hand, he was instrumental in illuminating Troy's history by unearthing the ancient city; on the other hand, by decimating different historical layers in Troy, he helped to make it a good deal more difficult to understand this history.

## Excavations of Troy after Schliemann

- In 1893 and 1894, the Prussian architect and archaeologist **Wilhelm Dörpfeld (1853-1940)** led excavations in Troy. Dörpfeld was indeed the researcher who first identified the nine basic layers in Troy, a stratification that is still employed today. Dörpfeld also pioneered the use of a system of coordinates to document an archaeological excavation. He came to the conclusion that the historical layer of the city that had witnessed the Battle of Troy was Troy VI.
- The next person to lead excavations was **Carl Blegen (1887-1971)**, a professor of archaeology at Cincinnati University, who was active in Troy between 1932 and 1938. During Blegen's term as the director of the excavations, filming was used for the first time to document work being done. By carrying out various technical and scientific studies, Blegen managed to distinguish between 46 levels at Troy. In contrast to Dörpfeld, Blegen claimed that Troy VI had collapsed as the result of an earthquake. He also maintained that the Trojan War had taken place at the layer of Troy VII, the settlement which followed on from Troy VI.
- Between 1988 and 2005, excavations at Troy were led by **Manfred Osman Korfmann (1942-2005)**, a professor of archaeology and prehistory from the University of Tübingen. With the research he carried out at Troy, Korfmann was able to show that, at the time of the Bronze Age, Troy was an Anatolian settlement.

## The Excavations of Troy Today (2015-present)

- After the death of Manfred Osman Korfmann, the excavations at Troy were led for a while by Ernst Pernicka and Peter Jablonka, both academics at the University of Tübingen; in 2012, though, the University of Tübingen ended its involvement in the excavations at Troy.
- Excavation work at Troy resumed in 2015, courtesy of an international team directed by Rüstem Aslan, professor of archaeology and prehistory at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart (18th March) University.
- Since 2015, excavations and surveys have been conducted in Troy under the directorship of Rüstem Aslan. Aslan and his team have been focusing on the archaeology of Troy's archaeology, reappraising the previous excavations, and undertaking conservation work in the area.