

'We know both a lot more and a lot less about Pompeii than we think' (Mary Beard). Could the same be said about Troy?

'We know both a lot more and a lot less about Pompeii than we think'. In some respects, this can apply to our knowledge about the ancient city of Troy. For a long time, the exact location of the city was not known; eventually people believed it to be a myth, that the city of Troy was a location invented by Homer in his work of the *Iliad*. However, in 1822, Charles Maclaren hypothesised that the mound Hissarlik, in the region of Anatolia was the site of ancient Troy. It was known that there had been a Greek city located there called Ilium; however, it was unknown whether ancient Troy had been located there earlier. Many did not believe him; it was only in 1860 that there was some interest in it; an archaeologist, Frank Calvert, persuaded Heinrich Schliemann, a rich businessman and amateur archaeologist, to start some exploratory work on Hissarlik. Schliemann conducted two major expeditions in 1870 and 1890, where he found the remains of a citadel. There, he also found gold and other artefacts he mistakenly called 'Priam's treasure'; however, these artefacts outdated Homeric Troy by a millennium. Later, it was discovered that the mound of Hissarlik contained 9 layers of civilisation, each of which ended in a disaster. Instead of destroying the remains and rebuilding from the ground, the inhabitants simply levelled off the buildings and rebuilt the city on top (Did ancient Troy really exist? , 2018).

We know a fair amount about many ancient cities, such as Pompeii, due to the studies that can be undertaken. However, there is nothing of the sort for Troy. There are few human remains that can be analysed, only remains of inorganic materials (i.e. not carbon based) and animal remains. There have been some remains found during the period of Troy VIIa- the town was destroyed by fire and there are partial human remains that show evidence of a siege (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 2019). However, it is difficult to know for sure- there are no literary accounts written by contemporaries.

There have been some studies looking into the topography and vegetation of Hissarlik and the nearby Kumpete. A book written by Simone Riehl details this; she wrote on the archaeobotanical aspects of the remains found at Hissarlik; through this one can theorise what life may have been like for the Bronze-Age dweller living in what could have been ancient Troy. The study of flora and fauna shows that large amount of fish and meat was eaten in the region; remains of oysters, tuna, cattle deer, and many other animals were found at Kumpete. There was an abundance of oyster shells found; this suggests that the diet of the region was heavily seafood based; this is not surprising, given the location's proximity to the coast. Since the distance between the site of Hissarlik (Troy) and Kumpete is only around 5km, and since Hissarlik lies only 6.5km from the Aegean Sea, one can assume that ancient Trojans had a similar diet (Riehl, 2001). Thus, one could argue that we do know more about the Trojans than we might believe; we can interpret their everyday diet from evidence found nearby. Another archaeozoological study states that there was evidence of red meat consumption and pig farming in the later stages of Troy (after Troy III); this could also implicate what sort of culture the Trojans had and the conditions in the region (Gündem, 2009). It can be theorised that they had droughts or finicky weather- this can be supported with evidence that the chief god was a weather god named 'Tarhun' in the Hittite empire, which Troy may have been influenced by- though this can be simply taken as evidence that Troy was likely under the Hittite sphere of influence (Gurney, 1999). The study above (Gündem, 2009) also states that an early type of wool sheep was introduced around Troy II. Thus, it can be theorised that the Trojans had a relationship with sheep not unlike Western society today; they used them for their wool, not their meat, implying that wool was an export from Troy. It is also stated that Early Bronze Age Hissarlik was a

coastal settlement, with sedimentation having been deposited over time, meaning that Hissarlik in later times was further from the sea. The remains of the flora and fauna support this (Riehl, 2001). Knowing the location of Hissarlik and its proximity to the sea means that we can theorise on the type of settlement Troy/Hissarlik was- in the early days of the settlement, it may have been a fishing settlement, but as the settlement grew, it would have grown in importance due to its location. It would have grown into a port and trading centre, becoming greatly significant. Therefore, it can be argued that we do, in fact, know more about Troy than we believe.

However, one could argue that the reason we know more about Troy than we might believe is that most people have only heard of Troy from Homer. It could be argued that since Troy fell millennia ago, Troy simply fell into obscurity, its location forgotten and hidden by time. Furthermore, there are few written records of Troy; the only piece of written evidence that Hissarlik found on site is a Hittite seal (Starkston, 2011). The only other written records that may refer to Troy are either Homer's works or from the works of Herodotus (which were influenced by Homer, so are maybe not the mostly reliable source) or from clay tablets found in Hattusa, the Hittite capital (Miszczak, 2019); a lot of information that might have referred to Troy and the Trojan war has been lost in the Greek Dark Ages (12th-8th centuries BCE). The clay tablets found in Hattusa reference 'Wilusa', presumed to be the Luwian word for Troy or Ilios or the surrounding region in north-west Anatolia, and 'Ahhiyawa', presumed to be the Luwian word for the Greeks (more specifically the Mycenaeans). There is evidence that the Mycenaeans (*Ahhiyawa*) were interested in the west coast of Anatolia (where Hissarlik is located) (West, 2011). They raided the Anatolian coast and, notably, took women as slaves. This is depicted in the *Iliad*; the Trojan Briseis was taken from her homeland and taken as Achilles' concubine and slave (Parada, n.d.). There is also more evidence of 'Ahhiyawa' being the Mycenaeans in the *Iliad*; Homer describes weapons typical of the Bronze Age- for example, a boar tusk helmet, which has been found in Mycenaean remains, and the Achaeans are called 'bronze-shirted' and 'well-greaved'- the Mycenaeans wore bronze greaves (Simpson, 2018). However, this still doesn't give a clear answer to whether or not the Trojans were based at Hissarlik; it gives solid evidence that the Greeks in the *Iliad* were Mycenaean. This could be why we know less about Troy than we think- all information to do with the Troy Homer and Herodotus wrote about has been lost, and we only have evidence that the Mycenaeans were featured in the *Iliad*. It could be argued that we know more about early Troy than Homeric Troy; there is a large gap in knowledge due to the loss of evidence in the Greek Dark Ages.

However, one could argue that we know more about Troy than we think; simply because we might not know much about Homeric Troy does not mean that one has no knowledge of ancient Troy at all. (Starkston, 2011) A Hittite seal found in Hissarlik in Troy VIIa (c.1100 BCE) is in Luwian, a language spoken in the Hittite empire, perhaps indicating that ancient Troy was a vassal state; this could contradict the depiction of a powerful city that Homer described in the *Iliad*. This evidence could be used to prove that we know less about Troy than we believe- we have no idea whether the Troy in the *Iliad* was a different city (unlikely, since Trojan names used in the *Iliad* are not Greek e.g. Priam, which stems from Luwite, and the Greek word for Troy (Τροίη or Troia) is itself derived from the Hittite word for the site at Hissarlik- '*T(a)ruwisa*' or whether Homer, not being a historian and since the *Iliad* was not his original work but one telling of the Trojan war; so it could be argued that the reason that the evidence found is nothing like the powerful city of Troy in the *Iliad*. Since Homer composed his poem a few centuries after the events of the Trojan war, he probably made a few mistakes in historical accuracy- he based his descriptions of Troy off his contemporary cities, rather than what a city-state would have looked like at that time. This interpretation is further supported by the evidence found at Hissarlik- Troy VI was not as Homer described, and analysis of other Greek bronze age settlement supports that this would have been what a city looked like at the time.

(Jones, 2011). While this did not refer specifically to Troy, and these words should be taken with a pinch of salt since she is not a classicist but an author, Le Guin suggested in her afterword in 'Lavinia' that many people living in the Bronze Age probably saw their settlements as cities, but to anyone from a later period they would see a conglomeration of huts (Guin, 2008). This could be applied to Hissarlik; while we may see the remains of Troy and think that this is a small town, while the original inhabitants of Troy would have seen their conglomeration of huts as a city. On the other hand, the evidence of a Hittite seal found in Hissarlik could also be used to suggest that Troy was a trade centre, therefore supporting Homer's description that Troy was a powerful city-state. This is supported by the geographical location of the site of Hissarlik, since it is near the Aegean Sea and the Dardanelles, straits that would have been important for trade. It is also worth noting that the buildings found at Hissarlik are likely the royal residence- the citadel. This is likely due to the location and size of the remains found at Hissarlik- the remains are heavily fortified, but not big enough to house a settlement of great size. In his article, Lendering stated that it was likely that the majority of the population of Troy (the peasants and labourers) lived in more perishable huts outside the city walls and took shelter in the citadel when attacked (Lendering, 2019). The idea of Troy as a powerful city-state is also supported by the evidence of formidable defences in Troy from around 1700-1190 B.C.E (Troy VI or VII) (Bryce, 2005). While it may not have been exactly what Homer had described, it supports the theory that Troy was a formidable power in the Aegean Sea at the time, and so may have been attacked by the Mycenaean Greeks for control of such a valuable location.

While Homer writes that the Trojan war was started through the abduction of Helen, it could be argued that either he romanticised the story to interest his audience more, and that he heard about the Trojan war from an inaccurate source, and it could be questioned how much of the *Iliad* is rooted in a successful Mycenaean raid on Troy or Hissarlik; (Nichols, 2010) this is likely since it is hypothesised that the Trojan war took place before the Greek Dark Ages, meaning that history was passed down orally due to the collapse of Mycenaean society and therefore the destruction of their writing system, which can lead to embellishments and inaccuracies. However, it could also be argued that many ancient Greek authors and historians believed that the Trojan war began by the abduction of Helen; this included Herodotus- however, it can be argued that it is a given that they believed this, since the *Iliad* was part of their own storytelling tradition (Finley, 1991). Still, this does not rule out the theory that the history of the Trojan War was embellished due to Mycenaean oral poetic storytelling tradition, especially since these historians had heard the same tales of the Trojan war and were basing their writings of that. The embellishment of the Trojan War could be compared to the tale of King Arthur; it is likely that Arthur was a character made from a combination of Romano-British generals fighting against the Saxon invaders. Similarly, the Trojan War could have been embellished and different events and causes of the war could have been changed and moulded- and while the poets may have wanted to preserve historical events, they didn't aim to keep everything true to the events and wished to exaggerate the actions of their heroes. They also probably had to earn a living from telling tales, and to keep their audience interested and pleased, had to embellish their stories to be more interesting (also, their audience had probably heard stories of the Trojan war many times- they may have needed to shake things up)- for example, in some versions of the story, Achilles is invulnerable, except for his heel. Another example is the inclusion of involvement from the gods in the *Iliad* which probably didn't happen but is rather an indication of the importance of religion in Bronze and early Iron Age societies. The Trojan War by Homer's time had probably turned into a semi-legend, and Homer was probably using versions of the legend that he had heard to create an epic. Thus, with this in mind, it could also be argued that the war that takes place in the *Iliad* was not a war between the Greeks and the Trojans, but in fact a war between the Mycenaean Greeks and the Hittite empire over Troy; the Mycenaean Greeks would have recognised the

advantage that Troy would have brought them- easy access to the Aegean Sea and the Dardanelles, allowing them to trade, raid, and set up colonies more freely (Cartwright, 2018).

Overall, it can be argued that Mary Beard's quote can be applied to Troy; we know a lot more and a lot less about Troy than we think. We know more about Troy than we realise; while immediately we may think of Troy as a mythical city invented by Homer, we have the site of Hissarlik that is very likely to be Troy due to the extensive archaeological evidence that supports this (heavy fortifications, partial human remains, and evidence that Troy VII was destroyed in a siege) and the works of Herodotus to support this. On the other hand, it can be argued that we do know a lot less about Troy than we realise; we have little contemporary records of the city, and those that we do are incomplete or give us little information on whether or not Hissarlik is actually Troy. The history of Troy is lost to the sands of time; it is difficult to determine the truth about the Trojan War and what went on in Greek prehistory.

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