

At the Tübingen debate, Professor Kolb insisted over and over again that the “excavations at Troy must be seen as something separate and distinct from the *Iliad*. . . . Identifying Troy with Wilusa is mere hypothesis. . . . One must avoid imagining that the settlement had something to do with the *Iliad*.” But why should one avoid imagining that? Because, perhaps, one actually finds so much evidence to suggest it? Might this be why Professor Kolb has turned down Professor Korfmann’s several invitations to visit the excavation site, and see things with his own eyes?

Kolb accused Korfmann of wanting, from the very outset, to excavate the “glorious Troy,” exactly as Heinrich Schliemann wanted to do in the 19th Century, when he followed Homer’s guide and found this buried city for the first time. Professor Kolb does not want to find any “glorious Troy.”

The Troy controversy of 2001 has been making such waves in the international scientific community, that a delegation of British scientists, led by the grand old man of Hittite studies, John David Hawkins, travelled to Tübingen for the symposium. Korfmann’s achievements, they said, were outstanding; he and his team had “set an example” for other archaeologists. They expressed their hope that “the conflict” not have an adverse effect on Korfmann’s work.

And when, during the final debate, Korfmann affirmed that he would definitely continue excavating at Troy, his announcement was greeted with resounding applause from the entire hall.

## Corrections to ‘Of Homer’s Troy’

There were a number of errors in our previous coverage of the new discoveries at Troy (“Of Homer’s Troy, and the Careerist Scholars’ Wrath,” *EIR*, Feb. 8, 2002).

- The dimensions of the “lower city” at Troy, unearthed during the 1990s, are larger than we reported: this surrounding city covers not 180,000, but 250,000 square meters.
- The defensive trench surrounding the city was at one point misidentified as a “fortified grave”; it is, as identified elsewhere throughout the article, a fortified trench or moat.
- The deposits tested at the site of the ancient subterranean well and water system were deposits of calcium, not iron.
- The signet seal (shown again here) found at Troy is made of bronze, not clay.

We regret these errors.

—Paul Gallagher

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## Interview: Dr. Manfred Korfmann

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# With New Methods, Troy Is Being Taught To Speak

*Manfred Korfmann (born 1942) is Professor of Archaeology at the University of Tübingen, Germany. Since 1972 he has carried out field work in Turkey and, since 1975, in the region of Troy. During 1982-87, he headed the excavations in Besik-Yassitepe, the so-called “port of Troy.” In 1988 he was offered the opportunity to reopen the excavations in Troy—the last were in 1938. Since then, an international team of around 75 scientists from several countries has been working there under his direction. Two years ago, he was invited to direct the excavations in Udabno, Georgia, together with a Georgian colleague.*

*Professor Korfmann is the publisher of the yearbook *Studia Troica*, and has produced films and published guides and maps related to these topics. He is the author of five books and some 130 publications.*

*Dr. Korfmann is the scientific director of the extraordinarily successful exhibition “Troy: Dream and Reality,” currently in Berlin’s Staatmuseum, which has drawn hundreds of thousands of visitors and the attention of all Germany (see *EIR*, Feb. 8, 2002). He was interviewed by Andrea Andromidas on Aug. 24, 2001, at Troy. The interview was first published in the Schiller Institute’s German magazine, *Ibykus*.*

**Q:** You have been excavating at Troy since 1988. Has your image of Homer undergone a transformation since then?

**Korfmann:** I did not begin working here with Homer in mind. Even now I have a very limited view of Homer, as I am no Homer expert. Whenever I come up against something that has to do with Homer, I turn to a Homer specialist, which may, oddly enough, be an advantage. Interestingly though, I believe the image of Homer has undergone a transformation in this field of specialized study due in part to the archaeology. That being said, I would stress that distinctions have got to be drawn, that Classical philology and archaeology are two quite different fields of study. We are excavating here using the methods of prehistoric archaeology, which means, we are not interpreting our discoveries by way of Homer.

Homer, assuming he was indeed a historical individual, must be understood as a witness to his own epoch. The things he reports on, for his epoch (around 720 B.C.), should, on the whole, tally with what we find at the site here—to the extent that Troy is, indeed, Ilion. The leading experts in Hittite civilization now say that (W)ilios-Ilios is one and the same as Wilusa, and thus held a notable place in the political configu-

ration. The Greater Hittite Kingdom would undoubtedly not have entered into a treaty with some Lilliputian hamlet. And that Troy was a sizable settlement—well, that is plain to any visitor today who takes a look at the citadel. If we take Homer as a witness to his epoch seriously, and if we understand that in the same manner as we understand Edgar Wallace using London as the background to his murder mysteries, or as Agatha Christie using relevant archaeological sites in her *Murder in Mesopotamia*, then one gets an idea of how one should be reading Homer.

Actually, these questions about Homer arose rather late in our excavations. As prehistorians, we concentrate, and have always concentrated, on the chronological aspects of the site. The same chronology established for Troy has, over the past 50 years, been the basis for understanding the archaeological cultures of Europe. Unlike the written, calendrical systems existing for areas such as Mesopotamia-Syria-Egypt, such absolute data have not been recovered in Europe, which is why finds from Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, or Austria have been analyzed by applying the “Troy chronology.” Thus, the early Neolithic *Bandkeramik* (linear band pottery) in Germany was, up until the 1950s and ’60s, dated by reference to Troy. The different layers of Troy were, depending on the scientific work, so variously interpreted, that applying the methods of prehistoric archaeology could be seen as leading to a failed system of analysis. Thus, for example, the famous finds of treasure hoard, which point to a number of cultural factors foreign to Troy of the Third Millennium B.C.—between 2700 and 1800 B.C.—have been dated every which way. Accordingly, a prehistorian specializing in western Anatolia must consider the problems of chronology as a major concern. By applying new methods, Troy should be taught to speak. That was my objective for Troy.

Since 1950, thanks to the radiocarbon-dating method, it has become technically possible to begin dating Troy’s succeeding strata very precisely.

Before working at Troy, I carried out excavations on a settlement mound dating from the Third Millennium B.C., at Demircihüyük (near Eskisehir in Turkey), where I examined certain cultural contexts. After five years of excavation, and a further five years of publishing the results, the question arose as to where to go next with the acquired knowledge and an experienced excavational team. We opted for taking on the city’s outskirts, and via that roundabout way, to learn more about neighboring Troy. That is what we attempted, through seven years of excavation very near to Troy. There, at Besik-Tepe, an ancient settlement mound from the Third Millennium B.C., our objective was to examine and to date precisely the early Bronze Age at Troy I. One of the foremost experts in Anatolian archaeology in the United States, Professor Melink, invited me at this time (1984) to a conference on Troy, held at Bryn Mawr University. There, we were encouraged to re-open the excavations at Troy itself.

Until then, I had not considered excavating at Troy proper.

As the excavations at Besik-Tepe drew to a close, clear signals were coming from Turkish archaeological circles: “Dr. Korfmann, you should go ahead and dig at Troy.” Once one has got that sort of encouragement to try one’s hand at Troy, not from international researchers alone, but from Turkish scientists as well, and when one has got an excavating team and workers—some of whom are still with us today—available, then one could hardly say no to such an offer.

In addition, a sponsor turned up, namely, Daimler-Chrysler AG, which has been covering around 20% of the annual budget since then, and so I told myself: “I’ll try it!” At present, we are also financed by the German Society for the Advancement of Science, which involves an annual scientific review of our work. For years, we had an international scientific board, known as the Hisarlik Conference, that evaluated our work each year. That is something I had personally wanted. The Hisarlik Conference met up until two or three years ago. The excavations having tapered off, such meetings have lost their original importance, which is why we stopped continuing the practice.

One aspect of the short history of our excavations is that near Besik-Bay, we came across a cemetery dating roughly to 1300 B.C. We had, in actual fact, been looking for the cemetery for the Third Millennium B.C. settlement at Besik-Tepe. A cemetery without a settlement? Not only did we fail to find a contemporaneous settlement, but the burial customs we encountered proved to differ greatly. Clearly, this could not have been the “Trojan Cemetery,” since the Trojans would most certainly not have buried their dead 8 kilometers away, on the coast. Could it have been the cemetery for a port that was inhabited only at certain times of the year? For a small settlement, though, the graves, going by the grave goods, were especially ornate: gold, cornaline, and heavy bronze anklets. The fact, moreover, that the dead were cremated, raised further questions. Homer describes, in the *Iliad*, burial customs which can be compared to those of his own time from the Eighth Century B.C. The fact that we came upon the self-same burial customs for the Thirteenth Century B.C. brought our attention to Homer.

These issues were not of pressing interest to us when we began excavating at Troy in 1988. Chronologically and technically speaking, we initiated our excavations from within, then extending outwards. We began with Schliemann’s excavations at the citadel, that is, at Troy I, and then followed a course to Troy II/III of the Great Megara. Presently, we have been concentrating our work outside the citadel, with finds being uncovered from the Second Millennium B.C. and from later periods. At the outset of the excavations, we not only maintained interest in investigating the important chronological questions, but in looking for evidence of Troy’s lower settlements.

The search for the lower settlement was initiated during the 1988 excavation season. Although the character of the finds uncovered is not always equally transparent, their rele-



Manfred Korfmann, professor of archaeology of the University of Tübingen, and chief of the excavating team of archaeologists and other experts at ancient Troy (modern Hisarlik, Turkey) since 1988.

vance can not be equally dismissed. Now, I will come specifically to your question. As the trench bordering the Bronze Age lower settlement was uncovered, the most convenient source of information available for understanding such a trench turned out to be Homer. Indeed, Homer has described such a trench for the naval encampment of the attacking Achaeans. Homer himself reckoned that people would at some point desire to see this trench, and wrote that it would never be found, because Poseidon had washed it away to sea. I could not help but be moved by the fact that Homer has proven to be our best contemporary source of information.

**Q:** Why did the academic debate then spark exactly from this point?

**Korfmann:** None of the people, who have become now so upset, has ever published anything of significance on Homer, on ancient Anatolian languages, or even on the archaeology of the Bronze Age. None of the critics is a practicing archaeologist, in other words, not one has actually excavated a site. We all have our own individual image of Troy. For my part, I can attest to working in this region, at this particular place, for the past 21 years. Along with this, I bring daily discussions with countless scientists and informed visitors. We archaeologists must argue on the basis of what we have uncovered. But that does not prevent us from giving some thought to the issue

of how things might have looked. It is just as legitimate as doing so with respect to the theories one may draw from excavations pertaining to the Neanderthals, Neolithic or Bronze Age in Europe, but nobody thinks about criticizing it there. Whereas, the instant we attempt to interpret the finds from Troy, our work is suddenly cast in doubt, because what we say does not mesh with the image others may have of Troy. At this point, various scientific disciplines converge.

**Q:** Criticism has focused over and over again on the doubt surrounding the historical and geographical importance that Troy may have had, and more especially, the role attributed to Troy in Homer's verse. What would you say with respect to the latest research on Homer?

**Korfmann:** Research on Homer has gone ahead at such a clip that it will, very shortly, be possible to present the historical core of the *Iliad*—however one might choose to define that. In the meantime, it has become accepted practice among scientists to speak not only of the Eighth Century, but of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries as well. As an archaeologist, I take it as a challenge to at least think about these precise issues. We are not looking, though, for a single Trojan War, as such, but have rather worked with the assumption that there have been many wars over this exact area. Simply on the basis of the topography alone, taking into account the site's particular position in the landscape and the fact that winds always blow from the north, it is fairly clear that it could not have been a place of slight importance. To the north of Mycenae and Tiryns, there is no comparable site of this size. When one considers Mycenae apart from its famous grave goods, there is no other place so large, so well-equipped, and in any way comparable to Troy. The grave goods gave Mycenae its reputation as the Golden Mycenae, and led to its being attributed so major a role in history.

**Q:** In 1997, in the *Festschrift* honoring Wolfgang Röllig, you proposed to correct the way people have been presenting Troy to date. Could you comment on this?

**Korfmann:** My own view is that we have got to take Homer more seriously, in terms of his epoch, the Eighth Century. Before we began to excavate, the general opinion was that archaeological finds had served only to demonstrate that there was no historical background to the *Iliad* worth discussing. In particular, the Hachmann Study, in 1964, put forward a wide range of arguments to that effect. And to be fair, at the time, one could do so. Nevertheless, our own work here has put each and every one of those arguments to the test. I presented the new conclusions in detail in an article for the *Festschrift* honoring Wolfgang Röllig in 1997. In the *Studia Troica* 2, in 1992, I demonstrated that there was a lower settlement, and that the fact might have been acknowledged earlier, had one looked closely enough into previously published material. As early as Dörpfeld, one reads that a search for the lower city was in order. But that never happened, not in his

day. In the 1930s, the Americans had other objectives, among other things, looking for the cemeteries. As for our own work, now that we have traced the outline of the lower settlement, we can, little by little, turn our attentions to the issue of the cemeteries.

Bearing in mind all that I have said above, one cannot but wonder why such a campaign has been launched in the press, now that the exhibition has been up for some time, and after a series of lectures has been given in Stuttgart, and now that we are removed from the scene, back here on the Troy excavation. It is important to emphasize here, that the group presenting itself as our “opponents” is made up of individuals who were told in their student days that “it’s a well-known fact that archaeology has demonstrated that everything (in the *Iliad*) was made up”—and such arguments were, of course, passed on to students as well. You have some of the more famous names in Classical history among them. As a scientist, I see it as my duty to step forward, nevertheless, and emphatically state that such arguments should not go uncontested. If the philologists themselves, through their own methods, have come to the conclusion that there does exist here a “historical background,” then the archaeologists need to consider the relevant information in a new light. Notably, when the experts in Ancient Anatolia tell us that we have been working on a site called Wilusa, we have got to take that into account. As for those who assume that I have been presenting the work of fantasy, or that I have been leading people down the garden path, I would suggest they come out here and take a look themselves at the houses in the lower settlement, and the excavation. One can freely debate this, that and the other, but I defy anyone to assert that these things are just not there. But that is what the media are after—an event?

**Q:** Another point of contention was the fact that you have compared the settlement’s role in maritime commerce with that of the Hanseatic League. Why would such a comparison be considered unacceptable?

**Korfmann:** An ordinary sort of vessel such as would dock at ports in those times would be manned by a crew of roughly ten. That we know from the *Ulu Burun* shipwreck, for example, which went down around 1327 B.C. before the southern coast of Turkey. Such vessels could be seized rather easily, particularly when the crew disembarked overnight at a port. These smallish vessels were, essentially, loaded only with valuable goods. Were a trading port city unable to guarantee shipowners and captains that their port was safe, and that the vessels would not be attacked and plundered, the city would straightaway lose both its reputation, and the prosperity it garnered from the vessels moving through its waters. With such a geographically important position as Troy possessed, where everything was conditioned and controlled by the winds and the currents at the Dardanelles Straits, the prosperity of the citadel and the surrounding area depended on the

Trojans behaving decently towards travellers. I do believe that all trading cities took the same approach, and that they accordingly entered into treaties, whether by word of mouth, or in writing, with the vessels, in other words, with the cities and lands from which the vessels came.

We know in some detail of the treaties produced from the Third and Second Millennium B.C. between the great powers and city-states of the day, such as Byblos and Ugarit, etc. It is simply not the case that these were the “Dark Ages.” Professor Wilhelm exclaims that even in Anatolia, we have now emerged into “the blinding light of history.”

Although most people remain focused on Greece, the fact is that when one adopts the vantage point of the Orient, and of Hittite studies, one does actually know a very great deal, even though not all the available material has been thoroughly examined, nor has it, perhaps, yet acquired the status of received knowledge. The expansive written Hittite sources are very much like springs churning in their depths, and would churn and gush to the surface if there were enough positions available to specialists who are capable of unleashing them. Now, if these coastal cities of the Second Millennium B.C. can be shown to have adopted principles pertaining to “trade,” then it can be generally said that the same must apply, broadly, to all millennia. Sea-faring populations have always had rules. One finds that with the Venetians, and their Mediterranean trading posts, and earlier with the Greeks, who, having left their bases such as Miletus in Asia Minor, maintained colonies as far as the Black Sea; not to mention the Phoenicians, etc. One began at a center, a starting-point, from which one set sail for those places where one engaged in secure trading. When one is operating within a trading alliance, one is entitled to expect greater personal safety, as well as better guarantees for one’s cargo. The same applied to the Hanseatic League, where, due to the formation of a common market, the cities involved organized a system for common security as well as one for guarantees, which extended from the seas, inland. There was someone who was offended over the fact that I had ventured to say so with respect to a port city, or a place on the coast, which Troy most certainly is. I did this simply to present the matter through a comparison for visitors to the exhibition. When I exclaim that a trading alliance between port cities was, in effect, described by Homer for the Eighth Century—in the catalogue of the ships of the *Iliad*—then I naturally do not mean that the Trojans actually had these trading alliances, only that something similar most probably existed in the Second Millennium B.C. In other words, I would not assert that Homer was describing the Trojan Hanseatic League: I am trying to allow an “outsider” to gain a rough understanding of how that sort of system may have operated.

**Q:** You have an international team working with you. What role do the specialists in other fields of study play in your work here, specialists who at first glance seem to have very

little to do with history?

**Korfmann:** Specialists in the natural sciences are among those who are represented here. Analyses of metals have supplied information as to whether finds from different time periods do come from the area around and in the vicinity of Troy, or rather from the Pontus, the Caucasus, or perhaps the northern Black Sea region. Zoology has a part to play as well. Archaeozoologists have discovered that, at the very time the citadel was built, or perhaps a mere two decades later, there were horses everywhere at Troy, where previously, there had been none. The horse comes from the Pontus; it is an animal of the steppe and the highlands of Anatolia. The horse does not originally come from Greece, or Egypt, but rather from cold, open landscapes. Horses must be domesticated and bred over a long period of time before they become useful animals to people. How the horse got to Troy, we do not know at present. Those that suddenly become present at Troy, and throughout the Mediterranean in 1700 B.C., must have come from somewhere. The horse was the great weapon of the Second Millennium B.C., and spread terror through its use. It is no accident that the pharaohs are portrayed as rulers in horse-drawn war chariots. Such applies as well to the grave stelae at Mycenae, which also depict such chariots.

**Q:** Dr. Korfmann, Troy was one of the centers of the world economy in its time, as you once described, with far-extending trading partners. It must also have been a focal point for international contacts and alliances, considering, for example, that the old Silk Road passes by rather near to here. Can it be demonstrated that contacts existed between Troy, China, and Egypt, for example?

**Korfmann:** No, I would not go that far. Insofar as trade is concerned, I'd rather proceed with caution. All that we can say for the moment is that Troy was on the periphery of what was then the "Near Eastern" world. I have made that fairly clear when comparing Troy to other cities in several of my publications. Compared to Karkemiš, Ugarit, or Hattuša, Troy is relatively small. I would definitely not go so far as to make Troy out to be the world-metropolis of the East. Ten years ago, the weekly magazine *Spiegel* accused me of having made Troy too insignificant, while they proposed, instead, that Troy was actually Atlantis, as one geologist had claimed. And now I'm being accused of the opposite, that I'm exaggerating, that I am building sandcastles-in-the-air when it comes to Troy's size. I have come to the conclusion that one has got to live with the fact that there will always be people who want to climb onto the Troy bandwagon, and take hold of the reins!

Turning to the matter of trade, I make the point that since I know that precisely in this area, at the Dardanelles Straits, the Greeks would found one city after another a couple of centuries later, in order to foster a brisk trade in all sorts of goods, then I find it plausible that this might have been going on in an earlier millennium. Treasure hoards dating from the

Third Millennium B.C. indicate that trading networks from this region stretched as far as Afghanistan. In one Afghan valley, in Badakhshan, there is, along with lapis lazuli, tin. How did tin get into the regions of the Eastern Mediterranean? Perhaps from Bohemia, but more likely from Central Asia. There is tin south of the Urals, in Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. The oldest artefacts containing tin have been found in, of all places, Alacahöyük, in the northern part of Turkey, in Troy, Lesbos, and Lemnos, as well as in Mesopotamian Ur, where lapis lazuli has also been uncovered. New research, supported by the German Archaeological Institute, has focused on Central Asia, because of the assumption that tin may well have come to us from that region. The geographical position of Troy makes it almost certain that the city came into contact with the business of such distant trading, as indicated by the remarkable treasure hoards dating from roughly 2500 B.C. Tin, mixed with copper, is what produces bronze, which is the most significant product of the Bronze Age. It is a material whose use produced far-reaching consequences, as in the essentials of warfare. When one considers, in addition to this, the early use of wheel-made pottery, as well as the existence of the so-called Megara, one can then assume that Troy in the Third Millennium B.C. could very well have prospered as a result of such trading contacts.

I find it difficult to understand at any level why anyone would be so offended by our use of the term "trade." The mechanisms of trade in the ancient world, which operated in the peripheral regions of higher cultures, are well known to us through written sources. It is worth noting that the Assyrian trading colonies extended outward from Assur, forming a long chain, which extended to the Black Sea. These so-called Karum settlements of the Nineteenth and Eighteenth Centuries B.C. were subject to the rulers of Assur. Translated from the Assyrian language, these trading colonies are called "ports," which indicates that the same sort of legal constructs would apply to the Euphrates and Tigris ports, as to the "overland ports" of the trading colonies. While Byblos oversaw Egypt, Ugarit/Ras Shamra oversaw Cyprus and the Aegean. Judging by these legal constructs, Troy was on the periphery of that world, but certainly not outside of its borders, neither in the Third, nor in the Second, Millennium B.C. To give one example, the *Ulu Burun* ship already mentioned here, which sank in 1327 B.C., was carrying goods from the greater powers of the day. Once we have understood the prevailing trading system, it is quite legitimate to assume that such a vessel might also have docked at Troy. One piece of evidence for this was a stone scepter from the Carpathians (present-day Romania) found on the vessel. What routes did such vessels take? Perhaps they followed the Danube into the Black Sea, and then, very likely, sailed on past Troy. Considering the geographical location of Troy, it could very well have served as the link to the Black Sea, to Thrace, Bulgaria, and to the hinterlands of southeast Europe.