

## Homer in Schliemann, Blegen and Korfmann

Aaron Psujek

---

Homer has had a powerful influence on the entirety of Western civilization. Through his epics and the tradition they represent, western culture traces many of its tropes, stereotypes and narrative techniques. Homer's influence extends well beyond the poetic and literary however. He has also had a tremendous influence on modern sentiments regarding how the classical Greeks saw their place in the world. Homer helps modern scholars better understand the entirety of the classical Greek tradition. Homer's *Iliad* in particular has been an influence and can still be viewed as the Greek national epic to this day. It is no wonder the *Iliad* has heavily influenced Greek and Anatolian archaeology. The quest for Troy dominated early archaeology and would eventually lead to the advent of many of the archeological tools and systems in place today. It remains to be seen, however, if the influence of Homer on the site of Hisarlik, believed today to be the location of ancient Troy, has diminished with time..

To examine this question, I will look at three excavators: Heinrich Schliemann, Carl Blegen and Manfred Korfmann. I chose these three because each sparked considerable debate and discussion concerning their findings. This is not to discount the work done by the early travelers to Hisarlik, nor to other excavators, specifically Wilhelm Dörpfeld. However, in the interest of focusing my paper I settled on these three excavators, since they can easily represent the beginning, middle and contemporary nature, styles and attitudes toward the site and excavation. In this paper, I hope to show that Homer casts a shadow of influence over the site of Hisarlik and the study of ancient Troy. Yet, this shadow takes different forms for different excavators. For Schliemann, he wished to find the true Homeric Troy and was quick to use Homer as a historical source. Blegen, too, wished to find the Homeric Troy but was interested in fitting the stories of the *Iliad* to the evidence found on site. Korfmann's relationship with Homer is the most complicated and hardest to pin down. Yet in examining the responses to Korfmann's excavation, it becomes clear that by this point the shadow of influence that Homer casts over Hisarlik is impossible to escape for an excavator. Thus, despite the complexity, it becomes clear Korfmann had a relationship with Homer. However, even more important is by Korfmann's excavations modern scholars could no longer discuss Hisarlik without invoking the name of Homer. Despite the differences between the three excavators they all used Homer in a very similar way: as a sell to the layman. Taken together, it will be seen that Homer became inseparable from Troy by the time of Korfmann.

## Homer and Schliemann

Schliemann wears his love of Homer, the *Iliad* and the quest for Homeric Troy on his sleeve. His writing commonly seems more of a romanticized adventurer than a scholarly account of his finds. For this reason, as well as his early and oftentimes destructive excavation style, Schliemann cuts a controversial figure in the archeological world. One look at modern writings on Schliemann can cast this controversy in a clear light. Books such as *Golden Treasures of Troy: The Dream of Heinrich Schliemann* clearly contrast with the negative connotations inherent in the title *Schliemann of Troy: Treasure and Deceit*. This controversy may seem only partially related to the discussion of Homer's influence on Schliemann, but it occupies an important place in that discussion. One of the core issues is whether Schliemann distorted his finds in order to claim he had found Homer's Troy. Thus, the quest for Homer's Troy is at the heart of the controversy that surrounds Schliemann.

Schliemann lays out his goal of finding Homeric Troy neatly in *Ilios: The City and Country of the Trojans*. In its conclusion, he states, "May this *research with the pickaxe and the spade* prove more and more that the events described in the divine Homeric poems are not mythic tales, but that they are based on real facts."<sup>1</sup> He goes on to write,

In humbly laying this account of my disinterested labours before the judgment-seat of the civilized world, I should feel the profoundest satisfaction, and should esteem it as the greatest reward my ambition could aspire to, if it were generally acknowledged that I have been instrumental towards the attainment of that great aim of my life.<sup>2</sup>

This highlights another important facet of Schliemann's character: he desperately wanted to be known as a scholar and an academic. "Heinrich Schliemann, in his younger years, might be called an unsophisticated reader of Homer; and in his maturity he aspired to the status of professional scholar."<sup>3</sup> This, too, is important because it highlights another issue of the deep controversy surrounding Schliemann: how much were his actions driven by this desire?

At this point, one is left with other questions. Did Schliemann really wish to find Homeric Troy because of some love of Homer? Did Schliemann just invoke the name of Homer and lay out that it was his

---

<sup>1</sup>Heinrich Schliemann, *Ilios: The City and Country of the Trojans* (Salem: Ayer Company, Publishers, Inc., 1989), 672.

<sup>2</sup>Schliemann, *Ilios: The City and Country of the Trojans*, 672.

<sup>3</sup>William A. McDonald, *The Discovery of Homeric Greece* (London: Elek Books Limited, 1967), 9.

life's goal to excavate Troy in an attempt to lend credence and invoke attention to his finds, fabricated or otherwise, in order to be labeled as an academic? Even granting that he did not fabricate claims and went about his quest with the noblest of intentions, should his findings still be colored by the fact that he was searching for a myth? The answers to these questions are not simple and the truth likely exists somewhere in the middle.

It would be overly cynical, however, to attribute Schliemann's invocation of Homer's name and his statement of his passion for Troy and the *Iliad* as little more than a farce, as Calder and Traill have argued.<sup>4</sup> While it is undeniable Schliemann was a constant exaggerator and has been caught in his fair share of lies, the mere fact he chose his quest for Homeric Troy as his life's work is evidence he had a deep respect and love of Homer and the *Iliad*. Mark Lehrer and David Turner craft a much better picture of Schliemann's interest in Homer, stating, "Schliemann's interest in archeological excavations, with his characteristic intermingling of scientific and pecuniary motives, is thus documentable almost as far back as his enthusiasm for Homer, although these interests presumably did not merge until 1868."<sup>5</sup>

What Lehrer and Turner's picture gives us is more of a middle ground. Schliemann had embraced Homer and classical archaeology at different points in his life. While he may have exaggerated his early desire to excavate Homeric Troy, that does not mean his love of Homer and the *Iliad* was anything less than genuine. Also, while Schliemann may have had less than noble intentions (he did earn the label "treasure hunter" for a reason) that does not mean he was against searching for Homeric Troy for its own scientific benefit. At the same time, Calder and Traill are right to acknowledge Schliemann was a savvy salesman and knew what the public wanted. In writing about Schliemann's finding of Priam's Treasure, Traill argues, "I think that [Schliemann's description] can be more accurately attributed to a canny sense of what the public wanted to hear and an ability to satisfy that demand."<sup>6</sup> Selling Homer to the public was a smart move by Schliemann as it allowed him greater security in his excavations. However, Schliemann playing the

---

<sup>4</sup>D. F. Easton, "Heinrich Schliemann: Hero or Fraud?" *The Classical World* 95 (1998): 335.

<sup>5</sup>Mark Lehrer and David Turner, "The Making of an Homeric Archeologist: Schliemann's Diary of 1868," *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 84 (1989): 224.

<sup>6</sup>David A. Traill, *Schliemann of Troy: Treasure and Deceit* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 114.

salesman does not mean he did not draw any legitimate influence from Homer or that he was merely playing off the public.

The other side of the argument labels Schliemann as a hero and the founder of modern Aegean archeology. This view in particular is evident in the public eye. In *The Golden Treasures of Troy*, a book written for a public audience, Herve Duchene writes, "Schliemann's point of departure was simple—a refusal to read the Homeric poems as mere stories... He gave them a geographical setting... He thus revived the Aegean world of the second millennium BC and became the father of pre-Hellenic archaeology..."<sup>7</sup> Duchene here is obviously casting Schliemann in a very positive light, contrary to the very negative conception of Schliemann presented above.

A full examination of the disconnect between the scholarly and public perception of Schliemann is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice to say that, as Schliemann's name carries quite a bit of baggage in scholarly circles, to the public he is still described as the successful, adventurous hero who discovered Troy. This perception obviously misses the mark just as much, if not more, than the negative one above. It is not my intention to argue Schliemann should be cast necessarily in a strictly positive light. Instead, I am arguing between the positive and negative views of Schliemann lie the reality of his contributions to archaeology and his use of Homer in his excavations.

A question still remains to be answered, however. How, exactly, did Schliemann use Homer in his writings? It has been stated repeatedly, both in this paper and others, that Schliemann wore his love of Homer and the *Iliad* on his sleeve. What needs to be shown now is how this love took form in Schliemann's works. There are two ways Homer is actually used in Schliemann. First, Homer is defended using corroborating evidence from other sources and from the site of Hisarlik. On the other hand, Homer is also used as evidence himself. These two styles intertwine throughout Schliemann's writing. This is noteworthy because today one would be expected to show first that a source is historically reliable, especially one as controversial as Homer, and then use that source as evidence. Instead, Schliemann uses Homer as evidence at the same time he defends him. This is likely because Schliemann already recognized Homer as a reliable source. However, it still reinforces the controversy surrounding Schliemann.

A good example of Schliemann looking to outside sources to corroborate and defend the literal historical truth of Homer comes from the book *Troja*. In it, Schliemann argues that Egyptian documents corroborate the assertion that the kingdom of Troy existed as Homer

---

<sup>7</sup>Herve Duchene, *The Golden Treasures of Troy: the Dream of Heinrich Schliemann* (New York: Abrams, 1996), 15.

envisaged it.<sup>8</sup> Writing on various kingdoms mentioned in the Egyptian sources, he goes on to state, “What struck me still more was, that these are precisely the same peoples who are enumerated in the second book of the *Iliad* as auxiliaries of the Trojans in the defense of their city.”<sup>9</sup> From the Egyptian evidence, Schliemann sees proof for the historical interpretation of Homer. Not just the more middling position that the *Iliad* could have a kernel of historical truth in it, but that Homer was writing the truth when stating that there were peoples that rode to the defense of Troy against the Mycenaeans.

As stated above, the other way that Schliemann uses Homer is in defense of Hisarlik as Troy. An example of this can be gleaned from *Troja* in a passage discussing the geography of Troy—specifically, discussing the location of tributaries that are fed by the Scamander. Schliemann writes,

Supposing now these springs did not exist, and we were asked to indicate the place best suited for the situation of the two Trojan springs flowing into the Scamander, with the stone wash-basins, in which the women of Troy used to wash their clothes, and where the single combat between Hector and Achilles took place, we should certainly indicate this precise spot, because it answers in all its details to the Homeric description.<sup>10</sup>

Schliemann states here that even without the physical remains found to point to these springs being used by Troy and leading into the Scamander one could still tell that they were important to the Trojans. Achilles and Hector’s famous duel took place there and it matched the physical descriptions found in Homer. Therefore, Homer can be used as a guide to the region. In fact, Homer is such a good guide one does not need to find any corroborating evidence because his descriptions were so accurate.

It is easy to see how Schliemann used Homer in his excavations of Troy. Homer was his guide and his objective. Schliemann both wished to defend a literal, historical reading of Homer’s *Iliad* and actually openly used the *Iliad* as a source in his work. This action, along with his desire to be labeled as a scholar and the potentially shady course he took to achieve that goal, placed Schliemann in a maelstrom of controversy in which he has remained to this day. There are those who would see Schliemann as a hero and there are those who would see him as a rogue and a treasure hunter. It would be unfair to label Schliemann as solely

---

<sup>8</sup>Heinrich Schliemann, *Troja* (Salem: Ayer Company, Publishers, Inc., 1989), 2.

<sup>9</sup>Schliemann, *Troja*, 3.

<sup>10</sup>Schliemann, *Troja*, 65.

responsible for Homer's influence over Hisarlik, as any mention of Troy would have likely invoked Homer's name rather quickly. However, Schliemann is still the one to pull the trigger, and he is the one who actively and happily placed Homer at the center of Hisarlik, a spot, it could be argued, Homer has occupied ever since, no matter how hard excavators wish to ignore him.

### **Blegen and Homer**

Carl Blegen took up the excavations of Hisarlik after Schliemann and Dorpfeld. He approached the site much differently than Schliemann, looking to refine the stratification with the new archaeological developments maturing during his time, as well as conduct his own excavation. Blegen and his search are more reminiscent of the classical conception of an excavator and excavation: quiet, reserved, and scientific. This clashes remarkably with Schliemann and his characteristic "adventuring" spirit and, what some would call, brashness. Blegen, however, soon became embroiled in his own controversy, and again, at the center was Homer and Homeric Troy. This time the controversy centered on a debate between Blegen and Schliemann's immediate successor: Dorpfeld. Blegen felt as though Homeric Troy was embodied in the level Troy VII while Dorpfeld believed Homeric Troy was Troy VI.<sup>11</sup> Blegen clearly uses the name Homer and looks to corroborate his findings with stories from the *Iliad*, but is much more muted than Schliemann. Therefore, his use of Homer is markedly different from Schliemann's, but despite these differences, Homer was still at the heart of Blegen's excavations.

It would probably not be possible to have two people more different from each other than Blegen and Schliemann. Fitton writes that "amidst the clashes of temperament that characterized the debate on Minoan and Mycenaean relations, Carl Blegen seems to have provided an oasis of calm."<sup>12</sup> Compare this description to Schliemann, whose name has likely never appeared in the same sentence as the word *calm*. Where Schliemann sparked controversy and engaged in exaggerated self-characterization, Blegen gathered friends and quietly but assuredly went about his business. It is also very true Blegen was no pushover; to characterize him as such would be a grave mistake. Fitton goes on to write, "Blegen was to be distinguished by his restrained but firm insistence on the truth as he saw it," and "one has the sense of his quietly putting into position building-blocks of knowledge while storms

---

<sup>11</sup>J. Lesley Fitton, *The Discovery of the Greek Bronze Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 159-160.

<sup>12</sup>Fitton, *The Discovery of the Greek Bronze Age*, 155.

raged around him.”<sup>13</sup> A quiet but strong figure, he did not look for debate but would not shy away from it.

When Blegen came to Troy he had multiple objectives. The first, as he lists, was to “reexamine the whole problem of the Trojan stratification in the light of present-day knowledge of Aegean archaeology.”<sup>14</sup> He wished to go back over the work done by Schliemann and his team, not because what they did was necessarily wrong, but because of the developments the field of archaeology had undergone since Schliemann’s day. He also states two other aims were to search for pre-classical tombs in the region around Hisarlik, as well as conduct a major study of the entire Troad in an attempt to complete the ancient geography of the region.<sup>15</sup> It is when he discusses the base reason for returning to Hisarlik that most concerns this paper. He writes,

Not much is needed in the way of justification...whatever contrary theories and speculations may be brought forward by those who oppose the identification, it was also surely the actual citadel—if there ever was one—that came to be immortalized, magnified, and gilded with poetic glamor, in the *Iliad*. Both from the side of general human interest and from the strictly archaeological point of view it was, and is, a place of unique appeal.<sup>16</sup>

The above quote says much to the way that Blegen views Homer. To begin, he starts by stating, “not much is needed in the way of justification.” The appeal to go back to Hisarlik and the need to further the understanding for the site is self-evident for him. This is especially true since he does not give the time of day to arguments that the site of Troy was still lost or located elsewhere. On the other hand, he also acknowledges there may not have been a historical site of Troy when he states “if there was one,” but he seems to quickly discard that by also saying that its connection to Homer and to myth grant it a special place in both archaeological terms and in terms of the general public. However, he also grants that Homer’s vision is not necessarily historical when he writes that it was “immortalized, magnified, and gilded.” For Blegen, then, Homer’s *Iliad* recounts real places and a real conflict between those places. However, Homer’s account is poetry and myth, not history, and it is up to archaeologists and historians to find the truth behind the myth.

---

<sup>13</sup>Fitton, *The Discovery of the Greek Bronze Age*, 156.

<sup>14</sup>Carl Blegen, John L. Caskey, Marion Rawson, and Jerome Sperling, *Troy* v.1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 7.

<sup>15</sup>Blegen, et al., *Troy*, 8.

<sup>16</sup>Blegen, et al., *Troy*, 5.

One of the few ways Blegen and Schliemann's excavations were similar is Blegen also used Homer to sell the site. After the publication of his four-volume set of texts detailing his excavations, he set out to write a book for a lay audience. This book took the form of *Troy and the Trojans* and was Blegen's attempt to make his work digestible for a modern audience. It is no coincidence Homer has a much stronger presence in this book than he did in any of his scholarly publications. Blegen's book begins with Homer and spends an entire chapter discussing Homeric Troy and evidence for the historicity of the epic in the site. Indeed, Blegen takes a stronger stance on Homer than in any of his other publications when he states, "[The Trojan War] must have a basis of historical fact, furthermore a good many of the individual heroes-though probably not all-who are mentioned in the poems were drawn from real personalities."<sup>17</sup>

Like Schliemann's characterization of the treasure of Priam, Blegen appears to be using Homer to sell to the public. While it should be said Blegen's book is in no way reminiscent of the larger than life adventures Schliemann painted, Blegen still appears to be cannily using Homer because the public wants and expects it in a book about Troy. More so than with Schliemann, this selling of Homer should not blemish his scholarly works. The tone and narrative used in a book geared toward the layman should by no means affect the contributions Blegen made to archaeology and scholarship on Hisarlik.

Blegen's use of Homer is inseparable from his debate with Dorpfeld. The core of their debate was a fight over which Troy level embodied the Homeric Troy. Dorpfeld's excavations led him to believe that the grandiose settlement of Troy VI, along with the length of time that the settlement stood, was Homer's Troy.<sup>18</sup> Blegen, as stated, felt Troy VIIA represented a siege mentality and thus better fit Homer's picture of the Trojan War.<sup>19</sup> It is clear why this debate is so important in studying Homer's influence over the site of Hisarlik. Here are two esteemed archaeologists and scholars debating over which settlement at Hisarlik best embodies the truth behind the *Iliad*. It is not just a debate over which site seemed to represent being destroyed by human hands, but which site seemed to show Agamemnon's clash with Priam. Homer has taken as much of the center stage as he had with Schliemann, despite his name being invoked less in published scholarly material.

Dorpfeld was the successor to Schliemann and had worked with Schliemann himself on his later campaigns. Because of this, Dorpfeld understandably had a continued interest in Hisarlik and finding Troy.

---

<sup>17</sup>Carl Blegen, *Troy and the Trojans* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger), 20.

<sup>18</sup>McDonald, *The Discovery of Homeric Greece*, 9

<sup>19</sup>Fitton, *The Discovery of the Greek Bronze Age*, 159-160.



Indeed, he held great respect for Schliemann and the work they did together at Hisarlik. However, he also understood the limitations of those early excavations and had doubts concerning Schliemann's conclusions about the nature of various settlements, as well as Troy II being labeled Homer's Troy.<sup>20</sup> Dorpfeld concentrated his excavations on Troy VI and in both of his excavations uncovered large, well-constructed walls and spacious and advanced housing.<sup>21</sup> Lastly, in terms of dating, Dorpfeld writes, "one need scarcely mention that this dating is in harmony with the time-setting now held for the Trojan War and the destruction of the citadel by the Greeks."<sup>22</sup>

The importance of when these different settlements fell was very important for Dorpfeld and Blegen. Too early an approximation and neither Troy would be important enough to assault, nor would the Mycenaeans have had the ability to attack. Too late and the Dark Age would have descended and the old powers of the Bronze Age would have been destroyed. Therefore, there was a very narrow time frame in which the war in Homer's *Iliad* could have taken place. Getting the correct dates became vital for both Blegen and Dorpfeld. The importance of the chronology and the timing is brought into focus when, in a preliminary season report, Blegen states, "Professor Dorpfeld has informed me that he is unable to accept the dating of Troy VI and Troy VIIA which we proposed in our preliminary report for the season of 1934," and he goes on to outline how he hoped further excavation would better establish the proper chronology.<sup>23</sup>

Blegen, too, examined the later settlements of Troy. In particular for this paper, his work on Troy VI and especially Troy VIIA is important. Blegen saw the grand structures of Troy VI and the shantytown of Troy VIIA. However, his conclusion, as stated before, was far different than Dorpfeld's. Blegen felt the scraping together of shelters, the sinking of storage pots into the earth and the hastily rebuilt defenses of Troy VIIA pointed to a siege mentality that pervaded the history of that stratum of the settlement.<sup>24</sup> As for how the two settlements ended, Blegen holds "Troy VI came to its end, probably in a severe earthquake," and Troy VIIA fell "doubtless by human agency, in a great conflagration in the early years of the twelfth century."<sup>25</sup> Blegen would eventually write that there is only one way to see this data:

---

<sup>20</sup>McDonald, *The Discovery of Homeric Greece*, 218.

<sup>21</sup>McDonald, *The Discovery of Homeric Greece*, 218-219.

<sup>22</sup>McDonald, *The Discovery of Homeric Greece*, 219.

<sup>23</sup>Carl Blegen, "Excavations at Troy, 1935," *American Journal of Archaeology* 39 (1935): 550.

<sup>24</sup>McDonald, *The Discovery of Homeric Greece*, 225.

<sup>25</sup>Blegen, "Excavations at Troy, 1935," 550-551.

As shown by persuasive archaeological evidence, [the settlement] was besieged and captured by enemies and destroyed by fire...just as Hellenic poetry and folk-tale describe the destruction of king Priam's Troy...It is Settlement VIIA, then, that must be recognized as the actual Troy, the ill-fated stronghold, the siege and capture of which caught the fancy and imagination of contemporary troubadours and bards.<sup>26</sup>

His conclusion is obvious: there is only one Troy that can be labeled as Homeric Troy, the "actual Troy" as he calls it, and that Troy is settlement VIIA because its situation corroborates that of the Troy of Homer's *Iliad*.

The goal here is not to persuade the reader one way or another in regards to Dorpfeld and Blegen's debate. Instead, it was to use the debate to highlight how Homer was utilized in the excavation of Troy. Through the debate, we can see the excavation of Troy was still dominated by the search for Homer's Troy, or the "actual Troy." Thus, Homer still remained at the heart of the excavations and the shadow of his hand was still felt by the different excavators. Blegen and Schliemann may have utilized Homer differently, but one need only flip open to the index of a book written by Schliemann and compare it to one written by Blegen to know that Blegen was not using Homer as source nor invoking his name as much. However, their goals remained largely the same: both embarked on a quest to find Homeric Troy.

### **Korfmann and Homer**

Korfmann's relationship with Homer is perhaps the most complicated of all of the excavators. It is clear he tried to actively avoid Homer influencing his excavations. However, Homer's name is still invoked in Korfmann's writings, the writings of his team members and the writings of his critics. What seems to be the case is, with Korfmann's excavations, Homer has bled more into the background of the site itself. Because of the work that preceded Korfmann, Hisarlik and Troy became nearly impossible to discuss without mentioning Homer. However, Korfmann clearly went to great lengths to make it so Homer was not in the limelight for the excavation—that Hisarlik was excavated for its own merits. Indeed, one of the key objectives of Korfmann was to approach Hisarlik from an Anatolian, rather than Greek, direction.<sup>27</sup> This shift of direction speaks volumes about any potential primacy Homer could have as well as the direction of the

---

<sup>26</sup>McDonald, *The Discovery of Homeric Greece*, 226.

<sup>27</sup>Joachim Latacz, *Troy and Homer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 20.

excavations; gone were the days of excavators looking specifically for proof of Homer's Troy. However, the situation becomes complicated since Korfmann often used Homer in order to set the scene and contextualize his excavations. For these reasons it can be said Korfmann had a relationship with Homer and Homer still influences the site of Hisarlik and how scholars discuss it.

Like Blegen before him, Korfmann had his own debate at the center of his excavation. He became embroiled in a vicious argument with Frank Kolb over the nature of the site of Hisarlik and the size of the city. Specifically, the fight was over the lower city, with Korfmann arguing for a very large lower city housing thousands and Kolb arguing for only a minor settlement around the citadel, if any. This debate divided scholarship on Troy and grew to include everything from the nature of trade at Hisarlik to the cultural orientation of the site. One of the topics of debate is the establishment of which stratum of Troy represented Homeric Troy. However, Homer still held a key position in the debate and his name was invoked often on both sides. Homer's influence over Hisarlik was such that, even without looking for his Troy, his name still occupied a key position in the argument.

It is best to begin by analyzing how Korfmann uses Homer in his writing on the site, since Kolb is oftentimes responding to Korfmann's conclusions. In Korfmann's writings Homer is mentioned by name many times and the *Iliad* is commonly referenced. Korfmann wrote little in English, yet even so, Homer's presence is obvious. In the article *Troia, an Ancient Anatolian Palatial and Trading Center* alone there are seventeen references to Homer. Oftentimes these references occur in the context of a larger argument. Korfmann never goes the Schliemann route where he blatantly uses Homer as a historical source. Instead, he seems to utilize Homer more like Blegen, as a means to set the scene for the site and invoking his name in contexts that are reminiscent of the *Iliad*.

For example, in outlining the discovery of a defensive ditch and wall at Troy, Korfmann writes,

Both constructions are described in detail by Homer in connection with the ship camp of the attackers. The question is whether such features represented standard building techniques or whether instead they embodied specific bardic traditions relating to Troy and its vicinity. At Troy, these two defensive features have now been archaeologically established.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Manfred Korfmann, "Troia, an Ancient Anatolian Palatial and Trading Center," *The Classical World* 91 (1998): 372.

In this passage, Korfmann arrives at Homer after he and his team had already found the defensive structures described. Until these constructions were found, it was unclear whether they were created by Homer or some other poet as part of a non-historical tradition, or whether the defensive structures were common and employed at Hisarlik. Korfmann's use of Homer here is not as a source like in Schliemann or even as a guiding light like in Blegen; instead he is using Homer to set the scene as that scene is corroborated by archaeological finds.

In the same article, Korfmann does state his conclusion concerning the historical nature of the *Iliad*. In discussing Homer's list of Troy's allied cities, he writes, "Homer's list of allied peoples and regions is completely plausible and convincing even for the thirteenth and twelfth centuries B.C.E. In its nucleus, the *Iliad* may reflect historical reality."<sup>29</sup> It is not a strong statement by any means; Korfmann is clearly far removed from Schliemann. However, this is still telling of where Korfmann places Homer in his excavations at Hisarlik. Just as he argues that at the nucleus of the *Iliad* there could be a kernel of truth, Homer is thus placed at the nucleus of Troy. The implication here, especially in light of Korfmann attempting to defend Homer's account of the allies of Troy, is that there is a kernel of Homeric truth to find and that truth is, at the very least, one of the goals of his excavations.

One of Frank Kolb's many criticisms of Korfmann centers on Korfmann's use of Homer in his excavations. According to Kolb, Korfmann's description of the potential Trojan lower city could account for as many as 10,000 citizens, "thus confirming the description found of Troy found in Homer's *Iliad*."<sup>30</sup> In the following few paragraphs Kolb goes on to deride such a description and Korfmann's classification of Troy as a trading city, going so far as to say Korfmann did not provide any evidence for such claims. The use of Homer here could be a simple descriptor; Kolb could just be invoking Homer's name to set the scene and give a sense of the scale that Korfmann was attributing to Troy. However, when looked at in conjunction with other reactions to Korfmann, the above quote begins to look very critical. Kolb is accusing Korfmann of letting Homer get in the way of his work, for either inspiring his digs too much or for Korfmann utilizing Homer for notoriety.

As stated, Kolb's other reactions corroborate the above statement. In another publication, Kolb writes, "Korfmann stands out not only as continuing the long tradition of scholars who account for the historic

---

<sup>29</sup>Korfmann, "Troia, an Ancient Anatolian Palatial and Trading Center," 383.

<sup>30</sup>Dieter Hertel and Frank Kolb, "Troy in Clearer Perspective," *Anatolian Studies* 53 (2003): 73.

significance of Troy as revealed in the Homeric epics by its strategic importance controlling the entrance to the Dardanelles, but also as attributing to Troy hitherto unprecedented economic importance."<sup>31</sup> He also states the history of the research into the Homeric epics show that literary traditions cannot fit easily into archaeological strata and historical records.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, in another publication, Kolb denies any connection between the actual site of Troy with the Homeric epic: "Troy VI and VIIA, which might be considered a chronological match for Homer's Troy, were wretched little settlements which could make no serious claim to the title of city."<sup>33</sup> From these statements, it is clear Kolb would deny any such "kernel of truth" to exist in the Homeric epics that Korfmann argues for; he would probably argue such a statement is childish at best. It is clear, then, one of the roots to the Korfmann/Kolb argument is Korfmann's use of Homer in his dig—not just that Homer is used improperly in Korfmann's excavations, but that he is used at all.

This argument, like the Blegen/Dorpfeld debate, can grant great insight into any particular excavator's relationship with Homer. From his debate with Kolb, it is clear Homer is at the heart of Korfmann's argument. However, Kolb's argument seems unfair: while it is true it is best to approach Hisarlik for the site itself and not to prove Homer right or any such goal, to remove Homer from Troy is to remove a vital essence of that site. Korfmann, it appears, understands this. He utilizes Homer where necessary to set the scene and recall Homer where the evidence fits. Indeed, his personal view on the matter is laid out neatly in one of his publications after an early excavation season at Hisarlik: "Our present task, however, is excavation and study of the finds. Should some among our finds cast a significant light upon the historical question of the Trojan War, that would indeed be a most felicitous by-product of our efforts."<sup>34</sup> First and foremost is to study the finds for themselves. Any connection found with Homer is fortuitous but that is not the primary reason for the excavation.

As was made clear earlier, however, this does not stop Korfmann from utilizing Homer's name. The first reason posited was Homer is an inseparable part of the site of Hisarlik. While Homer has bled into the background more and more since Schliemann first started digging

---

<sup>31</sup>Frank Kolb, "Troy VI: A Trading Center and Commercial City?" *American Journal of Archaeology* 108 (2004): 578.

<sup>32</sup>Kolb, "Troy VI: A Trading Center and Commercial City?" 578.

<sup>33</sup>Latacz, *Troy and Homer*, 25.

<sup>34</sup>Manfred Korfmann, "Besik Tepe: Trojan Sixth and Seventh Settlements," in *Troy and the Trojan War: A Symposium Held at Bryn Mawr College*, ed. John Lawrence Angel, Machteld Mellink (Bryn Mawr Commentaries, 1986): 28.

there, Homer still remains a root to draw from and an inspiration for excavations. The other reason is that Homer sells. There is still a wide affinity for Homer and for the *Iliad*. Homer is present in everything from movies to television to video games. It is not merely scholars and classicists who are interested in his works or in the story of the Trojan War. Korfmann, along with Blegen and Schliemann, understood this. Korfmann was in a position to take advantage of this and he likely did, as evidenced by his characterization of the site to colleagues compared with how he characterized it to visitors.

A recent lecture and discussion I attended with Liz Riorden (an architect who worked with Dr. Korfmann on site for many years) highlights the last point. In this, she stated Homer was never mentioned on site during the digs as far as she knew. There was only one instance she could recall in which someone made a reference that the ditch the team found could have been a good defense against Mycenaean chariots. However, she also mentioned when visitors would come to the site, those unfamiliar with Hisarlik or unaffiliated with the excavation, Korfmann would not hesitate to use Homer's name or to reference different finds in the context of the Homeric epic.<sup>35</sup> On the one hand, Korfmann could have been utilizing Homer in much the same way he did in his publications: invoking Homer's name to set the scene, which could be especially useful for the uninitiated or the layman. On the other, Korfmann could be utilizing Homer's epic to create popular support for his excavations. Homer could have been used as an easy sell for those not familiar with or uninterested in academic archaeology. This type of selling of Homer's name reflects Schliemann's use of the various treasures he found in order to drum up popular interest, along with the utilization of Homer in Blegen's book on Troy for laymen.

It would be unfair to label Korfmann as a rogue for utilizing Homer to sell the site; indeed, more popular support means more money. It would also be unfair to say Korfmann had no personal or scholarly interest in Homer and was simply using his epic for money or fame. By the time of Korfmann's excavations Homer had become inseparable from the site of Hisarlik, so to use Homer as inspiration is only natural. It is true Korfmann approached the site from a new angle and did not come to Troy in order to specifically search out the historic Trojan War. That did not stop him from utilizing Homer where he could and from invoking the Trojan War where he deemed appropriate, however. With Korfmann, Homer became an ends, a conclusion to be arrived at by examining the finds. That does not mean Korfmann's relationship with

---

<sup>35</sup>Liz Riorden, Personal Communication, 11/14/12.

Homer was any dimmer than Blegen or Schliemann's, simply that Homer was more behind the scenes.

### **Conclusion**

Schliemann, Blegen and Korfmann all contributed to our understanding of Hisarlik in different ways. At the heart of each of their excavations, however, was Homer. Homer's inspiration manifested differently for each excavator, but his influence was still present. While it would probably not be true to say Homer was an intrinsic part of the site of Hisarlik itself before Schliemann, he was still always going to be a key part of the larger search for Troy. As Schliemann performed his excavations and time progressed, Homer bled further into the site of Hisarlik itself, becoming as much a part of the site as the ruined walls and houses. By the time of Korfmann, he had bled further into the background and it was no longer professionally acceptable to excavate Troy looking to prove the historicity of Homer. However, despite this, Homer clearly has a presence in Korfmann's digs and his publications.

This presence was one aspect that led to an intense debate between Korfmann and Kolb. One of the issues was Korfmann going out of his way to fit the finds of the site to the Homeric myth. It seems as though Homer has a penchant for being at the heart of great debates, as before Korfmann and Kolb butted heads there were Blegen and Dorpfeld. It is true the two debates were far different: Kolb was looking to argue against the size and importance that Korfmann was ascribing to Troy, Blegen and Dorpfeld were arguing over which settlement was Homer's Troy. That being said, these debates confirmed Homer was one of the core aspects to all of these excavations, as they would have either not happened or taken dramatically different paths without his influence.

There is one aspect all three excavators share in their utilization of and inspiration by Homer. That is their use of Homer in order to create popular interest and support for their excavations. Such interest and support meant wider notoriety and more resources for all three excavators. From Schliemann's treasures, to Blegen's layman book to Korfmann's utilization of Homer in describing Troy to the uninitiated, all three have used Homer to their own ends. This is not necessarily roguish, as receiving popular support is good security for any excavation. Nor does this use of Homer mean that the excavators' interest in and inspiration from Homer is any less real or sincere. Instead, it is one of the key connecting strands running through all three excavations and further points to Homer's influence over Hisarlik, as all three excavators called upon his name in their public campaigns.