

Spirit of Enterprise



The 1993 Rolex Awards



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Reconstructing the Trojan War from ancient texts

Eberhard Zangger

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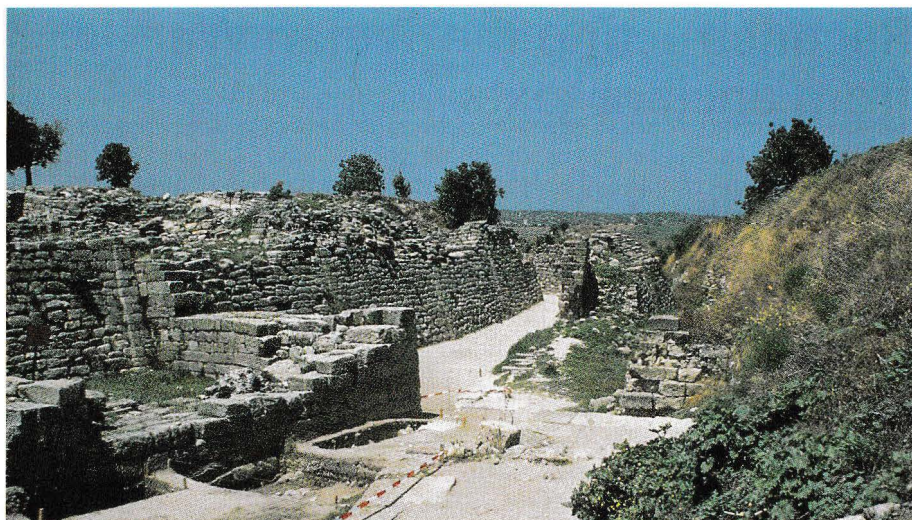
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This project consists of three parts. Firstly, demonstrating that Plato's Atlantis account represents a distorted recollection of the Trojan War. Secondly, finding more ancient texts which describe Troy and the Trojan War. Thirdly, excavating at thus far neglected places in the Trojan Plain for port basins, ships, bodies, etc. Part one has been carried out during the past two years (1990-1992) and concluded with the publication of the book *The Flood From Heaven*. My project now is to proceed with the second and eventually the third part of my overall plan.

A stunning discovery!

Between 1984 and 1990, I investigated the interrelation between the early Mycenaean culture and its environment. Thus far, Aegean archaeologists have not been able to provide a satisfying explanation for the sudden rise and demise of the Mycenaean culture (1600-1100 BC), and it was hoped that geoarchaeological investigations of environmental changes at the end of the Bronze Age would provide new insights into this problem. At first, I believed that a collapse of the highly organized Mycenaean society was far more likely to have caused the sudden breakdown than, for instance, climatic changes. In August 1987, however, my coring near the Tiryn's citadel brought to light the record of a devastating flood which had destroyed a large portion of the lower Mycenaean town. This event coincided with an exceptionally destructive earthquake, found in the archaeological records of Mycenae and Tiryns. Both events, flood and earthquake, mark the beginning of the Mycenaean demise.

I recalled Plato's description of the sudden disappearance of the ancient culture of Atlantis due to simultaneous earthquakes and floods. When I looked up the ancient text it turned out that it was not Atlantis which was destroyed by earthquakes and floods, but a glorious Greek culture which was at war with Atlantis. Examining the text carefully, I realized that Plato had produced an accurate account of the final phase of the Mycenaean civilization around 1200 BC. The true meaning of the Atlantis account was concealed to the present day because the Egyptian priests who retrieved the story from hieroglyphic inscriptions misinterpreted some place



The Late Bronze Age city of Troy represents one of the most formidable archaeological sites in the world. An upcoming article in the Oxford Journal of Archaeology by Eberhard Zangger argues that Troy was also the subject of Plato's controversial Atlantis account which, according to Zangger, rests on lost Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions describing the conflicts at the end of the Bronze Age.

names during their translation into Greek, while Solon, in an attempt to remedy these mistakes, obscured the text even more by introducing his own interpretation of the foreign names.

Shedding new light on ancient texts

Based on the discovery that Atlantis and Troy are identical, this book has far-reaching implications for our understanding of the beginning and demise of the Mycenaean civilization. Furthermore, scholars will now have reason to trust the accuracy of Plato's and Homer's writing to a greater extent than so far.

The identification of Atlantis as Troy also shed new light on the historicity of the Trojan War — a topic that was intentionally not discussed in *The Flood From Heaven*. Although almost every ancient Greek author referred to the War at Troy, today's traditional scholarship considers it to be mainly an Homeric invention. The research for *The Flood From Heaven*, however, produced substantial proof for the historicity of the Trojan War, including eye-witness accounts which perfectly coincide with the archaeological evidence. In the second part of the study these neglected reports will be compared with the archaeological record in order to reconstruct the historic developments before, during and after the Trojan Wars. By looking at a time-span from the journey of the Argonauts to the return of the Dorians, the book will demonstrate the existence of two wars between Trojans and Greeks instead of just one. Novel ideas about the cause and course of these clashes will be introduced and the nature of the Greek victory (brought about by treachery) will be shown in a new light. Since all the arguments will be backed up by archaeological proof, this second part of the study may have a more profound impact on Aegean prehistory than *The Flood From Heaven* itself. It will produce

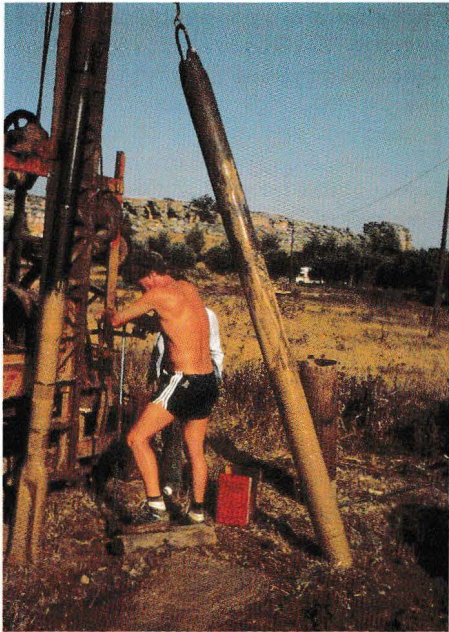
explanations for universal problems, like the nature of the Sea People and the Bronze Age civilization demise, as well as for minor mysteries such as the purpose of the Trojan horse or the brevity of the time-span covered in Homer's *Iliad*.

Was ancient Troy much larger than previously thought?

The proposed study will look at all accounts of the Trojan War, including the self-acclaimed eyewitnesses Dares and Dictys, as well as Homer, Quintus of Smyrna, Virgil, etc., and their Medieval versions. These will be compared with the archaeological knowledge of the Late Bronze Age. The result will be stunningly clear answers to thus far unexplained archaeological problems.

Since I am currently not a member of the Troy excavation campaign, I have little influence on the decisions of where excavations will be conducted in the future. I will, however, attempt to either join the excavation crew or suggest potential places to the responsible archaeologists and geoarchaeologists. There can be no doubt that Troy was much bigger than previously thought. There might be suburbs, port districts and harbour basins several kilometres away from the Royal citadel. During the Trojan Wars people, animals, ships and goods are bound to have drowned in the numerous channels and port basins which existed in the Trojan Plain. The bodies that had fallen into the water would be quite well preserved because of their deposition in a non-aerobic environment. The information that could be collected by excavating these port basins may well surpass our current imagination. The composition of an entire Bronze Age army could be reconstructed from the arms; ships could be recovered, trade commodities determined and the health status of the people reconstructed.

When carried out to its end and concluded successfully the proposed three-part study might well represent one of the greatest archaeological achievements of all time.



Eberhard Zangger taking drill cores in the vicinity of the Bronze Age citadel of Tiryns (background). Zangger's coring revealed that the outer districts of the city were buried 5 m deep by a flash flood which occurred 3,200 years ago. Future excavations could unearth a Bronze Age Pompeii here.