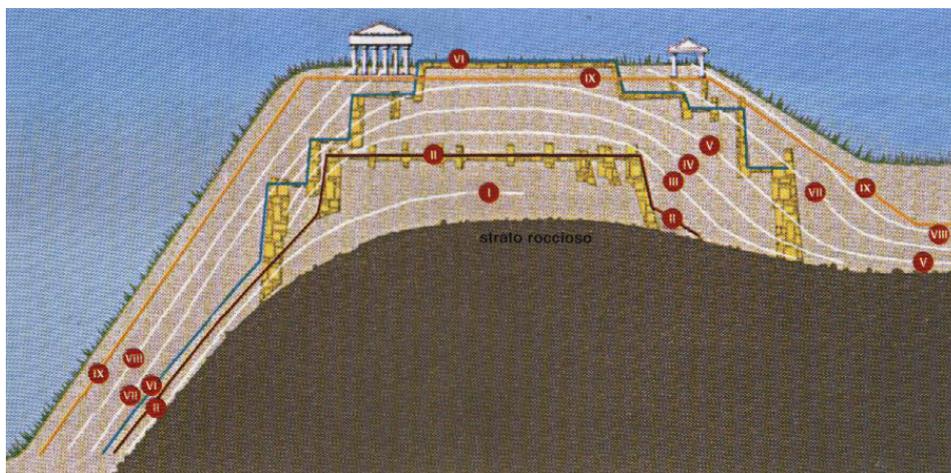


The Trojan War

An extract from the historical monography: "The Hellenic Middle Ages" by Luciano Rizzuti,
translated by Giovanna Farruggia

In Troy, on the hill of Hissarlik, nine layers have come to light from the excavations effected by *Heinrich Schliemann* (1870 - 1890) and his coadjutor *Wilhelm Dörpfeld* (1893 - 1894) first and by *W. T. Semple* and *Carl Blegen* later. Each layer was 60 - 90 centemetres thick. This means that the city was destroyed many times and rebuilt again upon its ruins.



The nine layers of the hill of Hissarlik

There is a question about the year in which the city sung by Homer was destroyed

Duride of Samos dates the event in 1334, *Herodotus* in 1250, *Eratosthenes* in 1194, *Apollodoro* in 1184, *Ephor of Cumae* in 1135.

It is not easy to establish the right date, but if we compare the above mentioned dates with the chart drawn up by **C. Blegen**, who has overseen the excavations from 1932 to 1938, we may notice that each of them can be situated in as many layers:

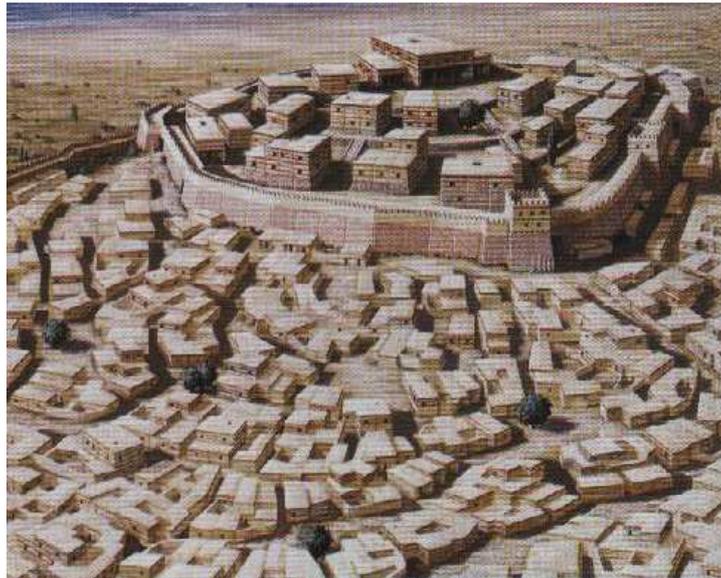
Troy I	3000 - 2500 B.C.	
Troy II	2500 - 2200 B.C.	
Troy III	2200 - 2050 B.C..	
Troy IV	2050 - 1900 B.C.	
Troy V	1900 - 1800 B.C.	
Troy VI	1800 - 1300 B.C.	<i>Duride of Samos - 1334</i>
Troy VIIa	1300 - 1260 B.C.	<i>Herodotus - 1250</i>
Troy VII bl	1260 - 1190 B.C.	<i>Eratoshenes - 1194</i> <i>Apollodoro - 1184</i>
Troy VII b2	1190 - 1100 B.C..	<i>Ephor of Cumae - 1135</i>
Troy VIII	700 - 85 B.C..	
Troy IX	85 - 500 AD	

If we keep in mind that the Achaeans destroyed Troy, according to this chart the fall of the city should be put in the layers **VI** (1800-1300 B.C.), as *Duride of Samos* refers, or **VIIa** (1300-1260

B.C.), as *Herodotus* hands down to us or **VIIb1** (1260-1190 B.C.) as *Eratosthenes* and *Apollodoro* assert; in fact, their dates agree exactly with the period in which the Mycenaean civilization flourished.

The date asserted by *Ephor of Cumae*, placeable in the layer **VIIb2** (1190 - 1100), should be excluded instead because it corresponds to the time of the decline of the palace kingdoms.

Thanks to the electromagnetic prospecting chart, in 1988 the German archaeologist *Manfred O. Korfman* discovered a circuit of walls at the bottom of the hill of Hissarlik. The remains of a city were found within its bounding line. The city was about 30 hectares wide and could receive up to 10.000 people. Its dimensions would have allowed its inhabitants to withstand a prolonged siege.



Troy VI by Korfmann with the acropolis of Pergamus

- Its most recent ruins date back to the XIV century B.C., therefore they can be placed in the layer **VI** (1800 - **1300** B.C.). However it is certain that the city was destroyed by an *earthquake*, but neither weapons nor human rests have been found in the site. The demolition caused by the earthquake didn't determine the final desertion of the city, because it was rebuilt soon after. The presence of the bastion in the northwest, dating back to this period and still existing, would testify that the Trojans rebuilt the walls of the acropolis adopting the wave lines in order to absorb the seismic energy.

After a few years from its reconstruction, the city went through another destruction because of an enemy attack.

- In the layer **VIIa** (1300 - **1260** B.C.) *Blegen* discovered the ruins of a small palace, inside he found furniture and ornaments artistically similar to Mycenaean models. This shows that its revival was followed by a presumable *Mycenaean settlement* whose existence would have left some traces in the Trojan people's culture.

In this period the problem of the tin provision created some political contrasts between the Mycenaean and the Hittites. In this context the Trojan saga would be confirmed in its substantial truth of *historical event*.

This thesis would be supported by the finding of a list of names of women working in the palace in the archives in Pylos, in *Linear B*. They are indicated as coming from *To-ro-ya*, place in which the philologists aim to recognize the city of Troy. However the destruction of this city cannot be related to the one described by Homer. When the Achaeans returned home after the fall of Troy, their kingdoms suffered a definitive collapse, so in such circumstances they would not have been able to lead other military expeditions anymore.

- Instead we know, as the layer **VIIb1** (1260 - 1190 B.C.) shows, that the city was rebuilt in *reduced dimensions*, but it suffered another siege and was destroyed again in 1190 B.C..

The ruins, in fact, have given back boundary city walls and the foundations of several small houses bound together. A great amount of jars meant to contain solid and liquid food were buried up to their opening in their floor, in order to save the little space available.

This detail brings to our mind that the city inside its boundaries held a greater number of inhabitants than it would have been able to contain. However it could not have withstood ten years of siege because of its *small dimensions*; for this reason, the war cannot have been of such great importance as it is described in the poem Iliad.

By reporting in the *catalogue of the ships* the names of 29 peoples that took part in the expedition and by making 1186 ships, 120.000 men and 44 leaders go to Troy, *Homer* exaggerated the enterprise to such a degree as to make it unbelievable even to *Thucydides*¹' eyes who didn't hesitate to say that

for lack of necessary means, as the preceding expeditions had been meaningless, so even this one, that was the most famous, is not truly up to the fame and the opinion that we have had for the lyric of the poets.



Troy VII b1, jars buried in the ground

This event might be connected to a serious food crisis that would have forced the Mycenaeans toward the coasts of the Black Sea or the fertile lands of Urartu, an eastern region of Anatolia, whose inhabitants at that time were capable craftsmen in the manufacture of metals and skilled farmers too. However, in order to get there, it was necessary to cross the Dardanelles Channel which was controlled by Troy.

In such circumstances the destruction of the city cannot have been caused by a great coalition of Achaean warriors, but probably by a great number of starving refugees; in fact, from its remains you can only perceive the collapse of one of the many centers of the Aegean Sea that disappeared at the end of the Bronze Age. Therefore we believe that this destruction cannot have been caused by the army driven by *Agamemnon* but by that coalition of Aegean people that the Pharaohs of Egypt called *Peoples of the Sea*.

There are valid reasons for believing that *Homer* really drew inspiration from this attack of refugees in describing the famous siege, because it was remembered as an extraordinary historical event for

¹ *Thucydides: The War of the Peloponnesus, I, 11*

the *large number of people* that occupied the Troad and also because it would be the last possible event in which the Mycenaeans would have been able to venture.

Sic stantibus rebus, the only hypothesis that we may propose about the famous war sung by Homer is that, upon composing its poem *Iliad*, the poet joined together the three historical periods of Troy. They occurred in different time but in the same space in a unique great event; as a consequence, the dates, we underlined, would be paradoxically all valid, because from their combination:

- layer **VI** (1800 - 1300 B.C.) the **big city** of *Manfred O. Korfman* destroyed by the earthquake;
 - layer **VIIa** (1300 - 1260 B.C.), the small city of *Blegen* **besieged and destroyed** by the Mycenaeans;
 - layer **VIIb1** (1260 - 1190 B.C.) the attack of a **great coalition** of refugees and the **fire** of the city
- it would result that

a great city was besieged and destroyed by a great coalition

Of course an heroic epic cannot ascertain the historical truth.

- The dates provided by *Ephor of Cumae* (1135 B.C.), that can be placed in the layer **VIIb2** (1190 – **1100** B.C.), would point out a new reconstruction and a further destruction that took place in a period in which the palace kingdoms had collapsed decades before. The findings that came to light (a free-hand made piece of pottery produced with depurated mixture, bone points of arrow) testify that the site was inhabited by extremely poor people and didn't exceed the dimensions of a simple village.

After its destruction, the hill of Hissarlik was abandoned for four centuries (from **1100** to **700** B.C.), as one can see by the dates of the following layer **VIII** (700 - 85 B.C.), and it was again repopulated at the time of the historical colonization.