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EPISTEMIC AUTHORITY AND BOUNDARY WORK IN AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTROVERSY: THE TROY–ATLANTIS CASE

Eberhard Zangger[1]*

[1]Foundation Luwian Studies, Zurich, Switzerland.

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Corresponding Author: Eberhard Zangger (e.zangger@luwianstudies.org)

ABSTRACT

Scientific controversies in archaeology are often shaped less by empirical testing of hypotheses than by processes of categorization, authority attribution, and reputational sanctioning. The long-standing debate surrounding Troy as a potential historical source of Plato's Atlantis offers a revealing case study of these dynamics. In recent decades, discussion of the hypothesis has increasingly shifted from methodological evaluation toward classificatory judgments about the legitimacy of the interpretation itself. This tendency became particularly visible when the hypothesis was addressed in a volume devoted to demarcating archaeology from pseudoscience, thereby implicitly situating it within such a classificatory framework, despite its publication in peer-reviewed venues. The subsequent diffusion of this framing through secondary knowledge infrastructures, including Wikipedia, illustrates how contested assessments can become stabilized as seemingly established facts. Using this case study, the article examines how epistemic authority operates in archaeology, how disciplinary boundaries are drawn, and how interdisciplinary interpretations may be marginalized without direct empirical refutation.

KEYWORDS: Scientific Controversies; Boundary Work; Epistemic Authority; Geoarchaeology; Troy; Atlantis; Wikipedia.

WHEN TITLES ANTICIPATE JUDGMENTS

Scientific controversies in archaeology have frequently been resolved not through systematic testing of hypotheses, but through processes of categorization, authority attribution, and reputational sanctioning (Meskell 1998; Johnson 2020). Such mechanisms are not confined to isolated cases, but recur in fields marked by strong disciplinary boundaries and asymmetries of institutional authority. The long-running debate surrounding Troy – in particular as a candidate for Plato's Atlantis – provides a revealing case study of these dynamics (Zangger 2003). The excavation of the Troy citadel under the auspices of Tübingen University, Germany, between 1987 and 2015 have increasingly shifted from methodological discussion toward personalized assessments, eventually reaching audiences far beyond the immediate research community (Ulf 2003). This pattern continued in 2018, when an article discussing the Troy–Atlantis hypothesis appeared in a volume devoted to demarcating archaeology from "pseudoscience," thereby placing the interpretation within a classificatory framework in which its scientific status was implicitly questioned (Blum 2018), despite its publication in peer-reviewed venues. The subsequent uptake and amplification of this classification on Wikipedia illustrates how secondary knowledge infrastructures can consolidate contested judgments into seemingly settled facts.

This article uses the Troy–Atlantis debate to examine how scientific authority is exercised, how boundaries are drawn, and how interdisciplinary hypotheses may be excluded without empirical refutation. As the author of this article has previously contributed to the scholarly debate discussed here, the analysis inevitably reflects an insider perspective. The purpose of the article is therefore not to adjudicate the historical validity of the Troy–Atlantis hypothesis, but to examine how epistemic authority, disciplinary boundaries, and reputational mechanisms shape the reception of controversial interpretations in archaeology.

The contribution under discussion appeared in a series of illustrated volumes on archaeology published by *Antike Welt*, a German popular science archaeology outlet. The anthology, comprising eleven essays, bears the title *Facts and Fictions: Archaeology vs. Pseudoscience* (Baumann 2018). The title itself performs an act of categorization: it establishes a sharp binary opposition between a form of archaeology associated with the production of "facts" and an opposing domain implicitly characterized as "fiction". In doing so, it prefigures evaluative judgments before any substantive argument is presented. The semantic framing leaves little ambiguity regarding the position from which the editors and contributors–affiliated with university institutions–speak, as well as the position to which alternative approaches are assigned (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The archaeological site of Troy, located on the hill of Hisarlık in the foreground, has been extensively excavated since 1870. By contrast, the alluvial floodplain right next to the citadel has never been systematically excavated. View toward the north, with the Dardanelles and the Gallipoli Peninsula in the background. (Photo with kind permission of the Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, Çanakkale Governor's Office; Luwian Studies #2213.)

From a journalistic or programmatic perspective, such dichotomization may appear effective. From the standpoint of the history of science, however, it is problematic, particularly in the field of Aegean and Near Eastern archaeology. Major discoveries and methodological advances in this domain have by no means been the exclusive product of institutionalized university archaeology. On the contrary, many foundational developments originated in contexts that lay at the margins of, or initially outside, established academic structures. Without such extra-institutional or interdisciplinary initiatives, key areas of classical and Near Eastern studies would likely have developed quite differently. Sites such as Troy, Mycenae, and Tiryns might have remained unrecognized for extended periods; Hattusa and Knossos might not have been systematically excavated; royal tombs such as those of Tutankhamun and Seti I might not have been identified; and the decipherment of Linear B might have been substantially delayed. The historical record thus illustrates that epistemic innovation has frequently emerged from heterogeneous constellations of actors, methods, and institutional positions. Against this background, the categorical equation of institutional affiliation with scientific legitimacy – and its converse with "pseudoscience" – appears less as an analytical distinction than as a boundary-maintenance strategy. Such classifications risk foreclosing empirical evaluation by substituting social or institutional markers for methodological scrutiny.

In this volume, prehistorian Stephan W.E. Blum from Tübingen University published an article entitled: *Atlantis – Vom vielen Suchen und nichts finden* (translated: *From Much Searching and Finding Nothing*) (Blum 2018). The first six of the sixteen pages of Blum's contribution are devoted to a general overview of the history of attempts to locate Atlantis. Against this broad historiographical background, he then turns to what he presents as the central issue: the idea that Plato's Atlantis account may refer to the Late Bronze Age context of Troy (Figure 1). The framing chosen for the title of Blum's article, however, anticipates an evaluative conclusion that does not accurately reflect the research process under discussion. The hypothesis in question did not arise from a targeted search for Atlantis. Rather, the conceptual link between Plato's narrative and Troy emerged as an unintended outcome of broader geoarchaeological investigations in the eastern Mediterranean. In this respect, it represents a case of scientific serendipity, grounded in landscape reconstructions, sedimentological analyses, and the integration of textual and environmental data, rather than in an a priori attempt to "identify" Atlantis.

Moreover, the assertion that such investigations yielded "nothing" is misleading with respect to the archaeological record of Troy. As will be discussed below, extensive work over recent decades has produced a substantial body of evidence relevant to the assessment of structural parallels between the historical site and Plato's description.

INSTITUTION, EXPERTISE AND AUTHORITY

Seen from this perspective, the Troy–Atlantis debate raises a more general question: by which criteria are competing interpretations evaluated, and how is scientific credibility assigned in fields marked by methodological and disciplinary diversity?

The range of interpretations of Plato's Atlantis account is indeed unusually broad. While the subject has long attracted the attention of amateurs – beginning with Ignatius Donnelly (1882) – it has also been examined in a serious and sustained manner by scholars firmly embedded in the academic mainstream, including Pierre Vidal-Naquet (2005) and Christopher Gill (2017). The coexistence of such heterogeneous contributions makes it necessary to ask how scientifically robust work on Atlantis can be distinguished from less rigorous approaches.

A pragmatic point of departure is to consider a set of widely accepted evaluative criteria. These include the author's disciplinary expertise, the venue of publication, and whether the work has undergone peer review. Equally important are the systematic engagement with relevant scholarship – particularly most recent research – the question whether unknown variables such as planetary collisions are introduced or whether existing unknowns are beautifully eliminated, as well as the internal consistency of the argumentation. Ultimately, however, the decisive question is whether a given analysis contributes to an increase in knowledge and opens productive avenues for further research, rather than merely reiterating established positions or foreclosing inquiry through categorical judgment.

Within Stephan Blum's dichotomous framing of archaeology as a domain of "facts" and its supposed counterpart as "pseudoscience" or "fiction," it also becomes essential to make the relevant forms of expertise of himself and the scholar he criticizes explicitly. Blum began his academic training in prehistory, classical archaeology, and ancient history at the Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen in 1992 and completed his doctorate there 19 years later under the supervision of geochemist Ernst Pernicka,

with a dissertation on the Early and Middle Bronze Age of Troy. He then continued working as a post-doc in the same research team for another 15 years. His scholarly qualifications for the study of Bronze Age material culture at Troy are not in question.

At the same time, it is important to note that his academic career has unfolded almost entirely within a single institutional and disciplinary framework. Moreover, his published work does not document any experience in the reconstruction of Holocene landscapes (Blum 2012), particularly with respect to erosion and sedimentation processes or large-scale hydraulic interventions in Bronze Age settlement environments. These dimensions, however, are central to the problem addressed by him, which concerns the co-evolution of human settlement, engineered water systems, and dynamic landscape change. From an epistemic perspective, the issue is thus not one of general scholarly competence, but of the alignment between specific research questions and the forms of expertise required to address them.

Within this demarcation framework, the author of the Troy–Atlantis model is discussed in a context that associates the interpretation with broader debates about the boundary between archaeology and what is categorized as "pseudoscience" or "fiction." A closer examination of this individual's academic and professional trajectory, however, reveals a profile of expertise that sits uneasily with such a classification. He studied geology and paleontology at Kiel University, earning a master's degree, and continued his training at Stanford University, where he completed a doctorate in geology with the support of scholarships from the German National Academic Foundation, including an overseas fellowship. After receiving his PhD, he served as Senior Research Associate at the University of Cambridge and as Research Fellow at Clare Hall. He later completed a four-year master's program in archaeology and anthropology at Harvard University, where his thesis was awarded the departmental prize for best dissertation (Zangger 2024). Since the early 1980s, his research has focused on the reconstruction of Bronze Age landscapes in the countries around the Eastern Mediterranean (Zangger 2001). His doctoral dissertation on "The Geoarchaeology of the Argolid" was published as a monograph by the German Archaeological Institute (Zangger 1993b), and his subsequent work has appeared in numerous international, peer-reviewed archaeological journals.

Taken together, this record points to a form of interdisciplinary expertise grounded in geology, archaeology, and landscape reconstruction – precisely the domains central to the questions raised by the Troy–Atlantis hypothesis. Associating an academic career of this kind with "pseudoscience" is difficult to reconcile with widely accepted criteria of scholarly practice. In this context, social labeling functions less as an analytical judgment than as a mechanism for asserting institutional interpretive authority and for deflecting sustained engagement with the underlying arguments. The concepts of pseudoscience and peer-reviewed scholarly publication refer to analytically distinct domains: scientific research is defined, among other things, by formalized procedures of evaluation, including critical assessment by independent experts prior to publication. Work that systematically avoids or fails to meet these standards may plausibly be located outside the scientific discourse. By contrast, research that has repeatedly undergone and passed such review cannot be excluded on purely categorical grounds without undermining the very distinction on which the label rests.

Indicators of scholarly reception further reinforce this observation. Publicly accessible metrics of academic engagement – including citation patterns and readership data on platforms such as Zenodo, Google Scholar, and Academia.edu – reveal marked asymmetries in how the respective contributions within the controversy have been received. The available evidence suggests that it is Blum's work that has indeed attracted comparatively limited attention within the academic community.

ON THE ARCHITECTURE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

What does it mean, in methodological terms, to reconstruct an archaeological landscape? The early work by the scholar whose approach Blum contests on the Holocene development of the Gulf of Volos offers a useful point of departure. This initial two-year investigation was conceived from the outset as an integrative research design, combining stratigraphic observation, hand augering, geological mapping, isotope analysis, and tectonic assessment (Zangger 1991). Rather than treating archaeological sites as isolated entities, the analytical focus lay on reconstructing long-term landscape dynamics and processes of environmental change.

This methodological framework was subsequently expanded and refined in multi-year studies of the landscapes surrounding Mycenae and Tiryns (Zangger 1994b), as well as in a four-year survey of the adjacent Berbati Valley (Wells et al. 1990). Additional lines of evidence included soil analyses, marine geophysical measurements, pollen analysis for reconstructing vegetation history, aerial and satellite imagery, and micropaleontological

studies aimed at identifying paleoecological habitats. At this stage, historiographical sources were also integrated directly into the analytical framework, not as external contextual references but as data to be evaluated alongside environmental and geological evidence (Figure 2).

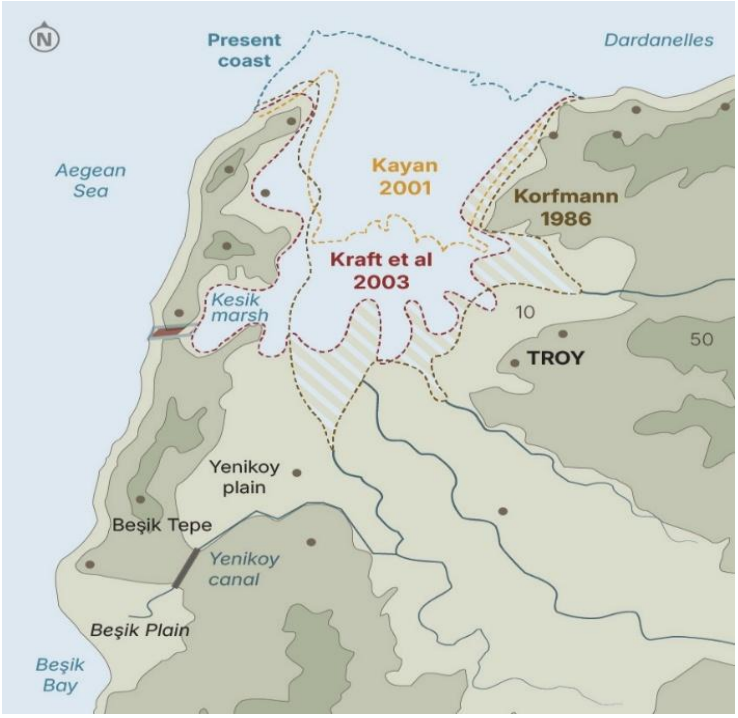

Figure 2. Scholars associated with the Troy Project have proposed different reconstructions of the coastline around 1200 BCE (Luwian Studies #2203).

Further methodological differentiation occurred during the reconstruction of the Mycenaean kingdom of Pylos. In this context, the research design was expanded to include the analysis of hydraulic systems by specialized hydrologists, ground-based geophysical methods such as magnetometry and electrical resistivity, quantitative botanical studies, and geochemical analyses of sediment cores (Zangger, Sergei B. Yazvenko, et al. 1997). The analytical emphasis increasingly shifted toward the interaction between environmental dynamics, anthropogenic landscape modification, and the political–economic organization of Late Bronze Age societies.

Building on these experiences, a research design was subsequently proposed for the Trojan plain (Figure 2) that envisaged a further broadening of the methodological spectrum, particularly in paleoecology, geochemistry, urban studies, and hydraulic engineering. The proposal followed a two-stage approach: an initial phase of large-scale remote sensing to identify subsurface structures across an area of approximately 10 × 10 kilometers (Zangger et al. 1997), followed by targeted ground-based investigations in zones identified as especially promising (Zangger et al. 1998). Even today, almost three decades after this research programme for the investigation of the Trojan plain was first proposed, no comparable initiative has been implemented. This absence is particularly striking in light of the fact that the current excavation campaign at Troy has now been ongoing for over forty years. During this same period, integrative, science-based survey approaches of the kind outlined here have become standard practice in archaeological fieldwork and are now formally required in Türkiye as part of the permitting process for new excavations.

Were such a remote sensing survey to be undertaken today, it would draw on a far more advanced and higher-resolution methodological repertoire. Beaumont Rivers Ltd., a London-based company specializing in the application of these techniques, has provided the technical framework underlying Figure 3. Their experts, Jonny Ackroyd and Ewan McLaughlin, have kindly contributed both the data structure reflected in the figure and the methodological outline presented below.

A key component of the updated survey design is the systematic integration of multi-scalar remote sensing data, combining readily available satellite imagery with targeted high-resolution airborne acquisition. Commercial optical and multispectral satellite platforms – such as Airbus Pleiades, SPOT 6/7, and PlanetScope, complemented by national

systems like Göktürk – provide sub-metre to metre-scale data suitable for mapping vegetation patterns, soil moisture variations, mineral signatures, and surface features. These datasets allow for a first-order identification of landscape anomalies, including palaeochannels and anthropogenic mounds, while open-access alternatives such as Sentinel-2 offer broader coverage at lower spatial resolution.

Coverage Level	Platform	Method	Systems and Products	Resolution	Discipline
Total Coverage	Satellite	Optical imagery (RGB, commercial)	Airbus SPOT 6/7, Airbus Pléiades, Airbus Pléiades Neo, Maxar WorldView, PlanetScope	0.3–1.5 m	Remote Sensing
	Airborne	Multispectral imagery (commercial)	Airbus SPOT 6/7, Airbus Pléiades, Airbus Pléiades Neo, Maxar WorldView, PlanetScope	1.6–6 m	
		Multispectral imagery (non-commercial)	Sentinel-2, Landsat 8/9 (open-access imagery)	10–30 m	
		National satellite imagery	Göktürk-1, Göktürk-2 (Türkiye)	0.5–2 m	
		Terrain DEM	Copernicus DEM (open source)	30 m	
		High-resolution terrain DEM (commercial)	Maxar WorldView DEM, Pleiades DEM, Planet SkySat DEM	1–2 m	
		Airborne LiDAR terrain DEM	National LiDAR datasets (e.g., Turkish government airborne LiDAR)	1 m terrain models	
Intermediate Coverage	Drone / UAV	UAV LiDAR terrain modelling	DJI Matrice RTK + Zenmuse L1/L2	3–10 cm terrain models	
Selected Areas	Helicopter / low-altitude airborne	Magnetometry	Airborne magnetometer surveys	variable	Geophysics
		Electromagnetic sensing	EM conductivity surveys	variable	
		Radiometric surveys	Scintillometry	variable	
	Ground survey	Geophysical prospection	Magnetometry, Electromagnetometry, Resistivity, Ground penetrating radar	sub-meter	
		Surface investigation	Geomorphology, Soil science, Archaeological mapping	site scale	Geoarchaeology
		Drill and auger holes	Geochemistry, Palynology, Chronometry	point data	

Figure 3: Diagram illustrating the disciplines and methods proposed for a systematic scientific investigation of the Trojan plain. Comprehensive coverage is feasible primarily through airborne survey methods, whereas ground-based investigations are necessarily limited to selected areas. Geophysical techniques can be applied both from the air and on the ground (based on Zangger et al. 1997, 20, Fig. 20; information provided by Beaumont River Ltd.; Luwian Studies #2212.)

For terrain modelling at the regional scale, digital elevation models derived from Copernicus data (c. 30 m resolution) form a useful baseline, though their vertical accuracy and spatial resolution remain limited. Higher-resolution commercial DEMs (e.g. WorldView, Pleiades, SkySat) improve upon this but remain constrained by their inability to penetrate vegetation cover. As a result, they are most effective for the detection of large-scale geomorphological features rather than fine archaeological structures.

To overcome these limitations, the methodology shifts, at the scale of selected target areas, to active remote sensing using UAV-mounted LiDAR systems (Campana et al. 2022; MacDonell et al. 2023; Abate et al. 2025; Vinci et al. 2025). Platforms such as the DJI Matrice RTK equipped with Zenmuse L1/L2 sensors enable the generation of high-density point clouds and ground models with resolutions in the order of a few centimetres. Unlike passive optical systems, LiDAR can partially penetrate vegetation, allowing for the reconstruction of underlying microtopography. This makes it particularly effective for identifying subtle anthropogenic features in landscapes with low to moderate vegetation cover. Even in more densely vegetated environments, while fine detail may be attenuated, LiDAR still provides a generalized yet analytically robust representation of the terrain.

The resulting workflow reflects a hierarchical strategy: satellite data guide the identification of areas of interest, while UAV-based LiDAR delivers the resolution required for archaeological interpretation. Crucially, the effectiveness of each method depends on environmental variables – especially vegetation density – and must therefore be calibrated to the specific conditions of the study area. In this sense, interdisciplinary research is not merely a combination of techniques, but an adaptive

framework in which the strengths and limitations of each dataset are explicitly integrated into the analytical design.

Against this background, the categorical classification of research programmes grounded in broadly interdisciplinary methodologies – and conducted by international, cross-disciplinary teams – appears analytically insufficient when they are implicitly situated within the realm of "pseudoscience." In the present case, such an association is not established through explicit argument, but rather through contextual framing, for instance by embedding the contribution within a volume dedicated to pseudoscientific claims. Rather than engaging with the methodological premises, research architecture, and empirical potential of such approaches, the controversy displays a recurring pattern in which evaluative judgments are issued without systematic discussion of the underlying research design. Assessment thus shifts away from the examination of testable hypotheses and toward the application of institutionalized criteria of legitimacy.

ON THE SOCIAL PRACTICE OF SCIENTIFIC CONTROVERSIES

Landscape reconstruction is thus inherently an interdisciplinary enterprise and depends on correspondingly developed modes of collaboration. Each landscape context requires a context-specific configuration of methods and forms of expertise. In response to this requirement, the research projects discussed here were organized around the participation of internationally recognized specialists from different disciplines. Research questions were defined jointly, embedded within an overarching analytical framework, and participating scholars were granted a high degree of methodological autonomy in the execution of their respective tasks. Results were published independently and in venues chosen by the contributors themselves. This collaborative model has been applied over a period of more than four decades, roughly coinciding with the emergence of geoarchaeology as a field. Over this time span, it did not generate internal conflicts within the research teams Stephan Blum is aiming at, nor disputes over authorship or intellectual ownership. On the contrary, many of these interdisciplinary collaborations developed into stable professional networks and, in some cases, into long-standing personal relationships.

Archaeological excavations and surveys likewise draw on a wide range of specialized expertise and technical methods. In practice, however, such projects are often organized in a multidisciplinary rather than an interdisciplinary fashion. The disciplines involved tend to operate alongside one another rather than being closely epistemically integrated, and coordination is frequently organized through hierarchical project structures. The institutional environments in which these projects are embedded are correspondingly more competitive: specialized subfields compete for limited resources, and professional interactions are more likely to be shaped by rivalry, strategic positioning, and latent forms of conflict.

Within this already highly competitive and structurally strained framework, the Tübingen Troy Project represents an unusually pronounced example of a confrontational culture of debate. While the excavation operated under German academic leadership, disputes surrounding the project repeatedly spilled into the public sphere. Scientific disagreements were not confined to methodological or evidential questions but escalated into protracted conflicts. These disputes were frequently characterized by recurrent patterns of deficient argumentation, including *ad hominem* attacks in place of substantive critique, distorted representations of opposing positions, unsubstantiated causal claims, appeals to authorities outside the relevant fields of expertise, the construction of artificial dichotomies, and the displacement of core issues by peripheral controversies.

These conflict dynamics first crystallized around the scholar to whom Stephan Blum later directed his critique. The individual had been admitted as a Doctor of Science candidate at the Department of Geography at Heidelberg University when the director of the Troy excavations, Manfred Korfmann, insisted on serving as principal reviewer, despite lacking affiliation with the host institution and formal expertise in geography. Public challenges to the candidate's professional qualifications followed and escalated into legal proceedings, which culminated in a court injunction prohibiting Korfmann from repeating these allegations.

In subsequent years, similar patterns of conflict re-emerged within the project, this time involving other senior participants. The so-called "Troy dispute" attracted considerable public attention and was later documented in a monographic account entitled *Crime Scene Troy* (Kolb 2010). Throughout these episodes, scientific disagreement was accompanied by significant reputational consequences and personal strain, illustrating how institutionalized conflict cultures can amplify controversies beyond the level of substantive scholarly debate.

WHEN PITCHES ANTICIPATE ARGUMENTS

Stephan Blum opens his article with an overview of the numerous unsuccessful attempts to identify a historical referent for Plato's Atlantis narrative. This survey culminates in a rhetorical crescendo (Blum 2018, 115): "Historical reality, coincidence, or once again just a despicable money-making scheme? But what is the point of all this research?" The evaluative tone is thus established even before the substantive argument begins.

The question of "why," however, takes on a different meaning once the relevant specialist literature is taken seriously. It becomes evident that the absence of a plausible historical or conceptual classification of Plato's Atlantis account constitutes one of the more persistent unresolved problems in classical studies. A convincing interpretation would have the potential to stimulate research across several subdisciplines, including philosophy, archaeology, ancient history, and classical philology. The sustained scholarly engagement with the text is therefore best understood as epistemically motivated, rather than as driven by the pursuit of publicity or sensation. If a plausible explanation for Plato's Atlantis riddle could be found, the expectation would be that this would not simply mark the end of a long search but rather could open up groundbreaking insights in a whole range of disciplines.

Against this background, the reference to "despicable money-making" appears analytically misplaced. Scholarly work in the humanities – particularly the production of research monographs – is typically characterized by a pronounced asymmetry between the intellectual investment required and any material return. As such, the attribution of pecuniary motives functions less as an explanatory argument than as a rhetorical device that frames the debate in moral rather than analytical terms.

FROM EVIDENCE TO WORKING HYPOTHESIS

Stephan Blum argues that if even the *Iliad* does not offer an accurate and verifiable description of a Late Bronze Age settlement, it is difficult to understand why Plato's Atlantis narrative should, of all texts, be transferable to a real historical landscape. This line of reasoning, however, conflates fundamentally different types of textual sources. The *Iliad*, composed in the eighth century BCE, draws on centuries of oral epic tradition and was intended for public performance and entertainment. Plato's Atlantis account, by contrast – if one follows his own framing – is said to derive from Egyptian hieroglyphic records intended to document historical events and written down at the time, several centuries earlier than the Homeric epics.

The analytical objective is therefore not to treat Plato's text as evidence in the sense of permitting direct or unambiguous identification. Rather, the text serves as a source from which heuristic working hypotheses may be derived and subsequently tested through field-based investigation. This distinction marks a central methodological difference between literary illustration and the geoarchaeological use of historical textual sources. If a substantive correspondence were to exist, it would not be expected to manifest itself in narrative detail, but in material correlates – most notably in large-scale artificial harbor installations of the type emphasized in Plato's account. Even if such structures have long since been infilled or obscured by sedimentation and deep ploughing, they should, in principle, remain detectable within the landscape.

In this context, Blum (2018, 127) states that extensive paleogeographic and sedimentological investigations have found "no evidence of the harbor basins postulated by Zangger." It is difficult to overstate how misleading this statement is. First, Blum himself did not take part in any of these investigations. The relevant fieldwork was carried out by specialists in paleogeography and sedimentology whose published interpretations do, in fact, identify geomorphological features consistent with former harbor installations within the Trojan plain (Figure 4). In independent communications, both İlhan Kayan (University of İzmir) and John C. Kraft (University of Delaware) emphasized that such traces are present in the geomorphological record (Kraft et al. 2003). These assessments have been thoroughly documented in the scholarly literature, including publications produced within the framework of the Tübingen Troy Project itself, some of them in *Studia Troica* (Kayan 2009). As early as 2006, for example, Bieg and Aslan (2006, 136–37) noted that "the artificial canal may have served as access to Sigeum's now silted-up south harbour in what is now Lisgar Marsh." Thus, it took only fourteen years for the excavators to arrive at a conclusion that had already been proposed (Zangger 1993, 84). In light of these published interpretations, the claim that no evidence exists is difficult to reconcile with the documented assessments of the specialists whose work is being invoked (Figure 5).

Figure 4: Standing water on agricultural fields in the Trojan plain can reveal the outlines of silted-up harbor basins after heavy rainfall. The photograph shows the Lisgar Marsh viewed from north to south along the Yeniköy ridge (right). It is precisely this basin, which has been temporarily refilled with water, that is connected to the Aegean Sea (on the right) by an artificial channel 30 meters deep, 50 meters wide, and 400 meters long (Zangger & Mutlu 2015, 593; Zangger 2016, 127; Luwian Studies #2113).

Figure 5: Detail from the topographical map of the Trojan plain by Thomas Spratt and Peter Wilhelm Forchhammer (1850). The at the time still unexcavated citadel is indicated at the right edge of the image as "Neu-Ilion," while the Lisgar Marsh appears on the left. The label on the deep artificial cut through the coastal ridge reads "Uralter künstlicher Durchschnitt" ("very ancient artificial cut") (after Zangger 2016, 109; Luwian Studies #2100).

Topographical maps of the Trojan plain produced by Peter Wilhelm Forchhammer and Thomas Spratt in 1850 already document extensive anthropogenic hydraulic structures (Figure 5), explicitly identified as "very ancient" works of hydraulic engineering (Forchhammer 1850, 20). These features correspond closely to the artificial hydraulic infrastructures that Plato emphasizes as a distinctive characteristic of Atlantis. Independent corroboration is found in Guido de Columnis's *Historia destructionis Troiae* (1287), a medieval narrative reconstructed from numerous manuscript traditions, in which hydraulic installations and an artificial harbor entrance play a prominent role in the description of Troy (Meek 1974). Given that neither the Homeric epics nor detailed knowledge of the local topography are likely to have served as direct sources for this account, the recurrence of such motifs may reflect the transmission – whether oral or textual – of earlier conceptions of Troy at its height (Figure 6).

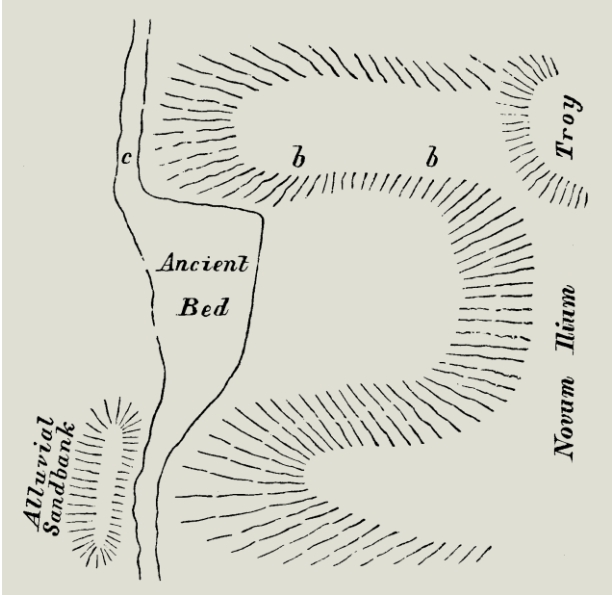

Figure 6: Plan showing the ancient bed of the Scamander River in front of Troy. A "sort of bank,"at least five feet high, is indicated by the letters "b" (Schliemann 1881, 81, Fig. 19; Luwian Studies #2106).

Comparable observations were also noted within the framework of the modern Troy Project itself. References to additional possible harbor installations appeared not only in specialist publications but also in public-facing venues, including an article in *Der Spiegel* (16/1997), which reported the discovery of a small, silted-up port basin directly below the citadel – already noted by Schliemann (Figure 6). The fact that these indications were not subsequently subjected to systematic, method-driven investigation represents a significant gap in the research history of the site.

Notably, Stephan Blum himself concedes that "extensive paleogeographical and sedimentological investigations between 1977 and 2005 have shown that the Trojan landscape has changed significantly since the Neolithic period as a result of sea-level fluctuations and various geomorphological processes – not exactly in the form predicted by Zangger, but close to it" (Blum 2018, 126–127). This acknowledgment further underscores that the disagreement does not concern the existence of large-scale landscape transformation, but rather the interpretive framework within which such transformations are evaluated.

ON THE BIAS OF SOURCE SELECTION

Stephan Blum subsumes proponents of a historical reference for Plato's Atlantis narrative under the general label "Atlantologists." This categorization obscures important distinctions. A number of well-established scholars in classical philology, ancient history, and archaeology – firmly situated within the academic mainstream – have argued that a historical referent for Plato's account is more plausible than a purely fictional construction (e.g., Frost 1913; Marinatos 1950; Brandenstein 1951; Corbato 1953; Luce 1969; Welliver 1977). Conversely, even among those Plato specialists who primarily interpret Atlantis as a literary device, there is no consensus regarding Plato's specific intentions in formulating the narrative or in assigning it such a prominent position within a trilogy-like compendium of natural science and history.

Blum calls upon advocates of a historical Atlantis to adopt a more professional engagement with the existing scholarly literature. This appeal, however, also invites scrutiny of the source base employed in his own contribution. Of the 54 endnotes included, a substantial proportion refer to online portals, most notably Wikipedia. This is striking given that the anthology programmatically claims to distinguish between "facts" and "fiction." Under such premises, one would normally expect evaluative judgments to rest primarily on peer-reviewed specialist literature, with popular or non-editorially controlled platforms serving, at most, as contextual references for the criticised positions. In the present case, however, the pattern appears inverted. The position subjected to categorical criticism by Blum has been articulated in multiple peer-reviewed publications (see below), whereas key elements of his own argument rely on Wikipedia entries. This asymmetry in source selection raises questions not only about evidentiary standards, but also about how epistemic authority is constructed and stabilized within the controversy (Figure 7).

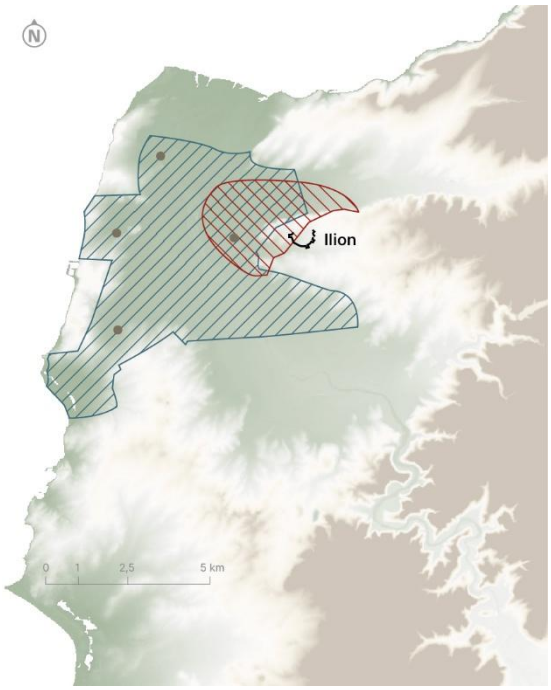

Figure 7: Map illustrating a proposed geophysical survey of the Trojan plain (blue) aimed at identifying hypothesized Bronze Age hydraulic installations (dots) and peripheral settlement areas of Troy (red) that may be buried beneath floodplain alluvium (courtesy of Beaumont Rivers Ltd., London, UK; Luwian Studies #2211).

The Atlantis–Troy hypothesis is particularly well suited to careful expert examination, precisely because it has been presented repeatedly and in detail. The initial article, published in 1993 in the *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, remains, to date, the only interpretation of Plato's Atlantis account to appear in a peer-reviewed archaeological journal while proposing a geographically specific historical referent (Zangger 1993a). The manuscript underwent a year-long review process and was ultimately published unchanged under the title "Plato's Atlantis Account: A Distorted Recollection of the Trojan War." More than three decades later, there still appears to be no substantive reason to revise either the central argument or even the wording of its original formulation.

Subsequent specialist publications developed this interpretive framework further by incorporating additional empirical findings and methodological refinements. These contributions addressed, among other topics, the artificial harbor installations attributed to Troy, the stratigraphic sequence of the Trojan plain to be investigated through ground-penetrating and sedimentological methods, and unresolved topographical and geoarchaeological questions. Relevant publications include:

– "Das Atlantis=Troja-Konzept. Auf den Spuren einer versunkenen Kultur in Westkleinasien" (Zangger 1998)
– "Searching for the Ports of Troy" (Zangger et al. 1998)
– "Atlantis: The End of a Legend," in *The Future of the Past* (Zangger 2001)
– "Some Open Questions About the Plain of Troia" (Zangger 2003)
– "Artificial Ports and Water Engineering at Troy: A Geoarchaeological Working Hypothesis" (Zangger and Mutlu 2015)

Taken together, this body of work does not constitute a speculative or isolated claim, but a sustained research program articulated across multiple peer-reviewed and specialist venues. Blum does not cite a single one of these publications, not even the article published in the *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*. Instead, his argument relies exclusively on a popular-science book published in 1992 (Zangger 1992), which deliberately presented the argument in a simplified form for a general readership. This selective use of sources sits uneasily with Blum's own claim that proponents of a historical reference for Atlantis tend to disregard or dismiss the work of university-based disciplines as ideologically motivated (Blum 2018, 118), thereby positioning themselves outside the scientific discourse. In the present case, however, it is Blum who omits the relevant specialist literature entirely and bases his assessment solely on the earliest and least technical formulation of the argument. The result is not an

engagement with the research program as it developed through peer-reviewed debate, but an evaluation constructed around a deliberately non-specialist point of entry (Figure 8).

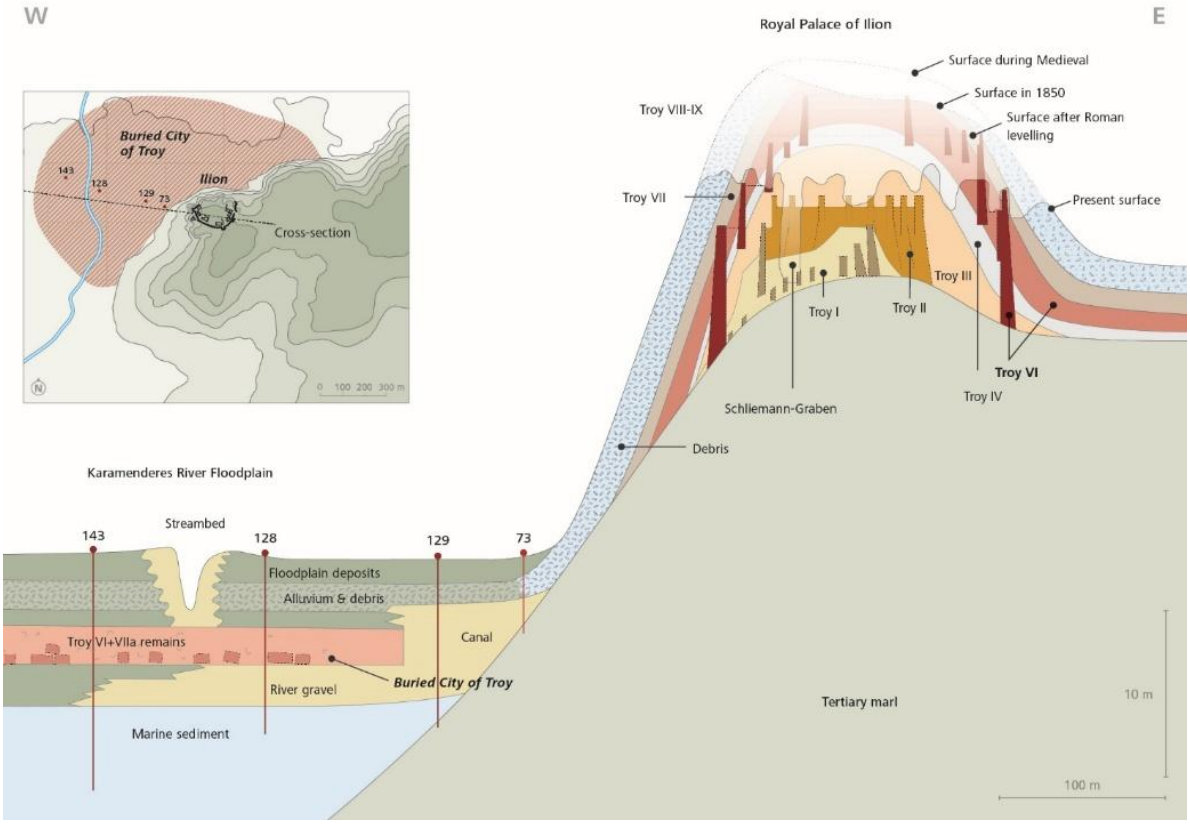

Figure 8: Cross-section of the citadel mound of Troy showing that many settlement layers were removed during levelling in antiquity and through archaeological excavation. At the same time, the section illustrates how clearly the settlement horizon can be identified at a depth of 5–7 meters within the floodplain stratigraphy (Zangger 2016, 100–101; Luwian Studies #2206).

THE RHETORIC OF ILLUSTRATION

Stephan Blum's contribution also exhibits a selective approach to visual representation. While the anthology as a whole is carefully designed and maintains a consistently high standard of visual presentation, the illustrations associated with the position under critique deviate noticeably from this level of precision and quality. This contrast is striking, given the otherwise meticulous visual standards applied throughout the volume.

This choice is all the more consequential because, for the subject matter in question, detailed and methodologically precise visualizations have been available for decades. Since the early 1990s, the research program discussed here has been accompanied by systematic collaboration with specialists in scientific illustration, dedicated studios, and professional photographers, aimed at translating complex archaeological and geoarchaeological data into accurate visual form. Such visualizations function not merely as illustrative supplements, but as integral components of analytical reasoning, particularly in the reconstruction of landscapes, hydraulic systems, and large-scale spatial relations. Since 2014, this practice has been continued and institutionalized by the Luwian Studies Foundation, with a particular emphasis on high-quality scientific visualization (Figure 8; see also Zangger et al. 2025; Woudhuizen and Zangger 2021). The resulting image material has been made freely accessible to the professional community.

Against this backdrop, it is difficult to understand why Blum's contribution relies on simplified black-and-white hand drawings. These images originate from a much earlier phase of the research process: they were produced 35 years ago as provisional working sketches, intended as internal templates for professional scientific illustrators. At the time, they were published in this preliminary form for pragmatic reasons, including the publisher's cost constraints. Since then, these early sketches have repeatedly been reused within the context of the Troy project as visual shorthand for a particularly simple methodological approach, despite the fact that numerous specialist publications on the same subject

have appeared in subsequent decades, accompanied by substantially revised and methodologically more refined illustrations. The continued use of such preliminary material thus does not reflect the current state of visual and analytical development in the field. From the perspective of scholarly practice, the assessment of research positions should be based on the most up-to-date versions of both arguments and their visual representations; reliance on superseded material is difficult to reconcile with accepted standards of good research practice.

WHEN PARALLELS BECOME EVIDENT

Thus far, questions of argumentative style and epistemic practice have been central. At this point, however, the arguments themselves also require consideration. On what grounds can the assumption be made that Plato's Atlantis account preserves a memory of the Trojan War? When the various strands of evidence and layers of cultural memory associated with Bronze Age Troy are brought into relation – archaeological findings, Homer's *Iliad*, but above all non-Homeric Trojan traditions and historiographical reports – a constellation of features emerges that corresponds strikingly with Plato's description of Atlantis.

Both traditions are situated in a heroic age and revolve around a large-scale conflict between opposing coalitions. In each case, a united Greek force crosses the sea to confront a powerful adversary, initially from a position of relative weakness, and ultimately brings about the complete destruction of the opposing polity. The cultural and technological horizon described in both narratives is consistent with a Bronze Age context: bronze weaponry, knowledge of iron, and the use of brass are explicitly mentioned in the texts or are archaeologically attested. Both societies are described as possessing knowledge of writing. Chariots play a central role in warfare, and both traditions refer to a fleet of 1,200 ships.

Both locations are situated along strategically constricted waterways (Figure 9) and mark – each from its own perspective – the edge of the known world. Topographically, they display comparable profiles: a rugged hinterland dominated by high mountain ranges and an extensive coastal plain separated from the sea by a steep cliff. In both regions, a pair of hot and cold springs are attested as distinctive features; both are exposed to strong northerly winds; and both possessed extensive hinterland forests that would have ensured a sustained supply of timber in the Bronze Age.

Parallels also emerge on mythological and symbolic levels. In both traditions, the principal city is associated with Poseidon, followed by the figure of Atlas. Each narrative refers to a sanctuary of Poseidon with an adjoining, garden-like precinct, and both traditions include a recurring five-year cycle during which the rulers themselves perform the sacrifice of a sacred bull.

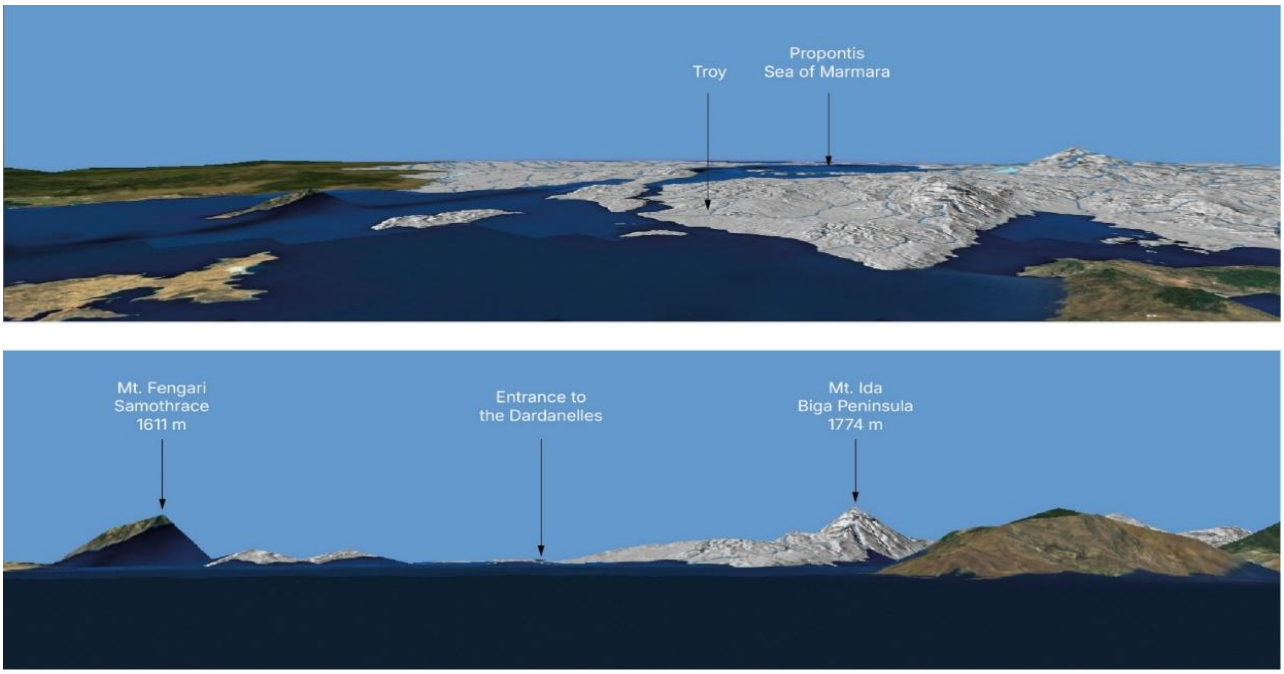

Figure 9. Exaggerated digital elevation model (DEM) based on Google Earth, showing the northeastern Aegean Sea with the Troad Peninsula, the Dardanelles and Troy at the center (after Mutlu & Koray 2015). In Timaeus (24e), Plato has an Egyptian priest describe the location of Atlantis as lying "in front of the mouth which you Greeks call, as you say, 'the Pillars of Heracles'"(Luwian Studies #6115).

Structural parallels can likewise be identified. In both cases, the landscape is described as being divided into ten political units. Each tradition refers to a striking artificial cut through a steep coastal barrier, creating a direct connection between the sea and the inland plain – a feature that remains prominently visible at Troy today. Concentric spatial arrangements play an important role in both settings, whether in the organization of the central settlement or in the articulation of surrounding zones. Both accounts emphasize artificial harbor installations requiring substantial modifications of the natural hydrological regime and refer to underground waterways as part of this engineered landscape.

Finally, the narrative arcs converge in their ending. After a prolonged siege and a large-scale war, the central city is conquered by Greek forces, set on fire, and destroyed. Its remains are subsequently obscured by sedimentary processes, so that the ruins of the city disappear and lie buried beneath shallow sediments or mud. In both traditions, this destruction is followed by a far-reaching cultural rupture, marking the transition from a flourishing heroic society to a period of profound disruption conventionally described as a Dark Age.

Such a dense accumulation of highly specific correspondences across multiple analytical levels – topography, hydrology, urban organization, cult practice, technology, warfare, and historical rupture – is difficult to account for methodologically as mere coincidence. The suggestion that the war for Atlantis and the war for Troy may be intrinsically connected is therefore neither novel nor speculative. As early as 1984, the ancient philologist Marcelle Laplace described this relationship as self-evident within the comparative study of ancient traditions (Laplace 1984).

Against this background, Stephan Blum's decision to equate these parallels with *Die Wahrheit über Hänsel und Gretel* (*The truth about Hansel and Gretel*) by Hans Traxler is analytically revealing (Blum 2018, 124 fn 39). Traxler's work is a satirical pseudo-documentary in which a fictional amateur archaeologist fabricates evidence for the historical core of a fairy tale. By invoking this analogy, the discussion is displaced from the evaluation of empirical patterns and methodological reasoning to the level of ridicule and genre confusion. The effect is not to refute the argument, but to delegitimize it through association, thereby substituting rhetorical disqualification for substantive critique.

ON THE CONNECTIVITY OF A WORKING HYPOTHESIS

Ultimately, the value of a research hypothesis lies in its implications and its capacity to connect previously disparate strands of evidence. In this sense, the decisive question is not whether a hypothesis is immediately verifiable, but what follows if it is provisionally taken seriously. Over the past century, several prominent attempts have been made to identify a historical referent for Plato's Atlantis, most notably those proposed by Kingdon Tregosse Frost (1909, 1913), who located Atlantis on Minoan Crete, and Spyridon Marinatos (1950), who associated Atlantis with Thera. In both cases, these interpretations were advanced by highly regarded archaeologists and generated extensive debate. Yet neither led to sustained new insights or to integrative field programs that extended beyond the original proposal. The question therefore arises: what if Troy were to be considered, provisionally, as a plausible historical referent for Atlantis? What consequences would this entail for archaeological research design?

First, for Troy itself, such a working hypothesis would imply that major architectural and infrastructural elements extended far into the surrounding plain (Figures 7,8 & 11), where they are now concealed beneath approximately five to seven meters of alluvium. The presence of such buried structures has, in fact, already been indicated by drilling data (Kayan 1996, 248). Within this interpretive framework, the concentric ditches surrounding the citadel (Figure 10) would no longer be understood primarily as obstacles to approaching chariots, but rather as internal boundaries within a cultic precinct, plausibly associated with the keeping and ritual sacrifice of sacred bulls in or near a palace garden.

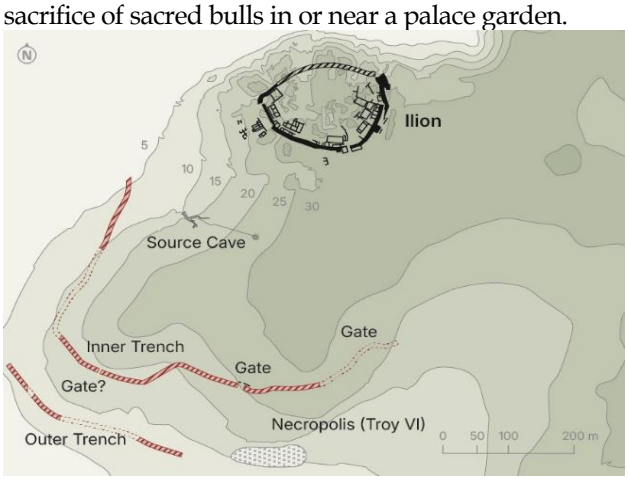

Figure 10: Plan of the Late Bronze Age citadel complex at Troy showing the location of trenches excavated into the Tertiary bedrock (Luwian Studies #2209).

Second, Troy's regional context would require reassessment. The neighboring Late Bronze Age polities of western Asia Minor would emerge as roughly comparable in economic capacity and military organization to the Mycenaean kingdoms of southern Greece (Zangger et al. 2022). Such a perspective would draw attention to the existence of an independent cultural and political sphere in western Asia Minor, which to date has been only fragmentarily documented in the archaeological record and is often interpreted primarily through Hittite or Mycenaean lenses.

Third, the so-called Sea Peoples invasions can be situated within a more coherent historical framework (Zangger 1995). Parallels between Plato's Atlantis account and the traditions surrounding these incursions were already noted in the nineteenth century, shortly after Jean-François Champollion's decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs had become widely accepted (more than thirty years after Champollion's death) and the reliefs of the mortuary temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu had become accessible to scholarship. Early commentators suggested that both bodies of evidence might ultimately refer to the same sequence of events (Christ 1886). This line of interpretation has not disappeared from scholarly discourse; it has been reiterated repeatedly (see references in Zangger 1992, 181, fn. 448), most recently by the Plato specialist Herwig Görgemanns (1996, 2000). Within such a framework, the modern collective label "Sea Peoples" would designate an alliance of predominantly western Anatolian polities, among which Trojan elites appear to have played a prominent role. The strategic objectives of these campaigns would have been to liberate Cyprus from Hittite control and to exert pressure on northern Syria, the Hittite Great King's closest ally (Woudhuizen and Zangger 2021, 127–131).

Fourth, such a perspective would make it possible, for the first time, to outline a coherent chronological sequence for the events marking the end of the Bronze Age (Zangger 1994a). The rapid and far-reaching cultural transformations of this period – often treated as loosely connected or regionally isolated phenomena – could be understood as interrelated outcomes of a multifaceted, cascading historical process.

Fifth, the long-standing debate over the historicity of the Trojan War would acquire a new analytical dimension. Rather than appearing as an isolated conflict, the war could be interpreted as a large-scale counteroffensive by the Mycenaean polities, following a phase in which Troy and its allies had destabilized or exerted control over significant parts of the eastern Mediterranean. Within this framework, Greek military strategies would no longer appear as innovations emerging *ex nihilo*, but as adaptive responses that appropriated and redirected tactics previously employed by Trojan-led coalitions (Woudhuizen and Zangger 2021, 127–31).

Finally, this perspective also opens new interpretive possibilities for the narrative structure of Homer's *Odyssey* (Zangger 1992, 177–200). Odysseus' sojourn among the Phaeacians may be read as a retrospective evocation of Troy at the height of its prosperity, while the broader narrative framework – beyond the episodic travel adventures – can be interpreted as a literary reflection on the conditions of internal conflict, fragmentation, and social instability that characterized Greece in the aftermath of Troy's destruction.

INTERNATIONAL RECEPTION AND HEURISTIC POTENTIAL

Field-oriented prehistoric archaeologists recognized the heuristic potential of the Troy–Atlantis hypothesis at an early stage. The first reviews of *The Flood from Heaven – Deciphering the Atlantis Legend* explicitly highlighted its interdisciplinary orientation and its systematic integration of natural-scientific methods into archaeological reasoning. Jeremy Rutter described the book as comprehensive, up to date, and methodologically persuasive, emphasizing in particular its holistic approach, which brings textual, archaeological, and scientific evidence into a coherent analytical framework (Rutter 1992). He further noted that the author's background as a geoarchaeologist with geomorphological expertise was especially well suited to assessing Plato's detailed descriptions of flooding and landscape transformation.

Particularly instructive is the reception of the book by established authorities in prehistoric and classical archaeology. In a review published in *Nature*, Colin Renfrew (1992) characterized the study as "perfectly sane and well-argued," authored by a "competent scholar." He explicitly acknowledged that the author's training as a geomorphologist placed him in a strong position to reconstruct changes in the topography of Troy since the Bronze Age. A similar assessment was articulated by Anthony Snodgrass (1992), who stressed in his foreword that the work did not propose a dogmatic "solution," but should rather be read as an explicit plea for methodological openness and for the exploration of new interpretive pathways within

ancient studies. Comparable evaluations were offered by Bernard Knapp, who referred to the book as "an excellent and impressive piece of scholarship," and by Christopher Mee, who described the approach as "ingenious and entirely plausible."

Several responses also drew attention to the broader implications of the work. Daniel Pullen commended the attempt to situate otherwise disparate phenomena of Late Bronze Age eastern Mediterranean history – from the Trojan War and the movements conventionally labeled as the Sea Peoples to the collapse of political systems – within a single, integrated explanatory framework (Pullen 1994). Curtis Runnels went further, suggesting that the study had the potential to encourage a generation of scholars to reassess established reconstructions of Aegean prehistory. These assessments are complemented by positive evaluations from Tjeerd H. van Andel, Günther Wagner, and Edmund Bloedow (1993), all of whom emphasized the interdisciplinary orientation of the work, the internal coherence of its argumentation, and – most importantly – its heuristic value for future research.

ON THE RESPONSIBILITY AND THE STABILIZATION OF EDITORIAL AUTHORITIES

The overall impression is that Stephan Blum's contribution omits a substantial body of relevant – and in some cases foundational – specialist literature, as well as the documented international reception of the work under discussion. These omissions are not marginal; they concern precisely those publications and assessments that would be required for a balanced and substantive engagement with the research program in question. The resulting analysis therefore functions less as a dialectical examination of a complex scholarly problem than as an act of demarcation from a position perceived as competing with an established interpretive framework surrounding Troy.

Such forms of controversy have not proven productive for the Troy Project itself. The project became overshadowed by scholarly debates of considerable intensity and ultimately lost its governmental permit and funding. Stephan Blum appears to be among the last remaining representatives of this line of argument in Tübingen. More importantly, however, this is the point at which editorial responsibility becomes central. Editors are tasked with ensuring balance, comprehensive engagement with the relevant literature, and adherence to basic standards of scholarly fairness. In the present volume, these responsibilities have not been adequately fulfilled. Viewed in a broader perspective, this shortcoming does not appear to be an isolated case.

For several decades, German-language academic media have presented discussions of Troy largely through the perspective associated with the Troy Project at the University of Tübingen. It is noteworthy that the editor of the volume and the majority of the critics cited therein emerge from the same institutional and intellectual contexts. By contrast, work from the field of Luwian Studies – which has received sustained attention in international peer-reviewed journals as well as in the global popular-science press – has remained comparatively marginal in German-language coverage. The asymmetry suggests not merely divergent scholarly assessments, but the operation of long-standing structures of interpretive authority that shape which perspectives are amplified and which remain peripheral.

The reasons for this asymmetry lie less in content-based evaluation than in structural dependencies characteristic of contemporary science journalism. As the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* observed in a different context, restraint in criticism helps to secure "valuable channels of communication with important decision-makers for the future" (Himmelreich 2026). Under such conditions, science journalism can easily assume the role of benevolently accompanying the narratives of institutionally powerful actors rather than critically interrogating them.

Against this backdrop, it is particularly regrettable that the considerable potential for open and productive exchange among the researchers involved in Germany has remained largely unrealized for decades. Instead of positioning themselves as facilitators of a pluralistic and dialogical process of knowledge production, key actors have tended to act as guardians of an implicit monopoly of interpretation. As a result, the exploration of alternative perspectives was displaced by practices of devaluation and exclusion. The consequence has not merely been a polarized debate, but a structurally impoverished discourse – one in which opportunities for epistemic innovation were foreclosed rather than explored.

THE PARADOX OF PREVENTED KNOWLEDGE

The development of the controversy illustrates how rapidly the examination of a working hypothesis can shift from empirical evaluation to categorical attribution once attention moves away from arguments, methods, and findings toward

institutional positioning and discursive framing. When criticism ceases to address questions of verifiability or falsifiability and instead operates through mechanisms of delegitimization, the conditions for productive inquiry become constrained. In such contexts, research risks functioning less as a means of expanding knowledge than as a mechanism for stabilizing existing interpretive hierarchies. This dynamic is particularly consequential in archaeology, where progress depends upon interdisciplinary cooperation and the integration of heterogeneous forms of evidence.

Figure 11: Artistic visualization of the Trojan plain intended to draw attention to possible architectural remains preserved within the alluvial sediments. The illustration highlights a hypothetical system of hydraulic installations associated with multiple harbor basins, serving as a heuristic framework for explaining corresponding features in the present-day landscape (© Christoph Haußner; Luwian Studies #2000).

The unrealized potential of the Troy project (Figure 11) must be understood against this background. Since 1992, three successive directors of the excavations – all emerging from the same institutional tradition – have expressed scepticism regarding the existence of extensive architectural remains beneath the surface of the alluvial plain. Yet the institutions most strongly positioned to test this assumption comprehensively did not undertake a systematic, integrated landscape investigation. Instead, prolonged exclusivity of access, combined with the allocation of public resources, resulted in the absence of precisely the kind of inquiry that might have clarified the issue. As C. Brian Rose has noted, cooperation did not materialize because the publication of the Atlantis–Troy hypothesis was perceived as a "personal affront" (Rose 2014, 203). This observation suggests that non-epistemic factors played a significant role in shaping the course of the debate.

If the project leadership was convinced that no relevant remains were present, there was no methodological justification for restricting research access to the surrounding landscape over an extended period. An open and collaborative framework would have permitted competing claims to be examined empirically rather than settled institutionally. Even in the absence of additional archaeological discoveries, a joint geoarchaeological investigation of the stratigraphy of the Trojan plain would have constituted a meaningful scientific undertaking.

When research practices no longer prioritize the systematic testing of hypotheses and instead contribute – intentionally or not – to limiting their empirical examination, the issue extends beyond competing interpretations to the structural governance of knowledge production. In this sense, the Troy case is less a dispute over a single hypothesis than a case study in how institutional configurations can delay or redirect scientific innovation. The paradox does not reside in the hypothesis itself, but in the reluctance to subject it to transparent and replicable procedures of evaluation.

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