

A New Suggested Site for Troy (Yenibademli Höyük)

Nearly all archaeologists identify the remains of Troy with Hisarlik. This article in contrast looks at some alternative suggested locations and finding them to be implausible suggests a Bronze-Age site (Yenibademli Höyük) on the island Imbros (Gökçeada). The popular identification of Hisarlik with Troy is further questioned and doubted. It is argued on the basis of an ancient tradition Hisarlik could not have been Troy and reveals descriptions of Troy from the *Iliad* are not compatible with Hisarlik.

Keywords: Troy, Homer, *Iliad*, Imbros, Yenibademli Höyük

Introduction

Archaeologists and classical scholars almost universally identify Troy with Hisarlik in northwest Turkey; the classicist John V. Luce (1998: 91) thought chances of an alternative site are virtually nil. However, Hisarlik is not a particularly strong candidate since the archaeology of Hisarlik presents a Troy somewhat different to that described in Homer's *Iliad* c. 700 BCE. Despite these discrepancies the identification of Troy with Hisarlik remains popular because in the words of Carl Blegen (who excavated Hisarlik in the 1930s) "No other key site has been found in the northern Troad. There is no alternative..."¹ (Blegen 1971, p. 411). What though if Troy sat outside this region? To have plausibility, an alternative site cannot be too far from the Troad (northwest Turkey). According to Homer, the allies of Troy (or king Priam) inhabited this area and surrounding territories such as Mysia and southern Thrace (*Il.* 2. 816-877) while Achaeans sacked nearby Aegean islands, including Tenedos (*Il.* 11. 625). The *Iliad* (24. 346) locates Troy near the Hellespont (Dardanelles). The general geographical setting of the *Iliad* is not in doubt by classical scholars, but has Troy been proven to be Hisarlik?

Theoretically, it is not impossible that Troy might be one day identified with other settlements in Anatolia or the Aegean... (Pavel 2014: 11)

This paper questions the popular identification of Troy with Hisarlik and proposes a different Bronze Age site close to the Hellespont but outside the Troad.

¹James Mellaart in *The Archaeology of Ancient Turkey* cautions (1978: 34): "Although Blegen fully accepted the identification of Hisarlik with Homeric Troy, the equation, however, remains unproved".

Hisarlik

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Prior to Schliemann's excavations at Hisarlik (a 200 x 150m mound and lower plateau) in the 1870s, archaeologists disputed the location of Troy across the Troad, including Pinarbaşı (six miles southeast of Hisarlik) and Akça Köy (four miles south of Hisarlik). What made the Hisarlik-Troy identification popular is alternative suggested sites were either falsified or shown to be improbable, leaving only Hisarlik which also benefited from tradition (Allen 1999: 81-83; Wood 2005: 36-38). Throughout most of classical antiquity Hisarlik was widely thought to be the location of Troy and its citadel Ilios (Romans even named the site 'Ilium' after the latter):

...rumor since ancient times has identified the city of Troy – poetically known as Ilios – with ruins on a mound at Hisarlik near the Turkish Dardanelles (ancient Greek Hellespont). Alexander the Great famously reversed the site of Achilles' rage, and the Romans so romanticised the spot that they rebuilt it as Roman Ilium. (Kitts 2015: 389-390)

There is though no evidence Greeks identified Hisarlik with Troy during the time of Homer in the late 8th century BCE (Grethlein 2010: 135). A few ancient Greeks also rejected to identify Hisarlik with Troy, namely Strabo in the late 1st century BCE who “stood alone among major authors in his insistence that it [Troy] lay elsewhere” (Allen 1999: 40). The earliest literary evidence Greeks had identified Hisarlik with Troy dates to the 5th century BCE (Hdt. 7. 43. 2; Hellanicus apud Strab. 13. 1. 42). Strabo (13. 1. 25) claimed identification of Troy with Hisarlik did not predate the 6th century BCE. Therefore, it is possible the site of Troy was originally a separate location during the time the *Iliad* was composed, but a century or more after Homer – Troy was relocated to Hisarlik. Nearly all archaeologists though are convinced Hisarlik is Troy based on the lack of alternative Bronze Age sites (that are fortified settlements) in the Troad:

The arguments for locating Troy here [Hisarlik] are as follows. First, from Homer's poems it has always been clear that Troy (Ilios/Ilios) was situated very close to the Achaean camp on the Dardanelles. Second, since Classical times the settlement at Hisarlik has been identified by inscriptions and coins as Ilios. Third, excavations since Schliemann's first campaigns in the 1870s until this day have unearthed at Hisarlik a citadel with remarkable architecture and finds as well as a 30ha fortified lower city. Fourth, a number of surveys across the Troas have established that the largest site in the Troad is undoubtedly Hisarlik. Fifth, Hittite sources of the late 15th to late 13th c. speak of conflicts between Mycenaean and Hittites (or their vassals) ... over 'Wilusa' in the region later named Troad. (Pavel 2010: 10)

How strong are these five arguments? I will examine each one.

1 A location near the Hellespont

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3 First, it is not in doubt the *Iliad* locates Troy next to the Hellespont
4 (Dardanelles), but this does not mean Troy must have sat inside the Troad. It
5 is reasonable to argue for a different site outside the Troad if nearby the
6 Hellespont (Smith 2020).

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Desolation of Troy

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11 Second, the Greco-Roman tradition Hisarlik was Troy is contradicted by
12 the 4th century BCE Athenian writer and orator Lycurgus who claimed the city
13 of Troy after its destruction by Achaeans was abandoned; in fact, he claimed
14 the site was left uninhabited in his own day:

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16 Who has not heard of Troy and how it became the greatest of the cities at that
17 time and ruled over all of Asia, and then was obliterated all at once by the Greeks
18 and is eternally uninhabited? (*Oratio in Leocratem*. 62. 3 translation by Borges
19 2011)

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21 Lycurgus' claim Troy was left desolate after its destruction² is impossible
22 to reconcile with the archaeology of Hisarlik (consisting of different
23 archaeological layers from 3000 to 500 CE). Hisarlik was destroyed multiple
24 times throughout the Bronze Age; some archaeologists identify the Trojan
25 War with archaeological layer VIIa that shows sign of warfare (Maher 2003:
26 60-61) although this remains contentious. Nevertheless, despite multiple
27 destructions Hisarlik was rebuilt and continuously inhabited until the 6th
28 century CE when the site was depopulated because of an outbreak of the
29 bubonic plague (Kitts 2015: 390). Throughout the Greek Dark Age (11th to 9th
30 centuries) Troy continued to be populated although there was sparse
31 settlement until a colony of Greeks arrived in the 9th century or early 8th
32 century BCE.

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Site Level	Approx. End Date	Cause of Destruction	Aftermath
VIh	1300 BCE	Earthquake	Continuity/rebuilding
VIIa	1230-1180 BCE	Attacked by enemy	Continuity/rebuilding
VIIIb [1]	1150 BCE	Unknown	New Culture

²The siege of Troy was dated by ancient Greek chroniclers between 1250 and 1135 BCE, see Wood 2005: 34.

VIIIb [2]	1100 BCE	Earthquake or enemy attack	Continuity/rebuilding
VIIIb [3]	1000-900 BCE	Unknown	Sparsely populated until Greek settlement

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2 Hisarlik continued to be inhabited throughout Archaic, Classical,
3 Hellenistic, and Roman periods (archaeological layers VIII to IX). Hisarlik's
4 archaeology is simply not compatible with Lycurgus' claim Troy was left
5 desolated after its destruction by Achaeans and remained uninhabited in his
6 own era. Heinrich Schliemann who excavated Hisarlik in the 1870s and
7 thought he had discovered Troy dismissed Lycurgus' claim as fiction
8 (Schliemann 1884: 292). However, there is reason to think Lycurgus was
9 relying on an earlier tradition, that rivalled a sperate tradition Hisarlik was
10 Troy. Strabo (13. 1. 42) knew of a tradition Troy was not rebuilt after its
11 destruction because reoccupation of the site was considered to be a bad omen.
12 For this reason, he rejected to identify Hisarlik (Roman Ilium) with Troy and
13 proposed another location nearby, three miles to the east (Strab. 13. 1. 25, 35).
14 Strabo also knew of "other inquirers who find that the city changed its site"
15 and named Demetrius of Scepsis a 2nd century BCE writer.³

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Troy's citadel (Ilios)

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21 The third and fourth arguments identify Hisarlik with Troy based on its
22 citadel and walls. Troy's citadel (Ilios) is described in the *Iliad* as "well-
23 fortified" (2. 113) with high gates and walls (4. 34). The *Iliad* mentions the
24 word "Ilios", 105 times, Troy, 53 times; the former refers to a smaller division
25 within the larger city (Muñoyerro 1997-1998). The citadel was elevated on a
26 mound (*Il.* 20. 52) and housed Trojan royals (*Il.* 6. 317). Its summit was called
27 Pergamos (*Il.* 4. 508; 24. 700) where stood a temple to Apollo (*Il.* 5. 446). Homer
28 repeatedly describes Ilios as "sacred", referring to the prominent position of
29 the temple. Outside the citadel, the lower area of the city was also fortified
30 with a surrounding wall and gates (*Il.* 5. 789; 6. 393), as well as a large tower
31 (*Il.* 6. 386). Proponents of the Hisarlik-Troy identification argue despite
32 inconsistencies between Homer's picture of Troy in the *Iliad* and Hisarlik,
33 nowhere else in the Troad is there a mound with a fortified settlement, "no
34 place other than Hisarlik... can show characteristics of a royal fortress"
35 (Blegen 1971: 411). I will show later that this claim is wrong.

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³Demetrius' writings are lost but are quoted by Strabo.

Wilusa

The fifth and final argument that identifies Troy or Ilios with Hisarlik is based on Hittite literary sources that mention a place named Wilusa which many but not all scholars identify with Ilios (Pantazis 2009). The Wilusa-Ilios equation is based on a linguistic argument Wilusa (or Wilusiya) was the Hittite name of the Greek word Wilios (an archaic form of Ilios before dropping the 'w'). I have doubts about the Wilusa-Ilios equation, but Hittite sources are vague about the location of Wilusa, "as with most of Hittite geography, no strict proof is possible" (Güterbock 1986: 41). Therefore, even if it is one day proven the Wilusa of Hittite literature and Homer's Ilios are one and the same place its location will probably remain undeterminable.

Alternative location hypotheses

If the search for the site of Troy is restricted to the Troad, there is no doubt Hisarlik is the sole candidate because "Troy was the only fortified settlement in the Troad during the second millennium BC" (Rose 2014: 27). However, a number of alternative sites for Troy have been proposed well outside of the Troad. These range from Cambridgeshire in England (Wilkens 1990), Helsinki in Finland (Vinci 2017: 172) and Dalmatia in Croatia (Price 2006). None of these alternative location hypotheses are remotely convincing and are far too distant from the Hellespont or Troad to be taken seriously by archaeologists.⁴ Another author who suggests an alternative site is John Lascelles. His argument is the ancient city Pergamon (Pergamos) in northwestern Turkey was Troy. To his credit, Lascelles describes England, Finland and Croatia as 'false trails' to search for Troy:

These false trails should not confuse us. Ancient writers provide abundant evidence that the Trojan War took place, not in Dalmatia, England, or Finland, but around the Aegean Sea. (Lascelles 2005: 16)

While I would hesitate to lump Lascelles' more reasonable location hypothesis with the aforementioned pseudoarchaeology ideas – the identification of Pergamon with Troy makes no sense because of its chronology. Pergamon dates no older than the 8th century BCE; the earliest dated ceramics at the site are proto-Corinthian (Hanse, 1971: 8). The *Iliad's* setting, including the Trojan War almost certainly predates the construction of Pergamon by centuries (Hood 1995). Lascelles' hypothesis is implausible based on its extreme revision of chronology, but it has been developed by

⁴See Snodgrass 2002 for criticism of the Troy-England hypothesis.

1 John Crowe (2011) in his book and website.⁵ Adding myself to the list of
2 alternative location hypotheses I proposed a different site for Troy at
3 Yenibademli Höyük on the Aegean island Imbros (Smith 2020).

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Five reasons to doubt Hisarlik is Troy

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8 Poseidon's view

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10 The god Poseidon observed Troy and ships of the Achaeans from the
11 highest mountain on Samothrace (*Il.* 13. 10-14). If Hisarlik was the site of Troy
12 there would be no clear line of sight because the mountainous island Imbros
13 (Gökçeada) sits between them and obstructs the view (Smith, 2020: 62-63). The
14 19th century traveller Alexander Kinglake once visited Hisarlik and realised it
15 was impossible to view Samothrace because Imbros sits in the middle (see Fig.
16 1):

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18 Now Samothrace, according to the map, appeared to be not only out of all seeing
19 distance from the Troad, but to be entirely shut out from it by the intervening
20 Imbros, a larger island, which stretches its length right athwart the line of sight
21 from Samothrace to Troy. (Lascelles 2005: 134-135)

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23 Likewise, vice-versa, from Samothrace – there is no clear line of sight to
24 Hisarlik. Although it has been argued on occasions (when the sky is not
25 cloudy or hazy) Hisarlik is dimly observable from the highest peak (Mount
26 Fengari) on Samothrace, “even a small amount of haze in the atmosphere blots
27 it out” (Luce 1998: 24). Homer stresses Troy was plainly visible to Poseidon on
28 the topmost peak of Samothrace, where he sat and had observed the Trojan
29 War (*Il.* 13. 11). The distance of Mount Fengari to Hisarlik is approximately 45
30 miles; this is too distant for an ancient observer to have a good view of the
31 Trojan battlefield.

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⁵<https://thetroydeception.com/>

1 *Figure 1. Map of Hisarlik and surrounding territory (Smith 2020: 63)*



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4 Crowe (2011: 102) does acknowledge the aforementioned problem, but he
5 avoids this difficulty by arguing Poseidon viewed the Trojan battlefield from
6 Samos (instead of Samothrace):

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8 ...line 12 seems to offer a wonderful opportunity for some later poet to change
9 the name of Poseidon's lookout from Samos to Samothrace.⁶

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11 There is no reason to relocate Poseidon from Samothrace to Samos and
12 this is not supported by Homeric text (*Il.* 13. 11-13). Instead, the solution is
13 Troy (Ilios) was located on the island Imbros. Poseidon would have a clear
14 line of sight to Troy from Samothrace because Imbros is only about 20 miles
15 away; the highest peak on Samothrace towers over the highest mountain on
16 Imbros (İlyas Dağ) thus providing Poseidon (or a real ancient observer) with a
17 plain view of Troy and the adjacent Trojan battlefield (Smith 2020: 63).

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19 **Mount Ida**

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21 Poseidon is said to have had a plain view of "Ida" from the highest peak
22 on Samothrace (*Il.* 13. 13). Ancient Greeks knew of a mountain range named
23 Ida (modern Kazdaği) in the Troad, but it is questionable whether the Ida
24 mountain Homer describes is the same mountain range. Ancient Greeks knew
25 of separate mountains named Ida such as Mount Psiloritis on Crete. Idalia was
26 also the name of a mountain in Cyprus (*Virg. Aen.* 1. 681). Ida (ἰδη) translates
27 as "wooded hill" and was a generic name applied to mountains with forests.
28 The distance of Mount Fengari to Kazdaği is about 75 miles. However, if one
29 considers the lower slopes and foothills of Kazdaği – the distance is
30 approximately 60 miles. This distance is unquestionably too great for

⁶Lascelles 2005 makes the same argument.

1 Poseidon to have had a clear view of Kazdağı; instead, I suggest identifying
 2 the Iliadic Ida with the stratovolcano İlyas Dağ on Imbros. Homer describes
 3 Ida as shaken by earthquakes (*Il.* 20. 58-59); Imbros sits close to Northern
 4 Anatolia Fault and commonly experiences earthquakes.

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6 **Zeus' view**

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8 Zeus watched the Trojan War on Ida from its highest peak where he
 9 signalled Trojans in battle against the Achaeans (*Il.* 8. 170-173). Kazdağı's
 10 summit ridgeline to Hisarlik is about 30 miles and if weather is not hazy, there
 11 is a very faint view (Luce 1998: 27). The Iliadic Ida could not though have
 12 been Kazdağı because the *Iliad* argues for a clear view of Troy (Ilios) from Ida,
 13 implying a much shorter distance. The distance of İlyas Dağ to Yenibademli
 14 Höyük is under ten miles and there is a plain view of the latter from atop the
 15 stratovolcano. The identification of İlyas Dağ with Ida is further supported by
 16 the fact Homer describes Ida as a place of oxen sacrifice (*Il.* 22. 170). The Greek
 17 population of the village Agridia (modern Tepeköy) nearby İlyas Dağ sacrifice
 18 oxen at an annual festival at the bottom of the mountain (Psychogiou 1991).
 19 Homer (*Il.* 2. 824) notes a small settlement that sat adjacent to Ida was named
 20 Zeleia (Ζέλεια). and arguably this is the same place as Agridia (Αγροΐδια).

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22 **Desolation of Troy**

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24 An ancient tradition first recorded by Strabo (13. 1. 42) states Troy was not
 25 reoccupied after its destruction and it was left desolated and uninhabited.
 26 Hisarlik therefore could not have been Troy because it was continuously
 27 occupied until the 6th century CE. The classicist Richard Jebb in an article
 28 criticising the identification of Hisarlik with Troy had the following to say
 29 about this ancient tradition of the city's desolation having traced back the
 30 tradition in literary sources:

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32 The point on which I here insist is that the notion of Homeric Ilium having
 33 continued to be inhabited, without any break in consequence of its capture by the
 34 Achaeans, is utterly at variance with...reference to some of the passages in which
 35 the destruction of Troy is incidentally noticed by prose-writers...

36

37 Enough has been adduced, I think, to prove that in the settled Greek belief of at
 38 least six centuries – from the time of Plato to that of Pausanias – Homeric Troy
 39 has been utterly destroyed and had ceased to be inhabited. (Jebb 1881: 10-15)

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41 **Achilles' sacking of cities**

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43 Homer mentions that the Achaeans led by Achilles sacked twelve cities by
 44 ships and eleven cities by land (*Il.* 9. 328-329) including across Mysia before

1 Troy. A few of the islands are mentioned: Lesbos (*Il.* 9. 129), Scyros (*Il.* 9. 668)
 2 and Tenedos (*Il.* 11. 625) but Imbros is noticeably absent from the list.
 3 Arguably the reason Imbros is not among the islands Achilles sacked before
 4 Troy is because Troy was itself located on Imbros.

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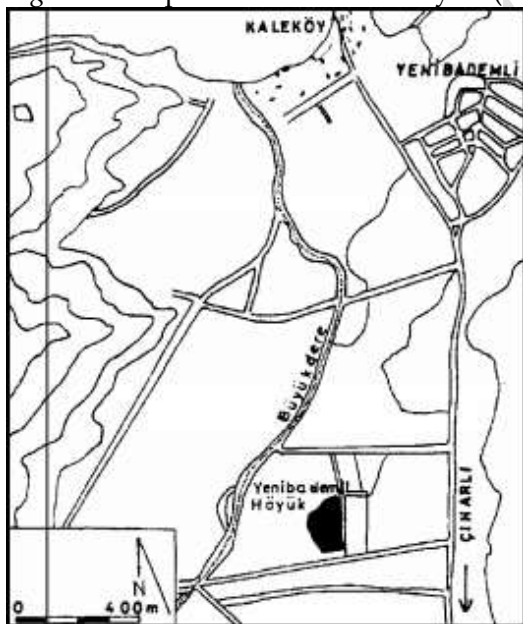
Yenibademli Höyük

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9 Yenibademli Höyük is a mound (covering an area of 120 x 130 meters) on
 10 the northeast of the island Imbros (Gökçeada) about one mile from a harbour
 11 and bay (Kaleköy); nearby is a village with same name. Approximately 250
 12 meters west of the mound is a creek (Büyükdere) which drains into Aegean
 13 Sea (see Fig. 2). In classical antiquity the creek was a larger river, named
 14 Ilissos (or Ilissus).⁷ Remarkably, this is similar in name to Ilios, and these could
 15 be the same location; the citadel of Troy taking its name from the valley and
 16 river. Yenibademli Höyük was first settled at the beginning of the 3rd
 17 millennium BCE; after an interval it was resettled during Late Bronze Age and
 18 abandoned at end of the Mycenaean era (c. 1100 BCE). It was left uninhabited
 19 until as recent as 100 years ago when a church was built on top the site.

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21 *Figure 1. Map of Yenibademli Höyük (Hüryılmaz, 2002)*



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24 Since the 1990s the site has been excavated by Halime Hüryılmaz (who
 25 recently published a paper on the three historical periods of occupation,
 26 beginning c. 3000 BCE), quoted below.

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⁷See Plin. *NH.* 4. 73 and Hüryılmaz, et al. 2009.

1 The systematic excavations conducted between 1996 and 2013 have revealed the
 2 presence of three cultural periods at this old settlement. From most recent to
 3 oldest, these can be listed as follows: (1) The culture of the inhabitants with
 4 Greek origins, (2) Late Bronze Age culture, (3) Early Bronze Age II culture. The
 5 chapel, which was built as a singular structure on the hilltop about 100 years
 6 ago, was used by the inhabitants with Greek origin. There have not been any
 7 settlement activities around this religious building, which represents the first
 8 cultural period at the mound. The second cultural period is made identified by
 9 the Mycenaean and Minoanising pottery sherds and small-scale remains of
 10 cyclopean masonry. The finds of this period which represent Late Bronze Age,
 11 are dated between 1400-1060/1040 B.C. The third cultural period is
 12 characterized by wide-spread settlement activities and lasted for about 400
 13 years... (Hüryılmaz 2021)

14
 15 The archaeology of Yenibademli Höyük matches Lycurgus' claim Troy
 16 (Ilios) was entirely abandoned after the Trojan War and desolated during his
 17 time. Early Bronze Age archaeology of the site during its first period of
 18 occupation (3000-2600 BCE) has revealed the mound was fortified with stone
 19 walls from the east, south and west (the north side was largely protected by
 20 the sea). There is evidence for a tower or large fortification structure and a
 21 ramp (which likely had a gate). Within the walls lay numerous buildings and
 22 wide paved roads, an average width of 1.6 meters (Hüryılmaz 2006: 34). The
 23 *Iliad* describes Troy having "broad streets" (e.g., *Il.* 2. 329). Palaeogeographical
 24 studies have shown the site in the 3rd millennium BCE (5000 BP) used to be
 25 located at the borders of a bay and the Aegean Sea (see Fig. 3). Over the past
 26 five thousand years, the bay has gotten considerably smaller to the extent
 27 Yenibademli Höyük is now a mile distant inland from the modern bay
 28 (Kaleköy).

29 The second occupation of Yenibademli Höyük began during the Late
 30 Bronze Age; dating is based on LH IIIB to LH IIIC Mycenaean decorated
 31 sherds, although more specific dating is not currently possible. The Late
 32 Bronze Age archaeological levels have eroded away but it is reasonable to
 33 presume the settlers built directly on top of the earlier fortifications and
 34 buildings. Therefore, Yenibademli Höyük was a fortified settlement during
 35 the Mycenaean era. In the late 2nd millennium BCE, the site was less close to
 36 the bay (a quarter of a mile or 400 meters) than it was a thousand years earlier.
 37 An invading Greek force could have docked in this bay and set up camp on
 38 the shore. The close distance of the Greek camp on the beach and ships to the
 39 walls of Troy is implied by Homer in several lines of the *Iliad*.⁸ Greeks were at
 40 one point driven back from the Trojan battlefield to their camp on the shore.
 41 As noted by Luce (1998: 143):

⁸Hector is said Diomedes could trust him from the ships to the walls of Troy (*Il.* 8. 532). Nestor had a clear view of the Greek encampment from a lookout point in Troy (*Il.* 14. 8-15) meaning it could not have been a far distance.

1 That the [Greek] camp looked directly onto the plain and across to Troy is clearly
 2 implicit in Homer’s picture of the sleepless night spent by Agamemnon before
 3 the second engagement... Similarly, Achilles, standing on the stern of a ship to
 4 watch the progress of fighting, catches sight of Nestor’s chariot leaving the fray.

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6 **Imbros in the *Iliad***

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8 The word Imbros is mentioned five times in the *Iliad* but refers to two
 9 places (1) the island and (2) a city on the island. To distinguish the two, the
 10 former is given the epithet ‘rugged’ (e.g., *Il.* 13. 33). In one line of the *Iliad*,
 11 Hera departs from Imbros to travel to Mount Ida; the goddess does not leave
 12 the island but city to reach Ida (*Il.* 14. 281; Smith 2020: 65).

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14 *Figure 3.* Yenibademli Höyük 5000 years ago (top), compared (bottom) today
 15 (Alkan, 2018)



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Summary

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This paper has argued for an alternative location for Troy (Ilios) that has
 plausibility: the site of Yenibademli Höyük is close to the Hellespont and is a

1 Bronze Age fortified settlement (on a mound) similar to Hisarlik; finally, the
2 archaeology of the site matches an ancient tradition Troy was desolated and
3 uninhabited after the Trojan War.

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