

This is not Troy

Boom of research and interpretations in the Middle and East German hillfort-archaeology in the 19th and 20th century

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The archaeological research of castles or hillforts was always an interdisciplinary project also before institutionalization of archaeology. The professional background of the early archaeological *dilettanti* in the 19th century influenced their understanding of the pre- and protohistorical fortified sites. Together they established a spectrum of interpretations which ranged from a military to a religious function.

The spectacular excavations on the islands and coasts of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and in Asia Minor since the second half of the 19th century increased the interests in archaeology in Central Europe. Hence also the expectations on local archaeology reached a new level. Troy and Knossos became topoi of fruitful high potential archaeological sites. And these topoi not only worked for archaeologists but also for members of funding institutions and the public. Developments of archaeological methodology and practice and excavation management expanded the possibilities in interpretation of hillforts since the early 20th century. But first of all networks and communication between archaeologists and scientists from related disciplines like Regional History (Landesgeschichte) and Historical Geography enlarged the spectrum of interpretations and of new questions. Hillforts got more and more integrated into narratives of historical settlement and colonization and became a research field also of politicized historical cultural studies.

Since the late 1920s a new type of project design was established in German archaeology. Based on the model of the so called Burgwall-Arbeitsgemeinschaft (1927-1932) groups of hillforts got inventoried, so in the project of the Roman-German Commission „Bestandsaufnahme der vorgeschichtlichen Wall- und Wehranlagen in West- und Süddeutschland“ (1939-1944), the Polish Millenium-project (1946-early 1960s) or the hillfort inventory in the early GDR. Only a handful of hillforts of every research region was excavated as a proxy of the whole. This *pars pro toto* logic connected the archaeological questions with problems and concepts of related disciplines perfectly. Archaeological sites more and more obtained the image of historical sites and became comparable with middle age castles, early towns or central places. However, a second Troy was never found.