MODERN HISTORY

How do history, archaeology and science contribute to the investigation of the past in reference to Troy?

History, archaeology and science contribute to the investigation of Troy in many critical ways. History has supplied the historical source; archaeology has provided the physical proofs and science has linked the two together, checking the facts and providing its own evidence. It is necessary that all three strands of inquiry are present for the full picture of Troy to become apparent. If one piece of the trio were missing, our evidence of Troy would be not nearly as sufficient as it is today.

The first piece of the Trojan puzzle is historical evidence. The Trojan War is written about in many pieces of Greek literature, but the majority of the information we have today has come from one major piece of historical evidence, the Iliad, which is an epic poem most commonly accredited to Homer who is referred to as the greatest ancient Greek epic poet. The Iliad tells the story of the Trojan War in its final weeks of the 10-year-long battle between the Trojans and the Spartans. The Trojan War is also described in the Epic Cycle, which is a collection of Ancient Greek poems. The legend of the Trojan War is that the Greeks waged war on Troy after Paris took the king of Sparta's wife for his own. This story is supported by both the Epic Cycle and the Iliad, as well as a tablet found from 13th century BC that listed the abductions of women that occurred during war and on it was the name "Toruja", which translates to 'women of troy', which could have been Helen. Hitite texts also refer to a rivalry between Troy and Greece, regarding a man named Alexandros, which translates to Paris. This historical evidence has been the basis of our knowledge of Troy, as the legend of Troy was like a needle in a compass, as the stories pointed Schliemann towards the site, and laid the foundation of the huge archaeological find that is the city of Troy.

The second piece of the puzzle, archaeological evidence, was found using the historical evidence. Heinrich Schliemann discovered Troy at a time in which it existed purely in the imagination. It was though for many centuries to simply be a legend, but Schliemann wanted to fulfil every child's dream and discover the setting of his childhood stories. Frank Calvert, an amateur archaeologist, whose family actually owned part of Mount Hissarlik, was convinced that Troy was located on his land. Schliemann talked with Calvert and secured permission to excavate Mount Hissarlik in 1868. He excavated twice, between 1871-73 and again in 1878-70. It was discovered that there were many layers of Troy as the Trojan's had built new cities upon the others as the previous city fell due to various factors, including earthquakes, fires and wars. Schliemann was incorrect in his belief that the layer of Troy that was described in the Iliad would be one furthers down, when in fact it was the sixth and seventh layers. In his haste, Schliemann dug right down to the ninth later and unintentionally damaged the layer of the Trojan War. Unfortunately, this resulted in the destruction of much important archaeological evidence.

Wilhelm Dorpfeld further excavated the site in 1893-94 and found Schliemann's mistake, by discovering that the artefacts dug up by Schliemann were over one thousand years older than possible to be from Homer's Troy. Carl Blegen's excavations in 1932-38 concluded that there were nine cities of Troy, build one upon the other, and that Homer's Troy was contained within layer VIIa (7a). Under the direction of Professor Manfred Korfmann, the Universities of Tubingen and Cincinnati excavated Hissarlik further in 1988, and discovered archaeological evidence that there was a Trojan War. The discovery of arrowheads, spearheads and sling stones as well as unburied human remains suggests that many deaths occurred within a short period of time which did not allow time for burial and that a large stock of weapons were contained within Troy, which indicates a siege. Korfmann's team also completed a remote sensing survey in 1993 that found that the city of Troy was in fact much larger than had previously accepted, which provided further proof that the city was, in fact, Troy. In 2006, Professor Ernst Pernicka obtained a digging permit and led a team from the University of Tubingen to continue excavation. This most recent excavation is still proceeding, and the discovery of a very long trench was concluded that Troy is even larger than Korfmann's

team revealed. All of these excavation projects have uncovered more and more archaeological evidence about the existence of Troy.

To check that evidence is legitimate, science helps us to examine and analyse artefacts and sites to determine their authenticity. After the historical evidence uncovered the location of Troy which led to a large amount of archaeological evidence being unearthed, science helped to add to the mountain of evidence. Science can date the archaeological evidence fount, including Troy itself, to see if those dates correlate with the historical evidence, and can find out more information about what living in that era was like. Methods such as dating samples, thermoluminescence, dendrochronology, reconstruction of chemical samples, statistical compilation of animal population, food chain analysis, reconstruction of landscape, depth drillings, geomorphology, sedimentology and geophysical surveys were all used to analyse and improve on evidence of Troy.

The most important scientific methods used in the excavations of Troy included remote sensing surveys and stratigraphy. An electrical resistance survey is a type of remote sensing survey (a survey not involving intrusion of the ground) and was used in 1993 at the site of Troy. The electronic apparatus that was used to complete this particular survey was a cesium magnetometer, the only one in the world at that time, which detects disturbances in the earth's magnetic field. This was the apparatus that discovered the ditch, which proved that Troy was much larger than earlier evidence had implied. Stratigraphy is a branch of geology that focuses on the study of different layers. This branch of science was particularly important in the excavations of Troy because there was so many different layers that spanned a great deal of time, and so the study of each later was necessary to determine which later was Homer's Troy.

In conclusion, history, archaeology and science all work together to form a bigger picture of Troy. It is necessary to have all strands of inquiry available whilst investigating a particular site so that each can complement one another and provide information that would not be available if one of the three strands were not in use. Without one of these fundamental factors, our evidence would not be anywhere near as complete as it is today.