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Manfred Korfmann †

The following news has caused deep sorrow for colleagues, students, friends, and countless others throughout the world who have avidly followed his research: Manfred Korfmann, since 1988 the leader of the new excavations at Troy, succumbed to a severe illness on the morning of 11 August 2005 at age 63. Only their closest friends have shared in the family's pain in the past few weeks. He did not want to cause too great a fuss.

It is difficult to convey in a few words what we have lost in Manfred Korfmann's passing. Those who knew him will understand the banality of such a statement. Korfmann projected a force of personality that defies description. His restless dynamism together with a disciplined and demanding vitality swept all before it. This impressed even those who disagreed with his opinions; yet these were in the minority. For the overwhelming majority of his scholarly colleagues, both at home and abroad, he was a towering personality who opened up new horizons not only within his specialty, pre- and early history, but also for the larger scholarly world. In particular, Korfmann's research and its ramifications triggered a phase of re-evaluation in the field of research into the Aegean and Anatolian Late Bronze Age (ca. 1500–1000 BC). We may safely predict that the impact of that research on the current situation in scholarship will be felt for decades.

I offer a few details of his career to justify this optimistic-sounding assessment and to illustrate his far-reaching ideas and plans. In 1970, he set out on the path to a university appointment first as a collaborator in an Africa atlas project and then for several years as a research specialist at the German Archaeological Institute in Istanbul. In the latter capacity, he led the excavation of the early historical Anatolian settlement of Demirci Hüyük (1975-1978). After his habilitation at Frankfurt in 1980, he was chosen for the professorship in Pre- and Early History at the University of Tübingen in 1982. At this point he changed the focus of his archaeological activity from eastern Turkey westward. He first excavated the "harbor of Troy" near the Dardanelles, and then, having been granted a personal license by the Turkish government, he moved from the Hellespont to the famous archaeological "hill of destiny," which now also became his "hill of destiny": Hisarlık/Troy. Heinrich Schliemann had begun excavations here in 1871, continued by Wilhelm Dörpfeld till his death in 1890. In the 1930s, a team led by the American archaeologist Carl Blegen (Cincinnati) worked here till the outbreak of

the Second World War. In the course of seventeen extensive annual campaigns (1988–2004), Korfmann’s international team again made the site a focal point of Bronze Age research. The Trojan excavations of Korfmann and his zealous and dedicated team exerted an unexpectedly powerful influence in a number of scholarly disciplines: pre- and early history, Anatolian studies (esp. Hittitology), ancient history, Indo-European studies, and not least classical philology, especially Greek studies and Homer research. Beginning already in antiquity, the name “Troy” had always had an electrifying effect, conjuring up stories of the Trojan War and the Trojan horse, conceived by the wily Odysseus.

That was not, of course, Korfmann’s starting point. As he often stressed, he wished to investigate specifically a site undeniably of the highest cultural and historical significance, lying right on the passage from Asia to Europe. He wished to clarify scientifically the living conditions of people in that prehistoric era and perhaps to add the results of his finds to the meager gleanings from Hittite, Egyptian, and in part the earliest Greek documents concerning the political and historical situation of the Aegean and Asia Minor. Of course, it was inevitable that he would be drawn into the old debate about the historicity of the “Trojan War.” To dispel the false impression that he meant to “prove Homer,” he presented his excavation results to a broad public in the great “Troy Exhibition” of 2001/2002, for which he served as the scholar in charge. The exhibit drew some 850,000 visitors, a success that demonstrated the terrific interest in his work and inspired him anew. In countless lectures around the world, including Japan and Argentina, and in some 200 publications, he informed, enlightened, and—by his own intense enthusiasm—drew his listeners and readers into the fascination of “Troy.” How many people he thereby remotivated and set into action is shown by, among other things, the Festschrift presented to him by friends and colleagues on his sixtieth birthday. It comprises no less than three volumes (1248 pages) and includes 210 names in its *Tabula Gratulatoria*; it features an introduction by presidents Johannes Rau (Germany) and Ahmet Sezer (Turkey).

It is not possible here to list the many honors that Manfred Korfmann received. He was very pleased just two days before his death when he was granted honorary citizenship of Çanakkale, the Turkish provincial capital of the region where Troy lies. Its university had bestowed on him an honorary doctorate, and its officials and residents honored in him the great Osman Bey. He was for them and for us all a shining example of passionate devotion to scholarship, but also of incorruptible discipline—in his research as well as in his daily work—and not least of love for the land and its people, even the simplest: those who made up the work gangs, shoveled clear the mounds, or cooked for the workmen. With the passing of Manfred Korfmann we have lost not only a great scholar but also a great visionary and a great human being. He will live on in our hearts.

Translated by James P. Holoka