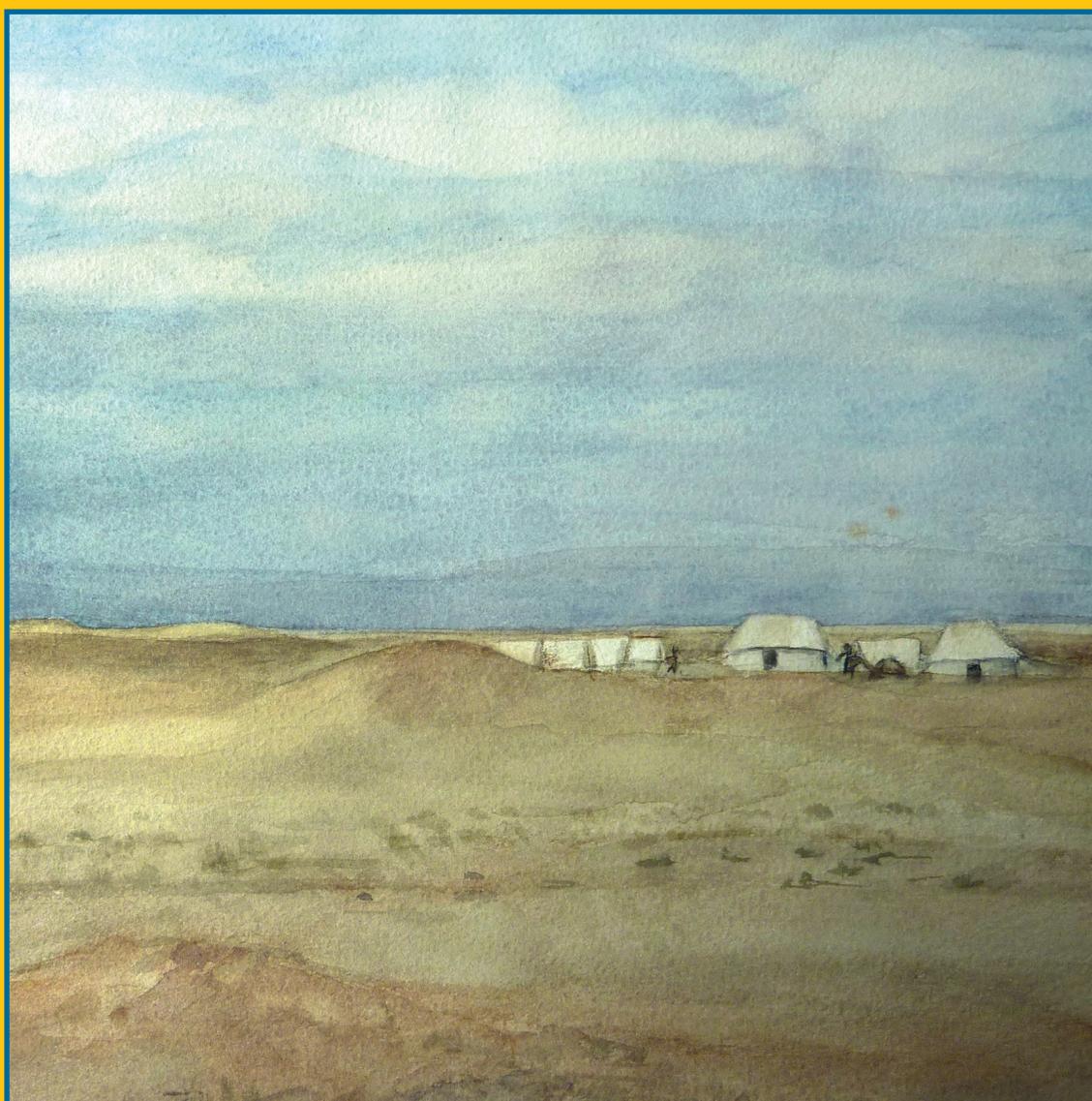




ADELHEID OTTO & KAI KANIUTH (HRSG.)

unter Mitarbeit von FEMKE GROPS

## 50 Jahre Vorderasiatische Archäologie in München



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*View of Sirkeli Höyük, 1993 (© Cornelia Wolff).*

## Sirkeli Höyük (1992–1996)

### Explorations in Plain Cilicia, Turkey

*Between 1992 and 1996, the Institute of Near Eastern Archaeology of LMU Munich carried out excavations at Sirkeli Höyük, a Bronze and Iron Age site in Plain Cilicia located in the south of present-day Turkey. The site is particularly known for the relief of the Hittite king Muwattalli II., which is still the oldest clearly datable Hittite rock relief. It was to be the last excavation under the direction of Barthel Hrouda. Even though the results attracted little attention at the time, they provide the basis for the current Swiss-Turkish research project working at the site.*

*1992 ve 1996 yılları arasında, Münih LMU Yakın Doğu Arkeoloji Enstitüsü, günümüz Türkiye'sinin güneyinde yer alan Ova Kilikya'da bir Tunç ve Demir Çağı sit alanı olan Sirkeli Höyük'te kazılar gerçekleştirdi. Alan özellikle Hitit kralı II. Muwattalli'nin rölyefi ile tanınmaktadır. Barthel Hrouda başkanlığındaki son kazı olacaktı. Sonuçlar o sırada çok az dikkat çekmesine rağmen, sahada yürütülen mevcut İsviçre-Türk araştırma projesinin temelini oluşturuyorlar.*

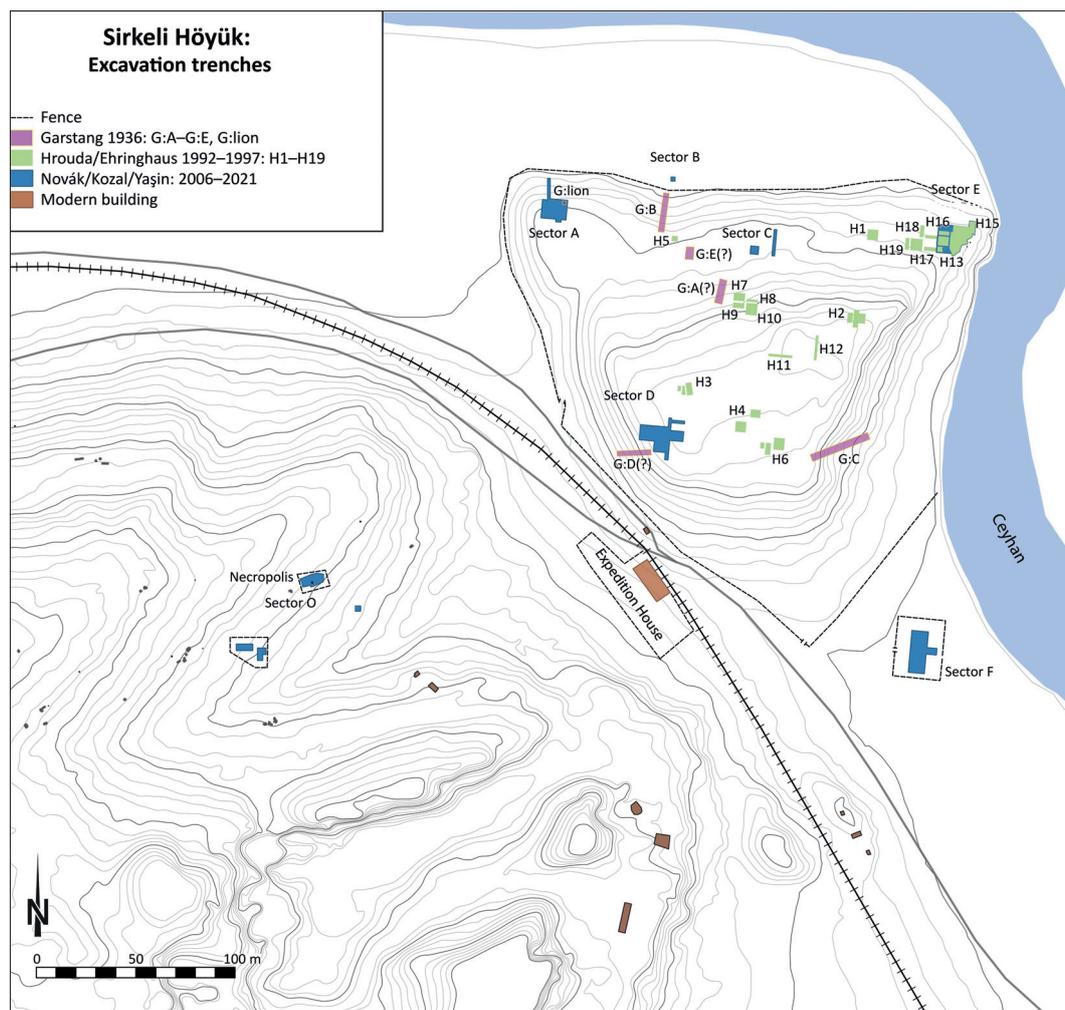
The political events of 1989 and 1990, resulting in the second Gulf War, had a heavy impact on archaeology: excavations in Iraq, the heartland of ancient Mesopotamia, came to a halt for many years. The Institute of Near Eastern Archaeology at LMU Munich under its director Barthel Hrouda was much affected by this development. After working many years in Isin and Assur, Barthel Hrouda planned to begin excavations in Babylon, probably the largest and most prestigious site in pre-Islamic Mesopotamia. However, this plan could not be realised, due to the political circumstances. Searching for an alternative, Hrouda's Turkish friends Tahsin and Nimet Özgüç, Hayyat and Armağan Erkanal and Halet Çambel suggested to start an excavation project at Sirkeli Höyük in Turkey.

At that time, Sirkeli Höyük was already a well-known Bronze and Iron Age site. It is located in the centre of the Çukurova (ancient Kilikia Pedias – “Plain Cilicia”) in an idyllic landscape opposing the medieval castle of Yılan Kale. It lies 40 km east of Adana on the left bank of the Ceyhan river, precisely at the point where the river finds its passage through the Misis Mountains. During the winter of 1936–1937, John Garstang had directed the first excavations there. On this occasion, a rock relief showing the Hittite King Muwattalli II (ca. 1290–1272 BCE) was documented. Two decades later, Veronica Seton-Williams visited the site in the course of her survey and reg-

istered it as one of the largest and longest-occupied sites in Plain Cilicia.

Hrouda followed his Turkish friends' advice and the Munich team started excavations at Sirkeli Höyük in 1992 (Hrouda 1997a). His decision was fueled initially by the hope to identify the site with the temporary Hittite capital of Tarḫuntašša, mainly because of the Muwattalli relief. This king had founded that city and made it his capital. But this suggestion could be ruled out already at an early stage of the project, when it was realized that the geographical information on the famous bronze tablet discovered in Ḫattuša with the contract between Tudḫaliya IV and his cousin Kurunta actually indicated that Tarḫuntašša was located north of the Taurus mountain range. Nevertheless, Sirkeli Höyük must have been one of the larger cities of Kizzuwatna, a kingdom incorporated into the Hittite Empire from about 1350 BC that became independent again after 1200 BC under the name Hiyawa/Qawa.

The first three campaigns (1992–1994) were financed by the Bavarian Ministry of Science and Culture and LMU, while the 1995 and 1996 campaigns were funded by a private donation from Horst Ehringhaus (Innsbruck), who was himself a member of the expedition (Fig. 2). Additional funds were provided by the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, under whose patronage the excavations were carried out.



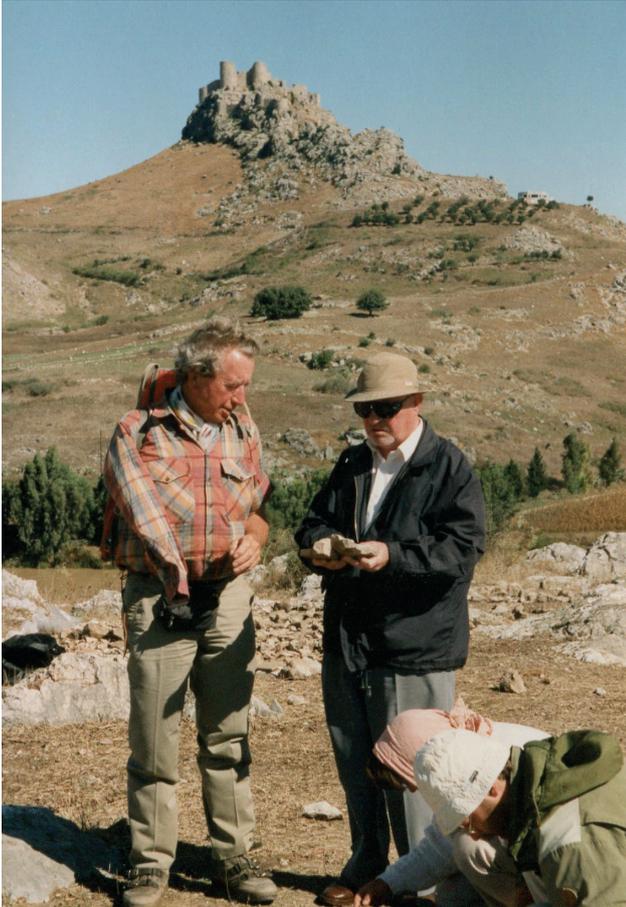
**Fig. 1.** Topographic plan of Sirkeli Höyük with the numbered “Areas” excavated by the LMU mission in green and the new Sectors of the Bern mission in blue  
(© Susanne Rutishauser and Gabriele Elsen-Novák, Sirkeli Project, IAW Bern).

The annual excavations always took place in autumn, when climatic conditions in Cilicia are best because the summer heat has subsided. The size of the team was usually quite manageable and included only a few staff and students. During the first campaigns, Stefan Kroll acted as field director. Later, Horst Ehringhaus took on this role. The mission did not have its own excavation house near the site. Instead, an old house serving only for the daily work was rented in the modern village of Sirkeli, while the mission members lived in a hotel in the seaside resort of Yumurtalık/Ayas, located at a distance of about 40 km from Sirkeli Höyük. Hence, the team had to commute to the site on a daily basis.

The project was multidisciplinary from its beginning: A team from the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences of LMU, headed by Ludwig Masch, investigated the geology of the landscape as well as the mineralogical and petrographic composition of the ceramic fabrics. Angela von den Driesch from the Institute for Palaeoanatomy, Domestication Research and History of Veterinary Medicine analyzed the excavation’s fau-

nal remains. Ahmet Ünal, then professor for Hittology at LMU, was the philologist of the expedition. Helmut Becker undertook geomagnetic prospections, which yielded very good results. During the 1994 campaign, parts of the team conducted a survey in the vicinity of Sirkeli Höyük as well as along the roads to Yumurtalık and Adana (Hrouda 1998).

In the beginning, a large number of rather small trenches, which Hrouda referred to as “areas”, were opened in various places of the site (Fig. 1). There are no records providing information about the concept which the project followed or the system according to which the “areas” were distributed across the mound. Most likely, Hrouda’s goal was to find monumental buildings or archives as fast as possible by opening many trenches at promising locations in a short time. In some trenches, excavations reached all the way down to virgin soil with the help of machines. In the final two campaigns, the work of the team focused on a stone building with monumental walls, which stood on the rocky ridge at the eastern flank of the mound above the Muwattalli re-



*Fig. 2. Photo showing Horst Ehringhaus (l.) and Barthel Hrouda (r.) in Sirkeli Höyük (undated photo from Horst Ehringhaus's archive).*

lief (Fig. 3). Despite equivocal evidence, Hrouda cautiously dated the building to the Hittite Empire period and suggested that it had been directly associated with the rock relief, although he later expressed a rather critical attitude towards this dating. The proposition was largely based on the discovery of two shallow cups that were found on the rock surface next to the stone building and above the relief. Subsequently, the building was identified with the *hegur* house of Muwattalli, which is mentioned in the aforementioned contract on the *Ḫattuša* bronze tablet. This assumption became even more plausible when in 1994 Horst Ehringhaus, following a hint by Mustafa Sayyar, discovered a second relief, only a few meters away from the Muwattalli relief. This second relief had apparently been severely mutilated in antiquity. Although the reading of the inscription was not possible by conventional means, it was preliminarily identified as the image of Kurunta, a member of the Hittite royal family and opponent of his ruling cousin Tudhaliya IV (Hrouda 1997b). As we know now, it shows Urḫi-Teššup, Muwattalli's son, who reigned for a few years under the name of Muršili III and was removed from the throne by his uncle Ḫattušili III. In this context, it is worth mentioning that in order to study the reliefs, Ehringhaus first had to make them accessible, as they were located immediately above the riverbank and thus difficult to reach. He managed by filling up a path along the rock outcrop, which to this day is largely responsible for enabling re-



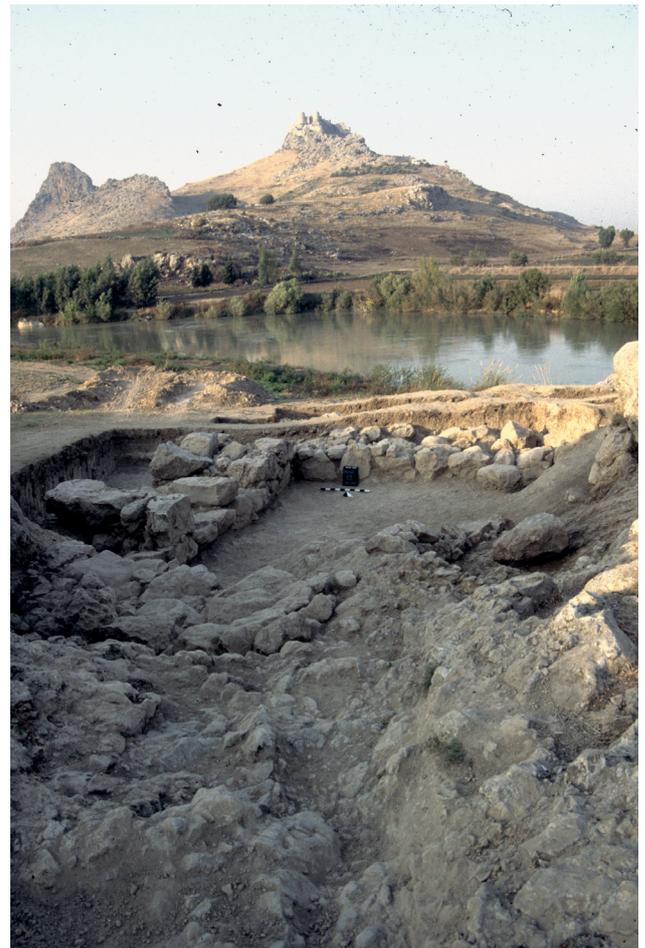
*Fig. 3. Aerial view of the stone building near the rock reliefs (from Horst Ehringhaus's archive).*



*Fig. 4. Excavations in area 18 in 1996. Barthel Hrouda in the foreground, planning (from Horst Ehringhaus's archive).*

searchers and visitors alike to visit the rock reliefs and which facilitated the Swiss-Turkish project's efforts to build a platform in front of the images.

Unfortunately, the stone building could not be fully uncovered by the end of the excavations (Fig. 4). Hence, in addition to the doubts regarding its date, its architectural context remained unclear, as well. It is merely certain that the building was erected at the eastern end of an approximately trapezoidal plateau, which represents a lower northern extension of the inner mound (Fig. 5). While it was therefore believed that inner mound and plateau made up the entire site, Hrouda and his team already suspected that there might be a lower town to the north of the mound. Therefore, a small sounding was laid out in the plain in 1994, in which Iron Age remains were encountered. Furthermore, Hrouda and his team observed additional evidence of settlement activities in the close vicinity of Sirkeli Höyük, including a necropolis on a hilltop south of the mound, a small mound at Küçük Burhaniye just opposite the Ceyhan river, and pottery sherds lying in the plain south and southeast of the main mound. While it had not been possible to see the connection between these findings back then, the current Swiss-Turkish project, in cooperation with Simon Halama's and Alexander Sollee's LMU-based subprojects (see chs. III.24 and III.25), have provided unequivocal evidence that all of these elements had once belonged to a single, large settlement, the layout and structure of which can now be reconstructed in detail (Novák et al. 2019).



*Fig. 5. Stone building near reliefs (from Horst Ehringhaus's archive).*

In all trenches excavated between 1992 and 1996, architecture from different periods was discovered. This led to the conclusion that the site had been inhabited without significant hiatus from the Late Chalcolithic to the Hellenistic periods. Due to the small and disjointed excavation areas, however, it was not possible to gain an understanding of the architecture and spatial design of the settlement. The complex stratigraphy, in which floors were only rarely identified, also made the chronological classification and dating of the findings difficult. Another problem was the complexity of the ceramic repertoire: Many studies have shown that the pottery of Cilicia changed dramatically several times in the course of the Bronze and Iron Ages and in many instances can be shown to have adapted external influences, e.g. from the Levant, Cyprus, Mesopotamia, Anatolia or the Aegean. Therefore, work in this region requires a relatively large team of ceramic specialists with different orientations, a requirement that the 1990s team was only able to meet to a limited extent due to its relatively small size and funds.

In 1996, with Barthel Hrouda's retirement, the project was terminated rather abruptly, leaving many questions and research issues unanswered. In 1997, a final campaign was carried out by the University of Innsbruck under Horst Ehringhaus, which, however, was also not

continued due to a lack of approval by the Turkish Ministry of Culture. The results of the 1992–1996 and the 1997 excavation campaigns were only published in two longer (Hrouda 1997a; Ehringhaus 1999) and a few very short articles, while a final publication evaluating all information gained was never attempted. This may also be the reason why the excavations at Sirkeli Höyük have not attracted much attention in the scholarly community, despite the demonstrably significant results.

It was not until 2006 that work in Sirkeli Höyük continued, initially as a cooperation between the universities of Tübingen and Çanakkale, which was converted into a Swiss-Turkish project headed by the university of Bern in 2011. While the first campaigns were rather small in scale and mostly limited to non-invasive investigations, the project has been conducting large scale excavations accompanied by a great number of other scientific methods since 2012. In addition to original new research, which examines questions such as urbanism or cultural contacts, the findings of the LMU excavations were and are also being re-evaluated and placed in the context of the new results (Novák et al. 2019). In this way, a completely new picture of the ancient city can be created on the foundation of the old excavations.

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