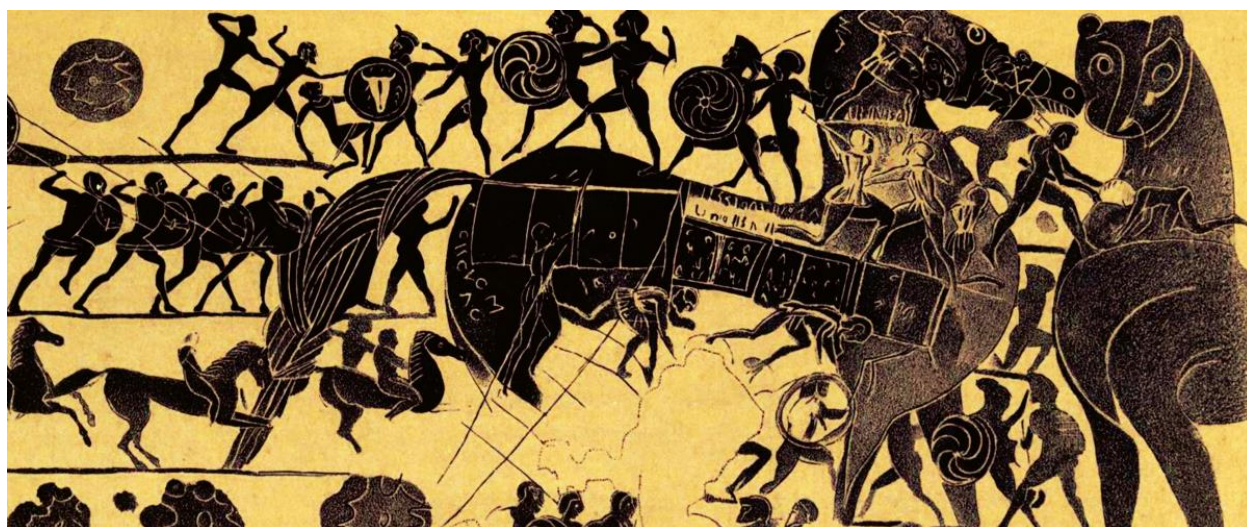


The Evidence for a Historical Trojan War: Is it Accurate and Compelling?

By Garry Victor Hill



An early depiction of the Trojan Horse. Found in 1887, this Corinthian flask has decoration in a style common around 660-640 BC.

Introduction:

The important questions in the title can be answered affirmatively. The evidence for a historical Trojan War is frequently accurate and when put together, becomes compelling. Due to the massive amount of writing on the topic and the often complicated nature of much specialist writing, this work cannot be a complete investigation and a second edition seems likely and necessary.

Several reasons for this situation emerge. My reading of Homer's works needs

redoing. Great as the used translations by Robert Fitzgerald are, his versions of *The Iliad* dates from 1962 and *The Odyssey* comes from 1974. Much has been found since then. 1990 translations by Robert Fagles are popular, widely relied on in many used sources and have detailed, informative and updated introductions. Fagles's translations need to be incorporated and my knowledge of Homer needs refreshment. Similarly Quintus Smyrnaeus's *The Fall of Troy* will be a better source than retellings taken from it. Other texts included in this work need a wider ranging study, particularly those dealing with new discoveries, carbon dating and the wider picture of the ending of the Bronze Age. These include Oliver Dickinson's *The Aegean Bronze Age*, M.I. Finley's *The Age of Odysseus*, O.R. Gurney's *The Hittites* and two collections, Eric H. Cline's *The Oxford Handbook of The Bronze Age Aegean. (ca.3000-1000BC)* and Machteld J., Mellink's *Troy and the Trojan War: A Symposium Held at Bryn Mawr College*. The question of linguistic evidence and Troy's ties to the Hittite empire turned out to be very complicated, inconclusive and requires more work, but after reading summaries will apparently not change the essential conclusion.

So with these reservations, why not wait, hold off publishing and do more? First because like many a lawyer I may not have the full story and all the relevant evidence, but unless a great many people have been fabricating written and archaeological evidence over the last three thousand years in a conspiracy something like that in *The Da Vinci Code*, I have enough evidence to prove the point. Second, due to an enforced government retraining program I will not have the time to do more work on Troy for some months at least and who can say what will happen months away? What seems likely to happen is that I will not have time even when it is finished. The bureaucracy will probably say at that point "Do more work! So we will go with what has been done, over sixteen thousand words. This

work cannot be the most detailed thing ever written on this much written about topic, but it covers the essential territory and gives updates on the topic for those who want a succinct, updated view. Preliminary investigations into further reading suggest that more detail about the examples given will emerge and so will more examples, but the conclusions will not change substantially.

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I am aware that the old methods of listing sources have changed. I know that making a page reference as p. 62 is more cumbersome than p62, that trans. for translator is a barbarism and that commas now replace semi-colons after publishing locales – at least like so many other changes for now. Ways of referencing that lasted several decades, perhaps centuries, are changing so frequently it becomes difficult to keep up. Students should check their local referencing system when quoting my sources and change them to suit expectations or the latest development.

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The Story

The tale of Troy remains one of the world's greatest epics. Only the Arthurian stories, *The Nibelung*, *The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharata* and the Robin Hood stories and songs have the same level of epic timeless themes and popular appeal. While all these similar epics are credited to either those who are anonymous or to different writers working centuries apart who gradually developed and built up a core idea, the whole story of Troy is frequently credited to one man, Homer. This is a fallacy. The tale of Troy in its authorship resembles the other epics in being the creation of many. The narrative of *The Iliad* makes no sense if no stories of Troy existed before it. This must be because Homer's story has no introduction that informs us of what happened before its opening scene. What happens after Homer's ending with Hector's funeral must have been known or it has an inconclusive ending after a massively long retelling. In the first lines readers are tossed into an argument between Achilles and Agamemnon without any explanation of the conflict, the setting or an introduction of the characters. This does make sense if the characters were so well known to the listeners that they did not need an introduction. In the same way an English story teller were to start with "Robin Hood waited in Sherwood Forest" everyone would know the setting, the character and have at least a basic idea of what would unfold. They would expect and be happy with an episode in the epic, not the full story.

As with Robin Hood stories, opinions of how much of the stories are true have differed over the centuries. With *The Iliad* opinions have changed since the days of ancient Greece, when most believed every word, to believing it to be mythic to believing it to containing a kernel of truth, to believing it to be essentially true with embellishments. Only total belief has lost all its adherents, unless somewhere

someone still believes Greek gods really live on Olympus. The story should be outlined before apportioning how much of the story should go to Homer and then investigating how much could be true.

The epic of Troy begins with the city's foundation. King Scamander of Crete leads his refugees from a Cretan famine to establish Troy, aligning with local Phrygians and Locian Greeks. Later Herakles (later Romanised as Hercules) plunders Troy in a raid of seven ships, leaving a young man called Priam to rule. The story then develops the origins of the war with the judgement of Paris, son of King Priam, now very old. At the wedding of Achilles parents Eris the goddess of strife, drops a golden apple from the sun to earth which will be awarded to the most beautiful goddess. Three goddesses ask the handsome young Paris to judge them in a beauty contest, the world's first. Then as now rivalries amongst the contestants lead to trouble, particularly for the judge who gets offers of a great reward. When Paris chooses Aphrodite she rewards him for choosing her as the most beautiful goddess by giving him the gift of love from the most beautiful woman on earth, Helen. Aphrodite here seems to be doing the task of Eris, for Helen is also probably the most troublesome woman on the planet, being the wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta. This choice makes an enemy of Athena, a rejected contestant. She will side with the Greeks. In some versions Helen finds herself forcibly taken by Paris and his Trojan raiders, along with Sparta's gold. The tale of Troy then shows Paris and Helen fleeing from Sparta to Troy. Twelve Greek lords, former suitors of Helen, are bound to alliance with Menelaus by oaths. They swore to defend each other against any threat and also swore to defend the man chosen by her father to be the husband of Helen. After Greek envoys fail to negotiate Helen's return the Greek warlords and kings assemble to regain Helen and punish Paris. The leading fighter who commands the best troops is Achilles, who joins to gain glory, but

Agamemnon brother of Menelaus, lord of Mycenae, the most powerful Greek kingdom, commands the alliance. He puts together a massive fleet of over a thousand ships to destroy Troy. From that event we get the phrase “the face that launched a thousand ships.”

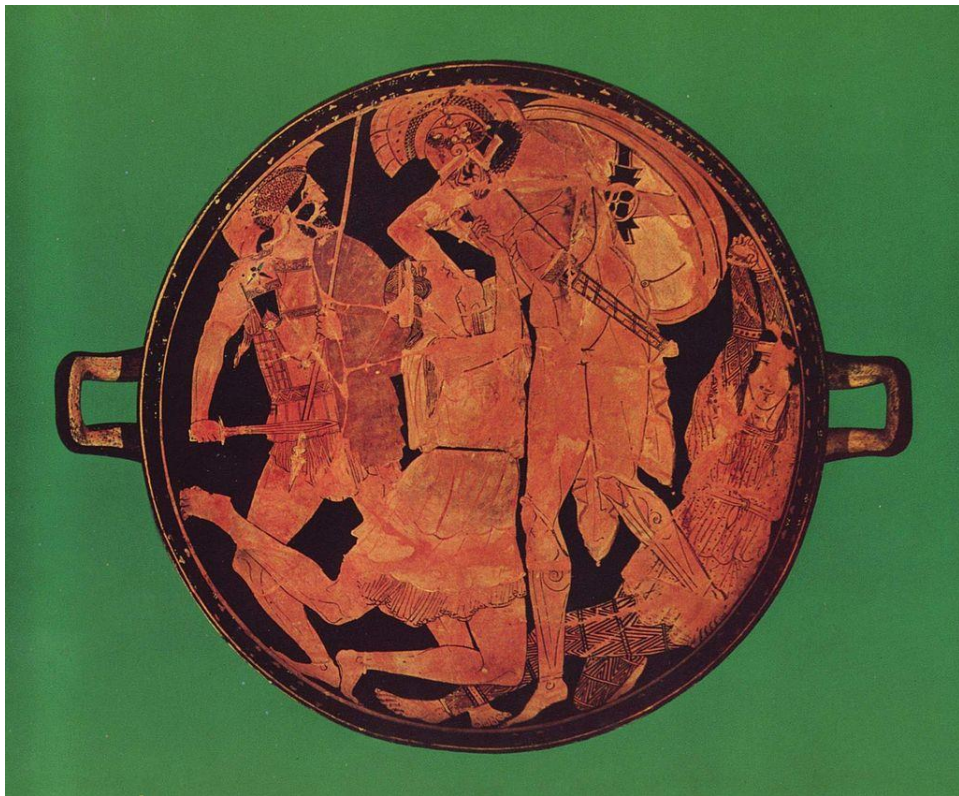
The armada assembles at Aulis, opposite Troy, but the goddess Artemis, angered by Agamemnon killing a sacred deer and boasting that he was a better shot than the goddess, kills off any sailing wind until Agamemnon will sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia on the altar. He does so and therefore her mother Clytemnestra, Helen’s sister starts on the revenge trail. This will lead to a cycle of plays and stories that spin off from the end of the Trojan epic.

The task of destroying Troy and regaining Helen turns out to be much more difficult than expected, for Troy has strong walls and many nearby allies and able leaders in King Priam, Aeneas a leading allied commander and Hector, brother of Paris. They also have Priam’s daughter Cassandra, who has been blessed with the invaluable gift of true prophecy – and cursed with never being believed.

However if the Greeks cannot take Troy, the Trojans cannot drive the Greeks from their beachhead. The Gods, who are divided between the two sides, ensure that the stalemate continues as they help their human favourites and their chosen side whenever they seem destined to suffer a decisive defeat. In these stories the gods squabble, go in for revenge and are full of jealousy while the humans indulge in superhuman feats. Gods act like humans and humans act like gods.



Achilles and Ajax play a game



Achilles killing Penthesilea. Attic artwork from c470-460BC

As Cassandra prophecies, the war lasts ten years and ends in a Trojan defeat. An unexpected, seemingly minor event snowballs, having massive consequences. Achilles feuds with Agamemnon over possession of Brises, a captive woman. When Agamemnon pulls rank as overlord to get her, Achilles furiously retires to his tent. Without him and his crack forces a Greek offensive goes wrong when a Trojan counter offensive led by Hector reaches the beached Greek ships. Achilles best friend and second in command Patroclus begs Achilles to lead their withheld troops in a desperate attack and gets his permission for this. Patroclus does delay the Trojan advance, until Hector kills Patroclus. This brings Achilles back into the war to avenge Patroclus and in a duel where they race around the walls of Troy. Achilles kills Hector in front of the Trojans. He then ties his body to the back of his chariot and rides around Troy's walls. Priam has to beg Achilles for his son's body so he can have the proper funeral rites. Soon after Paris kills Achilles with an arrow. His mother had baptised Achilles in the magic waters of the Styx which guarantee invincibility: no blow can kill him. However she held him by the heel as she plunged him in the water and that one vulnerable spot was where the Paris's arrow hit. From this we get "Achilles heel" a secret and fatal weakness in a seemingly invincible person, nation or organisation. Paris turns out to be the next battle death and with that the Trojans should have handed Helen back and ended the war. Versions differ about why they kept her. In one Priam feels so delighted with her company that he cannot bear to hand her over. In another she rapidly remarries to a Trojan lord.

Odysseus breaks the stalemate with his subterfuge. The Greek fleet will sail away, but only to be just out of sight. They will leave a gigantic wooden horse which hopefully the Trojans will take into their city as a trophy. Inside the horse are Odysseus and his band. They will emerge at night, kill the main gate's guards and

so seize the gate and then signal the main force to rapidly return and help them plunder the city. Despite Cassandra's warning prophecy actuality goes exactly to plan. Hence the phrase "Beware of Greeks bearing gifts." Priam is killed.

Cassandra become Agamemnon's prisoner, joining Brises in a sexual triad or harem as she has twins. Only Hecuba who turns herself into a howling mad black bitch and Aeneas carrying his father on his back and holding his son by the hand escape – Aeneas to Italy where his descendants found Rome in later versions. Even later versions have one descendant Brutus founding British civilization, hence Britain being named after him.

Menelaus intends to kill Helen, but dazzled by her beauty, takes her back. Troy burns in a massive conflagration and the Greeks return home – eventually. Cursed by a god Menelaus and Helen take ten years to reach home, so does Odysseus - and for the same reason. Agamemnon's return is more prompt, only to find his wife has taken a lover and they now rule the kingdom. She murders him, Cassandra and Brises. This sets off a family blood feud. Of all the Greek leaders only Nestor returns home easily, to his palace at Pylos, where he lives a contented life. This strife for all the other Greeks in the Trojan War's aftermath suggests that the collapse of Bronze Age Greek civilisation may have happened soon after the war. These dismal, troubled, often tragic stories concerning Troy's conquerors certainly create a general sense of foreboding.

This then is the epic of Troy. Although Homer refers to several of these events in *The Iliad* and then *The Odyssey*, he only tells the part which begins in the ninth year of the war with the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles over Brises. He concludes with the funeral rites for Hector. Lawrence Norfolk rightly calls

Homer's work a vast fragment of the whole story.¹ In his 1962 introduction to his prose retelling of the whole epic, *The Siege and Fall of Troy* Robert Graves states that two thirds of the primary source material comes from other ancient sources apart from Homer.² This also seems fairly accurate for how much of the epic appears in *The Iliad*, for over the centuries anonymous others added pieces from other texts that do not exist in vast fragments, only in little ones. Like stones in a mosaic, they are put together by writers like Robert Graves to give us their complete version of the epic.

Others resembled Homer in that they focused on a section of the epic. Aeschylus in his trilogy focused on Agamemnon and his family. Euripides on the female survivors in *The Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*. Virgil traced the later life of Aeneas. In the 4th century AD the Roman Quintus Smyrnaeus seems to have collated from fragments to produce his epic poem, *The Fall of Troy*. The title reveals the theme.

The process has not ended and perhaps never will. Prose versions abound. Helen of Troy has had several serious biographies, as well as many novels and poems. Three major English language cinematic versions which purport to tell the full epic story of the conflict have been made so far, *Helen of Troy* (1955), the 2003 television, DVD and film version of the same name and *Troy* (2006). As well as these works others tell sections of the story, two big budget English language versions have been made of *The Odyssey*. Michael Coyannis filmed three different films that relate to the Trojan War, *Electra* (1962), *The Trojan Women* (1971) and *Iphigenia* (1977). In 1990 Derek Walcott did a poetic retelling set in the Caribbean and won

¹ Lawrence Norfolk, His 2005 Introduction to *The Siege and Fall of Troy*. Folio, 2005. pxii.

² Robert Graves, Author's 1962 introduction to *The Siege and Fall of Troy*. 1962. Folio Reprint, 2005. pxix.

the Nobel Prize for literature soon after. Homer's influence not only remains, but goes on in new media forms. Expect musicians or their financiers to invent Trojan rock and for a computer game to come on the market soon.

Comments by many writers such as Michael Wood that the tale of Troy as the earliest European epic and the most influential, seems accurate.³ Homer's direct influence on Greek and Roman civilization, which would in turn have a massive impact on the Western world was immense; from law to religion to military affairs to the idea of retribution and reward based on behaviour, he was an inspiration. By keeping alive the tale of Troy Homer influenced powerful people. When the Persian Emperor Xerxes reached Troy on his westward attempt to conquer Greece he sacrificed there, using revenge against the Greeks for the sack of Troy as one of his excuses for invasion.⁴ Alexander the Great when travelling east to invade Persia also sacrificed there, at the supposed tomb of Achilles as Alexander had Achilles for a lifelong hero, regretting that he had no Homer to record his deeds.⁵ To what extent he was inspired to carry out his conquests by Homer being an inspiration remains uncertain, but the inspiration is there. The flow on effects of Homer on Alexander are massive. If Alexander had not conquered the Middle East Greek would not have become a common language there, the gospels would have been written in little known Aramaic, not Greek, which was the language Alexanders armies and then traders and colonists had spread from Italy to the Indus. Without that linguistic development the world might not have experienced the spread of Christianity, of the world's most important developments. Alexander was only the most one successful military leader inspired by Homer amongst

³ Michael Wood, *In Search of Troy*. London; Guild Publishing, 1985. pp14-15 p17 pp29-36.

⁴ Wood, pp29-30.

⁵ Arrianus, Flavius. *The Life of Alexander the Great*. London, 1970. p37.



An image of a Mycenaean woman from Pylos. The rich clothes and elaborate hairstyle suggest nobility. This might be as close as we can now get to the reality of Queen Helen.

many: Homer's widespread and popular idea of glorious war and the Homeric hero would last into World War One. Ironically for many, Homeric delusions would end in the 1915 Gallipoli campaign, almost within sight of Troy. Such delusions should have ended much earlier with a closer reading of those sections where Achilles and Agamemnon kill for plunder and enslavement: where the hunt for glory goes plundered riches and misery for the defeated follow. Homer's battlefield descriptions of what swords and axes do to the human body are accurate and therefore less than glorious: they resemble what happens in abattoirs. He does not glamorise war; he has conceited, callous, deluded characters who do that.

Homer's inspiring images of personal heroism, capricious fate and societies in conflict would also inspire those outside the military world. Writers as diverse in their outlooks as Alexander Pope, Andrew Lang the Scottish folklorist, the Marxist William Morris, Lawrence of Arabia and Richmond Lattimore would all do their translations of Homer. The cultural image was not fixed. After Schliemann's 1870s discoveries England's Pre-Raphaelite and classical artists, particularly J.M. Waterhouse, Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Frederic Leighton Aubrey Noakes, and Edward Burne Jones, would develop pictures of the ancient Greek myths that replaced the stilted often pallid earlier paintings with much more vivid realistic depictions.⁶

Considering what has just been mentioned about Homer's influence it was unsurprising when in a 1977 listing of the one hundred most influential people of all time and in order of importance Homer was listed ninety-fourth.⁷ As the

⁶ Aubrey Noakes, *Waterhouse*: John William Waterhouse. London, 2004. p91.

⁷ Michael H. Hart, *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*, 1978. New York; a Hart Book/ Vantage House, 1981. p7 pp486-489.

compiler Michael H. Hart states, this assumes that Homer was one person who really existed. What little information we have about him dates from hundreds of years after he probably lived. Writing in the fifth century BC Herodotus stated that Homer lived four hundred years before his time.⁸ The Parian marble dates Homer as active or writing in 907 BC.⁹ A comment from the Homeraidae, an ancient Greek Homeric appreciation society, mentions that he was blind and came from the island of Chios.¹⁰ These are the shaky facts, but they all point to the existence of one man. As for other theories, that “Homer” was a title or a fictional individual hiding the work of several poets working decades or centuries apart and that *The Iliad* and were written by different people, hard evidence appears rarer than the scant evidence just presented for Homer’s existence. This is one reason why I refer to Homer as the sole writer. Even so it is important to emphasize that answering whoever wrote *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* remains a very separate question as to the reliability of the accounts of the Trojan War. Reliability here relies on the presented facts: not the person who presented them. We do not know enough about Homer to bring in his personal bias or personal reliability or lack of it as a factor.

What is left out of *The Iliad* and comes into the epic from other sources includes some of the motifs that have become household knowledge and have sometimes gone into common language; the golden apple of the sun, the judgement of Paris, Iphigenia’s sacrifice, Achilles heel and the Trojan horse. How old these motifs that are outside Homer’s writings are remains a vexed question. Those who insist they date from long after Homer are on thin ice. As previously mentioned unless the

⁸ Herodotus, Book II 53.

⁹ Wood, p28

¹⁰ M.I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus*. London; Folio, 2002. p28. Finley reproduces a long section of the poem.

Iliad is only a large fragment of what Homer wrote and the rest has been lost, it makes no sense to tell this incomplete fragmentary story unless the rest of the tale of Troy was already known to his audience. Old versions of the tale of Troy are known to have existed, but with some we now have only fragments, with others not even that, just mentions. This is typical of ancient writings. We do not know how many ancient records have been lost, or even how much of what we now have dates from earlier, now lost versions. Writing in 1954 M.I. Finley gives the example of 150 Greek authors of tragedy being listed, but the works of only three are existent.¹¹ Of these he states that Sophocles wrote 123 plays of which only seven exist in a full form; of the eighty-two by Aeschylus only three survive. While not giving an overall estimate Finley also gives other examples of the poor survival rate amongst ancient manuscripts. While difficult to estimate, few would disagree with the idea that massive amounts of documentation from the ancient world have not survived into our age.

Even many of those still existent are fragmentary. Few Greek writings survive from the archaic period intact, even Homer's writings. Although *The Iliad* is usually considered to composed in the eighth century BC or earlier, one of the oldest existent copies not in fragments was found by Flinders Petrie in 1888 in an Egyptian woman's coffin dating from the second century AD: she used Books I and II as a head rest.¹² The evidence for Trojan stories before written full accounts of Homer are much older and are not always from histories. Although he never mentioned the wooden horse and some writers state it was an embellishment from the time of the Roman empire they are demonstrably wrong. Archaeological evidence shows that the wooden horse story predates the previously mentioned

¹¹ Finley, pp6-7.

¹²Bettany Hughes, *Helen of Troy: Goddess, Princess, Whore*. London, 2005. p272.



The Mykonos flask. This is the earliest known depiction of the Trojan horse, dating to the eighth century BC

Iliad manuscripts by nearly a thousand years. This earliest known depiction of the Trojan horse exists on the Mykonos flask, dating from the eighth century BC.¹³ Dating shows that this evidence fits roughly within what Herodotus stated was Homer's lifetime. A second vase decoration dates from around two hundred years later. It is used as a frontispiece with this work. This flask and the vase decoration only proves that the age of the Trojan horse story is very old, and disproves the

¹³ Wood, p80 photograph and caption.

Roman invention claims, but age cannot in itself prove that the Trojan horse is historic fact.

The nature of evidence about Troy and the war there keeps changing, not only due to our changing perceptions but due to new finds in both linguistics and archaeology: not even Homer stays constant as evidence.

The Causes of the War

Troy was a fortified city located in a controlling position at the Dardanelles, within easy sight of the mile long channel between the two shores. Controlling this waterway meant that it controlled access to the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea. While the Dardanelles and the Sea of Marmara provided rich fishing grounds for tunny, the Black Sea coast also provided grains, minerals, wool and slaves. The area Troy ruled, now known as the Troad, was also rich grazing land and farmland, providing the fortress city well. Homer mentions that the Trojans were horse breeders and traders and the number of found horse bones during excavations bears this out, just as the large number of spindle whorls suggests they were traders in wool and cloth.¹⁴ The finding of many hundreds of horse bones in the Troad by the first half of the 1990s also suggests great wealth, status and power.¹⁵ If horses were not quite a rare luxury item in the Bronze Age, they were highly valued and in demand. This suggests they were used for extensive trading and almost certainly were part of a large cavalry force and the use of chariots, both for status and war.

¹⁴ Blegen, Carl W., *Troy and the Trojans*. London; Thames and Hudson, 1963. Blegen mentions the horses and quotes Homer about them, p113 and mentions the spinning whorls p72; Hughes, p181 for horses; Wood, p20 p165 p166.

¹⁵ David M. Frank, (Producer) *The Odyssey of Troy*. Film Roos in Association with A & E Networks. 1994. Multimedia Entertainment.

Even early Troy, over a thousand years before Homer, also had extremely widespread trading connections. Amongst the finds from that time in Troy II were pieces of amber from the Baltic, carnelian from the Indus Valley and lapis lazuli from Afghanistan, with raw materials coming from central Asia.¹⁶ Thousands of luxury good fragments were found, some from Syria and Mesopotamia.¹⁷ Even iron, supposedly unknown at this same time was found on a pommel.¹⁸ Troy VI would have ivory and ostrich eggs which would surely have come from Africa and luxury goods such as faience, alabaster, gold, silver, electrum and carnelian. Such trade came from Crete, Mycenae, Cyprus and the Levant.¹⁹ Trading in such objects was probably not restricted just to this early era. The Trojans of Level II had time to hide what became known as Priam's hoard, which was why it could be found intact by Schliemann. Unless trade routes were disrupted in some way, probably later, similar hoards were plundered and only scattered similar pieces were found. Trading in luxury goods was not only more lucrative, it was easier because fewer objects had to be carried long distances. It was equally attractive to thieves and for the same reasons. This was a rich society – and in the Bronze Age world pirate raids and sacking cities were common with rich societies.²⁰

The Mycenaean empire apparently had an ambivalent role with piracy and trade. From around 1500 BC to its collapse about three hundred and fifty years later Mycenae ruled an empire that stretched from Crete to Anatolia. Trading links stretched further, from modern Italy, into the Danube River area, modern Croatia

¹⁶ Rose, pp11-12 pp18-19; Peter Jablonka, 'Troy.' in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bronze Age Aegean*. Eric H. Cline, Oxford, 2012. p852.

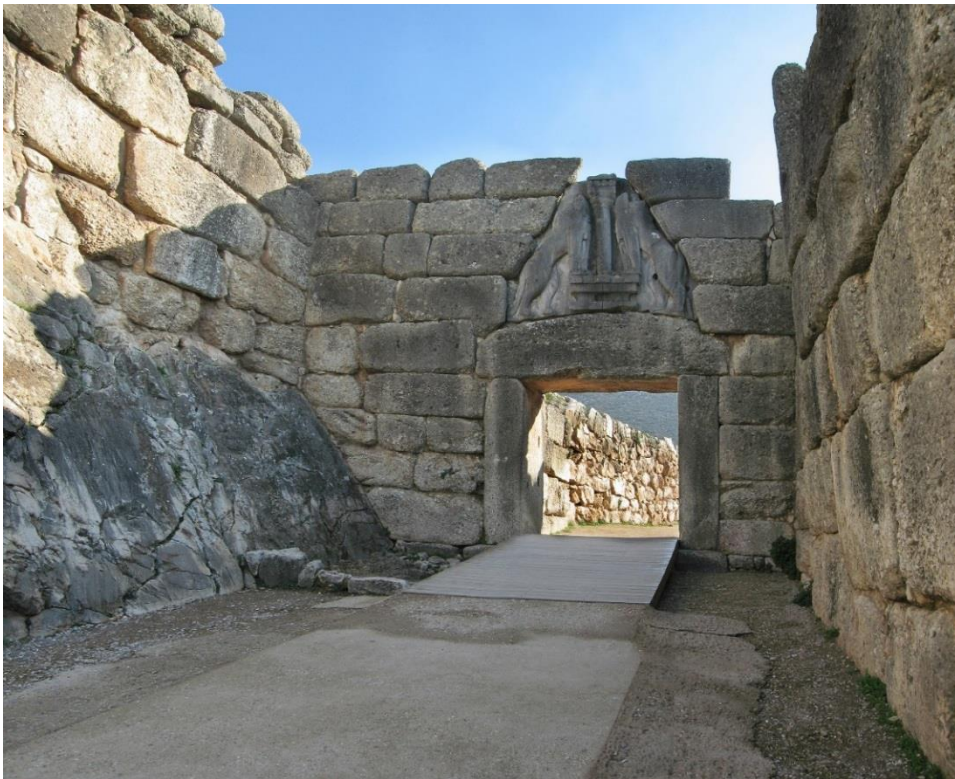
¹⁷ Jablonka, p852.

¹⁸ Rose, p17.

¹⁹ Rose, p35.

²⁰ Thucydides, Introduction 7-8

the Levant, North Africa, the Black Sea and Egypt. Some of these links were probably indirect, found objects might not necessarily have come from Mycenaean traders, but from middlemen or a line of middlemen trading rare objects over long distances. The idea of Mycenaeans or Trojans in the Hindu Kush or near Kilimanjaro goes beyond straining credibility. On the Anatolian coast south of the Troad Michael Wood states that a total of twenty-five Mycenaean settlements, ports or cities once existed.²¹ Were these Mycenaean colonies, conquests, or independent cities heavily dominated by Mycenaean trade and so their populations left much archaeological evidence from Mycenae behind?



The famous lion gate, the entrance to Mycenae. The sloped walkway means that the visitor must look up to the lions and be psychologically impressed with these symbols of power

²¹ Wood, p161.

Whichever of these possibilities was the correct one it brought them close to the Troad and to the edge of the Hittite empire. How did the Mycenaean empire come into being? A combination of trade, migration and conquest are likely, evidence exists for all three.

On the Trojan coast within site of the city the Mycenaean had what may have been either a trading post or a makeshift port for a long siege.²² Inside Troy many remnants of Mycenaean pottery or imitations of it have been found and some luxury goods.²³ Troy was not only a lucrative prize in itself, its takeover would at the least by giving Mycenae control of the Dardanelles, and that would give them control over the Black Sea trade. Until the late 1980s the idea of such a trade was frequently dismissed as a thin possibility without firm evidence, but since then firm if scanty evidence for this trade exists. Ox hide ingots used by the Greeks and the Levantines and also Aegean style anchors have been found in excavations the Bulgarian coast, while Aegean weapons are common finds in the hinterland and a Romanian sceptre was found in the Uluburun shipwreck.²⁴ With sea levels being twelve metres lower in the Ancient world of the Black Sea very little evidence could be obvious, but archaeological evidence of Bronze Age settlements on Bulgaria's coast are emerging.²⁵ The trade from that area was probably mainly in perishable goods, grain, fish, wool, skins and fruit, very little evidence of such things would survive. The idea that this rivalry for Black Sea trade was a root

²² Manfred Korfmann, 'Beşik Tepe: New Evidence for the period of the Trojan Sixth and Seventh Settlements.' In *Troy and the Trojan War: A Symposium Held at Bryn Mawr College, October 1984*. Machteld J. Mellink (ed.) Bryn Mawr, 1986. pp19-24.

²³ Wood, p164.

²⁴ Jablonka, p857.

²⁵ Rose, p36.

cause of the war has become common to the extent that it appears in the 1955 cinematic retelling *Helen of Troy*.

While plausible, evidence is thin, but the story of Jason and the Argonauts does reveal some things about this situation. Getting the Golden Fleece at Colchis on the far eastern shores of the Black Sea shows both a knowledge of the area and a desire for its riches. Even the Golden Fleece itself has a kernel of garbled truth, for the people of Colchis would leach gold dust and nuggets out of the streams by soaking fleeces in the waters.²⁶ The story (at least in some form) can only be older than Homer, for he mentions its popularity.²⁷ Less strong evidence such as characters existing before Troy's war and Herakles and Achilles's father appearing as Argonauts in Jason's story, also suggest that the story predates the fall of Troy by a generation. Robert Graves agrees with the ancient Greek tradition in giving it two generations before Troy's fall and quotes the date of 1225 BC for Jason's voyage. While this is overly precise it is also plausible as Graves bases this dating on the work of the respected ancient scientist Eratosthenes of Alexandria.²⁸

Important evidence suggesting that the Golden Fleece story predates Troy's fall also suggests that rivalries between the Trojans and the Mycenaeans existed over the Black Sea - or rather it's potential. Unresolved disputes about lucrative markets and territories are a common cause for war. A writer working in the Vatican in the fifth century AD used ancient sources to state that Trojans were banned from going on Jason's voyage.²⁹ The ancient Greeks, including Herodotus, believed in this voyage and if we discard the supernatural elements and limit scepticism to some of

²⁶ Graves, quoting Strabo. His introduction to his *The Golden Fleece* London, 2003. pxxvi

²⁷ Graves, pxix

²⁸ Graves, pxxi

²⁹ Graves, pxxvi. Graves reproduces the Latin passage. He also mentions this in an unnumbered footnote on the same page.

the dramatics, no good reason exists for doubts – or datings not long before the Trojan War.

It may be that the Trojan War was a war over territorial possession in the Dardanelles, or claiming potential resources in the Black Sea or a mixture of both. With the additional rewards of the lucrative plundering of Troy fuelling other Greek powers into enthusiasm for Mycenae's war of expansion and control.

However aspects of the golden fleece story, like the scanty finds, also tends to support the idea of minimal contact, for no mention of Greek settlements or traders appear and the story is permeated with a sense of wonder at the exotic and mysterious land they have reached, so full of strange things. That atmosphere would hardly exist if the voyage was going on an established trading route. It may also well be that the opening of the Black Sea to Mycenaeans and Trojans was in the initial stages, but the outbreak of war between them delayed that development and the problems which started hitting the Bronze Age world around 1220-1170 BC meant that it would be over four hundred years before Greek trade and colonies started there.

With Mycenae having either allies or bases from the Dardanelles to the Levant, proximity alone could have led to anything flaring up into warfare. We tend to see war as something to be avoided, but in the ancient world it was a chance for glory plunder and land grabs.

It may well be that the stories of Trojans raiding Sparta, seizing Helen and the treasury was an insult and a provocation not to be endured by Menelaus. Romantic jealousy would probably be a factor, but being a willing cuckold would lead to

contempt that could inspire usurpers. If this sounds far –fetched consider Thucydides’ detailed account of the Peloponnesian War’s origins. He tells of how a dispute by factions for control of a small unimportant city on the edge of the Greek world, unaligned with either Sparta or Corinth snowballed into a devastating war that lasted decades.³⁰ That war destroyed the Athenian empire and left the victorious Spartans so exhausted that they were a waning power.

The Evidence

The evidence for the Trojan War comes from two sources, ancient writings and modern archaeology. By themselves each source would not be compelling: but taken together they present a compelling case for the Trojan War being an actual event, although several aspects can only be mythical, and other legendary aspects are extremely unlikely. Some primary sources are at best tentative.

The outstanding example of such uncertain evidence concerns the theory that Troy was a Hittite vassal entitled Wilusa. This theory was first put forward in 1924 by Paul Kretschmer.³¹ It relies on those Hittite records which deal with this vassal, which existed somewhere in western Anatolia around the possible times of the Trojan War, but the evidence consists of many examples of alliteration and assonance in names which appear in *The Iliad*.³² Several historians consider this evidence tantalising and possibly misinterpreted.³³ Others accept and develop

³⁰ Thucydides, i-26

³¹ Hans G. Gütterbock ‘Troy in Hittite texts? Wilusa, Ahhiyawa and Hittite history’ in *Troy and the Trojan War: A Symposium Held at Brywn Mawr College, October 1984*. Ed. Matchteld J. Mellink. Brywn Mawr, 1986. p33.

³² O.R. Gurney, *The Hittites*. London, 2002. pp52-56.

³³ Gütterbock, p40; Frank Kolb, ‘Troy VI: a trading centre and commercial city?’ in *American Journal of Archaeology*. Vol. 108, No.4 (Oct., 2004) pp587-589.; Gurney, pp52-56; Cline, H. Eric. *1177B.C: The Year Civilization Collapsed*. Princeton, 2014. p36

Kretschmer's logic.³⁴ Facts against acceptance are that Wilusa's location remains unidentified and that while the Hittites kept records of Wilusa, after eighty years of excavation no archives or documents have been found in Troy. Vassal states usually record their dealings and treaties with their superiors and keep their superior's missives, but Troy has nothing like this.³⁵ Another odd consideration is that if Troy was this Willusa state, why didn't the Hittites come to the aid of their attacked vassal when the Greeks established a beachhead and began raiding? For a king to let a vassal state be attacked without giving aid can only be a virtual abrogation of royal responsibility, credibility and therefore power. There may well have been a revolt of the Hittite empire's border provinces at this time of its waning power.³⁶ Did the Mycenaeans, sensing this, prey upon a former Hittite vassal for its riches? In *The Iliad* no mention of the Hittite power emerges. Troy is not presented as a vassal state, but comes close to being presented as an empire; other allied city states and kingdoms nearby aid her; even a military contingent from "Aethiopia" does so.³⁷ To the ancient Greeks this could mean anywhere south of Egypt or land east of there, where people were dark skinned.³⁸ This does sound like a later embellishment, but perhaps not. Mycenaean Greeks served the Egyptian pharaoh centuries before Troy fell. Could a Trojan king have gained a detachment

³⁴ Hughes, pp123-124. p180; Barry Strauss, *The Trojan War: A New History*. London, 2007. pxxi pp18-19; Trevor Bryce, 'The Trojan War.' In Eric H Cline, Ed. *The Oxford Handbook of The Bronze Age Aegean. (ca.3000-1000BC)* pp478-479; Rose, pp26-28.

³⁴ Rose, p35; Kolb,

³⁴ N.K. Sandars, *The Sea Peoples: Warriors of the Ancient Mediterranean 1250-1150BC*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1978. P197

³⁴ Strauss, pp162-163

³⁵ Rose, p35; Kolb,

³⁶ N.K. Sandars, *The Sea Peoples: Warriors of the Ancient Mediterranean 1250-1150 BC*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1978. P197

³⁷ Strauss, pp162-163

³⁸ *Ibid*,

of Pharaoh's Nubian troops for payment or a favour? This absence of the Trojans as Hittite vassals has three possible interpretations:

Troy was never a Hittite vassal

Troy was a Hittite vassal, but became an independent power after Hittite power collapsed. The war with the Greeks happened after they became independent.

Homer, and those who worked at creating other sections of the Tale of Troy, for whatever reason, left out the role of the Hittites.

If the latter interpretation turns out to be correct, Homer's omission would damage his growing reputation for reliability on historical matters and be strong evidence for those who disagree with that reputation or of Troy's existence. Other ancient writings concerning Troy are also problematic. They reveal that even in the ancient world Homer's accuracy was questioned. Writing in the first century AD Josephus raises doubts about the possibility of those taking part leaving a record: "It is a highly controversial and disputed question if even those who took part in the Trojan campaign made use of letters."³⁹ He apparently did not know of Linear B. This suggests it was unknown outside palace tax records and inventories. He goes on to state that the true view is that they did not have the present mode of writing, which probably means Phoenician derived Greek. He then states that Homer was the first Greek literary figure and lived after the Trojan War, but did not leave written versions of his works which were first transmitted by memory and "the scattered songs were not united until later."⁴⁰ This is all interesting, important, plausible and annoying. Vagaries like "later" and no precise dates leave massive gaps. Ambiguities such as "scattered songs" may mean those composed by Homer and scattered by others in differing collections or by being later works.

³⁹ Wood, quoting Josephus p123

⁴⁰ *Ibid*

Josephus's emphatic statement that there was no Greek literature before Homer could easily mean that there was absolutely nothing. He was the creator: all other Trojan stories came after him. However Homer's words disproves this because he refers to the Golden Fleece story. Josephus also does not distinguish literature from song. A depiction of a bard on a mural at the Pylos palace gives proof of ballads (possibly about Troy) being sung before Homer.⁴¹ Fragments of bard's harps have also been found at Mycenaean sites and miniature models of them in temples.⁴² Apart from a lack of substantiation about thirteen hundred years after the mentioned event, Josephus's tricky mixture of vagary, ambiguity, omissions and emphatic statements, Josephus causes other problems. Usually considered to be frequently unreliable, even his modern editor advises that he be used with extreme caution.⁴³ However two of the most reliable ancient historians, Herodotus and Thucydides, also raise doubts about Homer and the Tale of Troy. Herodotus recounts an unlikely story supposedly derived from Menelaus and then centuries later given to him by Egyptian priests; Helen and Paris resided in Egypt, not Troy, which was the real reason the Trojans could not return her.⁴⁴ The Greeks did not believe that until after Troy was destroyed. Homer knew this, but only hinted at it, going for a different version.⁴⁵ This raises the question of the reliability of the Egyptian informants. Was this an oral tradition passed on for hundreds of years - or did they read from a document Menelaus dictated? Did someone copy down an oral history at some point? This indicates a weakness within the methods of the father of history. He takes hearsay as near fact and does not always indicate his

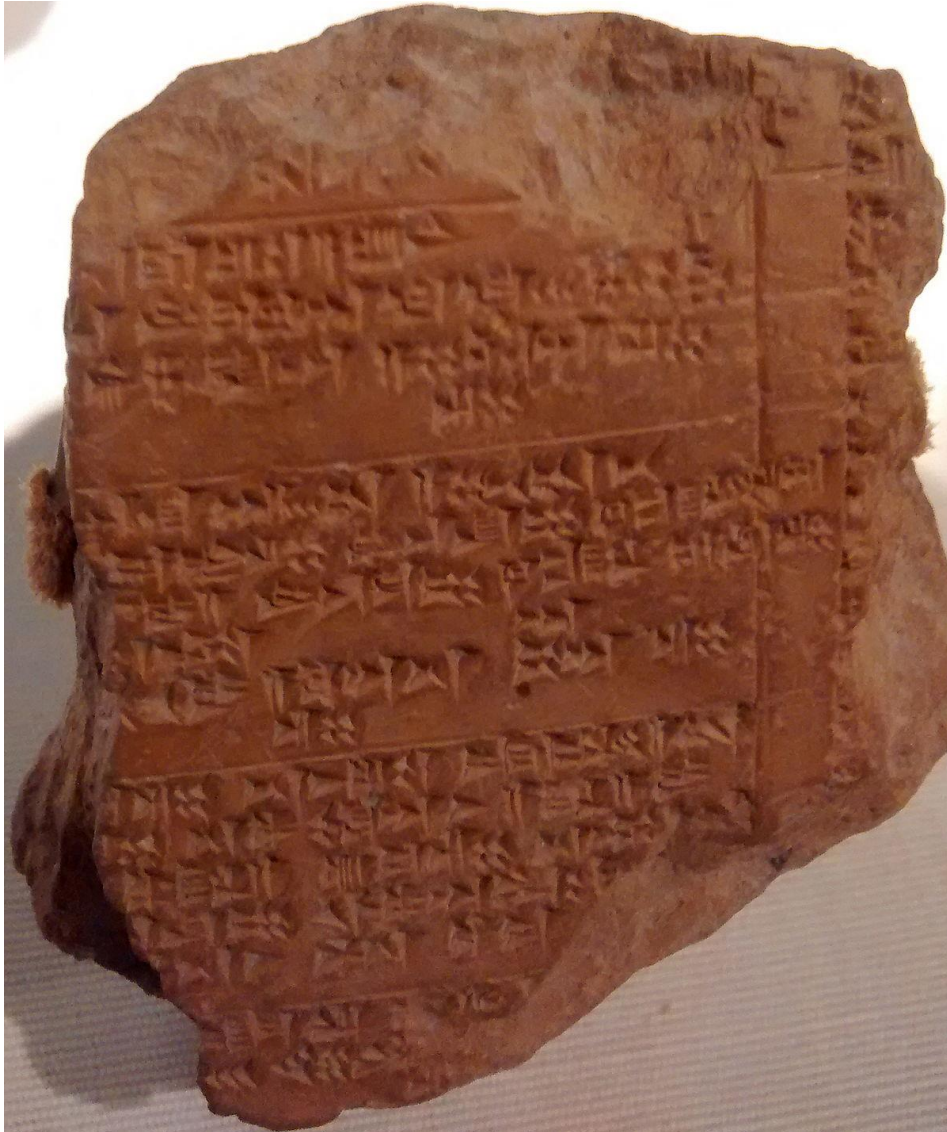
⁴¹ Blegen and others, *A Guide to the Palace of Nestor*. Princeton, N.J.; 2001. Figure 8. p14.

⁴² Hughes, p87.

⁴³ G.A. Williamson introduction to Josephus, *The Jewish War*. Hammondsworth, 1972. pp13-14.

⁴⁴ Herodotus, 2 112-120.

⁴⁵ Herodotus, 2 118.



A Hittite tablet written in Akkadian. This example is from Anatolia from between the sixteenth and thirteenth centuries BC. The state of preservation gives an idea of the problems historians and archaeologists face in decipherment.

sources precisely. Thucydides rightly questions Homer's veracity concerning numbers, stating that being a poet he exaggerated.⁴⁶ Thucydides statement denying that the Greek invasion fleet against Troy consisted of a thousand ships is a precursor to what many have said about the Trojan War over the centuries:

⁴⁶ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Introduction 12.

we shall find if we look at the evidence of what was actually done, that it was not as important as it was made out to be and as it is still, through the influence of the poets, believed to have been. *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Introduction 12.

That advice to look at the evidence remains one of history's most vexing pieces of advice: Thucydides does not tell us what it is, where it existed or who created it! As an Athenian admiral Thucydides should know what was possible in Greek naval terms. While his comment reduces Homer's total credibility, like Herodotus and Josephus he unquestioningly accepts that the war happened. In itself this is compelling evidence. Although these historians clearly disagree with Homer about what happened within the war, the war as a fact stays unquestioned. Josephus also implicitly raises doubts, while Thucydides does so explicitly. Both writers allowing for a cultural tradition to develop and reshape. However from Thucydides onwards Homer's works have also led others into many problems concerning verification. Herodotus dates Homer's existence to not more than four centuries before his own time and the war to eight hundred years before him.⁴⁷ Ancient dating systems give a range for the Trojan War from 1334 BC to 1135 BC.⁴⁸ Eratosthenes dates the war to 407 years before the first Olympiad in 778BC, giving a date of 1185 BC.⁴⁹ Oddly, this date matches that of carbon dating which usually as given as 1190-1180 BC. The copy of the now flawed and therefore frequently illegible Parian marble lists many dates in Greek history, including the destruction of Troy, which in modern dates comes to June 9th 1209 BC.⁵⁰ Many of the dates the Parian marble gives are for Bronze Age events are plausible. Unfortunately they

⁴⁷ Herodotus, 2.53; Bryce, 'The Trojan War' pp475-476. Bryce, 'The Trojan War: Is there any Truth Behind the Legend?' *Near Eastern Archaeology* Vol. 65 No. (Sep., 2002), p185.

⁴⁸ Hughes, p240; Strauss, pp10-11; Bryce, 'The Trojan War.' p476.

⁴⁹ Bryce, 'The Trojan War.' pp475-476.

⁵⁰ Wood, pp28-29.

have no precise corroboration due to the rarity of Greek Bronze Age writing outside palace inventories and the apparent non-existence of any Trojan writing. Many ancient writers and some modern historians date the war to around 1200BC.⁵¹ Even if we accept the narrowest gap, that of Herodotus for Homer's life being in the eighth century and the date of 1135 BC for the Trojan siege, around three hundred years between the event and the writing remains. The problem of a more frequently mentioned four to five hundred year gap between Troy's events and Homer's narrative leads to questions. How much has been lost, embellished or added to the story over the centuries? Where did his information come from? Homer, Herodotus, Thucydides and Josephus do not tell us. Possibly Homer researched, perhaps from maps, unknown documents or traveller's tales. He may have even visited Troy. Whatever his sources, he accurately describes Troy as windy, correctly notes the beaches, nearby hot springs, the inner city's well, the city's gates and high sloping walls and the Scamander River. These accuracies in *The Iliad* would eventually lead to the discovery of a site that most writers now consider to be Troy.

Although preliminary work on the site had been done before, that real discoverer was Heinrich Schliemann (1822-1890) who is often described as the father of archaeology and without doubt, still remains its most controversial figure. One recent writer on Troy finished their book with a section entitled 'Distinguishing Fact from Fiction' in which two writers present opposing views about Schliemann.⁵² Similarly the 1994 documentary *The Odyssey of Troy* also

⁵¹ M.I. Finley, p14; Strauss, p10; Hughes, p240.

⁵² Hervé Duchêne, *The Golden Treasures of Troy: The Dream of Heinrich Schliemann*. London, 1995. pp130-135.

presented two more academics presenting similar opposed views and also did not present a firm conclusion. In relation to Troy, on the negative side he has been called a thief who took or planted evidence, an egotist, a liar in his narrative and the destroyer of evidence and even sites in his quest for gold. The supposed dishonesty rests on thin evidence. In some accounts (including his own) he is a lone visionary, a gifted amateur who against the vast majority of world opinion, used Homer to prove that Troy existed and brought its treasures to the world's view. Some truth exists in both views, which means our perceptions of Homer and Troy are uncertain and divided. Either way, if only to an extent, scholarly views about Troy and Homer are shaped by Schliemann: his work at Troy becomes important for assessing evidence concerning the war there. Until the time of his discovery of Troy in the 1870s few modern experts thought that Troy had ever really existed.⁵³ Schliemann certainly changed that, opening up a controversy that still endures.

In his long introduction to Schliemann's *Troja: Results of the Latest Researches and Discoveries on the Site of Homer's Troy, 1882*. Professor Sayce recalled several of these once authoritative opinions to crow over them, using Schliemann's much publicised success and his following detailed accounts and assembled and assessed finds as proof.⁵⁴ This book and its 1875 predecessor *Troy and its Remains: A Narrative and Discoveries made on the Site of Ilium an in the Trojan Plains* show the merits within Schliemann's work and its severe flaws. Both large books show that he did carefully catalogue and explain what he found, he was no

⁵³ Ceram, p31; Duchêne, p15, Taylour and Chadwick p45; A.H. Sayce, Preface *Troja: Results of the Latest Researches and Discoveries on the Site of Homer's Troy, 1882*. 1884. New York; 1976.pv-vi

⁵⁴ A.H. Sayce. Preface pv-vi

mere plunderer, but his many findings got into the books because of methods that leave modern archaeologists horrified. While working in the 1980s as a gardener for an archaeologist who had worked at Troy, I made the mistake of mentioning Schliemann. Normally a most quite, contained and polite man, just that name was enough to start a loud tirade on Schliemann and his methods, given with snarls. Even Schliemann's own writings reveal much against him. Although in his last months he expressed doubts he incorrectly identified the second Level of Troy's nine levels as Priam's city.⁵⁵ In the contents page of *Troya*, his *Chapter III* has the heading 'The Second City: Troy Proper; The 'Ilios' of the Homeric Legend.' In that detailed chapter he makes several other clear references to this strata (labelled Level II) being the Troy of Homer's conflict. As he admits in that same chapter, to get down to that level he had to remove what he described as debris and what others more accurately have since labelled evidence - and perhaps vital evidence. His several references to debris and his descriptions, make it unintentionally clear that much of what was probably Priam's Troy (which is usually described as Level VIIa or Level VI or Level VII) no longer exists due to his ironic efforts to find Priam's Troy. He was not the only destroyer. In Hellenistic times much of the centre of the citadel of Troy VI was shorn off to provide level ground for a temple.⁵⁶ Despite the good work done on the site by his successors and sometimes by Schliemann, in assessing evidence it should be remembered that the most important archaeological site for verifying or disproving *The Iliad* cannot now show experts what was once a much more revealing story.⁵⁷ In 1996 excavators with the Troy Excavation Project, believing that the shorn off citadel was under

⁵⁵ Heinrich Schliemann, *Troya*. Contents page heading for Chapter Three and pages 52-174 contain several other similar identifications.

⁵⁶ Rose, p34; Jablonka, p853.

⁵⁷ Rose, p19.

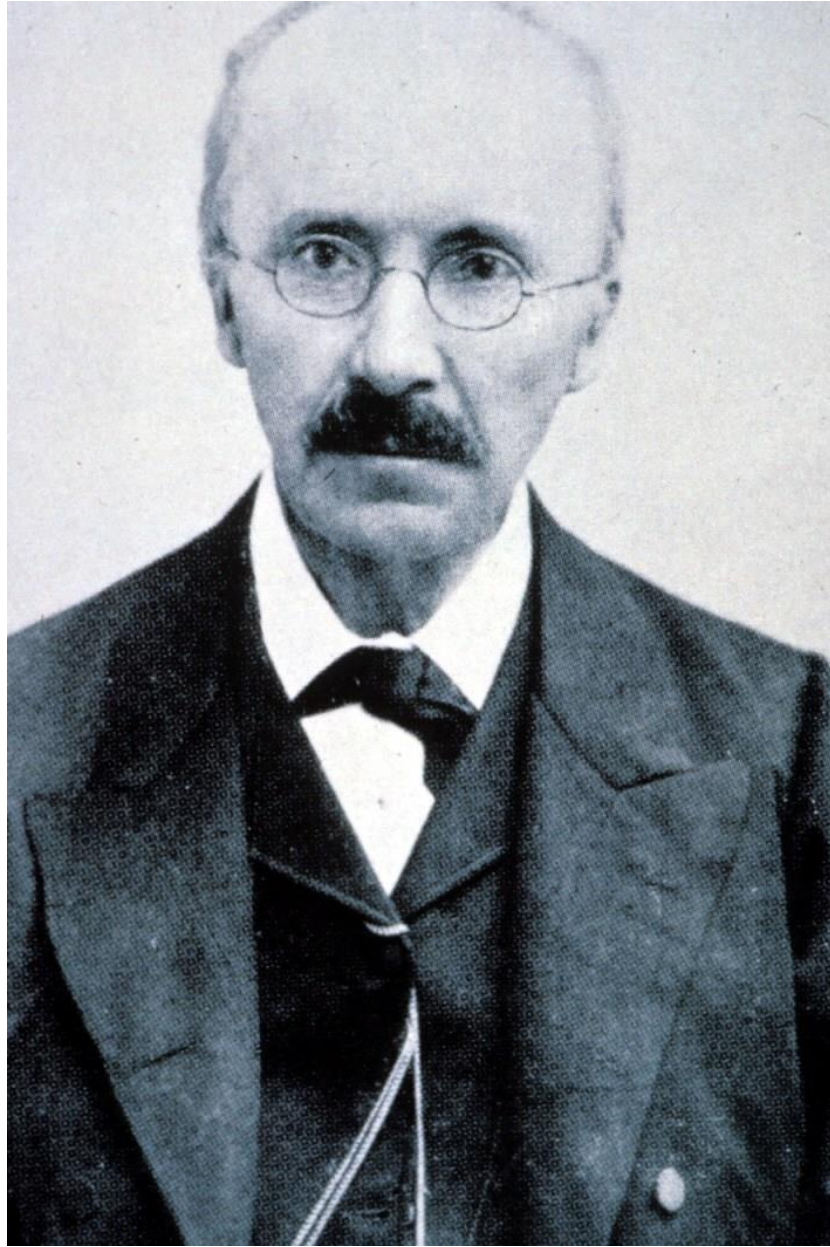


Achilles tends Patroclus. An attic vase of c500BC

Schliemann's dump, started excavating, but found the work too dangerous to continue.⁵⁸ Whatever secrets the citadel holds such as records (if any) still await.

While Schliemann took Homer's writings out of the category of fairy tale or myth, other problems still vex scholars and archaeologists. Linguistic differences within *The Iliad*, leads to several questions. How much of it was written by one person? How long had it existed before it was written down? How long after the described events was it formed? How highly should we rate the general accuracy of what it tells? Such questions boil down to can the text be reliable evidence?

⁵⁸ Rose, p43.



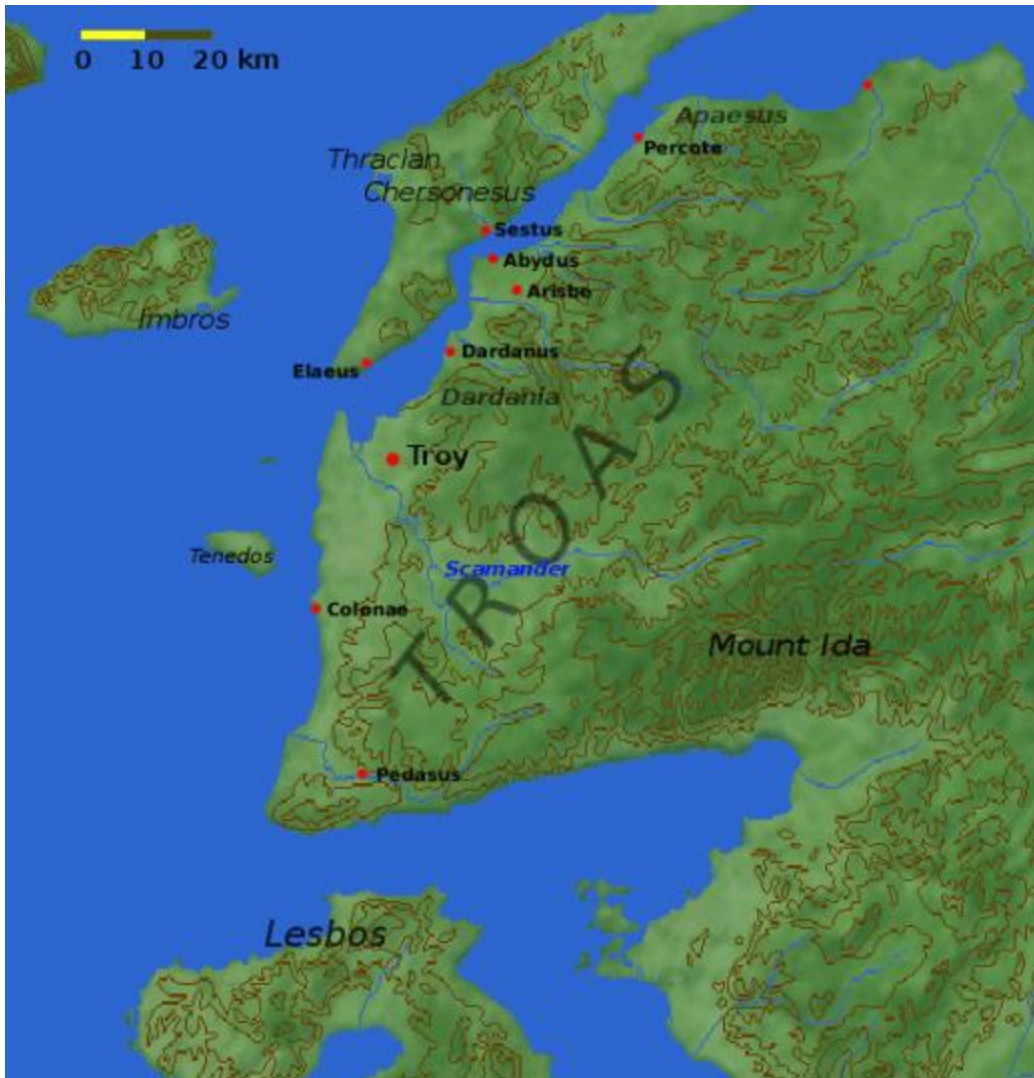
Heinrich Schliemann



Mrs Schliemann modelling what her husband incorrectly called Priam's Treasure from Level II at Troy. At the least, like the city on that strata at Troy, this treasure dates from a thousand years before Priam ruled.



Various aspects of the tale of Troy was a favourite topic on Greek vases



Troy and its territory and neighbouring cities

Bettany Hughes presents strong evidence that can solve these doubts if *The Iliad* turns out to be much older than previously believed. Evidence for this appears in its structure, which frequently mismatches the later classical Greek language, but matches Linear B, the writing which supposedly vanished in the twelfth century, soon after Troy's fall:

The rhythm of the *Iliad* too can guide us towards the certain knowledge that a number of Homer's lines were composed in the Mycenaean period. The entire poem is written in hexameter. Many of the verses read perfectly, and

yet the meter of some lines is simply unsatisfying, there are jolts and jars where normally the poetry flows. But write these lines using elements of Linear B Bronze Age rather than Classical Greek – in the language that the Mycenaeans would have used – and the lines scan perfectly. p198.

Over twenty years before Hughes's idea was published, Taylour and Chadwick, although describing *The Iliad* as predominantly linguistically Ionic, also pointed out that many hexameters were awkward in that language and referred to Mycenaean aspects in the text, but they did not specifically argue for a much earlier date of creation.⁵⁹ In the 1980s Professor Vermeule did argue that linguistic and other elements in parts of *The Iliad* suggested a dating and an inspiration from around the fourteenth or fifteenth century.⁶⁰ In 1985 Michael Wood was also onto this concept, noting how many grammatical constructions and words Homer used were found in Linear B tablets. These included Wanax, the archaic word for king and the word for captives.⁶¹ Homer's description of "silver studded swords" matched a tablet listing of swords from the Pylos palace Linear B inventories. Taylour and Chadwick and Wood all refer to how even Homeric names appeared in the Linear B lists as common names; these included Hector and Achilles.⁶² Wood notes however that Homer uses very few words that are Mycenaean, that he uses many dialects including one the Arcado-Cypriot that was contemporary with Mycenaean and that Ionian, a later language was predominant.⁶³ This almost polyglot use of linguistics suggests that the written version of *The Iliad* was

⁵⁹ Taylour and Chadwick, pp46-49.

⁶⁰ Bryce, 'The Trojan War: Is there Any Truth Behind the Legend?' p193.

⁶¹ Wood, p122 p159.

⁶² Wood, p122 p159; Taylour and Chadwick, p48; Finley p32.

⁶³ Wood, 130-131.

worked on or embellished by several writers or that Homer was multilingual, taking parts of the story from different cultures.



At excavated Troy a new Trojan horse awaits; note the tourist's heads poking out.

The ideas of Wood, Vermeule and Hughes would also explain why geography and archaeology show Homer got so many details from around the thirteenth century right around three to five hundred years later – and in a society without written records. More evidence for this idea is that Homer's catalogue of ships appears to be “surprisingly similar” to “the bald, bland, and repetitive” listings of Linear B tablets. No prominent places from the eighth century which were unknown in the Bronze Age are included.⁶⁴ This would be an odd omission if *The Iliad* were

⁶⁴ Hughes, pp196-197.

written in the eighth century. Until excavations of Theban Linear B tablets in 1991 Thebes seemed a minor Bronze Age power, but is now known to have controlled a larger territory than each of the better known kingdoms of Pylos, Sparta or Mycenae. Hughes explains something concerning Thebes that seemed puzzling in *The Iliad*. Agamemnon's invasion fleet assembles at Aulis, a Theban port. Why assemble here if Thebes is an unimportant power? Thebes as an important power would be more likely to have the massive supplies for an invading fleet than a small kingdom. The Theban tablets also reveal another linguistic reason for giving *The Iliad* credibility. Until the Theban town of Elion was mentioned in the Theban Linear B tablets this town was believed to be a product of Homer's imagination because the word existed nowhere else but in his catalogue of ships.⁶⁵



Diomedes attacks Aeneas

Without using their linguistic evidence or referring to their work Eric H. Cline comes to their conclusion concerning dating *The Iliad* using different evidence. He

⁶⁵ Hughes, p197.

notes that descriptions of armour and weapons match examples in use hundreds of years before 1250-1175 BC, but they were out of use by estimated time of the Trojan War.⁶⁶ He also mentions the finding of a Mycenaean sword in 1991 at Hattusa, the Hittite capital. The sword was dedicated to the storm god for victory over Assuwa rebels and has been dated to approximately 1430 BC, approximately the same time that Hittite records give for the suppression of a rebellion in Assuwa.⁶⁷ Was the Troad Assuwa? Did this rebellion become repeated in a garbled form as Homer's Trojan War? This possibility has little supporting evidence, but tantalises.

The first evidence going against the ideas of Hughes, Wood and Vermeule must be that Homer's writings and in fact any fiction at all are as yet unknown in Linear B. A second puzzling point is how did Homer read, speak or understand Linear B if he lived around four hundred years after the language supposedly died out? Or did the Linear B dialect continue to be spoken long after all currently known and rare evidence for it in written form ended? Linguistically such patterns are not uncommon. Scots and Irish Gaelic, Gullah and the old English of rural Virginia were and are all commonly spoken languages amongst English speakers while their written forms died out or became rare. Examples of written Linear B are limited to a few palaces and fortified places, usually where fires baked the clay tablets hard. It is far more likely that bards such as Homer may have had access to private collections of scrolls or carried scrolls containing their songs, rather than cumbersome clay tablets which would hold little information. Scrolls of course are more perishable. Did Homer have access to old scrolls? We know almost nothing

⁶⁶ Cline, *1177BC: The Year Civilization Collapsed*. pp40-41

⁶⁷ Cline, *1177BC: The Year Civilization Collapsed*. p32.

reliable about the man beyond what Herodotus wrote and it is possible that Herodotus got it wrong, which means that hundreds of writers since have repeated his error concerning Homer. Some writers have disputed that he wrote both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* while others dispute that he even existed. If he lived hundreds of years before the generally given date, or if he had access to aged Linear B scrolls or if that language survived much longer than is now believed, giving away to classical Greek with its vastly different Phoenician derived alphabet in Homer's lifetime, this would explain the puzzle of the evidence for Mycenaean linguistic remnants and references to long past things in *The Iliad*.

Another problem for doubting Homer's evidence for the Trojan War concerns mythic elements. Gods and goddesses are prominent characters, Apollo spreading disease by magic arrows, dreams becoming incarnate messengers from Zeus, the sea monster that devours Laccoon and his sons on cue, all clearly appear as salient impossibilities. While ancient historians frequently mention supernatural elements in their works, often to explain the puzzling, they usually do not overwhelm their historic narratives: in the Trojan War stories these supernatural elements do. Mythology and magic permeate the stories to the extent that they seemed justifiably unhistorical - before the initial investigations of Frank Calvert and Heinrich Schliemann's subsequent excavations.⁶⁸

Some writers overdevelop the idea of Schliemann as the lone pioneer who found ancient Troy. Geographic locales mentioned by Homer such as the Dardanelles, Mount Ida Lesbos and the Scamander River made it clear to those investigators who believed Homer that Troy was somewhere nearby.⁶⁹ Some investigations and

⁶⁸ Duchêne.. p46.

⁶⁹ Rose, p40.

excavations had started in the late eighteenth century and others started in the early nineteenth but literally and figuratively only scratched the surface. In 1855 a British engineer, John Brunton actually began excavating the correct site, but not to much depth.⁷⁰ Schliemann's conclusions had already been reached by Frank Calvert, a British born American expatriate who had purchased much of Hissarik Hill, but in 1863 had tried to get English funding for a dig but failed.⁷¹ Schliemann differed from earlier investigators in having almost unlimited finance and time, both of which he personally controlled. He was sustained by an unshakable and iron clad belief in the veracity of *The Iliad*, which he treated as a virtual guide book to the area.

Schliemann saw beyond the mythic elements to believe in the essential veracity of Homer's story and by using geographic and topographic descriptions in Homer's work and Calvert's knowledge, found the ancient city buried at Hissarlik Hill. Schliemann's find of a highly unusual geographic feature as described by Homer, hot springs near the Scamander River where Trojan women washed clothes, was strong, compelling and unusual evidence.⁷² Similarly Schliemann ultimately rejected the commonly held idea at the time amongst those that did believe Homer's account that Troy was underneath the village of Burnarbashi. He noted that the village was too far inland to match Homer's descriptions, had unusual

⁷⁰ Rose, p.2.

⁷¹ Wood, p44-46. A letter of December 1863 by Frank Calvert is reproduced.

⁷²Duchêne reproduces Homer's passage about the springs without line reference. p43; C.W. Ceram, *Gods, Grave, and Scholars: The Story of Archaeology*. London, 1971. pp32-33. This writer also reproduces the firsts section of the same passage, crediting it to "Song 22 verses 147-152" He includes details concerning Schliemann's beliefs and activities which Curtis Runnels states are hagiographic and uncritically based on Schliemann's autobiographical writings, but are uncited. See Runnels, *The Archaeology of Heinrich Schliemann: An Annotated Bibliographic Handlist*. Second Edition. Boston, 2007. pp62-63. Despite his harsh criticisms concerning hagiography Runnels does not dispute the facts in Ceram's account.

geographic features Homer did not mention and as running around Troy three times as Hector and Achilles had done would have meant a race of fifty-two miles, Burnarbashi could not be Troy.⁷³ He found Hissarlik Hill was near the coast, surrounded by plains and running around it three times equalled a circumference of nine miles. Schliemann had his own personal money and Calvert generously gave him digging permission and his local knowledge. Schliemann excavated there and now the site is generally considered to be Troy. Schliemann's successful use of Homer to find Troy became one of the most compelling facts to prove that the Trojan War happened. Almost all scholars now believe that of nine levels Schliemann and his deputy and successor William Dörpfeld identified, the town on Level VII or Level VIIa was Homer's Troy.⁷⁴ Writing in 1954 in *The World Of Odysseus* M.I. Finley became one of the last doubters citing scant archaeological evidence, no historical documents and the difference between the small poor citadel of Troy and Homer's grand descriptions. However since 1954 much has been found to counter these objections. Another factor to consider is that Finley did not deal in detail with evidence supporting Homer known by 1954.

Both Barry Strauss and Bettany Hughes in their works written since recent discoveries were made, mention evidence from the 1990s onward. While fragmentary in both the literal and figurative sense, these pieces of new evidence when put together and then put with older evidence provides compelling proof for a real Trojan War and frequently for Homer's descriptions. They do not endorse everything Homer wrote. The war's ten year length and the Greek fleet of almost twelve hundred ships are dismissed as exaggerations and neither writer endorses

⁷³ Ceram, pp32-35.

⁷⁴ Bryce, 'The Trojan War.' pp475-476; Finley, p31; Duchêne, pp64-65 diagram and caption; Korfmann, pp25-26



This 14th century BC boar's teeth helmet came from Mycenae and is now in the National Museum at Athens

the Trojan horse as real.⁷⁵ Hughes reveals that the supposed burial mound of Achilles was Hellenistic.⁷⁶ She mentions how the gold objects found in the Mycenaean graves by Schliemann are evidence for Homer's description of "Mycenae rich in gold."⁷⁷ Homer's mentioned underground springs and rivers in

⁷⁵ Hughes, p198 p220 p208; Strauss pp7-8 p41 p79 pp171-180.

⁷⁶ Hughes, pp175-176; Korfmann, 'Troy: Topography and Navigation.' in Mellink, p11.

⁷⁷ Hughes, pp35-37.

Troy sounded fanciful until the concealed water channel which still carries 1400 litres a day was recently found.⁷⁸ The supposedly anachronistic figure eight tower shield Homer describes as belonging to Ajax was frequently represented in Mycenaean art and one such example dates from the fourteenth century.⁷⁹

Homer describes Odysseus's stitched leather helmet with boar's tusks, this perfectly matches the excavated Dendra helmet's appearance.⁸⁰ This find includes both the helmet and a suit of plated bronze, another match to another of Homer's descriptions.⁸¹ Another almost exactly identical helmet was found at Knossos and in a wall mural at Thera a row of eight infantrymen wear such helmets.⁸² Michael Wood list several other archaeological finds from the Mycenaean age that match what Homer wrote. These include greaves, metalwork techniques for a shield's inlay and silver studded swords.⁸³

One point Homer was derided on was his many descriptions of feasts with large amounts of meat in a society believed to have been sustained by vegetables and fruit porridge, but Linear B tablets listing animals and also modern bone analysis, both from Pylos's late Bronze Age palace, show palatial society eating large amounts of meat, cattle sheep and pigs are all listed on the tablet inventory for feasts.⁸⁴ Tests also show residue on drinking vessels containing a mixture of honey mead and retsina; this could easily match Homer's description of "honeyed mellow

⁷⁸ Hughes, p208.

⁷⁹ Hughes p39; Strauss, pp79.

⁸⁰ Hughes, p74 p363 n17; Homer, 10 306-310, Oliver Dickinson, *The Aegean Bronze Age*. Cambridge, 2008. Plate 5:21 p204.

⁸¹ Wood, p130.

⁸² Wood, p130 and the mural is reproduced on p196.

⁸³ Wood, p130.

⁸⁴ Hughes, p84; Davis p687.

wine.”⁸⁵ Archaeology demonstrates that Bronze Age feasts worked on class separation – and royal weddings were full of music and feasting, all just as Homer describes.⁸⁶ Blegen also mentions the evidence for meat and fish being consumed in Troy.⁸⁷ Another seemingly odd factor is Homer’s description of clothes being soaked in olive oil, but at Pylos references to unguents being stored for cloth also appear in the palace’s Linear B tablets.⁸⁸ Ancient illustrations of warriors in animal skins bear out Homer’s descriptions of warriors dressing this way.⁸⁹ Homer writes of warriors wearing lion’s skins and in 1995 a lion’s jaw was found amongst refuse at Troy.⁹⁰

Very compelling evidence for the Trojan War exists at Beşick Bay, five miles from Hissarlik Hill. A Mycenaean cemetery was excavated there in the 1980s.⁹¹ Over a hundred men, women and children were buried with some Anatolian artefacts, but most grave goods were either Greek or Greek imitations.⁹² Although not a battlefield cemetery, cenotaphs for empty graves exist, it seems that some warriors were cremated, perhaps with their swords or daggers, as melted metal was found with their ashes.⁹³ Homer writes of Greek warriors being cremated on Troy’s beaches.⁹⁴ M.I. Finley states that such descriptions prove that Homer places Iron Age burial customs which involved cremation back into Mycenaean times, when

⁸⁵ Hughes, p84 *The Iliad* quoted 4.401. *The Odyssey* 9.3-11 also bears out the points about meat and drink.

⁸⁶ Hughes, pp84-85 *The Odyssey* 9.3-11

⁸⁷ Blegen, p112.

⁸⁸ Hughes, pp106-107 quoting *The Odyssey*

⁸⁹ Hughes, p122.

⁹⁰ Hughes, p122 Quoting *The Iliad* No detailed reference given

⁹¹ Maurice Korfmann, ‘Beşick Tepe: Evidence for the period of the Trojan Sixth and Seventh Settlements’ in Mellink, pp17-28; Hughes, p175

⁹² Korfmann, p23; Hughes, p175.

⁹³ Hughes, p175.

⁹⁴ Homer, *The Iliad* 1.60

the dead were buried.⁹⁵ However the 1980s archaeologist in charge, Manfred Korfmann provides another example of recent archaeology showing Homer, not his critics, to be correct as a cremation took place. The archaeological dating in his first report finds that this cemetery dates within the Trojan War's usual estimates.⁹⁶ Even if it was a peaceful settlement or a trading post, it shows a strong link between Trojans and Greeks around the war's era.⁹⁷

This link makes Paris's visit to Mycenae more plausible. It also shows that the Mycenaeans had links and an interest in the Trojan coast and the Dardanelles, the shipping route to the lucrative perhaps potential Black Sea trade. The Trojans may well have considered such a settlement as a threat to their trade.

Other links to the Mycenaeans were found within Troy; their pottery and imitations of it were abundant.⁹⁸ Schliemann's work and 1980s archaeology from Troy shows more compelling evidence for Homer's account. Troy's unusual sloped walls match Homer's description of Troy as "well walled" and having "jutting walls."⁹⁹ Homer's Troy suffered a massive, destructive fire, but several writers who suspect that this was from a sacking cannot present what they consider to be certain evidence as they cannot exclude a possible earthquake or an accident as causes.¹⁰⁰ In the 1950s Carl Blegen, a respected writer and archaeologist working on the site

⁹⁵ Finley, pp153-154.

⁹⁶ Korfmann, p18 p20 p24 p26 p27 p28. Homer, Herodotus and Eratosthenes are quoted.

⁹⁷ Hughes, p175.

⁹⁸ Korfmann, p27; Hughes, p207.

⁹⁹ Hughes, p207 quoting *The Iliad*.

¹⁰⁰ Hughes, pp240-241; Strauss, pp180-181; Bryce, 'The Trojan War: Is there Any Truth Behind the Legend?' pp187-188; Korfmann, p25.



Troy's walls. Note the jutting angle just as Homer described. The slope in the next picture is just enough for optimistic runners to try to reach the top.





in the 1930s, did present strong evidence for an earthquake. He found fissures, toppled towers, and crooked, leaning walls which should have been straight.¹⁰¹ However he later stated that this earthquake was in Troy VI the city before Homer's Troy, which he referred to as Troy VIIa which had been repaired, both before and after Homer's war¹⁰² Cline supports Manfred Korfmann, who found the previously undiscovered lower Troy during his time digging at the site from 1988 to 2005. Korfmann goes further than many scholars, being definite about Troy's destruction as being caused by war. Blegen and Cline separately present evidence of rebuilding, showing that the Trojans rebuilt much of their city before the war

¹⁰¹ Cline, *1177BC: The Year Civilization Collapsed*. p127

¹⁰² Blegen, *Troy and the Trojans*. pp144-145; Strauss, p184.

began, which Cline now dates to 1190-1180 BC. Blegen, Cline, Strauss and Hughes, while giving different dates for the city's sacking, do separately present compelling evidence for war as the cause of Troy's destruction. Strauss lists finds from the fire including bronze arrowheads, unburied human remains and stored sling stones, all indicating war, but are odd in a peaceful town hit by an earthquake.¹⁰³ He also mentions a single arrowhead of a type not found elsewhere outside Greece, which indicates who did the sacking.¹⁰⁴ Cline mentions arrowheads were found embedded in walls and skeletons were found in streets.¹⁰⁵ Arrowheads matching those from Greek mainland Mycenaean sites were found separately by Schliemann, Dörpfield and Blegen.¹⁰⁶ Bronze sickle blades, a Mycenaean knife and lance head were also found.¹⁰⁷ In the 1994 documentary *The Odyssey of Troy* one archaeologist is shown removing dirt from an arrowhead embedded in a Trojan wall and another doing the same for a bronze spearhead found in the street. In 1902 Dörpfield stated that the Trojan citadel "was destroyed by enemy action" and that burning in Troy happened "in a great many places"¹⁰⁸ Similarly Manfred Korfmann concluded that the city was besieged, defended itself, lost the war and suffered "catastrophe with fire."¹⁰⁹ Blegen, clearly stated in his 1963 work *Troy and the Trojans* that Troy VIa was "no doubt burned" and people were killed. Schliemann, Dörpfield, Blegen and Korfmann; four out of four of the main excavators at Troy, after working there for several years, clearly and separately stated that the Troy believed to be existent at the time of Homer's Trojan War was attacked, sacked and burned. This can only be very compelling evidence.

¹⁰³ Strauss, pp180-181.

¹⁰⁴ Strauss, pp181.

¹⁰⁵ Cline, *1177BC: The Year Civilization Collapsed*. p127.

¹⁰⁶ Wood, p228.

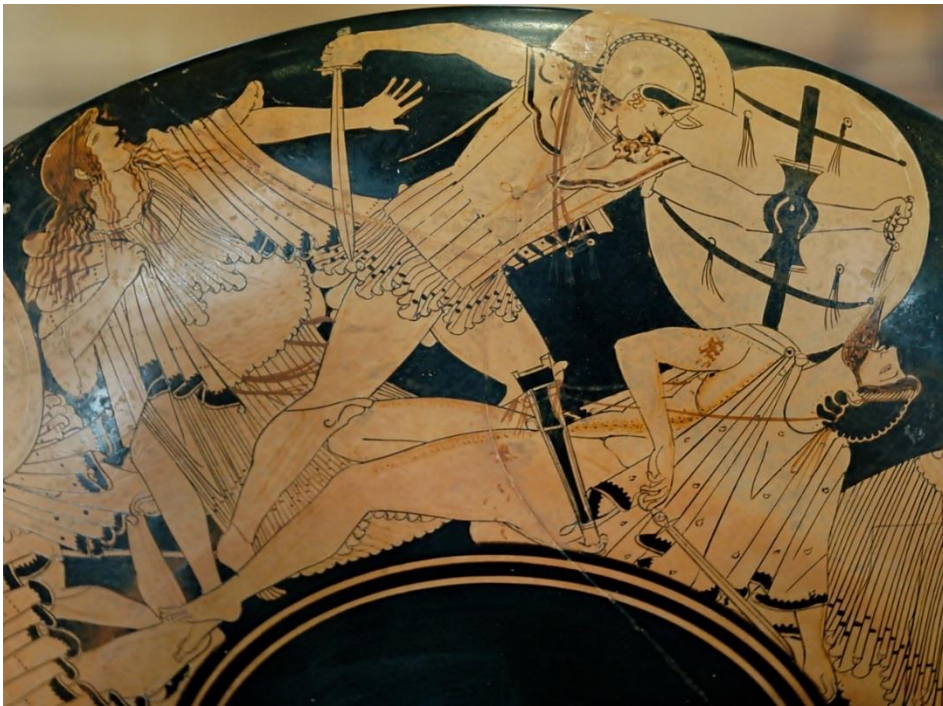
¹⁰⁷ Wood, pp228-229.

¹⁰⁸ Wood, p228.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*,



Menelaus finds Helen in Troy while the Gods watch on. This vase dates from around 440BC and was found in Italy.



A vivid Greek depiction of the fall of Troy made about 490BC.

Other strong evidence about the fall of Troy comes from the Mycenaean palace at Pylos. Hughes states that the words ‘Tros’ and ‘Troia’ (Trojan and Trojan Women) appear in the lists of human commodities in Linear B tablets from Thebes and Pylos.¹¹⁰ Captives were usually enslaved and other women from areas near Troy are listed in the Pylos archives as captives or “women taken as bounty.”¹¹¹ Wood, while less definite on this point than Hughes, also notes that one woman is listed as a servant of a god and that her appellation ‘To-ro-ja’ might mean ‘The Woman of Troy.’¹¹² As Troia is the ancient word for Troy and was applied to some women on the lists, Hughes seems to have won that point. Using these lists as a starting point Michael Wood notes that amongst the listed 700 women and 400 girls and 300 boys are 300 men “who belong to them.”¹¹³ This sounds like a reference to the slaves of those captured. This suggests that the Pylos tablets record another example of the frequent pattern in ancient raids and wars was to kill the warriors and the feeble and to enslave the rest. Such scenes are depicted in *The Iliad* when Achilles raids and then when the Trojan women meet their fate after the capture of Troy. The same word that Homer uses for Achilles captive women ‘lawiaias’ is often used on the Pylos tablets to describe these women.¹¹⁴ Homer’s locales for the Greek’s plunderings are often near the towns and islands listed in the Pylos records.¹¹⁵ Both are in the Eastern Aegean and not far from Troy. In referring to these names Cline is not as certain as to their Trojan identity, how many were merely workers or if they were all taken to Pylos from raids or some from slave auctions?¹¹⁶ The reference to bounty indicates that raids rather than purchases are

¹¹⁰ Hughes, p222.

¹¹¹ Hughes, p38 p354 n22.

¹¹² Wood, p159.

¹¹³ Wood, quoting from the Pylos tablets p159.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Wood quoting from the Pylos tablets pp159-160 and *The Iliad*.

¹¹⁶ Cline, *1177BC: The Year Civilization Collapsed*. p88.

much more likely. He does note that several scholars suggest the enslaved Trojan women as a possibility.¹¹⁷ These lists suggest a reality strongly resembling the old legends and the plays of Euripides concerning what happened to enslaved Trojan women after the fall of Troy.

Evidence Against verification

In *The Archaeology of Greek and Roman Troy* Charles Brian Rose rounds off his first chapter 'Troy in the Bronze Age' with a three page summary concerning the historicity of Homer's Trojan War. After stating that geographic factors locate Troy near Hisarlik, he points out that this excavated city is the only fortified town with a citadel known of in the region.¹¹⁸ He mentions the point about dating Troy's sacking and then brings in other factors suggesting that many of the aspects of Homer's story date from the Iron Age. Homer refers to Delphi and Phrygia, but they were unimportant in the Bronze Age, only gaining great importance in the 8th century BC, about the time Homer is usually credited with writing.¹¹⁹ Rose considers many of the weapons Homer mentions to be from centuries after Troy's war.¹²⁰ However some of the dated styles of these weapons are very open to dispute. Some may well have been old fashioned, but weapons were extremely valuable and unlikely to be thrown away unless broken or useless. He also points out that aspects of the citadel were evident for hundreds of years after Troy's sacking and a writer looking for a setting for an epic could have easily found one at Hislarik.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Rose, p40.

¹¹⁹ Rose, p41.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

Oddly, the two clearest, obviously intended to be factual parts of *The Iliad* are the two things most likely to cause doubts about its veracity. Apparently no modern writer believes in the permanent ten year long siege. The ancient economies simply could not sustain it, no ruler with a grain of sense would leave his kingdom open to invasion, mismanagement, coups or being untaxed for such a length of time – and his troops and officers would not stand such a prolonged war away from home either. For a comparison look at the campaigns of Alexander the Great, Saladin, Richard the Lionheart and the other crusaders. Consider that they still had to deal with mutinies, near mutinies and returning home without a clear victory and this was often despite gaining or hoping for large amounts of plunder. At Troy the Greeks supposedly spent ten years in trenches looking up at invincible walls. Ancient warfare was a summer occupation, followed by returns home in the autumn. No similar siege lasting ten years or anywhere near that long exists in ancient or medieval annals – or in modern accounts either. The Greeks may have spent ten consecutive summer campaigns fighting against Troy, conducting some summer sieges or raiding her and her allies before a final victory. That is possible.

The second piece of evidence concerns the nature of the Greek force assembled to invade the Troad lands and seize Troy. The famous virtual order of battle for the Greeks was Homer's catalogue of 1,184 ships and therefore a force numbering many tens of thousands. As mentioned Thucydides did not believe it and we should not believe the massive numbers either. When Xerxes invaded Greece his grand fleet, according to Herodotus, totalled just over twelve hundred triremes and this was with the wealth, population and seaside ports of the great Persian Empire to draw on.¹²² Even this figure strains credibility when compared to well

¹²² Herodotus, 7 89.

documented modern cases. In 1588 the Spanish empire with its extraordinarily high levels of wealth and its emphasis on being the world's greatest nautical power, fielded only just over a tenth of what the Mycaeneans supposedly did - a hundred and thirty ships were in the Spanish Armada, which tried to invade England, desperately defending itself by mustering a hundred and two ships.¹²³ The largest battle ever fought in Greek waters (and probably in European history) is also instructive. When in 1571 the three mightiest empires in the Mediterranean, a Papal- -Venetian and Spanish alliance and Ottoman Turkey, clashed at the naval battle of Lepanto, the Catholic coalition were able to field a fleet of just over two hundred vessels and at least eighty thousand men.¹²⁴ Even this extraordinary effort was apparently only because the Pope was able to put together his forces, consisting of wealthy Spain, assorted Catholic volunteers and the aligned Venetian empire. The mighty Ottoman fleet was rumoured to be around three hundred vessels with subsequent reinforcements.¹²⁵ These three great Mediterranean powers, existing at a time when wealth, technology and population increase were all much, much greater than it had been nearly three thousand years before, could with tremendous straining effort, combine to total only less than half of 1,184, the number of ships supposedly in Mycaenae's empire, combining with Greek allies. No 'probable' or 'possible' applies here to Homer's totals. Whatever truth's they reveal about existent places, their importance and alignments, Homer's ship and troop numbers can only be impossible. This is also evident when some accurate figures are available from the Linear B tablets at Pylos. While the records are incomplete, these mention thirty conscripts from one town on one tablet and over four hundred rowers on another, while Homer claims ninety ships from Pylos in

¹²³ Oliver Warner, *Great Sea Battles*. London; Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1963. p25 p28.

¹²⁴ Warner, pp16-17.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

the catalogue of ships.¹²⁶ If true, this means four or five men crewed each ship from Pylos! Given that the number of rowers needed for even small vessels was almost certainly not less than twenty, this figure was not possible. Similarly the last ruler of Pylos summoned ten detachments to watch the shore for attackers, most detachments were small and the largest consisted of 110 men.¹²⁷ Even allowing for palace guards remaining, including the rowers and generously allowing for around a hundred men a detachment, it must be extremely unlikely that the force at Pylos, one of Agammemnon's twelve strongest allies, totalled even eighteen hundred men. Given the previously mentioned examples and Heracles force of seven ships to conquer Troy within Priam's lifetime, even a force of a hundred ships and ten thousand troops strains credibility. So why did Homer give such obvious exaggerations?

Apparently similar exaggerations are at work in assorted grandiose descriptions of Troy compared to what archaeologists found, at least until recently. The small citadel and cramped poor walled city of Troy VI did not match Homer's words concerning size, wealth and a large population: even Dörpfeld noted this.¹²⁸ However he did make a start on the walls and fortifications outside the citadel which Korfmann would continue nearly a hundred years later.¹²⁹ Korfmann's excavations outside Troy's walls change the picture, adding size, prosperity and much larger numbers. In this area he found evidence of working in purple dye, one of the ancient world's most lucrative trades as well as metal working, threshing floors and several pithoi, all evidence for a prosperous city.¹³⁰ As only 2% to 3% of

¹²⁶ Taylour and Chadwick, pp279-280, Homer, Book 2 Line 695.

¹²⁷ Taylour and Chadwick, p280

¹²⁸ Professor Ian Morris and also Leonard Nimoy, *The Odyssey of Troy*; Finley, p31.

¹²⁹ Frank, *The Odyssey of Troy*.

¹³⁰ Rose, p23.

this lower city had been excavated by the time of Kaufmann's death in 2005 the picture is very far from complete.¹³¹ While incompletely excavated, one particular aspect described by Homer, the ditch surrounding Troy, was found in 1993, four hundred metres out from the citadel.¹³² This must have been a first line of defence, a protection for the lower city. To date a forty metre long segment has been excavated. This was no crude slit in the earth, but a sophisticated, systematic fortified rock cut base, three metres wide.¹³³ Only a small proportion of this width was probably taken by the timber palisade: the rest would have been a walkway for troop movements.¹³⁴ The base had holes for double timber posts and supporting buttresses to reinforce the timber palisades.¹³⁵ Begun several hundred years before Priam, the walkway was added hundreds of years later, but long before Agamemnon's siege. However this fortification was Trojan, not made by besieging Greeks. This raises the possibility that either Homer saw it or he relied on eyewitness visitors who misunderstood its purpose. This first encircling citadel wall, five metres thick and then more walls inside the citadel, eight metres high in parts would explain why Troy had a reputation for invincibility and was not easily conquered. While the finds in the lower city bring historic Troy closer to the grandiose legend and when finished, might fulfil it, at present the grand descriptions are closer to a slightly earlier Troy, the strata which Blegen described as being destroyed by an earthquake. Were descriptions or memories of this city grafted onto the later siege? Blegen dated the earthquake to around 1300BC and the sacking to around 1240BC.¹³⁶ In 2008 Strauss estimated Troy's size as

¹³¹ Rose, p.6 p23

¹³² Rose, p.5.

¹³³ Rose, p22 Figure 1.11 p16 fig. I.7 A and B.

¹³⁴ Rose, p.23. Figure 1.12

¹³⁵ Rose, p5 p16 a diagram and a photo from the Troy Excavation Project are reproduced. See source note 117.

¹³⁶ Rose, p40.

seventy–five acres and its population as around five to seven thousand.¹³⁷ While substantial for a Bronze Age city, these figures are hardly supportive evidence for the grand legend. When the remaining 97% of lower Troy is excavated the legend will almost certainly look more plausible.

In *In Search of the Trojan War* Michael Wood does raise a puzzle about Troy. The dating of a series of extremely destructive, severe attacks on Greek mainland cities is frequently given as around 1200 BC. Many such as Pylos, were totally destroyed and while Mycenae survived or was reoccupied, it only continued for a few decades more as a waning power.¹³⁸ Blegen also worked extensively at Pylos and he came up with the date of 1200 BC for Pylos's destruction. Most sources now date Troy VIIa's destruction to c 1190-1180 BC - so what happens to Blegen's dating of Troy's fall to c1240 BC? This date fitted with the Greek accounts that puts the fall of Mycenaean and Bronze Age Greek civilization three generations after the fall off Troy. Taylour and Chadwick's estimate, Graves's dating and the Parian Marble date are also now much closer to what science has revealed. However the essential conflict between dates that Wood noted remains. If Greek city states were invaded and frequently destroyed before Troy's fall, how can the story of a Greek-Trojan war be true?

Pylos provides the most detailed, vivid and clear example for the dating and collapse of mainland Greece's' Bronze Age civilizations. While this one important example may not necessarily apply to others or preclude other factors in other areas, it is the best example we have. As much the initial work and then subsequent excavations was done by Blegen there can be no question that the events or the

¹³⁷ Strauss, p8

¹³⁸ Taylour and Chadwick, pp163-166.

dates given are biased to disprove his work in Troy. If matching changes in pottery styles between Troy and Pylos do show changing migration patterns and are evidence for massive destruction of sites, they reveal that Pylos was destroyed before Troy was. This alone puts important elements of the tale of Troy under question. The palace at Pylos was destroyed by fire and the existence of weapons and human bone outside the palace are very strong evidence for attack.¹³⁹ Even stronger evidence comes from the palace's tablets, especially the last messages from the palace about the placing of coast watchers and summoning detachments; these clearly indicate that the palace was expecting an imminent attack – apparently around 1200 BC.¹⁴⁰

In their revised 1983 version of *The Mycenaeans* Lord William Taylour and John Chadwick accept this earlier date of 1200 BC given by Blegen for Pylos's destruction.¹⁴¹ Like Blegen, Taylour had also worked there extensively for many years and John Chadwick was a distinguished scholar on Mycenaean and Minoan history; their opinions cannot be lightly discounted. Taylour and Chadwick do note the changing patterns in pottery styles that Wood refers to and draw some of his inferences about how this indicates conflict, destruction and migration patterns around the time of the Trojan War.¹⁴² However they use this evidence to push back the likely dating of the war to around 1220/1210 BC.¹⁴³ Wood states that pottery styles in Pylos and Troy and carbon dating all indicate that the destruction of Pylos happened before the siege of Troy ended.¹⁴⁴ So how does this fit in with the tale of

¹³⁹ Taylour and Chadwick, p281.

¹⁴⁰ Taylour and Chadwick, pp281-282.

¹⁴¹ Taylour and Chadwick, p163. Blegen and other writers give this date in *A guide to the Palace of Nestor*. p39.

¹⁴² Taylour and Chadwick, pp161-163

¹⁴³ Taylour and Chadwick, pp161-162.

¹⁴⁴ Wood, p214.

Troy, where Nestor returns to Pylos to live out his days in peace? We have a three way choice.

First Jack L. Davis in his essay 'Pylos' states that the palace there was destroyed in about 1180BC.¹⁴⁵ This allows for the old stories to be right and evidence for a late twelfth century BC date for Troy's destruction to be possible, but Davis gives no provenance for the 1180 BC date.

Second, the old stories of the Trojan War are very wrong about Nestor and Pylos.

Third those giving a date for Troy's fall after 1200 BC are miscalculating, the science is out, sort of. Where does the neat date of 1200 BC come from? If from bones or ash taken from the palace fire (two of the best sources from carbon dating) the reliability of the tale of Troy is indeed in trouble.

However a rarely mentioned problem exists with using pottery and other created objects for dating. When we are given a carbon 14 date from objects, are we given not a precise single date, but a range, usually of several decades. If everyone is quoting 1200 BC does that mean the carbon dating range was between 1230 BC and 1170BC? While that makes *around* 1200 BC the most likely answer the method is comparatively imprecise and allows for the old stories to be true. A second problem is what is the dating giving us? Are we getting the date of creation or destruction? Or is this the date of discarding? For how long are objects kept? We live in the throw-away society, but jars, vases, knives and swords needed labor intensive production, often with scarce resources and taking much time. For both

¹⁴⁵ Jack L. Davis, 'Pylos' in Cline, pp680-681 p687.

of these reasons they were therefore expensive, very unlikely to be immediately replaced and therefore likely to be treated carefully and so would be likely to be kept for generations. In ancient times did styles change as rapidly or as capriciously or as frequently or as uniformly as they now do in our global village? If a style emerged in Thebes, Troy or Mycenae, how long would pass before it took over in Pylos? One year? Ten? Twenty? The Bronze Age way of imitated foreign styles also make identifying the place of origin and therefore human migration difficult. Dating events precisely by carbon dating or changes in pottery styles cannot be the exact science many claim for them. Unfortunately most of the secondary sources give only a precise date, not the carbon dating range.

Even so, other tentative evidence does support the pottery dating method and Wood's puzzling question. Davis states that the Pylos palace records on tablets were made for the current year.¹⁴⁶ Chadwick and Taylour also state this practice applied to the Mycenaean palaces and decry what was therefore obviously the total lack of unnecessary year dates on the tablets.¹⁴⁷ These facts reveals much, for to be preserved in the last destructive fire means that only the last tablets dealing with the last year were preserved - and amongst these were the lists of the captured slave women from the eastern Aegean dating from the late thirteenth century BC.¹⁴⁸ Included is one very probably listed as the woman of Troy.¹⁴⁹ Even if this listing was compiled just after the making of the previous year's list, this suggests that Pylos was destroyed just months or even as little as weeks after Troy was destroyed. The woman of Troy chosen for the goddess, and the others who are

¹⁴⁶ Davis, p682.

¹⁴⁷ Taylour and Chadwick, pp303-304.

¹⁴⁸ Rose, p41.

¹⁴⁹ Wood, p159.

possibly Trojan women or from nearby areas may possibly have been bought back from raids before Troy's fall, or even long after the war. They may have been refugees from Troy's destruction, finding a new home in what years later were raided cities. Homer mentions Achilles and others raiding on the Anatolian coast and around the Aegean years before Troy fell. His wording for captives matches that word on the Pylos tablets, as does his naming of several of the places which were raided for these women.¹⁵⁰ Another point won from archaeology for Homer's veracity. This could explain why so many of the slave women listed in the Pylos tablets are from these areas and others are 'Tros,' that is Trojan women. If it explains that, it raises the question of why on dating the destruction of Pylos and Troy, the legends give us a picture in opposition to archaeological reality. If Davis's dating is correct aged Nestor *may* have had a few years of peace after returning from the Trojan War and died peacefully. He may have been murdered like Priam was, stabbed to death by enemy raiders in a burning palace, either almost immediately after his return from Troy or because he never went there. Nobody knows and now even his existence has become uncertain. Far too much hangs on the words "'Tros' and 'Troia' (Trojan Women and Trojan) to describe slaves, but the word for Troy is Troia and evidence remains evidence: the destruction at Pylos remains a conundrum. It and the destruction of other Bronze Age Greek cities and Troy so close together in time may indicate that there was no Greek-Trojan War as the stories describe it, but both Trojans and Greeks were overwhelmed by a common enemy, peasant rebellions, the Sea peoples or the Dorian invasion from the north. This latter explanation, given by Herodotus and Thucydides, and therefore accepted for hundreds of years, has gone out of fashion

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

on modern archaeology. The Dorians seemingly came much later, but the problem of date ranges with carbon dating might also be a problem here.

Another puzzling question concerning the veracity of the Tale of Troy concerns the series of earthquakes which hit mainland Greece and the eastern Mediterranean between about 1225BC and 1175BC. The archaeological evidence that Mycenae and Tiryns suffered massive damage and fatalities that contributed to their decline is irrefutable.¹⁵¹ Cline goes on to list many other major cities as probable casualties of earthquakes in this era, including Troy. These earthquakes would have weakened royal control and left the areas open to the likelihood of looters, freebooters and brigandage, either from their local outlaws, rebellious peasants or foreign invaders. This period would mark the end of the Bronze Age. Earthquakes may have combined with climate change, drought, possible peasant rebellions and brigandage to end Mycenaean and Trojan civilizations with a period of serious decline, perhaps chaos.¹⁵² So how in this period when civilizations are being destroyed in an almost apocalyptic vision, can the kingdoms being destroyed launch a massive, resource devouring invasion against Troy? How can they stay outside the city, engrossed in a prolonged siege, while at the least their kingdoms face massive problems from earthquake devastation and probable raiding or invasion threats?

The Trojan War may make sense if rich Troy was hardly touched by these Greek and Mycenaean disasters and these battered kingdoms hoped that plundering the Troad would ease their problems. Alternatively we do not now have a reliable

¹⁵¹ Cline, *1177BC: The Year Civilization Collapsed* p127.

¹⁵² Cline, *1177BC: The Year Civilization Collapsed* pp141-149.

chronology for the disasters and problems hitting the Greeks or at what point their civilizations became powerless remnants. The war with Troy could have happened generations before the disasters overcame them, as Greek traditions state. There may have been a gradual piling up of disasters or a sudden massive destruction as Pylos demonstrates. Different kingdoms seem to have had different fates. While Pylos was so devastated it was abandoned, occupation continued on at Tiryns and Mycenae. Athens, then a minor power, alone seemed unchanged.

Another frequent objection to the Trojan War being history is the cause: Helen's elopement or abduction. It does sound far-fetched – until Thucydides' account on what set off the Peloponnesian War is recalled. Modern history provides an even more seemingly far-fetched example. Historians millennia off will dismiss it as impossible: the effects of the murder in Sarajevo of an Austrian archduke and his wife by a student in 1914 as the immediate cause of a global war. Most of the world was plunged into war and around ten million or more died on battlefields. The igniting of underlying tensions of course should be considered, but because of one student in Sarajevo hundreds of millions of people were affected in the remotest corners of the world in the oddest of ways. Conscripts were rounded up in Siberia. Scottish castles became wartime hospitals. Neutral Scandinavian immigrants destined for neutral America drowned when U-boats sunk their ships. New Zealand, which is about as far away from Sarajevo as is possible on the inhabited parts of the planet, had around ten percent of its population in uniform. In America the enlistments reached five million. Natives in Papua attacked Australians. Afrikaners on the veld fought each other. Mexico intrigued with Germany to seize back American states. The Chinese port of Tsingtao was besieged by Japanese troops. German bakeries overseas were looted. German shepherd dogs were renamed Alsatians. French, Australians and New Zealanders,

Indians, English and Irish together fought Turks almost within sight of Troy. Compared to these realities Helen's recapture as a cause for a war and the destruction of one city as a result sounds minor and very creditable.

Conclusion

Details in Homer's account being frequently supported by archaeology are indicative of a real Trojan War, but are not necessarily compelling in themselves. Some finds matching either his descriptions or those in the Tale of Troy could be coincidental, based in hearsay or a poet's research, but could this apply to so many? When they are assembled they are not easily refuted as they present a match on point after point. Despite problems with carbon dating and chronology, a compelling case for a real Trojan War exists.

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