

THE TROJAN WAR: HISTORY OR BRICOLAGE?¹

SUSAN SHERRATT

The Trojan War motif, which forms the essential background to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and also to many other Greek epics (such as those which form part of the so-called Epic Cycle, numerous literary epics, as well as Attic tragedy and much historical literature), has loomed largely and more or less continuously for something like two and a half thousand years. For the Greeks of antiquity it formed one of the focal landmarks of their remote history, as it did later for the Romans and various other groups living in ancient Italy, who traced their origins from one or other hero or one or other group of people who were involved in the Trojan War. It was equally important throughout the Middle Ages as a focus of the foundation myths of numerous European royal lines or kingdoms. In the 12th century Geoffrey of Monmouth traced the origin of the Plantagenet kings back through King Arthur and the ancient Britons to Brutus, the grandson of Vergil's Aeneas, the most illustrious Trojan hero of Mediaeval western Europe. The Goths and Franks also claimed descent from Trojan War heroes, as did the Hapsburg emperors. Later still, and in a rather different way, Schliemann's widely acclaimed success in proving the historicity of the Trojan War by means of the new science of archaeology, along with his highly romanticized autobiography, created in him a kind of foundation myth as well as a folk-hero for the new unified Germany of the 1870s – a myth which still has a considerable amount of potency in the re-unified Germany of the present day.

Thus the Trojan War still has a great deal of popular resonance in a number of different ways. To illustrate this I reproduce below an extract from a letter written about 15 years ago to Michael Vickers, by Clive Foss, the historian and archaeologist.² Its gist is probably familiar to many, and it is certainly something of an urban myth among those who have taken part in the late Manfred Korfmann's excavations at Troy or who have visited them.

You were interested in the modern version of the Trojan War. As told by the wife of my taxi-driver in Izmir, it has a certain coherence. She is a woman of about 50, evidently of extremely modest origins and fairly limited education. Her husband has done well, and they now live in a nice flat in a central part of the town, quite good district, travel to Istanbul from time to time, and go on trips to other parts of Western Turkey. She has sent her sons to good schools and has hopes they might go to the university. You get the picture.

¹ This paper was presented to the Mycenaean Seminar on 18 January 2006. It is offered here more or less in its original form, with only a minimum of references added.

² I am grateful to Clive Foss for giving me permission to quote from his letter.

She recently took a trip with friends (or a group) which led her to Troy, where she marvelled at the wooden horse. That, it seems, had been left behind by the Greeks when they were besieging the city. After a long time fighting without success they seemed to give up their attack, and left the horse behind as a sort of memorial. The foolish Turks dragged the thing into the city with a tractor (or truck), then, when they were asleep – perhaps even drunk after celebrating their apparent victory (she couldn't understand how 'we Turks' could be so foolish, but it wasn't uncommon to be taken in by Greeks), during the night the Greeks emerged from the horse with their rockets and machine guns, overwhelmed the Turks and took the city. She knew that all this happened in the past, but didn't try to put a date to it; maybe she thought it was the war of independence. She seemed too, to believe that the actual horse was the original, still left from those days. There you have it. I listened in appreciative amazement, congratulated her on the accurate narrative. Of course, we don't know whether this is her own interpretation, or actually what the guides told them ...

Here we have proof that The Trojan War is still important, this time to a Turkish lady living in Izmir, who is quite sure that it is part of her national history, despite the fact that there were no Turks (at least in the sense of Turkish-speakers) anywhere near either Troy or Izmir until about 600 years ago, long after many of those living in Western Europe had become so familiar with the story that they had identified the ancestral founders of the kingdoms in which they lived with Trojan War heroes or their sons. This lady, too, knows that it happened a long time ago, and that it is real history. What could be more real than tractors, trucks, hand-held rocket-launchers and machine guns? And what could be more real than the victimization of Turks by 'treacherous Greeks' for at least the last 180 years? The evidence that it is real history is, of course, provided by the existence of Troy, its ruined state and the presence of the wooden horse. I daresay if we wanted further archaeological proof that her story was true, we could dig up the relics of the Gallipoli landings in 1915 and demonstrate that the area around Troy was attacked and besieged by an army of foreign allies at roughly the sort of time in which the story appears to be set. We might have trouble with the rockets, but, given that the story must have been transmitted orally through several generations, that could be explained as an understandable 'anachronism'.

It is easy for us to be amused by the story of the Trojan War as recounted by the wife of the Izmir taxi driver, and to think that we know better. As we are assured by countless television programmes and school text books, the real setting of the Trojan War and the Fall of Troy is over three millennia earlier than the era of trucks and machine guns, and there is archaeological evidence to suggest that it may have been a real war in which Greeks (then called Achaeans) were involved, several centuries before the time of Homer. But do we know this? What actually do we know?

1) We know that there was a real place known to the Greeks of the early first millennium as Ilios (or Ilion), and probably to the Hittites in the late second millennium as Wilusa. There is no reason why these should not refer to the same place: that is, the site called Hissarlik in modern times, and excavated in turn by Schliemann, Dörpfeld, Blegen and Korfmann. It was the site of a city or perhaps small principality which flourished for around two thousand years, from 3000 BC to around the end of the second millennium. After that, it remained a known location, possibly acting mainly as a religious centre, until it became a substantial

city again in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, with a thriving tourist industry first made fashionable by Alexander the Great for his own ideological purposes.

2) Many of the physical aspects of Troy as described or mentioned in Homer's *Iliad* accord well with what we know of Troy archaeologically, particularly Troy VI and VII.

3) Troy (or rather the parts of it that have been excavated) seems to have been destroyed or damaged several times during the third, second and first millennia. In this respect it resembles most other excavated cities with a long-term history of occupation. Sometimes destructions are attributed to earthquake, sometimes to fire. That hostile action was quite often involved seems more than likely.

What else do we know about Troy from archaeology? We know that people were living at Troy until around 1000 BC, that thereafter there was probably a diminution in activity until the eighth century, when the site may have functioned mainly as the location of a shrine. The ruins of Troy VI-VII, which were almost completely obliterated in Hellenistic times, were still very visible (and still very impressive) in the eighth century.

Troy lay on the western edge of Anatolia, which throughout most of its history has been as much, or more, a part of an Aegean world as of the world of the Anatolian hinterland. Its particular position, on a deep natural inlet at the junction of the Dardanelles and the Aegean, and close to the meeting point of Asia and Europe, meant that, from the time of its foundation around 3000 BC until the last centuries of the second millennium (when the centre of gravity of Mediterranean trade routes shifted to a more southerly east-west pattern), it acted as a crucial node along a number of converging long-distance maritime and overland routes. This is already reflected, for instance, in the middle of the third millennium by the conjunction of Baltic amber and Central Asian lapis lazuli in the Troy II treasures. The arrival of the sail in the north-east Aegean, probably in the later part of the third millennium, intensified Troy's integral role in the new patterns of Aegean maritime circulation, then developing; and, by the mid- and later second millennium, it formed something of a nodal point in the sea routes which linked the north-east Aegean and the western Black Sea area (probably overland via Thrace rather than via the Marmara) with the Greek islands and mainland and, via the western Anatolian coast, with the southern Aegean and the East Mediterranean. This can be traced by such things as pottery from various Aegean regions (and later its import substitutions) as well as Cypriot pottery at Troy, western Black Sea material in Greece and on the Uluburun wreck, and Trojan ceramic material in the East Mediterranean. Troy was thus well known to the mariners of the eastern half of the Mediterranean, not just as a local centre but as an entrepôt of more than regional significance. Its reputation is likely to have spread quite widely, and its character to have been cosmopolitan by Aegean standards. Its strategic position at the meeting of a number of long-distance land and sea routes, and as a place through which a variety of desirable materials and goods passed, must have been widely recognized, often with some envy.

If that is what we know about Troy, what do we know about the Homeric epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*? We know, or assume, for a number of fairly persuasive reasons (which lie beyond the scope of this article) that they 'emerged' in some sense, quite possibly in something more or less similar to the form in which we recognize them, around 700 BC, give or take a few decades on either side. We also deduce (and I certainly

believe) that behind the specifically Homeric epics there lies a long ‘prehistory’ of hexameter heroic songs and cycles of songs which feed directly into Homeric epic, and which certainly goes back as far as the mid-second millennium, and probably a great deal further. We can deduce this both on linguistic grounds and on grounds of references to earlier material culture, which are embedded (often unobtrusively and/or anomalously) at various structural levels in the Homeric epics: in elements like certain noun-epithet combinations, certain formulaic lines or line-endings, in certain types of particularly formulaic scenes, or in certain story-patterns. The unobtrusive and anomalous or contradictory character of many of the elements of material culture, which archaeology suggests must be older (sometimes a great deal older) than the late eighth century, and the way these seem to cluster in certain periods more than others, also tells us, however, that we are not dealing with a coherent long-lived tradition which was ready-formed in an early period and transmitted in a steady line, either in a primarily conservative way or in a way which meant that its references to material culture were constantly updated in a regular or evolutionary manner. If we were, then we would expect material culture references to follow a relatively smooth chronological curve, running in one direction or the other. With an essentially conservative tradition we might expect datable material cultural references to cluster mainly at the earlier end (the time of original composition), with signs only of gradual alteration and updating as time went on. If, on the other hand, we were dealing with a constantly changing tradition (that is, one which was constantly being updated), then we might expect the opposite sort of distribution, with most of the material culture input weighted at the later end of the chronological spectrum, the time of formation of the epics as we know them, with just a few earlier references, which happened for one reason or another to remain. In both cases (that is, with either a continuously fading or a continuously updated tradition), we would expect a fairly regular fall-off curve going from one end of the potential chronological spectrum to the other. However, what we have instead is what looks like a bimodal distribution or a distribution which is weighted in two parts of the spectrum, neither of them right at the end. The majority of datable material cultural references fall into the long and rather amorphous ‘post-palatial’ period of the 12th to earlier eighth centuries, with only a few scattered references to the material culture of the later eighth century; and, in addition to this, there is a small but irreducible body of material references which best fit the early Mycenaean and/or proto-palatial period of around the 17th to early 14th centuries BC.³ This suggests that we may be dealing with distinct modes of creation and transmission of heroic song, which may have tended to dominate alternately over a very long period: periods of active generation and reinterpretation based on what one might call contemporary ‘statement’, grounded in the ideals and lifestyles (including the material culture) of the present, and particularly aimed at the contemporary definition and image projection and enhancement of individuals and groups with social or political aspirations; and on the other hand periods in which the ‘possession’ of a commonly agreed, inherited past is more important to social communities as a whole. These alternating patterns suggest to me that we cannot talk about the Homeric epics *either* as representing the end of a straightforward line of

³ E. S. Sherratt, “‘Reading the texts’: archaeology and the Homeric question”, *Antiquity* 64 (1990) 807-24.

transmission which started in the Bronze Age and gradually changed as time went on, leaving a historical 'core' intact, *or* as representing something that has no bardic tradition behind it, but was effectively thrown together out of a few random folk tales around the end of the eighth century.

In any case, given that the Homeric epics came quickly to be regarded by the historical Greeks as the basis of their own earliest 'history', it is inconceivable that the Trojan War motif, which forms the essential background of both epics, could have been invented out of nothing in the eighth century. It is a crucial feature in the success of such 'histories' that they must contain what their audiences intuitively 'know' to be true. And this only works if it has some accumulated basis in popular 'memory'. Like Demodokos, the Phaeacian bard (whose name probably *means* 'popular consensus'), Homer has to sing his tale *kata kosmon* ('correctly' – or according to what everyone agrees to be the 'truth'). This is not to say, however, that we should take Homer's Trojan War at face value as reflecting some handed-down 'memory' of a specific war which actually took place several hundred years earlier. Nor should we believe, as did Schliemann and Blegen, or more recently Latacz⁴ and Niemeier,⁵ that either direct or circumstantial evidence for such a specific historical war can be found in the ground at Troy or elsewhere. To do so would quite certainly be to adopt a uniquely simplistic attitude toward the potential of the archaeological record and its interpretation, as well as toward the nature and role of Homeric epic. Though the Homeric epics certainly have a deep prehistory which contributes to their formation, they are first and foremost products of their own time. If we wish to understand the nature of the historicity of the Trojan War motif in Homer we must begin by approaching it contextually: firstly by examining the context and role of the motif within the Homeric epics, and secondly by considering the context of the epics themselves in the wider archaeological picture of the period in which they emerged.

The Trojan War plays an important structural part in both epics: it is the essential backcloth against which both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are set. The *Iliad* takes place at Troy, in the tenth year of the war; the *Odyssey* ten years after the fall of Troy, when Odysseus finally arrives home in Ithaca. But there is more to it than that, since, if we take the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* together, and compare each of their base-locations with a map of historical Greece, we see something even more suggestive. The *Iliad* is set at Troy, on the eastern edge of the historical Greek 'homeland', while the *Odyssey* has its home-base on Ithaca, at its far western edge. Together, they define the eastern and western boundaries of a discrete Greek homeland. This structural symmetry is particularly suggestive because, try as one might, no one has yet found a Mycenaean palace on Ithaca (or on Kephallenia, for that matter).⁶ What is more, there are several reasons for thinking that Odysseus, as a character, started his heroic life somewhere else far from Ithaca and probably in a

⁴ J. Latacz, *Troia und Homer. Der Weg zur Lösung eines alten Rätsels* (Munich and Berlin 2001).

⁵ W.-D. Niemeier, 'Mycenaeans and Hittites in war in western Asia Minor', in R. Laffineur (ed.), *Polemos: le contexte guerrier en Egée à l'Age du Bronze*. Aegaeum 19 (Liège and Austin 1999) 141-55.

⁶ See most recently R. Bittlestone, *Odysseus unbound. The search for Homer's Ithaca* (Cambridge 2005), and for various earlier attempts *ibid.* 550-62.

language other than Greek – perhaps, as Paul Faure and others have argued, on Crete.⁷ Crete certainly figures largely in his ‘alterae personae’, presented in the successive lying tales he tells on Ithaca. At any rate, it seems quite probable that he was deliberately transplanted to Ithaca to fulfil this structural symmetry.

There are several other striking aspects of the Homeric epics which also suggest that, as a whole and together, they are artificial creations, the products of some very self-conscious process and aimed at some deliberate purpose. One of these is the series of dualities or sometimes even triplicities: the rather curious and highly artificial combination of Ionic and Aeolic dialectal forms; the three names, Achaei, Danaoi and sometimes also Argeioi, used interchangeably to mean ‘all the Greeks’; two names for Troy (Ilios or Ilion and Troia) used interchangeably (and we could perhaps add Pergamos as well); two names (Skamandros and Xanthos) for the chief river of the Trojan plain; two names for Paris/Alexandros, Astyanax/Skamandrios, Epikaste/Iokaste, Phylakos/Iphikles; two homes for Pandaros (Zeleeia below Mount Ida, and Lycia), and so on. And another sort of duality: the same name for more than one person, place or animal (116 instances of this in the *Iliad* and 16 in the *Odyssey*). Taken together with the curious artificial blend of dialects, this looks like the deliberate and self-conscious merging, or transparent reconciling, of more than one regional tradition or ‘corpus’ or ‘cycle’ of stories, locations and characters.

There is also the striking appearance of regional comprehensiveness in terms of early historical Greece, especially in the Catalogues in *Iliad* 2. The Greek catalogue covers in order first of all south-central Greece, then the Peloponnese, the Ionian islands and Aetolia, and then the south and east Aegean in the form of Crete and the Dodecanese. It then moves to north-central Greece up as far as northern Thessaly. The Trojan catalogue broadly completes the circle, starting with the Troad and its immediately surrounding region (on both sides of the Hellespont), then Thrace and Macedonia, and a diversion into the Pontic region followed by Mysia and Phrygia. Finally, it travels down the coast of Asia Minor as far as Lycia.

The one missing area is the Cyclades (with Delos in the centre, at the hub of the ‘Greek’ sea), which forms a large and very suggestive hole in the centre of this circle, and is apparently not claimed by anyone. This I think has some attractive implications for where the process of formation in performance of our Homeric epics may have taken place in the later eighth century: at the supra-regional maritime sanctuary on Delos.⁸ An international maritime centre like this might also make sense in terms of the mixture of dialectal forms in the epics.

The final structural aspect of the epics which I think is probably important here is the emphasis on language. What we might call barbarophonism (the speaking of barbarian languages: *i.e.* languages which are distinguished from Greek by being characterized by incomprehensible sounds) admittedly appears only once in the *Iliad*,⁹ but a very similar concept is more common. This is the concept of allothroism (*allothroos*, *i.e.* ‘making other confused noises’, just like the idea behind *barbarophonos*, not speaking Greek). Egyptians and Phoenicians are *allothrooi* in the *Odyssey*. The word is also applied to

⁷ P. Faure, *Ulysse le Crétois (XIII^e s. av. J-C)* (Paris 1980).

⁸ O. Taplin, *Homeric soundings. The shaping of the Iliad* (Oxford 1992) 39-41.

⁹ *Iliad* 2.867 in relation to the Carians of Miletus.

foreigners in general with the clear indication that these are non-Greek speakers and therefore different. In the *Iliad* we have a particularly revealing contrast between the Greek army who quite clearly all speak one language, and the Trojan allies who, we are explicitly told, are disadvantaged by the fact that they all speak different languages or make different 'noises'. The only place where linguistic diversity is an issue in the Achaeon/Danaan/Argive world of Homer is Crete, whose position seems in other ways rather ambivalent. Only seven out of the 100 Cretan cities actually take part in the war; Crete is frequented by Phoenicians; and the ethos and activities of two of Odysseus's Cretan characters in his lying tales, who emerge as lawless individualists and adventurers, form a clear contrast to the normal epic heroic values. What is more, these Cretan characters consort with Phoenicians and share in their dubious activities.

It seems to me that if all these aspects are taken together, the conclusion is that the Homeric epics have a quite consciously and deliberately integrative function which seems to involve some of the most prominent features of early Greek collective self-identity: language, by which means Greeks distinguished themselves from non-Greeks (and distinguished themselves from one another); the idea of a collective Greek homeland (the single Hellas already present in Hesiod) with its centre in the middle of the Aegean Sea, and which we can associate in Homer with the curious phrase 'Hellas and midmost Argos' (*Ellada kai meson Argos*) which recurs four times in the *Odyssey* and clearly means 'all of Greece' (and which incidentally is mirrored, in the *Odyssey*, by the invention of a single Phoenician homeland); and the idea of a past in which all Greeks combined together in a single, heroic and successful enterprise, under the leadership not of an overlord or emperor, but of a *primus inter pares*, to rescue the honour of one of their heroes and retrieve the sexual integrity of one of their womenfolk. Troy, as the central background to both epics, the setting of one of them, and as one half of the structural symmetry which demarcates the eastern and western edges of a discrete Greek homeland, plays a very important part in this function.

The idea that the Homeric epics have much to do with early panhellenic ethnogenesis finds a considerable amount of support if we look at other significant features of the later eighth century BC. Briefly – and without going into detail – they are:

1) The idea of a growing sense of local and regional identity associated with the rise of early city states in the later eighth century and centred particularly on community sanctuaries. We also get a growing sense of territorial definition, particularly at the level of inter-city boundaries, which is marked by the growth of trained citizen armies (hoplites, then cavalry and eventually trained navies) whose job it is to defend political territories.

We can already probably glimpse the rise of such citizen armies in the individualized shield blazons which begin to appear shortly before the end of the century, at least in depictions on pots at Athens. It is only once fighters begin to equip themselves uniformly and act as a uniform body that such distinguishing marks become necessary, in order to tell one from another. Earlier in the century, the wide variation in equipment, *e.g.* in shield shapes, which went with rather more individualistic tactics, made telling individuals apart rather less difficult.

2) Over and above the city and regional sanctuaries, we have the growth of what are often called supra-regional sanctuaries at places like Delos, Olympia, Delphi, Isthmia, Samos,

Eretria and so on.¹⁰ These often lie on long-distance maritime or maritime and land routes, and, as Imma Kilian-Dirlmeier has shown,¹¹ attract people and offerings from astoundingly diverse and far-flung areas of the Mediterranean. Within Greece itself, and probably because of this, they already seem to form a focus for a wider identity above and beyond the purely local or regional. The institution of inter-regional games, above all the Olympiad – participation in which becomes a touchstone of ‘Greekness’ – was traditionally set in this period.

3) We also have signs of an interest in identifying and relating to an evidently distant past. First of all, in the phenomenon of what is often called tomb cult: in particular, some sort of activity which involves poking around in Mycenaean chamber tombs. Whoever was doing this had no way of knowing how old these tombs were, and, as Anthony Snodgrass emphasized long ago,¹² there is no way they could have been connecting them with Homeric heroes. However, Nicolas Coldstream once pointed out that this kind of activity seemed commonest in those areas in which single flat graves were the norm in the eighth century,¹³ and I suspect the idea may have been that these chamber tombs were obviously very old because they were just about as different from contemporary tombs as they could possibly be. What seems most likely is that they were being associated with some distant ‘past’, perhaps the tombs of distant ancestors who first occupied ‘their’ territory.

Another related phenomenon in the later eighth century is the possible emergence of hero shrines which eventually come to be associated with Homeric heroes. This can be seen in the form of traces of some sort of activity at places such as the Agamemnoneion at Mycenae, the shrine of Menelaos and Helen near Sparta, the cave of the Nymphs and/or Odysseus on Ithaca. It is not at all clear that any of these were associated with specifically Homeric heroes when they started. However, they are sometimes associated, as at the Menelaion, with impressive ruins which obviously belonged to an impressive past. The most spectacular example of this is Mycenae, but it may well have applied to numerous other sites with extant Late Bronze Age ruins. I would see this as in some sense parallel to activity at Mycenaean tombs, indicating an interest in relating to an obviously long distant and impressive past.

4) The late eighth century is also the time when we have the establishment of overtly political colonies (*apoikiai*), particularly in the central Mediterranean. This starts (according to the traditional dates) in the late eighth century, and follows a period of less formal contact and settlement attested archaeologically, for example, at Pithecusae, where we seem to have a mixed community of Greeks and easterners involved in trade along half the length of the Mediterranean.¹⁴ The overtly political element in the formal foundation of colonies is almost certainly the result of growing competition between

¹⁰ A. M. Snodgrass, *The Dark Age of Greece* (Edinburgh 1971) 421.

¹¹ I. Kilian-Dirlmeier, ‘Fremde Weihungen in griechischen Heiligtümern vom 8. bis zum Beginn des 7. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.’, *Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums* 32 (1985) 215-54.

¹² A. M. Snodgrass, *An archaeology of Greece. The present state and future scope of a discipline*. Sather Classical Lectures 53 (Berkeley 1987) 160-61.

¹³ J. N. Coldstream, *Geometric Greece* (London 1977) 346-47.

¹⁴ D. Ridgway, *The first western Greeks* (Cambridge 1992) 107-18.

Greek and Phoenician cities to control certain strategic sea routes in the west, particularly those leading to important metal resources, although there is equally clearly an element of competition between individual Greek cities. At any rate, what the process eventually ends in is a clear differentiation between Phoenician and Greek spheres in the western half of the Mediterranean.

5) Something else which takes place in this period is the development of the Greek alphabet, which I am tempted to see as closely related to the development of the kind of specifically linguistic identity that we glimpse in the Homeric epics. Given the really quite striking uniformity of the early alphabet (which is far more striking than the differences) and its very rapid spread, it is clearly not something which developed piecemeal and individually in separate centres. To that extent, it too seems to have a panhellenic dimension. If we are looking for a context and purpose for it, we could consider it as a means of providing a visual representation – a visible symbol – of a single Greek language. Again one of the maritime sanctuaries, frequented alike by Greeks and long-distance eastern sailors, might well be a suitable setting for its adoption: perhaps Eretria, to judge by recent evidence for the conjunction of Phoenician and early Greek inscriptions in or near the sanctuary there.¹⁵

6) Then there is the reappearance, around 700 BC or so, of art of a clearly specific narrative nature, which follows a period characterized (particularly at Athens) by much more anonymous, generic scenes of funerals and fighting, in which it is hard to see any sense of particular stories or ‘histories’ rather than generic activities and ideals. We are perhaps just beginning to see this switch in the series of curious double-headed figures, often associated with the Aktorione/Molione twins, who in Hesiod (though not in Homer) appear as conjoined twins. By the seventh century, however, we have scenes which unmistakably tell some specific story even if we do not recognize it. In some cases, such stories are clearly relatable to episodes which we can recognize in Homeric epic.

7) In addition to that, we have the emergence of the Homeric epics themselves.

What this amounts to, it seems to me, is a distinct sense of Greek ethnogenesis at various levels: at a regional, political level, with the inhabitants of Greek cities identifying and defining themselves in relation to other cities and establishing their territorial boundaries; and at a transcendent ‘ideal’ level, with Greek-speakers identifying and defining themselves collectively in relation to a non-Greek speaking other, predominantly easterners (especially Phoenicians) with whom they found themselves regularly in contact both inside and outside the Aegean area, and increasingly in competition. At both levels, sanctuaries (either local or supra-regional) act as the focuses of this identity; and, at both levels, language is one of the main defining features. This is accompanied, again at both levels, by the search for and creation of a ‘past’ – for a sense of linear ‘history’ to give roots to both a regional and a collective, panhellenic identity.

¹⁵ T. Theurillat, ‘Early Iron Age graffiti from the sanctuary of Apollo at Eretria’, in A. Mazarakis-Ainian (ed.), *Oropos and Euboea in the early Iron Age. Acts of an international round table, University of Thessaly (June 18-20, 2004)* (Volos 2007) 331-45.

There is yet another development around this time, namely the stirrings of increasing interest in the Black Sea area, to which the Dardanelles forms the gateway. There were almost certainly Greek speakers already living close to the Troad, either of long-standing or who had newly adopted the language, who were not only beginning to identify themselves as Greeks, but were also poised to extend their commercial influence and activities into the Dardanelles and up towards the Propontis. However, it is most unlikely that the way was left entirely clear for them to do so without opposition. That indeed may well be one reason why the first Greek colonies in the Propontis and Black Sea area seem only to be established after 700 BC. We know very little about the extent of power and influence of the Phrygian kingdom in this period, but Phrygian inscriptions of roughly this date are found at Dascylium, just south of the western half of the Propontis, and it is likely that Greek attempts to establish too regular or obtrusive a presence in or beyond the Hellespont were met by strong resistance, either from Phrygians, expanding Lydians, or others. It would not entirely surprise me, for instance, if Phoenicians too had some aspirations in this direction.

All this has some clear implications for Homer's Trojan War and for the particular form that it takes. To take one of the most obvious examples, the story of a prolonged Greek siege at Troy would have clear contemporary resonances in circumstances of expanding Greek interests in the north-east Aegean, which, as suggested, may well have encountered a certain amount of sustained local, regional or other opposition. Another very obvious example is the theme of a collective Greek expedition against Troy under the consensual leadership of Agamemnon. It is impossible to imagine this happening in real life at any period in Greek history, but it makes perfect sense in a purely ideological context of nascent panhellenism, of a sense of collective Greek identity emphasized by a shared 'history' among equal Greek constituents. It makes no sense at all in the second millennium, when, as far as I can see, there is not a shred of evidence to support the idea of a united Mycenaean (or Ahhiyawan) empire with its centre at Mycenae, Thebes or anywhere else.¹⁶ We cannot simply equate the Ahhiyawa of the Hittite texts with the Achaei of Homeric epic, and we cannot simply equate either with what we call 'Mycenaeans'. The 'Mycenaeans' are our concept, invented in the late 19th century as a retrojection back into prehistory of the idea of modern (and classical) Greek territory and political and ideological unity. The term was coined from the site of Mycenae, originally to describe the kinds of pottery and other remains of material culture found by Schliemann at Mycenae, and rapidly elevated into a widespread 'civilization' covering most of the area of historical Greece (including Crete) and (hardly coincidentally) that of the modern Greek nation state. Since then we have gone on blithely talking about Mycenaeans (often speaking in terms of them 'colonizing' outwards from their Peloponnesian 'homeland' in the later second millennium) without ever really stopping to think what on earth we mean by this label. The truth is we have absolutely no reason to think that what we call Mycenaeans thought of themselves as a collective unity, either politically or

¹⁶ For a concise summary of the representation of Ahhiyawa in Hittite records, S. W. Manning, 'Archaeology and the world of Homer: introduction to a past and present discipline', in C. Emlyn-Jones, L. Hardwick and J. Purkis (eds.), *Homer: readings and images* (London 1992) 137-38; for the wide range of varying views as to its location, W.-D. Niemeier, 'The Mycenaeans in western Anatolia and the problem of the origins of the Sea Peoples', in S. Gitin, A. Mazar and E. Stern (eds.), *Mediterranean peoples in transition, thirteenth to early tenth centuries BCE* (Jerusalem 1998) 20-25.

in any other way, despite their shared pottery styles and tomb types. Moreover, we cannot just draw a line down the west coast of Anatolia and see a block of 'Mycenaeans'/Ahhiyawans on one side and Anatolians on the other. That, it seems to me, is to think entirely anachronistically and inappropriately about the nature of the scattered palatial centres of the Aegean Bronze Age, which are much more like the small-scale historical emirates of the Persian Gulf or Indonesia than large political or 'national' blocks.

Still on the question of Ahhiyawa, it seems to me there is nothing (apart from wishful thinking) to link the land of Ahhiyawa and its successive kings in the Hittite texts with anywhere on the Greek mainland, let alone with any Mycenaean palace yet known to us. The most we can say from the Hittite documents is that between the late 15th and 13th centuries, kings of the 'land of Ahhiyawa' operated on or near the west coast of Anatolia in a manner more or less irritating (though sometimes helpful) to the Hittite authorities; and that, at least at times, they exercised control over some of the islands (and there are a great many of these to choose from in this part of the world). We do not know the size of the 'land' they ruled (though there is at least an implication that this was probably not constant), nor do we know the nature or indeed the objective status of their 'kingship'. The fact that they are sometimes referred to as 'Great Kings' means only that for the purposes of diplomacy or domestic rhetoric it suited the Hittite rulers to refer to them in this way. We do, however, know that they occasionally received letters from the Hittite kings, which suggests that they also occasionally wrote them (something at least obliquely implied by the Tawagalawa letter),¹⁷ both practices requiring the kind of international literacy and its supporting scribal infrastructure for which the Mycenaean palaces have so far produced no evidence whatsoever, *e.g.* in the form of professional scribes able to read and write a more international language than Greek in a script other than Linear B. Given that whoever controlled the more strategic harbours of Rhodes during the Late Bronze Age, particularly at the north-east tip of the island under the historical centre, occupied a potentially important and powerful position in relation to maritime traffic and other activities at the junction of western Anatolian coastal routes and the East Mediterranean and the Aegean, Rhodes remains *a priori* a plausible home base for the kings of Ahhiyawa. This does not mean, however, that we can safely cast these kings as 'Mycenaean' and assume identity in all (or even many) respects with the *wanaxtes* of Mycenae, Thebes, Pylos or Knossos. Although they (or their 'subjects') appear to have used chamber tombs and Mycenaean pottery, we know nothing about the language or languages they spoke or their social or political organization. In any case, even if a regular Mycenaean palace with Linear B records and reference to a *wanax* were to turn up on Rhodes, all this would do would be to add strength to the argument that Hattusa was in periodic communication with a Greek-speaking ruler on Rhodes. It would do nothing to support the notion of diplomatic exchanges or periodic confrontations between the Hittite rulers and those of the Mycenaean palaces of the Greek mainland.

All the same, while several of the elements which make up the specifically Homeric theme of the Trojan War – like a combined Greek expedition – can almost certainly be regarded as creations of the eighth century, including probably much of the detailed

¹⁷ T. R. Bryce, 'Ahhiyawans and Mycenaeans – an Anatolian viewpoint', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 8 (1989) 300-01.

topography of Ilion itself, whose impressive ruins were still very visible at that time, other elements are undoubtedly very much older. However, given the nature and history of heroic song, and the kinds of successive contexts in which it may well have been created, transmitted, and transformed or re-created over many centuries, such elements are likely to be disparate in origin and with a propensity to cross linguistic and cultural boundaries and to float around in time and space. One at least of these elements can be traced back well beyond any later traditional date or dates for the Trojan War and back beyond the period in which we might *like* to see a possible setting for such a war on the basis of contemporary Hittite texts or excavations at Troy or Miletus; and this almost certainly has nothing specifically to do with Troy. The siege motif on the silver rhyton from Shaft Grave IV at Mycenae is one of a series of what have been interpreted as siege scenes which first appear in the Aegean around the middle of the second millennium, and which were discussed a quarter of a century ago by Hartmut Döhl.¹⁸ These include the stone rhyton fragments from Epidauros, as well as aspects of other fragmentary stone vessels from Crete, possibly the Town Mosaic from Knossos, and perhaps also of part of the miniature frieze from the West House at Akrotiri on Thera. The motif of a siege or taking of a walled city has a very long history in Egypt, going back as far as the 6th Dynasty in the late third millennium and continuing into the Ramesside period. In Mesopotamia, where inter-city rivalry was a prominent feature of the earliest urban history, it is traceable even further back. The famous victory stele of Naram Sin, who ruled in Agade in the 23rd century, commemorates his victory over the Lullubi tribe – and, though in this case it does not portray a walled city, there are nevertheless some distinct similarities between it and the much later Shaft Grave rhyton, both in theme and in general iconography. In fact, there are several elements of the iconography of the Shaft Grave siege rhyton which seem much more eastern than Aegean, and make me suspect that its iconography (if not the rhyton itself) came straight from the east, in the same way as Joost Crouwel has argued that the Shaft Grave chariot iconography is really Syrian iconography which arrives in the Aegean as part and parcel of the ideology of chariotry itself.¹⁹ On the siege rhyton these include the slingers, the curious short shields (which are much shorter than the usual Shaft Grave body shield), and the shape of the trees which are somewhat reminiscent of eastern palm trees. Above all, there is the scale mountain on which the city under attack sits, a very distinctive iconographical device used to denote mountains in the Near East from the third millennium onwards.

What the appearance of ‘siege scenes’ like this suggests is the borrowing from the east at this time, probably mainly (though perhaps not entirely) through Crete, not just of an iconography but of an elite motif or theme which reflects the importance which the *idea* of the successful capture of cities had in the self-image of eastern rulers. This was taken over and adapted by Aegean elites as an important part of their own elite ideology: the idea that, if you were anyone, you had to have carried out (or claimed to have carried out) the successful siege and capture of a city. Later Greek legends are full of the same motif

¹⁸ H. Döhl, ‘Mykenische Kampfdarstellungen. Bild und Deutung im prähistorischen Griechenland’, *Materialhefte zur Ur- und Frühgeschichte Niedersachsens* 16 (1980) 21-32.

¹⁹ J. H. Crouwel, *Chariots and other means of land transport in Bronze Age Greece* (Amsterdam 1981) 148-49.

in various forms: the Seven Against Thebes, for instance, the exploits of Herakles at Orchomenos and his pre-Trojan War sack of Troy, and the frequent Homeric use of the epithet *ptoliporthos* ('sacker of cities') to describe Odysseus, Herakles and other heroes, as well as gods. This is a generic ideological motif of eastern origin taken over by Aegean elites, not an item arising from some specific Aegean historical event or particular 'history'. It exists as an elite ideology independent of individuals and individual cities. Sieges and the idea of sieges, as part of the required agenda of heroic elite exploits, exist quite independently of Troy, and long before the 13th century. They can attach themselves to any character and any city, regardless of any 'real' history.

This is one verbal and visual motif of eastern origin which was adopted by elites in the Aegean no later than the mid-second millennium. But there are numerous other elements in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* which also clearly betray their eastern origins. These include purely linguistic conceits: such things as metaphorical usages, which are often particularly noticeable in a comparison between the language of Homer and that of Near Eastern texts, including the Old Testament. Homeric imagery, too, is often redolent of eastern imagery, again borrowed wholesale by the Aegean at various times, including the mid-second millennium. For example, the imagery of lions used by oriental and Egyptian kings to symbolize their power in battle is adopted both in Aegean Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age visual imagery and in the verbal imagery of the Homeric epics and almost certainly their Late Bronze Age predecessors.

Other eastern borrowings also reveal themselves in Homeric motifs and story patterns. Though we do not know its eastern version from any literary source, the story of the competition with the bow between Odysseus and the suitors in the *Odyssey*, which involved the shooting of an arrow through a line of axes, is, as has often been pointed out, likely to be originally an eastern story. If one wanted to be literal about this episode, one could point out that only eastern battle-axes (fenestrated, lunate or possibly with exaggeratedly curved butts) are suitable for shooting arrows through. However, we could also see in this story the additional echo of a slightly different type of iconography and rhetoric emanating from New Kingdom Egypt.²⁰ There is a granite relief from Karnak which shows the early 15th century pharaoh Amenophis II standing in his chariot and firing his bow at a copper target or ingot which has been pierced by five arrows. An accompanying inscription reads:

The king, great in strength, who displayed his dexterity before his army, the mighty bowman who shoots surely and whose arrows do not go astray; he, when he shoots at a plate of copper, cleaves it as one does a clump of papyrus...This is the great plate of mined copper at which his majesty shot, three fingers in thickness. The hero pierced it with many shafts, three handbreadths of them standing out at the back of the plate.

A little later we have a gold quiver plate engraved with a similar picture of the 14th-century Egyptian ruler Aya, with two foreign prisoners tied up below the target. Later still, we have

²⁰ W. McCleod, 'The bow and the axes', in A. L. Boegehold *et al.* (eds.), *Studies presented to Sterling Dow on his eightieth birthday*. Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies Monograph (Durham NC 1984) 203-10; S. P. Morris, *Daidalos and the origins of Greek art* (Princeton 1992) 116, fig. 16.

a seal from Beth Shan with Ramses II doing the same sort of thing. What we have is a recurring iconography and rhetoric of the pharaoh as a mighty bowman, able to shoot right through metal (in fact a solid copper ingot) – a feat which, though in reality almost certainly impossible, is iconographically and rhetorically associated with the Pharaoh vanquishing his enemies, as Odysseus vanquished his in the *Odyssey*.

There are also some strong resemblances between episodes of the standard Akkadian version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and Odysseus's adventures on the island of Calypso and his arrival in Phaeacia in Books 5-6 and 13 of the *Odyssey*, and his account of his fantastic adventures as told to the Phaeacians in Books 9-12. These often consist of similarities in odd little details as much as in overall outline. The standard version of *Gilgamesh* that we have was discovered in the library of the seventh-century king Assurbanipal at Nineveh, although this version itself was based on earlier versions of the early second millennium. There are also remains of independent narrative poems relating to Gilgamesh in Sumerian dating to the late third millennium, and these may well have their origins further back still in the third millennium. Episodes of Gilgamesh's encounters with Siduri and Utnapishtim are generally similar (and include some detailed similarities) to the consecutive Calypso and Phaeacian episodes in the *Odyssey*. Enkidu's dream about his descent to the Netherworld, full of the once-famous, also has strong echoes in Odysseus's visit to the underworld in *Odyssey* Book 11. There is no space to go into the details of these similarities here, but they suffice to suggest that the Gilgamesh stories ultimately contributed something to at least certain episodes or motifs of the *Odyssey*. The Gilgamesh epic, as we know, travelled through several languages and over several millennia. We do not know when exactly it and other eastern elements reached the Aegean, but it is generally assumed that this was in the early orientalizing period, from around the end of the eighth century.²¹ However, we have already seen that the eastern siege motif, at least, was absorbed into the visual imagery of the Aegean right at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age, when it formed part of a wider package of oriental motifs, symbolism, and ideology (including the ideology of chariotry and motifs like sphinxes and griffins, some of which had already arrived in the Aegean before the mid-2nd millennium). There are also some grounds for thinking that elements of Near Eastern epic, including probably early second millennium versions of Gilgamesh epic, may have reached the Aegean at least as early as this. One reason is that, if we choose this time span, one or two aspects of *Gilgamesh* and related epic seem to show even closer similarities to the *Odyssey* than the standard first millennium version of *Gilgamesh* does. For instance, in the separate Akkadian *Flood Story*, which dates to the earlier second millennium, and which is incorporated in the Utnapishtim episode of the Standard version of *Gilgamesh*, the character of Utnapishtim (who can be compared with the character Alkinoos, the king of Phaeacia) is not called Utnapishtim (which means 'he has found life') but Atrahasis (which means 'exceedingly wise'). The name Alkinoos, as no reminder is needed, also translates as something like 'he of the powerful mind'. Another indication that the Calypso and Phaeacia episodes in particular may go back to early second millennium versions of *Gilgamesh* and related epics are the hints in earlier (early second millennium)

²¹ W. Burkert, *The orientalizing revolution. Near Eastern influence on Greek culture in the early archaic age* (translated from the original German by M. E. Pinder and W. Burkert. Cambridge MA 1992) 88-129.

fragments of the Siduri episode (the equivalent of the Calypso episode in the *Odyssey*) of the possibility of a sexual relationship between Gilgamesh and Siduri which are not there in the standard version.

Also to be considered is the distinct possibility of non-Greek (*i.e.* non-Greek Aegean and western Anatolian, including probably Cretan) epic input, and indeed the strong possibility that many elements of second millennium oriental stories and motifs which find their way into Greek epic were originally channelled through Neopalatial Crete and other islands and/or the coasts of Anatolia, and adopted and adapted by Greek speaking elites along with palatial trappings such as writing and frescoes. For instance, both Antoine Meillet and Cornelis Ruijgh have argued that the dactylic hexameter itself is not well adapted for the natural rhythms of the Greek language which tends to be short of dactylic sequences, and have suggested the possibility of a non-Greek origin for this metre;²² in other words, that Greek-speakers may actually have adopted the metre from Cretan or Luvian or other non-Greek epic or other songs. In this connection, to go back to something I mentioned before, it is perhaps worth noting that the form in which Latin borrowed the name of Odysseus (that is, Ulixes or Ulysses) and the form (Olusseus) which Odysseus has in some Greek dialects suggest a lack of clear distinction between the sounds d and l. There seems to be a similar lack of distinction between these sounds in certain non-Greek words which appear on the Linear B tablets: for instance, the way in which what appears to be the later word *laburinthos* is written as *da-pu-ri-to*.²³

There is one possible eastern story which, in connection with the Trojan War, must be mentioned here. This is the fragment from among the Songs of Istanuwa which contains one incomplete line of what appears to be some sort of ritual song in Luvian, which begins *ahha-ta-ta alati awienta wilusati* ('When they came from steep Wilusa...'). Over 20 years ago Calvin Watkins suggested that this *might* be part of the first formulaic line of what he fancifully called a 'Wilusiad' – a Luvian epic or shorter ritual song about Wilusa – perhaps (and here we enter the world of wild speculation) even concerning some sort of military exploit at Wilusa or Ilion.²⁴ This is a lovely idea, not least because of the parallelism with one of the epithets of Ilion, 'steep Ilion' (*Ilios apeine*), in the *Iliad*. Watkins himself has used this, and what he restored as a possible variant of this formulaic line on a different text from Boghazköy, as an argument for a hypothetical shared proto-Indo-European origin for both Greek and Luvian epic or heroic song. This seems to me quite unnecessary, since there are clearly other ways of looking at it, and formulae, just as much as stories, characters and indeed metres, can and clearly did travel from one language to another with an ease that we sometimes underestimate, blinkered as we are by the historical Greeks' own rhetoric of distinction and separation based particularly on language. If we do have a Luvian epic concerning the site that we call Troy among the Songs of Istanuwa, however, we have to consider some of the possible implications. One

²² A. Meillet, *Les origines indo-européennes des mètres grecs* (Paris 1923); C. Ruijgh, 'La langue et l'écriture', in R. Treuil, P. Darcque, J.-C. Poursat, and G. Touchais (eds.), *Les civilisations égéennes du Néolithique et de l'Âge de Bronze* (Paris 1989) 569-84.

²³ J. Chadwick, *The Mycenaean world* (Cambridge 1976) 93.

²⁴ C. Watkins, 'The language of the Trojans', in M. J. Mellink (ed.), *Troy and the Trojan War* (Bryn Mawr 1986) 58-62.

is the context, which like performances of Homeric epic is formalized and ritual ('sacred words') rather than informal, mundane, or secular. In this sense, whatever it is, it falls within the realm of the ideological rather than the documentary. The other is the date which, if various estimates, including that of Frank Starke,²⁵ are right, may well go back to the Old Hittite period. If so, we might have a well-known and well-canonized song about Troy circulating already in Western Anatolia in the 16th-15th centuries or possibly even earlier. We are back with exactly the same kinds of problems of historicity as we have with the Homeric epics 800 years later.

So where is history in all this? I have no doubt that something (or perhaps many things) that we might just call real history in some sense of the word is there, lurking in the palimpsest of Homeric oral prehistory. But the question of whose history, and when and where, is something we can probably never untangle; and I do not believe we can find the answer to these questions either by looking in the ground or by analysing ancient historical texts. We may accept from the Hittite texts that what they call Wilusa probably refers to the same place that the Greeks of the first millennium called Ilion; though, in that case, we also have to accept that if Greek Troia equals Taruwisa or Truwisa in the same Hittite texts, then it cannot also be the same place. We can deduce from the same texts that control of Ilios/Wilusa was periodically contested, and that it was probably also fought over (not to mention raided) arguably quite regularly from the third millennium onwards and probably mainly by people based in western coastal Anatolia and the eastern Aegean islands, not just by Anatolian super-powers. However, this hardly comes as a surprise, given Troy's position and its regional prominence from the early third millennium onwards, and in view of the regularity with which individual excavated buildings have been found to be burnt. Even if we accept that the Tawagalawa letter implies that the Hittite king and the then king of Ahhiyawa may have fought over Wilusa (and again this takes a good deal of optimistic faith), or if we accept that an earlier king of Wilusa may have had a Greek-derived name, I am not sure that this gets us any further. The temptation to see the real history of the Trojan war specifically in the Hittite imperial period of the 13th century is precisely because we have some preserved glimmerings of recorded history then, not because history did not happen at other times. We still do not have anything that Homer's audiences would have recognized as their 'historical' Trojan War, and we certainly cannot retroject on to it the clash of mighty armies from east and west battling it out on the plain of Troy. In any case, it is clearly not the only element, 'historical' or otherwise, that contributed to the Homeric Trojan War, and almost certainly not the reason why it is a *Trojan* war and not a war (or siege) set around some other city, for which one could easily find innumerable other candidates either archaeologically or in historical texts. To explain why it is a Trojan war we need only the historical and ideological context of the Homeric epics themselves and the regional or wider reputation which almost certainly already surrounded Troy long before the reign of Hattusilis, and which may have been immortalized in Luvian (and quite possibly other) song at a very early date. There is no reason to suppose that various other inhabitants of the Aegean coasts and islands, too, including Greek speakers, may not have had some song about

²⁵ F. Starke, *Die keilschrift-luwischen Texte in Umschrift*. Studien zu den Bogazköy-Texten 30 (Wiesbaden 1985) 301-04.

Troy or Ilion or a battle at Troy, perhaps adopted from Luvian or some other East Aegean language, at a very early date, in the early second millennium or even earlier. Who they might have thought fought in that war and when they thought it happened is another question; but it is characteristic of elements of heroic song that they have the ability, and indeed a propensity, to shift around in time and place and attach themselves to different people depending on who was singing and who they were singing for. We only need think of the way Phemios, the Ithacan court bard in the *Odyssey*, tailored his story of the return of the heroes from Troy to produce what Penelope's suitors wanted to hear. The most we can say is that, if several of the names applied to all sorts and conditions of people in the Linear B texts are anything to go by, it seems likely that by the Mycenaean palatial period there were already bodies of heroic song featuring heroes whose names are known to us from Homer, and after whom people liked to name their children – just as nowadays we name ours after characters in films or television soaps. This does not mean that they were real, let alone contemporary, characters, or for that matter that names such as Achilles, Hektor or Tros were attached at that time to either Ilios or Troy.

So where does this leave us? We can go back, perhaps, to the story as told by the wife of the Izmir taxi-driver and conclude that her account of the Trojan War has no more, and no less, history behind it than Homer's Trojan War. It is a story made out of inherited elements which by now have passed through many different languages, been adopted as their own by different people and assigned to different times. It is a story which, as a whole, however, makes sense in a particular ideological context, in which it plays a central, structural role. This is the main reason why the taxi-driver's wife knows that it is a 'true' story, though, if she had any doubts about this, she also saw the proof with her own eyes in the ruined state of Troy and in the wooden horse. Homer's Trojan War is really a series of accidents of long-term ideological history rather than necessarily, or even probably, a reflection (however distorted) of any actual Greek historical (or prehistoric) event. Among other things, Troy's position and the regional prominence this gave it for almost two millennia made it a good candidate to become a 'legendary' city among many others. It is the result of accidents of the ideological history of the last three millennia that it became the setting of a legendary war in a set of literature which itself survived to perpetuate and disseminate the legend well beyond its original context and to encourage the continuing search for proof of its reality. This is why successive excavators from Schliemann to Korfmann have invested so much time, effort and money in excavating the site at Hissarlik. Though in later cases the initial motives of the excavators for excavating Troy may have varied, the wider public and institutional backing which made the excavations of Blegen and Korfmann possible owed a great deal to an agenda which in several respects hardly differed from that of Schliemann. It is because of what Schliemann's Trojan war still means to a German public that the eyes of the entire German press could be directed, for months on end a few years ago, to a very public spat between Korfmann and Frank Kolb over what would otherwise seem an arcane dispute between dry-as-dust specialists over a few holes in the ground; and it is precisely because of this that the emotive red herring of a fixation on Homeric historicity was also dragged into this dispute. It is because Homer's Trojan War, as a powerful and infinitely adaptable ideological motif and just about the most famous 'event' of history

(after the Flood) on which one can hang a long and glorious ancestry, is so deeply embedded in the collective psyches and cultural traditions and national inheritance and sense of self-identity of so many Europeans, that anyone even thinks of caring whether it represents real history or not.

*Department of Archaeology
University of Sheffield*