

# Trojan War and epic cycle: the historical and literary version. Where, how, when and why the Trojan War myth was invented

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## ABSTRACT

There are two aspects about the Trojan War, the historical and the literary. For 1200 BC, the Late Bronze Age there are two epigraphical testimonies, the Hittite inscriptions and the Linear B tablets. Due to the fact that the latter do not contain historical information, only the Hittite inscriptions remain, which provide us with very important historical information about the relationships between the Hittite empire, the kingdom of Troy and the kingdom of Ahhijawa. An important contribution to the historical reality is also offered by the excavations of the professor Manfred Korfmann (University of Tübingen) that brought to light the lower city with a moat. So the city is a typical Eastern city with Appaliuna (=Apollo) as one of the main gods. The Treaty of Alaksandu, king of Troy, and Muwatalli, king of Hattussa, and other Hittite documents confirm that Troy was a vassal of the Hittite empire and thus under its protection. Therefore, in the 13th century BC the Trojan War could not have taken place, as the Achaeans would have faced the powerful Hittite force. In the 12th century the Achaeans were not in a position to campaign, because the Mycenaean centres had collapsed. So, the Trojan War is a literary and not a historical event. Thus, the Epic Cycle is examined with the various works and more specifically the Iliad and the Odyssey, their grammar, their structure, the editing of the text during the Alexandrian age and the famous Homeric question.

## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine whether the Trojan War is a historical or a literary event. For this reason, we analyse the main testimonies in the Late Bronze Age, which are the Hit-

tite inscriptions, because the Linear B tablets in the Mycenaean centres do not include historical information, but mainly record storage material with the exception of the Pylos tablets. The fall of the Mycenaean centres in the 12th century BC excludes the case of a Mycenaean war expedition against Troy, while a potential Mycenaean attack on Troy in the 13th century would have been vigorously countered by the Hittites, who protected Troy, according to the Treaty of Alaksandu. Therefore, it remains to examine the Trojan War as a literary event, appearing from the 9th century BC onwards. The Epic Cycle is analysed, where the Iliad and the Odyssey are contained, which were originally composed orally (oral composition) and were later written. An important role is played by the dactylic hexameter and the Aeolic and Ionic elements of the epic are explored, the role of Athens in the time of Peisistratus in the creation of the entire epic and the role of the Alexandrian grammarians in the analysis and the commentary of the text.

Various theories and arguments (historical, literary, astronomical, epigraphic, etc.) have been proposed regarding the reality of myth of this polemic enterprise event (de Jong, 2005; Finley *et al.*, 1964; Korfmann, 2004; Papamarinopoulos *et al.*, 2012, 2014).

## Historical version

The archaeological, the philological, the linguistic and the historical sciences try to answer reliably the question if the Trojan War has happened or not. Two sources are the most credible from the 12th century BC, when Trojan War supposedly happened, the Hittite inscriptions (Sommer, 1932; Laroche, 1971; Haas, 2006; Müller and Gernot, 2002-2013; Sachermeier, 1954) and the Linear B tablets (Ventris and Chadwick, 1956; Chadwick, 1976; Ruy Pérez-Melena, 1996; Konstantinopoulos, 2013). The former

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enlighten the relationships between the Trojans, the Hittites and the Mycenaeans, while the latter unfortunately contain mainly accounting information and secondly social, religious and administrative information. Very important help is provided by the second excavating activity, which has been conducted by the professor Manfred Korfmann (University of Tübingen, Germany), the results of which are annually published in the scientific journal "Studia Troica" (Korfmann, 1993). The results of these excavations were the discovery of a lower city (Figure 1), with additional walls and moat. From a religious point of view, bronze small statues of an Eastern deity, as well as stone columns were found, which prove an Eastern influence. In the point of view of many religionists and professor Korfmann, these are a typical symbol of the god Appaliuna, who was obviously identical with the god Apollo.

The name of Troy in the Hittite inscriptions is Wilussa or Truwissa (Latacz, 2002; Garstang and Gurney, 1959; Bryce, 2002, 2006) and its location was in the Northwest side of Asia Minor. This place, which is near Thrace and Phrygia, leads some scholars to the thought that the Trojan people belonged to the Thracophrygian nation and therefore their language was the Thracophrygian (Wooduizen, 2017). According to other scholars (Bryce, 2006), the Trojan people were the Luwians (Macqueen, 1986), a point of view that orients us to think that the Trojans were speaking the Luwian dialect, which is an Indo-European dialect and was *lingua franca* in the Hittite empire.

### The relationships between Troy and the Hittite empire

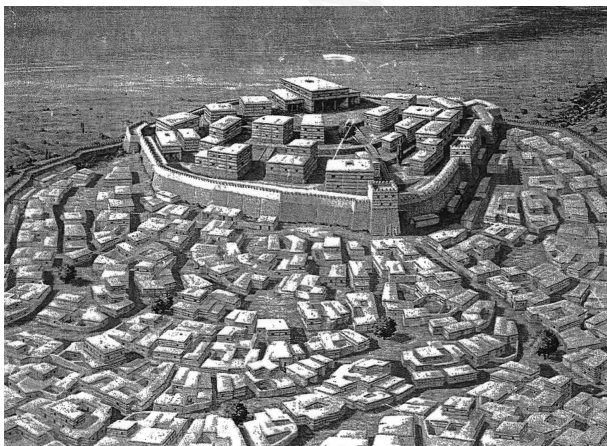
The organized secretariat of the Hittites saves in cuneiform writing the correspondence of its kings with the states of the territory and informs us adequately for the events in the Bronze Age. The oldest testimony is the Chronicle of Tudhalija A ca. 1420-1400 BC (Sommer, 1932), where Wilussa and Truwissa that belonged to the alliance of Assuwa were defeated and so were henceforth subordinates of the Hittite empire.

The most important Treaty between the Hittite emperor, Muwatalli B (1290-1272 BC) and Troy was the so-called Treaty of Alaksandu (Friedrich, 1930; Bryce, 2002; Starke, 1999), who was the king of Troy (Figure 2). According to it, Wilussa was

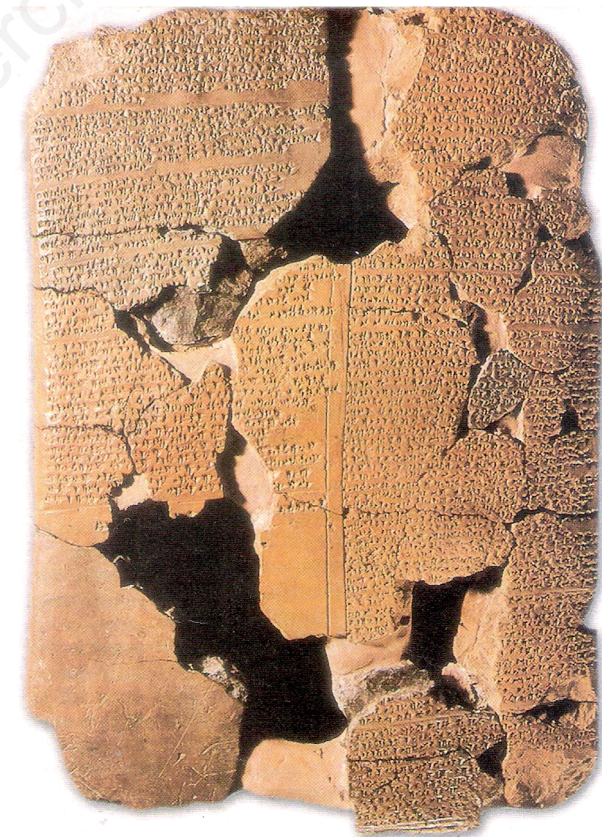
under the protection of the Hittite empire, in the event of an enemy attack. What is more, the Hittites were committed to eliminate anyone who threatened Wilussa. At the end of the Treaty follows the list of the gods of Wilussa, among which Appaliuna was included. This Treaty proves that i) during the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC, Troy was still under the Hittite sphere of power, in which it had been acceded two centuries before; ii) any invader would face the powerful Hittite army; and iii) the gods being worshiped in Troy were many, with main among them the god of thunder -who obviously corresponded to Zeus- and the god Appaliuna -who corresponded to Apollo.

An additional, and equally important, text was the Milawanda Letter (Hoffner, 1982; Kopanias, 2021; Starke, 1999; Hawkins, 1998). In this letter the Hittite king Tudhalija C (1240-1214 BC) addressed Atpa, son of the representative of Ahhiyawa at Milawanda (=Miletos) and asked him to restore Walmu, who was exile near Atpa, to the throne of Wilussa. From this letter, we conclude that the Hittites at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century regulated the political situation in Troy.

Another very important letter is the one (Starke, 1999; Latacz, 2005) from Manabatarhunta of Seha to the king Muwatalli B, from whom he seeks help, in order to face the aggressive activity of someone called Pijamaradu, who, having Milawanda as a base, was causing trouble to the kingdom of Troy. Pijamaradu (Starke, 1997; Page, 1959; Latacz, 2005; Bryce, 2006) invaded Lazpa (=Lesbos), from where he abducted craftsmen and took them to Milawanda. From this letter we also conclude that during the end



**Figure 1.** Troy VI with a lower city. Source: the book of Joachim Latacz, *Troia und Homer. Der Weg zur Lösung eines alten Rätsels*, München-Berlin 2001.



**Figure 2.** The Treaty of Alaksandu. Source: the journal *Historica (Ιστορικά)*, issue 140, ΤΡΟΙΑ, Athens, 2002.



of the 13<sup>th</sup> century there was a hostile activity towards Troy from someone who had his base at the Mycenaean area of Miletos. Furthermore, Seha, a neighbouring country to Troy, as well as the Hittite empire, a main power in the region, rushed to Troy's aid.

### The bronze seal of Troy

In the year 1995 in the ruins of Troy VIIIb2 a bronze seal of Troy (Korfmann, 1997; Latacz, 2005; Neumann, 1992; Hawkins and Easton, 1996; Latacz, 2005) was discovered, dated at the second half of the 12th century (1150-1100 BC) and is the first epigraphical find of Troy (Figure 3). This find is very important for us, because it gives us an idea of the language of Troy. This language is the Luwian dialect and the find belonged to an official of Troy. The conclusion we draw is that the Trojans spoke the Luwian dialect, which was used as a common language in the Hittite kingdom and with its communication with the kingdoms of the area.

### The relationships between the Hittites and the Achaeans

The latest studies have proven that the word Ahhiyawa, which is found more than twenty times in the Hittite inscriptions, is identified with the name Achajja. The most important testimonies of the relationships between Hattussa and Ahhiyawa (Forrer, 1924; Sommer, 1932; Page, 1959; Garstang and Gurney, 1959; Starke, 1997; Sachermeier, 1935) are observed in the following Hittite texts: the letter of the king Manabatarhunta (Starke, 1997; Starke, 1999; Kopanias, 2021) to the king Muwatalli B, where he protested against the action of Pijamaradu, who went to his son in law, Atpa, king of Ahhiyawa's representative in Miletos.

Another important text is the so-called letter of the Hittite king Hattusili B (1264-1240 BC) to the king of Ahhiyawa, com-

plaining about Tawagalawa (Güterbock, 1990; Ventris and Chadwick, 1956; von Matz, 1956; Starke, 1997; Latacz, 2005; Bryce, 2006; Hawkins, 1998; Kopanias, 2021; Page, 1959; Sommer, 1932), king of Ahhiyawa's brother. The characterization "my brother" shows that the king of Ahhiyawa was considered equal to the Hittite king. The letter proves that there was diplomatic correspondence between the two kings and that Ahhiyawa was based in the city of Milawanda, which had gone from a city with Minoan influence in the 16th century BC to a city with Mycenaean influence now.

An equally important text (Otten, 1988; Sommer, 1932; Lehmann, 1991; Niemeier, 1999; Starke, 1997; Latacz, 2005; Page, 1959; Bryce, 2006) is the Treaty of Tudhaliya C (1240-1215 BC), who in 1220 BC made a Treaty with the vassal king Sausgamuwa of Amurru (now Libanos). In this Treaty he asked to prevent the supply of Assur and primarily not to allow the ships of Ahhiyawa to transport supplies to Assur. This Treaty demonstrates that by the end of the 13th century the relationships between Ahhiyawa and Hattussa had become hostile and that Ahhiyawa had expanded its trade in the Eastern Mediterranean. Very important is the Letter of Arnuwanda C (1215-1200 BC), which includes the conflict between Attarsijas (Atreus), king of Ahhiyawa's brother, and the Hittite general Kisanpilis, who was victorious (Goetze, 1927; Page, 1959; Bryce, 2006; Kopanias, 2021).

### The location of Ahhiyawa

The fact that all the researchers accept that Ahhiyawa is located in Greece creates a problem as to where exactly it was. Page accepted that Ahhiyawa was Rhodes (Hrozny, 1929; Sachermeier, 1935; Page, 1959). Other scholars were of the opinion that the capital city was in Crete, Cyprus, Mycenae (Bryce, 2006) etc. Newer researches, after the discovery of the Linear B tablets in Thebes (Aravantinos, Godart and Sacconi, 2002; Latacz, 2005; Niemeier, 2001), point to this city as the capital of Ahhiyawa. The Iliad advocates this view with the List of Ships (Book B), where Boeotia holds the first place. Moreover, the exceptional position of the city is attested by the Theban cycle. In favour of Thebes is also a Letter of Ahhiyawa (Latacz, 2005; Bryce, 2006; Sommer, 1932; Kopanias, 2021), which, according to F. Starke, has been sent from Ahhiyawa to Hattussa and not the opposite, as it has been considered so far. This of course means that there was correspondence between the two kingdoms, which, however, has not been preserved on the Linear B tablets, because the Mycenaean did not keep the tablets for more than one year. The reference to this letter contains the king of Ahhiyawa's refusal to accept the Hittite king's claims to the islands that were near the coast of Assuwa, namely Imbros, Samothrace and Lemnos. The Achaean king supports that one of his ancestors, perhaps Kadmos (Kagamma), had acquired the sovereignty of these islands, due to his daughter's marriage to the king of Assuwa. Additionally, the recent discovery of the Linear B tablets in Thebes and the discovery of a ruined palace confirm the dominant position of Thebes.

### Danaans. The other name of the Achaeans

In the Hittite inscriptions the mentioning of the name Danaans (Edel, 1996; Latacz, 2005; Bryce, 2006) does not exist at all. This name is found at the tomb of the Pharaoh Amenofis C (1390-1352 BC) in the necropolis of Thebes. This inscription recorded the then known world (descriptio orbis) and in particular it listed the regions that are north of Egypt. It has two columns and a heading in each column with the place names



**Figure 3.** The bronze seal. The first epigraphical find of Troy. Source: the book of Joachim Latacz, *Troia und Homer. Der Weg zur Lösung eines alten Rätsels*, München-Berlin 2001.

(Rehak, 1997; Rehak, 1998) Kafta (kftw) and Danaja (tnjw). Cities of Crete are recorded under Kafta, while under Danaja are the cities Mukana, Degajis, Misane, Nuplija, Kutira, Waleja and Amukla. It is clear that these cities are from the parts of the main body of Greece, which was called Danaja.

### The Linear B tablets

In contrast to the Hittite inscriptions that shed abundant light on the history of the peoples of Asia Minor in the middle and late Bronze Age, the Linear B tablets (Ventris and Chadwick, 1956; Chadwick, 1976; Page, 1959; Latacz, 2005; Ruipérez and Melena, 1996; Mühlestein, 1956) offer only information of an administrative and accounting nature regarding the kingdoms. This writing was used only for the needs of the bureaucracy of the Mycenaean palaces and was lost with the fall of the palaces in the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC. The syllabic character of this writing creates a degree of uncertainty in the reading of this writing. Therefore, we cannot have specific historical information about this particular period.

### The historical and the Homeric Troy

While the latest excavation data of M. Korfmann (Korfmann, 1993) and the Hittite inscriptions demonstrate a pure Eastern type of Trojan kingdom, both from an urban, as well as cultural point of view, the Homeric image of Troy is Greek. The city does not have any ships and is rather a land city than a naval one. In the Homeric epics, the lower city of Troy with the wall and moat is not known. The cultic customs and the deities we see in the Treaty of Alaksandu are also unknown, while, the worshipping of Athena in the citadel is mentioned (Z 88 ff.), in the seated statue of which the women of Troy place a veil. It becomes clear that here there are influences from the Panathenaic festival.

The main power of the Asia Minor area, the Hittite empire, is also unknown. In addition, the complete destruction of Troy at the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century is not confirmed by the archaeological findings, as the discovery of the seal at the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century proves that Troy still existed as a state entity until then. Also not known are the language and writing of the Trojans, while in the Hittite inscriptions the language of communication is Luwian and the writing of communication is cuneiform. From the above it becomes clear that the Homeric Troy is a literary creation and has no relation to the historical Troy.

### Trojan War: Myth or reality

- i) The Hittite inscriptions that record the historical reality in Asia Minor from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC do not at all know a conflict between Ahhijawa and Wilussa, namely between the Greeks and the Trojans. If there had been a massive attack by the Achaeans against the Trojans in the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Troy VI) or the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Troy VII), the invaders would have faced the Hittite army, which had Troy under its protection, according to the Treaty of Alaksandu (1275 BC). The invasion of Troy by Attarsijas, king of Ahhijawa's brother, was an isolated event of minor importance, which did not threaten and much less destroyed Troy. Troy, even in the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, was a state entity, as evidenced by the seal with the name of its chief secretary.
- ii) The Linear B tablets from Knossos, Pylos, Thebes etc. do not confirm any war campaign. Additionally, at 1200 BC the main Mycenaean centres had fallen and it was not possible for a military operation to take place in this situation. The supposed

reason that the Mycenaean marched on Troy for financial reasons, namely the control of the Hellespont straits, does not apply, because the Mycenaean left Troy, after its supposed destruction. Therefore, there has never been an expedition and thus neither Trojan War as a historical fact.

Given that this war was not a historical event, the question that is placed is how, when, why and from whom the myth of the Trojan War was invented. The answer to this question leads us to examine the Trojan War as a literary and not a historical fact.

## Literary version

### The time the epics were composed. Historical and archaeological evidence for their composition

#### Historical

From the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> to the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century the emigration (Cambridge Ancient History, 1975) of the Aeolians and the Ionians (A colonization) to the islands of the Aegean (Lesbos, Chios, Samos), the opposite coast of Asia Minor and the distant Cyprus began. The Aeolians settled in Lesbos and on the opposite Asia Minor coast, while the Ionians settled in Chios and Samos and on the opposite Asia Minor coast. Later, the Dorians settled in Rhodes and on the opposite Asia Minor coast. The area of the Troas remains interesting, because the ruins of Troy led the Aeolian immigrants to imagine the greatness of the city. Thus, the Aeolian singers that were associated with the hegemonic courts and were singing the exploits of the aristocratic class could now invent false historical elements and project the aristocratic classes, who, due to their ancestral glory were claiming the right to rule in local societies. It is very difficult, however, to discover who inspired the epic poem of the Trojan expedition and what its original form was. It is certain though that this epic composition was oral, based on the hexameter verse and standard phrases that were repeated as structural elements. Because the Aeolians arrived with the A Greek colonization in NW Asia Minor, it is natural that the A Greek colonization is really the terminus post quem for the composition of the core of this mythological cycle. This assumption is confirmed by the fact that, when the Aeolian immigrants arrived in the region of the Troas, there no longer was a Hittite empire, but only the peoples who originated from its dissolution, namely Kares, Lykioi etc., as depicted in the Iliad.

The fact that the composition was made in a post-Mycenaean era is proved by the reference to the Dorians, such as the king of Rhodes, Tlepolemos, son of Heracles, and the division of the people of Rhodes into three tribes, as was the case with the Dorians (B 653-670). In Crete, the Dorians are mentioned among the inhabitants, divided into three tribes (τ 177). All these things show that the epics were created in the Iron Age, as indicated by expressions, such as σιδήρειον ἦτορ, σιδήρειαι πύλαι (heart of iron, doors of iron) etc. The presence also of the Phoenicians with their commercial activity coincides with this era.

The research of H. T. Wade-Gery (Wade-Gery, 1952) proved that, before 800 BC, a king of Chios was called Hector, while a king of the Aeolian Kymi in 700 BC was called Agamemnon. The Iliad thus, according to Wade-Gery, must be dated within these hundred years.

The cooperation of many and different kings against Troy shows a theme of the action by many heroes, which is observed in epic poetry, as in Argonaut expedition, the hunting of the Kally-

donean boar etc. A historical event contemporary with Homer is the war for the Lelantine plain, where many warriors from all over Greece gathered and fought hand to hand, as in the Iliad.

## Archaeological

**Burial customs** (Mylonas, 1948; Mossé, 2011). The burning of the dead, which is mentioned in the Iliad and generally in the epic cycle, does not belong to the Mycenaean period, as evidenced by the many Mycenaean tombs. The burning of the dead appears in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and this is also a terminus post quem for the creation of the epics.

**Pottery** (Fitschen, 1969; Boardmann, 19973; Boardmann, 1998; Johansen, 1967; Carpenter, 1991). The fact that from the 7<sup>th</sup> century there are images from the epic cycle, this is a terminus ante quem for the themes of the epic cycle.

**Sculpture** (Boardmann, 1978). The only statue in the Iliad is the one of Athena seated on a throne. This goddess does not belong to the eastern gods, but was a deity of Attica. We saw that the Athena veil (Z 90-92) has influences from the Panathenaic festival, while the seated statues appear in the Greek art from the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC (Bethe, 1922; Lorimer, 1950; Schadewaldt, 1983; Kirk, 2003).

**Olympic Games** (Gialouris, 2003). The beginning of the Olympic Games dates back to the 8<sup>th</sup> century (776 BC). In 680 BC the chariot race with four horses was added to the programme of the Olympic Games, so the corresponding sport in Ψ of the Iliad belongs to the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

**Oriental themes** (Pöhlmann, 2011). The narration of the adventures of the Bellerophonites is similar to the theme of Petephris (Genesis 39:7-20) and the letter of Uriaiah (Book of Kings B 11). These writings according to scholars W. Burkert (Burkert, 1983). On the contrary, see Morris, 2009), M. West (1995) and W. Kullmann (1960) lead us to date the entire Iliad (Gesamtilias) to the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

The existence of the alphabet from the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century does not mean that writing was used from the beginning to compose the epic, because the character of the epic was oral (oral composition). The oral poetry by its very nature offers the possibility from singer to singer to alter the text, either consciously, by adding or removing verses and scenes or unconsciously by forgetting or changing verses. The reason was that there did was no fixed text to be faithfully followed by the singers.

## Pre-Homeric epic tradition and the Iliad

When Homer composed in the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century the poem of the wrath of Achilles, he had at his disposal a richly formed epic material. The main names of the heroes Achilles, Ulysses etc., as well as the main episodes, such as the fall of Troy, the death of Achilles etc. have been created. We must consider it natural that the extent of the main episodes was small. A singer, like Demodocus in Odyssey (θ 73) knew many episodes by the title of their content (e.g. the quarrel between Ulysses and Achilles or another subject, such as the Trojan horse) and could sing them according to the listeners' demands. Such short episodes could either by sung independently or joined together in a large ensemble. We know that in Athens in the 6<sup>th</sup> century Peisistratus (Merkelbach, 1952; West, 2011). On the contrary, see Pfeiffer, 1972; Nagy, 1996) had compelled the singers to sing the epic episodes in the correct order, so as to ensure the continuity of the narration. This means that the singers knew and sang individual episodes, without

a unified text in mind. According to Cicero (De orat. 3.137) the unified text of the epics was first constructed in the time of Peisistratus. This so-called correction of Peisistratus led to the creation of the Athenian standard (Bethe, 1914) of the Iliad, as attested by many ancient testimonies. Until the time of Peisistratus the Homeric text had not been written and was being transmitted orally. The oral composition and distribution of the epics is supported by many scholars (Parry, 1975; Kirk, 2003; Nagy, 1996; Haslam, 2009), while other scholars (Lord, 1960; Janko, 1982; West, 2011; Powell, 2009) accept the written composition and recording at the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

The segmental composition of the Iliad is demonstrated by the prologues (Kirk, 2003; West, 2011; Bassett, 1923; Lentz, 1980), which are found at various points in the Iliad, such as A 1-5, B 484, II 122.

## The wrath of Achilles

The wrath of Achilles (Konstantinopoulos, 1997) is a small but central episode of the Iliad, around which other individual episodes were attached, such as the Catalogue of Ships, Patrocleia etc., which eventually formed the final Iliad. In the Iliad two are the main concepts, these of honour (τιμή) and pudency (αἰδώς). In the Iliad the actions of the heroes are directed by the will of the gods. The heroes have no responsibility for their actions. On the contrary in the Odyssey people are responsible for their actions and are punished for them. The companions of Ulysses were punished, because they ate the oxen of the Sun. The same is true for Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, because they did not listen to the warning of the gods and killed Agamemnon. Odyssey, thus, represents a new world, that of guilt and punishment, and is based on a new legal concept, which we also find in Hesiod (Snell, 1984; Dodds, 1981; Schadewaldt, 1985; Von der Mühl, 1952).

## Patrocleia

Patrocleia is about the death of Patroclus by Hector, who was killed by Achilles in revenge for the death of his friend. Here, it becomes clear that Achilles' motive is revenge and therefore that his rage is due to vengeful fury, rather than an insult to honour. So, this type of rage cannot coexist with the Achilles' rage against Agamemnon. This means that Patrocleia was added to the poem of Achilles' wrath. The content of Patrocleia is based on Memnon's poem, according to Schadewaldt, and many scenes from there have been transferred to the Iliad (Pestalozzi, 1945; Kullmann, 1960). The scene where Thetis with her fifty sisters mourn for Patroclus is obviously appropriate for the death of Achilles.

## The poem of Meleager

In the Iliad, beyond the influences from the episodes of the epic cycle, such as the poem of Memnon, there are more local myths, e.g. the poem of Meleager. Some scholars, e.g. Howald (Howald, 1924. Regarding the relationship between the Iliad and the poem of Meleager, see Bethe, 1925; Sachs, 1933; von der Mühl, 1952; Hainsworth, 1993; Voskos, 1974), Kakrides (Kakrides, 1935), accept that this poem was the model for the Iliad. This point of view is rejected by Schadewaldt (Schadewaldt, 1985). The most basic difference exists in the type of wrath. Achilles feels that his honour has been insulted, while, in the case of Meleager, the rage is caused by anger from a domestic dispute. The new theological beliefs that are found in I of the Iliad, namely Hades, Persephone and Erinyes do not belong to Homer's 8<sup>th</sup> cen-



ture and have been added later in the 6th century, as Page (1959) has suggested.

## Oriental themes

The episode (Howald, 1951) between Tlepolemos and Sarpedon is apparently a reflection of a local episode between the inhabitants of Lycia and the inhabitants of Rhodes. The novella of Bellerophon (Malten, 1925; Pöhlmann, 2011; Gordon, 1990) in the episode between Diomedes and Glaucus (Z 119-231) is apparently derived from the theme of Petephris, which is found in Genesis and must have been incorporated in the Iliad in the 7th century. This proves that the singers were always adding new episodes to the original poem of Achilles' rage (Urilius), thus creating the final Iliad (Gesamtlied).

## The Epic Cycle

The archaeological evidence argues in favour of an early composition of the cyclic epics, although the written poems date back to the 7<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. These epics were composed to complement what preceded or followed the Iliad and the Odyssey. In summary these books were saved by the Neoplatonist philosopher Proclus (5<sup>th</sup> century BC) and extend from the union of the Sky and the Earth to the death of Ulysses. However, different references to the content of these cyclic epics give the impression that their content was not strictly defined (Lesky, 2014). According to Photios (Bibliotheca 239), Proclus confirmed that the cyclic epics were studied not for their value, but for the continuation of the epic narration. This testimony led Aristarchus to think that they were composed after Homer as complete poems, despite the fact that many of their scenes were known in the Iliad, and, thus, these poems are later than the Iliad. On the contrary, Welcker (Welcker, 2020) accepts that these are pre-Homeric poetry of equal worth and constituted the basis for the Iliad and the Odyssey. Neoanalysts and Analysts accept the use of themes of the cyclic epics in the rhapsodies of the Iliad. Kullmann (Kullmann, 1960) believes that the Iliad knows very well the epic content of the cycle.

The cyclic epics (for the texts see Allen, 1912; Bernabé, 1996; West, 2003; Lesky, 2014), besides the Iliad and the Odyssey, comprise the following poems: The *Titanomachy* or the *Gigantomachy*, the *Theban Cycle* (namely the *Oedipodea*, the *Thebaid* and the *Epigoni*), the *Cypria*, the *Aithiopsis*, the *Little Iliad*, the *Iliupersis*, the *Nostoi* and the *Telegony*.

## The themes in the Odyssey

While in the Iliad the main theme is the wrath of Achilles and the action unfolds in the East, in the Odyssey the action unfolds in the West and two themes are observed: i) the return (Finley, 1978; Radermacher, 1915; Stanford, 1954) of a man to his homeland and his struggle to save his wife and restore his place in the society; ii) the hard struggle of a shipwrecked man to face the difficulties he encounters in order to survive and reach his homeland safely (*νόστος*).

The second theme is found in an Egyptian papyrus of 2000 BC and this proves the antiquity of such seafaring tales in the Mediterranean region. These two themes were organized in the Odyssey into two main sections, namely Ulysses' account of his adventures (Αλκίνοου Απόλογοι, ι-μ) and the Slaying of the Suitors (Μνηστήροφονία, ξ-ω). A third theme was added later and is

that of Telemachus' journey to Sparta (Τηλαμάχεια, α-δ), because it is absent from the prologue of the Odyssey.

## The wanderings of Ulysses

The wanderings of Ulysses (Hennig, 1934; Wolf, 1968; Lesky, 2014) in and out of the Mediterranean depict the experiences of sailors of that time, enriched by the imagination of the singers. The sea monsters, the Cyclops, the goddess Kirk, the god Aeolus etc. are the result of fictional folk tales. The descent of Ulysses in Hades was added to these tales.

## The epic names of the heroes

1100 names of heroes (Kullmann, 1960; Kamptz, 1982) and places are found in the Iliad, reflecting different time and cultural periods. Thus, the question arises as to which names Homer took from the epic material, which names he also took from local myths and which names he created himself for the needs of poetry. There is no doubt that the main heroes of the Iliad belong to the tradition. These are Achilles, Ulysses, Agamemnon, Menelaos, Nestor, Helen, Ajax, Paris and Priam. Among the names the poet received by local traditions are Diomedes and Sthenelos from the Theban cycle, Meleager from the Aeolian tradition, Idomeneus from the Cretan tradition etc. Among the names the poet created are Patroclus Hector, Glaucus etc. The main heroes have been sourced from the local cult. There are, however, many names that have been created as victims of Greek heroes, such as of Achilles, Ajax etc. A criterion for the authenticity of the name is the presence of the hero in the epic cycle. Ulysses, for instance, appears in 8 poems of the epic cycle, while Achilles in 3, Nestor in 4, Ajax in 3. Thus Ulysses is an older mythical figure compared to the other heroes. This is confirmed by the pre-Hellenic origin of the name. Achilles, Nestor, Nireus, Theseus, Oeneus, Alexander, Paris also have pre-Hellenic origins. Among the female names, Helen, Cassandra and Penelope have pre-Hellenic origins.

## The Homeric dialect

The Homeric dialect (Hoffmann, Debrunner and Scherer, 1988; Porzig, 1954; Risch, 1995; Adrados, 1999; Palmer, 1962; Horrocks, 2009; Kretschmer, 1896; Lesky, 2014) in the Iliad and in the Odyssey is mixed and contains both Ionian and Aeolian types. This language does not represent any formal dialect. However, it has become a model for epic poets and lyric poets. The question in which dialect the Iliad and the Odyssey were originally composed is answered by two theories. According to the first theory, by A. Fick (Fick, 1886), the epic was first composed in the Aeolian dialect and in Aeolian regions, such as Thessaly, Boeotia, Lesbos and the opposite coast of Asia Minor. The last two areas, Lesbos and Asia Minor, must be excluded, due to the fact that the epic ignores the Aeolic types of these areas. This theory is supported by both linguistic and mythological observations. There are Aeolian phrases in the epics that cannot be replaced by Ionian phrases. The fact that the main hero, Achilles, is of Aeolian origin and the fact that the Boeotians are mentioned first in the list Catalogue of Ships, to whom the poet Hesiod belongs, strengthens the hypothesis that the first language of the epics was the Aeolian.

The second theory, also known as "the theory of diffusion" (Horrocks, 2009), holds that both the dialects, the Aeolian and the Ionian, were developed in the main body of Greece by mutual dif-

fusion of their types and from there the mixed dialect was carried to the coast of Asia Minor. The reason the Ionian prevailed over the Aeolian is because of the spiritual superiority of the Ionians. In this case some scholars believe that the mixing happened in Asia Minor, when the Ionians advanced north into the land of the Aeolians.

## Formulas (Formulae)

H. Fränkel (1968) was the first to analyze the art of Homeric verse composition, based on the fixed relationship between noun and adjective. It was M. Parry (Parry, 1971; Lord, 1960; Hoekstra, 1965), who, with his research in the Serbo-Croatian region on the art of memorization and the composition of multi-line poems, proved that writing was not necessary for the composition of long poems. Additionally, the use of formulas, which could be moved to the beginning, to the middle or to the end of the verse gave the poet more freedom to compose long poems. Formula is a short phrase (Latacz, 1979; Holoka, 1991a), which was used in the same metrical situations. The same was argued by Hainsworth (Hainsworth, 1968), namely that formulas are characterized by a great flexibility in the composition of the poems. Thus, we have fixed forms of verses, such as τὸν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη (to him responding he said); met often in Iliad and Odyssey) that cover the first or the second half-verse and therefore act as ready-made building blocks for the composition (Bozzone, 2014).

## The style of epic poetry

In terms of structure the epic is based on the repetition of verses of the same metrical value (dactylic hexameter= δακτυλικὸς ἑξάμετρος), which are comprised of formulas. These verses are divided into two half-verses (πενθημιμερῆ καὶ κατὰ τρίτον τροχαῖον). The half-verses are themselves divided into two metrical sections, also called κῶλα (Porter, 1951; Rossi, 1965; Kirk, 1966b, 2003; Barnes, 1986; Beck, 1972). An effort was made so that each verse has full meaning. Sometimes, however, the meaning continued into the next verse or more rarely into subsequent verses. The themes of the epic were the raptures of women, the wrath of heroes and gods, the cooperation of heroes, while individual episodes exist within the context of these themes. The composition was oral, as evidenced by the formulas. When writing came into use, the widespread use of these repeating logotypes was naturally limited. This is seen in Hesiod, who is the first poet of the West to use writing. How important a role writing played in the limitation of formulas is shown by the Apollonius of Rhodes' Argonautica (Ἀργοναυτικὰ) or Virgil's Aeneid. The size of these poems must not have been too large and they were developed linearly, without a plot. The narration, as a rule, was done from the beginning of the events (ab ovo), as in the Iliad, while the beginning from the middle of the events (in medias res), which creates a plot, is the result of later elaboration.

## The techniques in epic narration

- *Deceleration*, namely the delay in the development of an episode with the interposition of other scenes or episodes.
- *Flashback*, namely the reference to events that have preceded.
- *Incorporation*, namely the appearance of secondary narrations to the main theme (e.g. the poem of Meleager in book 9 of the Iliad).

## Similes-metaphores-speeches

Characteristic feature of the epic style is the use of similes in the narration. More than quadruple the number of similes is observed in the Iliad (approximately 200) than in the Odyssey (approximately 40). Similes are frequent, due to the fact that the epic language does not have the appropriate vocabulary to clearly describe the situations and because of this it resorts to the use of images, which are offered by the similes. Homeric similes belong to the epic heritage and cannot be found in the epics of other peoples, such as the epic of Gilgamesh (Jensen, 1906; Tigay, 1982; Wilson, 1986; Beye, 1984). The simple simile is introduced with the words ὡς or φή (=like, such as), e.g. like a lion, for a hero. In its development the simile becomes more extensive and its themes come from nature. The language of the similes is the Ionian.

Metaphors also belong to the traditional material and they are numerous, e.g. *ἔπεα πτερόεντα* (words that fly).

Also traditional is the presence of speeches (Lohmann, 1970; Marg, 1967; Bezzantakos, 1996) in the epic. The speeches are direct, because the epic language was not so advanced to allow for extended indirect speeches. From the speeches we can understand the character of the heroes. The delivery of speeches was a characteristic of the hero, who had to be both a good speaker and a good fighter. Among the Homeric heroes, Nestor is considered to be a very good speaker. His words were better than honey.

## Sentences and moods

The sentences in the epic are the first form of the Greek speech, given that Linear B tablets offer too few texts to safely output results. In a general framework the epic language consists of sentences, which have a common element of subject, verb, object and adjunct. As a rule, the connection of the sentences is simple (parataxis) and subordinate clauses (hypotaxis) are rare, where independent and dependent clauses are joined and the latter are named by the corresponding conjunctions (clauses of reason, conditional clauses etc.). The conjunctions have originated from adverbs. From this connection the dependent clauses were developed in the classical age. The simple character of the epic style is confirmed by the indirect speech, where only the persons and not the moods change (cf. book 9, 127 ff.-9, 270 ff.). The moods in the independent clauses are: The indicative, which is distinguished into a potential indicative and a volitive indicative, which is used to express a wish that cannot be realized. The subjunctive, which can be potential subjunctive, with the use of the particles κε(v), ἄν. The optative, which expresses a wish that is possible to be fulfilled in the future. It is also distinguished into a potential optative with the use of the particles κε(v), ἄν. The imperative, which expresses a command or prohibition, do or not do something.

## The Homeric grammar

In the Homeric language (Palmer, 1962; Chantraine, 1953; Hoffmann, Debrunner and Scherer, 1988) there are **Aeolic** (e.g. psilosis, digamma, third-declension dative plural -εσσι, infinitive -μεναι -μεν, potential particle κεν etc.), **Ionic** (e.g. -η instead of -α, such as δῆμος instead of δᾶμος (people), μήτηρ (mother), instead of μάτηρ, first-declension dative plural -ησι, third person plural of the perfect tense and of the pluperfect tense -αται, -ατο, the potential particle ἄν, the infinitive -ναι, the conditional conjunction ἦν etc.), **Arcado-Cypriot** (some words exist, e.g. αἴσα

(destiny), εὐχολή (wish), κασίγνητος (brother), πόλις (city) etc.) and Attic (some words exist, e.g. κείντο (were down), ἦντο (were sitting), τεύχη (weapons), βοῦν (cow), ἑοσφόρος (dawn), ἡμιτελής (semi-perfect), etc.) elements, which are the newest, and are apparently connected with the recording of the epics under Peisistratus in Athens.

## Dactylic hexameter

The dactylic hexameter (Bowra, 1984; Clark, 2013; Horrocks, 2009; Snell, 1969; Maas, 1929; Lesky, 2014) is the most ancient meter of Greek poetry, which was also called heroon (ἡρῶον), according to Aristotle, or epic (ἔπος), according to Hephaestion. It probably is of a pre-Hellenic origin (Meister, 1921; Meillet, 1923). The epic poetry, which was based on the dactylic hexameter, was sung to the accompaniment of a lyre. The dactylic hexameter was repeated in every verse and consisted of six meters or feet. Every meter or foot contains one long and two short syllables. The long one, which is stressed, is called thesis. A long syllable is equivalent to two short ones. The combination of these two creates a variety of 32 verses. In full development the verse has 17 syllables, while in its shortest form it has 12 syllables (full spondee). The digamma (F) that was contained in words, even if they were not written, offered the composer the ability to change the quantity of syllables. Due to the fact that the basis of the dactylic hexameter is prosody, which is connected with the number of syllables, the poet had the possibility, besides the use of natural long or short syllables, to create artificial long and short syllables and, thus, adapt them to the requirements of the meter. Each version can have one or three caesura.

## The Homeric question

### In the Iliad

The Homeric question (Sandys, 1967; Wilamowitz, 1921; Davison, 1984; Turner, 1981; Turner, 2009; Lesky, 1963; Schadewaldt, 1983; Fowler, 2004; Rutherford, 1996) is the greatest philological question of all time and concerns whether Homer was the poet of the Iliad and the Odyssey and whether these epics were composed in a written or oral manner. From the 2nd century BC two grammarians, Xenon and Hellanicus, supported that a different poet wrote the Iliad than the one who wrote the Odyssey. To these two separators the great Alexandrian philologist Aristarchus (217-146 BC) responded (Pfeiffer, 1972) in favour of the Homeric authorship of the epics and, thus, influenced the whole of Homeric philology.

In modern times, A. Wolf (Wolf, 1795) with the famous *Prolegomena ad Homerum* supported that it was not possible for such long poems to be composed by one person, without writing, and that these are combinations of smaller epics. He considered the so-called Peisistrateian correction (πεισιστράτεια διόρθωση) an important stage in the history of these epics, which, according to Cicero (*de orat* 3, 137), made it possible for the first time to record the scattered short epics. Although the work of Parry and Lord in Yugoslavia showed that it is possible to compose great epics from memory, three schools still emerged: that of the *Analysts*, that of the *Unitarians* and that of the *Neoanalysts*.

The great school of Homeric philology is that of the *Analysts*, which are distinguished into four theories: a. the theory of

the small epics by K. Lachmann (Lachmann, 1847), who, in analogy with the Nibelungen (Thorp, 1940) epic, believed that the Iliad was composed of 18 independent short epics, which were joined by the rhapsodists. b. The theory of compilation by A. Kirchhoff (Lesky, 2014), who believed that separate small epics were combined by the rhapsodists without success. c. The theory of extension by G. Hermann (Hermann, 1832), according to which an initially small core, the original Iliad, was receiving additions at different time periods. Therefore, the Iliad has the poem of menis as its core, while the Odyssey has the return of Ulysses. d. The theory of layers, according to which the Iliad is comprised of initial and later layers. The main representatives are W. Theiler (1947) P. von der Mühl (1952) and H. van Thiel (1982).

### Our opinion

In our opinion (Konstantinopoulos, 1997) the original Iliad was the poem of the wrath of Achilles, composed orally in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC (Wilamowitz, 1916; von der Mühl, 1952; Howaldt, 1946) and, as we saw in the episode of Chryses, the Iliad had a linear and simple form. To this the refusal of Achilles in the embassy, the narration of Phoenix with the Litai and Erinyes and finally Patrocleia were added later. All these comprised of the entire Iliad (6<sup>th</sup> century BC).

### In the Odyssey

The two main schools of thought of the *Analysts* and of the *Unitarians*, which we mentioned in the Iliad, are also observed in the Odyssey.

More specifically, the *Analysts* accept that there are three distinct sections (Kirchhoff, 1879; Page, 1955; Lesky, 1963) in the Odyssey, Telemachy, the adventures of Ulysses and the Slaying of the Suitors. These three main and independent poems were later joined by a poet of the Attic cultural circle in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, who highlighted the responsibility of humans as a central theme of the entire Odyssey. Schadewaldt (1958) considers the return of Ulysses as a main theme of the Odyssey, while the other themes were added by a later poet, who added the Telemachy. P. von der Mühl (1940) accepts two layers to the Odyssey, the early one (Urodissee), which was written by Homer, and the rest of the poem, which was written by a later poet. J. Irmscher (Irmscher, 1950) accepts the elaboration of an older poem about Ulysses by a younger poet, who has a religious way of thinking and reduces the wrath of the gods to the main theme of the poem. R. Merkelbach (Merkelbach, 1951) argues that Homer is the author of an old poem of revenge. A younger poet has added the Telemachy and other shorter epics, such as the Phaeacis, the descent into Hades, the wanderings of Ulysses and his arrival in Ithaca.

On the contrary, the *Unitarians* believe that the Odyssey has been created on the basis of a clearly structured and studied in its details plan, with which the poet has joined the individual thematic units. The view of Delebeque (1958) and Eichhorn (1965) is Unitarian.

The works of F. Klinger (1944), K. Reinhardt and his student, Hölscher (1959), belong to the Unitarian school of thought, where the unified composition of the Odyssey is supported. Bethe (Bethe, 1927) recognises a clearly structured plan of a single poet, who well ties together smaller themes, such as the slaughter of the suitors, the Telemachy, the descent into Hades, etc.



## The Homeric text in the Alexandrian age

The city of Alexandria emerged as a great cultural centre, which the Ptolemaic dynasty wanted to make a city of letters and sciences (Pfeiffer, 1972; Lesky, 1963). The establishment of the museum and the Library gathered many distinguished grammarians, such as Zenodotus (Pfeiffer, 1972; Nickau, 1977; van Thiel, 1992; van Thiel, 1997; Dünzer, 1948), Callimachus (Pfeiffer, 1972; Pfeiffer, 1949-1953; Blum, 1991), Eratosthenes, (Pfeiffer, 1972; Rengakos, 1993), Aristophanes of Byzantium (Pfeiffer, 1972; Nauck, 1848; Slater, 1981; West, 2017; Callanan, 1987), Aristarchus of Samothrace (Pfeiffer, 1972; van Thiel, 2014; Schironi, 2004; Schironi, 2018; Matthaios, 1999; Erbse, 1969), who, with their studies, influenced the Homeric text that we have today. The greatest of these was Aristarchus of Samothrace, whose work was preserved in fragments by his disciples. All of them belonged to the famous Alexandrian school.

At the opposite side of this school was the school of Pergamon, which was founded by Crates of Mallos (Mette, 1951; Kroll, 1922; Broggiato, 2001; Broggiato, 2014; Dionysopoulou, 2016-2017), who was also the founder of the Library of Pergamon. He showed great respect for difficult grammatical formulas and for this reason he was considered the chief representative of the principle of anomaly, in contrast to Aristarchus, who was the chief representative of the principle of analogy. Crates paid special attention to the allegorical interpretation of the Homeric text.

Contemporary with Aristarchus and Crates was Demetrius of Skepsis (Pfeiffer, 1972; Gaede, 1880). In his work *Τρωϊκὸς διάκοσμος* (30 books) he studied the allies of the Trojans, who are mentioned in the Catalogue of Ships.

## The Homeric commentaries

### The Scholia to the Iliad

The widespread use of the Homeric poems in the education of the young people in the classical era required the preparation of special works for a better understanding of the text with an explanation of difficult words and mythological, etymological and historical details. These collections are distinguished into three main categories: i) Scholia Minora (Henrichs, 1971; Lehrs, 1824; Erbse, 1960; Montanari, 1998; van Thiel, 1992), which, as it appears, had been created in their first form since the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Into this group the interpretations of Aristarchus were incorporated indirectly, namely through the works of his students, who saved commentaries of other Alexandrian grammarians, such as Zenodotus. ii) Scholia Maiora, which include a summary of the studies of Aristarchus that is offered by his students Didymus, Aristonicus, Nicanor and Herodian (so-called *Διατεσσάρων* = Four-men commentary or Viermännerkommentar). The exegetical Scholia (Erbse, 1969-1988) of the manuscripts bT belong to this category, as well as the mixed Scholia of the manuscript Ge, the Scholia h and the Scholia of the papyri, which do not fall into any of these categories. iii) Scholia D (Lundon, 2004; van Thiel, 2006; Ernst, 2006), which are a Byzantine collection derived from the Scholia Minora of the imperial era. Their text has been expanded by mythological and other information. The manuscripts in this category are six and can be distinguished in two branches of tradition.

## The Scholia to the Odyssey

The Scholia to the Odyssey were first published by Dindorf (1855) and afterwards partly by Ludwich (1966; Nagy, 2009). The most recent critical edition of the Scholia, which replaced the older edition by Dindorf, was written by Pontani (2007-2020). The Scholia D to the Odyssey were first published by Ernst (2006), without philological commentary.

## Conclusions

The debatable issue if Trojan War is an historical or literary work has been reassessed. We were based on archaeological evidence, critical evaluation of survived documentary inscriptions at that era, as well as, in depth examination of the Epic Cycle with the various works, and more specifically the Iliad and the Odyssey, their grammar, their structure, the editing of the text during the Alexandrian age and the famous Homeric question. We reach out to the conclusion that the Homeric epics were literary work that did not occur in reality, although some archaeoastronomical results may sway opinion to the contrary. Certainly, more work and hopefully archaeological witnesses are most welcome to decipher once for ever this extremely intriguing historical problem.

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