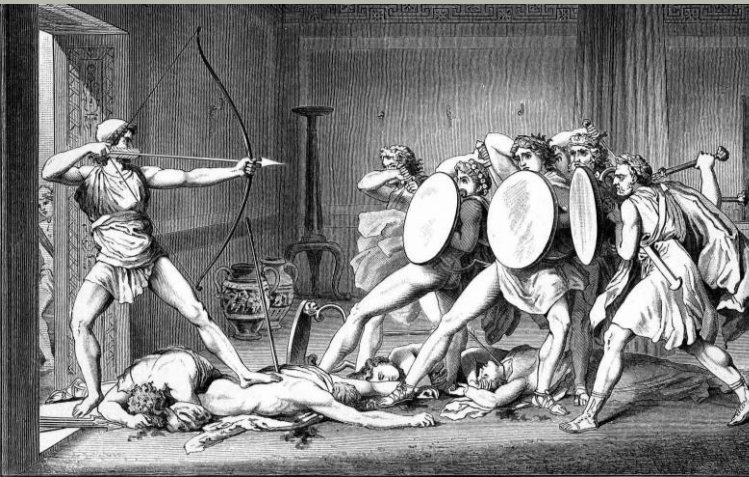
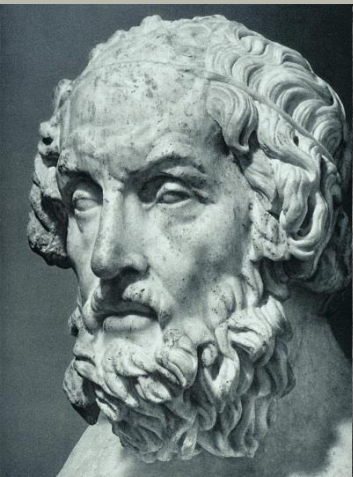


# General introduction to Homeric Poetry

Juraj Franek (j.franek@mail.muni.cz)



# Homeric question(s)

“Die Entwicklung der Forschung hat es bedingt, daß man von Homer nicht sprechen kann, ohne die homerische Frage mitzumeinen.” (Albin Lesky)

- Who composed the *Odyssey* (and the *Iliad*)?
- When did this happen?
- What is the nature of their composition?
- Why is “Homer” quite repetitive?
- Is *Odyssey* (and *Iliad*) fiction or history? Is it both, but to a different degree?
- Which period of Greek history do the epics depict?
- Mycenaean? Dark ages? Archaic? A combination of different periods?
- Can archeological findings settle the questions in any meaningful way?

# Who composed the *Iliad*?

- Friedrich Wolf, *Prolegomena ad Homerum* (1795)
  - Epics are composed orally around 950 BCE
  - Written down and edited by a compiler in 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE
- Karl Lachmann, *Betrachtungen über Homers Iliad* (1847)
  - Just like the German *Nibelungenlied*, epics are collections of separate songs
  - Songs have been composed with little to no relationship one to another
  - Author is the “collective genius of Greek people”
- Analytical interpretation
- Unitarian interpretation
  - Interpolationists (Hermann): Homer -> Interpolators -> Iliad
  - Neo-analysts (Kakridis): Multiple oral traditions -> Homer -> Iliad

# Internal inconsistencies: *Iliad*

“Son of Atreus, most lordly and king of men, Agamemnon, none could scorn any longer these gifts you offer to Achilles the king. Come, let us choose and send some men, who in all speed will go to the shelter of Achilles, the son of Peleus; or come, the men on whom my eye falls, let these take the duty. First of all let Phoinix, beloved of Zeus, be their leader, and after him take Aias the great, and brilliant Odysseus, and of the heralds let Odios and Eurybates go with them.”

(*Il.* IX, 163-170)

Ἄτρεΐδη κύδιστε ἀναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγάμεμνον  
δῶρα μὲν οὐκέτ' ὄνοστὰ διδοῖς Ἀχιλῆϊ ἀνακτι·  
ἀλλ' ἄγετε κλητοὺς ὀτρύνομεν, οἳ κε τάχιστα (165)  
ἔλθωσ' ἐς κλισίην Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος.  
εἰ δ' ἄγε τοὺς ἂν ἐγὼ ἐπιόψομαι οἳ δὲ πιθέσθων.  
Φοῖνιξ μὲν πρῶτιστα Διῖ φίλος ἠγησάσθω,  
αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' Αἴας τε μέγας καὶ δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς·  
κηρύκων δ' Ὀδῖος τε καὶ Εὐρυβάτης ἅμ' ἐπέσθων. (170)

So these two walked along the strand of the sea deep-thundering with many prayers to the holder and shaker of the earth, that they might readily persuade the great heart of Aiakides.

Now they came beside the shelters and ships of the Myrmidons and they found Achilles delighting his heart in a lyre, clear-sounding, splendid and carefully wrought, with a bridge of silver upon it, which he won out of the spoils when he ruined Eëtion's city.

With this he was pleasuring his heart, and singing of men's fame, as Patroklos was sitting over against him, alone, in silence, watching Aiakides and the time he would leave off singing.

Now these two came forward, as brilliant Odysseus led them, and stood in presence. Achilles rose to his feet in amazement holding the lyre as it was, leaving the place where he was sitting.

(*Il.* IX, 182-194)

Τὼ δὲ βάτην παρὰ θίνα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης  
πολλὰ μάλ' εὐχομένω γαιηόχῳ ἐννοσιγαίῳ  
ῥηϊδίως πεπιθεῖν μεγάλας φρένας Αἰακίδαο.

Μυρμιδόνων δ' ἐπί τε κλισίας καὶ νῆας ἰκέσθην, (185)

τὸν δ' εὗρον φρένα τερπόμενον φόρμιγγι λιγείῃ  
καλῇ δαιδαλέῃ, ἐπὶ δ' ἀργύρεον ζυγὸν ἦεν,

τὴν ἄρετ' ἐξ ἐνάρων πόλιν Ἡετίωνος ὀλέσσας·

τῇ ὅ γε θυμὸν ἔτερπεν, ἄειδε δ' ἄρα κλέα ἀνδρῶν.

Πάτροκλος δέ οἱ οἶος ἐναντίος ἦστο σιωπῇ, (190)

δέγμενος Αἰακίδαην ὅποτε λήξειεν ἀείδων,

τὼ δὲ βάτην προτέρω, ἠγείτο δὲ δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς,

στὰν δὲ πρόσθ' αὐτοῖο· ταφῶν δ' ἀνόρουσεν Ἀχιλλεὺς

αὐτῇ σὺν φόρμιγγι λιπῶν ἔδος ἔνθα θάασσεν.

# Internal inconsistencies: *Odyssey*

When Athene, lady of many counsels, puts it into my mind, I will nod my head to you, and when you will perceive it, take all the warlike weapons which are stored in the great hall and carry them off and store them away in the inward corner of the high chamber; and when the suitors miss them and ask you about them, answer and beguile them with soft words, saying: “I stored them away out of the smoke, since they are no longer like what Odysseus left behind when he went to Troy land, but are made foul, with all the smoke of the fire upon them. [...] but leave behind, for you and me alone, a pair each of swords and spears and a pair of oxhide shields, to take up in our hands, and wield them, and kill these men; and Zeus of the [counsels and Pallas Athene will be there to maze the wits in them.” (Od. XVI, 281-298)

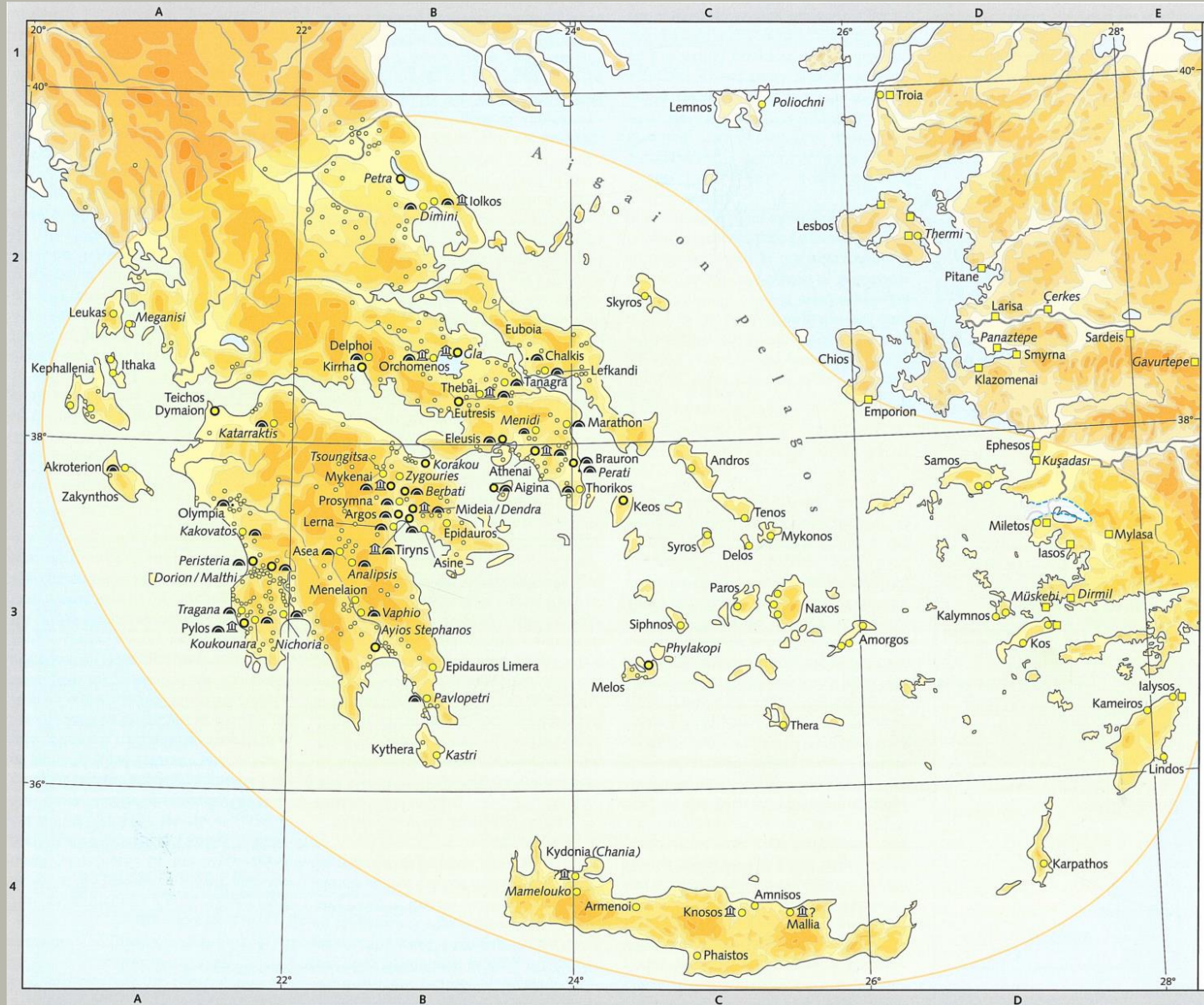
ὄπποτε κεν πολύβουλος ἐνὶ φρεσὶ θῆσιν Ἀθήνη,  
νεύσω μὲν τοι ἐγὼ κεφαλῇ, σὺ δ' ἔπειτα νοήσας,  
ὅσσα τοι ἐν μεγάροισιν ἀρήϊα τεύχεα κείται,  
ἔς μυχὸν ὑψηλοῦ θαλάμου καταθεῖναι ἀείρας (285)  
πάντα μάλ'· αὐτὰρ μνηστήρας μαλακοῖσ' ἐπέεσσι  
παρφάσθαι, ὅτε κέν σε μεταλλῶσιν ποθέοντες·  
ἔκ καπνοῦ κατέθηκ', ἐπεὶ οὐκέτι τοῖσιν ἐώκει,  
οἶά ποτε Τροίηνδε κιῶν κατέλειπεν Ὀδυσσεύς,  
ἀλλὰ κατήκισται, ὅσσον πυρὸς ἴκετ' ἀϋτμή. (290)  
[...] νῶϊν δ' οἴοισιν δύο φάσγανα καὶ δύο δοῦρε (295)  
καλλιπέειν καὶ δοιὰ βοάγρια χερσὶν ἐλέσθαι,  
ὥς ἂν ἐπιθύσαντες ἐλοίμεθα· τοὺς δέ κ' ἔπειτα  
Παλλὰς Ἀθηναίη θέλξει καὶ μητίετα Ζεὺς.

‘Father, now I will go and bring you a shield, and two spears,  
And a helmet all of bronze fitting close to your temples.  
I too will go and put on armor, and give the swineherd  
And oxherd more to wear. It is better for us to be armored.’  
Then in turn resourceful Odysseus spoke to him in answer:  
‘Run and fetch them, while I have arrows still to defend me,  
Or else, while I am alone, they might force me from the doorway.’  
So he spoke, and Telemachos obeyed his dear father,  
And went on his way to the inner room, where glorious  
Armor was stored away [...]







(*Od.* XXII, 101-109)

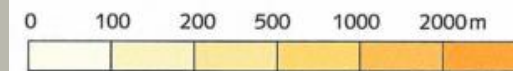
“ὦ πάτερ, ἤδη τοι σάκος οἴσω καὶ δύο δοῦρε  
καὶ κυνέην πάγχαλκον, ἐπὶ κροτάφοισ’ ἀραρυῖαν,  
αὐτός τ’ ἀμφιβαλεῦμαι ἰών, δώσω δὲ συβώτη  
καὶ τῷ βουκόλῳ ἄλλα· τετευχῆσθαι γὰρ ἄμεινον.”  
τὸν δ’ ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς· (105)  
“οἴσε θεῶν, εἰός μοι ἀμύνεσθαι πάρ’ οἴστοί,  
μή μ’ ἀποκινήσωσι θυράων μοῦνον ἐόντα.”  
ὥς φάτο, Τηλέμαχος δὲ φίλῳ ἐπεπείθετο πατρί,  
βῆ δ’ ἵμεναι θάλαμόνδ’, ὅθι οἱ κλυτὰ τεύχεα κείτο.

# External (in)consistencies

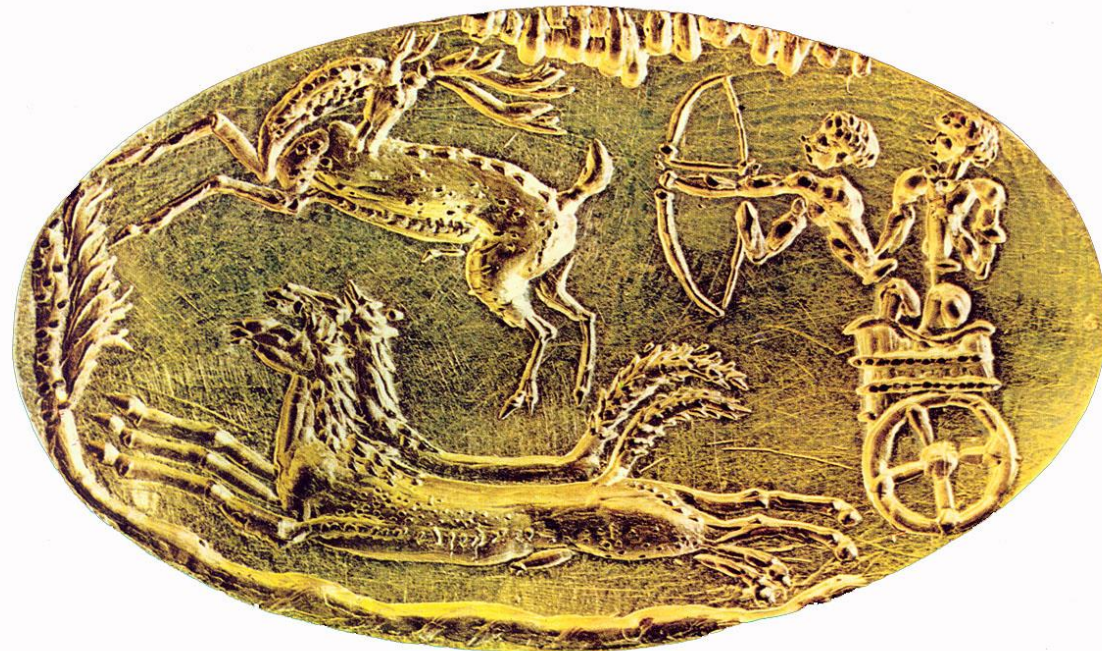


The extent of Mycenaean culture in the Aegean area (17th to 11th cents. BC)

-  Area of the 'Mycenaean Koine'
  -  Settlement
  -  Walled settlement
  -  Other find-spot with remains of Mycenaean settlement
  -  Find-spot of Aegean imports/local imitations
  -  Palace
  -  Grave(s), Necropolis
  -  Identification uncertain
- Epidauros Ancient name  
*Phylakopi* Modern name
-  Historical coastline







**Top:**

Gold signet ring from shaft grave IV, Mycenae (LH II), ca. 1500  
National Archaeological Museum, Athens

**Left:**

Late Helladic (IIIA) terracotta chariot krater, ca. 1375-1350  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York





Cypriot bronze rod tripod  
Late Bronze Age, ca. 1250-1050  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Cypro-Achaic cauldron and stand  
Orientalizing Period, ca. 800-700  
Cyprus Museum, Nicosia

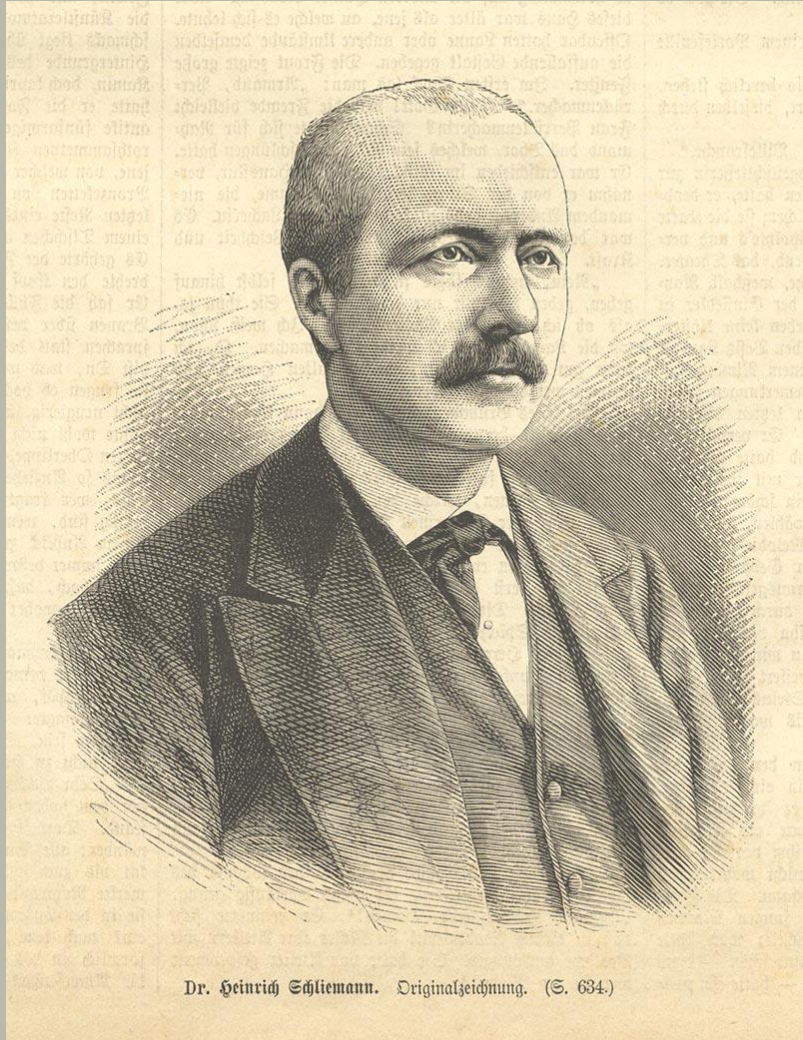


Jacques-Louis David, *The Funeral of Patroclus*, 1778, National Gallery of Ireland

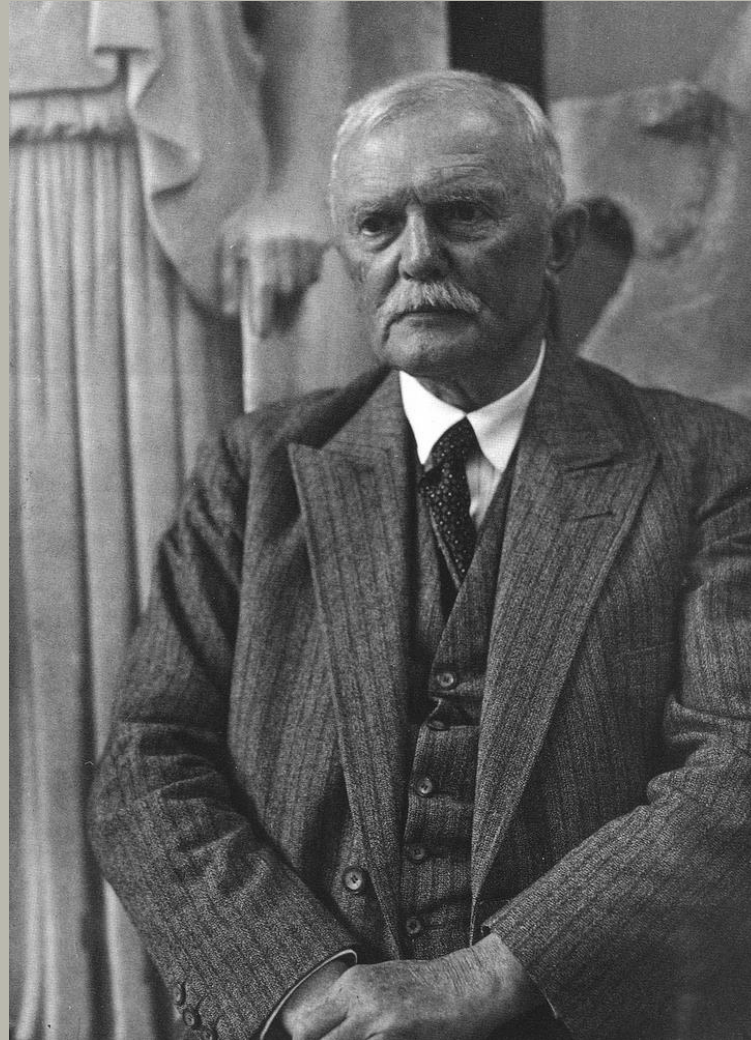


“Treasury of Atreus”, Mycenae, c. 1250

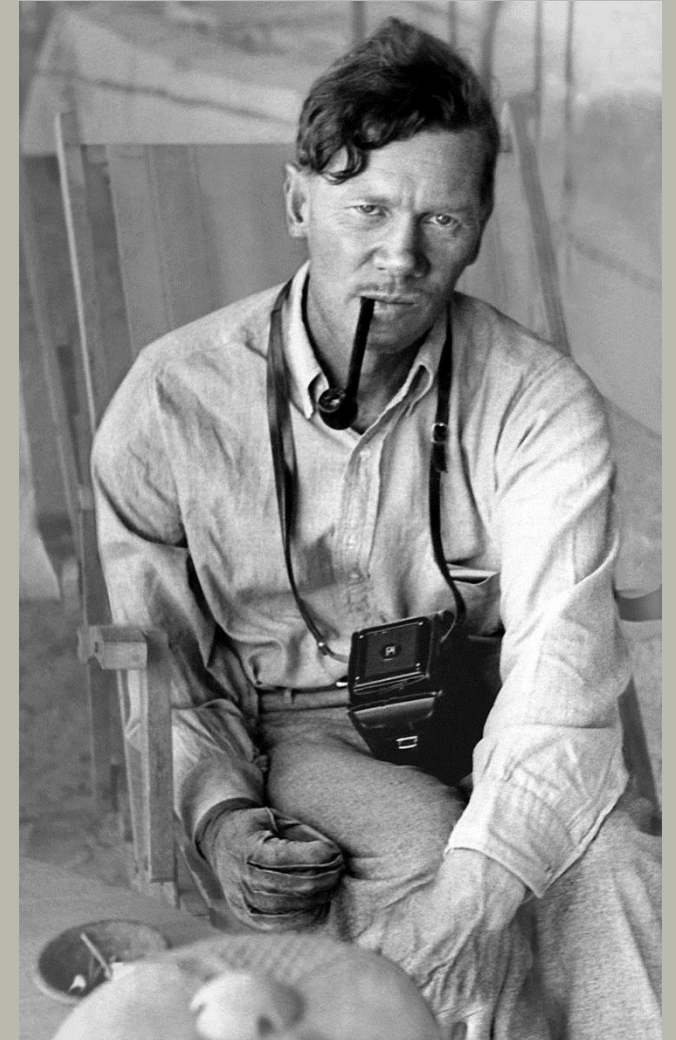
# The discovery of Troy (Hissalrik) and Mycenae



Heinrich Schliemann (1822-1890)



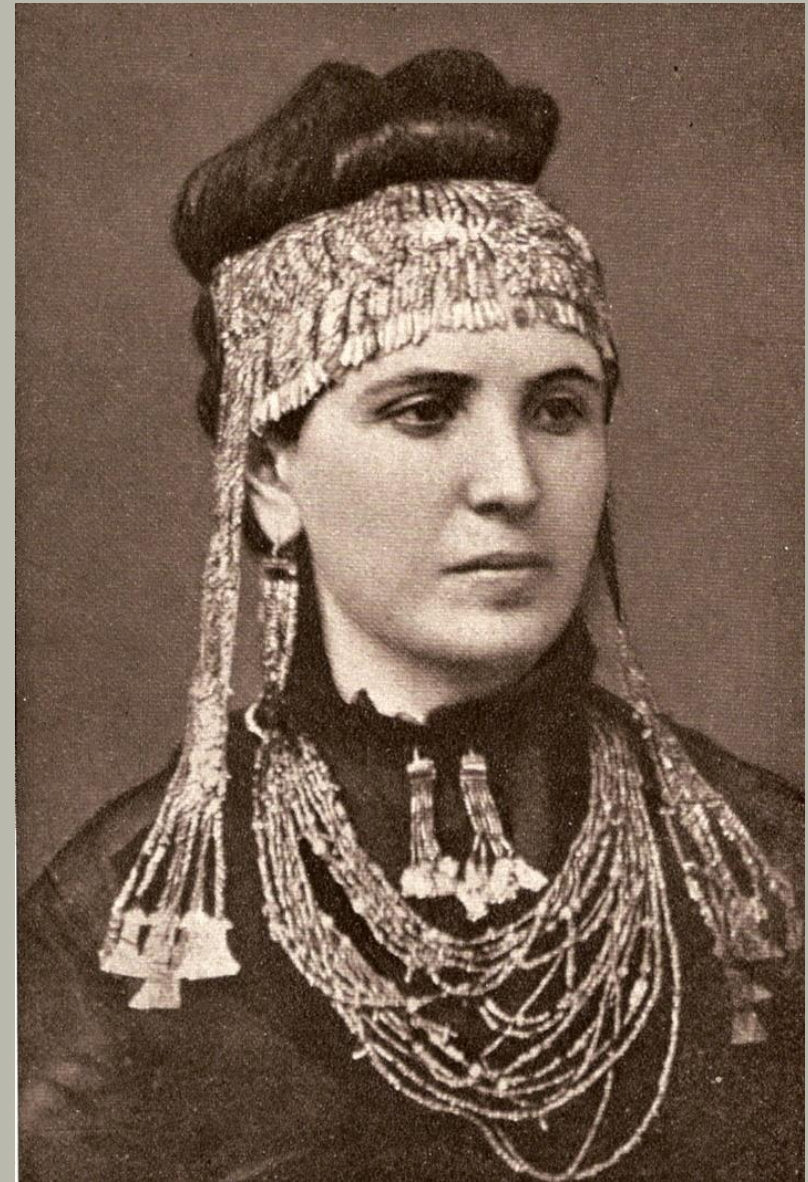
Wilhelm Dörpfeld (1853-1940)



Carl Blegen (1887-1971)



Troy VIIa (destroyed around 1250 BC)



“Priam’s treasure” (belonging to Troy II stratum), now mostly in Pushkin Museum, Moscow

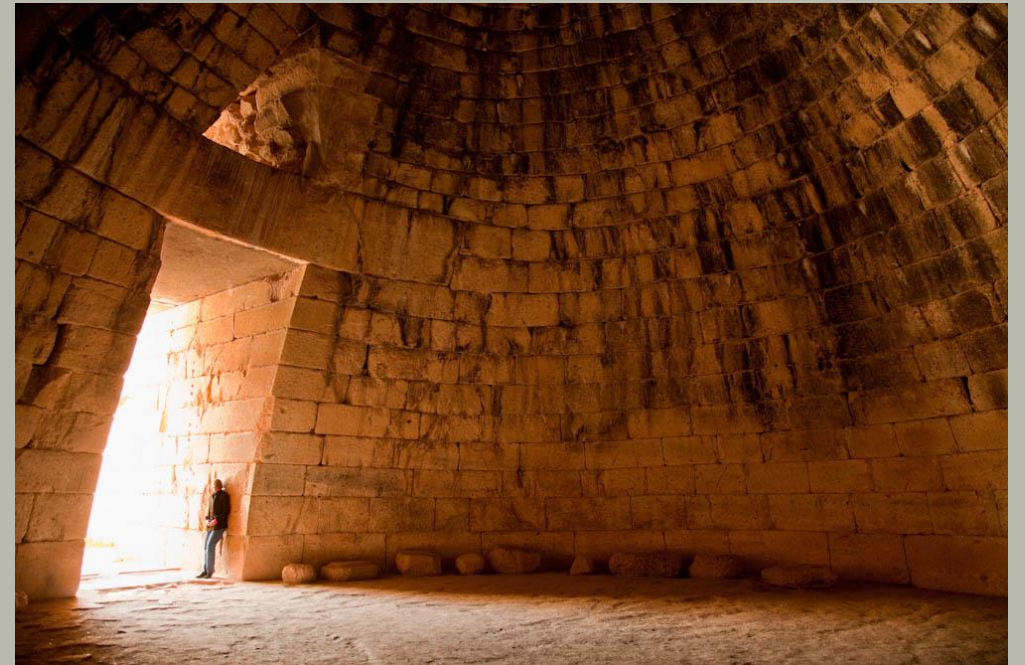
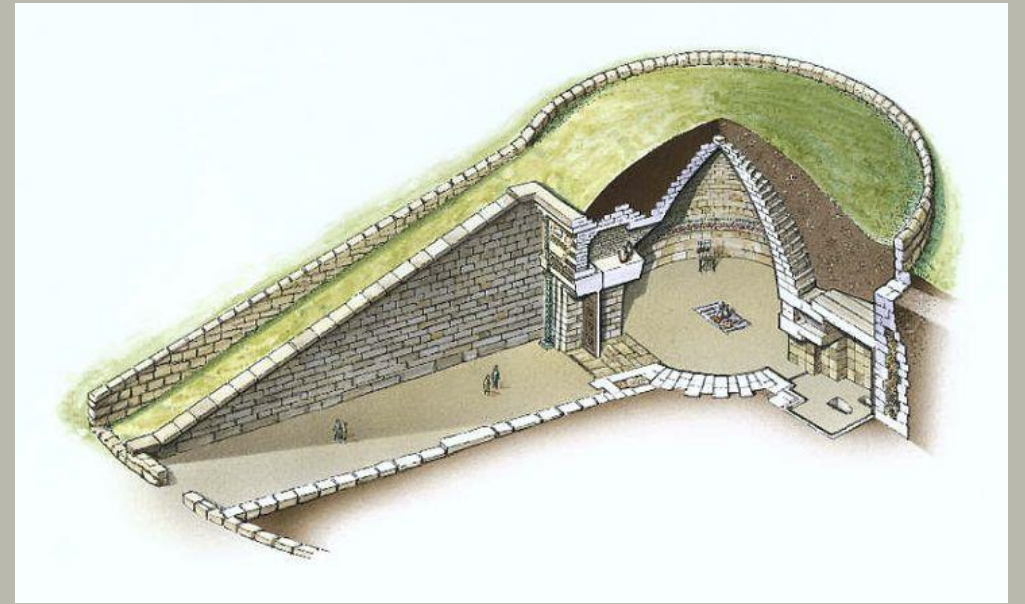




Archeological site at Mycenae, aerial view



4-18 | RECONSTRUCTION OF CITADEL AT MYCENAE



“Mask of Agamemnon” and “Treasury of Atreus”, Mycenae

*Underwood & Underwood, Publishers.  
New York, London, Toronto-Canada, Ottawa-Kansas.*

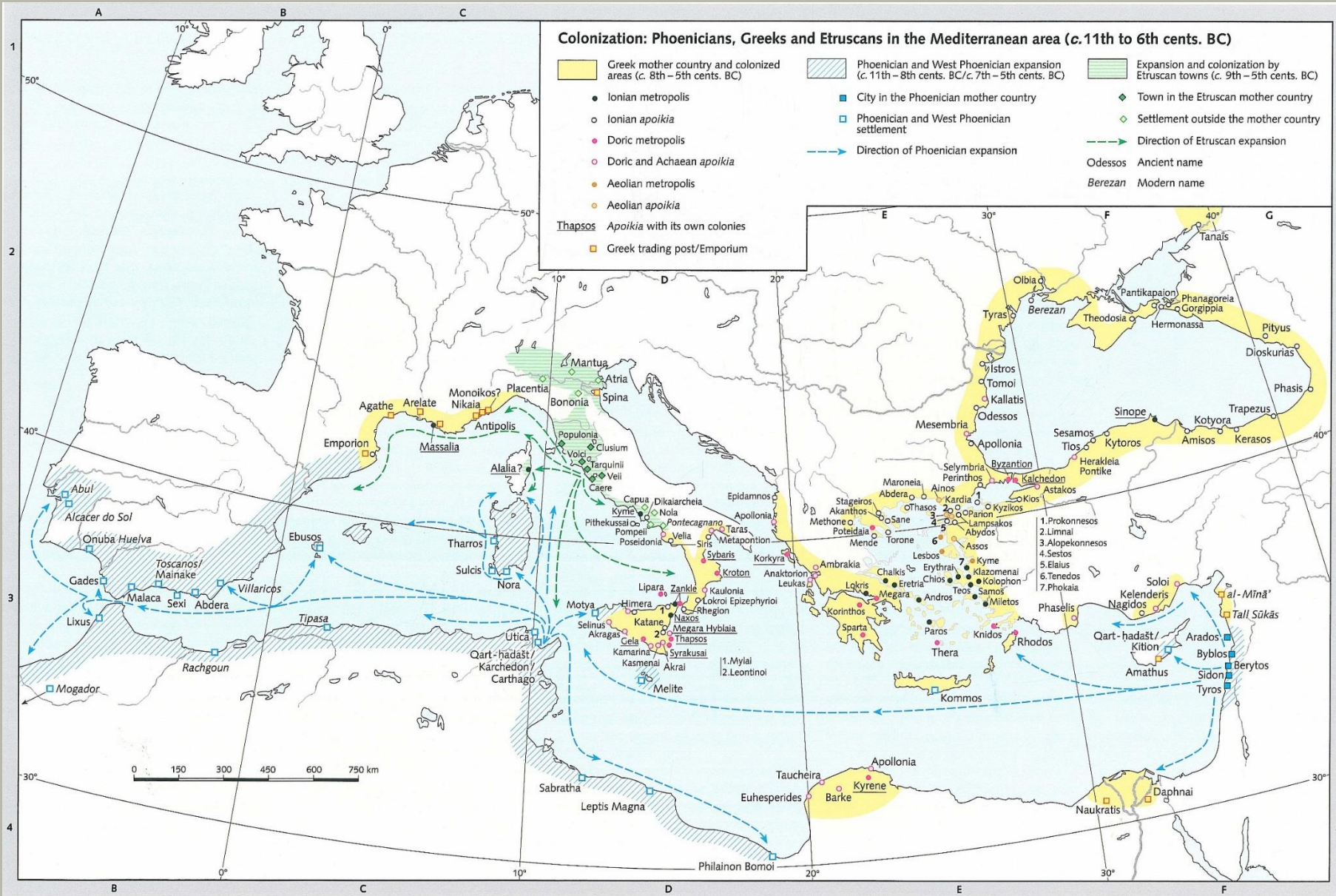


*Worke and  
Washington D.C. Arlington Va. Studios  
Littleron Md.*

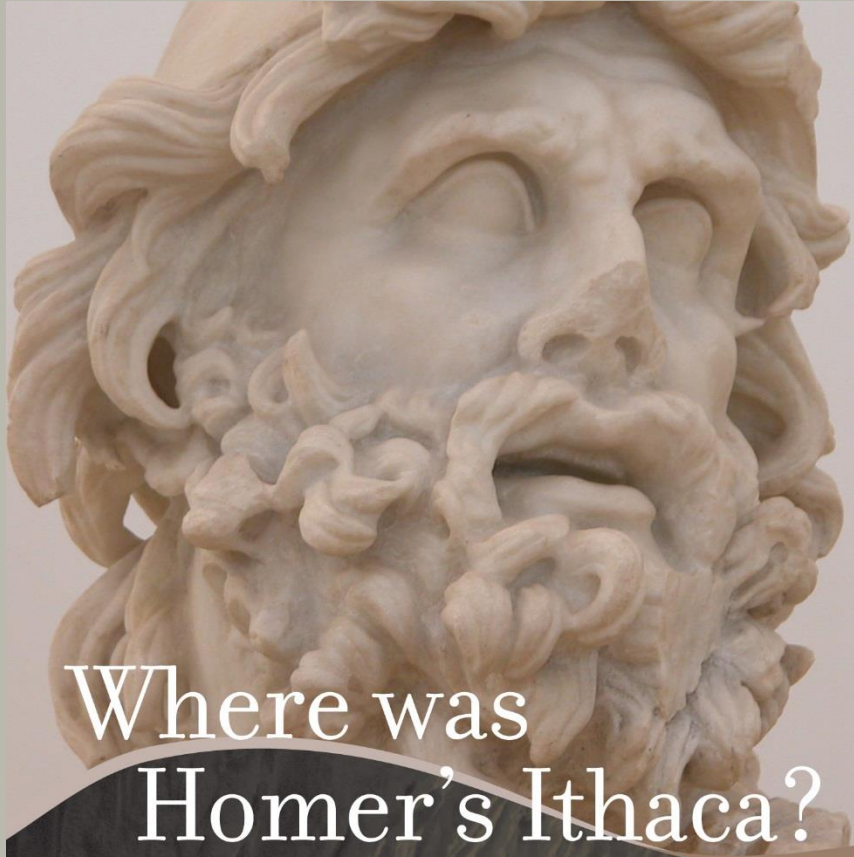
(41) Entrance to Tomb of Agamemnon, Conqueror of Troy (B. C. 1194), Mycenæ, Greece.  
Copyright 1897 by Underwood & Underwood.

“Entrance to Tomb of Agamemnon, Conqueror of Troy (B.C. 1194), Mycenæ, Greece”

# Odysseus' travels, Scheria and Greek colonization



# Odysseus and Ithaca?



Speakers: Robert Bittlestone and Professor James Diggle will present their radical solution to the 3,200 year old mystery of the lost homeland of Odysseus.

Date: Wednesday November 28 2007 16.00

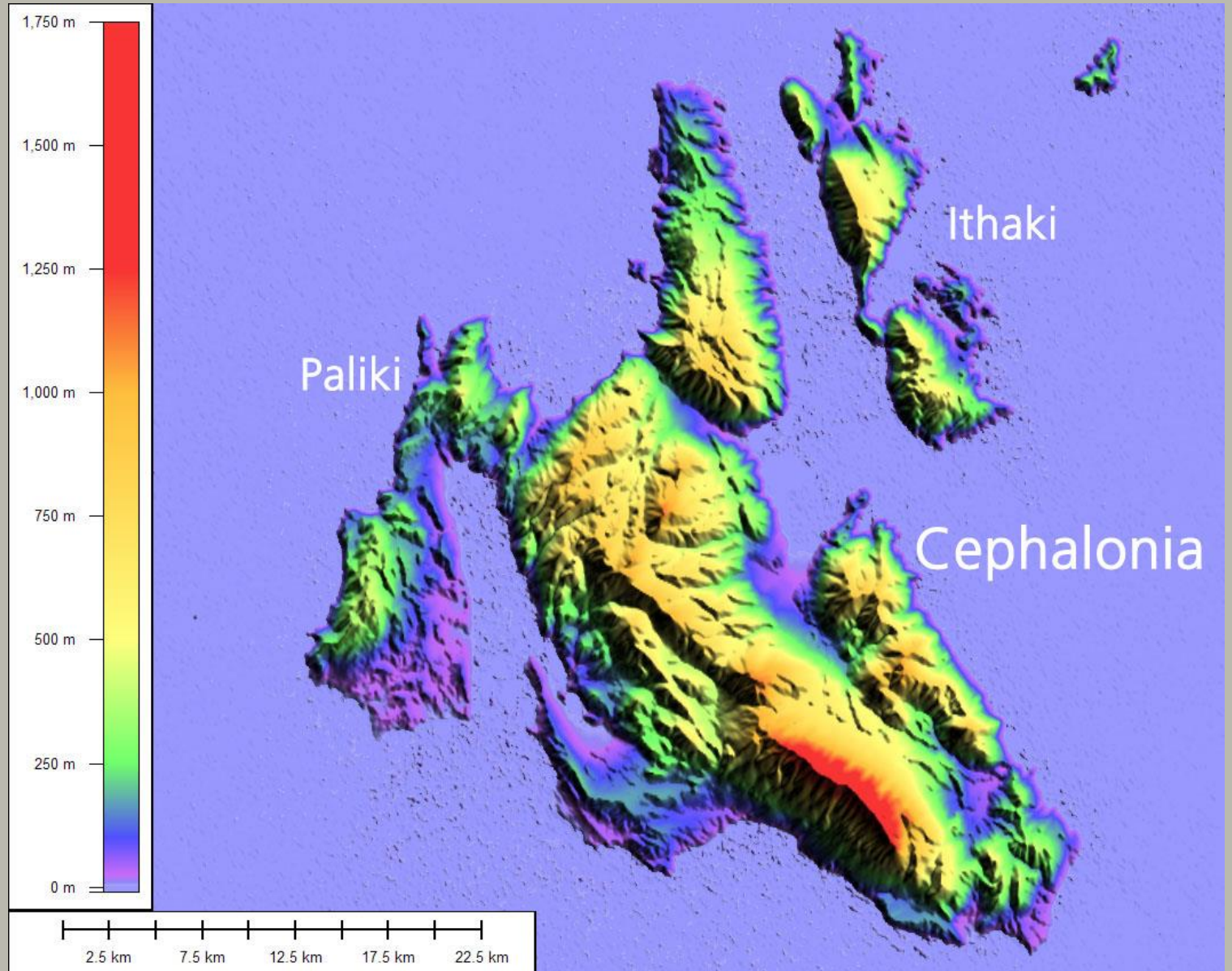
Venue: The Perse School, Hills Road, Cambridge CB2 8QF

Admission: Free, but by ticket only, available from Mrs Rebecca Randall.

Contact: 01223 403894 or RCRandall@perse.co.uk

Signed copies of *Odysseus Unbound: The Search for Homer's Ithaca* will be on sale from Cambridge University Press after the talk at the special price of £20.

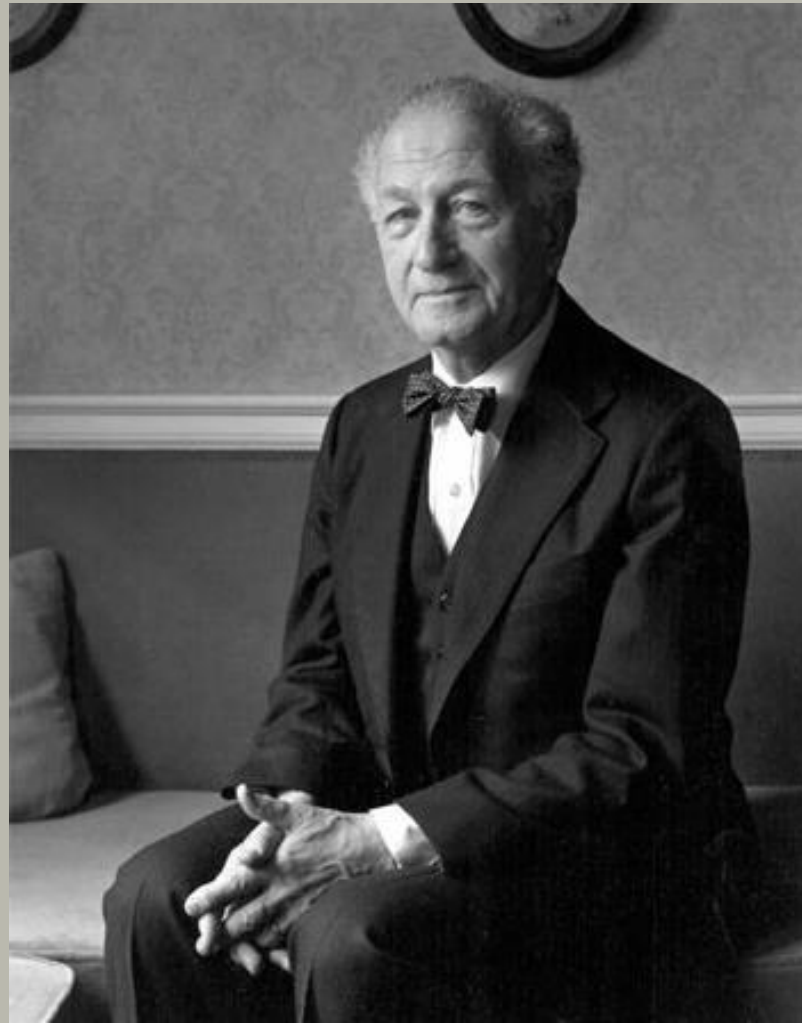
Further details: [www.odysseus-unbound.org](http://www.odysseus-unbound.org)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8buaCDIYU2U>



Milman Parry (1902-1935)



Albert Lord (1912-1991)



Avdo Međedović (ca. 1875-1953)

TABLE I—NOUN—EPITHET FORMULAE OF GODS AND HEROES IN THE NOMINATIVE CASE; PRINCIPAL TYPES

(An asterisk \* indicates that the metre of a name makes a noun—epithet formula impossible in the metre in question)

	Between the bucolic diaeresis and the end of the line —○○—	Between the hepthemimeral caesura and the end of the line ○○—○○—	Between the feminine caesura and the end of the line —○○—○○—	Between the beginning of the line and the penthemimeral caesura —○○—○○—	Noun— epithet formulae of different types	Different types of formulae
'Οδυσσεύς	δῖος 'Οδυσσεύς 60 ἑσθλὸς 'Οδυσσεύς 3	πολύμητις 'Οδυσσεύς 81 ποτόλιπορθος 'Οδυσσεύς 4	πολύτλας δῖος 'Οδυσσεύς 38	διογενὴς 'Οδυσσεύς 4	12	8
Ἀθήνη	Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη 39 [ὄβριμοπάτρη] 2	γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη 26	θεὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη 51 Ἀλαλκομενῆς Ἀθήνη 2	Παλλὰς Ἀθηναίη 8	11	6
Ἀπόλλων	Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων 33	Διὸς υἱὸς Ἀπόλλων 2 ἐκάεργος Ἀπόλλων 6 κλυτότοξος Ἀπόλλων 1	ἄναξ Διὸς υἱὸς Ἀπόλλων 5 ἄναξ ἐκάεργος Ἀπόλλων 3	[Φοῖβος ἀκερσεκόμης] 1	15	5
Ἀχιλλεύς	δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς 34 ὠκύς Ἀχιλλεύς 5	πόδας ὠκύς Ἀχιλλεύς 31 μεγάθυμος Ἀχιλλεύς 1	ποδάρκης δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς 21		10	7
Ζεὺς	μητιάτα Ζεὺς 18 εὐρύοπα Ζεὺς 14	νεφεληγερέτα Ζεὺς 30 Ζεὺς τερπικέραυτος 4 στεροπηγερέτα Ζεὺς 1	[πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε] 15 'Ολύμπος εὐρύοπα Ζεὺς 1	Ζεὺς ὑψιβρεμέτης 5	39	24
Ἥρη	πότνια Ἥρη 11	λευκῶλενος Ἥρη 3	βοῶπις πότνια Ἥρη 11 θεὰ λευκῶλενος Ἥρη 19		3	3
Ἔκτωρ	Φαίδιμος Ἔκτωρ 29 ὄβριμος Ἔκτωρ 4	κορυθαίολος Ἔκτωρ 25	μέγας κορυθαίολος Ἔκτωρ 12	Ἔκτωρ Πριαμίδης 6	11	7
Νέστωρ	ἰππότα Νέστωρ 1		Γερήμιος ἰππότα Νέστωρ 31		7	4
Ἄρης	χάλκεος Ἄρης 5 ὄβριμος Ἄρης 5	χρυσήμιος Ἄρης 1	βριήπνος ὄβριμος Ἄρης 1 Ἄρης ἄτος πολέμοιο 3		12	10
Διομήδης	[Τυδέος υἱός] 8	κρατερὸς Διομήδης 12 ἀγαθὸς Διομήδης 1	βοὴν ἀγαθὸς Διομήδης 21		7	5
Ἀγαμέμνων	*	κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων 26	ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων 37	[ἦρωσ Ἀτρείδης] 3	15	6



## Modern view

“In sum, with due regard to the unknowables, I would argue that the Iliad and Odyssey were conceived as new kinds of text by their oral poet(s). The notion that they wrote and lovingly revised their texts with pen in hand seems anachronistic, but it is possible that large portions of the songs, through premeditation, came to be fixed. Their contemporary recording in writing cannot be coincidental; but which is cause, and which is effect? The pairs ‘unfixed/fixed’ and ‘oral/written’ are not exactly synonymous. Perhaps one could describe the progression thus: (1) non-fixed, because oral; (2) oral, with many consciously fixed passages; (3) mostly fixed, and therefore written; (4) written to start with, and therefore fixed. In Homer’s day, I suggest, Greek epic moved through (2) to (3).” (Robin Fowler)