

# intro/organisation

CLCV 2500 | ENGL 2500 Classical Mythology

# Syllabus notes

## How to find me

- [yukaili@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:yukaili@cunet.carleton.ca)
- Paterson 2A 56 (between fl. 2 and 3)
- Office hours: TBD

## Things I'm interested in

- Greek literature, esp. Homer, Theocritus, tragedy
- Greek language and linguistics
- Ancient literatures, history, culture
- Contemporary literary theory, critical theory, philosophy
- Anything you want to talk about

# Syllabus notes

## TAs

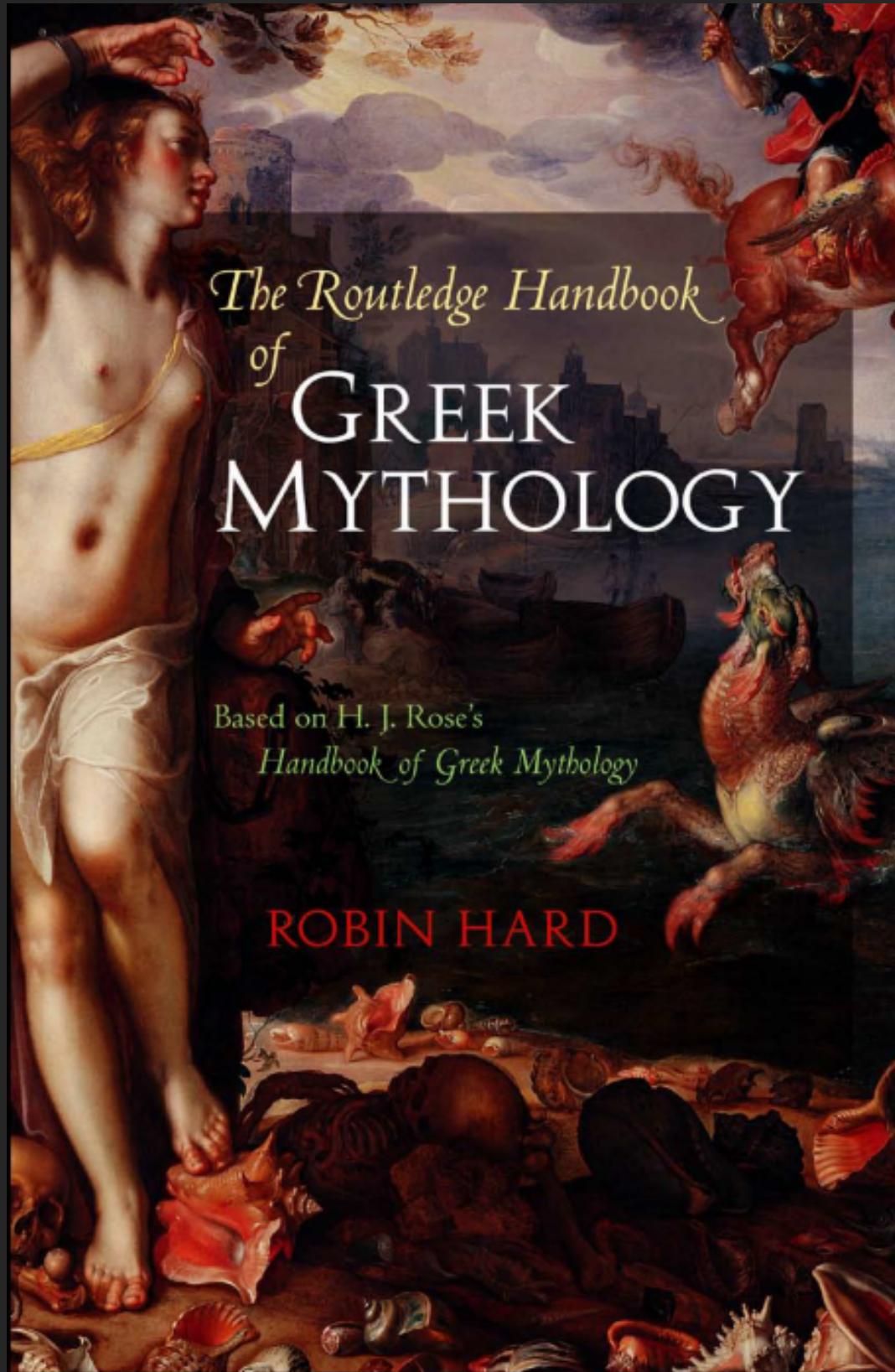
- @carleton.ca
- Office
- Office hours: TBD

What are they interested in?

- ?

# Syllabus notes

## Books and readings



please feel free to use  
ebooks/second hand/anything to  
keep costs down

this book will be used for  
background and reference: it is not  
the core of what we will be doing

# intro/organisation

what will/won't we be doing?

focus: understanding, not memorising

(but need to memorise *some things* to understand)

example questions

not like this: “who is Agamemnon’s second wife’s third cousin?”

more like this: “what did the story of Agamemnon’s murder mean to 5<sup>th</sup> century Athenians?”

# intro/organisation

what will/won't we be doing?

## components

“what did the story of Agamemnon’s murder mean to 5<sup>th</sup> century Athenians?”

story: contents of myth

5<sup>th</sup> century: history

Athenians: society, culture

meaning: literary interpretation

classics (Greek & Roman studies): interdisciplinary

secret literature survey

# intro/organisation

## grading and assignments

everyone

online quizzes: based on lectures/readings, 10 minutes, 8 MC questions

midterm: in class; part 1 MC like quizzes, part 2 written response (~1 side)

two tracks: pick your poison

1. scheduled final: like midterm (2 parts)

or

2. final assignment: re-write a story in the style of one of the authors we will study, *plus* write an explanation of *how* your re-writing is like the author you are imitating

# intro/organisation

## how to succeed in this class

- Come to lecture
- Do readings beforehand
- Read actively (use a pen/highlighter)
- Ask questions (please interrupt!)
- Talk to me; talk to other people
- Lecture notes will be uploaded
- Collaborative study guides?

# intro/organisation

next time: what is myth? why study it?

# what is myth?

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# what is myth?

???

what is myth about?

who is in mythological stories?

why do you call something a myth? as opposed to fiction? novel? lies?

why did Greeks/Romans care about myths? why do we care about myths?

# what is myth?

## who is in mythological stories?

“gods and heroes”

example: Trojan war  
(what happens?)

“myths are stories about gods and heroes” ↗ what contemporary stories might fall under this definition?

Mykonos vase, 7<sup>th</sup> c. ↗



# what is myth?

## what happens in mythological stories?

Cadmus and the dragon, 6<sup>th</sup> c.



# what is myth?

what happens in mythological stories?

Eleusinian mysteries

Heracles, Persephone (seated), a priest, Demeter (middle, seated), Triptolemus (the child), Hecate, Iambe (seated), Dionysus



# what is myth?

## what happens in mythological stories?

when do these stories happen?

“once upon a time”

“a long time ago ...”

- is this any specific, historical time? no - just “before”

“floating gap”

# what is myth?

why did Greeks/Romans care about

what is the relationship between the “once upon a time” and the present? why is the past important?  
**myths?**

Cadmus slays dragon ↳ founding Thebes  
Demeter goes to Eleusis ↳ founds Mysteries

what happened in the “once upon a time” explains aspects of the present  
explains: justifies, legitimises

key term: aetiology, *aitia*, “causes, reasons, responsibility”  
“the story about Demeter is an aetiological account of the Eleusinian Mysteries”

contemporary myths: what do they explain/justify?  
e.g., American revolution; storks

# what is myth?

## myths, fictions, lies

are myths “true”? did Greeks/Romans “believe” their myths? yes and no

no

- there was no “one true version”
- compare monotheistic religions: book, word of God, orthodox vs. heretical
- myths contain variations
- e.g., where was Zeus born? some say Crete, some say Arcadia
- why was variation okay? mortals can never have certain knowledge about gods
- compare “revealed religion”

# what is myth?

myths, fictions, lies

are myths “true”? did Greeks/Romans “believe” their myths? yes and no

yes

- myths *worked*, they *functioned*
- e.g., myth of Cadmus *worked* in giving a civic identity to Thebans (*spartoi*)
- myths continue to work, e.g., children are satisfied by the stork theory



# what is myth?

## why do we care about myths?

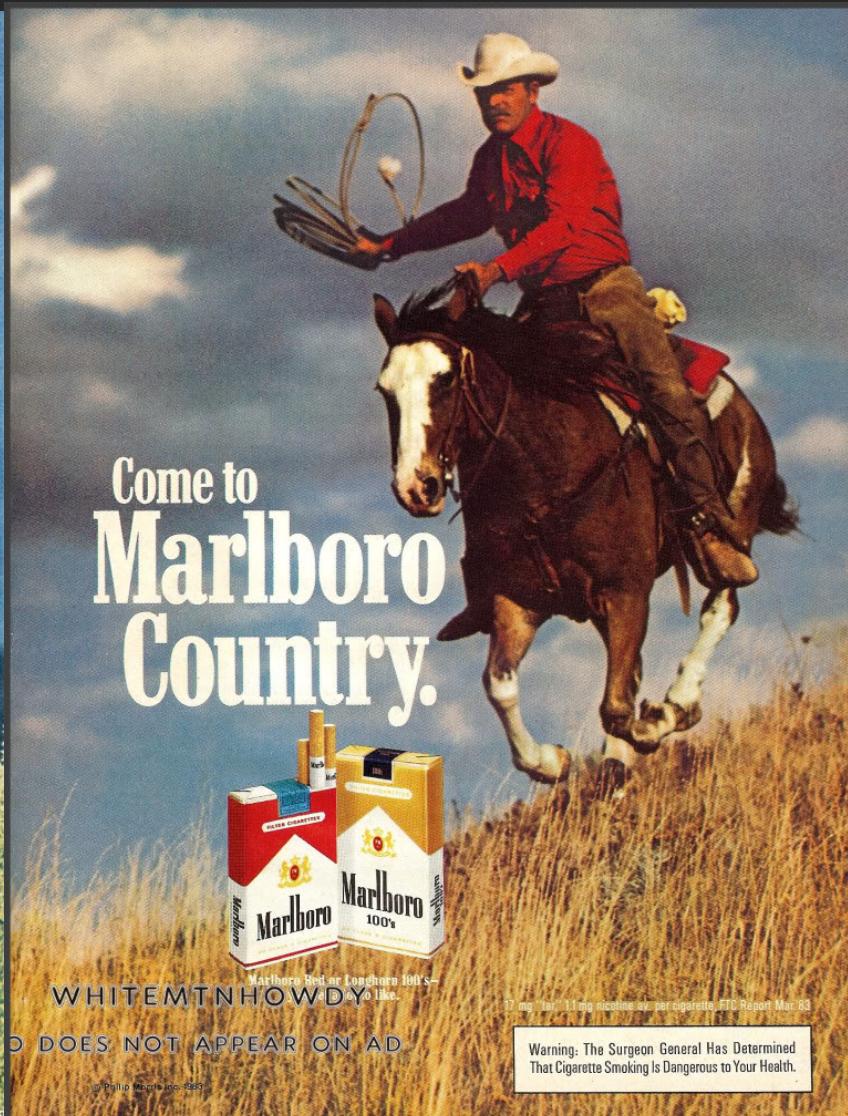
### content vs. function

content: Greek/Roman myths important for understanding references in history, also in later art/literature (“reception”)

function: seeing how Greek/Roman myths worked lets us compare how our myths work

e.g., what work do these stories accomplish?

- “Bill Gates, university dropout”
- “the Resistance” in Star Wars
- visual myths in advertising



DOES NOT APPEAR ON AD

Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined  
That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous To Your Health.

# what is myth?

## provisional definition

"traditional stories embedded within a society that presents or encodes the way that society organises its way of thinking about the world"

traditional: a myth is not new even when it is new – always presents as authoritative because inherited (compare “originality,” “genius”)

stories: something that took place once (compare scientific facts, true for all time);  
aetiology: explain a fact using a story

embedded within a society: a poet can *re-tell* a myth, but no one person *makes up* a myth; myths are common property

presents or encodes: ways of thinking are not explicitly presented ↳ need interpretation;  
e.g., “rags to riches” stories ↳ “I’m not a poor person; I’m a future/potential rich person”

# what is myth?

## provisional definition

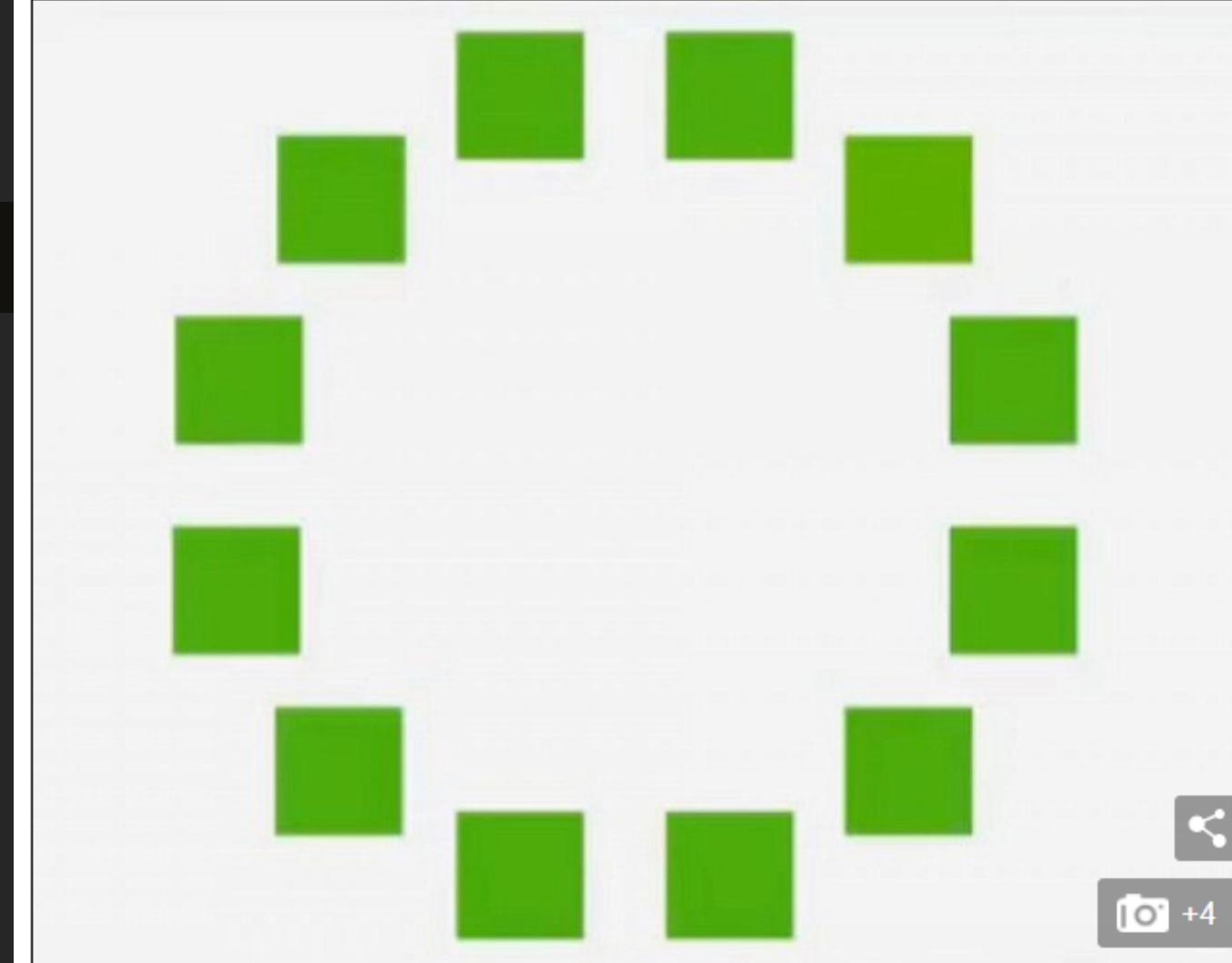
"traditional stories embedded within a society that presents or encodes the way that society organises its way of thinking about the world"

### way of thinking about the world:

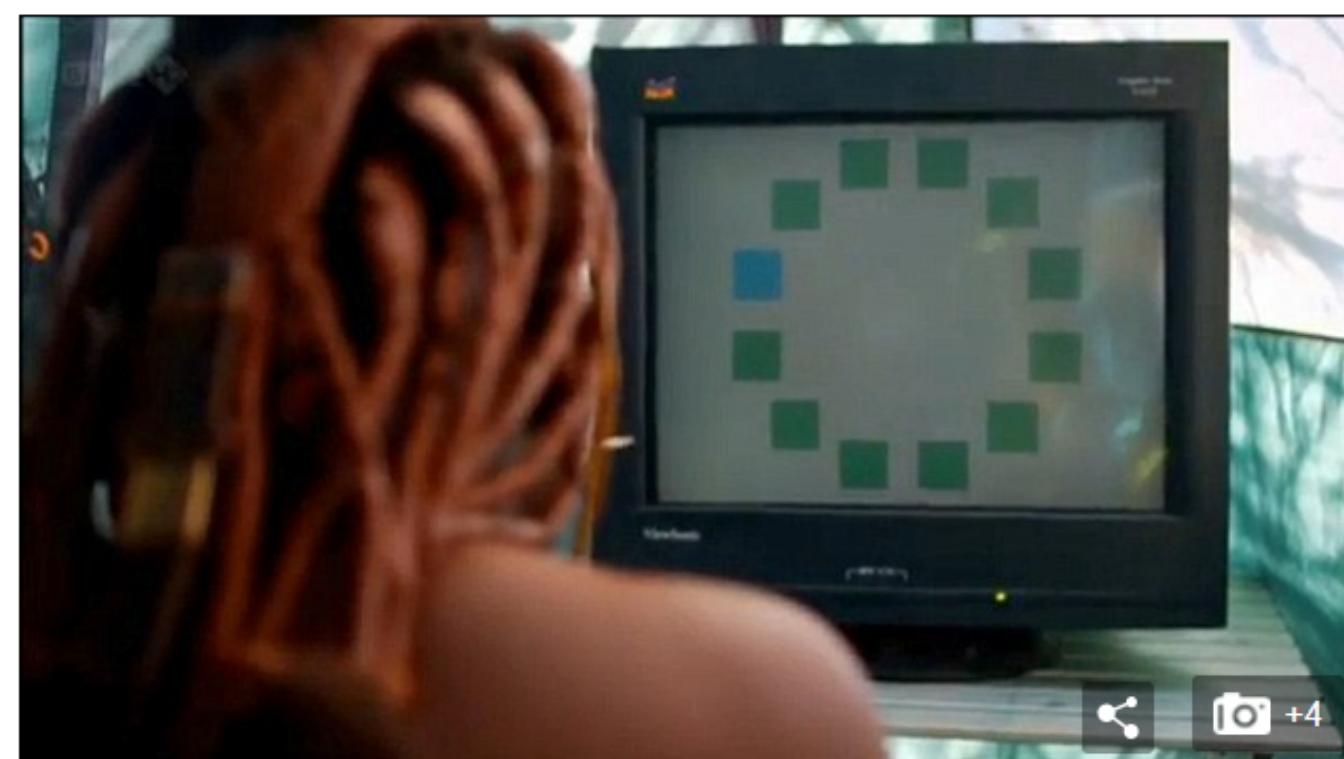
- thinking: dividing up experience using concepts
- myths provides concepts that organise experience
- e.g., names for colours ↗
- who is “us” in contrast to “them”?
- “man” vs. “woman”?
- “bravery” vs. “cowardice”?

the concepts we have shapes our perception/experience of the world

- your perception vs. baby's
- “reading” a video game



Can you see which green square is a different shade? It is the second one of the top left. While we may not be able to distinguish it, the Himba tribe - who have a number of different words for green - can see it instantly



Several years ago, researchers showed some of the Himba tribe a circle with 11 green squares and one blue. The study found they could not pick out which one was different from the others, or took much longer to make sense of it

# what is myth?

## provisional definition

"traditional stories embedded within a society that presents or encodes the way that society organises its way of thinking about the world"

way of thinking about the world:

- thinking: dividing up experience using concepts
- myths provides concepts that organise experience
- e.g., names for colours ↗
- who is “us” in contrast to “them”?
- “man” vs. “woman”?
- “bravery” vs. “cowardice”?

the concepts we have shapes our perception/experience of the world

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# what is myth?

## transliteration

	<b>Greek</b>	<b>(✉ Latin)</b>	<b>✉ English</b>	<b>rule?</b>
1	Zeus		Zeus	
2	Kassandra	Cassandra	Cassandra	k ✉ c
3	Mukenai	Mycenae	Mycenae	u ✉ y ai ✉ ae
4	Athenai, Thebai	Athenae, Thebae	(Athens, Thebes)	
5	Akhilleus	Achilles	Achilles	kh ✉ ch (eus ✉ es)
6	Phoinix	Phoenix	Phoenix	oi ✉ oe
7	Menelaos	Menelaus	Menelaus	os ✉ us
8	Priamos	Priamus	Priam	os ✉ [ ]
9	Alexandros	Alexander	Alexander	ros ✉ er

# what is myth?

looking ahead

next time: broad historical background

then: begin with Homer's *Iliad*

please *start* reading textbook 437-80, story of Trojan war, background to *Iliad*

# myth and history

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# myth and history

## overview

classical myths: start out as Greek myths, then adopted/adapted by Romans

### topics for today

1. Greek history before writing
2. Indo-European origins of Greek language: did Greeks inherit myths with their language?

# myth and history

## overview

- Neolithic 7000-3000
- Bronze age 3000-1200
- Early iron age 1200-750 ("dark age")
- Archaic 750-480
- Classical 480-323
- Hellenistic 323-30 BC
- Roman 30-337 AD/CE

### **Transition: Late bronze age to archaic Greece:**

- Minoan and Mycenaean civilisations  
~2000-1200
- "dark age" ~1200-750
- archaic and classical Greece 750-

480: defeat of the second Persian invasion

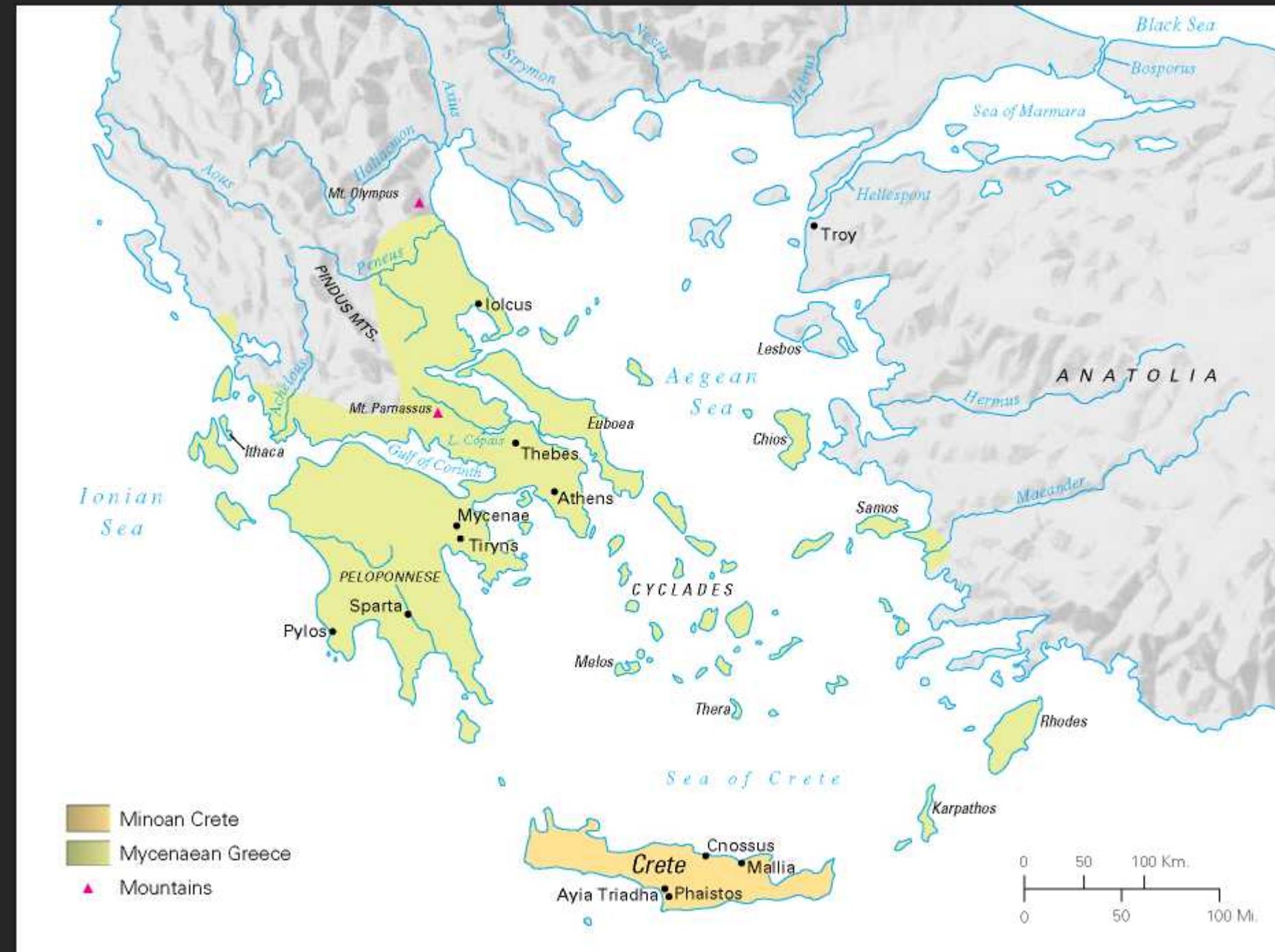
323: death of Alexander

30: Roman conquest of Greek Egypt

337 AD: death of Constantine I, division of the Roman empire

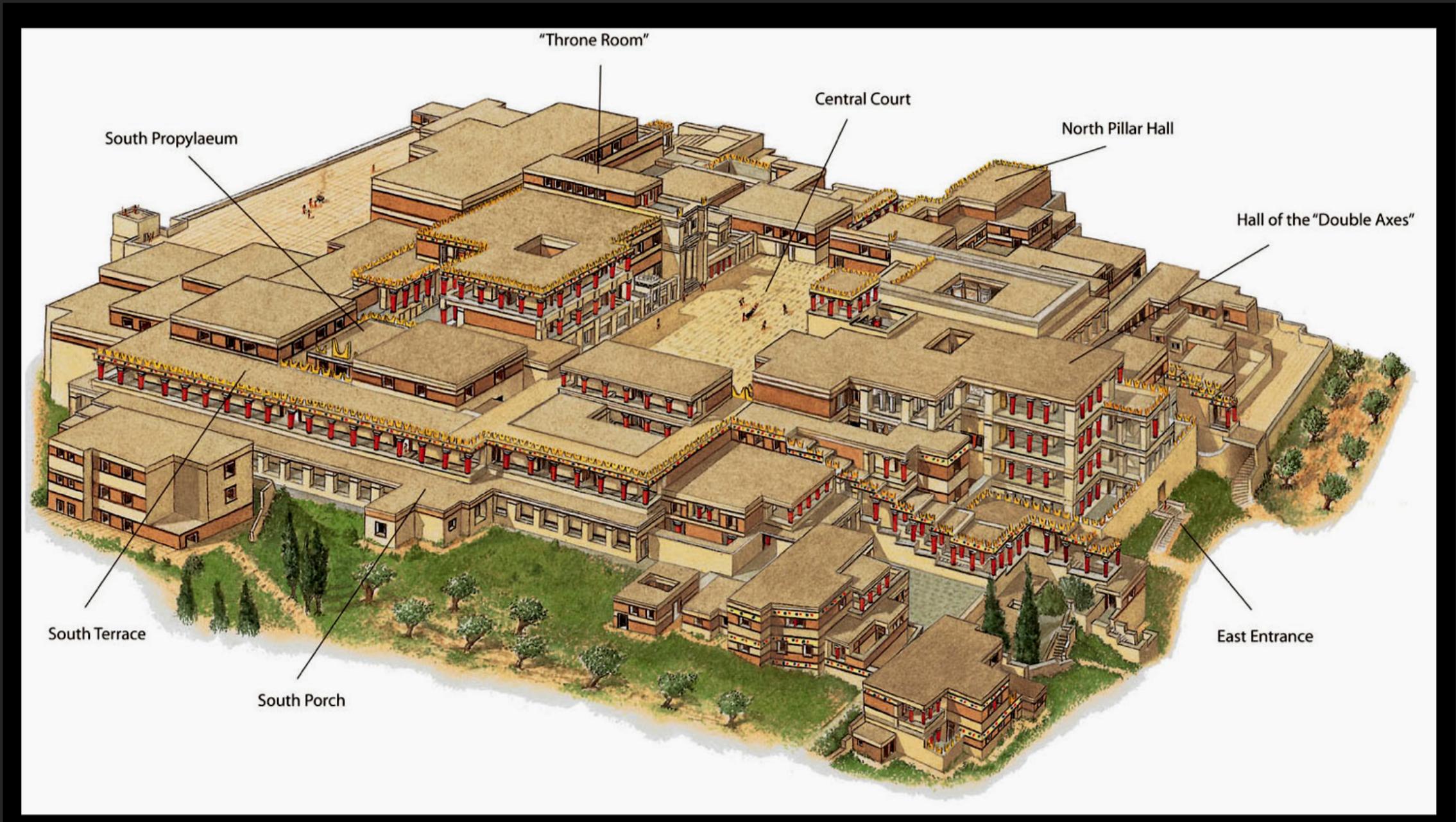
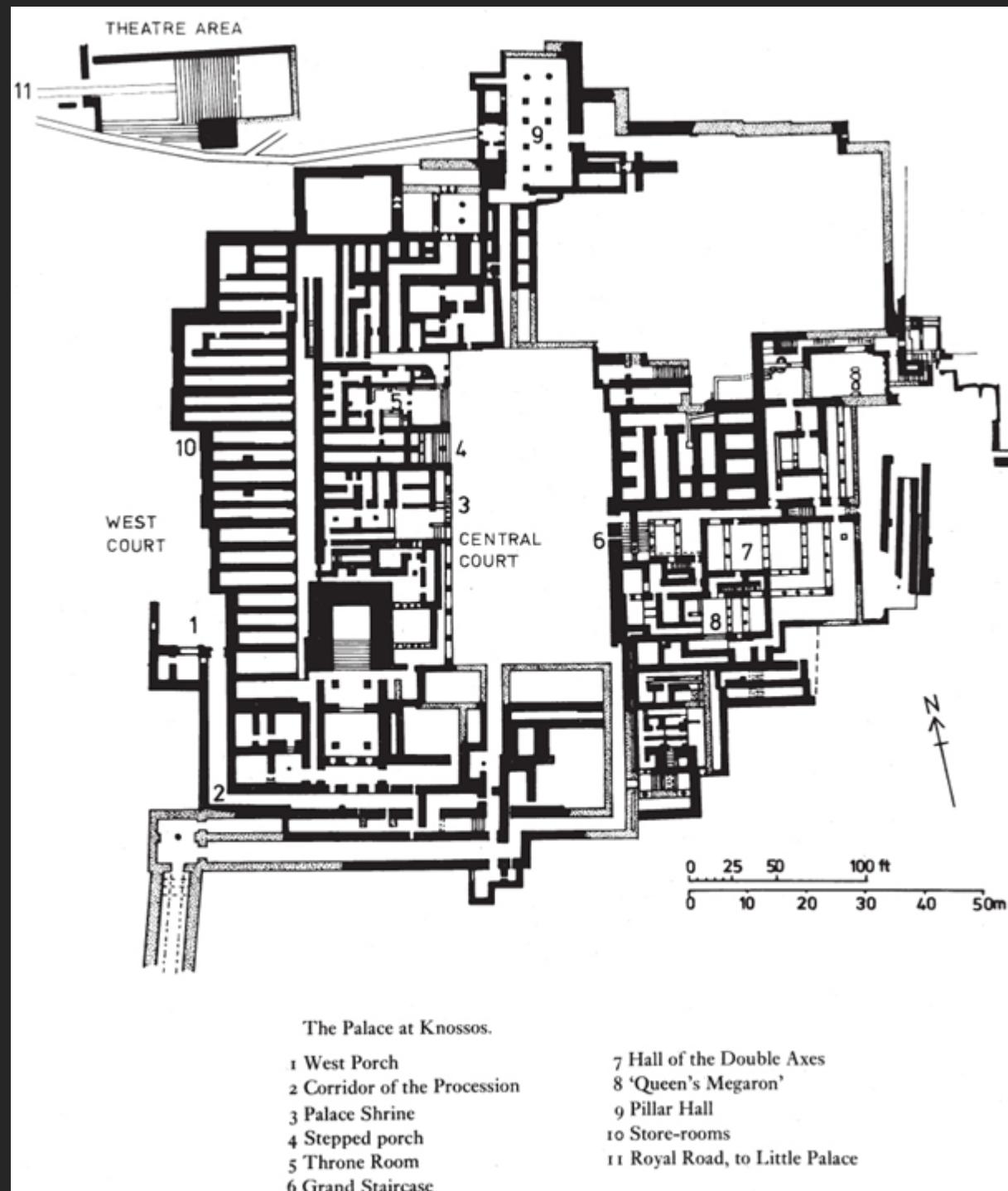
# Minoan civilisation

**2,700 - 1,100 BC**



# Minoan civilisation

## Palace at Knossos



# Minoan civilisation

Minoans and the sea



# Minoan civilisation

Minoans and the sea



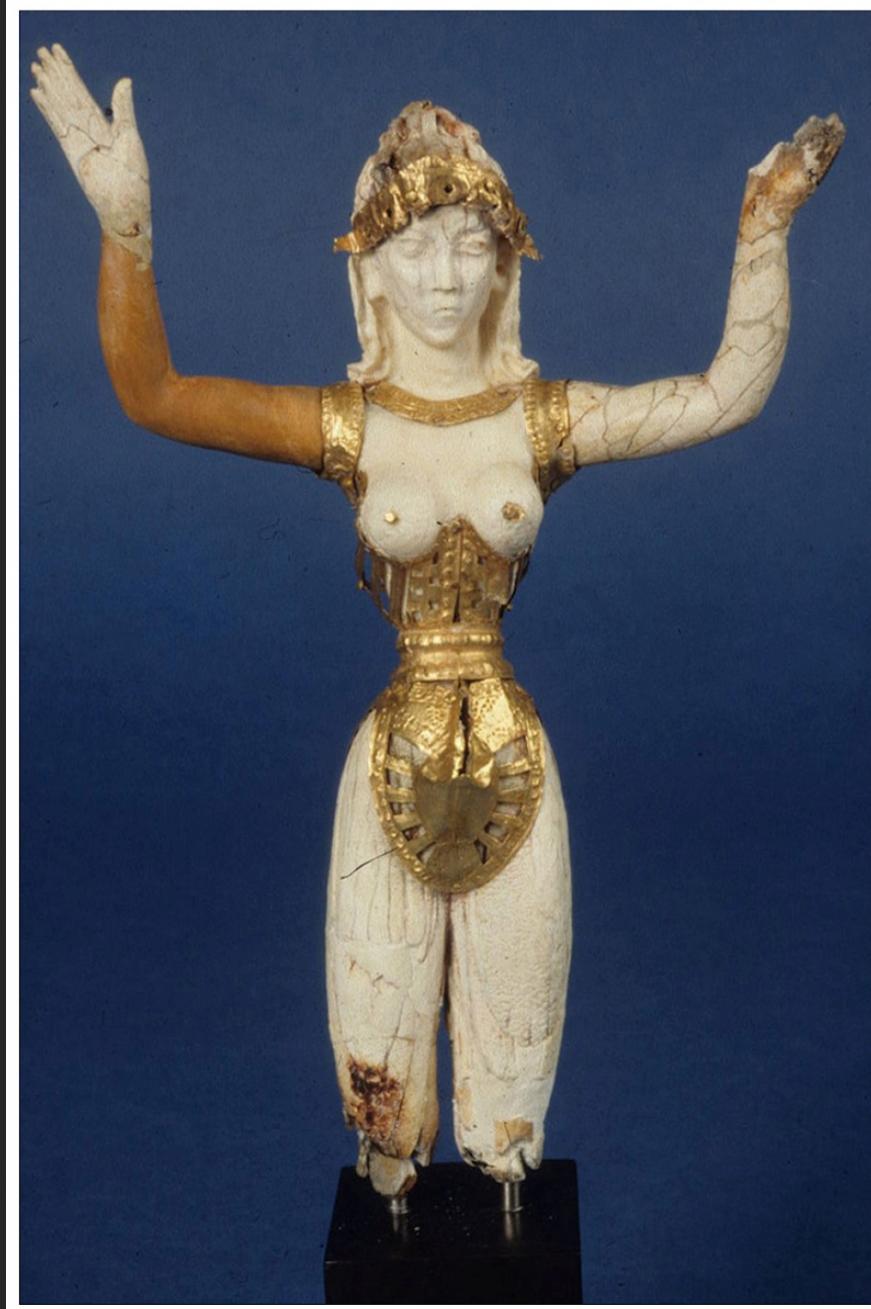
# Minoan civilisation

Knossos frescos



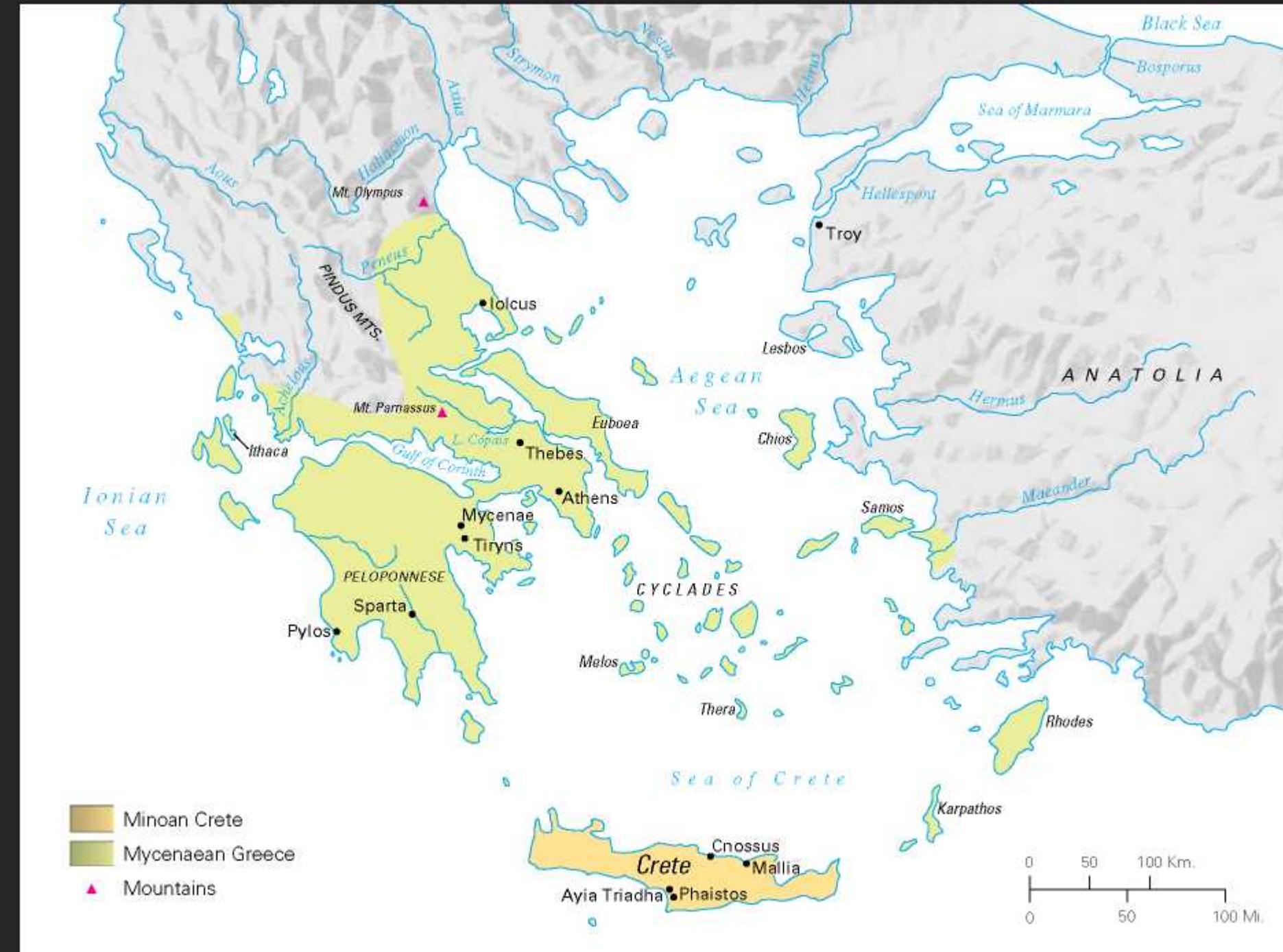
# Minoan civilisation

Female gods



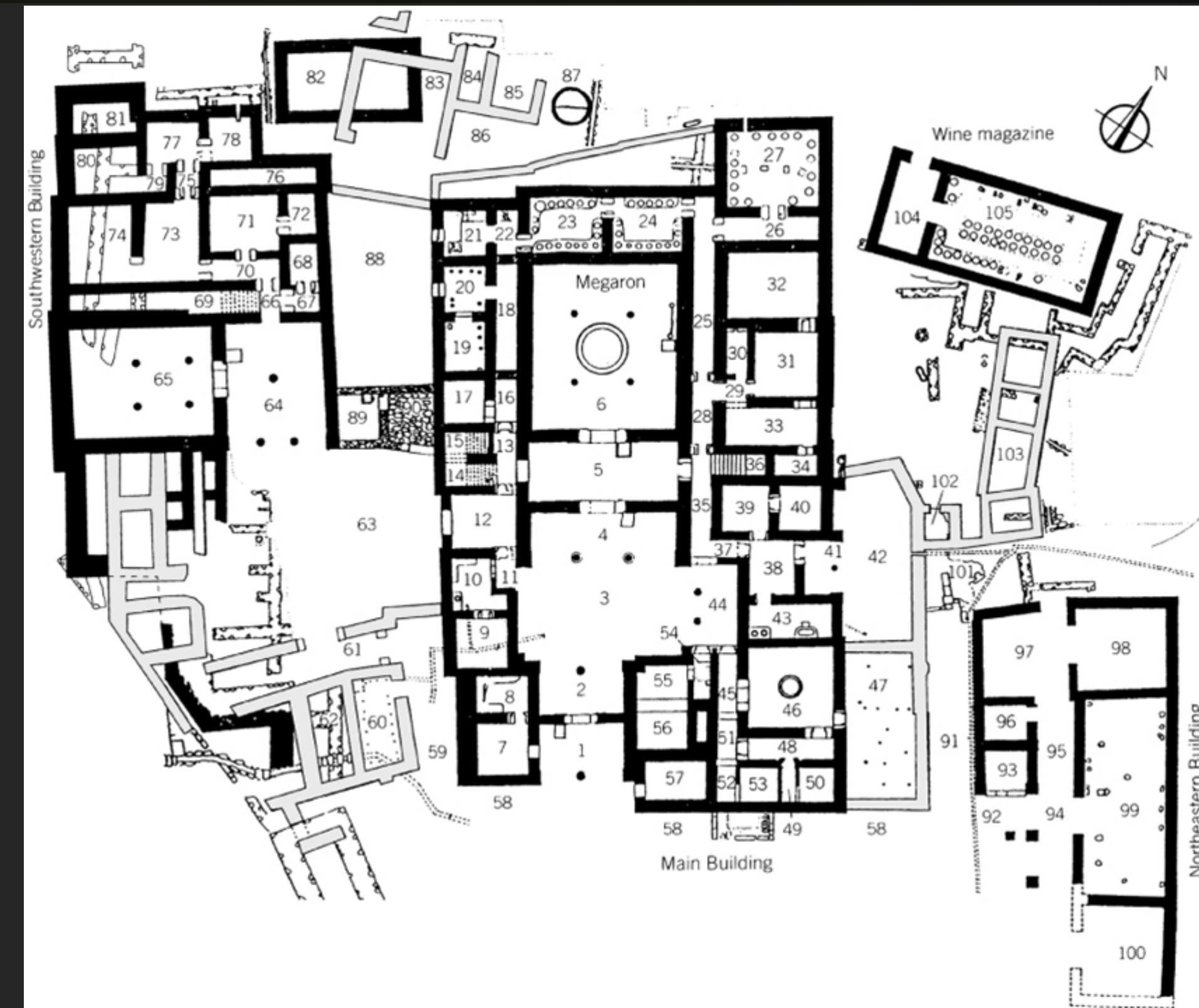
# Mycenaean civilisation

17<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> c.



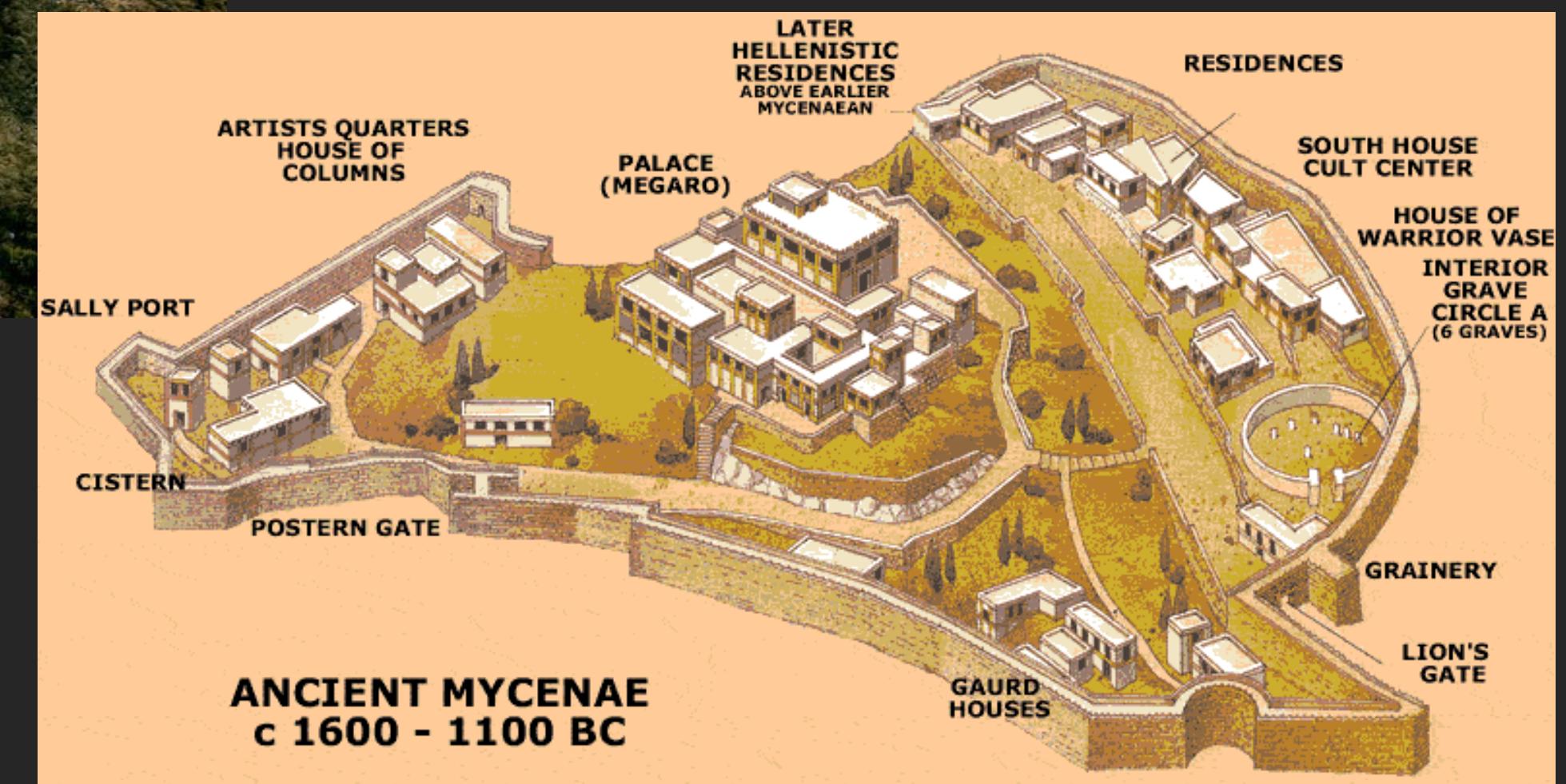
# Mycenaean civilisation

Palace at Pylos ~1,200



# Mycenaean civilisation

Mycenae



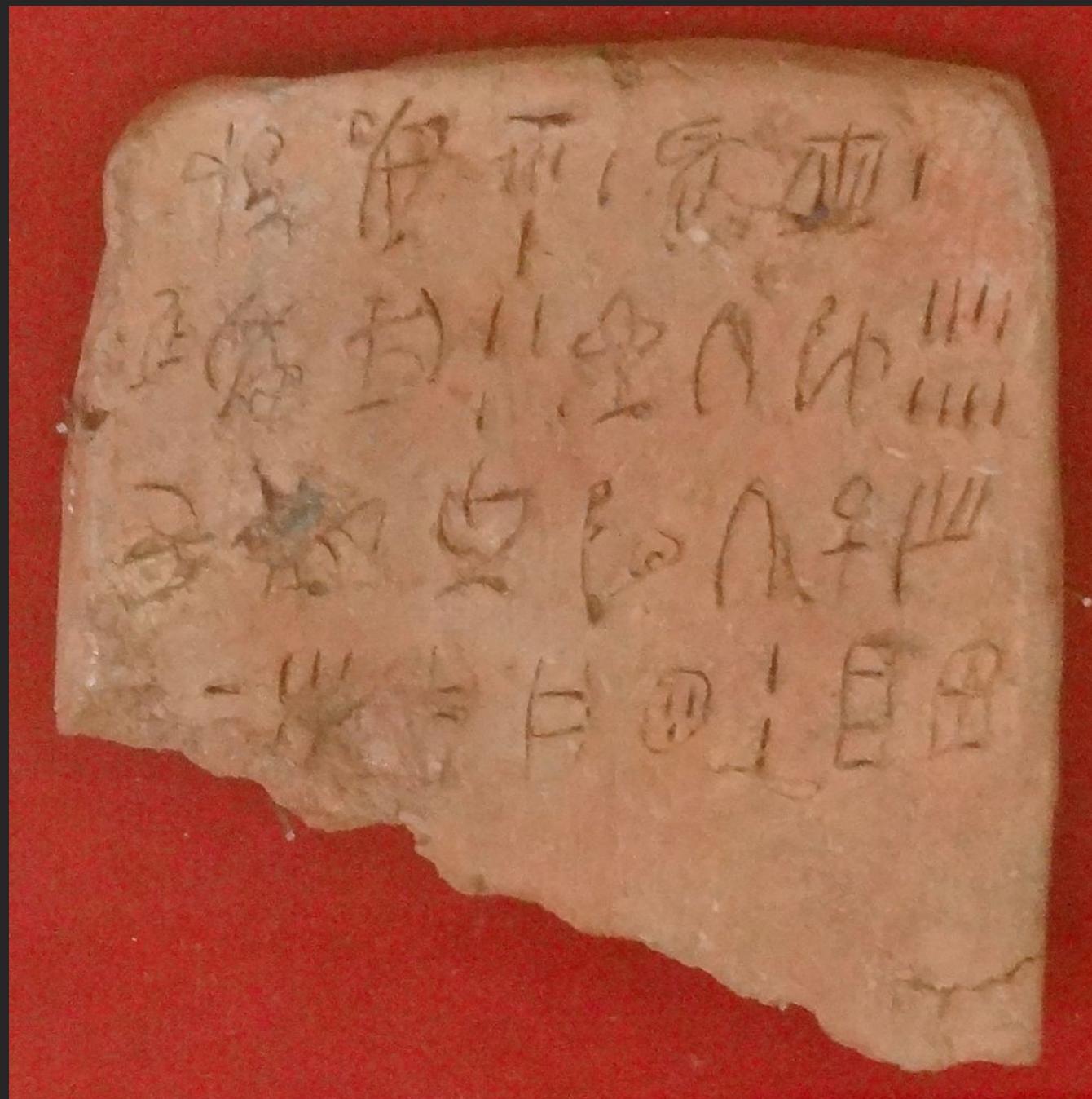
# Mycenaean civilisation

Mycenae



# Mycenaean civilisation

Language of the Mycenaeans: early Greek



Linear A (non-Greek, Minoan)

𐐀	𐐁	𐐂	𐐃	𐐄	𐐅	𐐆	𐐇	𐐈	𐐉	𐐊	𐐋	𐐌	𐐍	𐐎	𐐏
a	da	ja	ka	ma	na	pa	qa	ra	sa	ta	wa	za			
𐐐	𐐑	𐐒	𐐓	𐐔	𐐕	𐐖	𐐗	𐐘	𐐙	𐐚	𐐛	𐐜	𐐝	𐐞	𐐟
e	de	je	ke	me	ne	pe	qe	re	se	te	we	ze			
𐐒	𐐓	𐐔	𐐕	𐐖	𐐗	𐐘	𐐙	𐐚	𐐛	𐐚	𐐛	𐐚	𐐛	𐐚	𐐛
i	di		ki	mi	ni	pi	qi	ri	si	ti	wi				
𐐔	𐐓	𐐔	𐐕	𐐖	𐐗	𐐘	𐐙	𐐚	𐐛	𐐚	𐐛	𐐚	𐐛	𐐚	𐐛
o	do	jo	ko	mo	no	po	qo	ro	so	to	wo	zo			
𐐓	𐐔	𐐔	𐐕	𐐖	𐐗	𐐘	𐐙	𐐚	𐐛	𐐚	𐐛	𐐚	𐐛	𐐚	𐐛
u	du	ju	ku	mu	nu	pu		ru	su	tu					

Linear B (Greek, Mycenaean)  
Syllabary, not alphabet

# Mycenaean civilisation

Language of the Mycenaeans: early Greek

examples of Greek names and words found written in Linear B:

- e-ra: Hera
- po-ti-ni-ja: Potnia
- re-u-ka: leuka ("white")
- ma-te-re te-i-ja: Mater Theia
- pa-ja-wo: Paian = later an epithet of Apollo
- e-nu-wa-ri-jo: Enyalios = later an epithet of Ares
- a-ta-na po-ti-ni-ja: Potnia of Athana ("Lady/Mistress of Athens")
  
- qa-si-re-u: basileus ("chieftain")
- wa-na-ka-sa: anax ("leader/lord")

# Mycenaean civilisation

## Indo-European language ... and myth?

how do we know that some languages have a common ancestor? systematic sound change

example: Grimm's law

Germanic languages systematically change certain consonants in certain situations

Non-Germanic	Germanic (incl. English)
pater (La.), padre (Sp.), père (Fr.)	father
piscis (La.), pez (Sp.), poisson (Fr.)	fish
penta- (Gk.)	five
cornu (La.)	horn
cervus (La.)	hart
dental	tooth
duo	two

# Mycenaean civilisation

## Indo-European language ... and myth?

connect more distant languages > older ancestor

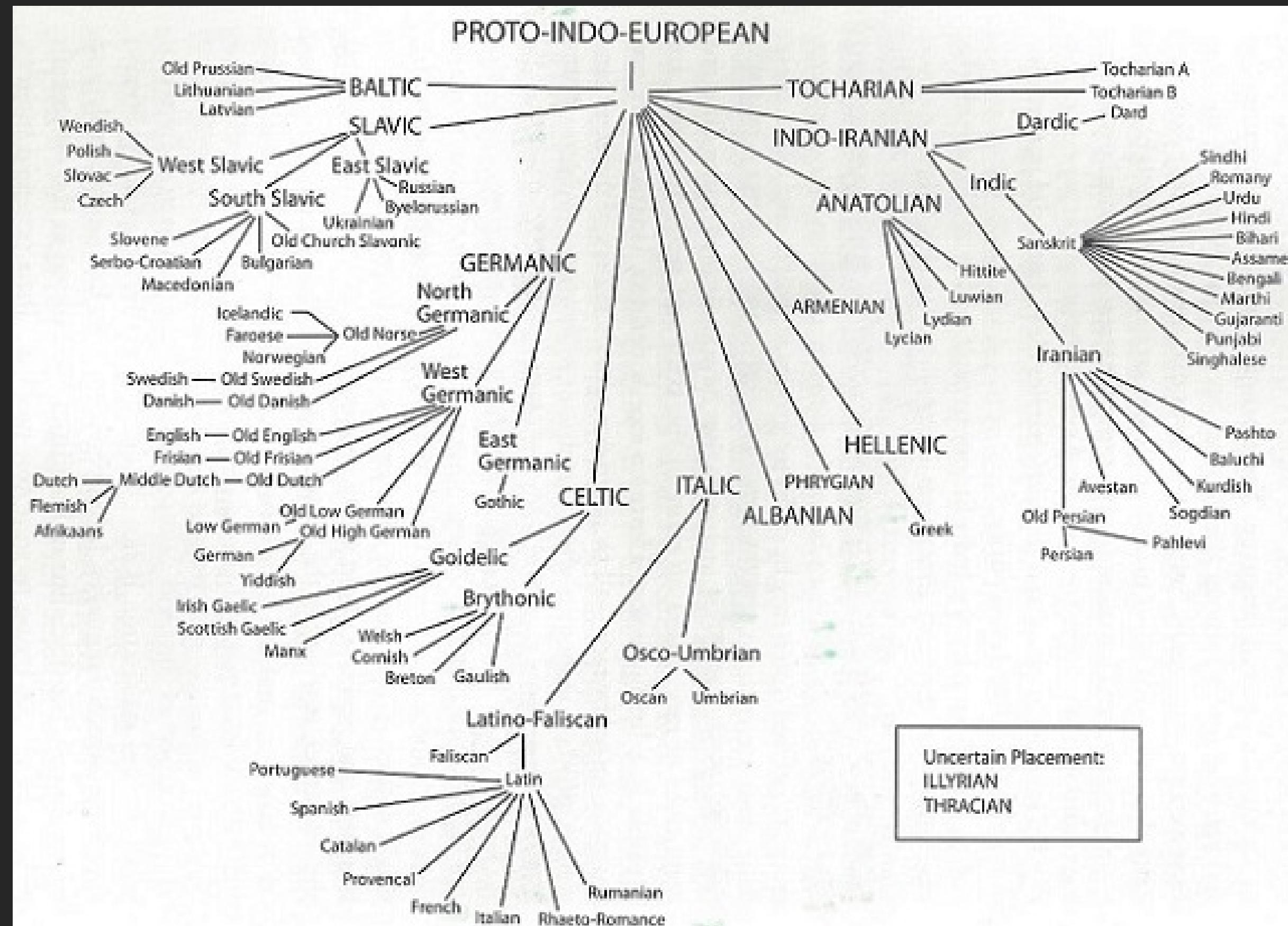
Spanish connected with French? ancestor Latin (people who spoke Latin in France and Spain gradually changed Latin in different ways)

Spanish connected with Germanic (e.g., *padre* ~ *father*)? ancestor must be older than Latin, since Germanic is not derived from Latin

eventually: “tree” of languages

# Mycenaean civilisation

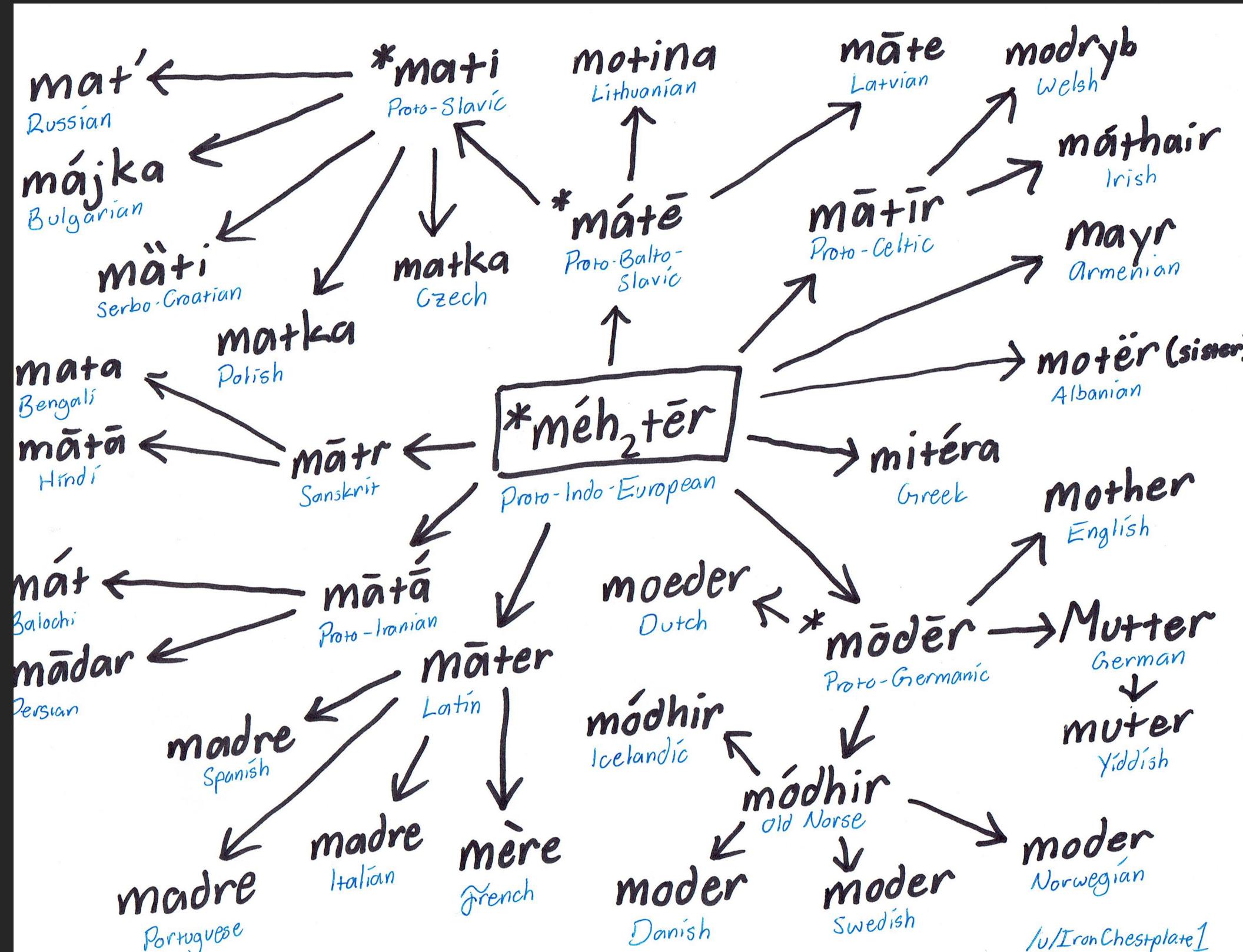
## Indo-European language ... and myth?



# Mycenaean civilisation

## Indo-European language ... and myth?

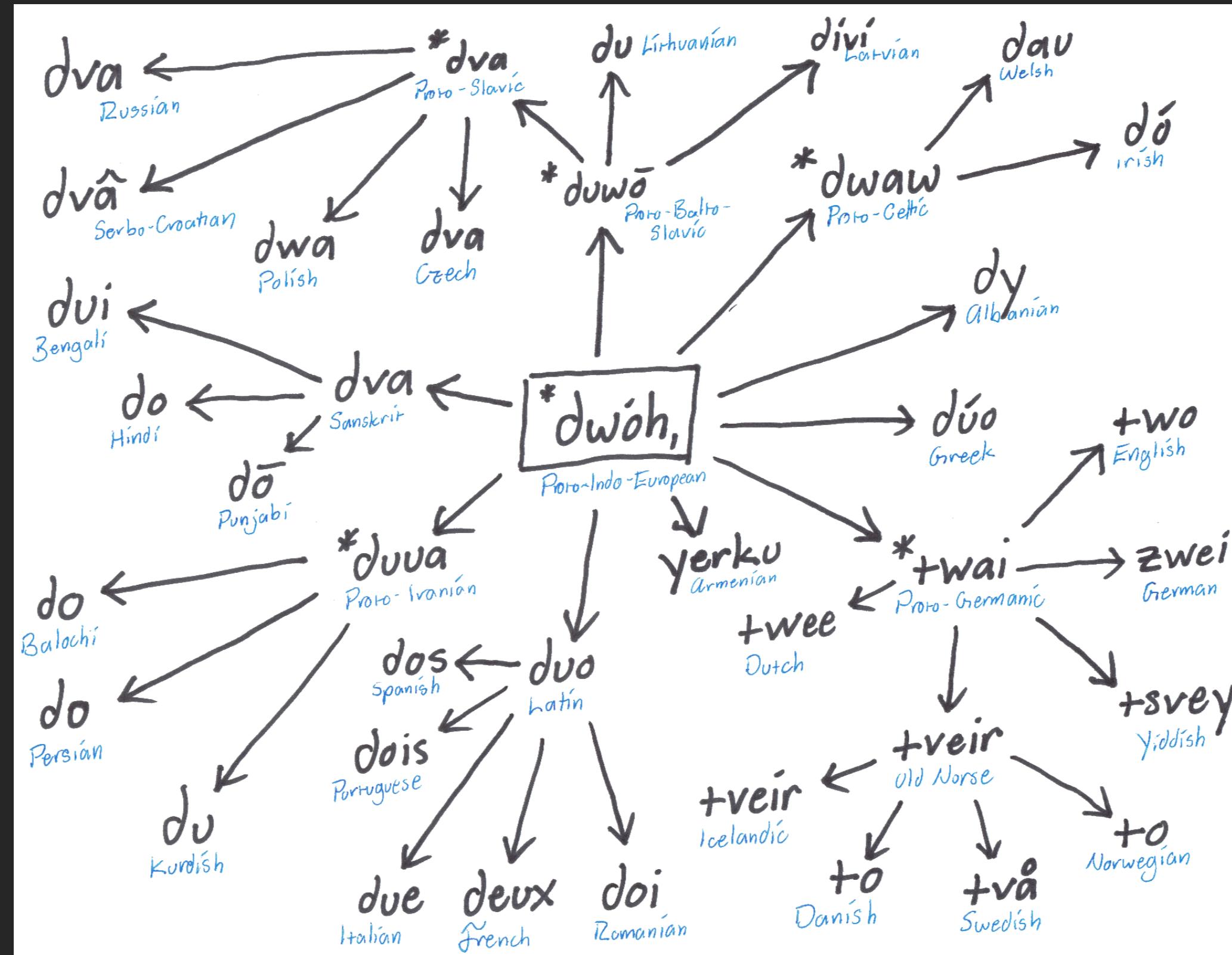
some words can be reconstructed for the oldest common ancestor, proto-Indo-European:



# Mycenaean civilisation

## Indo-European language ... and myth?

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# Mycenaean civilisation

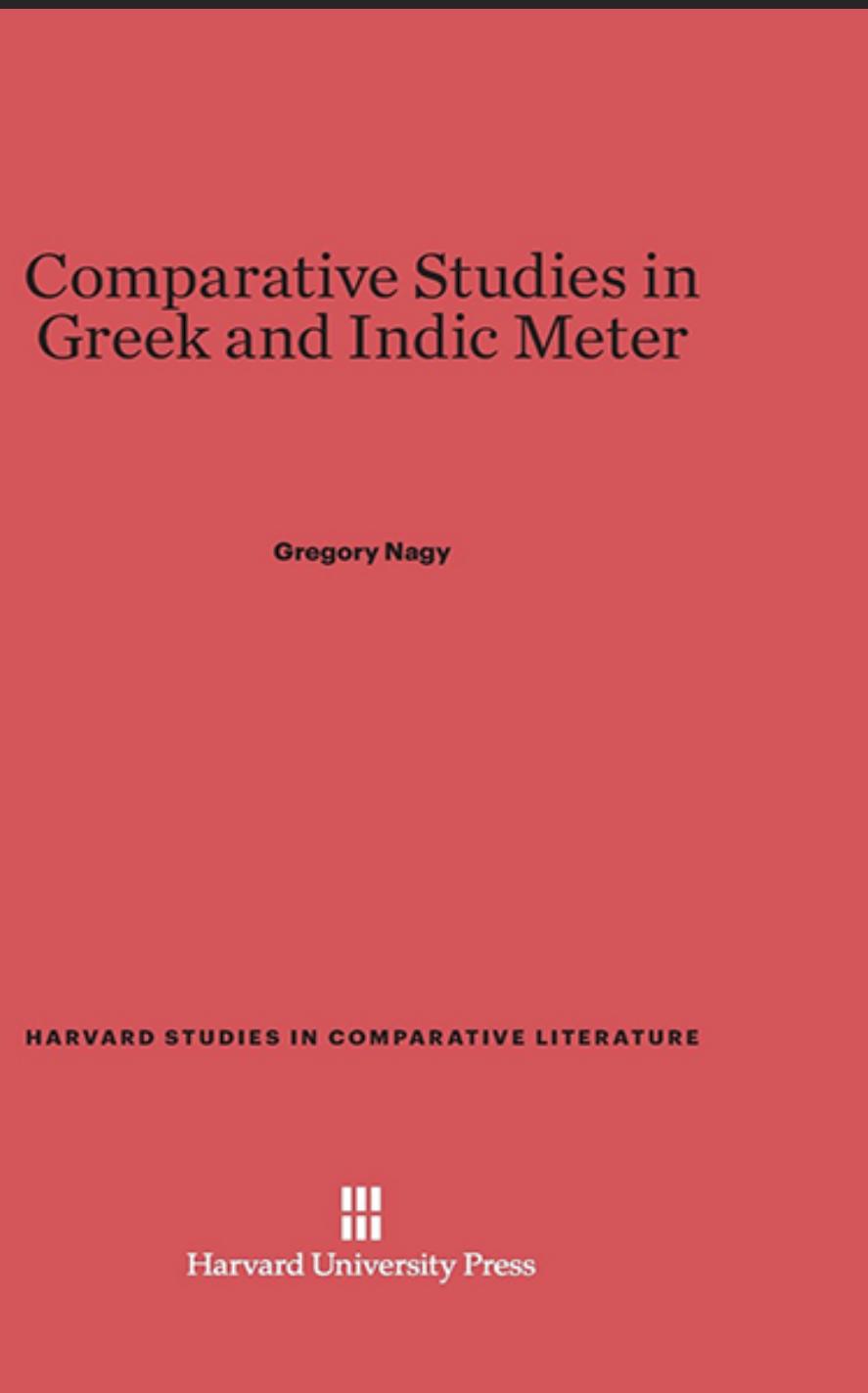
## Indo-European language ... and myth?

can we reconstruct myth in the same way?

we can reconstruct words/names:  
Zeus pater ~ Ju-piter ~ Dyáuṣ Pitṛ: “sky father”

<b>Greek themes:</b>	kle(w)os	aphthiton
<b>Sanskrit</b>	srvās	aksitam
<b>(translation)</b>	fame	un-dying

further: poetic metre, story patterns



- part of Greek mythology inherited from Indo-European

# End of the Greek bronze age

~1,100 BC



- Volcano?
- Invaders?
- Sea peoples (Mycenaean refugees?)
- Destruction of palaces (Pylos, Mycenae, Thebes, Orchomenos), breakdown of large political structures

# Making sense of ruins



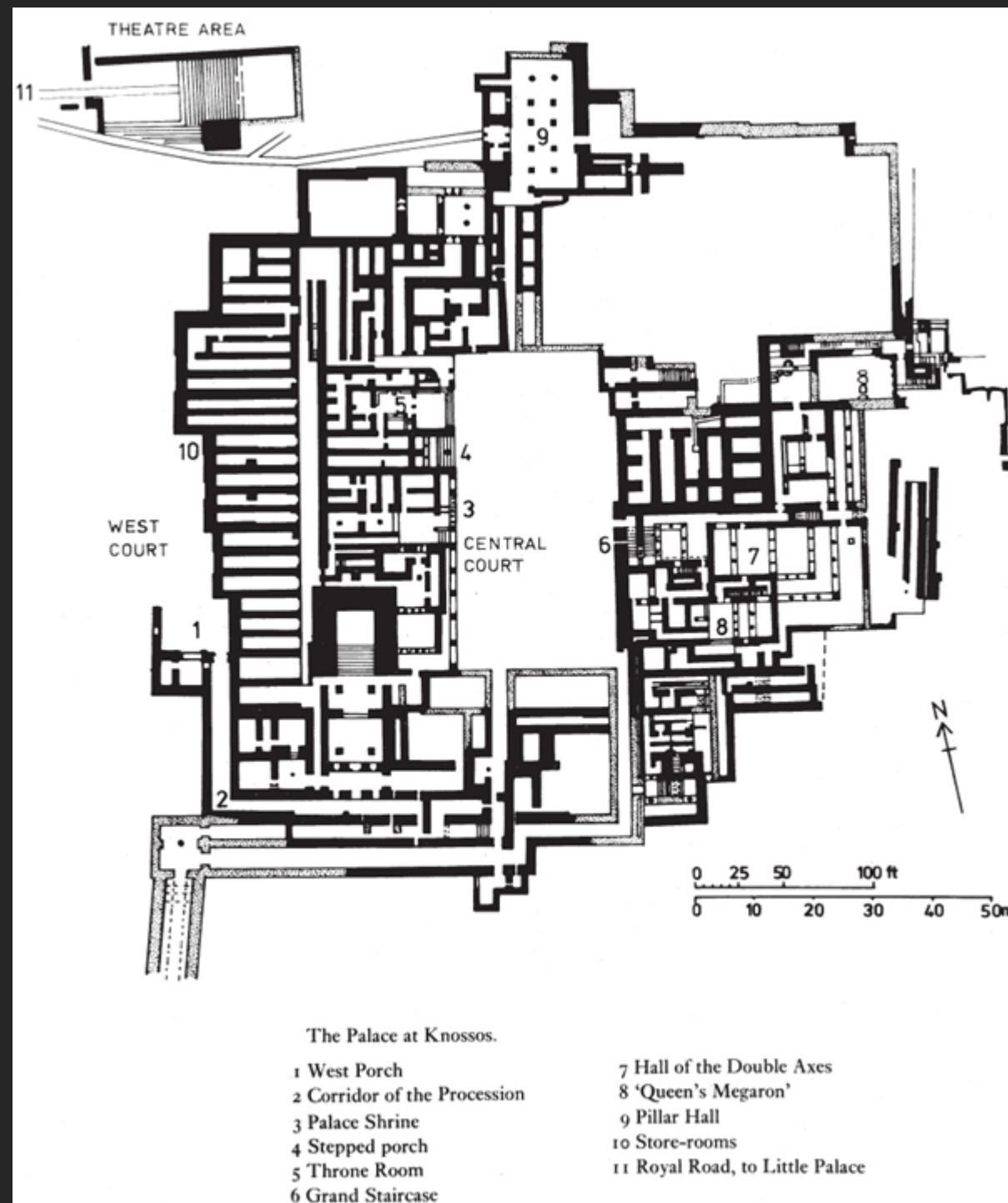
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Transition: Late bronze age to archaic Greece:

- Minoan and Mycenaean civilisations ~2000-1200
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# Making sense of ruins

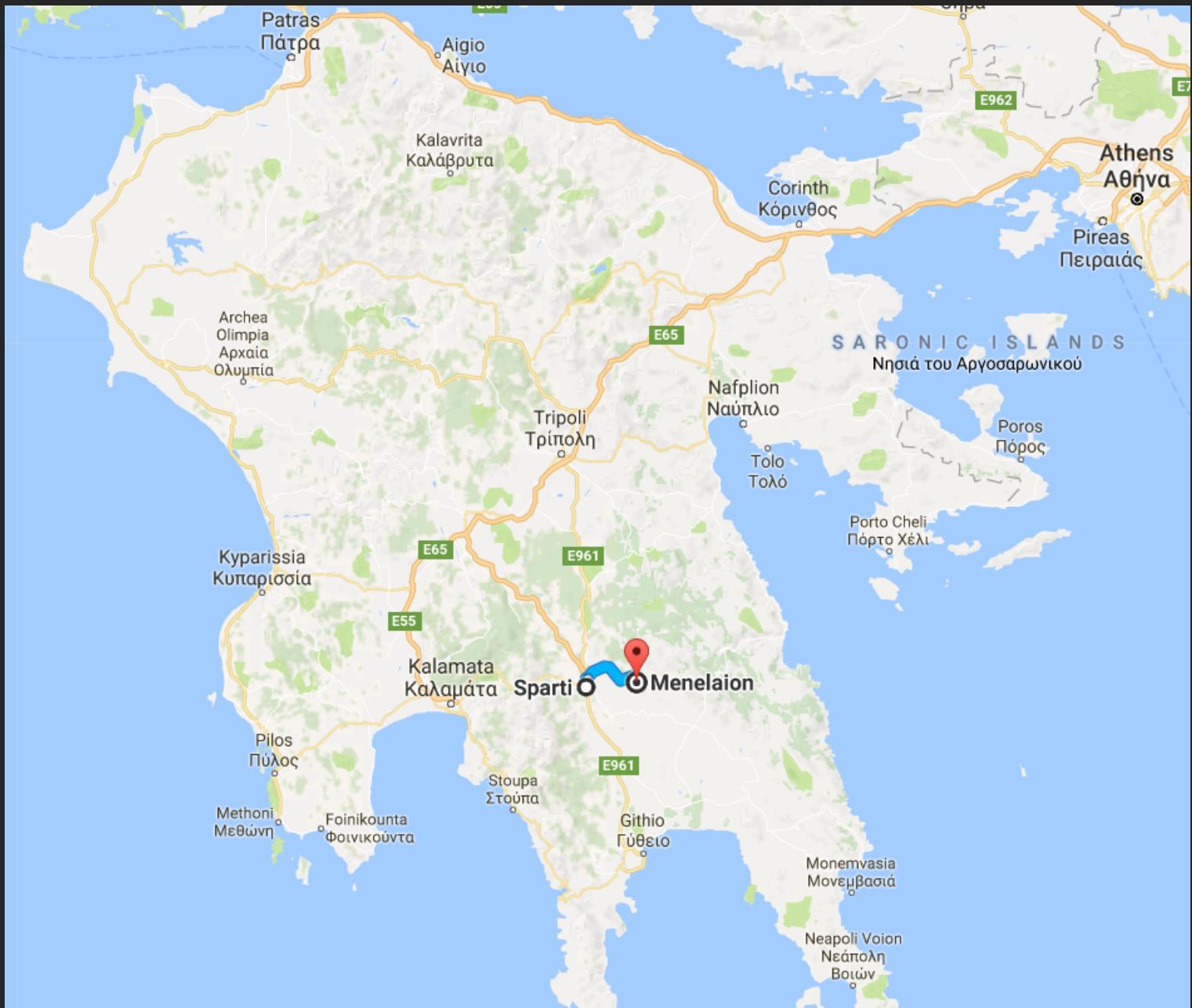
## Minos, Theseus, labyrinth



- Crete, Athens
- Minos, Pasiphae
- Daedalus, Labyrinth
- Minotaur, Ariadne
- Theseus

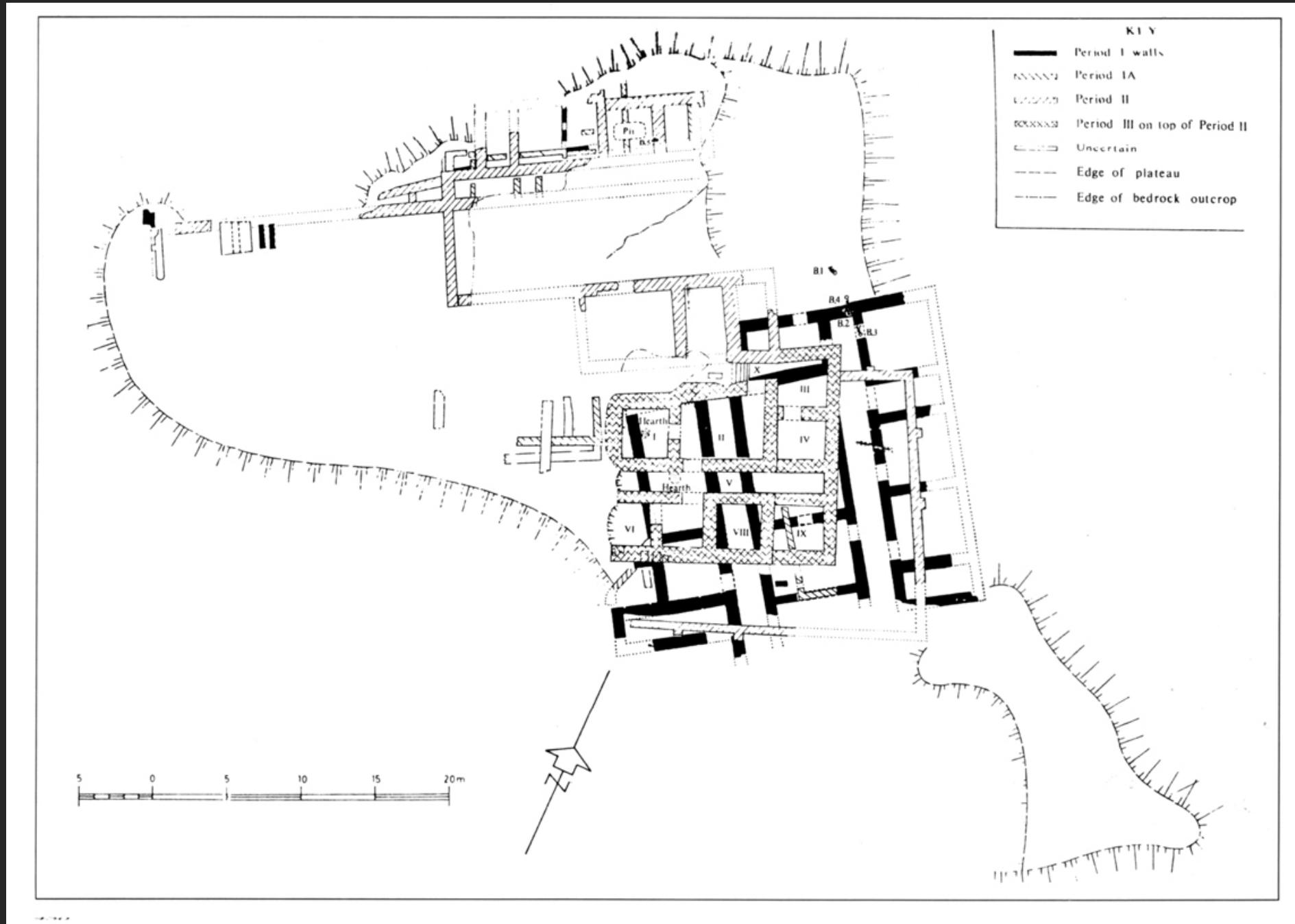
# Making sense of ruins

## Hero worship: the Menelaion in Sparta



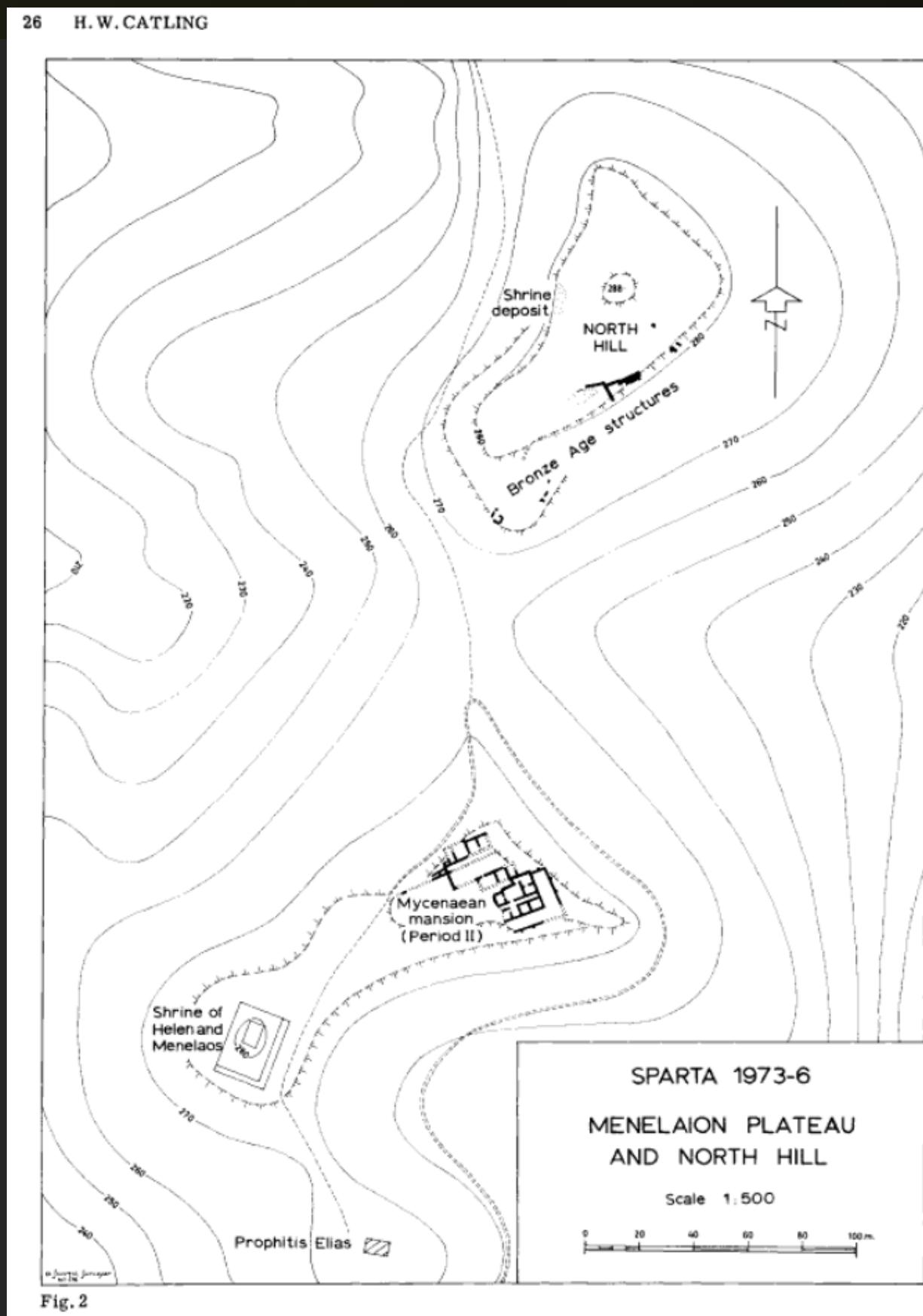
# Making sense of ruins

## Hero worship: the Menelaion in Sparta



- archaeological layers from the 15th-13th centuries BC
- each layer built on top of the previous one, after destruction by earthquake and by fire

# Making sense of ruins



## Hero worship: the Menelaion in Sparta

hero shrine (built 8th-7th century) in relation to Mycenaean (15th-13th century) structures

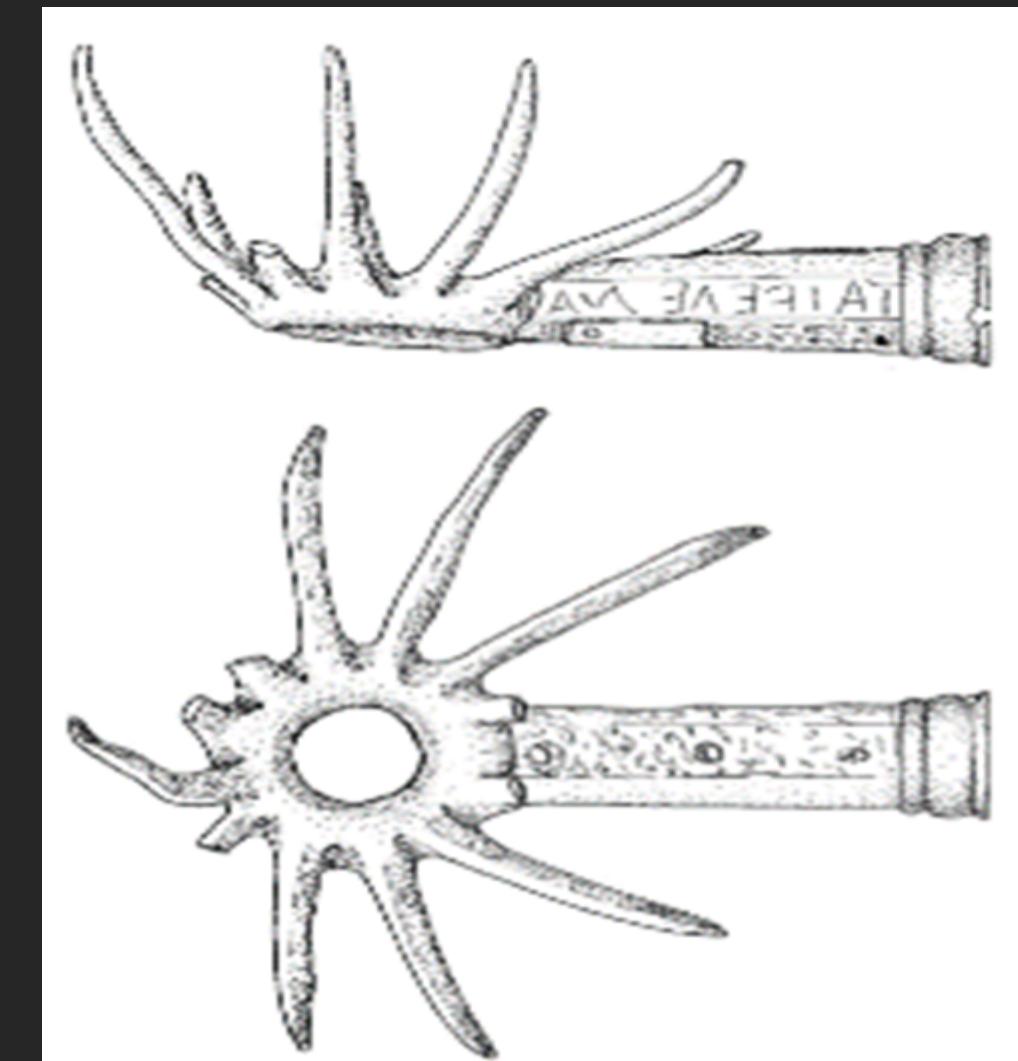
Menelaos in myth: brother of Agamemnon, husband of Helen, king of Sparta

# Making sense of ruins

signs of worship



“Euthykrēnes dedicated  
[this] to Menelaus” (early  
5th c.)



“to Helen” (570  
BC)

# myth and history

## sources of myths

- proto-Indo-European
- interpretation of ruins
- borrowings from other cultures
- inventions, variations, re-tellings

# homer: the singer and his tradition

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# homeric tradition

the part on the Trojan war is page 400-something in the textbook:  
why are we *starting* with Homer?

# myth and history

## last time

- Neolithic 7000-3000
- Bronze age 3000-1200
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### **Transition: Late bronze age to archaic Greece:**

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earliest accounts of what we know as Greek myth:

- poetry from the early archaic period (8<sup>th</sup> c.)
- this poetry carries on traditions/memories from earlier periods ("dark age," interpretations of Minoan/Mycenaean culture)

# homeric tradition

## the Homeric tradition

why are the earliest accounts of Greek myth we have from the 8<sup>th</sup> c.?

what does a tradition of song/poetry need to survive/continue?

oral traditions: how do they work? who performs? for whom? what do they perform?



Francesco Hayez, 1814-1815

# homer: the singer and his tradition

## the Homeric tradition

before 8<sup>th</sup> c.: oral performances of old, traditional songs/stories

8<sup>th</sup> c.: introduction of writing ↗ beginning of preservation (?)

strangeness: if you just learned to write, what would you be writing down?

question: who is the author? who is “Homer”?

oral tradition ↗ repetition of well-known stories ↗ no “original” creator

most scholars: “Homer” is just a name, used because people have a hard time conceiving of a poem without an author

# homer: the singer and his tradition

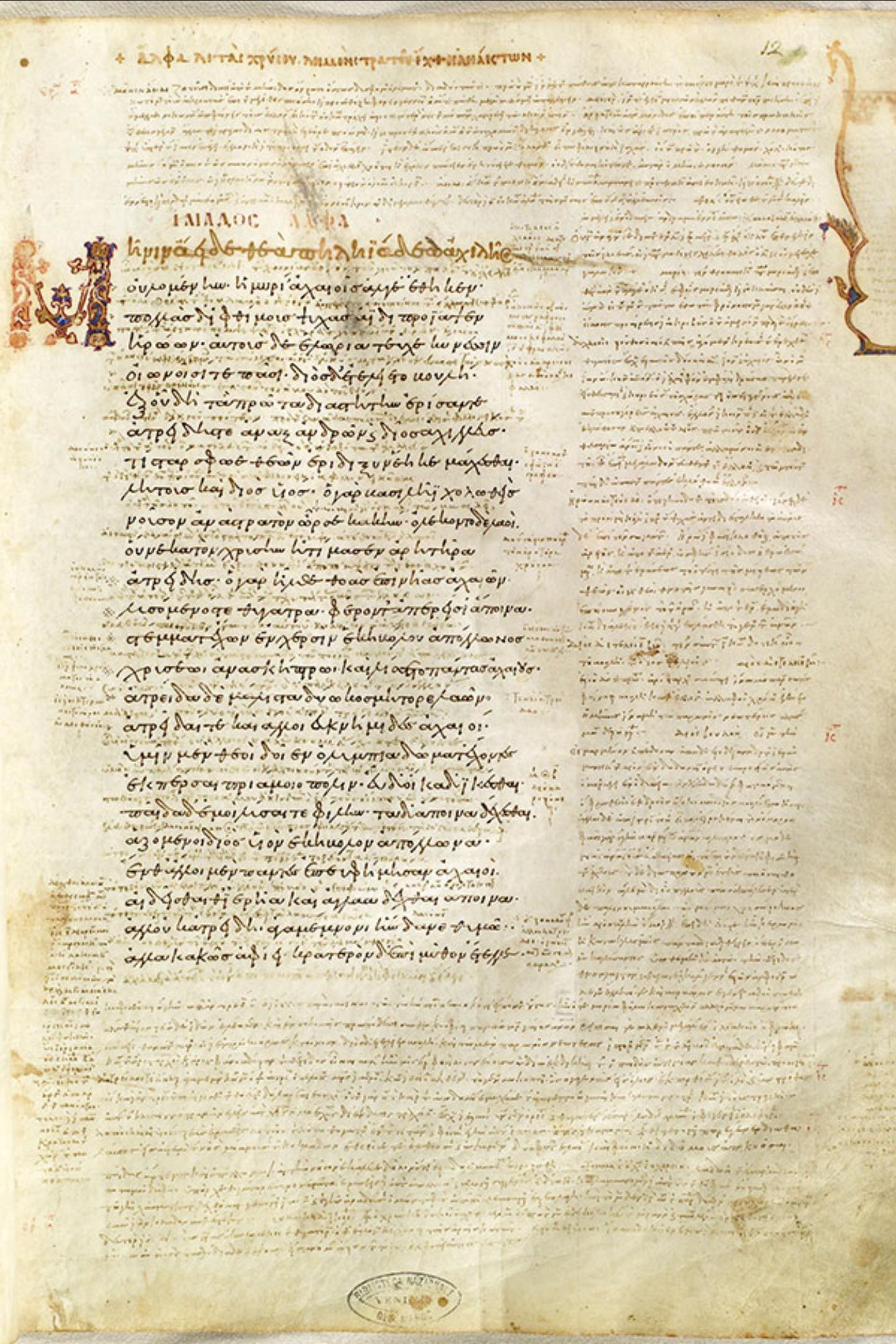
## the Homeric poems

two monumental poems, *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

- *Iliad* 16,000 lines, *Odyssey* 12,000 lines
- “the one about Ilion/Ilium,” “the one about Odysseus”

how are they preserved for us?

- mediaeval manuscripts (hand copies)
- earliest: 10<sup>th</sup> c. AD, “Venetus A” ☐
- manuscripts reflect an edition from 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC, produced by scholars in Alexandria (Ptolemaic Kingdom, Greek Egypt)



# homer: the singer and his tradition

## the Homeric poems

back to the question: why are we starting with Homer? it's the oldest

Homer is central to all Greek culture

- everyone knows Homer
- education in classical Greece: reading and writing out passages from Homer, memorization
- later authors assume that you know Homer
- public institutions of Homeric performance: Hipparchus (d. 514 BC), tyrant of Athens, decreed performances of Homer in the Panatheneia

Hipparkhos, ... who publicly enacted many and beautiful things to manifest his expertise, especially by being the first to bring over to this land [= Athens] the poetic utterances [épē] of Homer, and he forced the rhapsodes at the Panathenaia to go through these utterances in sequence, by relay, just as they [= the rhapsodes] do even nowadays.  
("Plato" *Hipparchus* 228b-c)

# homeric tradition background to the *Iliad*

Homer can be confusing: traditional stories → assume that you know the stories + background already

this is okay: you are learning about myth the same way an ancient Greek person would have learnt  
(you have advantage from reading textbook)

## basic background

Homeric world in two parts: gods and mortals

gods: immortal, powerful

- most live on Mt. Olympus
- greatest god + ruler: Zeus
- other gods: Hera, Athena, Apollo, Ares, Poseidon, Aphrodite, Demeter, Artemis, Hermes
- also minor gods, spirits of rivers, forests, etc.
- they argue, squabble, plot against each other
- concerned with the mortal world: honoured by mortal sacrifices, some mortals are their children

# homeric tradition

## background to the *Iliad*

### basic background

Homeric world in two parts: gods and mortals

mortals: “heroes”

- like “us” but stronger
- some are children/descendants of gods (e.g., Achilles, son of mortal father and immortal mother)
- live in different cities/communities (Agamemnon from Mycenae, Menelaos from Sparta, etc.)
- heroes are rulers/leaders of their communities (rarely “ordinary” people in *Iliad*)
- often motivated by fame/glory (*kleos*)
- two main groups: Greeks (aka, Achaeans, Danaans, Argives), Trojans (and allies)
- each group relatively loose: Agamemnon is most powerful king and commander of Greek army, but no absolute rule; Priam is king of Troy (Ilium), son Hector commander, but also allies/neighbours who came to help out

# homeric tradition background to the *Iliad*

basic background: reasons for war

for mortals:

- Paris (aka Alexander) takes Helen
- Menelaus gets big brother Agamemnon to gather Greeks ☐ get Helen back

for gods:

- (possibly?) Zeus wanted to reduce mortal population ☐ contrive big war
- this is speculation/retconning

limitation of textbook: presents everything as “fact” ☐ no: story of Trojan war is important for Greek identity, the *why* of the war is much less important + can be filled in later (c.f., Boston tea party)

map of “catalogue of ships” and “catalogue of allies” (book 2, 3)

what is one reason why  
the myth of the Trojan  
war is important for  
Greeks, based on map?



# homeric tradition background to the *Iliad*

basic background: story up to beginning of *Iliad*

- Greek army gathers, crosses to Troy, makes camp, besiege city
- fighting, fighting, fighting
- raiding, pillaging, looting (surrounding cities)
- repeat 10 years

in 10<sup>th</sup> year:

- Greeks raid a nearby temple of Apollo, take captive Chryseis (daughter of priest, Chryses)
- Chryses comes to the Greeks to ask for daughter

# homeric tradition background to the *Iliad*

note: *in medias res*

- “in the middle of things”
- *Iliad* doesn’t start at “beginning” (what would be the beginning anyway?)
- audience *assumed* to already know background ☐ traditional story
- not “textbook” presentation
- *Iliad* often mentions events from earlier or later: difference between “what happened” and order in which story is told (flashback, fore-shadowing)
- *Iliad* covers only a couple of weeks
- begins after the beginning of war, ends before the end
- through flashbacks/forwards (analepsis/prolepsis), tells/alludes to much of mythological history

# homeric tradition

## the singer and his tradition

### synopsis

#### structure of the poem

- 24 books (Greek alphabet)
- main shape of plot: rage of Achilles and consequences

1.1 Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus' son Achilleus  
1.2 and its devastation, which put pains thousandfold upon the Achaians,  
1.3 hurled in their multitudes to the house of Hades strong souls  
1.4 of heroes, but gave their bodies to be the delicate feasting  
1.5 of dogs, of all birds, and the will of Zeus was accomplished  
1.6 since that time when first there stood in division of conflict  
1.7 Atreus' son the lord of men and brilliant Achilleus.

▀ *Iliad* ~ story of Achilles

# homeric tradition

## synopsis

1. The Greeks are on the beaches outside the city of Ilium (Troy), besieging it; Achilles is angered by Agamemnon taking his prized captive and swears to not help the Greeks in battle; through his mother, he asks Zeus to make the battle go badly for the Greeks so they will know how important he is to them
- 2 to 8. Fighting without Achilles goes badly for the Greeks and they are pushed back to their ships
9. The desperate situation of the Greeks leads Agamemnon to repent and send an embassy to Achilles, offering gifts in exchange for his return to battle; Achilles rebuffs the offer and declares that he will only return when the Trojan attack reached the Greek ships and threaten them with fire

# homeric tradition

## synopsis

**10 to 15.** The battle continues to go badly for the Greeks; the major Greek heroes are wounded; the Trojan hero Hector breaches the Greek defences and starts throwing fire onto the ships

**16.** Achilles' companion Patroclus pities the Greeks and asks to be allowed to fight in Achilles' stead; Achilles lends him his own armour; Patroclus' arrival turns the battle and the Trojans are driven back to the city; Patroclus tries to assault the walls of Troy, but is beaten back by the god Apollo, and is then killed by Hector

**17.** Hector takes Achilles' armour; fighting around Patroclus' body.

**18.** Achilles is mad with grief and swears vengeance on Hector; he receives a set of armour forged by the god Hephaestus

# homeric tradition

## synopsis

- 19 to 21.** Achilles enters battle and drives all before him, killing many; he also fights the river god Skamandros
- 22.** The Trojans have escaped into the city, except Hector, who faces Achilles alone outside the walls of Troy; Achilles kills Hector and drags his body behind his chariot in an effort to mutilate it
- 23.** Achilles sees Patroclus in a dream, asking to be buried; the Greeks hold a day of funeral games for Patroclus
- 24.** Priam, king of Troy and Hector's father, arrives alone at night in Achilles' tent, asking for the body of his son; both Achilles and Priam mourn their losses, and Achilles allows Priam to carry away Hector's body; Hector is buried by the Trojans, and the city mourns

# homeric tradition

## singer and tradition

how does the singer present himself?

- as a creative poet?

### 1.1 Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus' son Achilleus

- who is “goddess”?
- who is responsible for the song?
- (does the goddess sing?)

# homeric tradition

## singer and tradition

- 2.484 Tell me now, you Muses who have your homes on Olympos.
- 2.485 For you, who are goddesses, are there, and you know all things,
- 2.486 and we have heard only the rumour of it and know nothing.
- 2.487 Who then of those were the chief men and the lords of the Danaans?
- 2.488 I could not tell over the multitude of them nor name them,
- 2.489 not if I had ten tongues and ten mouths, not if I had
- 2.490 a voice never to be broken and a heart of bronze within me,
- 2.491 not unless the Muses of Olympia, daughters of Zeus of the aegis, remembered all those who came beneath Ilion.
- 2.493 I will tell the lords of the ships, and the ships numbers.
- what is the muse? her function?
- what does it mean when the poet claims that his song comes from the muse?
  - muse ~ tradition
- myth is traditional: epic poetry derives its authority by presenting itself as the song of the muse, i.e., tradition itself
- whose tradition is Homeric epic?
  - of particular cities? specific peoples?
  - what is one ideological *function* of Homeric epic?

# homer: use of language and myth

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# homeric use of language and myth today

*Iliad* book 9

how Homeric heroes use traditional language

limits of traditional language

how heroes use myths

# homeric language and myth

## review: the structure of the Iliad

"withdrawal, devastation, and return"

- 1.** anger of Achilles, withdrawal from battle; asks Zeus for Greek defeat (1. 240: "some day longing for Achilleus will come to the sons of the Achaians")
- 9.** "The Embassy": Odysseus, Ajax (Aias), and Phoenix (Phoinix) try to persuade Achilles to return
- 11.** Machaon wounded, Achilles sends Patroclus to enquire
- 16.** Patroclus returns, asks to fight in Achilles' stead; Achilles lends armour, tells him not to attack city; Trojans driven back; Patroclus assaults walls of Troy, killed
- 18 - 22.** Achilles re-enters battle, takes vengeance on Hector, accepts own death
- 24.** Priam, alone, asks for Hector's body

# homer: use of language and myth

## structure of book 9

what happens in book 9?

- Greek camp: mood?
- embassy: who are Odysseus, Phoenix, Ajax? how does Achilles receive them?
- order of speeches:
  - Odysseus, Achilles
  - Phoenix, Achilles
  - Ajax, Achilles
- what does Achilles decide?
- embassy returns to Greek camp

(what happens in book 10?)

# homer: use of language and myth

## the language of Achilles

- 9.16 So, groaning heavily, Agamemnon spoke to the Argives:
- 9.17 'Friends, who are leaders of the Argives and keep their counsel:
- 9.18 Zeus son of Kronos has caught me badly in bitter futility.
- 9.19 He is hard: who before this time promised me and consented
- 9.20 that I might sack strong-walled Ilion and sail homeward.
- 9.21 Now he has devised a vile deception and bids me go back
- 9.22 to Argos in dishonour having lost many of my people.
- 9.23 Such is the way it will be pleasing to Zeus, who is too strong,
- 9.24 who before now has broken the crests of many cities
- 9.25 and will break them again, since his power is
- how does Agamemnon feel?
- what does he suggest?
- has he suggested this before?
- do you like Agamemnon?

# homer: use of language and myth

## the language of Achilles

- 9.42 But if in truth your own heart is so set upon going, Diomedes' reply  
9.43 go. The way is there, and next to the water are where have we heard this before?  
standing  
9.44 your ships that came--so many of them!--with you (language, repetition)  
from Mykenai,  
9.45 and yet the rest of the flowing-haired Achaians will  
stay here  
9.46 until we have sacked the city of Troy; let even  
these also  
9.47 run away with their ships to the beloved land of  
their fathers,  
9.48 still we two, Sthenelos and I, will fight till we  
witness  
9.49 the end of Ilion; for it was with God that we made  
our way hither.

# homer: use of language and myth

## the language of Achilles

9.115 Aged sir, this was no lie when you spoke of my madness.

who is "aged sir"?

9.116 I was mad, I myself will not deny it. Worth many

what does Ag. say? is it an admission? take responsibility?

9.117 fighters is that man whom Zeus in his heart loves, as now

9.118 he has honoured this man and beaten down the Achaian people.

what does Ag. offer to Achilles? apology? gifts? something else?

9.119 But since I was mad, in the persuasion of my heart's evil,

9.120 I am willing to make all good, and give back gifts in abundance.

# homer: use of language and myth

## the language of Achilles

- immediately: treasure, horses, women, return of Briseis (untouched)
- later: spoils from Troy, more women, a daughter in marriage, seven cities
- and in return?

what has Agamemnon learnt?

- 9.157 All this I will bring to pass for him, if he changes from his anger.  
9.158 Let him give way. For Hades gives not way, and is pitiless,  
9.159 and therefore he among all the gods is most hateful to mortals.  
9.160 And let him yield place to me, inasmuch as I am the kinglier  
9.161 and inasmuch as I can call myself born the elder.

# homeric language and myth

## the language of Achilles

what did you notice about Odysseus' speech? what does he do to Ag.'s speech?

how does Od. try to persuade Achilles?

- a. Achilles' sympathy
- b. image of Hector (what does this say about Achilles?)

9.228 ... here it is not the desirable feast we think of,  
9.229 but a trouble all too great, beloved of Zeus, that  
we look on  
9.230 and are afraid. There is doubt if we save our  
strong-benched vessels  
9.231 or if they will be destroyed, unless you put on your  
war strength.

9.237 ... while Hektor in the huge pride of his strength  
rages  
9.238 irresistibly, reliant on Zeus, and gives way to no  
one  
9.239 neither god nor man, but the strong fury has  
descended upon him.  
9.240 He prays now that the divine Dawn will show most  
quickly,  
9.241 since he threatens to shear the uttermost horns  
from the ship-sterns,  
9.242 to light the ships themselves with ravening fire, 9

# homer: use of language and myth

## the language of Achilles

how does Od. try to persuade Achilles?

- c. Achilles' future regret
- d. Achilles' memory
- e. Ag.'s list of gifts

what kind of man is Od.? where have we seen him in action before?

9.247 Up, then! if you are minded, late though it be, to rescue  
9.248 the afflicted sons of the Achaians from the Trojan onslaught.

9.249 It will be an affliction to you hereafter, there will be no remedy

9.250 found to heal the evil thing when it has been done.  
No, beforehand

9.251 take thought to beat the evil day aside from the Danaans.

9.252 Dear friend, surely thus your father Peleus advised you

9.253 that day when he sent you away to Agamemnon from Phthia:

9.254 "My child, for the matter of strength, Athene and Hera will give it

9.255 if it be their will, but be it yours to hold fast in your bosom

# homer: use of language and myth

## the language of Achilles

how does Achilles respond?

- he hears parts of Ag.'s speech (demand for submission) Od. suppressed: hears it in list of gifts
- Achilles would become Ag.'s son-in-law, ruling seven of his cities
- accepting gifts ↗ Achilles yields to Ag. "the kinglier"

principle of exchange: dishonor suffered = collection of gifts?

- what does Achilles think about this possibility of exchange?

# homer: use of language and myth

## the language of Achilles

375 He cheated me and he did me hurt. Let him not beguile me

< what does Ach. respond  
to here?

376 with words again. This is enough for him. Let him of his own

will

377 be damned, since Zeus of the counsels has taken his wits away  
from him.

378 I hate his gifts. I hold him light as the strip of a splinter.

< what do all these vivid  
images say?

379 Not if he gave me ten times as much, and twenty times over

380 as he possesses now, not if more should come to him from  
elsewhere,

381 or gave all that is brought in to Orchomenos, all that is brought  
in

382 to Thebes of Egypt, where the greatest possessions lie up in  
the houses,

383 Thebes of the hundred gates, where through each of the gates  
two hundred

384 fighting men come forth to war with horses and chariots;

385 not if he gave me gifts as many as the sand or the dust is,

386 not even so would Agamemnon have his way with my spirit

387 until he had made good to me all this heartrending insolence.

# homer: use of language and myth

## the language of Achilles

- 9.388 Nor will I marry a daughter of Atreus' son, Agamemnon, < again, emphatic image:  
9.389 not if she challenged Aphrodite the golden for loveliness,  
9.390 not if she matched the work of her hands with grey-eyed  
Athene;  
9.391 not even so will I marry her; let him pick some other Achaian, < what is he responding to?  
9.392 one who is to his liking and is kinglier than I am.  
9.393 For if the gods will keep me alive, and I win homeward,  
9.394 Peleus himself will presently arrange a wife for me.  
9.395 There are many Achaian girls in the land of Hellas and < girls? exchangeable ✉  
Phthia, what is not exchangeable?  
9.396 daughters of great men who hold strong places in guard. And  
of these  
9.397 any one that I please I might make my beloved lady.

# homer: use of language and myth

## the language of Achilles

9.398 And the great desire in my heart drives me rather in that place

9.399 to take a wedded wife in marriage, the bride of my fancy,  
9.400 to enjoy with her the possessions won by aged Peleus. For  
not

9.401 worth the value of my life are all the possessions they fable

9.402 were won for Ilion, that strong-founded citadel, in the old  
days

9.403 when there was peace, before the coming of the sons of the  
Achaeans;

9.404 not all that the stone doorsill of the Archer holds fast within it,

9.405 of Phoibos Apollo in Pytho of the rocks. Of possessions  
9.406 cattle and fat sheep are things to be had for the lifting,  
9.407 and tripods can be won, and the tawny high heads of horses,  
9.408 but a man's life cannot come back again, it cannot be lifted  
9.409 nor captured again by force, once it has crossed the teeth's  
barrier.

< what is not  
exchangeable?

(< note: image of/longing  
for peace; where else do  
we see images of peace in  
the poem?)

< what is not  
exchangeable?

# homer: use of language and myth

## the language of Achilles

*wait: weren't we talking about the dishonour Achilles suffered, and how that can't be bought off? why is Achilles talking about life and death now?*

Achilles' distinction: exchangeable things and inexchangeable things

inexchangeable: dishonour, love, death

why is honour linked with death for Achilles?

(note: slip between honour and glory; two words in Greek, *timē* and *kleos*)

9.340 Are the sons of Atreus alone among mortal men the ones  
9.341 who love their wives? Since any who is a good man,  
and careful,  
9.342 loves her who is his own and cares for her, even as I  
now  
9.343 loved this one from my heart, though it was my  
spear that won her.

9.410 For my mother Thetis the goddess of the silver feet  
tells me  
9.411 I carry two sorts of destiny toward the day of my  
death. Either,  
9.412 if I stay here and fight beside the city of the Trojans,  
9.413 my return home is gone, but my glory shall be  
everlasting;  
9.414 but if I return home to the beloved land of my  
fathers,  
9.415 the excellence of my glory is gone, but there will be

# homer: use of language and myth

## the language of Achilles

Achilles not only angry at Agamemnon's insult, but challenges entire system of exchange:

honour and possessions <> death

this is the heroic *ethos* ☐ Achilles loses faith in the values of heroic society

Achilles seems to blame Ag. for faults of heroic society ☐ unfair? Ag.'s offer of exchange represents the heroic value system

Achilles can only blame Ag. as representative, because he has no language to analyse/critique his

- 12.310 'Glaukos, why is it you and I are honoured before others  
12.311 with pride of place, the choice meats and the filled wine cups  
12.312 in Lykia, and all men look on us as if we were immortals,  
12.313 and we are appointed a great piece of land by the banks of Xanthos,  
12.314 good land, orchard and vineyard, and ploughland for the planting of wheat?  
12.315 Therefore it is our duty in the forefront of the Lykiens  
12.316 to take our stand, and bear our part of the blazing of battle,  
12.317 so that a man of the close-armoured Lykiens may say of us:  
12.318 "Indeed, these are no ignoble men who are lords of Lykia,  
12.319 these kings of ours, who feed upon the fat sheep"

# homer: use of language and myth

## using myths in context: throwing

### Hephaestus

1.586 'Have patience, my mother, and endure it, though you be saddened,

1.587 for fear that, dear as you are, I see you before my own eyes

1.588 struck down, and then sorry though I be I shall not be able

1.589 to do anything. It is too hard to fight against the Olympian.

1.590 There was a time once before now I was minded to help you,

1.591 and he caught me by the foot and threw me from the magic threshold,

1.592 and all day long I dropped helpless, and about sunset

1.593 I landed in Lemnos, and there was not much life left in me.

1.594 After that fall it was the Sintian men who took care of me.'

18.394 'Then there is a goddess we honour and respect in our house.

18.395 She saved me when I suffered much at the time of my great fall

18.396 through the will of my own brazen-faced mother, who wanted

Hephaestus speaks in both: why are they different? was Hephaestus thrown by Zeus for helping Hera, or did Hera want him to be thrown (did she throw him herself)?

how does Hephaestus' story help make his point in each case?

bk 1: "opposing Zeus is dangerous"

bk 18: "Thetis helped me, so I will help him"

is one version true and the other false?

# homer: use of language and myth

## using myths in context: Phoenix's

Phoenix tries to make Achilles accept principle of exchange >

9.496      Then, Achilleus, beat down your great anger. It is not  
9.497      yours to have a pitiless heart. The very immortals  
9.498      can be moved; their virtue and honour and strength  
are greater than ours are,  
9.499      and yet with sacrifices and offerings for endearment,  
9.500      with libations and with savour men turn back even  
the immortals  
9.501      in supplication, when any man does wrong and  
transgresses.

uses mythological story of Meleager >

9.524      Thus it was in the old days also, the deeds that we  
hear of  
9.525      from the great men, when the swelling anger  
descended upon them.  
9.526      The heroes would take gifts; they would listen, and  
be persuaded.  
9.527      For I remember this action of old, it is not a new  
thing,  
9.528      and how it went; you are all my friends, I will tell | it

# homer: use of language and myth

## using myths in context: Phoenix's

summary of the story (Lowell Edmunds): **fable**

Meleager lived in Calydon. His father was Oineus. Oineus neglected a sacrifice to Artemis, and in anger she sent a wild boar to ravage the territory of the Calydonians. Meleager gathered allies from a nearby city to fight the boar. These were the Curetes. After they killed the boar, they began to fight amongst themselves over the trophies, the boar's tusk and hide. In the fighting, Meleager happened to kill his uncle on his mother's side, one of the Curetes. Meleager's mother then cursed him. In anger against his mother, because of the curse, Meleager withdrew from the fighting and spent all his time with his wife, Cleopatra. The Curetes then began to get the upper hand, and the elders of the Calydonians sent him a series of embassies, offering him gifts. None of these succeeds. Only when the Curetes are on the walls of the city does a fifth party succeed in persuading Meleager, and this is his wife, Cleopatra. Meleager then drives back the Curetes, without, Phoenix points out, having received any gifts.

# homer: use of language and myth

## using myths in context: Phoenix's

point of story: gifts ↗ how does it work in Achilles' context?

beginning of story: Achilles should follow example the old heroes, persuadable by gifts ("The heroes would take gifts; they would listen, and be persuaded.") ↗ positive example: "be like Meleager"

end of story: Meleager ended his anger too late, received no gifts ↗ negative example : "don't be like Meleager"

two further notes:

- Meleager returns because persuaded by wife, Cleopatra; Achilles returns because of Patroclus ↗ pater, "father", kleos, "fame" ↗ "father's fame"
- Phoenix suppresses ending in myth of Meleager: he dies young at hands of Apollo (another version: his mother burns wood); Achilles, also dies young ↗ did Phoenix mean to allude to it? myth contains more parallels and meanings than could be controlled by speaker

# homer: use of language and myth

## using myths in context: Phoenix's

- myths are embedded in contexts: they can be adapted or even contradictory ↗ that is okay: point is not to establish a “canonical” version
- myths work in subtle ways ↗ no one-to-one correspondence between myth and present context
- myths establish parallels that can escape control of the person who uses them
- the fact that Homeric poems use myths ↗ Homer not beginning or source: Homeric poems already steeped in mythological tradition

# homer: the hero at war

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# homer: the hero at war

today

formulaic language and formulaic sequences ↪ why do we think Homeric poems are traditional?

epic similes

how do battles go in Homer?

first: what is a hero?



# homer: the hero at war

## the heroic ethos

what is a hero?

- divine descent:  
Achilles, Heracles,  
Sarpedon, Aeneas
- prowess in fighting
- social obligation?  
what else?

Sarpedon, *Il.* 12 ↗

310 'Glaukos, why is it you and I are honoured before others  
311 with pride of place, the choice meats and the filled wine cups  
312 in Lykia, and all men look on us as if we were immortals,  
313 and we are appointed a great piece of land by the banks of  
Xanthos,  
314 good land, orchard and vineyard, and ploughland for the planting  
of wheat?  
315 Therefore it is our duty in the forefront of the Lykians  
316 to take our stand, and bear our part of the blazing of battle,  
317 so that a man of the close-armoured Lykians may say of us:  
318 "Indeed, these are no ignoble men who are lords of Lykia,  
319 these kings of ours, who feed upon the fat sheep appointed  
320 and drink the exquisite sweet wine, since indeed there is  
strength  
321 of valour in them, since they fight in the forefront of the Lykians."  
322 Man, supposing you and I, escaping this battle,  
323 would be able to live on forever, ageless, immortal,  
324 so neither would I myself go on fighting in the foremost  
325 nor would I urge you into the fighting where men win glory.  
326 But now, seeing that the spirits of death stand close about us

# homer: the hero at war

## the heroic ethos

- why do heroes fight?
- what does he owe?
- what does he receive?
- to whom are they responsible?
- how do they feel about this?
- heroes and mortality

310 'Glaukos, why is it you and I are honoured before others  
311 with pride of place, the choice meats and the filled wine cups  
312 in Lykia, and all men look on us as if we were immortals,  
313 and we are appointed a great piece of land by the banks of  
Xanthos,  
314 good land, orchard and vineyard, and ploughland for the planting  
of wheat?  
315 Therefore it is our duty in the forefront of the Lykians  
316 to take our stand, and bear our part of the blazing of battle,  
317 so that a man of the close-armoured Lykians may say of us:  
318 "Indeed, these are no ignoble men who are lords of Lykia,  
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324 so neither would I myself go on fighting in the foremost  
325 nor would I urge you into the fighting where men win glory.  
326 But now, seeing that the spirits of death stand close about us

# homer: the hero at war

## the heroic ethos

contrast Achilles

- 9.400 ... For not  
9.401 worth the value of my life are all the possessions they fable  
9.402 were won for Ilion, that strong-founded citadel, in the old days  
9.403 when there was peace, before the coming of the sons of the  
Achaeans
- 1.152 I for my part did not come here for the sake of the Trojan  
1.153 spearmen to fight against them, since to me they have done  
nothing.  
1.154 Never yet have they driven away my cattle or my horses,  
1.155 never in Phthia where the soil is rich and men grow great did  
they  
1.156 spoil my harvest, since indeed there is much that lies between  
us,  
1.157 the shadowy mountains and the echoing sea

# homer: the hero at war

## the heroic ethos

how has Achilles lost the motivations that drive Sarpedon?

- relation to community?
- relation to death?

9.410 For my mother Thetis the goddess of the silver feet tells me  
9.411 I carry two sorts of destiny toward the day of my death. Either,  
9.412 if I stay here and fight beside the city of the Trojans,  
9.413 my return home is gone, but my glory shall be everlasting;  
9.414 but if I return home to the beloved land of my fathers,  
9.415 the excellence of my glory is gone, but there will be a long life  
9.416 left for me, and my end in death will not come to me quickly.

322 Man, supposing you and I, escaping this battle,  
323 would be able to live on forever, ageless, immortal,  
324 so neither would I myself go on fighting in the foremost  
325 nor would I urge you into the fighting where men win glory.  
326 But now, seeing that the spirits of death stand close about us  
327 in their thousands, no man can turn aside nor escape them,  
328 let us go on and win glory for ourselves, or yield it to others.

# homer: the hero at war

formulaic language,  
formulaic sequences

- epithets: "swift-footed Achilles," "Atreus' son Agamemnon," "brilliant Odysseus"
- lines: "Then in answer again spoke ...", "Then looking darkly at him ... spoke"
- sequences: battles, sacrifice/feasting

values of Homeric poetry: originality or traditionality?

## Homeric battles and formulas

- 1.458 And when all had made prayer and flung down the scattering barley
- 1.459 first they drew back the victims' heads and slaughtered them and skinned them,
- 1.460 and cut away the meat from the thighs and wrapped them in fat,
- 1.461 making a double fold, and laid shreds of flesh upon them.
- 1.462 The old man burned these on a cleft stick and poured the gleaming
- 1.463 wine over, while the young men with forks in their hands stood about him.
- 1.464 But when they had burned the thigh pieces and tasted the vitals,
- 1.465 they cut all the remainder into pieces and spitted them
- 1.466 and roasted all carefully and took off the pieces.
- 1.467 Then after they had finished the work and got the feast ready
- 1.468 they feasted, nor was any man's hunger denied a fair portion.
- 1.469 But when they had put away their desire for eating and drinking,
- 1.470 the young men filled the mixing bowls with pure wine, passing

# homer: the hero at war

patterns within patterns:  
fighting sequences

- arming
- exchange of kills
- similes
- "verbal epitaph"

Achilles arming in bk 19

- context?

divine favour:

- Athena prepares Achilles (does he know?)
- ambrosia and nectar
- "weakness in the knees": whose perspective?

## Homeric battles and formulas

19.351 ... Now the Achaians  
19.352 were arming at once along the encampment. She [Athena]  
dropped the delicate  
19.353 ambrosia and the nectar inside the breast of Achilleus  
19.354 softly, so no sad weakness of hunger would come on his  
knees,  
19.355 and she herself went back to the close house of her powerful  
father, while they were scattering out away from the fast  
19.356 ships.

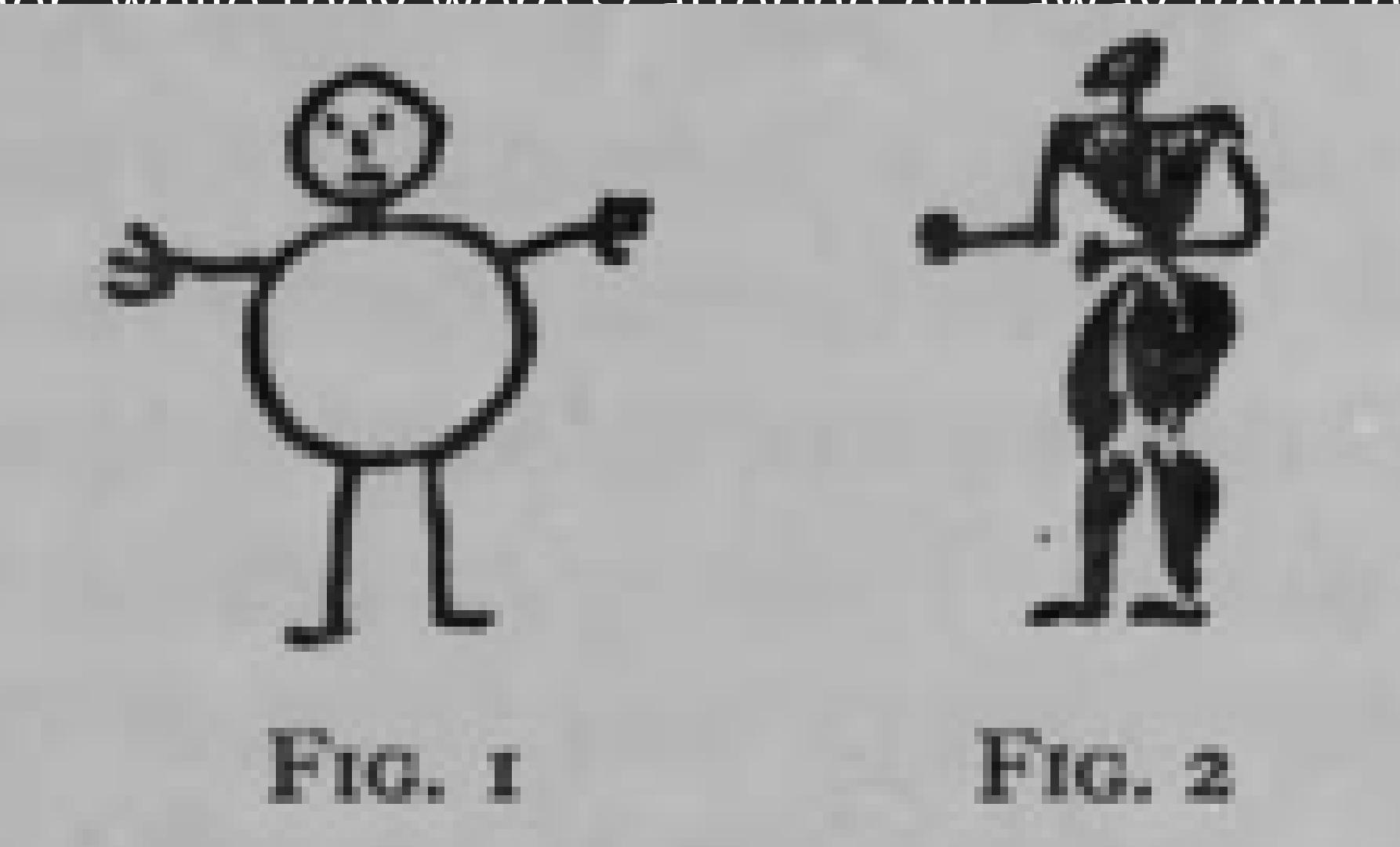


Fig. 1

Fig. 2

## Homeric battles and formulas

19.357 As when in their thickness the snowflakes of Zeus  
come fluttering  
19.358 cold beneath the blast of the north wind born in the  
bright sky,  
19.359 so now in their thickness the pride of the helms  
bright shining  
19.360 were carried out from the ships, and shields massive  
in the middle  
19.361 and the corselets strongly hollowed and the ash  
spears were worn forth.

epic simile

- introduced by "as when" or "like when"
- contents of similes?
- relation to contents of main narrative?
- points of contact: A is like B
- excesses?

## Homeric battles and formulas

- 3.1 Now when the men of both sides were set in order by their leaders,
- 3.2 the Trojans came on with clamour and shouting, like wildfowl,
- 3.3 as when the clamour of cranes goes high to the heavens,
- 3.4 when the cranes escape the winter time and the rains unceasing
- 3.5 and clamorously wing their way to the streaming Ocean,
- 3.6 bringing to the Pygmaian men bloodshed and destruction:
- 3.7 at daybreak they bring on the baleful battle against them.

- epic simile
- introduced by "as when" or "like when"
  - contents of similes?
  - relation to contents of main narrative?
  - points of contact: A is like B
  - excesses?

- 11.292 As when some huntsman drives to action his hounds with shining teeth against some savage beast, wild boar or lion,
- 11.293 ...

## Homeric battles and formulas

8.304 Gorgythion whose mother was lovely Kastianeira,  
8.305 Priam's bride from Aisyme, with the form of a goddess.  
8.306 He bent drooping his head to one side, as a garden  
poppy  
8.307 bends beneath the weight of its yield and the rains of  
springtime;  
8.308 so his head bent slack to one side beneath the helm's  
weight.

- epic simile
- introduced by "as when" or "like when"
  - contents of similes?
  - relation to contents of main narrative?
  - points of contact: A is like B
  - excesses?

16.404 Patroklos coming close up to him stabbed with a  
spear-thrust  
16.405 at the right side of the jaw and drove it on through the  
teeth, then  
16.406 hooked and dragged him with the spear over the rail,  
as a fisherman  
16.407 who sits out on the jut of a rock with line and glittering  
16.408 bronze hook drags a fish, who is thus doomed, out of  
the water.  
16.409 So he hauled him, mouth open to the bright spear, out

## Homeric battles and formulas

4.141 As when some Maionian woman or Karian with purple  
4.142 colours ivory, to make it a cheek piece for horses;  
4.143 it lies away in an inner room, and many a rider  
4.144 longs to have it, but it is laid up to be a king's treasure,  
4.145 two things, to be the beauty of the horse, the pride of  
the horseman:  
4.146 so, Menelaos, your shapely thighs were stained with the  
colour  
4.147 of blood, and your legs also and the ankles beneath  
them.

epic simile

- introduced by "as when" or "like when"
- contents of similes?
- relation to contents of main narrative?
- points of contact: A is like B
- excesses?

# homer: the hero at war

back to book 19,  
dressing the hero  
- equipment?  
- context?

another simile  
- for what?  
- why is it special?

## Homeric battles and formulas

19.367 ... Raging at the Trojans  
19.368 he put on the gifts of the god, that Hephaistos wrought him  
with much toil.  
19.369 First he placed along his legs the fair greaves linked with  
19.370 silver fastenings to hold the greaves at the ankles.  
19.371 Afterward he girt on about his chest the corselet,  
19.372 and across his shoulders slung the sword with the nails of  
silver,  
19.373 a bronze sword, and caught up the great shield, huge and  
heavy  
19.374 next, and from it the light glimmered far, as from the moon.

# homer: the hero at war

## Homeric battles and formulas

19.375 And as when from across water a light shines to mariners  
19.376 from a blazing fire, when the fire is burning high in the  
mountains  
19.377 in a desolate steading, as the mariners are carried unwilling  
19.378 by storm winds over the fish-swarming sea, far away from  
their loved ones;  
19.379 so the light from the fair elaborate shield of Achilleus  
19.380 shot into the high air. And lifting the helm he set it  
19.381 massive upon his head, and the helmet crested with horse-  
hair  
19.382 shone like a star, the golden fringes were shaken about it  
19.383 which Hephaistos had driven close along the horn of the  
helmet.

shield is really special ↗  
big simile after little  
simile  
- technique for  
emphasising  
important things

# homer: the hero at war

## Homeric battles and formulas

19.384 And brilliant Achilleus tried himself in his armour,  
to see

19.385 if it fitted close, and how his glorious limbs ran  
within it,

19.386 and the armour became as wings and upheld the  
shepherd of the people.

19.387 Next he pulled out from its standing place the  
spear of his father,

19.388 huge, heavy, thick, which no one else of all the  
Achaeans

19.389 could handle, but Achilleus alone knew how to  
wield it,

19.390 the Pelian ash spear which Cheiron had brought to  
his father

19.391 from high on Pelion, to be death for fighters in  
battle.

weight of spear: notice "heavy"  
things in Homer

- what other heavy things do you remember?
- what does heaviness mean?

end of "arming" sequence

patterns in patterns: what follows?

*aristeia*, from *arete*,  
"virtue/manliness"

- Diomedes, Agamemnon,  
Patroclus

do battles "make sense"? how  
many kinds of fighting?

# homer: the hero at war

group vs. individual hero  
- "camera angles"  
- mass melee vs. duel  
- ideals: "democratic" or "aristocratic"

## Homeric battles and formulas

16.212 And as a man builds solid a wall with stones set close together  
16.213 for the rampart of a high house keeping out the force of the winds, so  
16.214 close together were the helms and shields massive in the middle.  
16.215 For shield leaned on shield, helmet on helmet, man against man,  
16.216 and the horse-hair crests along the horns of the shining helmets  
16.217 touched as they bent their heads, so dense were they formed on each other.

11.67 And the men, like two lines of reapers who, facing each other,  
11.68 drive their course all down the field of wheat or of barley  
11.69 for a man blessed in substance, and the cut swathes drop showering,  
11.70 so Trojans and Achaians driving in against one another  
11.71 cut men down, nor did either side think of disastrous panic.

# homer: the hero at war

## Homeric battles and formulas

Chigi vase, 7<sup>th</sup> c. Corinthian,  
found in Etruscan tomb



# homer: the hero at war

## Homeric battles and formulas

Tyrtaeu  
s, 7<sup>th</sup> C.  
Spartan

Courage, children of unconquered Heracles! Zeus  
has not yet turned his back.  
Fear no multitude. Never panic. Push  
your shield in the enemy's face,  
despising life and loving death's dark  
demons like rays of the sun.  
You know war's harsh temperament and how  
Ares works destruction.  
You have joined in retreat and pursuit, young fighters;  
you have had your fill of both.  
When men stand side by side, not flinching  
from hand-to-hand fights at the front,  
some die, but they save their people. When men run away,  
all their virtue is lost.  
No one could name every evil that comes  
to a man in such disgrace.  
Though cleaving the back of a man in flight in the heat  
of combat gives no pleasure,<sup>1</sup>  
the corpse fixed to the ground by a spear thrown  
from behind lies in disgrace.

Now is the time for a man to stand, planting  
his feet and biting his lip,  
to hide his body, ankles to neck, behind  
a shield's big belly,  
to jab on the right with his strong spear and shake  
his helmet's fearsome crest.  
Violent acts teach warfare better  
than cowering out of range.  
March to the front, close with the enemy, strike  
with spear or sword and take him.  
A man who holds spear or sword must fight  
that way: toe to toe,  
shield to shield, crest to crest, helmet  
to helmet, breastplate to breastplate.  
You soldiers who are lightly armed can each  
find a shield to crouch by,  
throw your stones and spears, keeping close  
to men in heavy armor. [8]

**Tyrtaeus (tr. Mulroy)**

# homer: the hero at war

## dueling heroes

patterns in patterns:  
repeated elements in  
duels

- heroes see and approach each other  
(chariot taxi)
- opening exchange of words: what do they say? ask?
- short spears thrown: with what results?
- heroes may comment on spear throws: what do they say?
- close combat with swords

- 22.273 So [Achilles] spoke, and balanced the spear far shadowed,  
and threw it;
- 22.274 but glorious Hektor kept his eyes on him, and avoided it,
- 22.275 for he dropped, watchful, to his knee, and the bronze spear  
flew over his shoulder
- 22.276 and stuck in the ground
- 22.289 So [Hector] spoke, and balanced the spear far shadowed, and  
threw it,
- 22.290 and struck the middle of Peleïdes' shield, nor missed it,
- 22.291 but the spear was driven far back from the shield, and Hektor  
was angered
- 22.292 because his swift weapon had been loosed from his hand in a  
vain cast.
- 4.489 Now Antiphos of the shining corselet,
- 4.490 Priam's son, made a cast at him in the crowd with the sharp  
spear
- 4.491 but missed Aias and struck Leukos, a brave companion
- 4.492 of Odysseus, in the thigh, and he fell

# homer: the hero at war

## dueling heroes

victor can emerge in  
spear throws or in sword  
fighting

what happens when a  
fighter dies?

- how does Homer  
emphasise important  
moments?

note

"biographies"/vignettes

- "*kleine Kämpfer*"  
- effect of vignettes?

4.473 There Telamonian Aias struck down the son of Anthemion  
4.474 Simoeisios in his stripling's beauty, whom once his mother  
4.475 descending from Ida bore beside the banks of Simoeis  
4.476 when she had followed her father and mother to tend the  
sheepflocks.  
4.477 Therefore they called him Simoeisios; but he could not  
4.478 render again the care of his dear parents; he was short-lived,  
4.479 beaten down beneath the spear of high-hearted Aias,  
4.480 who struck him as he first came forward beside the nipple  
4.481 of the right breast, and the bronze spearhead drove clean  
through the shoulder.  
4.482 He dropped then to the ground in the dust, like some black  
poplar,  
4.483 which in the land low-lying about a great marsh grows  
4.484 smooth trimmed yet with branches growing at the uttermost  
tree-top:  
4.485 one whom a man, a maker of chariots, fells with the shining  
4.486 iron, to bend it into a wheel for a fine-wrought chariot,  
4.487 and the tree lies hardening by the banks of a river.

# homer: the hero at war

## dueling heroes

retrieval of weapon

gloating over corpse

despoiling the body

can lead to fighting over  
corpse

- fight sequence starts again
  - another duel, or general fighting (“close up” or “wide shot”)

11.446 [Odysseus] spoke, and Sokos turning from him was striding in flight

11.447 but in his back even as he was turning the spear fixed

11.448 between the shoulders and was driven on through the chest beyond it.

11.449 He fell, thunderously, and great Odysseus boasted over him:

11.450 'Sokos, son of wise Hippasos the breaker of horses,

11.451 death was too quick for you and ran you down, you could not

11.452 avoid it. Wretch, since now your father and your honoured

mother

11.453 will not be able to close your eyes in death, but the tearing

11.454 birds will get you, with their wings close-beating about you.

11.455 If I die, the brilliant Achaians will bury me in honour.'

# homer: the hero at war

## dueling heroes

to conclude:  
sometimes *ethos* or  
character of a hero is  
revealed in how he  
fights

Ajax, “bastion of the  
Achaeans” [*herkos  
akhaion*]

next time: past and  
future in Homer; onto  
*Odyssey*

11.557 ... As when  
11.558 a donkey, stubborn and hard to move, goes into a cornfield  
11.559 in despite of boys, and many sticks have been broken upon  
him,  
11.560 but he gets in and goes on eating the deep grain, and the  
children  
11.561 beat him with sticks, but their strength is infantile; yet at last  
11.562 by hard work they drive him out when he is glutted with eating;  
11.563 so the high-hearted Trojans and companions in arms gathered  
11.564 from far places kept after great Aias, the son of Telamon,  
11.565 stabbing always with their spears at the centre of the great  
shield.  
11.566 And now Aias would remember again his furious valour  
11.567 and turn upon them, and beat back the battalions of Trojans,  
11.568 breakers of horses, and then again would turn and run from  
them.  
11.569 He blocked them all from making their way on to the fast ships  
11.570 and himself stood and fought on in the space between the  
Achaeans

# homer: before the beginning and after the end

CLCV 2500 | ENGL 2500 Classical Mythology

before the beginning and after the end

today

death and ransom

Homer and time

intro to *Odyssey*

death and ransom

disarmed warrior may ask for mercy: supplication

- gesture: one hand around knees, one hand raised to chin
- if accepted ☑ taken prisoner, released for ransom
- ransom: principle of exchange, life for goods

# before the beginning and after the end

## death and ransom

Lycaon (son of Priam), comes across Achilles

- previously captured and ransomed by Achilles
- gets home ➔ meets Achilles again
- Lycaon loses all equip in river, helpless
- asks Achilles for mercy

21.70 ... Lykaon  
21.71 with one hand had taken him by the knees in supplication  
21.72 and with the other held and would not let go of the edged spear  
21.73 and spoke aloud to him and addressed him in winged words:  
'Achilleus,  
21.74 I am at your knees. Respect my position, have mercy upon me.  
21.75 I am in the place, illustrious, of a suppliant who must be honoured ...'

# before the beginning and after the end

## death and ransom

what does Achilles decide? what are his reasons?

> why “friend”?

> note: “definite indefiniteness”

21.97 So the glorious son of Priam addressed him, speaking  
21.98 in supplication, but heard in turn the voice without pity:  
21.99 'Poor fool, no longer speak to me of ransom, nor argue it.  
21.100 In the time before Patroklos came to the day of his destiny  
21.101 then it was the way of my heart's choice to be sparing  
21.102 of the Trojans, and many I took alive and disposed of them.  
21.103 Now there is not one who can escape death, if the gods send  
21.104 him against my hands in front of Ilion, not one  
21.105 of all the Trojans and beyond others the children of Priam.  
21.106 So, friend, you die also. Why all this clamour about it?  
21.107 Patroklos also is dead, who was better by far than you are.  
21.108 Do you not see what a man I am, how huge, how splendid  
21.109 and born of a great father, and the mother who bore me  
immortal?  
21.110 Yet even I have also my death and my strong destiny,  
21.111 and there shall be a dawn or an afternoon or a noontime  
21.112 when some man in the fighting will take the life from me also  
21.113 either with a spearcast or an arrow flown from the bowstring.'

# before the beginning and after the end

## death and ransom

Homeric awareness of time

here: “my death will definitely come; I don’t know when or how, but it informs my decisions now”

☞ unknowable future affects present

what other forms of time awareness do we find?

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21.98 in supplication, but heard in turn the voice without pity:  
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21.111 and there shall be a dawn or an afternoon or a noontime  
21.112 when some man in the fighting will take the life from me also  
21.113 either with a spearcast or an arrow flown from the bowstring.'

# before the beginning and after the end

## time and the Iliad

temporality: the form or  
“shape” of time

☞ what does this mean?

time has different  
shapes:

- narrative of war:  
unstoppable flow of  
events, one thing  
leads to another, one  
killing to the next ☞

time as chain of  
cause and effect

- similes: breaks in the  
flow, images of peace

☞ habit, routine,  
moments stretched  
out

11.67 And the men, like two lines of reapers who, facing each other,  
11.68 drive their course all down the field of wheat or of barley  
11.69 for a man blessed in substance, and the cut swathes drop  
showering,  
11.70 so Trojans and Achaians driving in against one another  
11.71 cut men down, nor did either side think of disastrous panic.

4.482 He dropped then to the ground in the dust, like some black  
poplar,  
4.483 which in the land low-lying about a great marsh grows  
4.484 smooth trimmed yet with branches growing at the uttermost  
tree-top:  
4.485 one whom a man, a maker of chariots, fells with the shining  
4.486 iron, to bend it into a wheel for a fine-wrought chariot,  
4.487 and the tree lies hardening by the banks of a river.

8.306 He bent drooping his head to one side, as a garden poppy  
8.307 bends beneath the weight of its yield and the rains of  
springtime;

# before the beginning and after the end

## time and the Iliad

another form of time:  
ecphrasis

ecphrasis:, a passage  
within a narrative that  
describes an object  
(often a work of art or  
craftsmanship)

effect of ecphrasis on  
narrative time?

ecphrasis of the shield  
of Achilles

- book 18. 478 - 608

18.483 He made the earth upon it, and the sky, and the sea's water,  
18.484 and the tireless sun, and the moon waxing into her fullness,  
18.485 and on it all the constellations that festoon the heavens,  
18.486 the Pleiades and the Hyades and the strength of Orion  
18.487 and the Bear, whom men give also the name of the Wagon,  
18.488 who turns about in a fixed place and looks at Orion  
18.489 and she alone is never plunged in the wash of the Ocean.

# before the beginning and after the end

## time and the Iliad

“a complete world”

- literal depiction of complete physical world (earth, sky, sea, etc.)
- complete human world embodied in two cities

city of peace: marriages, festivals, dancing, assembly in market place, law suit (community instead of violence)

city at war: siege, ambush, raid on sheep

agricultural activities: ploughing, harvesting, winemaking, animal husbandry, more dancing

18.483 He made the earth upon it, and the sky, and the sea's water,

18.484 and the tireless sun, and the moon waxing into her fullness,

18.485 and on it all the constellations that festoon the heavens,

18.486 the Pleiades and the Hyades and the strength of Orion

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# before the beginning and after the end

## time and the Iliad

shield represents “complete” world, beyond the limited world of war ☐ but it is itself an implement of war, within the war narrative

peace is almost unimaginable within the time of war: how does this manifest?  
- peace seen in the nostalgic past  
- depiction of peace on shield cannot be seen by warriors

9.400 ... For not  
9.401 worth the value of my life are all the possessions they fable  
9.402 were won for Ilion, that strong-founded citadel, in the old days  
9.403 when there was peace, before the coming of the sons of the  
Achaeans;  
9.404 not all that the stone doorsill of the Archer holds fast within it,  
9.405 of Phoibos Apollo in Pytho of the rocks.

19.12 The goddess spoke so, and set down the armour on the ground  
19.13 before Achilleus, and all its elaboration clashed loudly.  
19.14 Trembling took hold of all the Myrmidons. None had the courage  
19.15 to look straight at it. They were afraid of it. Only Achilleus  
19.16 looked, and as he looked the anger came harder upon him  
19.17 and his eyes glittered terribly under his lids, like sunflare.  
19.18 He was glad, holding in his hands the shining gifts of  
Hephaistos.

# before the beginning and after the end

## time and the Iliad

why can only Achilles look at the shield?

shield depicts an unimaginable time, outside the narrative of war

Achilles can imagine the unimaginable outside

- Achilles can confront his unknowable death

19.12 The goddess spoke so, and set down the armour on the ground  
19.13 before Achilleus, and all its elaboration clashed loudly.  
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19.18 He was glad, holding in his hands the shining gifts of Hephaistos.

21.110 Yet even I have also my death and my strong destiny,  
21.111 and there shall be a dawn or an afternoon or a noontime  
21.112 when some man in the fighting will take the life from me also  
21.113 either with a spearcast or an arrow flown from the bowstring.'

# before the beginning and after the end

## time and the Iliad

connections: knowledge ~ present; time ~ ignorance

- in what sense is everything you know part of your present?
- true time ~ unknown

*Iliad* constantly plays with ignorance and time

Helen doesn't know that time has been passing without her

- poem lets us see two times: Helen's imagined time (includes possible reunion with brothers) and the true time (she had already seen her brothers for the last time, without knowing it)

3.236 ' ... yet nowhere can I see those two, the marshals of the people,

3.237 Kastor, breaker of horses, and the strong boxer, Polydeukes,

3.238 my own brothers, born with me of a single mother.

3.239 Perhaps these came not with the rest from Lakedaimon the lovely,

3.240 or else they did come here in their sea-wandering ships, yet

3.241 now they are reluctant to go with the men into battle

3.242 dreading the words of shame and all the reproach that is on me.'

3.243 So she spoke, but the teeming earth lay already upon them

3.244 away in Lakedaimon, the beloved land of their fathers.

compare: death of Albertine in Proust

- petty jealousies ↗ imagines continuation of petty jealousies ↗ doesn't know future death

# before the beginning and after the end time and the Iliad

contrast between two times:

- anticipated future (1) ↗ unexpected event ↗ actual future (2)
- contrast is achieved when traces of future (1) are found in future (2)

compare: historical fiction

- we know what will happen
- what does historical fiction offer? the halo of lost futures

can also do this in other media

- e.g., leitmotif in film music



STAR WARS EPISODIO I

LUCASFILM

# before the beginning and after the end

## time and the Iliad

part of the *Iliad's* technique of composition: using lines from one context in another ☐ bringing contexts together in contrast

- 18.22 He spoke, and the black cloud of sorrow closed on Achilleus.
- 18.23 In both hands he caught up the grimy dust, and poured it
- 18.24 over his head and face, and fouled his handsome countenance,
- 18.25 and the black ashes were scattered over his immortal tunic.
- 18.26 And he himself, mightily in his might, in the dust lay
- 18.27 at length, and took and tore at his hair with his hands, and defiled it.

# before the beginning and after the end

## time and the Iliad

*Iliad* constantly plays with ignorance and time

Patroclus asks to fight

- “in his great innocence”: *mega nepios*, lit. “greatly foolish”
- why foolish? not because he is dumb, but because he doesn’t know the future
- bringing into contrast: what he thought he was doing, what he was actually doing (how things will actually turn out in the unknowable future)

16.40 ‘Give me your armour to wear on my shoulders into the fighting;

16.41 so perhaps the Trojans might think I am you, and give way

16.42 from their attack, and the fighting sons of the Achaians get wind

16.43 again after hard work. There is little breathing space in the fighting.

16.44 We unwearied might with a mere cry pile men wearied

16.45 back upon their city, and away from the ships and the shelters.'

16.46 So he spoke supplicating in his great innocence; this was

16.47 his own death and evil destruction he was entreating.

# before the beginning and after the end

## time and the Iliad

another twist: heroes do not know their future, but they know that they do not know

heroes' knowledge of their own ignorance ↗ expressed in concept of song in the future

- “my life will be part of a song in the future; I sure hope it's a good one!”

Helen says this directly

- “life sucks, seems pointless, but I can hold onto the possibility that it will make sense in a song of the future”

6.354 But come now, come in and rest on this chair, my brother,

6.355 since it is on your heart beyond all that the hard work has fallen

6.356 for the sake of dishonoured me and the blind act of Alexandros,

6.357 us two, on whom Zeus set a vile destiny, so that hereafter

6.358 we shall be made into things of song for the men of the future.

# before the beginning and after the end

## time and the Iliad

heroes are motivated by how they will appear in future song, even though they don't know what role they will play in it

2.119 And this shall be a thing of shame for the men hereafter  
2.120 to be told, that so strong, so great a host of Achaians  
2.121 carried on and fought in vain a war that was useless  
2.122 against men fewer than they, with no accomplishment shown for it

7.81 But if I take his life, and Apollo grants me the glory,  
7.82 I will strip his armour and carry it to sacred Ilion  
7.83 and hang it in front of the temple of far-striking Apollo,  
7.84 but his corpse I will give back among the strong-benched vessels  
7.85 so that the flowing-haired Achaians may give him due burial  
7.86 and heap up a mound upon him beside the broad passage of Helle.  
7.87 And some day one of the men to come will say, as he sees it,  
7.88 one who in his benched ship sails on the wine-blue water:  
7.89 "This is the mound of a man who died long ago in battle,"<sup>16</sup>

# before the beginning and after the end

## overview of the Odyssey

Odysseus' return from Trojan war

two “tracks”

- Odysseus: travels, adventures
- home (Ithaca): Penelope, Telemachus, the boys

broad structure: what happens when two tracks meet?

four parts



# before the beginning and after the end

## overview of the Odyssey

1 to 4. “Telemachy”: Telemachus is the son Odysseus left behind. At the start of the poem, he is entering adulthood, but in a complicated family situation: a crowd of noble men (the suitors) are squatting in his house, trying to force his mother Penelope to marry one of them. Penelope has so far refused to choose any, since she is still waiting for Odysseus, about whom there's been no news. The poem begins when the goddess Athena arrives in disguise and incites Telemachus to do something about his situation. That something is to leave home and look for news of Odysseus to end the uncertain situation on Ithaca. He sails to the mainland, visiting Nestor at Pylos and Menelaos and Helen in Sparta. They tell him stories of his father, but do not have current news. Telemachus returns home.



# before the beginning and after the end

## overview of the Odyssey

5 to 13: The return of Odysseus. The poem picks up with Odysseus, who has been marooned on an island with a nymph (minor female divinity) Calypso. Odysseus leaves the island on a raft and becomes shipwrecked. He is washed up on the shores of the mythical society of the Phaeacians, whose ships can easily ferry him home. Odysseus stays with the Phaeacians for some days and secures his passage home.

(inset) 9 to 12: The *Apologoi*, "stories/tales". While Odysseus is staying with the Phaeacians, they entertain him at dinner and ask about his story. Odysseus tells the story of how he left Troy, lost all his ships and men, and ended up on Calypso's island. This part of the poem, narrated in Odysseus' own voice, includes the episodes of the Cyclops and the Sirens, as well as a visit to the underworld.



# before the beginning and after the end

## overview of the Odyssey

13 to 24 (half the poem!): Odysseus on Ithaca.

Odysseus arrives on Ithaca, disguised as a beggar while he observes the situation and plots to kill the suitors. In a series of scenes, Odysseus reveals his identity to his son Telemachus and allies in the household. Penelope, who does not yet know of Odysseus' return, declares a contest at which the suitor who can string the bow Odysseus left behind will win the right to marry her. When no one is strong enough to string the bow, Odysseus in his beggar disguise is allowed to try, and he succeeds. Odysseus proceeds to use the bow to shoot the suitors, beginning a battle in the house that ends with all the suitors dead. Penelope misses all of this through being upstairs. A meeting between Penelope and Odysseus establishes his identity to her. Meanwhile, the family of the dead suitors arrive, irate and bellicose, but just before fighting breaks out again,



before the beginning and after the end

## relation between *Odyssey* and *Iliad*

we've been talking about "Homeric/epic tradition" like a big bag that contains *Iliad* and *Odyssey* ↗ can we say anything more specific about it?

Theban cycle and Trojan cycle

*Iliad*: almost the end of the Trojan War

*Odyssey*: ten years from the end of the Trojan war, but focused on Odysseus

Question: what about the rest of the story? It's found in other poems.

Trojan cycle or cyclic poems: poems narrating the Trojan war, which aren't *Iliad* or *Odyssey* (only survive in fragments and summaries; "epitome")

# before the beginning and after the end relation between *Odyssey* and *Iliad*

## Cyclic epics in “story” order

- *Cypria*: start of Trojan War (Judgment of Paris) up to beginning of *Iliad*

*Iliad*: tenth year of war to death of Hector

- *Aethiopis*: Penthesileia and Amazons, and Memnon; deaths of Antilochus and Achilles
- *Little Iliad*: Trojan Horse, dispute over the arms of Achilles
- *Iliou Persis* (“sack of Troy”): sack of Troy
- *Nostoi* (“returns”): Greeks' journeys home

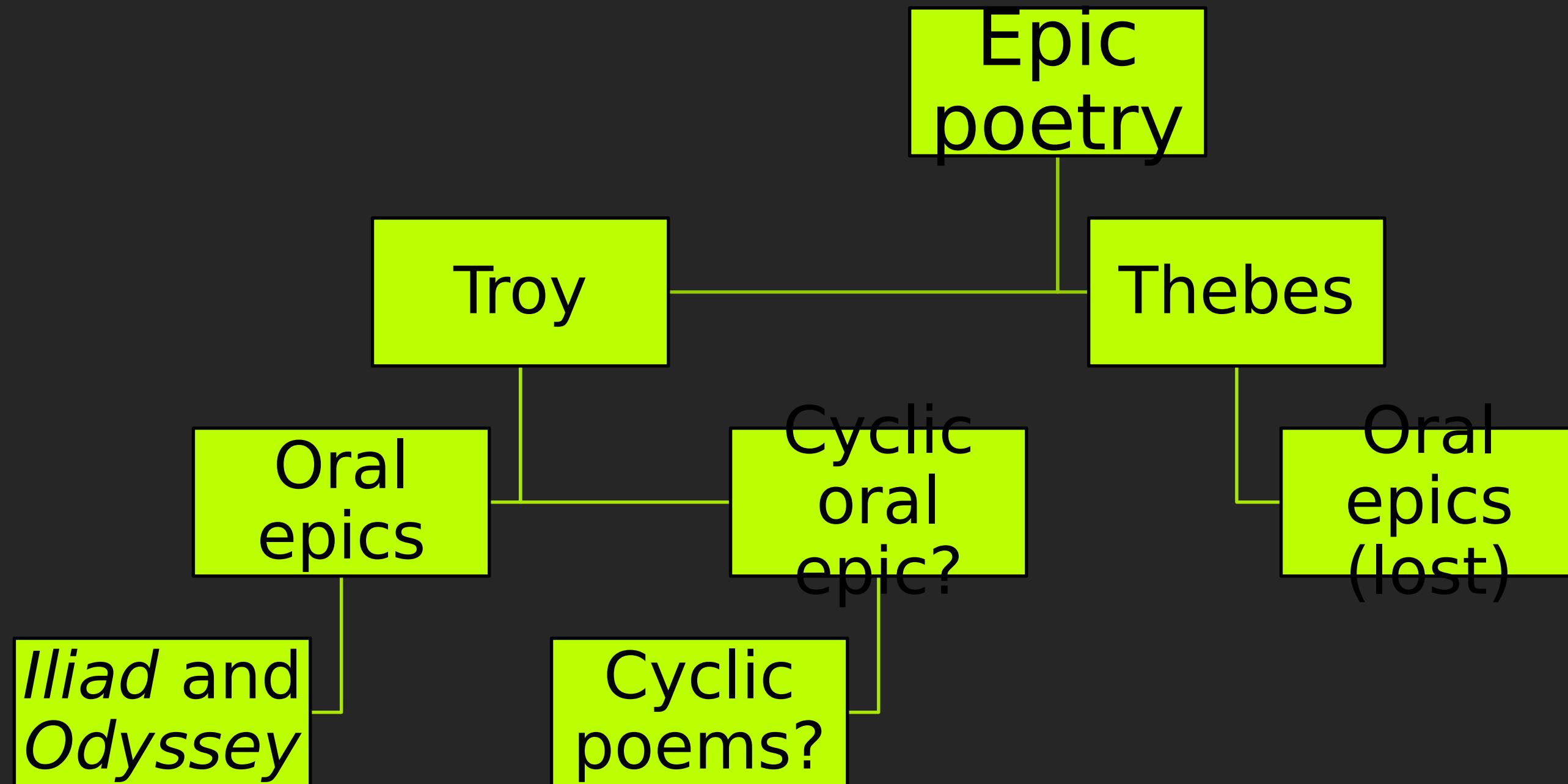
*Odyssey*: Odysseus' journey home and what he does when he gets there

- *Telegony*: Odysseus' voyages and death afterwards

Question: How are the cyclic poems related to the Homeric poems?

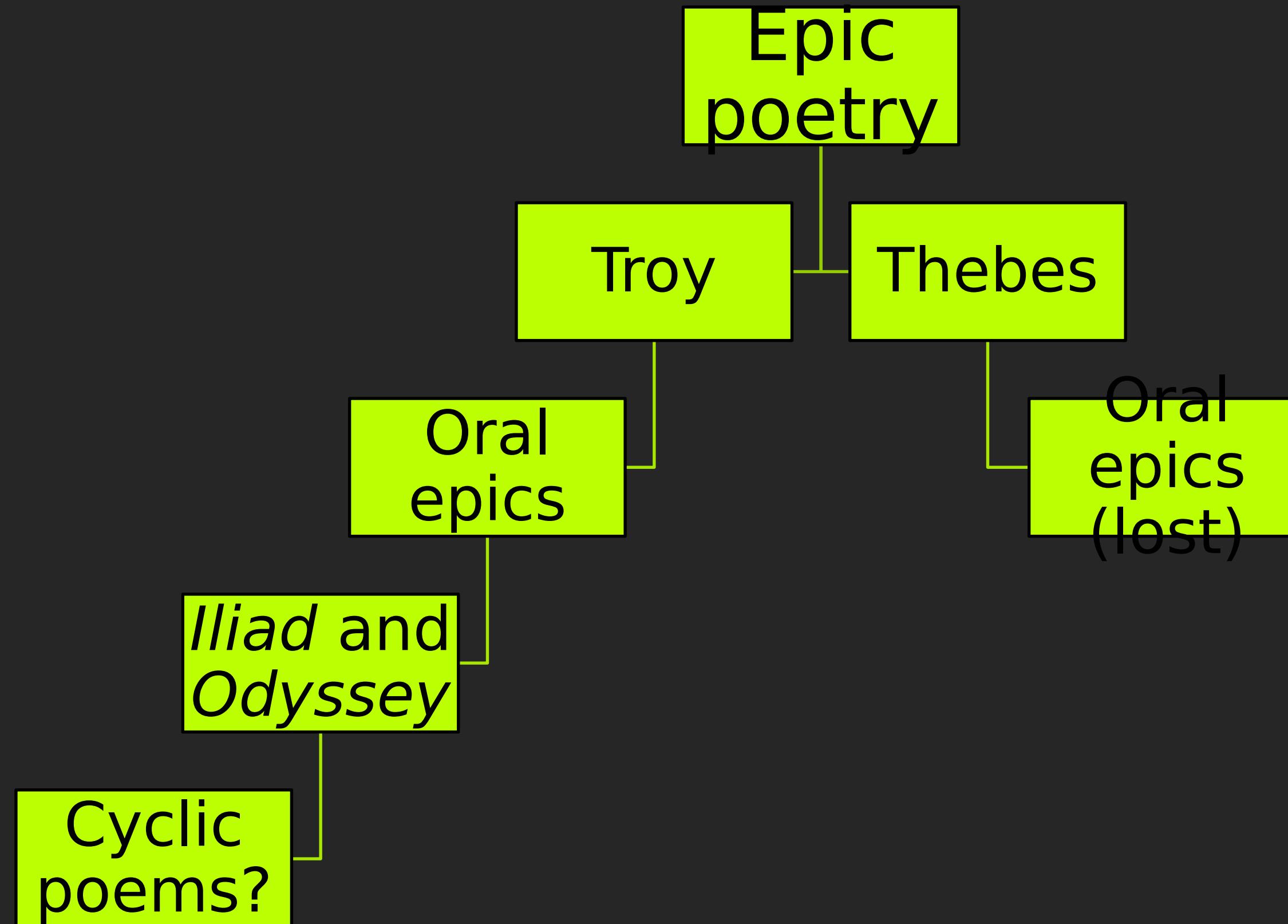
before the beginning and after the end

relation between *Odyssey* and *Iliad*



before the beginning and after the end

relation between *Odyssey* and *Iliad*



# before the beginning and after the end

## relation between *Odyssey* and *Iliad*

Question: How old are the stories in the cyclic poems? How much do they preserve oral epic traditions independent of the Homeric poems? To what extent do they derive *from* the Homeric poems?

Are the cyclic poems “fan fiction”?

Also possible: Cyclic poems later than Homeric poems and are intended to complete them, but draw on older material.

Also possible: The Homeric poems themselves are “fan fictions” of established myths (Patroclus and Hector made up? Achilles-Patroclus-Hector < Achilles-Antilochus-Memnon?)

# homer: civilisations and their opposites

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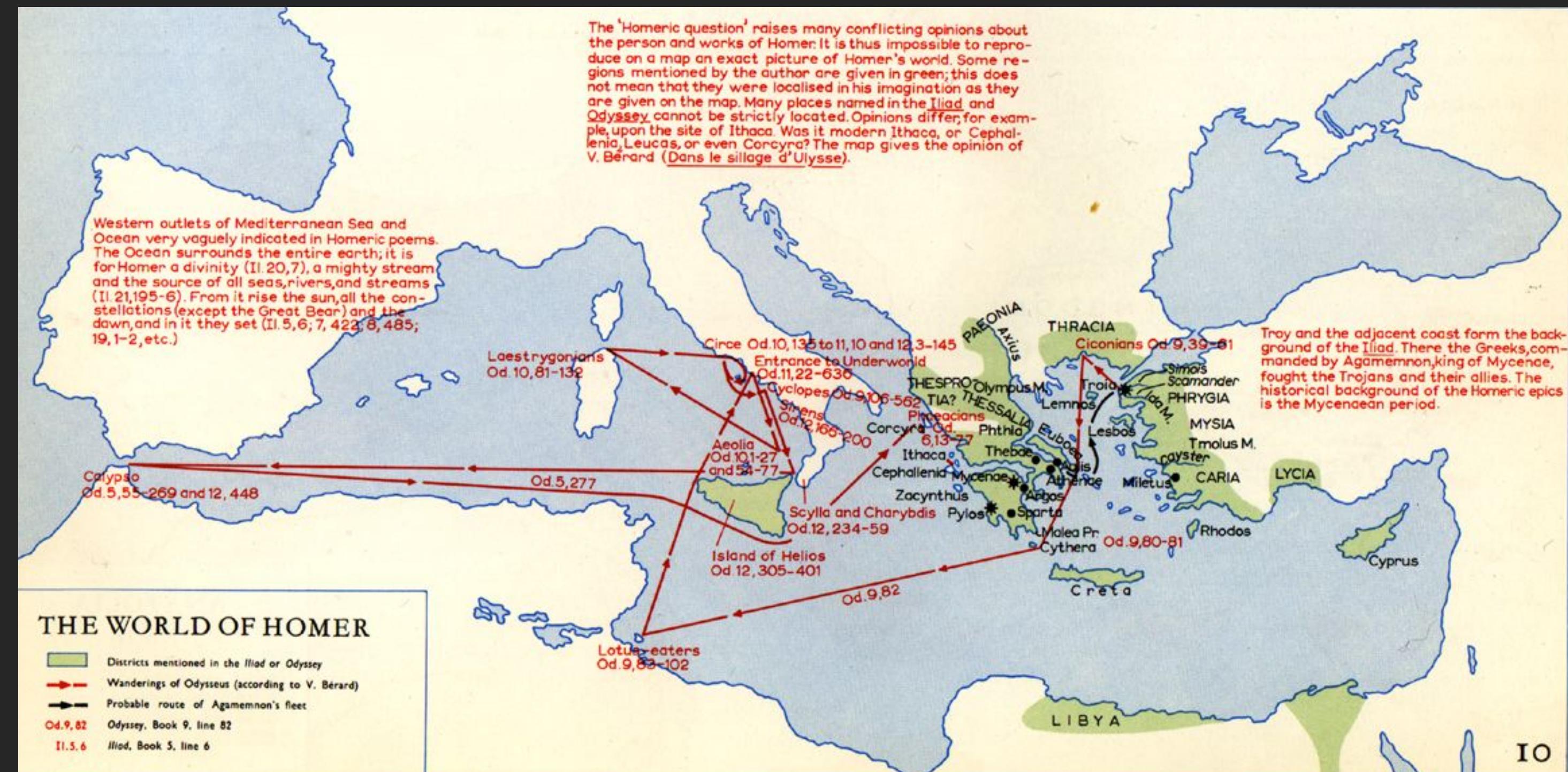
# civilisations and their opposites

today

wanderings of  
Odysseus

myth as sociology

self and other



# civilisations and their opposites

## outline of the wanderings

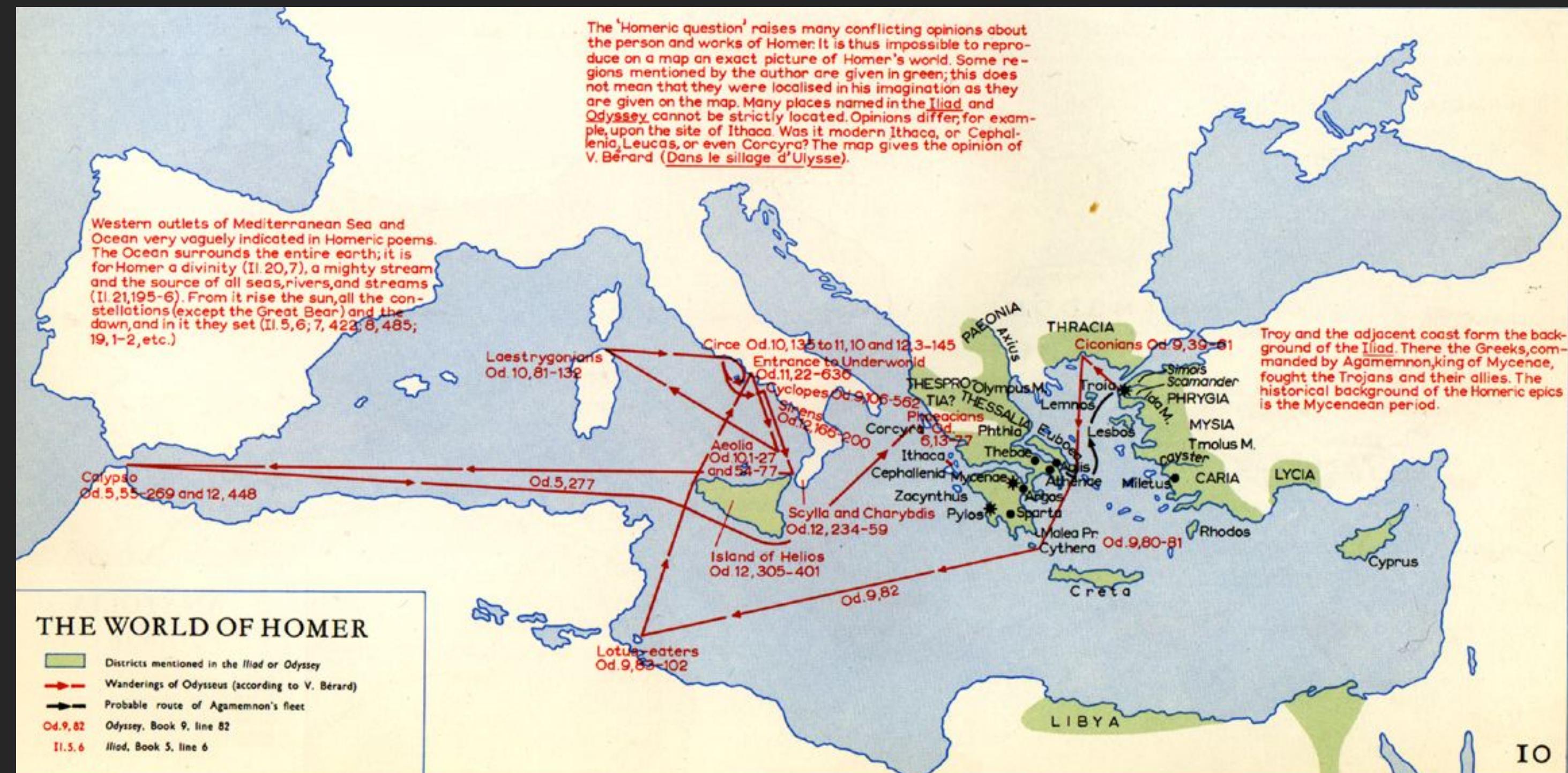
context: where are we in the poem?

book 9

- raid on Ciconians
- Lotus-eaters
- Cyclops

book 10

- Aeolus
- Laestrygonians
- Aeaea (Circe)



# civilisations and their opposites

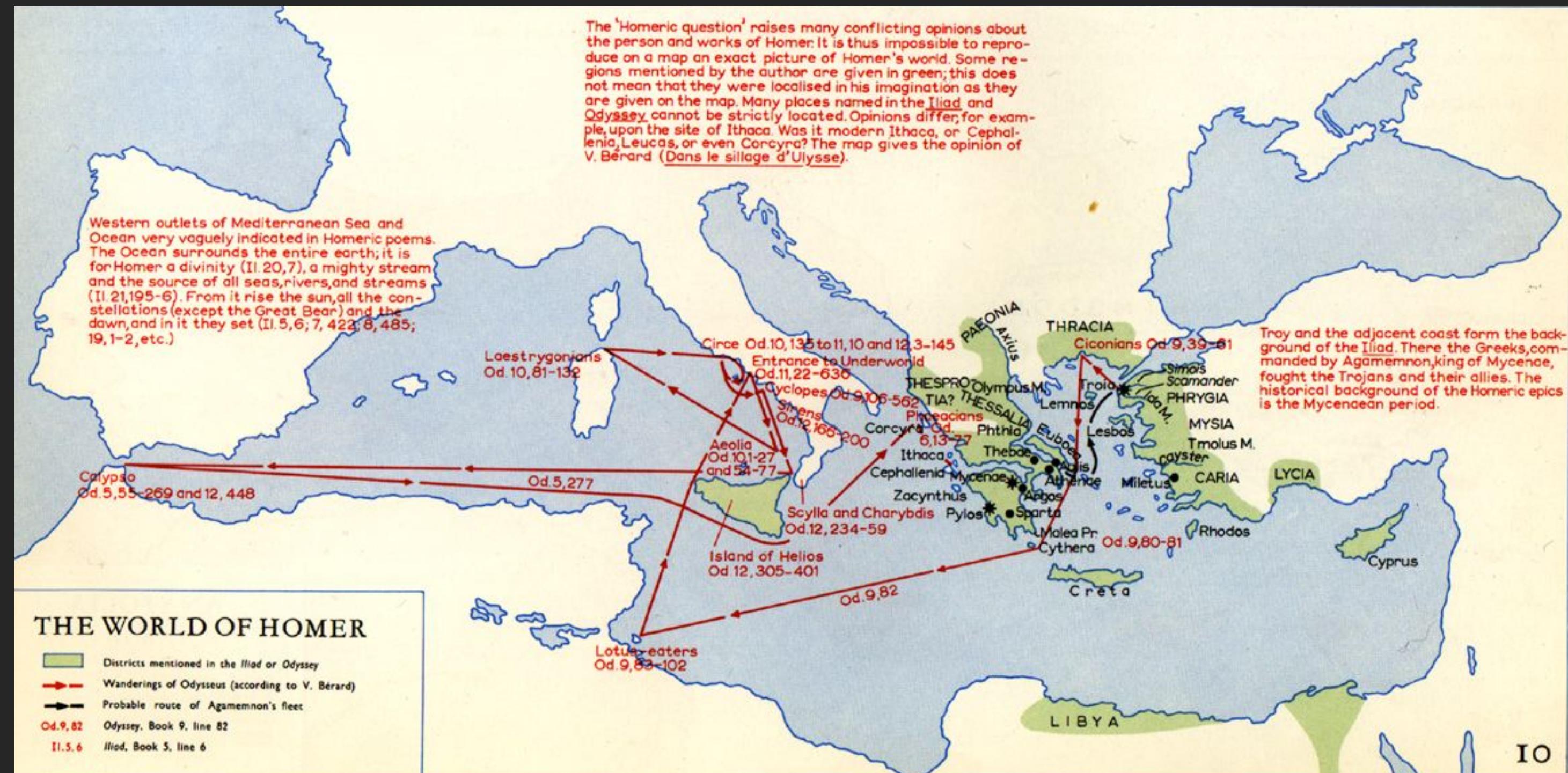
## outline of the wanderings

### book 11

- underworld
- nekuia: Tiresias, spirits of mother, dead heroes, famous women

### book 12

- Circe again: next moves
- Sirens
- Scylla and Charybdis
- Thrinacia, cattle of Helios
- shipwreck, Calypso's island



# civilisations and their opposites

## how to greet a stranger?

xenia, guest-friendship  
xenos,  
guest-friend/stranger

Diomedes and Glaukos  
in *Iliad* 6 ☐

xenia ☐ generational  
bond

why this custom?

- visits of gods
- dangers of travel

*Odyssey*: different ways  
of welcoming guests  
- good, ambiguous,  
bad

6.215 'See now, you are my guest friend from far in the time of our fathers.  
6.216 Brilliant Oineus [Diomedes' grandfather] once was host to Bellerophontes [Glaukos' grandfather]  
6.217 the blameless, in his halls, and twenty days he detained him,  
6.218 and these two gave to each other fine gifts in token of friendship.  
6.219 Oineus gave his guest a war belt bright with the red dye,  
6.220 Bellerophontes a golden and double-handled drinking-cup,  
6.221 a thing I left behind in my house when I came on my journey.  
6.222 Tydeus, though, I cannot remember, since I was little  
6.223 when he left me, that time the people of the Achaians perished  
6.224 in Thebe. Therefore I am your friend and host in the heart of Argos;  
6.225 you are mine in Lykia, when I come to your country.  
6.226 Let us avoid each other's spears, even in the close fighting.  
6.227 There are plenty of Trojans and famed companions in battle for me  
6.228 to kill, whom the god sends me, or those I run down with my 5

# civilisations and their opposites

## proper welcome

what happens first?

what doesn't happen  
first?

Now far the first to see Athene was godlike Telemachos,  
as he sat among the suitors, his heart deep grieving within him,  
115 imagining in his mind his great father, how he might come back  
and all throughout the house might cause the suitors to scatter,  
and hold his rightful place and be lord of his own possessions.

With such thoughts, sitting among the suitors, he saw Athene  
and went straight to the forecourt, the heart within him  
scandalized

120 that a guest should still be standing at the doors. He stood  
beside her

and took her by the right hand, and relieved her of the bronze  
spear,

and spoke to her and addressed her in winged words: 'Welcome,  
stranger.

You shall be entertained as a guest among us. Afterward,  
when you have tasted dinner, you shall tell us what your need is.'

# civilisations and their opposites

## proper welcome

what information does Telemachus ask for?

> significance of this question?

But come now, tell me this and give me an accurate answer.

170 What man are you, and whence? Where is your city? Your parents?

What kind of ship did you come here on? And how did the sailors bring you to Ithaka? What men do they claim that they are?

For I do not think you could have traveled on foot to this country.

And tell me this too, tell me truly, so that I may know it.

175 Are you here for the first time, or are you a friend of my father's from abroad? Since many other men too used to come and visit our house, in the days when he used to go about among people.'

# civilisations and their opposites

## proper welcome

> meaning of “Mentes,” “Mentor”

> historical context: reasons for sailing?

Then in turn the goddess gray-eyed Athene answered him:  
‘See, I will accurately answer all that you ask me.  
I announce myself as Mentes, son of Anchialos  
the wise, and my lordship is over the oar-loving Taphians.  
Now I have come in as you see, with my ship and  
companions  
sailing over the wine-blue water to men of alien language,  
to Temese, after bronze, and my cargo is gleaming iron.

...

But come now tell me this and give me an accurate answer.  
Are you, big as you are, the very child of Odysseus?  
Indeed, you are strangely like about the head, the fine eyes,  
as I remember; we used to meet so often together  
before he went away to Troy, where others beside him  
and the greatest of the Argives went in their hollow vessels.  
Since that time I have not seen Odysseus nor has he seen  
me.’

# civilisations and their opposites

## proper welcome

Nestor, iii. 65 ff.

> reason for sailing (recall: first episode in Odysseus' wanderings)

When they had roasted and taken off the spits the outer meats, dividing shares they held their communal high feast. But when they had put aside their desire for eating and drinking,

first to speak was the Gerenian horseman, Nestor: 'Now is a better time to interrogate our guests and ask them who they are, now they have had the pleasure of eating. Strangers, who are you? From where do you come sailing over the watery ways? Is it on some business, or are you recklessly roving as pirates do, when they sail on the salt sea and venture their lives as they wander, bringing evil to alien people?'

# civilisations and their opposites

## proper welcome

Menelaos and Helen (iv. 20 ff.)

These two now, the hero Telemachos and the shining son of Nestor in the forecourt, themselves and their horses, stood, while powerful Eteoneus, who was the active henchman of glorious Menelaos, came forward and saw them and went with his message through the house to the shepherd of the people.

He came and standing close beside him addressed him in winged words:

'Menelaos, dear to Zeus, here are certain strangers, two men, and they look like the breed of great Zeus. Tell me then, whether we should unharness their fast horses, or send them on to somebody else, who can entertain them.'

Then, deeply vexed, fair-haired Menelaos answered him:

'Eteoneus, son of Boëthoös, you were never a fool before, but now you are babbling nonsense, as a child would do. Surely we two have eaten much hospitality from other men before we came back here. May Zeus only make an end of such misery hereafter. Unharness the strangers' horses then, and bring the men here to be feasted'<sup>10</sup>

> why maintain custom of xenia? "pay it forward," Zeus Xenios (god as reflection of social system)

# civilisations and their opposites

## proper welcome

note the detail: what effect does it convey?

So he spoke, and the man hurried through the hall, bestirring the other active henchmen to come on the way along with him. They set free the sweating horses from under the harness, and tethered them fast by the reins in front of the horse mangers, and put down fodder before them and mixed white millet into it, and leaned the chariots up against the glittering inner walls, and led the men inside the divine house. These marveled as they admired the palace of the king whom Zeus loved, for as the shining of the sun or the moon was the shining all through this high-roofed house of glorious Menelaos. When with their eyes they had had their pleasure in admiration, they stepped into the bathtubs smooth-polished and bathed there. Then when the maids had bathed them and anointed them with oil, and put cloaks of thick fleece and tunics upon them, they went and sat on chairs beside Menelaos the son of Atreus.

# civilisations and their opposites

## proper welcome

orderly, smooth household  
- compare to?

what do they eat?

> hierarchy

> formulaic line

A maidservant brought water for them and poured it from a splendid and golden pitcher, holding it above a silver basin for them to wash, and she pulled a polished table before them. A grave housekeeper brought in the bread and served it to them, adding many good things to it, generous with her provisions, while a carver lifted platters of all kinds of meat and set them in front of them, and placed beside them the golden goblets. Then in greeting fair-haired Menelaos said to them: 'Help yourselves to the food and welcome, and then afterward, when you have tasted dinner, we shall ask you who among men you are, for the stock of your parents can be no lost one, but you are of the race of men who are kings, whom Zeus sustains, who bear scepters; no mean men could have sons such as you are.' So he spoke, and taking in his hands the fat beef loin which had been given as his choice portion, he set it before them.

# civilisations and their opposites

## proper welcome

- Menelaos tells his own story
- Telemachus cries when he mentioned Odysseus
- M. guesses who Telemachus is, but wonders whether to wait for him to reveal himself or to ask directly ☐ what does this tell us about M.?
- Helen enters (anticipation: what kind of person would Helen be at home? what kind of relation would she have with Menelaos?)

'Do we know, Menelaos beloved of Zeus, who these men announce themselves as being, who have come into our house now?

Shall I be wrong, or am I speaking the truth? My heart tells me to speak, for I think I never saw such a likeness, neither in man nor woman, and wonder takes me as I look on him, as this man has a likeness to the son of great-hearted Odysseus, Telemachos, who was left behind in his house, a young child by that man when, for the sake of shameless me, the Achaians went beneath Troy, their hearts intent upon reckless warfare.'

Then in answer fair-haired Menelaos said to her:

'I also see it thus, my wife, the way you compare them, for Odysseus' feet were like this man's, his hands were like this, and the glances of his eyes and his head and the hair growing. Now too I was remembering things about Odysseus and spoke of him, what misery he had in his hard work for me, and he let fall a heavy tear from under his eyelids, holding before his eyes the robe that was stained with purple.'

# civilisations and their opposites

## proper welcome

- Helen and Menelaos's tact
  - tensions between M. and H.?
- 'Do we know, Menelaos beloved of Zeus, who these men announce themselves as being, who have come into our house now? Shall I be wrong, or am I speaking the truth? My heart tells me to speak, for I think I never saw such a likeness, neither in man nor woman, and wonder takes me as I look on him, as this man has a likeness to the son of great-hearted Odysseus, Telemachos, who was left behind in his house, a young child by that man when, for the sake of shameless me, the Achaians went beneath Troy, their hearts intent upon reckless warfare.'
- Then in answer fair-haired Menelaos said to her:
- 'I also see it thus, my wife, the way you compare them, for Odysseus' feet were like this man's, his hands were like this, and the glances of his eyes and his head and the hair growing. Now too I was remembering things about Odysseus and spoke of him, what misery he had in his hard work for me, and he let fall a heavy tear from under his eyelids, holding before his eyes the robe that was stained with purple.'

# civilisations and their opposites

## proper welcome

Phaeacians welcome Odysseus as a suppliant (vii. 142 ff.)

> recall the pose of a suppliant

> prosperity of the family line

what does Odysseus ask for?  
what is he able to offer? what  
does he rely on?

Odysseus clasped Arete's knees in his arms, and at that time the magical and surrounding mist was drifted from him, and all fell silent through the house when they saw the man there, and they wondered looking on him, and Odysseus made his entreaty:  
'Arete, daughter of godlike Rhexenor, after much hardship I have come to your knees as a suppliant, and to your husband and to these feasters, on whom may the gods bestow prosperity in their own lives, and grant to each to leave to his children his property in his house and the rights the people have given him.  
But for me, urge that conveyance be given quickly to my country, since long now far from my people I suffer hardships.'

# civilisations and their opposites

## proper welcome

- Alkinoos (Alcinous) the king, Arete the queen
- suppliant asks for conveyance
- nothing to offer except good wishes ↗ rely on xenia
- food and drink, before questioning stranger

significance of invoking Zeus

- Phaeacians recognise gods
- Zeus protects the helpless (strangers and suppliants)

So he spoke, and sat down beside the hearth in the ashes next the fire, while all of them stayed stricken to silence. But at long last the aged hero Echeneos spoke forth. He was the most advanced in age of all the Phaiakians, and surpassed all in words, knowing many things from time long past.

He in kind intention now spoke forth and addressed them: ‘Alkinoös, this is not the better way, nor is it fitting that the stranger should sit on the ground beside the hearth, in the ashes.

These others are holding back because they await your order. But come, raise the stranger up and seat him on a silver-studded chair, and tell your heralds to mix in more wine for us, so we can pour a libation to Zeus who delights in the thunder, and he goes together with suppliants, whose rights are sacred. And let the housekeeper from her stores give the stranger a supper.’

# civilisations and their opposites

## ambiguous welcome

lotus-eaters (ix. 91 ff.)

what do the lotus-eaters do  
“properly”?

what do they not do?

why is losing the desire for  
home so bad?

My men went on and presently met the Lotus-Eaters, nor did these Lotus-Eaters have any thoughts of destroying our companions, but they only gave them lotus to taste of. But any of them who ate the honey-sweet fruit of lotus was unwilling to take any message back, or to go away, but they wanted to stay there with the lotus-eating people, feeding on lotus, and forget the way home. I myself took these men back weeping, by force, to where the ships were, and put them aboard under the rowing benches and tied them fast, then gave the order to the rest of my eager companions to embark on the ships in haste, for fear someone else might taste of the lotus and forget the way home, and the men quickly went aboard and sat to the oarlocks, and sitting well in order dashed the oars in the gray sea.

# civilisations and their opposites

## bad welcome

Circe (x. 220 ff.)

They stood there in the forecourt of the goddess with the glorious hair, and heard Circe inside singing in a sweet voice as she went up and down a great design on a loom, immortal such as goddesses have, delicate and lovely and glorious their work. Now Polites leader of men, who was the best and dearest to me of my friends, began the discussion: “Friends, someone inside going up and down a great piece of weaving is singing sweetly, and the whole place murmurs to the echo of it, whether she is woman or goddess. Come, let us call her.” ‘So he spoke to them, and the rest gave voice, and called her, and at once she opened the shining doors, and came out, and invited them in, and all in their innocence entered; only Eurylochos waited outside, for he suspected treachery.

# civilisations and their opposites

## bad welcome

what does Circe do properly?  
what shouldn't she have  
done?

Circe's motivation? she's a  
witch!

Circe's effect? Odysseus  
distinguished from his men:

- his men often behave  
brutishly (bag of winds,  
cattle of the sun)
- Circe makes brutishness  
literal

recall: Odysseus is telling this  
story ↗ why might Odysseus  
be interested in making his  
men look bad?

She brought them inside and seated them on chairs and benches, and mixed them a potion, with barley and cheese and pale honey added to Pramneian wine, but put into the mixture malignant drugs, to make them forgetful of their own country. When she had given them this and they had drunk it down, next thing she struck them with her wand and drove them into her pig pens, and they took on the look of pigs, with the heads and voices and bristles of pigs, but the minds within them stayed as they had been before. So crying they went in, and before them Circe threw down acorns for them to eat, and ilex and cornel buds, such food as pigs who sleep on the ground always feed on.

# civilisations and their opposites

## bad welcome

Hermes gave Odysseus  
antidote

> what is this gesture?

> now she goes back to the  
script

She made me sit down in a chair that was wrought elaborately and splendid with silver nails, and under my feet was a footstool. She made a potion for me to drink and gave it in a golden cup, and with evil thoughts in her heart added the drug to it. Then when she had given it and I drank it off, without being enchanted, she struck me with her wand and spoke and named me:

“Go to your sty now and lie down with your other friends there.”  
‘So she spoke, but I, drawing from beside my thigh the sharp sword,

rushed forward against Circe as if I were raging to kill her, but she screamed aloud and ran under my guard, and clasping both knees  
in loud lamentation spoke to me and addressed me in winged words:

“What man are you and whence? Where are your city and parents?

The wonder is on me that you drank my drugs and have not been enchanted, for no other man beside could have stood up

# civilisations and their opposites

## bad welcome

how does Circe recognise Odysseus? is her reasoning correct?

> substitute one phallic object for another

> odd reasoning? Odysseus' character

> faith in oaths

There is a mind in you no magic will work on.  
You are then resourceful Odysseus. Argeiphontes of the golden staff was forever telling me you would come to me, on your way back from Troy with your fast black ship. Come then, put away your sword in its sheath, and let us two go up into my bed so that, lying together in the bed of love, we may then have faith and trust in each other."

'So she spoke, and I answered her again and said to her: "Circe, how can you ask me to be gentle with you, when it is you who turned my companions into pigs in your palace? And now you have me here myself, you treacherously ask me to go into your chamber, and go to bed with you, so that when I am naked you can make me a weakling, unmanned.

I would not be willing to go to bed with you unless you can bring yourself, O goddess, to swear me a great oath that there is no other evil hurt you devise against me."

'So I spoke, and she at once swore me the oath, as I asked her, 21

# civilisations and their opposites

## cyclops: upside-down society

Cyclops (ix. 105 ff):

- opposite of xenia
- opposite of Greek society

lack of polis: city, community, politics, interaction, law

"lawless outrageous Cyclopes"

- no political organisation
- largest social unit: patriarchal family
- contrast to Greek polis, inter-city communication, long-distance and inter-generational guest-friendships
- no tekhne, skill in doing

'From there, grieving still at heart, we sailed on further along, and reached the country of the lawless outrageous Cyclopes who, putting all their trust in the immortal gods, neither plow with their hands nor plant anything, but all grows for them without seed planting, without cultivation, wheat and barley and also the grapevines, which yield for them wine of strength, and it is Zeus' rain that waters it for them. These people have no institutions, no meetings for counsels; rather they make their habitations in caverns hollowed among the peaks of the high mountains, and each one is the law for his own wives and children, and cares nothing about the others.

# civilisations and their opposites

## cyclops: upside-down society

lack of tekhnē, skill in  
exploiting nature for civilised  
purposes (agriculture,  
building, sailing)

“goat island”

> from what kind of  
perspective does Odysseus  
examine the island? (another  
reason for sailing)

‘There is a wooded island that spreads, away from the harbor,  
neither close in to the land of the Cyclopes nor far out  
from it; forested; wild goats beyond number breed there,  
...

neither again is it held by herded flocks, nor farmers,  
but all its days, never plowed up and never planted,  
it goes without people and supports the bleating wild goats.  
For the Cyclopes have no ships with cheeks of vermillion,  
nor have they builders of ships among them, who could have  
made them  
strong-benched vessels, and these if made could have run them  
sailings

to all the various cities of men, in the way that people  
cross the sea by means of ships and visit each other,  
and they could have made this island a strong settlement for  
them.

For it is not a bad place at all, it could bear all crops  
in season, and there are meadow lands near the shores of the  
gray sea,

# civilisations and their opposites

## cyclops: upside-down society

Odysseus's questions: about the society of the inhabitants

note oppositions: savage vs. hospitable ↗ xenia as essential part of civilisation

"The rest of you, who are my eager companions, wait here, while I, with my own ship and companions that are in it, go and find out about these people, and learn what they are, whether they are savage and violent, and without justice, or hospitable to strangers and with minds that are godly."

# civilisations and their opposites

## cyclops: upside-down society

- > contrast: herdsman vs. city
- > how does this make you feel about Polyphemus?
- > baseness of the companions
- > Odysseus' motivation?  
guest-present? greed or curiosity?

'Lightly we made our way to the cave, but we did not find him there, he was off herding on the range with his fat flocks. We went inside the cave and admired everything inside it. Baskets were there, heavy with cheeses, and the pens crowded with lambs and kids. They had all been divided into separate groups, the firstlings in one place, and then the middle ones, the babies again by themselves. And all his vessels, milk pails and pans, that he used for milking into, were running over with whey. From the start my companions spoke to me and begged me to take some of the cheeses, come back again, and the next time to drive the lambs and kids from their pens, and get back quickly to the ship again, and go sailing off across the salt water; but I would not listen to them, it would have been better their way, not until I could see him, see if he would give me presents. My friends were to find the sight of him in no way lovely.'

# homer: return of the hero, beginning of history

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# return of the hero, beginning of history

today

finish cyclops

myth and history

where did we leave Odysseus?

- waiting for cyclops
- helping themselves to cheeses
- are you supposed to do this as a guest? foreboding because off-script

# return of the hero, beginning of history

## cyclops: upside-down society

cyclops returns

what does he do? how would you describe the life of the cyclops?

why are Odysseus and his men afraid?

(script, off-script)

... He carried a heavy load of dried-out wood, to make a fire for his dinner, and threw it down inside the cave, making a terrible crash, so in fear we scuttled away into the cave's corners. Next he drove into the wide cavern all from the fat flocks that he would milk, but he left all the male animals, billygoats and rams, outside in his yard with the deep fences. Next thing, he heaved up and set into position the huge door stop, a massive thing; no twenty-two of the best four-wheeled wagons could have taken that weight off the ground and carried it, such a piece of sky-towering cliff that was he set over his gateway. Next he sat down and milked his sheep and his bleating goats, each of them in order, and put lamb or kid under each one to suck, and then drew off half of the white milk and put it by in baskets made of wickerwork, stored for cheeses, but let the other half stand in the milk pails so as to have it to help himself to and drink from, and it would serve for his

# return of the hero, beginning of history

## cyclops: upside-down society

where have we heard these questions before?

reasonable question, in context?

are we still on script?

again, why are they afraid?

But after he had briskly done all his chores and finished, at last he lit the fire, and saw us, and asked us a question: “Strangers, who are you? From where do you come sailing over the watery ways? Is it on some business, or are you recklessly roving as pirates do, when they sail on the salt sea and venture their lives as they wander, bringing evil to alien people?”

‘So he spoke, and the inward heart in us was broken in terror of the deep voice and for seeing him so monstrous; but even so I had words for an answer, and I said to him:

# return of the hero, beginning of history

## cyclops: upside-down society

how is Odysseus' answer different to previous answers to these questions?

significance of the name?

note: setting up Zeus, then invokes Zeus

- trying to maintain xenia script

"We are Achaians coming from Troy, beaten off our true course by winds from every direction across the great gulf of the open sea, making for home, by the wrong way, on the wrong courses. So we have come. So it has pleased Zeus to arrange it. We claim we are of the following of the son of Atreus, Agamemnon, whose fame now is the greatest thing under heaven, such a city was that he sacked and destroyed so many people; but now in turn we come to you and are suppliants at your knees, if you might give us a guest present or otherwise some gift of grace, for such is the right of strangers. Therefore respect the gods, O best of men. We are your suppliants, and Zeus the guest god, who stands behind all strangers with honors due them, avenges any wrong toward strangers and suppliants."

# return of the hero, beginning of history

## cyclops: upside-down society

“we are better than gods”: no room for misinterpretation

decisively off script now ↗  
xenia is broken

- gods as representations or guarantors of social/cultural expectations

all bets are off ↗ devolve to test of might (or does it?)

- question: are we at the level of might = right? or is there room for cunning?

what is cunning?  
- language, social norms

‘So I spoke, but he answered me in pitiless spirit:  
“Stranger, you are a simple fool, or come from far off,  
when you tell me to avoid the wrath of the gods or fear them.  
The Cyclopes do not concern themselves over Zeus of the aegis,  
nor any of the rest of the blessed gods, since we are far better  
than they, and for fear of the hate of Zeus I would not spare  
you or your companions either, if the fancy took me  
otherwise. But tell me, so I may know: where did you  
put your well-made ship when you came? Nearby or far off?”  
‘So he spoke, trying me out, but I knew too much and was not  
deceived, but answered him in turn, and my words were crafty:  
“Poseidon, Shaker of the Earth, has shattered my vessel.  
He drove it against the rocks on the outer coast of your country,  
cracked on a cliff, it is gone, the wind on the sea took it;  
but I, with these you see, got away from sudden destruction.”

# return of the hero, beginning of history

## cyclops: upside-down society

inversion of xenia: proper relation between food and guests?

(what had the cyclops planned for dinner?)

significance of “unmixed”?  
- social norms

‘So I spoke, but he in pitiless spirit answered nothing, but sprang up and reached for my companions, caught up two together and slapped them, like killing puppies, against the ground, and the brains ran all over the floor, soaking the ground. Then he cut them up limb by limb and got supper ready, and like a lion reared in the hills, without leaving anything, ate them, entrails, flesh and the marrowy bones alike. We cried out aloud and held our hands up to Zeus, seeing the cruelty of what he did, but our hearts were helpless. But when the Cyclops had filled his enormous stomach, feeding on human flesh and drinking down milk unmixed with water, he lay down to sleep in the cave sprawled out through his sheep.

# return of the hero, beginning of history

## cyclops: upside-down society

what is Odysseus' plan?

> what is a libation?

> why is the cyclops concerned with names?

- cyclops thinks he can do what he wants because he is mightier than gods, but some things he can't get through strength
- cyclops also reliant on language and cunning

Then at last I, holding in my hands an ivy bowl full of the black wine, stood close up to the Cyclops and spoke out:

“Here, Cyclops, have a drink of wine, now you have fed on human flesh, and see what kind of drink our ship carried inside her. I brought it for you, and it would have been your libation

had you taken pity and sent me home, but I cannot suffer your rages. Cruel, how can any man come and visit you ever again, now you have done what has no sanction?”

‘So I spoke, and he took it and drank it off, and was terribly pleased with the wine he drank and questioned me again, saying: “Give me still more, freely, and tell me your name straightway now, so I can give you a guest present to make you happy.

For the grain-giving land of the Cyclopes also yields them wine of strength, and it is Zeus’ rain that waters it for them; but this comes from where ambrosia and nectar flow in abundance.”

# return of the hero, beginning of history

## cyclops: upside-down society

Odysseus way ahead of him

Greek outis (ou, “no”; tis, “someone, anyone”)

Odysseus gives up his identity

- significance in epic context?
- ix. 19-20: “I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, who is known to all for my cunning, and my kleos reaches heaven.”

‘So he spoke, and I gave him the gleaming wine again. Three times

I brought it to him and gave it to him, three times he recklessly drained it, but when the wine had got into the brains of the Cyclops,

then I spoke to him, and my words were full of beguilement: “Cyclops, you ask me for my famous name. I will tell you then, but you must give me a guest gift as you have promised. Nobody is my name. My father and mother call me Nobody, as do all the others who are my companions.”

‘So I spoke, and he answered me in pitiless spirit: “Then I will eat Nobody after his friends, and the others I will eat first, and that shall be my guest present to you.”

# return of the hero, beginning of history

## cyclops: upside-down society

cyclops falls asleep, loses eye, screams for help

> we find out the cyclops' name; meaning of "Polyphemus"?

- did cyclopes have names before? what are names for?

> outis ~ metis: "wisdom, cunning"

> Polyphemus wrong about being stronger than gods

he cried aloud to the other Cyclopes, who live around him in their own caves along the windy pinnacles. They hearing him came swarming up from their various places, and stood around the cave and asked him what was his trouble: "Why, Polyphemos, what do you want with all this outcry through the immortal night and have made us all thus sleepless? Surely no mortal against your will can be driving your sheep off? Surely none can be killing you by force or treachery?" 'Then from inside the cave strong Polyphemos answered: "Good friends, Nobody is killing me by force or treachery." So then the others speaking in winged words gave him an answer: "If alone as you are none uses violence on you, why, there is no avoiding the sickness sent by great Zeus; so you had better pray to your father, the lord Poseidon."

# return of the hero, beginning of history

## cyclops: upside-down society

how did they get out of the cave?

- turn into animals ↗ c.f., Circe

touching moment between cyclops and ram

- later portrayals of Polyphemus

Last of all the flock the ram went out of the doorway, loaded with his own fleece, and with me, and my close counsels. Then, feeling him, powerful Polyphemos spoke a word to him: "My dear old ram, why are you thus leaving the cave last of the sheep? Never in the old days were you left behind by the flock, but long-striding, far ahead of the rest would pasture on the tender bloom of the grass, be first at running rivers, and be eager always to lead the way first back to the sheepfold at evening. Now you are last of all. Perhaps you are grieving for your master's eye, which a bad man with his wicked companions

put out, after he had made my brain helpless with wine, this Nobody, who I think has not yet got clear of destruction. If only you could think like us and only be given a voice, to tell me where he is skulking away from my anger, then surely he would be smashed against the floor and his brains go spattering all over the cave to make my heart lighter from the burden of all the evils this niddering Nobody gave me." 11

# return of the hero, beginning of history

## cyclops: upside-down society

Odysseus regains his name

- Iliadic value of kleos in conflict with Odyssean value of nostos
- Iliadic warrior speaks here

once again in the anger of my heart I cried to him:

"Cyclops, if any mortal man ever asks you who it was that inflicted upon your eye this shameful blinding, tell him that you were blinded by Odysseus, sacker of cities. Laertes is his father, and he makes his home in Ithaka."

how does kleos hinder nostos?

# return of the hero, beginning of history

## between myth and history

how to connect myth and history? what links epic past to the present?

IL.7.87 And some day one of the men to come will say, as he sees it,  
IL.7.88 one who in his benched ship sails on the wine-blue water:  
IL.7.89 "This is the mound of a man who died long ago in battle,  
IL.7.90 who was one of the bravest, and glorious Hektor killed him."  
IL.7.91 So will he speak some day, and my glory will not be forgotten.

IL.6.357 ... hereafter  
IL.6.358 we shall be made into things of song for the men of the future.

OD.8.579 The gods did this, and spun the destruction  
OD.8.580 of peoples, for the sake of the singing of men hereafter.

# return of the hero, beginning of history

## between myth and history

why is the idea of future song attractive?

*This is Your Life*, Tom Sawyer showing up at own funeral  
☞ life as a story that has a meaning, each senseless event contributing to that meaning (“I was angry about it then but now I see that it made me a better person”)

the promise of this song/perspective of the future:

“Come this way, honored Odysseus, great glory of the Achaians, and stay your ship, so that you can listen here to our singing; for no one else has ever sailed past this place in his black ship until he has listened to the honey-sweet voice that issues from our lips; then goes on, well pleased, knowing more than ever he did; for we know everything that the Argives and Trojans did and suffered in wide Troy through the gods’ despite. Over all the generous earth we know everything that happens.”

# return of the hero, beginning of history

## between myth and history

*Odyssey* between myth and history:

- characters still mythical heroes; still include superhuman feats; gods still appear in human world
- great mythological wars are over; Menelaos and Helen and Nestor are retired at home; other heroes home or dead; time of myth already passing into song

*Odyssey*: epic poem set in the epic past that already contains epic song

The famous singer was singing to them, and they in silence sat listening. He sang of the Achaians' bitter homecoming from Troy, which Pallas Athene had inflicted upon them.

But when they had put away their desire for eating and drinking, the Muse stirred the singer to sing the famous actions of men on that venture, whose fame (kleos) goes up into the wide heaven,

the quarrel between Odysseus and Peleus' son, Achilleus, how these once contended, at the god's generous festival, with words of violence, so that the lord of men, Agamemnon, was happy in his heart that the best of the Achaians were quarreling;

for so in prophecy Phoibos Apollo had spoken to him in sacred Pytho, when he had stepped across the stone doorstep to consult; for now the beginning of evil rolled on, descending on Trojans, and on Danaans, through the designs of great Zeus.

# return of the hero, beginning of history

## between myth and history

Trojan War already famous ↗  
already myth in the *Odyssey*

- Odysseus introduces himself as a famous character

*Aeneid*: Aeneas sees mural depicting as myth events that he took part in

I am Odysseus son of Laertes, known before all men for the study of crafty designs, and my fame goes up to the heavens.

For while beneath the mighty temple, awaiting the queen, he scans each object, while he marvels at the city's fortune, the handicraft of the several artists and the work of their toil, he sees in due order the battles of Ilium, the warfare now known by fame throughout the world, the sons of Atreus, and Priam, and Achilles, fierce in his wrath against both. He stopped and weeping cried: "Is there any place, Achates, any land on earth not full of our sorrow? See, there is Priam! Here, too, virtue finds its due reward; here, too, are tears for misfortune and human sorrows pierce the heart. Dispel your fears; this fame will bring you some salvation."

# return of the hero, beginning of history

## between myth and history

in *Odyssey*: Odysseus  
between old and new, myth  
and history

his story is becoming song  
and becoming myth

- paradoxical: myth is  
always already traditional  
and always already there

ambiguity of kleos: “rumour”  
and “fame”

- “rumour” in mythical past  
  ✉ “fame” in our world  
- *Odyssey* poised at the  
moment when rumour  
becomes fame

But for yourself, I will counsel you shrewdly, and hope you will listen.

Fit out a ship with twenty oars, the best you can come by,  
and go out to ask about your father who is so long absent,  
on the chance some mortal man can tell you, who has listened to  
Rumor (kleos)  
sent by Zeus.

# return of the hero, beginning of history

## kleos and nostos

kleos: fame/rumour

nostos: homecoming, return home (c.f.: “nostalgia”)

*Iliad*: fame opposed to homecoming >

*Odyssey*: Odysseus' fame is his homecoming

- Odysseus away from home  
✉ risks being forgotten (how close was Penelope to “moving on”?)

IL.9.410 For my mother Thetis the goddess of the silver feet tells me

IL.9.411 I carry two sorts of destiny toward the day of my death.  
Either,

IL.9.412 if I stay here and fight beside the city of the Trojans,

IL.9.413 my return home is gone, but my glory shall be everlasting;

IL.9.414 but if I return home to the beloved land of my fathers,

IL.9.415 the excellence of my glory is gone, but there will be a long life

IL.9.416 left for me, and my end in death will not come to me quickly.

# return of the hero, beginning of history

## kleos and nostos

conflict between *Iliad* and *Odyssey*: rewriting Achilles' attitude toward kleos and death

“... Achilleus,  
no man before has been more blessed than you, nor ever  
will be. Before, when you were alive, we Argives honored you  
as we did the gods, and now in this place you have great  
authority  
over the dead. Do not grieve, even in death, Achilleus.”  
So I spoke, and he in turn said to me in answer:  
“O shining Odysseus, never try to console me for dying.  
I would rather follow the plow as thrall to another  
man, one with no land allotted him and not much to live on,  
than be a king over all the perished dead.”

# return of the hero, beginning of history

## kleos and nostos

what does nostos mean?

long second half of the *Odyssey* devoted to this question: scenes of Odysseus being recognised by people he used to know, until final recognition by wife and father

- coming home not only geographical
- more importantly: re-entering family and community, re-establishing ties ↗ being re-cognised

book xvii  
(c.f. Cyclops and ram)

Now as these two were conversing thus with each other, a dog who was lying there raised his head and ears. This was Argos, patient-hearted Odysseus' dog, whom he himself raised, but got no joy of him, since before that he went to sacred Ilion. In the days before, the young men had taken him out to follow goats of the wild, and deer, and rabbits; but now he had been put aside, with his master absent, and lay on the deep pile of dung, from the mules and oxen, which lay abundant before the gates, so that the servants of Odysseus could take it to his great estate, for manuring. There the dog Argos lay in the dung, all covered with dog ticks. Now, as he perceived that Odysseus had come close to him, he wagged his tail, and laid both his ears back; only he now no longer had the strength to move any closer to his master, who, watching him from a distance, without Eumaios noticing, secretly wiped a tear away ... But the doom of dark death now closed over the dog, Argos, when, after nineteen years had gone by, he had seen Odysseus

# creating and ordering the world: beginnings according to Hesiod

CLCV 2500 | ENGL 2500 Classical Mythology

# beginnings according to Hesiod

today

child after listening to Homer: what do you know? what questions do you have?

Hesiod can answer some of those questions

who is Hesiod? what are his poems? what did he do with/to myths? how did he use them?

- biography of Hesiod
- how did he become a poet? (what is a poet?)
- what was the origin of the gods we know from Homer?

# beginnings according to Hesiod

## Hesiod: a biography?

likely real historical figure,  
~750 - 650 BC

- compare to Homer?

how do we know this?

- his poems give some details about his life

- (how do we know he's not lying?)

father moved from Cyme to Ascra, near Mt. Helicon

brother called Perses, who cheated him

once won a singing contest on Euboea

My father and yours, foolish Perses, used to sail in ships in want of fair livelihood. And one day he came here, making the long crossing from Aeolian Cyme in his dark ship, nor running from riches, nor from wealth and prosperity, but from evil poverty, which Zeus dispenses to men. And he settled near Helicon in a miserable village, Ascra, bad in winter, foul in summer, good at no time.

Works and Days 633-40



# beginnings according to Hesiod

## Hesiod: a biography?

likely real historical figure,  
~750 - 650 BC

- compare to Homer?

how do we know this?

- his poems give some details about his life
- (how do we know he's not lying?)

father moved from Cyme to Ascra, near Mt. Helicon

brother called Perses, who cheated him

once won a singing contest on Euboea

For as to ships, I have never yet sailed the broad sea, except to Euboea from Aulis, the way the Achaeans once came when they waited through the winter and gathered a great army from holy Greece against Troy of the fair women. There to the funeral games for warlike Amphidamas and to Chalcis I crossed, and many were the prizes announced and displayed by the sons of that valiant; where I may say that I was victorious in poetry and won a tripod with ring handles. That I dedicated to the Muses of Helicon, in the original place where they set me on the path of fine singing.

Theogony 656-59



# beginnings according to Hesiod

## Hesiod: a biography?

main works: Theogony, Works and Days

Theogony: genealogy of gods, stories, anecdotes

Works and Days:

- “works”? agricultural manual
- “days”? list of lucky/unlucky days
- mixed work: also includes myth of Prometheus, creation of Pandora, advice on marriage, household management, seafaring
- main theme: work honestly, do not defraud people (aimed at whom?)

other works (possibly/probably spurious)

- list of mythological women (seen this before?)
- Shield of Heracles (ring a bell?)
- many fragments

# beginnings according to Hesiod

## becoming a poet

Hesiod's own poetic origins:  
how did he become a poet?  
what does that tell us about  
what a poet is?

scene of poetic inspiration  
- “in-spiration”: to breathe  
(what?) into someone

Hesiod as shepherd  
- place of shepherds?  
- how are poets like  
shepherds?

Panhellenism: poet not of  
city, but of all Greeks

And they once taught Hesiod the art of singing verse,  
While he pastured his lambs on holy Helicon's slopes.  
And this was the very first thing they told me,  
The Olympian Muses daughters of Zeus Aegisholder:  
"Hillbillies and bellies, poor excuses for shepherds:  
We know how to tell many believable lies,  
But also, when we want to, how to speak the plain truth."  
So spoke the daughters of great Zeus, mincing their words.  
And they gave me a staff, a branch of good sappy laurel,  
Plucking it off, spectacular. And they breathed into me  
A voice divine, so I might celebrate past and future.  
And they told me to hymn the generation of the eternal gods,  
But always to sing of themselves, the Muses, first and last.  
Theogony 23-35

# beginnings according to Hesiod

## becoming a poet

what did the muses teach?

- to sing past and future

compare seer Calchas (*Iliad*)

poet ~~or~~ prophet

- knowledge
- vice versa: prophesies in verse

hymn the eternal gods,

muses

- what is the function of hymning?

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Theogony 23-35

1.69 Kalchas, Thestor's son, far the best of the bird interpreters,

1.70 who knew all things that were, the things to come and the things past

# beginnings according to Hesiod

## becoming a poet

who are the muses?

what does it mean that  
muses are “daughters of  
memory”?

“forgetting of troubles”:  
poetry as cure for sadness  
- compare *Odyssey*, later  
Theocritus

They were born on Pieria after our Father Cronion Mingled with Memory, who rules Eleutherai's hills.  
She bore them to be a forgetting of troubles, A pause in sorrow. For nine nights wise Zeus Mingled with her in love, ascending her sacred bed In isolation from the other Immortals,

...

She bore nine daughters, all of one mind, with song In their breasts, with hearts that never failed ...  
(53-63)

For if anyone is grieved, if his heart is sore  
With fresh sorrow, if he is troubled, and a singer  
Who serves the Muses chants the deeds of past men  
Or the blessed gods who have their homes on Olympos,  
He soon forgets his heartache, and of all his cares  
He remembers none: the goddesses' gifts turn them aside.  
(99-104)

# beginnings according to Hesiod

## becoming a poet

what do they say to Hesiod?

literally: “rustic shepherds,  
shameful things, mere  
bellies”

- “mere bellies”?
- muses take a shepherd  
(merely concerned with  
bodily things) Ο in-spire  
him Ο make a poet (knows  
past and future, the  
stories of gods)

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Theogony 23-35

# beginnings according to Hesiod

## becoming a poet

what do they say to Hesiod?

"lies which are just like truth"  
- Odysseus before being ready to reveal identity:  
"He made the many lies he told seem the same as true things."

theme of whether poets lie runs throughout philosophical thinking about poetry (Plato, Aristotle): where is the truth in poetry?

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While he pastured his lambs on holy Helicon's slopes.  
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Theogony 23-35

# beginnings according to Hesiod

## becoming a poet

what do they say to Hesiod?

staff (sceptre) of laurel

- laurel: Apollo, god of song and prophecy

sceptre: power/authority to speak among people/within a community

compare sceptre from Iliad 1

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## becoming a poet

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- laurel: Apollo, god of song  
and prophecy

sceptre: power/authority to  
speak among people/within a  
community

compare sceptre from Iliad 1

IL.1.234 in the name of this sceptre, which never again will  
bear leaf nor

IL.1.235 branch, now that it has left behind the cut stump in  
the mountains,

IL.1.236 nor shall it ever blossom again, since the bronze blade  
stripped

IL.1.237 bark and leafage, and now at last the sons of the  
Achaeans

IL.1.238 carry it in their hands in state when they administer

IL.1.239 the justice of Zeus.

# beginnings according to Hesiod

## becoming a poet

sceptre: symbol of a king  
- “sceptred kings”

the king speaks authoritatively, settles disputes, pronounces the way things are

- muses help the king rule with “straight judgments”
- (not so subtle point here?)

poet-prophet-king: all speak with authority within a community

Hesiod as poet takes on properties of prophets and kings

For she [the muse Calliope] keeps the company of reverend kings.

When the daughters of great Zeus will honor a lord Whose lineage is divine, and look upon his birth,  
They distill a sweet dew upon his tongue,  
And from his mouth words flow like honey. The people All look to him as he arbitrates settlements  
With judgments straight. He speaks out in sure tones And soon puts an end even to bitter disputes.  
A sound-minded ruler, when someone is wronged,  
Sets things to rights in the public assembly,  
Conciliating both sides with ease.  
He comes to the meeting place propitiated as a god,  
Treated with respect, preeminent in the crowd.  
(81-93)

# beginnings according to Hesiod

## the succession myth

current state of things: Zeus  
ruling heaven  
→ how did that come to be?

tell a story: succession of  
rulers

Uranus > Cronos > Zeus

near eastern parallels  
(sources?) for Greek myths of  
succession:

Kingship in Heaven, Hittite,  
written form from the 13th c.

Song of Ullikummi, sequel to  
Kingship in Heaven?

Kingship in Heaven: Alalu, first ruler of the universe, is succeeded by Anu, who is in turn succeeded by Kumarbi. Kumarbi bites off Anu's phallus as he flies upward, and as a result of this impregnation he gives birth to the storm god Teshub.

Song of Ullikummi: Kumarbi impregnates a huge rock and thus begets Ullikummi, a monster made of diorite. Ullikummi is a threat to Teshub. Teshub uses the sickle with which heaven and earth were once separated to sever Ullikummi from Upelluri, a giant who held up the sky ....

# beginnings according to Hesiod

## the succession myth

current state of things: Zeus ruling heaven

→ how did that come to be?

tell a story: succession of rulers

Uranus > Cronos > Zeus

near eastern parallels

(sources?) for Greek myths of succession:

Illuyankas (Hittite):

- snake monster, defeats Teshub
- Teshub defeats Illuyankas with help of other gods, regains kingdom.

There Zeus saw that Typhon was seriously wounded and engaged him hand-to-hand. But Typhon wrapped his coils around Zeus and got him in a hold. He stripped away the sickle and cut out the sinews of his hands and feet. Lifting Zeus onto his shoulders, he carried him across the sea to Cilicia, and when he arrived he put him into the Corycian cave. Likewise, hiding the sinews in a bearskin, he stowed them there. He set the dragoness Delphyne to guard him. This girl was half-beast. But Hermes and Aegipan [Goat-Pan] stole the sinews and put them back in Zeus without being caught.

(Apollodorus Anthology 1.6.3)

# beginnings according to Hesiod

## the succession myth

current state of things: Zeus  
ruling heaven  
→ how did that come to be?

tell a story: succession of  
rulers

Uranus > Cronos > Zeus

near eastern parallels  
(sources?) for Greek myths of  
succession:

Enuma Elish, Babylonian  
creation poem (written form  
after 1100 BC)

Apsu and Tiamat are the first divinities. Apsu represents male, fresh waters, and Tiamat represents female, salt waters. They have two sets of descendants. Apsu plans to destroy one set, still within Tiamat. Ea, a great grandson of Apsu, casts a spell on him, appropriates his power, kills him, and builds a temple and palace over his corpse. Tiamat raises an army of monsters against the younger gods. Marduk, a son of Ea, agrees to defend the gods if they make him ruler. Marduk, with the aid of evil winds, defeats Tiamat. He splits her corpse in half and from it forms heaven and earth and the rest of the cosmos. He makes human beings from the blood of Kingu, Tiamat's firstborn and her vizier. He gives the gods their places in the universe, and they build him the city of Babylon and a temple there.

# beginnings according to Hesiod

## the succession myth

Greek: Uranus > Cronos >  
Zeus

### 1. Ouranos overthrown by Cronos

- Uranus, “heaven”
- Kronos; \*distinguish from  
Chronos, “time”

in the beginning: Heaven and  
Earth (Gaia)

- Ouranos feared his  
children

And from the start their father feared and loathed them.  
Ouranos used to stuff all of his children  
Back into a hollow of Earth soon as they were born,  
Keeping them from the light, an awful thing to do,  
But Heaven did it, and was very pleased with himself.  
(155-159)

# beginnings according to Hesiod

## the succession myth

Greek: Uranus > Cronos >  
Zeus

### 1. Ouranos overthrown by Cronos

Earth plotted with youngest  
son Cronos to overthrow  
Ouranos

- Earth's motivation?
- description of Heaven "all  
over" Earth
- why genitals? link between  
genitals and cosmology?  
how is the universe  
conceived? what forces  
are at work?

Vast Earth groaned under the pressure inside,  
And then she came up with a plan, a really wicked trick.  
She created a new mineral, gray flint, and formed  
A huge sickle from it and showed it to her dear boys.

...

She hid young Cronos in an ambush and placed in his hands  
The jagged sickle. Then she went over the whole plain with him.  
And now on came great Ouranos, bringing Night with him.  
And, longing for love, he settled himself all over Earth.

From his dark hiding-place, the son reached out  
With his left hand, while with his right he swung  
The fiendishly long and jagged sickle, pruning the genitals  
Of his own father with one swoop and tossing them  
Behind him, where they fell to no small effect.

(160-83)

# beginnings according to Hesiod

## the succession myth

Greek: Uranus > Cronos >  
Zeus

### 1. Ouranos overthrown by Cronos

Aphrodite born from foaming  
genitals of Ouranos

- Aphrodite is goddess of what?
- other accounts: Eros was the oldest god O how would this make sense?

mythological explanation: tell story to explain name

The genitalia themselves, freshly cut with flint, were thrown  
Clear of the mainland into the restless, white-capped sea,  
Where they floated a long time. A white foam from the god-flesh  
Collected around them, and in that foam a maiden developed  
And grew. Her first approach to land was near holy Cythera,  
And from there she floated on to the island of Cypros.  
There she came ashore, an awesome, beautiful divinity.  
Tender grass sprouted up under her slender feet. Aphrodite  
Is her name in speech human and divine, since it was in foam  
[aphros]  
She was nourished.  
(188-97)

# beginnings according to Hesiod

## the succession myth

Greek: Uranus > Cronos >  
Zeus

### 2. Cronos overthrown by Zeus

Zeus, youngest son like  
Cronos

- Rheia, “flow”
- gods as characters or forces of nature?

like Ouranos, Cronos feared his children and swallowed them

- repetition, cycle
- prophecy, attempt to circumvent fate

Later, Cronos forced himself upon Rheia,  
And she gave birth to a splendid brood:  
Hestia and Demeter and gold-sandaled Hera,  
Strong, pitiless Hades, the underworld lord,  
The booming Earthshaker, Poseidon, and finally  
Zeus, a wise god, our Father in heaven  
Under whose thunder the wide world trembles.  
(456-62)

And Cronos swallowed them all down as soon as each issued from Rheia's holy womb onto her knees,  
With the intent that only he among the proud Ouranians  
Should hold the title of King among the Immortals.  
For he had learned from Earth and starry Heaven  
That it was fated for him, powerful though he was,  
To be overthrown by his child, through the scheming of Zeus.  
Well, Cronos wasn't blind. He kept a sharp watch  
And swallowed his children.  
(463-71)

# beginnings according to Hesiod

## the succession myth

Greek: Uranus > Cronos >  
Zeus

### 2. Cronos overthrown by Zeus

Rhea plots with Gaia (earth)  
and Ouranos (heaven) to  
stop Cronos, by hiding Zeus  
inside a cave on Crete and  
giving Cronos instead a stone  
to swallow

Zeus grows up and  
overthrows Cronos

It wasn't long before the young lord was flexing  
His glorious muscles. The seasons followed each other,  
And great devious Cronos, gulled by Earth's  
Clever suggestions, vomited up his offspring,  
[Overcome by the wiles and power of his son]  
The stone first, which he'd swallowed last.  
Zeus took the stone and set it in the ground at Pytho  
Under Parnassos' hollows, a sign and wonder for men to come.  
And he freed his uncles [Cyclopes], other sons of Ouranos  
Whom their father in a fit of idiocy had bound.  
They remembered his charity and in gratitude  
Gave him thunder and the flashing thunderbolt  
And lightning, which enormous Earth had hidden before.  
Trusting in these he rules mortals and Immortals.  
(495-508)

# beginnings according to Hesiod

## the succession myth

Greek: Uranus > Cronos >  
Zeus

### 2. Cronos overthrown by Zeus

Cyclopes are sons of  
Ouranos?

- why does this surprise you?

genealogies of divine beings  
(esp. less important ones)  
change with needs of  
narrative/writer

- genealogical charts of gods → pinch of salt
- they are based on “real” classical sources, but “...”

It wasn't long before the young lord was flexing  
His glorious muscles. The seasons followed each other,  
And great devious Cronos, gulled by Earth's  
Clever suggestions, vomited up his offspring,  
[Overcome by the wiles and power of his son]  
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# beginnings according to Hesiod

## the succession myth

Greek: Uranus > Cronos >  
Zeus

### 2. Cronos overthrown by Zeus

Zeus gains two attributes  
(what are attributes?):  
thunder, lightning

one function of myth: explain  
how gods got their attributes  
- i.e., how things came to be  
the way they are  
(aetiology)

It wasn't long before the young lord was flexing  
His glorious muscles. The seasons followed each other,  
And great devious Cronos, gulled by Earth's  
Clever suggestions, vomited up his offspring,  
[Overcome by the wiles and power of his son]  
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# beginnings according to Hesiod

## the succession myth

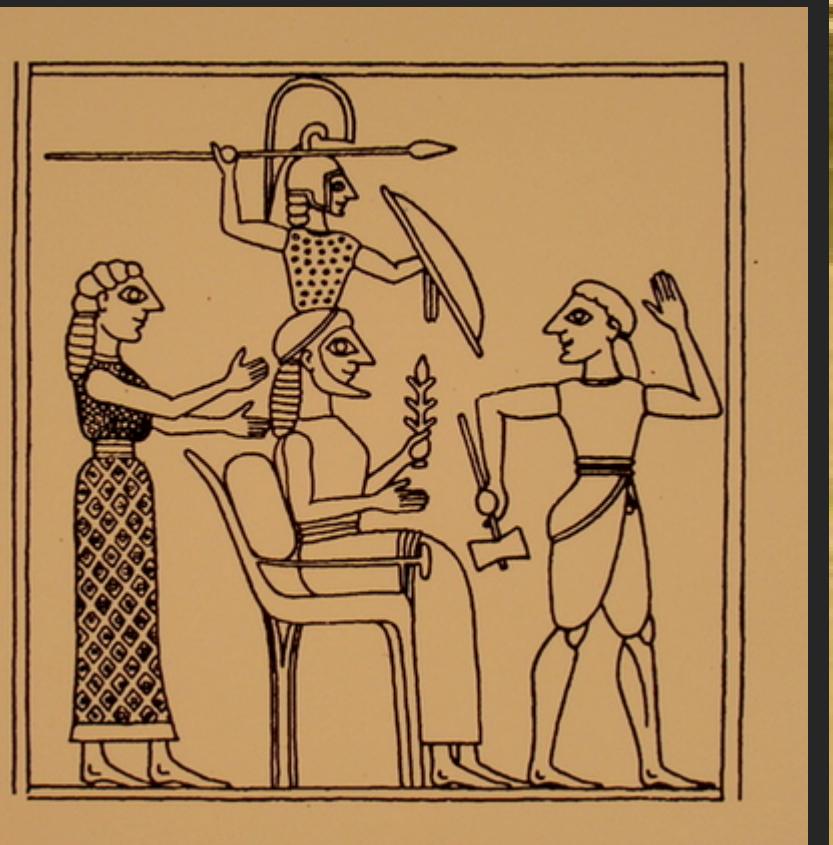
Greek: Uranus > Cronos >  
Zeus

### 3. Zeus avoids being overthrown

swallows Metis, gives birth to  
Athena from his head

- another prophecy: if Zeus  
marries Metis, the child  
will overthrow the father
- who is Metis?

end of cycle of overthrowing  
O stability in Heaven



# creating and ordering the world: division of the human world

CLCV 2500 | ENGL 2500 Classical Mythology

# division of the human world

today

last time: how there came to be stability in heaven (divine world)

today:

- relation between gods and men (ritual of sacrifice)
- why do we mortals have to work?
- why does the world and everyone in it suck so much?

# division of the human world

## sacrifice at Mecone

symbolic significance of sacrifice: self-identity, communal identity, relation with gods

1. use of fire to cook: man distinguished from beast
2. sacrifice as shared meal: communal identity
3. proper sacrifice: proper relationship between men and gods

sacrifice at Mecone: mythological story explaining why sacrifices happen the way they do: who gets what?

- aetiology: how did things come to be the way they are

where is Mecone? possibly Sicyon (near Corinth)



# division of the human world

## sacrifice at Mecone

what happened at Mecone?  
gods and men decide who  
was going to have which part  
of sacrificed animals

remember sacrifices from  
Homeric poems: animal  
(usually cattle) killed, part  
given to gods, rest shared  
between humans  
✉ which part goes to whom?

That happened when the gods and mortal men were negotiating  
At Mecone. Prometheus cheerfully butchered a great ox  
And served it up, trying to befuddle Zeus' wits.  
For Zeus he set out flesh and innards rich with fat  
Laid out on the oxhide and covered with its paunch.  
But for the others he set out the animal's white bones  
Artfully dressed out and covered with shining fat.  
(537-43)

# division of the human world

## sacrifice at Mecone

note: mortal men popped out of nowhere

- we were never introduced to the origins of mortals
- goal of this myth: explain sacrifice ritual, not account for every detail

ox's "paunch" (stomach) looks unappetising on outside, but stuffed with good things

ox's "shining fat" looks good on outside, but filled with bones

Zeus gets to choose

- not just for himself, for this time
- which part of sacrifice will gods get, chosen once and for all?

That happened when the gods and mortal men were negotiating

At Mecone. Prometheus cheerfully butchered a great ox  
And served it up, trying to befuddle Zeus' wits.  
For Zeus he set out flesh and innards rich with fat  
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(537-43)

# division of the human world

## sacrifice at Mecone

Zeus chooses “bad” portion: looks good, contains only bones

- was Zeus deceived?
- why did he choose “wrong” portion?

one possibility: in another version, Zeus was thoroughly deceived

- explains his anger
- but Zeus supposed to be omniscient!

Hesiod tries to rescue Zeus' omniscience by making his choice intentional ☐ slightly illogical outcome

This was Prometheus' trick. But Zeus, eternally wise, Recognized the fraud and began to rumble in his heart Trouble for mortals, and it would be fulfilled.

With both his hands he picked up the gleaming fat. Anger seethed in his lungs and bile rose to his heart When he saw the ox's white bones artfully tricked out. And that is why the tribes of men on earth Burn white bones to the immortals upon smoking altars.  
(553-559)

# division of the human world

## sacrifice at Mecone

Zeus chooses “bad” portion: looks good, contains only bones

- was Zeus deceived?
- why did he choose “wrong” portion?

another possibility: Zeus wanted to be deceived

- excuse to punish mortals
- withholds secret of fire
- leads into Prometheus’ theft of fire, Pandora, trouble for men

This was Prometheus’ trick. But Zeus, eternally wise, Recognized the fraud and began to rumble in his heart Trouble for mortals, and it would be fulfilled.

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Anger seethed in his lungs and bile rose to his heart

When he saw the ox’s white bones artfully tricked out.

And that is why the tribes of men on earth

Burn white bones to the immortals upon smoking altars.

(553-559)

# division of the human world

## work and toil ... and women

why do we have to do work?

connected set of ideas: sacrifice at Mecone, theft of fire, Pandora and women

sacrifice at Mecone:

did Zeus see through Prometheus' trick and wanted an excuse to make trouble for mortals?

doesn't matter ☐ result is the same

point of myth: not to establish exactly what happened

Plainly the gods keep secret from humankind the means of survival;

Otherwise, you in a day could easily do enough work to last you a whole year long, and without any further exertion.

Soon, very soon you would hang up over the fireplace your rudder;

Then would be finished the labors of oxen and hard-working donkeys.

(W&D. 42-6)

This was Prometheus' trick. But Zeus, eternally wise, Recognized the fraud and began to rumble in his heart Trouble for mortals, and it would be fulfilled.

(Th. 552-4)

# division of the human world

## work and toil ... and women

theft of fire:

why fire? what did Greeks do with  
fire?

fire of sacrifice ☐ fire as link  
between gods and mortals

Thus Zeus, angry, whose wisdom never wears out.  
From then on he always remembered this trick  
And wouldn't give the power of weariless fire  
To the ashwood mortals who live on the earth.  
(Th. 563-6)

No, Zeus kept it a secret because in his heart he was angry,  
Seeing how devious-minded Prometheus once had fooled  
him;  
Therefore did almighty Zeus plot sorrows and troubles for  
mankind.  
He hid fire ...  
(W&D. 47-50)

# division of the human world

## work and toil ... and women

something odd:

> what is “it”?

connection between “means of survival” (key to easy life) and “fire”?

- we have fire, but still toil
- cannot do a year’s work in a day

something wonky: poss. existing myths (“hiding of fire/theft of fire”) reworked into Hesiod’s wider agenda (“man toils because of the gods”) ↗ don’t quite fit

again: myths occur in particular contexts to make particular points

- point is not to make complete, logical

Plainly the gods keep secret from humankind the means of survival;

Otherwise, you in a day could easily do enough work to last you a whole year long, and without any further exertion.

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Then would be finished the labors of oxen and hard-working donkeys.

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He hid fire ...  
(W&D. 42-50)

# division of the human world

## work and toil ... and women

Pandora and “the race of women”: response to theft of fire: Zeus sends another evil upon mortals

“for yourself a calamity, also for men of the future”

- ✉ myth has eye on its goal, i.e., what it is explaining
  - in this case: presently existing human world, in which men are stuck with women

Then cloud-gathering Zeus to Prometheus said in his anger:  
“Iapetus’s brat, since you’re so much smarter than anyone else, you’re  
Happy to outwit me, and rejoice in the fire you have stolen

—  
For yourself a calamity, also for men of the future.  
For I shall give them a bad thing, too, in exchange for this fire, which  
Heartily all may delight in, embracing a homegrown evil.”  
(53-8)

# division of the human world

## work and toil ... and women

Pandora (in Hesiod): first woman, also (somehow) the progenitor of all later women (“from her is the race of female women”)

what does this mean? are all women born from Pandora?

Pandora as first representation of “femaleness” in the mortal world

“femaleness” already existed for gods ➔ Pandora based on goddesses

He made this lovely evil to balance the good,  
Then led her off to the other gods and men  
Gorgeous in the finery of the owl-eyed daughter  
Sired in power. And they were stunned,  
Immortal gods and mortal men, when they saw  
The sheer deception, irresistible to men.  
From her is the race of female women  
(Th. 588-94)

# division of the human world

## work and toil ... and women

what is the goal of this myth?  
what is Hesiod trying to  
do/explain by telling the  
origin of Pandora?

what is the major opposition  
or contrast in the description?

> *ikelon*, “a likeness” ↗  
essence is already simulation  
- c.f., “be yourself”

Then he commanded Hephaestus, the world-famed craftsman, as soon as Possible to mix water and earth, and infuse in it human Speech, also strength, and to make it look like a goddess, and give it Likewise a girl-like form that was pretty and lovesome. Athena Would instruct her in handwork and weaving of intricate fabrics; Furthermore, gold Aphrodite should drip charm over her head to Cause heartsore longing, emotional anguish exhausting the body. Zeus gave instructions to Hermes, the sure guide, slayer of Argus, To put in her the heart of a bitch and a devious nature. Then did the famed lame god manufacture at once from the earth a Fair simulacrum of one shy maiden, according to Zeus's will. Next to her skin did the godlike Graces and gracious Persuasion Carefully place gold necklaces; round her adorable head the Hours who are gorgeously coiffed wove garlands of beautiful spring flowers. Hermes, our sure guide, slayer of Argus, contrived in her breast Lies and misleadingly false words joined to a devious nature, At the behest of the deep-voiced thunderer, Zeus; and the herald God of the gods then gave her a voice. And he called her Pandora, Seeing how all who inhabit lofty Olympus had given Something to pretty Pandora, that giant bane to industrious mankind (W&D 60-79)

# division of the human world

## work and toil ... and women

what does woman represent in archaic Greek thought (at least in Hesiod)?

- beauty, desire
- falsehood, dissimulation
- cause of evil
- “freeloaders” ☐

From her is the race of female women,  
The deadly race and population of women,  
A great infestation among mortal men,  
At home with Wealth but not with Poverty.  
It's the same as with bees in their overhung hives  
Feeding the drones, evil conspirators.  
The bees work every day until the sun goes down,  
Busy all day long making pale honeycombs,  
While the drones stay inside, in the hollow hives,  
Stuffing their stomachs with the work of others.  
(Th. 594-603)

# division of the human world

## work and toil ... and women

what does woman represent in archaic Greek thought (at least in Hesiod)?

- beauty, desire
- falsehood, dissimulation
- cause of evil
- “freeloaders”
- but unfortunately necessary ☐

compare: jars of Zeus from the Iliad (bk 24): you can either have both good and evil, or just evil ☐ pure good is not an option

... And he added another evil  
To offset the good. Whoever escapes marriage  
And women's harm, comes to deadly old age  
Without any son to support him. He has no lack  
While he lives, but when he dies, distant relatives  
Divide up his estate. Then again, whoever marries  
As fated, and gets a good wife, compatible,  
Has a life that is balanced between evil and good,  
A constant struggle. But if he marries the abusive kind,  
He lives with pain in his heart all down the line,  
Pain in spirit and mind, incurable evil.  
(Th. 606-16)

# division of the human world

## work and toil ... and women

Prometheus' brother Epimetheus accepts gift of Pandora

symbolic: Epimetheus taking Pandora  all of mankind taking on necessity of living with woman

- compare to what?

Pandora's jar/box:

- suddenly Pandora seems to have brought a jar
- another explanation of why mortals toil (because hard to see how even the worst wife could be responsible for all human toil?)

Formerly dwelt on earth all the various tribes of the human Race, on their own and remote from evils and difficult labor And from distressing diseases that bring doom closer to each one.

For in misfortune do humans age rapidly, quicker than ever. Using her fingers, the maid pried open the lid of the great jar, Sprinkling its contents; her purpose, to bring sad hardships to mankind.

Nothing but Hope stayed there in her stout, irrefrangible dwelling, Under the lip of the jar, inside, and she never would venture Outdoors, having the lid of the vessel itself to prevent her, Willed there by Zeus, who arranges the storm clouds and carries the aegis.

Otherwise, myriad miseries flit round miserable mortals; Furthermore, full is the earth of much mischief, the deep sea also.

Illnesses visiting humans daily and nightly at all hours All by themselves bring terrible troubles aplenty to mortals

# division of the human world

## work and toil ... and women

evils were not all in Pandora,  
but she let them escape  
☒ woman still somehow  
responsible

how to interpret “hope”  
staying in the jar?

Formerly dwelt on earth all the various tribes of the human Race, on their own and remote from evils and difficult labor And from distressing diseases that bring doom closer to each one.

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# division of the human world

## work and toil ... and women

suffering and toil: multiple explanations

Freud's kettle joke:

A borrowed a copper kettle from B. and after he had returned it was sued by B. because the kettle now had a big hole in it which made it unusable. His [A.'s] defence was:

"First, I never borrowed a kettle from B. at all; secondly, the kettle had a hole in it already when I got it from him; thirdly, I gave him back the kettle undamaged."

Each one of these defences is valid in itself, but taken together they exclude one another. A. was treating in isolation what had to be regarded as connected whole.... We might also say: A. has put an "and" where only an "either-or" is possible.

# division of the human world

## myth of ages

yet another explanation for why life is hard; Hesiod is aware that he is giving a different version ☐

history of mankind divided into different ages inhabited by different “races”

two versions of why mortal life is full of toil in the same poem (W&D)

do Mecone-fire-Pandora and the myth of ages occur in the same “universe”?

- does it matter? why or why not?

I will give you the pith of another story—if you wish—with consummate skill. Treasure this thought in your heart:  
(108-9)

# division of the human world

## myth of ages

### 1. golden age/golden race

compare cyclopes from Od.:

Cyclopes who, putting all their trust in the immortal gods, neither plow with their hands nor plant anything, but all grows for them without seed planting, without cultivation, wheat and barley and also the grapevines, which yield for them wine of strength, and it is Zeus' rain that waters it for them.

origin for mankind (missing from Theogony); is this compatible with sacrifice at Mecone?

First, the immortals who dwell high up on the top of Olympus Fashioned the firstborn race of articulate men, which was golden, And it is said that they lived when Cronus was ruling in heaven. Godlike, they lived like gods, and their hearts were entirely carefree, Distant strangers to labor and suffering; neither did wretched Age overtake them; instead, their members intact and unchanged, they Took much pleasure in banquets and parties, apart from all evils Till they died as if sleep overcame them. And everything worthwhile Came to their hand, as the grain-growing earth bore fruit without tilling. Plenty of good food crops unbegrudged; so they lived at their pleasure, Peacefully minding their own business, amid numerous good things. Wealthy in flocks were they and beloved of the blessed immortals.

# division of the human world

## myth of ages

2. silver race

where do they come from?

in what ways were they  
inferior?

physical, moral

Afterward, those that inhabit Olympus fashioned a second,  
Silver race, which was very inferior, worse than the first one,  
For they did neither in growth nor intellect equal the golden.  
Children were then brought up by their diligent mothers a  
hundred  
Years and engaged in sheer infantile child's play there in their  
own homes.  
But when maturing at last they came to the measure of  
manhood  
They lived only the tiniest time, and moreover they suffered  
Much in their folly; they could not keep themselves back from  
their wicked  
Violence on one another; nor were they willing to serve the  
immortals  
Or make sacrifice using the Blessed Ones' sacrosanct altars,  
As it is lawful for humans to do and according to custom.  
Thereupon, Zeus, son of Cronus, suppressed them all in his  
anger,  
Seeing they did not worship the gods who inhabit Olympus.

# division of the human world

## myth of ages

### 3. bronze race

new creator? succession in  
heaven?

in what ways were they  
inferior?

physical, moral

Zeus manufactured a new third race of articulate mankind,  
But this bronze generation in no way equaled the silver,  
For they were offspring of ash trees, mighty and frightful, and  
Ares'  
Noisy employment concerned them and violent deeds. They ate  
no  
Bread and appeared tough-minded as adamant, wholly  
unpolished;  
All too great was their strength and their hands were invincible,  
growing  
Out of their mighty shoulders to hang at the end of their stout  
limbs.  
Bronze was their armor and brazen their arms, brass-bound were  
their dwellings;  
Bronze were the tools which they worked with, as iron had not  
been invented.  
Dying by each other's hands, they went down to the  
underworld's cold rot,  
Leaving no names to posterity. Black death took them despite

# division of the human world

## myth of ages

### 4. race of heroes

interrupts:

- sequence of metals
- sequence of decline

which part of the mythological past fits here?

why does Hesiod make space even at the cost of disrupting his sequence?

But when this bronze generation, however, was finally buried, Zeus, son of Cronus, created a whole new fourth generation Here on the fertile earth who were better and fonder of justice; This was a godlike race of heroical men who were known as Demigods, last generation before our own on the broad earth. Horrible war with its frightening war cries wholly destroyed them, Some who fought in the kingdom of Cadmus below seven-gated Thebes where they strove in vain with each other for Oedipus's rich flocks, Others transported across the immense deep gulf of the sea on Shipboard to Troy after well-coiffed Helen, the fairest of women. Some of them there death's ending completely enveloped in darkness. Others, however, the son of Cronus decided to grant a Dwelling place far from men at the furthermost ends of the earth, and There they continue to live, their consciousness perfectly carefree, There in the Isles of the Blessed, beside deep-eddying Ocean,

# division of the human world

## myth of ages

### 5. iron race

why does the world suck?

- bottom of the barrel

do you think work is worse  
than dying in war (bronze)?

Zeus then created a fifth and last generation of mankind  
Such as to this day also inhabit the bountiful green earth.  
How I would wish to have never been one of this fifth generation!  
Whether I'd died in the past or came to be born in the future.  
Truly of iron is this generation, and never by day will  
They intermit hard labor and woe; in the night they will also  
Suffer distress, for the gods will give them unbearable troubles.  
Nevertheless, there will always be good mixed in with the evil.  
(170-7)

# division of the human world

## myth of ages

### 5. iron race

what kind of decline is described?

physical, moral ↗ reflection

> pointed description?

- “a history of mankind to explain why my brother sucks”

Zeus will destroy this race of articulate mankind, however,  
When they have come to exhibit at birth gray hairs at their temples  
And when fathers will differ from children and children from fathers,  
Guests with their hosts will differ and comrades will differ with comrades.  
And no more will a brother, as previously, be beloved.  
When they grow old, people will show no respect to their elders;  
Harshly upbraiding them, they use words that are horribly cruel,  
Wretches who don't acknowledge the face of the gods and who will not  
Pay back ever the cost of their upbringing to their old parents,  
Thinking that might means right; and they devastate each other's cities  
There will be nothing like gratitude for oath-keepers and just men,  
Nor for the good man; rather, they'll only respect evildoers,  
Monsters of violence. Might will be right, all shame will be lost 25

# creating and ordering the world: myth and ritual

CLCV 2500 | ENGL 2500 Classical Mythology

# myth and ritual

today

texts: Homeric hymns

how to talk about gods

myths, religion, ritual

# myth and ritual

## essentials of Greek religion

basic belief framework

- divine vs. ordinary
- supernatural powers ☐ weather, fertility, life

role of religion: maintain relation with supernatural powers ☐ ensure continued survival + prosperity

how? performance of ritual

- ritual as link with the divine

organisation of ritual performance ☐ communal importance ☐ public ceremonies ☐ connection between religious and political power

# myth and ritual

## essentials of Greek religion

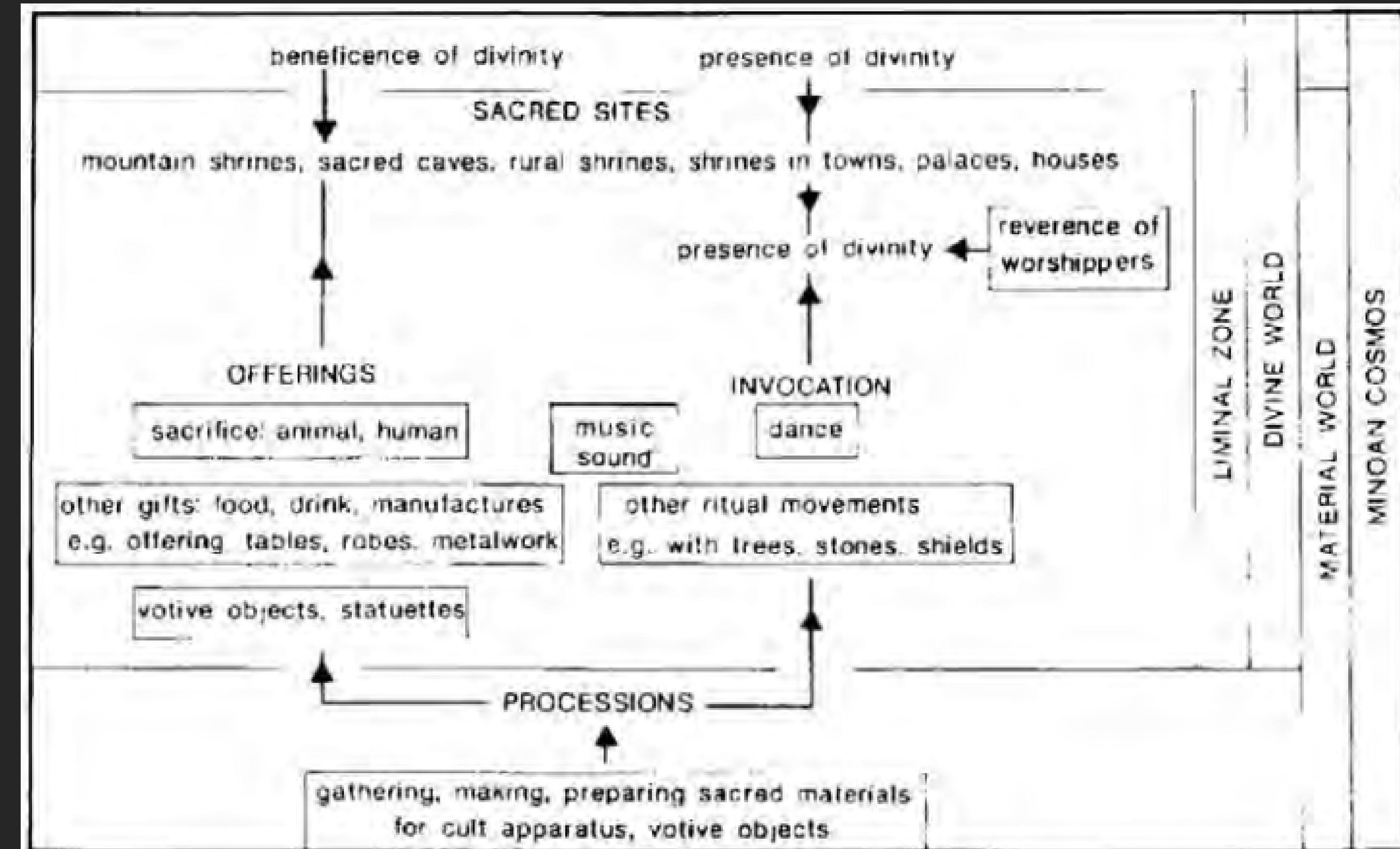
note: boundary of ordinary and divine

- procession:  
crossing  
boundary

kinds of activity:  
offerings,  
invocations

- offerings:  
exchange, *do ut des*
- invocation:  
ensuring the god  
is there

shrines: places  
where divinity can  
be accessed



# myth and ritual

## essentials of Greek religion

role of myth and poetry in religion?

ritual ~ myth, actions ~ words

- maintain link to gods by “recalling”/”remembering” them
  - naming the god & attributes
  - tell stories about origins
- explain aspects of ritual
  - e.g., why this location here? why these words? why these actions?

both roles: aetiology

## Homeric hymns

what are Homeric hymns?

- anonymous hymns, dedicated to one god
- "Homeric": epic metre; Homeridae
- 33 hymns, varying length (4 to hundreds of lines)
- performance contexts: feasts, poetic contests, festivals

structure (prelude to other poetic performances):

- invocation of god
- listing attributes
- tell story
- transition to other song, promise to sing of god again

sometimes overgrown ↗ major hymns

- Demeter, Apollo, Hermes, Aphrodite

# myth and ritual

(recall: who is Athena?)

> attributes

> story

> promise + moving on

## Homeric hymns

### To Athena

[1] I begin to sing of Pallas Athena, the glorious goddess, bright-eyed, inventive, unbending of heart, pure virgin, saviour of cities, courageous, Tritogeneia.

Wise Zeus himself bare her [5] from his awful head, arrayed in warlike arms of flashing gold, and awe seized all the gods as they gazed. But Athena sprang quickly from the immortal head and stood before Zeus who holds the aegis, shaking a sharp spear: great Olympus began to reel horribly [10] at the might of the bright-eyed goddess, and earth round about cried fearfully, and the sea was moved and tossed with dark waves, while foam burst forth suddenly: the bright Son of Hyperion stopped his swift-footed horses a long while, until the maiden Pallas Athena [15] had stripped the heavenly armour from her immortal shoulders. And wise Zeus was glad.

And so hail to you, daughter of Zeus who holds the aegis! Now 71

# myth and ritual

## Homeric hymns

compare invocation +  
attributes from Iliad 1:

“Hear me, lord of the silver  
bow who set your power  
about Chryse and Killa the  
sacrosanct, who are lord in  
strength over Tenedos,  
Smintheus ...”

redundancy: making sure  
message got to recipient

### To Athena

[1] I begin to sing of Pallas Athena, the glorious goddess, bright-eyed, inventive, unbending of heart, pure virgin, saviour of cities, courageous, Tritogeneia.

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And so hail to you, daughter of Zeus who holds the aegis! Now

# myth and ritual

what is the meaning of the story?

story ~ another attribute

basic structure: attribute, attribute, attribute ...

- each could be story + expanded
- long hymns: massively expanded

## Homeric hymns

### To Athena

[1] I begin to sing of Pallas Athena, the glorious goddess, bright-eyed, inventive, unbending of heart, pure virgin, saviour of cities, courageous, Tritogeneia.

Wise Zeus himself bare her [5] from his awful head, arrayed in warlike arms of flashing gold, and awe seized all the gods as they gazed. But Athena sprang quickly from the immortal head and stood before Zeus who holds the aegis, shaking a sharp spear: great Olympus began to reel horribly [10] at the might of the bright-eyed goddess, and earth round about cried fearfully, and the sea was moved and tossed with dark waves, while foam burst forth suddenly: the bright Son of Hyperion stopped his swift-footed horses a long while, until the maiden Pallas Athena [15] had stripped the heavenly armour from her immortal shoulders. And wise Zeus was glad.

And so hail to you, daughter of Zeus who holds the aegis! Now 91

# myth and ritual

## Homeric hymns

### kinds of attributes

- names
- description: traditional epithets
- function: what do they do? over what do they rule?  
how do they help mortals?
- birth story
- how did they come to occupy their current position?
- how did they become associated with their cult sites?
- etc.

### To Athena

[1] I begin to sing of Pallas Athena, the glorious goddess, bright-eyed, inventive, unbending of heart, pure virgin, saviour of cities, courageous, Tritogeneia.

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And so hail to you, daughter of Zeus who holds the aegis! Now 10

# myth and ritual

## Homeric hymns

- maintain link to gods by “recalling”/“remembering” them
  - naming the god & attributes
  - tell stories about origins
- explain aspects of ritual
  - e.g., why this location here? why these words? why these actions?

myth: “religious” and “intellectual” side

- intellectual: aetiological explanations
- religious: keeping the god in mind

☒ intellectual side is/feeds into religious side

long hymns today

- Hymn to Demeter: consequences of Hades seizing Persephone
- Hymn to Apollo (double structure): birth, establishment of cult at Delphi

# myth and ritual

## Hymn to Apollo

two parts: "Delian Apollo", "Pythian Apollo"

Delos: birthplace of Apollo

Delphi (Pytho): major cult centre of Apollo (home to the oracle)

why call Apollo "Delian" or "Pythian"?  
is Delian Apollo different from Pythian Apollo?

aspects of gods: different aspects emphasised for different occasions

e.g.: when would you call on Zeus ...

- Xenios ("Zeus of Guest-friendship/hospitality") or Philoxenon ("Zeus who is friendly to guests")?



# myth and ritual

## Hymn to Apollo

back to Apollo: difference between Delian and Pythian?

- same god, different contexts + associations

Pythian Apollo: oracles, prophecy

Delian hymn: prob. produced for festival on Delos ↗ what is special about Delos?

- Ionians

hymns prob. performed at Delos and Delphi

- compare “occasional poetry,” poets laureate



# myth and ritual

opening of hymn:

structure?

playing with  
epithets/attributes:

- “who shoots afar”
- “with bright bow”
- “son of Zeus”
- “honoured by Zeus”
- “son of Leto”
- “mighty archer”
- “born on Delos”

all epithets tied into a story

(instead of “Tony Stark,  
billionaire, CEO,  
philanthropist, Iron Man ...”,  
the *litanies* of *ritual*)

## Delian Apollo

I will remember and not be unmindful of Apollo who shoots afar. As he goes through the house of Zeus, the gods tremble before him and all spring up from their seats when he draws near, as he bends his bright bow. [5] But Leto alone stays by the side of Zeus who delights in thunder; and then she unstrings his bow, and closes his quiver, and takes his archery from his strong shoulders in her hands and hangs them on a golden peg against a pillar of his father's house. Then she leads him to a seat and makes him sit: [10] and the Father gives him nectar in a golden cup welcoming his dear son, while the other gods make him sit down there, and queenly Leto rejoices because she bare a mighty son and an archer. Rejoice, blessed Leto, for you bare glorious children, [15] the lord Apollo and Artemis who delights in arrows; her in Ortygia, and him in rocky Delos, as you rested against the great mass of the Cynthian hill hard by a palm-tree by the streams of Inopus.

# myth and ritual

can now answer some questions:

> why are they scared? is he about to attack someone?  
Leto the bravest of gods?

> why do we care about Zeus serving nectar? or Leto rejoicing?

narrative: one time action  
attribute:  
ongoing/permanent state  
✉ is this narrative or attribute?

## Delian Apollo

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# myth and ritual

after first story/attribute ↗  
birth story of Apollo

narrative: Leto traveled to  
bunch of places  
attribute: ?

priamel: “not A, not B, not C  
... but D!”

narrative: Leto tells Delos,  
“you’re a pretty shitty island”  
attribute: ?

## Delian Apollo

[bunch of places] ... so far roamed Leto in travail with the god who shoots afar, to see if any land would be willing to make a dwelling for her son. But they greatly trembled and feared, and none, not even the richest of them, dared receive Phoebus, [50] until queenly Leto set foot on Delos and uttered winged words and asked her:

“Delos, if you would be willing to be the abode of my son Phoebus Apollo and make him a rich temple —; for no other will touch you, as you will find: and I think you will never be rich in oxen and sheep, [55] nor bear vintage nor yet produce plants abundantly. But if you have the temple of far-shooting Apollo, all men will bring you hecatombs and gather here, and incessant savour of rich sacrifice will always arise, and you will feed those who dwell in you [60] from the hand of strangers; for truly your own soil is not rich.”

# myth and ritual

questions:

why are the lands already afraid? how do they know who Apollo is anyway?

why does the story not make chronological sense? what is important to the story, what isn't?

## Delian Apollo

[bunch of places] ... so far roamed Leto in travail with the god who shoots afar, to see if any land would be willing to make a dwelling for her son. But they greatly trembled and feared, and none, not even the richest of them, dared receive Phoebus, [50] until queenly Leto set foot on Delos and uttered winged words and asked her:

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# myth and ritual

## Delian Apollo

questions:

Apollo was a precocious  
baby?

Forthwith Phoebus Apollo spoke out among the deathless  
goddesses: "The lyre and the curved bow shall ever be dear to  
me, and I will declare to men the unfailing will of Zeus."

# myth and ritual

narrative: Apollo likes Delos  
a lot

attribute: ? ↗ who/what is  
praised?

- > function of poetry/song
- > what does this imitation  
mean?

> who is this?

## Delian Apollo

Many are your temples and wooded groves, and all peaks and towering bluffs [145] of lofty mountains and rivers flowing to the sea are dear to you, Phoebus, yet in Delos do you most delight your heart ... And there is this great wonder besides—and its renown shall never perish —, the girls of Delos, hand-maidens of the Far-shooter; for when they have praised Apollo first, and also Leto and Artemis who delights in arrows, [160] they sing a strain telling of men and women of past days, and charm the tribes of men. Also they can imitate the tongues of all men and their clattering speech: each would say that he himself were singing, so close to truth is their sweet song.

And now may Apollo be favorable and Artemis; and farewell all you maidens. Remember me in after time whenever any one of men on earth, a stranger who has seen and suffered much, comes here and asks of you: “Whom think ye, girls, is the sweetest singer that comes here, and in whom do you most delight?” [170] Then answer, each and all, with one voice: “He is a blind man, and dwells in rocky Chios: his lays are evermore”

## Pythian Apollo

new hymn: structure?

> note: Apollo ~ music

> did he forget he going to Pytho? (narrative ↗ attribute)

O Lord, Lycia is yours and lovely Maeonia [180] and Miletus, charming city by the sea, but over wave-girt Delos you greatly reign your own self.

Leto's all-glorious son goes to rocky Pytho, playing upon his hollow lyre, clad in divine, perfumed garments; and his lyre, [185] at the touch of the golden key, sings sweet. Thence, swift as thought, he speeds from earth to Olympus, to the house of Zeus, to join the gathering of the other gods: then straightway the undying gods think only of the lyre and song, and all the Muses together, voice sweetly answering voice, [190] hymn the unending gifts the gods enjoy and the sufferings of men, all that they endure at the hands of the deathless gods, and how they live witless and helpless and cannot find healing for death or defence against old age.

# myth and ritual

- > why does the poet tell us about his puzzlement? what does this device introduce?
- > Coronis, mother of Asclepius
- > ? ?
- > Daphne? (laurel)
- > why tell us about the places where Apollo did not want to place his oracle?

## Pythian Apollo

How then shall I sing of you —though in all ways you are a worthy theme for song? Shall I sing of you as wooer and in the fields of love, how you went wooing the daughter of Azan [210] along with god-like Ischys the son of well-horsed Elatius, or with Phorbas sprung from Triops, or with Ereutheus, or with Leucippus and the wife of Leucippus ... you on foot, he with his chariot, yet he fell not short of Triops. Or shall I sing how at the first [215] you went about the earth seeking a place of oracle for men, O far-shooting Apollo? To Pieria first you went down from Olympus and passed by sandy Lectus and Enienae and through the land of the Perrhaebi. Soon you came to Iolcus and set foot on Cenaeum in Euboea, famed for ships: [220] you stood in the Lelantine plain, but it pleased not your heart to make a temple there and wooded groves. From there you crossed the Euripus, far-shooting Apollo, and went up the green, holy hills, going on to Mycalessus and grassy-bedded Teumessus, [225] and so came to the wood-clad abode of Thebe; for as yet no man lived in holy Thebe, nor were there tracks or ways about Thebe's wheat-bearing plain as yet. ...

# myth and ritual

Telphusa (nymph of a spring in Boeotia) rejects Apollo

why single out Telphusa from the other not-oracle places?

## Pythian Apollo

Then you went towards Telphusa: and there the pleasant place seemed fit for [245] making a temple and wooded grove. You came very near and spoke to her: "Telphusa, here I am minded to make a glorious temple, an oracle for men, and hither they will always bring perfect hecatombs, [250] both those who live in rich Peloponnesus and those of Europe and all the wave-washed isles, coming to seek oracles. And I will deliver to them all counsel that cannot fail, giving answer in my rich temple."

So said Phoebus Apollo, and laid out all the foundations [255] throughout, wide and very long. But when Telphusa saw this, she was angry in heart and spoke, saying: "Lord Phoebus, worker from afar, I will speak a word of counsel to your heart, since you are minded to make here a glorious temple to be an oracle for men who will always [260] bring hither perfect hecatombs for you; yet I will speak out, and do you lay up my words in your heart. The trampling of swift horses and the sound of mules watering at my sacred springs will always irk you, and

## Pythian Apollo

story of Typhaon

- dragon/serpent monster, child of Hera
- slain by Apollo

aetiological myth: why is Apollo called Pythian?

- rotting corpse -> Pytho, Pythian
- more likely: *punthanomai*, “I find out”
- but myth don’t care!

# myth and ritual

## Hymn to Demeter

interaction of myth and ritual

Demeter: goddess of the fertile earth, grain, vegetation

single 15th century manuscript, found 1777 in Russia, in a stable, “where it must have sat for many years among chickens and pigs”

hymn closely linked to Eleusinian Mysteries, festival for Demeter and Persephone  
- at Eleusis, near Athens

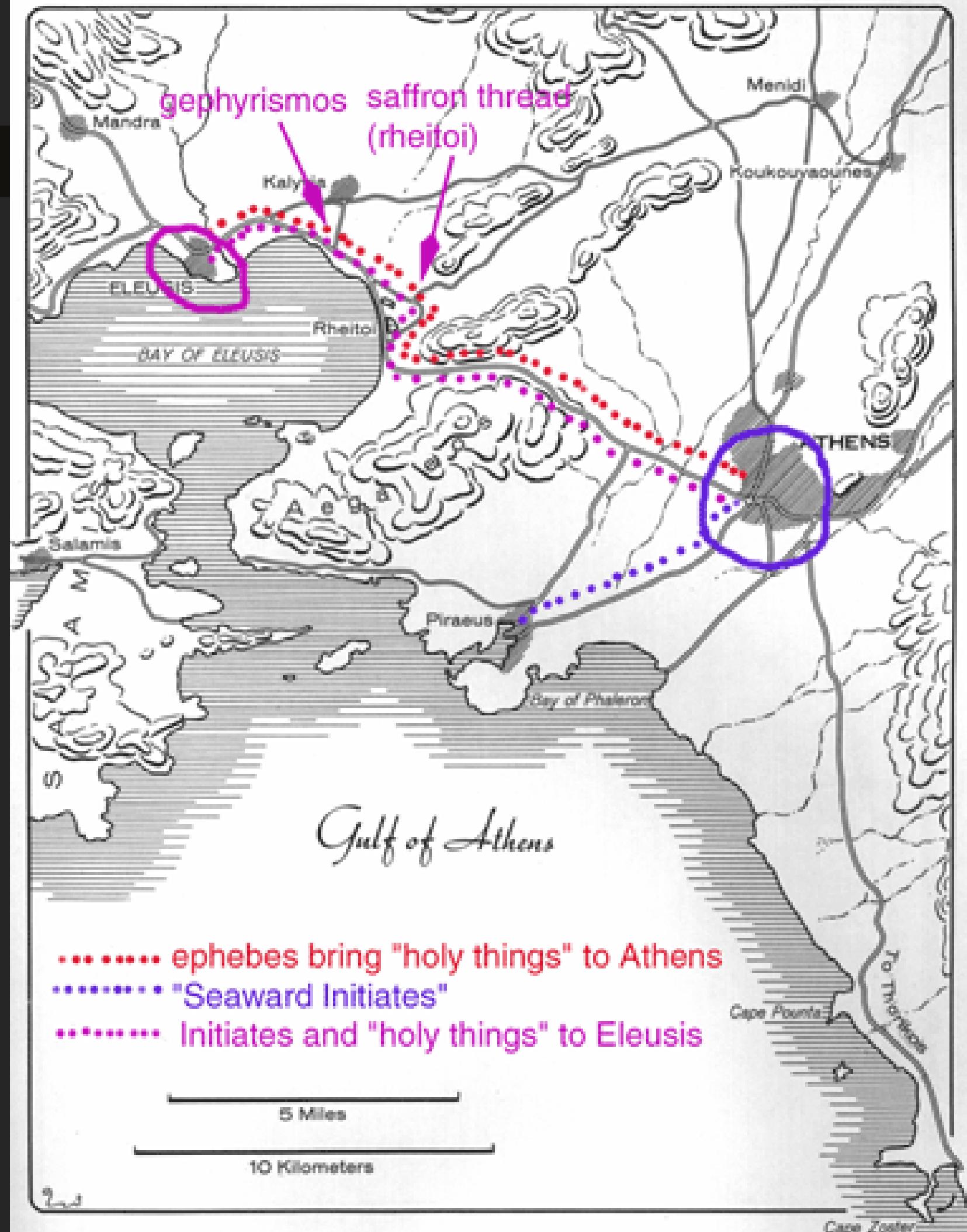
# myth and ritual

## Hymn to Demeter

what happens in the Mysteries?

- procession from Athens to temple of Demeter at Eleusis
- initiation ritual: *something* is shown at night, something about life after death (early Christian Church Father: ear of corn)
- initiates obtain secret blessing for afterlife

question: how does the myth as told in the hymn relate to the ritual?



# myth and ritual

## Hymn to Demeter

story of the myth:

- Persephone picking flowers, earth opens up, Hades seizes her
- Demeter finds out from Hecate and Helios
- she leaves the gods, goes disguised among mortals, ends up at family of Celeus (in Eleusis) as nurse to the young son, Demophon
- Demeter tries to make Demophon immortal (burying him in fire), his mother sees
- Demeter reveals herself, demands temple
- while Demeter was angry, nothing grew ☐ Zeus asks Hades to let Persephone go back
- Hades agrees, tricks Persephone into eating pomegranate seed ☐ she must continue to spend some time away in underworld
- Persephone: one third of year with Hades, two thirds
- Demeter teaches rites for her temple



# myth and ritual

## Hymn to Demeter

Heracles, Persephone (seated), a priest, Demeter (middle, seated), Triptolemus (aka Demophon, child), Hecate, Iambe (seated), Dionysus



## Hymn to Demeter

interpretation of the story

### 1. rhythm of Persephone's year

- seeds lying underground before sprouting?
- grain stored in underground jars?
- former more likely: Persephone's return associated with flowers of spring

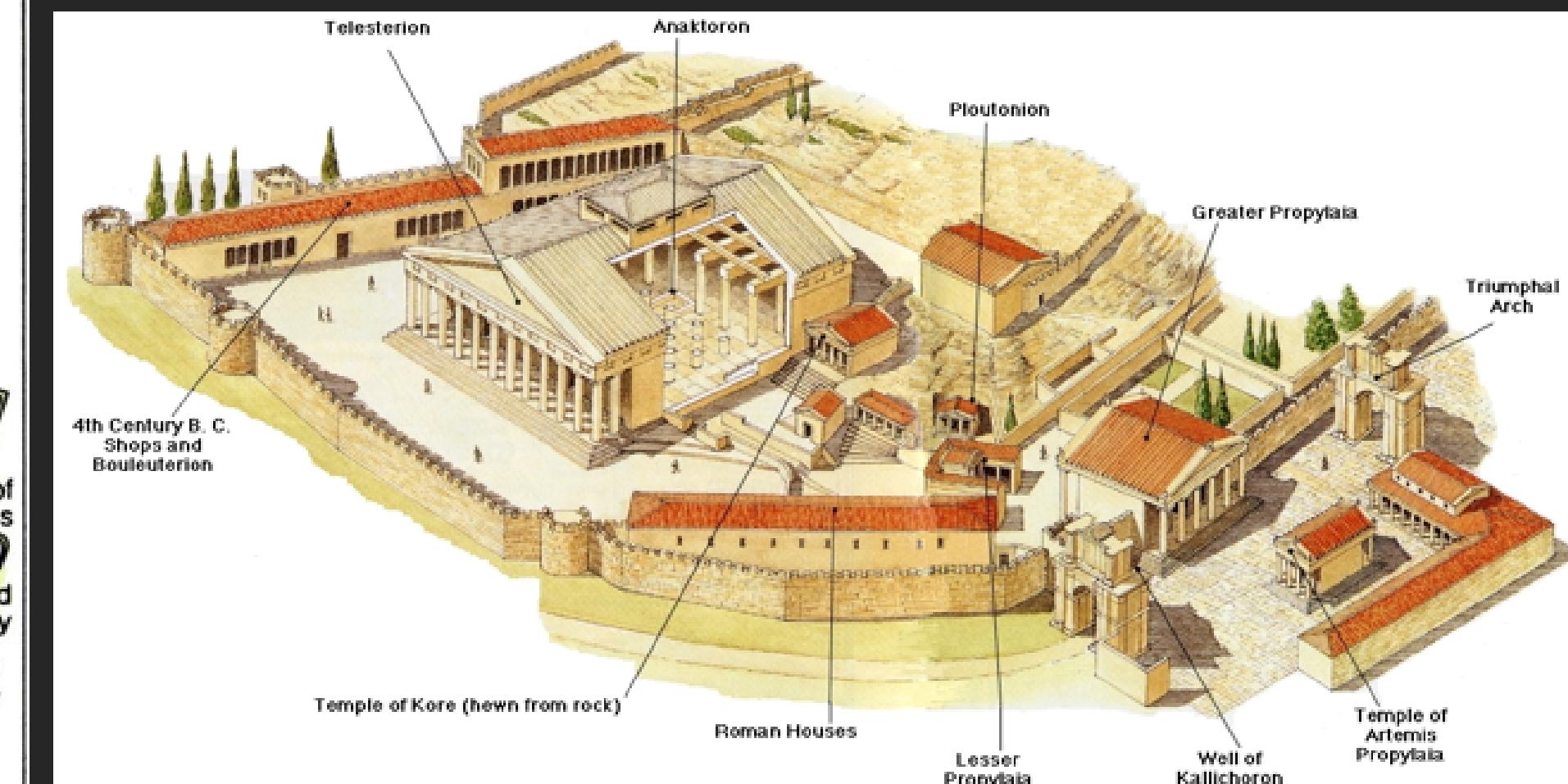
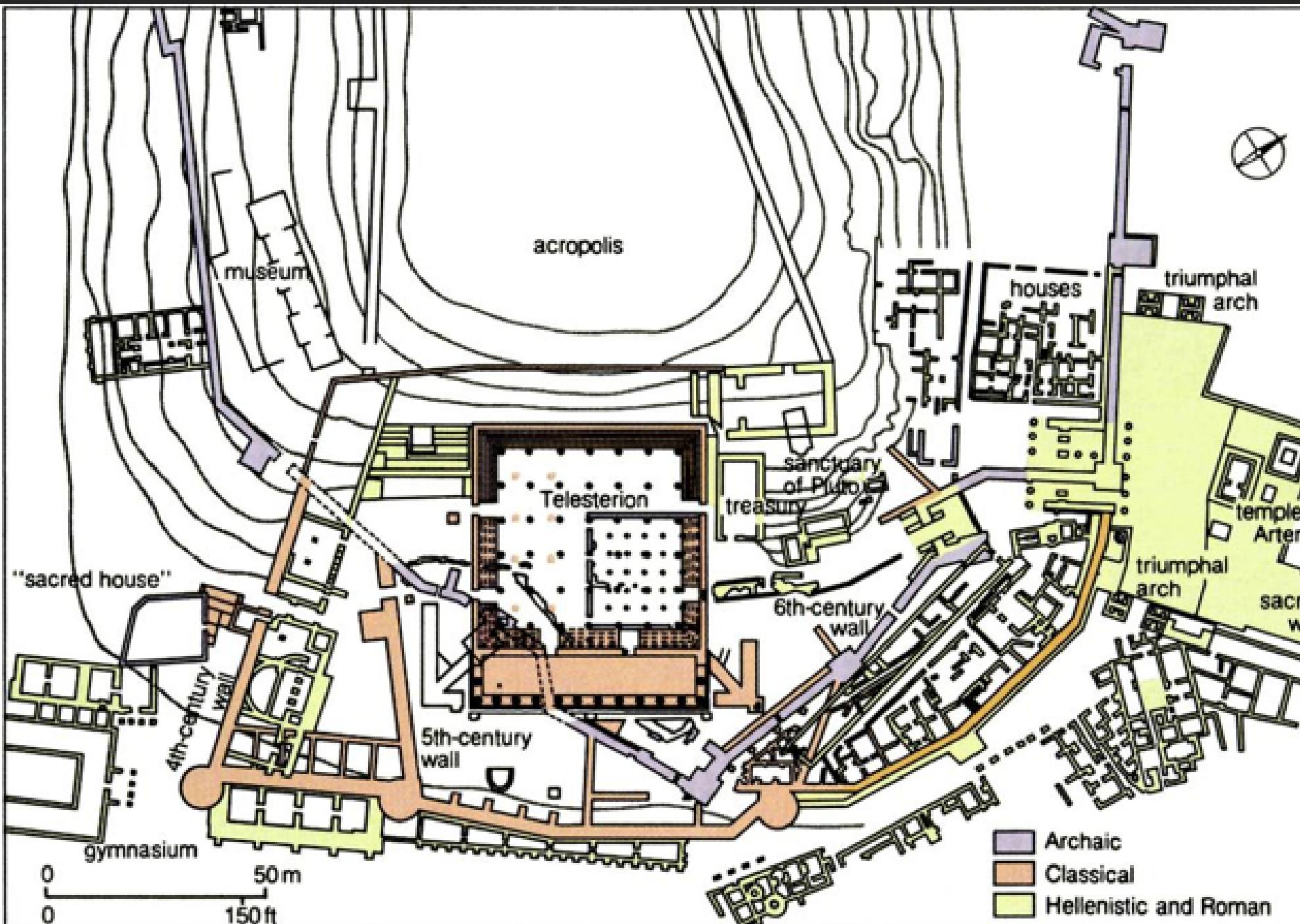
“In Greece the grain continues to grow after being sown in the fall, if slowly, throughout the winter season; growth then quickens in the spring.” (Foley)

# myth and ritual

## Hymn to Demeter

### 2. establishment of temple and mysteries at Eleusis

- origin of temple: need to propitiate Demeter
- end of poem: Demeter herself taught rites and mysteries to man



# myth and ritual

## Hymn to Demeter

relations between myth and ritual

### 1. rude jokes, vulgar speech (aischrologia)

Unsmiling, tasting neither food nor drink,  
she sat wasting with desire for her deep—girt daughter,  
until knowing lambe jested with her and  
mocking with many a joke moved the holy goddess  
to smile and laugh and keep a gracious heart—  
lambe, who later pleased her moods as well.

- lambe: personification of “blame poetry,” poems attacking someone
- ritual abuse, obscene speech: part of Eleusinian festival, common at festivals of Demeter
- fertility ~ sexuality ~ obscenity
- myth tells the origin of obscene jokes

# myth and ritual

## Hymn to Demeter

relations between myth and ritual

### 2. ritual drink, kykeon

Metaneira offered a cup filled with honey-sweet wine,  
but Demeter refused it. It was not right, she said,  
for her to drink red wine; then she bid them mix barley  
and water with soft mint and give her to drink.

- kykeon: drink with which initiates broke their fast
- (“mint”: pennyroyal, slightly toxic flower)
- myth tells origin of the specific drink

(didn't make much effort to make a good story; note: priamel, attribute ✉ narrative)