Mousaios, Peisandros of Kameiros was said to have stolen *Herakleia* from Peisinoos of Lindos, and Panyassis of Halikarnasos, a fifth-century writer, was said to have stolen the *Capture of Oichalia* from the eighth-century Kreophylos of Samos. This was just another way of saying that Panyassis's own carefully crafted masterpiece on the labors of Herakles was based on the tradition that Kreophylos had long ago shared. Similarly, the poem that Eugammon wrote stemmed from a long tradition in which Mousaios was said to have shared.

The gift story (Stasinos, Kreophylos) and the pupil story (Arktinos) are two alternative ways for later authors to deal with an issue that they honestly did not understand, the oral transmission of a poetic narrative tradition. The theft story (Panyassis, Eugammon) is a way of dealing with another issue that they did not understand, the different responsibilities of the poet who shares in an oral tradition and the poet who also writes or whose work is written down. No one grasped that an oral narrative poem is new and unique in each performance, or that the poem that is written down is the only one available to later readers—this is a twentieth-century realization, owed principally to Milman Parry. Therefore, no one understood that as far as later readers are concerned, the only crucial occasion in the case of each story or cycle was the occasion of writing, and the only creativity that can be recognized in later times is the creativity of the poet who participates in the occasion of writing.

We needed to go through these names of lost epics and shadowy poets in order to understand how distant and tenuous the links are between the legendary singer Homer, who is said to have contributed more than any other individual to the oral epic tradition, and the two great epics that we know. However unforgettable Syagros or Arktinos might have been as performers, their work was lost and could not be recoverable if it was not written down. However plagiaristic Panyassis and Eugammon were thought to be by unsympathetic contemporaries, they actually were the creators of their poems, because they were the ones who wrote them down. In just the same way, if Homer did not see his poems written down, his work is lost forever, as unrecoverable as that of the shadowy Syagros. Whatever poet was present at the writing of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* was the real creator of those poems.

2

The Iliad *and History*

It's possible to read the *Iliad* without even thinking about whether the Trojan War really happened. In ancient times, nearly all readers assumed that it was history; in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, most readers took it to be fiction. The value of the *Iliad* to its audience—which means us—does not depend on such questions. And yet, quite reasonably, many people want to know the answers.

Is Troy a real place? Was there a ten-year siege of Troy at the same period when Mykenai was powerful, and did the siege end with the destruction of the city by an Achaian army? Were the opposing forces led by Hektor, son of King Priam, and Agamemnon? Was the war fought because Helen, the wife of Agamemnon's brother Menelaos, had

eloped with the young Trojan Paris? Was Achilles the greatest warrior on the Achaian side?

With every new retelling of the Trojan War story, including the recent film *Troy*, these questions are asked again. Answers are always given—most recently in Joachim Latacz's *Troy and Homer*. The answers vary over time, depending partly on the gradual emergence of archaeological evidence and partly on current fashions among historians and archaeologists.

Classical Greeks and Romans believed that the *Iliad* was in essence history: an accurate oral tradition had transmitted this knowledge to Homer, who made it into a great poem, and this in turn was transmitted orally and eventually written down. Scholars of early modern Europe down to the mid-nineteenth century became more and more skeptical of this belief. They were aware of many conflicting legends of the origins of European peoples, including this one, and they were inclined to believe none of them. Then two big scientific advances set off the swings of fashion. First, beginning in 1870, Heinrich Schliemann's archaeological discoveries at Troy and Mykenai meant that flat skepticism had to give way to acceptance that these had been centers of power at the right time. Then, from the 1930s on, research into oral traditions showed that although historical events may be remembered for several centuries, details are not transmitted accurately and eventually become inextricably confused, and there can be no doubt that the *Iliad* was composed, purely on the basis of oral tradition, several centuries after the Trojan War would have taken place.

The answer to the basic questions is now known to be yes. Troy is identified with complete confidence; at the right period, its political links placed it in opposition to the Achaians of Greece. It was destroyed violently. However, we cannot say who carried out the destruction. There is archaeological support for many background details in the *Iliad*, but they turn out to belong to very different periods, as research into oral traditions would lead us to expect. As for a Trojan War and whether Achaians were the attackers, we have no evidence at all outside the *Iliad* itself.

THE TROJAN WAR IN ITS TRADITIONAL CONTEXT

In book 6 of the *Iliad*, when in conversation with Hektor and Paris (here called Alexandros), Helen recognizes that Hektor and the people of Troy are fighting because of her:

> *For the sake of myself, a bitch, and Alexandros's blind folly.*
> *On us two Zeus has set a sorry fate, so that afterward*
> *We shall be themes of song for men of the future.*
>
> (*Iliad* 6.356–358)

The poet makes Helen describe herself as a bitch because, though she is still married to Menelaos, she is living openly with another man; in this metaphor she equates her own apparent lack of shame with that proverbially attributed to dogs because they will mate in public view. On this rare occasion the poet of the *Iliad* gives in to the temptation, familiar to narrative poets, to allow characters to predict that songs will be made about them by later generations, and we, as audience, have to admire the skill with which Helen predicts the future. She's right, of course: these traditions would exist, the poet would make use of them, and the *Iliad* story would be told.

Here we have to work backward from the real *Iliad*. Is it possible to identify when and how the traditions that led to the poem really began?

To start with the most obvious point, the Trojan War was not a recent event. Unlike the singers Phemios and Demodokos in the *Odyssey*, who are shown to be narrating current affairs, the poet is telling of incidents that lie far beyond the reach of living memory. We can prove this on the basis of the quotation just given, because what is really happening in these lines is that Helen is predicting the Greek epic tradition. She is predicting the poet; therefore, as far as she is concerned, the poet is in the future. The matter is made clear elsewhere, in any case, because we are told four times that the heroes of the Trojan war belonged to a mighty generation of the past. Here is one example:

He seized a boulder in his hand,
Tydeus's son did, a big thing which even two men could not lift
Who were like mortals of today, but he hefted it easily on his own.
(*Iliad* 5.302–304)

In all four cases the half-line formula *who were like mortals of today* is included, as if to drive the point home to us.[1] This was a different epoch, an age of heroes.

But that's all. We are never told exactly how long ago the events of the *Iliad* took place. No lines of descent are given linking heroes of the Trojan War with the potential readership of the poems, or with any other people of the poet's own time—in fact, there is scarcely a hint that the heroes had any offspring. Later legends gradually filled the gap.

Other epics told of the later adventures of Telemachos and revealed that Odysseus had had a son by Kirke, named Telegonos (which means "fathered far away"), and that Telegonos eventually killed his father. Tragedians gave classic form to the legend of Agamemnon, which was completed with the story of his son, Orestes. Orestes avenged his father by killing his mother, Klytaimestra, along with her lover, Aigisthos, and was with difficulty cleansed of the pollution of the horrific act of matricide. Storytellers explored the adventures of certain Trojans who escaped death when their city fell and sought a new life in the west, notably Aeneas, a minor character in the *Iliad*. According to the legends crystallized in Virgil's *Aeneid*, Aeneas led a band of Trojans to Italy, where their descendants became the founders of Rome.

Genealogists and local historians, who soon abounded in Greece, traced the family lines from each of the heroes down to their own times. In due course, thanks to their work, Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar were both convinced of their "heroic" descent, the former from Andromache, the latter from Aeneas. Family trees spread luxuriantly; retrospectively, they filled the centuries that preceded the writing of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Then came the chronologists. Their aim was to list the dates of historical events in the past, and where the sources provided no dates—as is the case with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*—they had to calculate them. This was generally done by counting generations in family trees or in lists of kings, working to an average of forty years between generations

(between the father's birth and that of the son destined to succeed him). Similar methods were applied, with equally unreliable results, when Europeans began to investigate African and Polynesian historical traditions. In this way the precise date of the Trojan War was eventually worked out: converting from the ancient Greek calendar to our own, the accepted answer was that Troy was besieged in 1194 and fell in 1184 B.C. It has been argued that the calculation was faulty because the average generation should have been counted as thirty-three and not forty years. It has also been argued, rightly, that this does not matter, because the family lines and king lists were invented and unrealistic. Since there was no way to verify them, and since classical historians had no other method of determining the date of such ancient events, we have no reason to hope that the traditional date of the Trojan War corresponds to any kind of reality.[2]

Ancient readers accepted, as we have seen, that the ten-year war really happened. They accepted that its historical background was accurate, encouraged by the fact that its geography was detailed and convincing. True, the two most important places in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* narratives had no current significance by the date when the poems were written, yet their existence and even their location were not controversial. One of the two was Mykenai, a rich and powerful city, Agamemnon's homeland and apparently a metropolis of southern Greece. The other was Troy, which is called *Troie* and *Ilios* in the poems. Troy, the focus of the war, was a fortress near the mouth of the Hellespont or Dardanelles, in northwestern Asia Minor. These places could be confidently identified by classical Greeks who looked into the question.

A prominent hilltop fortress not far west of Argos had strong walls pierced with a narrow gate surmounted by two fine carved lions. This was Mykenai, a decayed city in which a few hundred people still lived, a place that the people of Argos would eventually feel strong enough to depopulate and partly to dismantle. Not only was it in the right place and not only did the name survive, but the elaborate burials in the neighborhood showed that it had once been the capital of a rich kingdom. People regularly made offerings at these burial mounds, as they did at others throughout Greece, to gain the favor of the semidivine "heroes," known or unknown, who must have been buried there in an earlier era. The classical geographical writers Strabo and Pausanias,

both careful and critical readers of Homer, accept without question that the ruins are those of ancient Mykenai. Pausanias describes them:

> If we turn back toward Argos, the ruins of Mykenai will be on our left. The Greeks know that Perseus was the founder of Mykenai. . . . The gate survives, with lions standing over it, among other sections of the defensive wall, said to be the work of Kyklopes. . . . In the ruins of Mykenai . . . are the graves of those who came home from Troy with Agamemnon, to be murdered by Aigisthos over dinner: one grave is Kassandra's (but the Spartans at Amyklai claim that they have Kassandra's grave); one is Agamemnon's, another is Eurymedon the charioteer's; and one single grave holds Teledamos and Pelops, said to be the twin children of Kassandra, who were only babies when they were butchered by Aigisthos along with their parents.[3]

The story that Kassandra had already borne twins to Agamemnon is not in the epics. It must have been a local legend, invented to explain a double burial.

Then there was a big mound topped by a small and insignificant city on the plain near the mouth of the Skamandros River, which reaches the sea at the point where the Hellespont flows into the Aegean. The name of this place was Ilion—the usual name of Troy in the *Iliad*—and it was widely accepted as the site of Troy. Some skeptics had doubts about the location. Ilion stands at the end of a rocky ridge, and the Roman geographer Strabo insists that Achilles could never have dragged Hektor's body all around this city with his chariot. The alluvial plain between Ilion and the sea was a recent formation and could not have been the site of Greek-Trojan battles, said the female scholar Hestiaia of Alexandria. The historical geographer Demetrios of Skepsis concluded that the real Troy must have been further inland, and the battleground must have been an inland valley.

Still, no one doubted that ancient Troy was somewhere around here. The district was still known as Troas; other place-names (including the river, Skamandros) matched those of the *Iliad;* many local topographical features corresponded with the poet's descriptions. When Alexander the Great visited the site in 334 B.C., providing what would

now be a photo opportunity after the first military victory of his Persian expedition, he was shown the "tomb of Achilles"—admittedly, not a real monument from the time of Achilles and Agamemnon, but a later memorial where visiting tourists and devotees could worship the hero. Not far away were shrines to Hektor, Paris, Hekabe, and the Greek heroes Aias and Patroklos.[4]

To sum up, later Greek readers were close enough to the heroes and their world to feel with absolute confidence that the story of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* was history. In fact, it was their own national history.

FROM NATIONAL MYTH TO ARCHAEOLOGY

Building on the *Iliad* and on later legends of Aeneas the Trojan refugee, Virgil's *Aeneid* adopts the Trojan War theme to provide a national mythology for the Romans. This inventive but high-handed literary use of what had been a Greek oral tradition set the pattern for the development in medieval times of a series of legends linking the peoples of various European countries with Troy. Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth-century *History of the Kings of Britain* for example, holds that the ancestor of the Britons was a certain Brutus, great-grandson of Aeneas. At least down to the Elizabethan period, many serious historians believed such tales. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, critical historians at last perceived the fantasy that lay behind these legendary genealogies. Unfortunately, they did not see any difference between the literary inventions of Virgil and his imitators, on one side, and the oral tradition that had culminated in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, on the other side. As a result, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Virgil, and Homer were all rejected as potential sources of history. Readers were no longer prepared to be taken in by the myth that there had been rich kingdoms and high culture in Greece and Asia Minor at the supposed date of the Trojan War.

Thus matters remained until Heinrich Schliemann, fired by his reading of the *Iliad*, excavated at the traditional sites of Troy and Mykenai. Schliemann, a successful businessman who applied his hard-earned wealth to his enthusiasm for Homer, was convinced that real history underlay the early Greek epics. Contradicting Strabo and many more recent doubters, he argued that the well-known mound of classical Ilion, then called Hissarlik, would in fact reveal the prehistoric city of

Troy. He began to dig there in 1870 and found a series of cities succeeding one another on the same site. In a deep layer (now called Troy II) he found spectacular golden jewelry which he called "the treasure of Priam"; it was modeled by Mrs. Schliemann in a famous photograph and then deposited in the Prussian State Museum in Berlin, but it was lost from sight at the end of World War II and has only recently been rediscovered in Russian custody.[5]

The remains of this very ancient city still showed signs that it had been destroyed by fire—one of the best possible archaeological indications of enemy action. Schliemann drew the natural conclusion that the Trojan War and the Greek victory were real historical events for which he had found the clinching evidence. He did not realize that Troy II is a thousand years older than any probable Greek siege of Troy.

His confidence bolstered by his finds at Troy, Schliemann dug at Mykenai, just inside the Lion Gate, and was lucky enough to rediscover several deep burial chambers, whose entrances had been carefully concealed. Some of them had been known to Pausanias; others had remained unknown and had never been plundered. In these chambers Schliemann found rich offerings that clearly originated from an unknown civilization many centuries older than the classical remains of Greece. The most celebrated item is probably the gold death mask of an aged man; "I have looked upon the face of Agamemnon," Schliemann announced.

In later excavations at Troy, in which Schliemann paid more attention to archaeological methods, it became clear that another of the eight successive cities (Troy VIIa), not very distant in date from the burial chambers of Mykenai, had also been destroyed by a catastrophic fire.

That is how Schliemann changed the agenda. Yes, we could test the *Iliad* archaeologically—he had begun to do exactly that. It was eventually clear beyond doubt that at around the same prehistoric period, Mykenai and Troy were rich, powerful, civilized cities and that both had been destroyed violently. A new era had opened in the study of the two epics. There was demonstrably some historical truth in them. Once more they could be looked on as potential historical sources, and they are still regarded in this light today.

Yet they result from an oral tradition that must have extended at least four hundred years, and probably much longer, without any written support, because writing was unknown in Greece between 1200 and

800 B.C. The real challenge, if we are to evaluate the *Iliad* as history, is to distinguish traditional from imagined, historical from fictional, early from late.

THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE *ILIAD*

To face this challenge, we need to look beyond Mykenai and Troy to the other Greek and Aegean places and peoples named in the *Iliad*. Every name is a piece of historical information, indicating that this locality was known and worth naming at a certain date during the growth of the epic tradition and was retained in the story until the poet composed the *Iliad*. Can we obtain any consistent dating in this way for the historical information in the *Iliad*?

To begin to formulate an answer, we can focus on the Greek cities named in the Catalogue of Ships in book 2. This catalogue is presented as a list of the places of origin of the Greek contingents fighting at Troy in the last year of the war. However, any reader will soon see that the list actually has a different history—a history that turns out to be independent of the traditions from which the remainder of the *Iliad* was composed.

The catalogue evidently began simply as a list of Greek cities, which naturally went into hexameter verse because in an oral culture, versified lists are easier than prose lists to remember accurately. There was a vital tradition of versified lists and catalogues in early Greek literature, including Hesiod's *Theogony* and its sequel, the *Catalogue of Women*. The city list in the catalogue as we have it is incomplete. A few cities that were surely important are not there, and some regions of Greece are completely omitted, perhaps intentionally, for a reason unknown to us, or perhaps as a result of errors at some stage. The list has a geographical arrangement: a clockwise spiral around central and southern Greece; a counterclockwise spiral from Crete via Rhodes and Kos to Karpathos; a short counterclockwise spiral in part of northern Greece. This is why it is unlikely that the catalogue started out as a list of the contingents that sailed from Greece or that fought at Troy, because if it did, why would they be listed in geographical order of origin? The suggestion has been made that these were cities that would be visited by sacred ambassadors from a major shrine; such lists are known from later Greece.[6]

to countries in their sphere of influence. *Dardanoi* is the precise equivalent of *Drdny*, the Egyptian name for a contingent of enemy soldiers at Qadesh. Egyptians often used names of peoples to designate attackers and enemy states; they must have learned this particular name from Hittite sources. We may now guess—though it can be no more than a guess—that the inhabitants of Troy, whatever language they spoke, used an equivalent of *Ilias ge* for the whole state ruled from Ilion, an equivalent of *Troie* for their capital city and *Troias ge* for the neighboring district, and an equivalent of *Dardanoi* for a division of their troops, perhaps levied not from the city but from an adjacent territory.[20]

Now to the three collective names for the Greek warriors. The most familiar is *Achaioi*, which, as already noted, corresponds to the Hittite name *Ahhiyawa*. In classical Greek, *Achaia* was a region on the northern coast of the Peloponnese, one bypassed by the later invasion of the Dorians. The second name for the Greeks is *Danaoi*, explained mythologically as "the descendents of Danaos" and apparently corresponding to the name *Tnyw* found in Egyptian documents. Less common is *Argeioi*, which means literally "men of Argos"; *Argos* itself, the name of a city near Mykenai, is sometimes mentioned in the *Iliad* as if it were the center of Greece and stood for the whole country. Least common of all are *Hellas* and *Hellenes*, the now familiar names for Greece and its people. In the Catalogue of Ships, *Hellas* is a district in northern Greece; elsewhere in the *Iliad* it seems that Achilles' own warriors, the Myrmidones, come from this district. But by the time the *Iliad* was composed, *Hellas* was also familiar as a name for all of northern Greece. This is reflected in a phrase in the catalogue, *Panellenas kai Achaious*, "all the Greeks and Achaioi"—that is, all the northern and southern Greeks—and likewise in the Odyssean formula *kath' Hellada kai meson Argos*, "throughout Hellas and middle Argos"—that is, throughout northern and southern Greece.[21]

We may guess that *Achaioi* was the name used for themselves by the people of a Mycenaean Greek kingdom of southern Greece; the related country name, in the form *Ahhiyawa*, was adopted in Hittite documents, in which the names of countries rather than peoples are preferred when listing foreign states. *Danaoi* perhaps had a more inclusive sense, encompassing Greek-speakers in general. Whatever its precise definition, it was adopted in Egyptian records because it was normal in Egyptian to use names of peoples in such contexts.

SIX POSSIBLE INGREDIENTS OF THE TROJAN WAR LEGEND

But why does *Paris-Alexandros* have those two names? If the Hittite king did business with an *Alaksandu*, king of Wilusa, about a hundred years before the destruction of Troy VIIa, why do Greek legends make *Alexandros* not one of the ancestors of Priam but his son, destined never to be king of Troy? It isn't hard to find answers to these questions—similar inconsistencies and confusions are very common in royal genealogies preserved by oral tradition—but the answers are depressing to anyone who hopes to find proof that the Trojan War was fought in the way described and for the reasons stated in the *Iliad*. The double naming of Paris is a warning that the story of Troy, as it stands in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, has complicated origins.

A quick tour of two other epic traditions will show us the kind of thing that can happen. The medieval French epics (*chansons de geste*), written between about A.D. 1080 and 1400, are explicitly set in the court of Charlemagne, crowned in 800, and his immediate successor, Louis the Pious. It is recorded that the oral traditions were in existence by 840, yet in the form in which we know them, these poems often incorporate episodes set in Constantinople and Jerusalem, inspired by the Crusades and by the east-west marriage alliances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Epics and sagas in various languages of northern Europe—Anglo-Saxon, German, Icelandic, and medieval Latin—written between about 930 and 1300, deal with Ermanaric, king of the Ostrogoths; Attila, leader of the Huns; Theoderic, Gothic king of Italy; and their warriors. Ermanaric was powerful from 350 to 375; Attila ruled from 433 to 453, Theoderic from 493 to 526. In these narratives, which result from up to nine hundred years of development in oral tradition, the three heroes are treated as contemporaries.[22]

If oral narratives elsewhere combine historical characters of very different periods, then the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* may certainly do the same. If we could follow the strands of the *Iliad* story back to their beginnings, they might involve a prince of Troy named Alexandros and a seducer named Paris—not the same person, not necessarily in the same place or at the same date.

Here are some known historical events of which there might be traces in the *Iliad* and related traditions: (1) the adoption by Kukkunni, a former ruler of Wilusa, of Alaksandu, who thus became his successor: (2) the presence of Trojans, and possibly of their ruler Alaksandu, at the battle of Qadesh; (3) the Hittite attack on the Seha River land; (4) the fall of Troy VIIa and the Hittite sack of Wilusiya; (5) the earthquake that destroyed Troy VI; (6) the raids on Egypt by the "Sea Peoples."

1. First let's look at the odd family history of Paris, said in later sources to have been abandoned at birth by King Priam and his wife, Hekabe, owing to a prophecy that he would bring destruction. The baby was found and brought up by a herdsman and afterward recognized and accepted into the royal family. There are many such stories in Greek legend and fiction, and we have no reason to take this one more seriously than most of the others—except that Alaksandu, who was king of Wilusa just after 1300 B.C., is said in the treaty to be not the natural son but the adopted son of his predecessor, Kukkunni. In legal terms, therefore, both Alaksandu and Paris-Alexandros entered the royal family not at birth but in later life. This is surely no coincidence—the Greek legend of Paris-Alexandros incorporates a real tradition concerning Alaksandu.

2. Now let's consider the hint in the *Iliad* that Paris, on returning to Troy with Helen, made a very long detour via the coast of Syria:

> *Hekabe herself went down into the sweet-smelling storeroom*
> *Where her robes were kept, intricate work by women*
> *Of Sidon, whom godlike Alexandros himself*
> *Had brought from Sidon, sailing the wide sea,*
> *On the voyage on which he had brought home noble Helen.*
> (*Iliad* 6.288–292)

These unexpected lines were a real puzzle to later commentators. If Paris and Helen were on the run, why did they not make immediately for the safety of the walls of Troy? And why did Paris have to bring the embroiderers home with him instead of just buying clothes for Helen? The story was flatly contradicted in other versions of the legend, including the lost epic *Kypria*, a narrative of the beginnings of the Trojan War that was composed somewhat later than the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The

Kypria stated that Paris and Helen reached Troy three days after leaving Sparta, which means that they could not have taken a detour via Sidon. The historian Herodotos uses this conflict between the *Iliad* and the *Kypria* to demonstrate that the latter poem was not by Homer.[23]

There is obviously a chance that this odd detail in the *Iliad* is a real reminiscence of a similar journey made by Alaksandu of Wilusa, if he personally led the contingent of Drdny who fought alongside the Hittites at the battle of Qadesh in 1296. They had a leader, but the Egyptian source does not tell us his name. It is even possible, after the victory at Qadesh, that embroiderers from Sidon were among the booty allotted to Alaksandu.

3. Next we look at an odd episode at the beginning of the Trojan War. According to Greek legend, the first landfall of the Achaioi in Anatolia was *Teuthras pedion*, the lowlands of Teuthrania (this was the Greek name for the valley of the Kaikos River, now known as Bakir Çay). Led by Agamemnon, the Achaioi found themselves in conflict at once with a powerful enemy and were driven back to the sea in spite of the personal bravery of Achilles. The leader who opposed the landing at Teuthrania was Telephos. This story is not in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, and Telephos does not appear in the *Iliad* at all, but his son, Eurypylos, is mentioned in the *Odyssey* as having been leader, in alliance with the Trojans, of a contingent of troops from the people called *Keteioi*. After the repulse at *Teuthras pedion*, the Greeks returned, set out once more from Aulis in Boiotia, and this time encamped before the walls of Troy.[24]

This story might correspond to a real occurrence recorded very briefly in the annals of the Hittite king Tudhaliya I, around 1410 B.C. The king advanced westward to subdue a vassal, King Manapadatta of the Seha River land. The kingdom known by this name to the Hittites lay north of Arzawa. It centered on the valley of the Hermos (modern Gediz) and probably extended northward to include the Kaikos valley; at any rate, it bordered on the kingdom of Wilusa, or Troy. Its territory corresponds with that of the people called *Meiones* in the *Iliad*. The annals record that as Tudhaliya approached, "the king of Ahhiyawa withdrew," implying perhaps that the latter had been involved in some resistance movement but did not wish to risk a direct confrontation with the Hittites. In their classic exploration of Hittite geography, John Garstang and O. R. Gurney sug-

gested that the Seha River land included the Kaikos valley and noted the possible link between this occurrence and the Troy legend.[25]

The name of the troops whom Telephos's son led to Troy, *Keteioi*, was long ago conjecturally linked with the Hittites, known to the Egyptians as *Kheta*. This link has never been widely accepted, but it could be real. We do not as yet know what name the Mycenaean Greeks used to refer to the Hittite kingdom.

4. Now to the fall of Troy, sacked by the Achaioi after a ten-year war. Two quite separate events may stand in the background of this legend. The first is an archaeological landmark, the burning of Troy VIIa, dated to around 1180 B.C. The burning was the result of action by an enemy that used slingstones, but the archaeologists cannot yet say who the enemy was. The second event is one more incident from the annals of the eventful reign of Tudhaliya. After the intervention in the Seha River land, Arzawa revolted from Hittite domination, along with a long list of mostly unknown states. That revolt was suppressed. A more northerly polity, Assuwa, then opposed the Hittite monarchy in turn. *Wilusiya* (which must be substantially identical with Wilusa) was one of twenty-two "lands" included in Assuwa at this period, according to King Tudhaliya. He takes up the story:

> But when I turned back toward Hattuša, the following countries declared war against me: . . . the land of Kispuwa, the land of Unaliya, the land of Dura, the land of Halluwa, the land of Huwallusiya, the land of Karkisa, the land of Dunda, the land of Adadura, the land of Parista, the land of Warsiya, the land of Kuruppiya, the land of Alatra, the land of Mount Pahurina, the land of Pasuhalta, the land of Wilusiya, the land of Truisa. These countries with their fighting men assembled. They drew up their army facing me. I, Tudhaliya, brought up my forces at night. I surrounded the enemy army. The gods went before me. . . . I defeated the enemy army and entered every country that had sent an army to fight me. I stripped all the countries mentioned that had declared war against me. I brought to Hattuša the conquered people, the cattle, the sheep, and the equipment of the land. So when I had destroyed the land of Assuwa I came back home to Hattuša.[26]

The list is a curious one, because most of the names in it do not occur elsewhere in the Hittite records. Many cannot be identified; but alongside Wilusiya appears Truisa, which is certainly the Hittite equivalent of the name Troy. As noted above, Greek *Troias ge* corresponds directly to the Hittite term "land of Truisa" in this text.

Tudhaliya is evidently pleased with himself; his listing of Wilusiya and Truisa as two states, when we believe them to be one, would be pardonable exaggeration. The king's boast cannot be totally discounted. Ancient Near Eastern kings always recorded their successes and sometimes used them to paper over their failures (modern politicians do similar things), but Tudhaliya could hardly have made these assertions if he had not brought home at least some prisoners and sheep and oxen to sell in the markets of Hattuša.

Thus the annals of Tudhaliya claim that the city of Wilusiya and Truisa, that is, Troy, was conquered and stripped of its people and animals just before 1400 B.C. It is not difficult to believe that the Hittite sack of Troy contributed to the legend retold in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

5. In book 12 of the *Iliad* there is an unusual glimpse of the future. The Achaioi had built a wall around their camp on the plains of Troy. Immediately after the fall of the city, this wall was to be destroyed by the gods Apollo and Poseidon the Earthshaker:

> *When the city of Priam was destroyed in the tenth year,*
> *And the Argeioi went in their ships to their dear native land,*
> *Then Poseidon and Apollo devised a plan*
> *To overwhelm the wall, harnessing the force of rivers,*
> *All those that flow out to the sea from the mountains of Ida . . .*
> *Phoibos Apollo made all these rivers join at one mouth*
> *And for nine days hurled their waters at the wall, and Zeus rained*
> *Continuously, the sooner to wash the wall into the sea.*
> *The Earthshaker himself, his trident in his hands,*
> *Led them, and sent away in his waves all the foundations,*
> *Of logs and stones, over whose placing the Achaioi had groaned.*
> (*Iliad* 12.15–29)

The wall and its destruction might quite easily be fiction. They might, however, carry a reminiscence of a real natural disaster. If so,

although flooding is the chief destructive force mentioned in this passage, we have to remember that Poseidon is the god of earthquakes and consider the earthquake that, according to the archaeologists, demolished the city of Troy VI around 1250 B.C. The destruction was not total, but it was so serious that the city had to be largely rebuilt; moreover, some archaeologists believe that fire, and perhaps enemy action, contributed to the destruction.

Incidentally, later poets depict the gods helping to destroy Troy with flood and earthquake as the Greeks overrun the city. This idea is not to be found in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and as far as we know it is not derived from early Greek legends.[27]

6. Now to the sixth recorded event. About 1188 B.C., the Egyptian ruler Ramses III included in his official annals a report of a fairly unusual occurrence for Egypt—a threatened invasion that somehow arose from disturbances far to the north. This is a free translation of the crucial words of his report:

> Year Eight . . . Certain foreign peoples created a disturbance in their islands. All at once, states were overturned and wiped out in the fighting. Not one state was able to stand against their arms: Hatti, Kode, Carchemish . . . and Alasiya [Cyprus] fell before them at the same moment. They camped at a location in Amor [in Palestine or Syria]: they destroyed the people there, and the land was in chaos. They moved forward toward Egypt.[28]

This describes the beginnings, as seen from Egypt, of the great upheaval caused by the wandering bands usually described as the Sea Peoples. They attacked Egypt itself, but Egypt stood against them; Egyptian rule in Syria and Palestine was ended, however.

It is far from clear where the Sea Peoples came from and whether they had any aims beyond looting and destruction. It seems likely, however, that the Mycenaean Greeks took part in these adventures. The stories told in the *Odyssey* by Menelaos and Odysseus of their adventures in Egypt around the time of the Trojan War, adventures that are completely irrelevant to the plot, may be pure fantasy. But they may contain small nuggets of historical fact, in the shape of reminiscences, transmitted by oral tradition, of Greek participation in the Sea Peoples' raids on Egypt in the early twelfth century.

In the second volume of his commentary on the *Iliad*, Geoffrey Kirk considers whether there is any historical basis for the *Iliad* story. In preparation, he asks whether it matters. This is a good question. We do not look to the *Iliad* for a historical narrative; what the epic has to tell us is timeless, and remains valid whether or not there happens to be any link with real events of the past. But we still want to know how traditions such as those of the Trojan War come into existence.[29]

We should not be surprised by conflicts of dates or contradictions of names. It's interesting, but not disturbing, that the adoption of Prince Alaksandu is to be dated a century earlier than the destruction of Troy VIIa; nor will it worry us if datings of that kind are suddenly altered by revisions in archaeological benchmarks or in the identification of documents. Whatever the dates of events 1 to 6, however inadequate their connections with one another, people remembered them and singers told of them. There were many other such events, equally tenuously linked, not identified here and in some cases never to be identified. Transformed in hundreds of years of oral tradition, these incidents survived in the repertoire. Thus they were available for their final transmutation, by a truly great poet, into the story of the written *Iliad*.