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Short Communication

New Evidence for the Nordic Origin of the Homeric Poems

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Abstract

In the Introduction to this article, it was deemed appropriate to summarize some essential points of the hypothesis, published in a previous article, that the Homeric poems were inspired by events prior to the descent of the Achaeans into the Mediterranean, which immediately explains all the innumerable inconsistencies that had so far prevented scholars from attributing a precise historical dimension to Homer's world. According to this hypothesis, the oral sagas that gave rise to the Homeric poems came from northern Europe, where in the second millennium BC a splendid Bronze Age flourished and many Homeric places are still identifiable. These sagas were brought to Greece by the blond Achaeans, coming from the Baltic-Scandinavian area (where their ancestors had fought the Trojan War), who around 1600 BC founded the Mycenaean civilization and rebuilt their original world in the Mediterranean, transferring many geographical names from their lost Hyperborean homeland. After the Introduction, the article provides new evidence to support this hypothesis, starting with the localization in Northern Europe of some places mentioned by Homer. The infamous cape Malea, where several Achaean fleets returning from the Trojan War had serious trouble, can be identified with the present cape Sandhammaren in southern Sweden, still considered "a graveyard for ships"; the city of Gortyn, where Menelaus' fleet was wrecked, is described in the Odyssey with details that correspond impressively to the territory of the present village of Göhren on the German island of Rügen; the two Achaean cities of Tarphe and Thronium "about the streams of Boagrios" correspond to two Swedish villages, Torpa and Tranås, overlooking a lake (where moreover an ancient local legend about the origin of this lake might correspond to the meaning of the name of Boagrios); what has always been considered a stone used by Homeric heroes during battles was instead a lethal weapon little known in Greece but widely used in the Nordic world; the way in which Homeric heroes used war chariots, considered by scholars strange and alien to the ways of fighting of the Mediterranean peoples, corresponds to the way of fighting of the ancient Britons at the time of Caesar. Regarding Britain, the article also focuses on the "Mycenaean" traces found by archaeologists in the ancient culture of Wessex, dating back to a period before the beginning of the Mycenaean civilization in Greece. An allusion to these contacts is probably found in a passage of the Odyssey.

Keywords: Homer; Homeric poems; Iliad; Odyssey; Troy; Ithaca; Bronze Age

Introduction

In this article, which builds on the conclusions of a previous article [1] in which a new hypothesis has been proposed on the origins of the Homeric poems, we will provide further evidence to support the fact that the events they tell are set in Northern Europe, before the descent of the Achaeans into the Mediterranean. To this end we have used a methodology that consists in a new critical examination of not only classical sources but also other literary con texts, which places due emphasis on some aspects to which sector studies had not yet paid the right attention.

First of all, it is worth briefly summarizing some salient aspects of the aforementioned article. The real setting of the Iliad and Odyssey can be identified not as the Mediterranean Sea, where it proves to be undermined by countless inconsistencies, geographical and otherwise— such as a climate that is cold and inclement

even during the sailing season, battles that drag on through the night, blond heroes wrapped in heavy woolen cloaks, rivers that reverse their course, islands and peoples that cannot be found, and even the fact that the poet describes the mountainous regions of the Peloponnese as if they were flat—but rather in northern Europe. The oral sagas that originated the two poems came from the Baltic regions, where the Bronze Age flourished in the 2nd millennium BC and where many Homeric places, such as Troy and Ithaca, can still be identified today. The blond seafarers who founded the Mycenaean civilization in the Aegean in the 16th century BC brought these tales from Scandinavia to Greece sometime after the end of the Holocene Climatic Optimum (HCO). These peoples then rebuilt their original world—where the Trojan War and many other mythological events had taken place—farther south in Mediterranean waters, transferring significant names of cities, regions, islands, rivers and so on from north to south. Through many generations, they preserved the memory of the heroic age and the feats performed by their ancestors in their lost Hyperborean homeland, until the writing down of this ancient oral tradition, which occurred following the introduction of alphabetic writing in Greece (around the 8th century BC), led to the writing of the two poems in their current form.

Indeed, there are countless geographical inconsistencies between the poet's extremely accurate descriptions of places whose names are familiar to us, such as Ithaca and Troy, and the geographical reality of the corresponding Mediterranean locations. For example, Homeric Ithaca, which the poet talks about in great detail, is the westernmost island of an archipelago where there are three main islands: Dulichium (i.e. "the Long" in Greek, never found in the Mediterranean), Same and Zacynthus [2]. However, the Greek Ithaca is not at all the westernmost island in its archipelago, nor is there any trace of Dulichium among the Greek islands. Not only that: as John Chadwich states referring to Greek Ithaca, when Homer "describes Ithaca, his geography is so erroneous that some scholars have tried to prove that it is not modern Ithaca at all" [3]. Instead, there is a group of Danish islands in the Baltic Sea, i.e., the South-Fyn Archipelago, which is the only one in the world that fits with Homer's descriptions. It includes three main islands: Langeland, the "Long Island", that is Dulichium, Aerø, that fits Homeric Same, and Tåsinge, ancient Zacynthus. The last island in the archipelago, located westwards, "facing the night" [4], is the real Ithaca of Odysseus, which is now known as Lyø: it closely coincides with the indications of the poet, not only in its position, but also in all topographical and morphological features.

The same can be said for Homeric Troy, whose traditional location on the Hisarlik hill in Anatolia is disputed: "Not a single scrap links the destruction of Troy VII with Mycenaean Greece, or with an invasion from any other source. Nor does anything known from the archaeology of Greece and Asia Minor or from the Linear B tablets fit with the Homeric tale of a great coalition sailing against Troy from Greece (…) nor is a Trojan War" [5]. Besides, Dieter Hertel (who worked on the site of Hisarlik), claims that both Wilusa and the city found by Schliemann have nothing to do with the Homeric Troy: "Troy/Ilium was not Wilusa (…) As to the supposed relationship between Wilusas's King Alaksandus and Paris Alexandrus, Priam's son, "King Alaksandus's father was not called Priam but Kukunni" [6] (moreover, Paris never was king of Troy). It should also be considered that "thanks a series of core samples taken in 1977 we now know that in prehistoric times the plain was covered by an extensive arm of the sea, which reached up to Hisarlik in the Troy VI period (...) and the findings of Schliemann, Virchow and Burnouf, based as they were on inadequate samples, were in error" [7]. Besides, Homer mentions the point "where the Simoïs river and the Scamander mix their waters" [8], which is impossible in the area of Hisarlik, where the two rivers don't mix at all.

Homeric Troy, on the other hand, was located near the "broad Hellespont" [9], which is very different from the Strait of the Dardanelles. Saxo Grammaticus, a Danish historian (c. 1150 - c. 1220), often mentions a people named "Hellespontins", sworn enemy of the Danes, and a "Hellespont" [10] in the Eastern Baltic area. Also considering that the Northern counterpart of the narrow Mediterranean Hellespont is the broad Gulf of Finland, it is noteworthy that in an area facing the Gulf of Finland, west of Helsinki, there are many place-names that startlingly recall those of the Iliad, and in particular the Trojan Allies: Askainen, Reso, Karjaa, Nästi, Lyökki, Tenala, Kiila, Kiikoinen, and many others. Furthermore, the place-names Tanttala and Sipilä (the mythical King Tantalus, whose kingdom lay near the area of Troy, was buried on a mountain named Sipylus) indicate that this theme touches not only on Homer's geography, but also the entire world of Greek mythology.

Right in the centre of this region, about 60 miles west of Helsinki, there is a village, Toija, whose characteristics correspond exactly to those handed down to us by Homer, with a mountainous area behind it (Ida, which never appears as a single mountain in the Iliad) and a plain extending to the coast; in the adjacent village of Kisko, less than one mile from Toija there is a hilly territory—where ancient Troy probably stood—overlooking the valley (now partly flooded) with the two rivers mentioned by Homer.

This area reveals significant traces of the Bronze Age: near Toija there are many Bronze Age burial mounds, like the ones described in the Iliad [11]. Furthermore, the old copper mines of Orijärvi, 8 km east of Toija, shed light on the probable origin of Priam's wealth, often mentioned in the Iliad.

The northern collocation of Troy immediately explains the enormous anomaly of the interminable battle, recounted in the eight central books of the Iliad, which lasted uninterruptedly for two days and one night. The fact that the darkness did not put a stop to the fighting is incomprehensible in the Mediterranean world, but it immediately clarified in the Baltic setting. Indeed, what allows Patroclus' fresh troops to carry on fighting through to the following day without a break, is the faint night light that is typical at high latitudes around the summer solstice. This interpretation—corroborated by the overflowing of the River Scamander during the

following battle, since in those regions this phenomenon occurs in May or June owing to the spring thaw (which occurs later than in the Mediterranean regions)—allows us to easily reconstruct the various phases of the entire battle in an absolutely coherent and realistic way, immediately dispelling any perplexity.

It should be noted that the enormous inconsistencies found by scholars in in the geographical characteristics of Ithaca and Troy—which are immediately smoothed out in the Baltic world—are only two of the many examples that can be given; among the most striking is also the fact that the poet speaks of the regions of the Peloponnese, which are notoriously very mountainous, as if they were flat. As a consequence, the historical reliability of the Homeric tales has been undermined; therefore, also given the difficulty of placing them in a precise period of Greek history, they have been downgraded from the level of history to that of myth.

To all this must be added the Nordic characteristics of Homer's world, which are found not only in the climate, but also in the clothes, the food, the customs and also in the fact that it appears much more archaic than the Mycenaean one in Greece. Moreover, the migration of the Mycenaeans from the north is further corroborated by their physical features, which we may discern from a variety of sources: "The Indo-Europeans who settled in Greece must have been tall and blond, just like Homer's strong, blond heroes" [12].

The idea that the descendants of the Homeric Achaeans came from the Baltic area to Greece, where they started the Mycenaean civilization, is supported by the correlations between the Scandinavian Bronze Age and the coeval Aegean cultures. A noteworthy example is the huge stone tumulus, called Bredarör—which measures 75 m in diameter—standing near Kivik in southern Sweden. It contains a sarcophagus built of square stone slabs engraved with stylized figures of human beings, animals, a two-wheeled wagon with two horses and the charioteer, and other objects such as axes and wheels. Archaeologists recognize the similarity between these figures and the Bronze Age finds in both Aegean and Near East areas. Klavs Randsborg analyzed the figures on the slabs and compared [13] them to the pictures on a sarcophagus from Hagia Triada in Crete and the stelae of the shaft graves from Mycenae.

More generally speaking, recent studies state that the art of the Nordic Bronze Age is very similar to that of Mycenaean Greece. These similarities are striking to the point that the Nordic Bronze Age has been defined as "a specific and selective Nordic variety of Mycenaean high culture that was not adopted in the intermediate region" [14].

At this point it is also important to recall what the English philosopher Bertrand Russell states upon the origin of the Mycenaeans: "There are traces which most probably confirm that they were Greek-speaking conquerors, and that at least the aristocracy was made up of blond Nordic invaders who brought the Greek language with them" [15]. From all this we can deduce that the Trojan War took place before those "blond Nordic invaders" settled in Greece, and not after their arrival as has been believed until now (in short, it occurred much earlier than the ancient Greeks believed). The Homeric poems, reread in this light, not only regain a historical dimension, but also represent the only literary testimony that remains to us of an ancient lost world, disappeared for millennia in the mists of prehistory.

Cape Malea and the city of Gortyn

Now we will try to locate Cape Malea and Gortyn—a Cretan city on a cliff where Menelaus' ships were wrecked after encountering a violent storm off Cape Malea—starting from the reconstruction of Homer's world that we had already developed in our previous works [16] using the indications of the Catalogue of Ships of the Iliad. The latter lists the twenty-nine Achaean fleets that took part in the Trojan War, together with the names of their captains and lieutenants, the number of ships in each contingent and their places of origin, as well as the settlements in the respective regions. In this way it was possible to reconstruct precisely and coherently the entire world of Homer, i.e. the hitherto unknown world of the Nordic Bronze Age, following step by step the coasts of the Baltic Sea in a counterclockwise direction, while in the Mediterranean this operation involves many geographical absurdities. A clear example is the contiguity that the Catalogue attributes to Aetolia and Crete, two geographical entities that in the Baltic context were effectively two bordering regions, while in the Mediterranean world they are very distant.

In particular, Homeric Crete, described in the Odyssey as a "vast land" with "ninety cities" [17], corresponds to the Pomeranian region in southern Baltic, which extends from the German coast, with the facing island of Rügen, to the Polish coast. Incidentally, this helps to explain why in the rich pictorial productions of the Minoan civilization, which flourished in Aegean Crete, "there is nothing (…) which seems to illustrate any type of known legend" [18]—despite the importance of Crete in the Homeric poems and in Greek mythology—and ships are very little represented. Moreover, whereas the Odyssey speaks of many populations on Cretan territory and emphasizes their bellicose nature, the surprising absence of defensive structures in the Minoan settlements of the Aegean Crete supports the idea that the latter has nothing to do with the Homeric one.

But now it's time to pinpoint the exact location of the infamous Cape Malea, where the fleets of Odysseus, Agamemnon and Menelaus encountered storms and raging seas on their return from Troy. It should be noted that Homer never calls Malea "cape" ("akron" in Greek). Instead, the poet refers to Malea as "the steep height of the Maleans" [19] (but here we will continue to call it Malea). This leads us to look on the map of the Baltic Sea for a height along the low southern coast of Scania (the region at the southern tip of Scandinavia), which lies on the return route from Troy of the ships of Odysseus, Agamemnon and Menelaus, the Achaean heroes who rounded Malea, with much trouble, on their way home after the Trojan War.

Indeed, sailing west along the flat southern coast of Scania, at Kåseberga, about 10 kilometres southeast of Ystad, one passes a "steep height". But this is not just any hill: here, on the top of this height, is Ales Stenar ("Stones of Ales"), the most important megalithic site in Scandinavia, which some scholars compare to Stonehenge [20]. Here are 59 large boulders, weighing up to 1.8 tonnes each, which outline the shape of a 67 m long and 19 m wide ship on the ground, with the stones at each end considerably larger than the others. Evidently, an unknown ancient people wanted to give this place a special importance.

As for the extreme danger of Malea for ships, which Homer repeatedly stresses, we note that adjacent to Ales Stenar there is Cape Sandhammaren: "The coastal area outside of Sandhammaren is renowned for the sand reefs, or tombolos, which are constantly shifting and difficult to judge. Together with strong currents, these reefs have caused so many shipwrecks that the area offshore is known as a graveyard for ships" [21]; "Sandhammaren with its dunes is Swedens biggest graveyard for shipwrecks. The dangerous sandbar and flowing water are why thousands of sunken ships lay here at the bottom outside Sandhammaren" [22]. All this, in addition to confirming that this most likely is the Homeric Malea, tells us that in the last millennia nothing has changed in the geography of those places and in its impact with human activities.

Homeric Malea was probably a very important landmark for Nordic Bronze Age sailors, so much so that its name was transferred to Greek geography when the Baltic Achaeans settled in Greece and founded the Mycenaean civilization. In fact, Swedish Sandhammaren and Greek Malea correspond geographically, because they are the southeastern extremities of Scandinavia and the Balkan Peninsula respectively.

On the other hand, the location of Cape Malea in the Greek world reveals another absurdity of Homeric geography in Greece, because Greek Malea, where according to the Odyssey Agamemnon encountered a storm [23] on his return journey to Mycenae after the Trojan War, is located much further south than the route from Troy to Mycenae (scholars have always wondered why Agamemnon's fleet was there). This is as absurd as saying that a ship sailing from Boston to Newport is passing in front of New York! Once again, we note that the Aegean world does not correspond at all to what Homer describes, while in the Baltic everything always fits perfectly.

But now let's see what happened to Menelaus when, returning from Troy after the war, his ships passed in front of Malea: "When, by sailing the wine-dark sea with his hollow ships, he reached the steep height of the Maleans in a hurry, then Zeus the Thunderer prepared him an evil way, he roused the blow of howling winds and huge waves as high as mountains, then he divided the ships and pushed some toward Crete where the Cydonians live about the streams of Iardanus" [24]. As for the river Iardanus (Iardanos), "where the Cydonians live", maybe modern-day Cedynia on the river Oder could be last memory of the Cydonians and the river Iardanus (never found, of course, in Aegean Crete). Cedynia is an ancient city in Poland, whose name appears in the year 972 as Cidini [25].

Menelaus' misadventure continues in the following lines: "There is a smooth, steep cliff on the sea at the end of Gortyn, in the misty sea where the South Wind pushes big waves against the headland on the left toward Phaistos, and a little rock stands against the billows. Thither came his ships and the men narrowly escaped death, but the waves smashed the ships against the cliff" [26].

As for Gortyn, a Cretan city "protected by walls" [27] where there is that "smooth, steep cliff on the sea", it is today's village of Göhren, near Cape Nordperd, the easternmost point of the island of Rügen. Nordperd is a nearly one-mile-long headland, which ends in a roughly 20-metre-high cliff at its tip. In addition to the analogy of the names (Gortyn-Göhren) and the location near that cliff which was fatal to Menelaus' ships, this identification is confirmed beyond any doubt by the "little rock" that "stands against the billows", that is the boulder called the Buskam now, located ca. 300 metres offshore, in front of the North Beach ("Nordstrand") of Göhren.

Furthermore, the cavities in the rock indicate that the Buskam—the largest glacial erratic boulder in North Germany—was used as a ritual place in prehistory [28]. Not only that: next to the church of Göhren the Speckbusch Barrow stands, that dates to the Bronze Age [29]. In short, Homer sent us an extraordinary "picture postcard" from Gortyn that comes to us directly from European prehistory.

Moreover, we have only just read here that "the South Wind pushes big waves towards the promontory on the left, towards Phaistos" [30]. Indeed, if from Göhren we look at the rock of Buskam and the sea to the north, on our left we can see the northeast coast of Rügen, where the town of Sassnitz can be seen on the horizon, over there on the left. Here there are important remains dating from the Neolithic and the Bronze Age. These are many large tombs and stone burial mounds, which, therefore, could refer to the Cretan city of Phaistos.

Before continuing, let us reconstruct Menelaus' route: in front of Cape Sandhammaren, at the southern tip of Sweden (Homeric Malea) he was surprised by a storm which pushed him southwards, where his ships were shipwrecked on the cliff of Cape Nordperd near Göhren (Gortyn), located at the eastern tip of the island of Rügen. Further south is the mouth of the river Oder (the Homeric Iardanus), on whose right bank, in the Polish hinterland, is the city of Cedynia, whose name recalls the Cydonians.

As for Rügen, it has been inhabited since the Stone Age, and all over the island there are numerous archaeological finds, such as megalithic tombs and altar stones [31]. During the Bronze Age Rügen was a part of the "vast land" of Crete. Incidentally, the name of Cape Arkona, at the northern end of Rügen, probably still retains the imprint of the Greek language (or rather, the archaic Greek spoken by the Homeric Achaeans). Indeed, in Greek "akron" means "cape, promontory", and the adverb "akrōs" indicates a place "at the

extreme limit, at the highest point". Over the centuries, "akrōs" has become "Arkona" by metathesis, a very common linguistic phenomenon.

One only has to look at the Mediterranean island of Crete to realise that there both the positions of Gortyn and Phaistos have nothing to do with the precise indications of Homer, whereas the extraordinary correspondence of these passages of the Odyssey with the area of the mouth of the river Oder, the island of Rügen, the cliff of Nordperd near Göhren and the rock of Buskam represent another overwhelming proof of the northern location of the Homeric Crete and the whole Homeric world.

Tarphe and Thronium "about the streams of Boagrios"

In the Catalogue of Ships, in fourth place, the Iliad mentions the cities of the Locrians "who live opposite sacred Euboea" [32]. Following the scansion of the Catalogue, which starts from central Sweden and goes down towards the south, in this stretch the Swedish coast overlooks the island of Öland, whose characteristic elongated shape, parallel to the coast, makes it the perfect counterpart of Greek Euboea. It is very significant that two towns of the Locrians mentioned here, "Tarphe and Thronium about the streams of Boagrios" [33], correspond to the present-day Torpa and Tranås, both in the Swedish hinterland on Lake Sommen, a few kilometers from each other, in the Småland region which faces Öland, the Homeric Euboea.

This alone, read in the general framework already outlined, would be enough to attest to the original Nordic dimension of Tarphe and Thronium. But one should also note that Lake Sommen is linked to a Swedish legend which has all the appearance of being very ancient. The lake was created by a cow named Urkon or Sommakoa, who in a fit of rage dug it with her hooves, then fled from the cave where the magician Somme had locked her up [34] (called Urkon's Cave in Swedish) and killed King Frode [35]. Now the cow rests asleep in her cave on a cowhide: every Christmas she eats a hair, but when she has finished eating them all she will come out of the cave and there will be the end of the world. Here we note the kinship between the names of Lake Sommen, the cow called Sommakoa and the magician Somme, who neutralized the terrible "wild cow" by locking her in the cave: by considering that the Swedish term sömn means "sleep" ("somnium" in Latin), which is well suited to the legend, it follows that Sommakoa (ko in Swedish means "cow") could be the "sleeping cow" in her cave, waiting to wake up at the end of time (but also the other name of the cow, Urkon, maybe could be connected, by metathesis, to agrios, "wild", an adjective that well characterizes her behaviour). Here, therefore, we probably find the memory of a very ancient myth.

So, we have found the Swedish cities of Torpa and Tranås, corresponding to those two Locrian cities, Tarphe and Thronium "about the streams of Boagrios", in a territory where a legend circulates that seems to have a very ancient origin. But could this be connected to the Greek (or pre-Greek) world? In this regard, we add the fact, which will have to be studied further by glottologists, that "Bo-agrios" could mean "wild cow" or "wild ox" in Greek. In fact, "bo" can be traced back to "boûs" ("cow" or "ox") while "agrios" means "wild". Therefore, the meaning of the Homeric name would correspond to the Swedish legend. If this relationship were to be glottologically plausible, it would constitute a further clue to add to what has already emerged.

In short, the amazing geographic correlation of the Homeric Tarphe and Thronium "about the streams of Boagrios" with the Swedish localities of Torpa and Tranås on Lake Sommen (and what's more in Småland, the region of the Locrians before Öland-Euboea) might be further strengthened by the hypothesized relationship between the meaning of the Greek term Boagrios and the ancient legend of the "wild cow" of Lake Sommen. All this represents a further confirmation of the original Nordic dimension of the two poems, also considering that, still in the region of the Locrians, the Homeric towns of "Calliarus (...) and lovely Augeiae" [36] correspond to present-day Hallarum and Augerum, respectively.

1. Archaic stone axes

We will now see that, in the relationship between Homer's world and Northern Europe, the correspondences with the Nordic world are not limited to geography. Indeed, all of this is also supported by what we will now see about a lethal weapon, called chermadion—whose true nature has been misunderstood until now—that the Homeric heroes frequently used. It is also used by Agamemnon, who "tested ranks of soldiers with his spear, sword, and big chermadions" [37]. In our opinion, its name has been the source of a misunderstanding that, when explained, could also result in an interesting subject for archaeology.

The term "chermadion" is normally translated as "stone, flint", but it is not an ordinary stone, which in Greek is typically referred to by names such as "petrē, laas, lithos". Whatever the chermadion was, it certainly was a lethal weapon. While Epeigeus tried to seize the corpse of Sarpedon, whom Patroclus has just killed, "Hector hit him on the head with a "chermadion" which split his skull in two inside his strong helmet; he fell prone" [38]. Likewise, Diomedes, who lacked his spear when Aeneas attacked him, picked up a chermadion and hit Aeneas on the hip, breaking the acetabulum and cutting two tendons: "The jagged stone ripped the skin" [39]. This "jagged stone" here obviously refers to the sharp end of the weapon. We find a similar description in an earlier passage: "[Diores Amarincides] was hit on the heel by a chermadion (...) The cruel stone shattered the two tendons and bones" [40].

As is manifest in these lines, the chermadions usually wound by cutting: Patroclus hit Sthenelaus "on the neck with a chermadion and cut his tendons" [41]. There is further evidence that the chermadion is not merely a rock or a stone, but rather an actual weapon. With reference to Telamonian Ajax, the Iliad states that he could not yield to any man "vulnerable with bronze or big chermadions" [42]. The chermadions, therefore, were not of bronze.

The key to understand what kind of weapons were the "chermadions" is found in another passage, where Hector "picked up a chermadion and headed straight for Teucer, intending to hit him. Teucer took a deadly arrow from his quiver and knocked it on the bowstring. While he was stretching, Hector struck him on his shoulder with the jagged stone in a very vulnerable point, where the clavicle divides the neck from the chest, and cut the bowstring [43].

After noting that the poet of the Iliad, unlike the poet of the Odyssey, is very precise in describing the human body—think, for example, of the penultimate line of verse of this passage: "where the clavicle divides the neck from the chest"—and, in particular, every kind of wound (he surely experienced the battlefields, and we have good reason to suspect that he was a military doctor), let's return to the chermadion. This lethal weapon, with its cutting stone that could be thrown or used in close combat and is even able to cut a bowstring, in our opinion may be reasonably identified with an instrument commonly found in many archaic cultures: the stone ax. This interpretation perfectly fits the passages where chermadions are mentioned.

We find chermadions also in the hands of the Laestrygonians in the Odyssey, who threw them at Odysseus' companions "from the cliffs" [44]. There is a strange Western-like effect in this scene, which evokes the Redskins positioned with their tomahawks on the edge of the canyon. Homer does indeed describe the Laestrygonians as primitive and savage, a bit like John Ford's Redskins, and the stone axe fits well with this kind of cliché. Other instances in which Homer mentions the chermadion confirm this: when Achilles, armed with a sword, attacked Aeneas, the latter "picked up a chermadion" [45] to defend himself, each of them having already thrown his spear. Here Aeneas needs a weapon for quick defense, and picks up a chermadion that probably someone had lost on the battlefield.

Furthermore, the chermadions were also "used as props of the ships" [46]. This, on the one hand, corroborates the relationship between axes and chermadions and, on the other, links them to the rupestrian engravings found in Scandinavia, where the coupling ship-axe is very common. In the Iliad we can find another passage linked with axes and seafaring: axes are the prize in an archery competition in which the target is a pigeon fastened to the mast of a ship [47]. The relationship between ships and axes could have had a concrete and practical origin: in an emergency, ancient seafarers had to become woodcutters and carpenters in order to repair their ships or build rafts, as Odysseus does on the island of Ogygia. Moreover, in the Middle Ages, the largest ships had a "master shipwright" among their crew. In short, it is likely that axes were very important tools for sailors since prehistoric times, just as they are today for firefighters.

Apart from the engravings, the identification of the Homeric chermadions with stone axes perfectly fits with Scandinavian archaeology, for axes are very often found in burial sites dating back to the epoch that preceded the time of the Achaean arrival in the Mediterranean. Actually, the "Battle Axe culture" flourished in the coastal areas of the south of the Scandinavian Peninsula and southwest Finland in the 3rd millennium BC. Let an archaeologist talk about this subject: "Although this is a questioned opinion, axes are generally considered a creation of the North (...) The first axes were of stone; later they were made by working native copper. There the tradition continued for several millennia, while it did not exist in the Near East, where the axes are rare and the relative technology seems to be absent" [48].

That's why the ancient Greeks could not understand what a chermadion was. On the other hand, this all fits wonderfully well with the archaism of the Homeric world with regard to the Mycenaean one. Today these ancient stone axes are known simply as stones or, to be precise, "thunderstones". The Danish farmers who found them in their fields called them "Zebedeus's stones" or similar names [49].

So, we can presume that while the leading warriors used chariots and bronze weapons, the privates—whom the poet of the Iliad refers to as the "anonymous rank": "I could neither mention them nor remember their name" [50]—were lightly armed and fought on foot using the rather primitive chermadions, which were commonly made to resemble their more precious metal counterparts. In the Homeric world, the precious bronze weapons and armor—the one Diomedes used was worth "nine oxen" [51]—were handed down from father to son. For example, the weapons that Achilles gave to Patroclus for his night counterattack during the two-day battle were handed down to him by his father [52], while the less wealthy warriors were buried with their humble stone axes, heritage of a previous epoch.

All of this corroborates the archaism of the Homeric world, very distant and much earlier than the ancient Greeks, and explains why they misunderstood the real meaning of the term "chermadion". This archaic weapon was alien to their refined civilization.

The strange use of the war chariots in the Iliad

It has always seemed strange that Homeric heroes used their chariots only to move around the battlefield, leaving them aside and fighting on foot during duels. The Trojan Asius, for example, used to fight "on foot in front of his puffing horses, which the charioteer kept all the time behind him" [53]. On this topic a scholar states: "Homer knows the war chariot, typical of the Mycenaean warrior, however he is unaware of its use, and the heroes use it only to move, but they fight on foot" [54]. Indeed, "There are the famous chariots, employed as taxis not only to transport the heroes to the battle but also to move them about within the mêlée (...) The fact of chariot-fighting had survived in the tradition and nothing else" [55].

In short, it would seem that Homer, who is always very accurate in describing the duels on foot of his heroes, knew very little about the use of war chariots. But is this really the case? Let us examine how Julius Caesar describes the way of fighting with chariots in ancient Britain (where he landed in the year 55 BC): "Their mode of

fighting with their chariots is this: firstly, they drive about in all directions and throw their weapons and generally break the ranks of the enemy with the very dread of their horses and the noise of their wheels; and when they have worked themselves in between the troops on horse, leap from their chariots and engage on foot. The charioteers in the meantime withdraw some little distance from the battle, and so place themselves with the chariots that, if their masters are overpowered by the number of the enemy, they may have a ready retreat to their own troops. Thus, they display in battle the mobility of cavalry, together with the firmness of infantry" [56]. Not only that: shortly afterwards Caesar, who presumably knew something about military tactics, pauses to illustrate how effective this tactic of the Britons was [57].

On this subject we also have the testimony of Diodorus Siculus, who is a contemporary of Caesar: "It is said that Brittany [island] is inhabited by indigenous tribes who conform to their old way of life. They use chariots in battle, like the ancient Greek heroes in the Trojan War" [58]. The chariot fighting narrated by the Iliad, therefore, is not at all a nonsense resulting from the supposed ignorance of the poet, who has proved himself very reliable on a number of subjects. It is instead an extraordinary testimony to the way of chariot fighting during the Nordic Bronze Age, which persisted among the Britons until the time of Caesar (probably because of the insularity of Britain).

This is a further confirmation that the Homeric world is completely foreign to the traditional Mediterranean environment of the Iliad, where "No one has ever fought like Homer's heroes do. These are brought into battle by chariot and then descend from it to face the enemy. Everything we know about the fighting chariot in the eastern Mediterranean protests against this view of things" [59]. In short, the incompatibility between the Iliad and the Mediterranean setting (of which we could give many other examples) certifies the validity of the Nordic hypothesis, with which all the absurdities found in more than two thousand years of studies and discussions on the Homeric poems find an immediate explanation.

Mycenaean traces in prehistoric Britain

The convergence in chariot fighting that we have found between the ancient Britons and the Homeric heroes, in addition to having given us further evidence of the original Nordic dimension of the latter, now suggests to us the opportunity—also in light of what has emerged on the presence of the Achaeans in northern Europe—to dwell on the question of the remarkable Mycenaean traces found by archaeologists in the Wessex culture, that is the predominant prehistoric culture of central and southern Britain during the early Bronze Age. Indeed, there is irrefutable archaeological evidence of the presence of the ancestors of the Mycenaeans in Britain before the beginning of the Mycenaean civilization in Greece. A sign of this is a graffito of a Mycenaean dagger engraved on a monolith [60] found by archaeologists in 1953 in the megalithic complex of Stonehenge, in southern England. Other remains found in the same area reveal this Mycenaean presence: "On Salisbury Plain, a chief's grave contained an inlaid sceptre paralleled only (…) to one of the early shaft graves of Mycenae" [61].

Not only that: radiocarbon datings show that Stonehenge and the Wessex culture in England go back to the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC, thus before the Mycenaean settlement in Greek territory around 1600 BC. As Colin Renfrew states, "At Rillaton in Cornwall a burial had been found accompanied by a very beautiful little cup of gold, often compared with Mycenaean examples (...) The chief early bronze age culture for Czechoslovakia and Germany, the Únětice culture, displayed a number of forms resembling Aegean ones (…) Calibration sets all these dates between 2400 and 1900 BC, and it seems likely that the Únětice culture had begun well before 2000 BC. These dates fit very well into the emerging pattern for the chronology of central Europe (...) They do suggest, however, that the Wessex culture, which has many evident links with late Únětice, may also be much earlier than had been thought" [62].

Those contacts are related to the fact that Cornwall is one of the very few northern regions which produces tin, i.e., the metal used in alloying with copper to produce bronze, which in Homer's world was essential for making weapons. It is very likely, therefore, that the rich production of the Nordic Bronze Age depended very much on the exploitation of tin mines in southwest England and on the bronze trade across the North Sea between the British Isles and the Baltic-Scandinavian area. Incidentally, the tin of the Nebra Ski Disc came from Cornwall; it is a bronze disk 30 cm (12 in) in diameter inlaid with gold symbols—which are very similar to those depicted on the central layer of Achilles' shield [63] in the Iliad—and has been dated by archaeologists to about 1800-1600 BC and attributed to the Únětice culture (it was found buried, together with two bronze swords identical to Mycenaean swords, on the Mittelberg hill near Nebra in northern Germany).

But are there any traces of contacts between the Achaeans and the British world of that time in the Homeric poems? Let us read a passage from the Odyssey where a seafaring trader—the Taphian ruler Mentes, who has just landed in Ithaca—says: "I am sailing on the wine-dark sea for foreign populations, to Temese for bronze; I am carrying shining iron" [64]. By keeping in mind what we only just said about tin in Cornwall, it makes sense to look near there for Temese, the only center for bronze trade mentioned by Homer. It then becomes easy to see the correspondence between Temese and the river Thames—that was called Tamesis in Latin and Tamis, Tamisa, Tamensim by the ancient English chroniclers [65]—whose source is not far from Cornwall, while its estuary faces the North Sea and Scandinavia.

So, by following Homer's indications, it seems likely that the Baltic Achaeans would have sailed overseas to "foreign populations" in Temese-Thames to stock up on bronze produced with tin from Cornwall in exchange for iron, perhaps of Swedish origin (the north of Sweden is very rich in iron). This would have taken them on a sea route that would naturally have passed by the South Fyn

Islands, quite close to where the Baltic Sea meets the North Sea, thus explaining Mentes' stop at Lyø-Ithaca on his way to Temese. Actually, in the Homeric world, usually iron was used mainly for agricultural purposes [66], while the weapons were made of bronze (with some exceptions such as Areithous' iron mace and Pandarus' arrow point). Therefore, the components of bronze, namely copper and tin, were strategic metals at that time.

At this point, also remembering the wanderings of Odysseus, one can ask whether long sea voyages were possible in that remote era. Confirmation is given to us by the Nebra Sky Disk, found in Germany, which we spoke about a little while ago. Recent metallographic analyses have shown that the tin [67] and part of the gold [68] with which it was made came from Cornwall.

Completing the picture are the remains of a Bronze Age wooden bridge or pier dating back to 1500 BC recently discovered in London, just west of Vauxhall Bridge on the south side of the Thames, evidence of a major settlement a thousand years earlier than scholars had previously supposed.

All of this squares with the Mycenaean traces found in Southern England, that are older than the beginning of the Mycenaean civilization in Greece.

Conclusion

In this article, after an introductory overview of the main arguments that support the Nordic origin of the Homeric poems, we have reviewed several new pieces of evidence that confirm this hypothesis. We started with the story of the shipwreck of Menelaus, returning from the Trojan War, on a cliff near Gortyn, a Homeric city identifiable with the modern German village of Göhren, where the data on his troubled route from Malea to the site of the shipwreck fit like a glove with the geography of the Baltic (to the point of even finding the large rock, expressly mentioned by Homer, in front of Göhren beach). Equally significant is the correspondence between the names of the two Homeric cities of Tarphe and Thronium "about the streams of Boagrios", and the two Swedish villages of Torpa and Tranås overlooking Lake Sommen. Furthermore, a local legend about the origin of the latter could perhaps be reflected in the meaning of the Homeric name of Boagrios.

Likewise, the discovery that the chermadion used by the fighters of the Iliad, until now considered "stones"—although they were capable of inflicting very serious cutting wounds, and even of cutting the string of a bow, to the point that Homer himself speaks of them as if they were real weapons—are in reality stone axes, as widespread in prehistoric Nordic Europe as they were little known in the Mediterranean area (which has created a thousand-year-old misunderstanding about the meaning of their name), further strengthens the hypothesis that the Homeric world originated in Northern Europe and that the Trojan War preceded the movement of the Achaeans into the Mediterranean. No less important are the characteristics of the use of war chariots in the Homeric world, which seem alien to the fighting methods of the Mediterranean peoples, but which correspond instead to that of the ancient Britons, that Julius Caesar has handed down to us. This is confirmed by several Mycenaean archaeological traces in prehistoric Britain, which predate the beginning of the Mycenaean civilization in Greece. On the other hand, the Odyssey seems to make a precise allusion to commercial contacts by sea with Britain.

At this point, while in the Mediterranean context "Homer does not belong to the realm of history" [69] and the Trojan War "is a timeless event floating in a timeless world" that "must be evicted from the history of the Greek Bronze Age" [70], after this change of scenery to the North of Europe the events told by the Iliad acquire a reliability that until now seemed unthinkable in the traditional localization, to the point that it becomes possible to attribute a real historical dimension to them.

This new interpretative key to the Homeric poems can, therefore, open new, fascinating horizons on the origin and prehistory of the Western civilization, whose beginning can be backdated by at least a thousand years, shedding light on the Nordic peoples of the Early Bronze Age and illuminating their life, culture, religion and history, which have been almost totally unknown until now, given the lack of Nordic literature dating back to that period.

Although our research now ends here, it remains open and awaits further investigations by specialists in various fields interested in this theory.

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