

CLAS 55H: Three Greek and Roman Epics. Background for second class.

Homeric composition

- oral poetry
- metrical formula
- repetition of whole passages at times
- dactylic hexameter (dactyl = long short short; hex-a-meter = six feet)

— u / — u / — u / — u / — u / — u

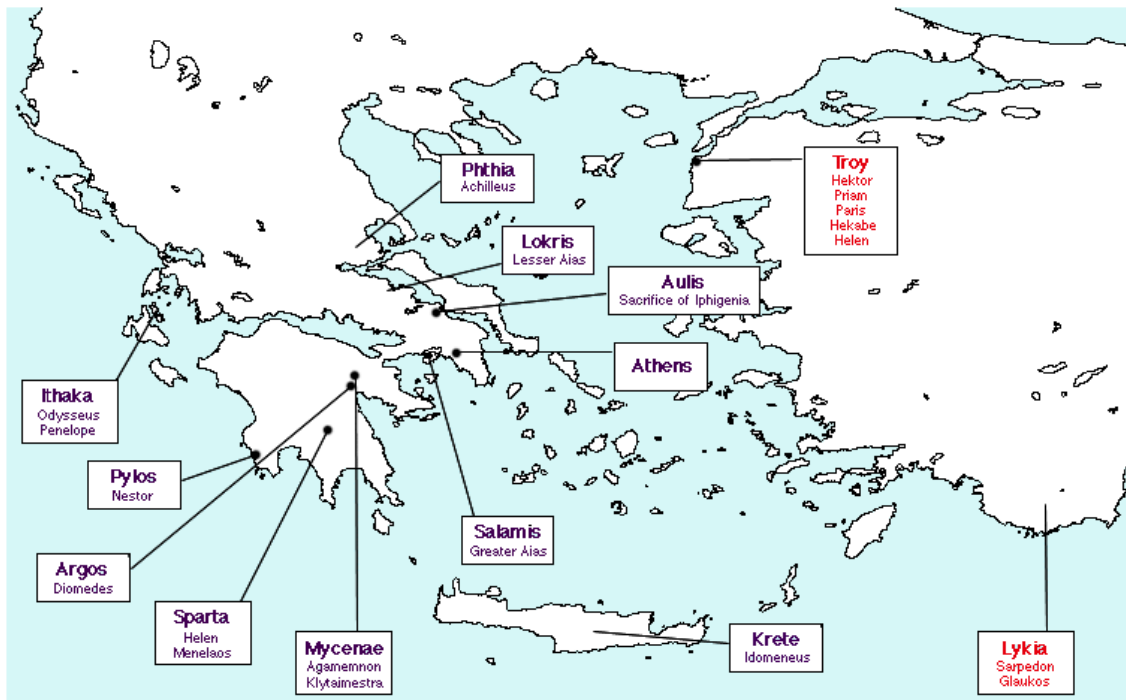
- formulaic
- rhapsode later

Map: <https://www.reed.edu/humanities/110Tech/Iliad.html#Homeric%20Geography>.

See also maps in Lattimore *Iliad* pp. 70-72

1. Homeric Geography.

We are not sure where all of the places mentioned in the **Iliad** and **Odyssey** were located, but later tradition and modern archaeological excavations have helped us gain knowledge of the sites. Here is a map listing some of the more important sites and a few of the heroes and heroines who were associated with them. Names of Greek sites and people are in purple, Trojan in red.



Map developed by Daphne Kleps.

To look up other sites mentioned in the **Iliad**, you can try searching the [atlas](#) provided by the Perseus Project at Tufts University.

There is also an excellent Glossary in the back of the Lattimore translation of the **Iliad** which includes place names.

Historical background.

- Greek Bronze Age = roughly 2000-1000
- Schliemann and Troy
- Evans and Crete
- Map for *Iliad* from Reed College: Troy, Crete, Ionia, Chios; Lattimore maps p.70
- two big sites in the Bronze Age: island of Crete and mainland Greece
- Minoan Crete (King Minos, father of the Minotaur): Cnossos, (Prof. Haggis digs elsewhere in Crete; Murphey 304: artefacts from Cyprus)
- Minoan Society: no fortifications; society collapses ca. 1450, Cnossos 75 years later --eruption of island of Thera?
- mainland: Mycenaean Age, Mycenae city of Agamemnon
 - Helladic (mainland) culture thrives 16th-12th centuries; palaces with megaron (great hall), fortifications
 - tablets Linear B= Greek, evidence for palace activity in commerce as in Crete
- problems in late 13th cent; “invasion of Dorians”?
- “Dark Ages” 11th-9th cent
- So: real age of kings and palaces, then Dark Ages, then *Iliad* and *Od.* get written down
- no level of Schliemann’s Troy quite fits our story, VI and VII almost do

Homeric Society

- *Iliad* (one “I”) offers “aristocratic, idealized view of the 8th century BC” (not really of 12th). Aristocratic = controlled by a few men at the top (“aristos” = best)
- Porter : poems depict unstable societies, war as a way of life
- focus, esp. in *Iliad*, on life of male elite warrior—not much concern either with common man (some in *Od.*), or with women (some in *Il.*, more in the *Od.*)
- concern for personal glory, Greeks not fighting for your “country” (Trojans fight for country/survival)
- Porter on Shame Culture (as opposed to our Guilt Culture): extreme concern for one’s public standing, not much sense of private conscience or hidden personal values

Some key terms, both in Porter and Martin

- *arete* (ar-e-TE), ἀρετή : excellence
- *kleos* (KLE-os), κλέος : fame, glory, fame that survives
- *time*, (ti-MAY, two syllables, no silent letters in Greek or Latin), τιμή : honor, concrete acknowledgement of *arete*
- (guest-friend(ship) (esp. *Odyssey*): more on this later) (*Odyssey* = one “d” , 2x “s”)

Another map on next page:

