

ACHILLES AND THE TROJAN WAR Reality or Myth?

For 10 years, since I began my odyssey to locate the homeland and capital city of Achilles, Phthia, I have encountered two types of people: (1) Those who believe Achilles was a real part of Greek history, and (2) Others who believe he is a mythical figure. To the ancient Greeks, to me, and many others there is no question that Achilles and the Trojan War were real events. Even though Heinrich Schliemann discovered Troy in 1871 and later Mycenae many scholars still believe it is myth. The problem today is, at the time of the Trojan War, 1250BC, the Greeks (whom Homer called Achaians) had no written literary language. There were no documents of any kind to authenticate historical events only a language called Linear A and B which was for recordkeeping. The Greek alphabet was developed about 400 years later.

Like the Egyptians the Hittites, whose kingdom was centered east of modern Ankara, did have a written language. In 1905, 10,000 clay tablets (their library) were discovered. Those tablets, as deciphered particularly in the last ten years, have provided written evidence of warfare in the Aegean during the late Bronze Age the time of the Trojan War. Many of the tablets were written in Akadian the language of diplomacy of that period.

A book by Joachim Latacz, Troy and Homer (2004), provides interesting details. These tablets identify a king called "Achijawa" very similar to "Achaioi" found in Homer's Iliad. This name first appeared in the Hittite texts in 1400BC. Latacz quotes Professor Starke of Tubingen University in Germany as saying, "*-in the reign of (the Hittite king) Hattusili III (1265-1240BC), he (Achijawa) repeatedly stirred up unrest on the entire western coast of Asia Minor.—The Hittite Great King consistently addresses the king of Achijawa formally using the style 'my brother.'—For the Hittite crown – Achijawa was a political and military force to be reckoned with.*" (p123). For the first time scholars have written evidence of events occurring during the period of the Trojan War and it associates Achijawa with the Greeks.

At a press conference in August 2003 in Troy, Professor Starke presented details of the first letter to be sent from the Greeks to the Hittites. He said, "*The sender of this letter was a king of Achijawa, and the recipient was the Great King of the Hittites.—Linguistic features of the text confirm the writer spoke Greek --.*" (p243).

Latacz stated, "*Ilios or Wilios (Troy) is not the product of the Greek imagination, but a real historical site. This site is located at the very place in which Homer shows it.*" (p90). He further cites from Edward Vissers' 1997 book, Catalogue of Ships, "*Nowhere in Homer can real errors – be established.*" (p223). British Hellenist Denys Page even earlier stated, "*The Achaians did fight the Trojans and Agamemnon was the name of the Mycenae's king. Achilles is certainly not less historical.*" (pp169-70, 305).

The tumulus of Achilles is today located outside Troy overlooking the Aegean where his Myrmidon troops laid him to rest 3250 years ago. Thirty feet high, this sacred site is just south of the old town of Achilleion established by Aeolian Greeks some generations after the war.

As each year passes new evidence is found to authenticate Achilles and the Trojan War. With sound planning, further research, archaeological permits, and financial support our "Achilles Project" to excavate the homeland, Phthia, and palace sites of Achilles and his father Peleus will be realized and establish their kingdom as a historical region for the people.

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