

**Lecture 8:
Warfare in Homeric Greece**



HIST 332

Spring 2012

After LBA Collapse, then what?

- following period known as the “Dark Age”
- no writing, very little archaeological evidence
- long oral tradition poem very influential in understanding this period:
- Homer
 - *Iliad*
 - *Odyssey*

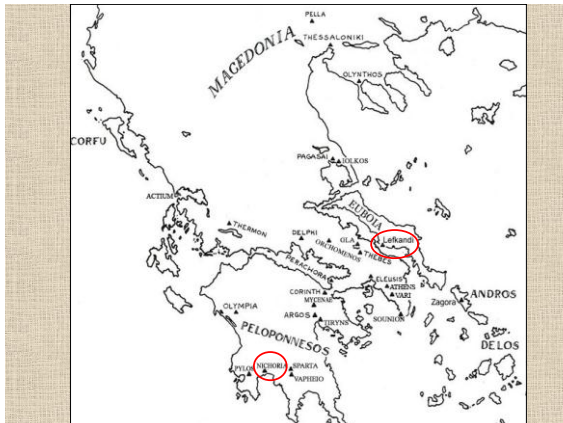


Bust of “Homer” Vatican Museum, Rome



Dark Age Greece (1150-800)

- Monumental stone construction stops
 - world of organized state armies, kings, officials, and redistributive palaces disappear
 - Linear B disappears
- vital trade links broken
 - pottery becomes cruder, less artistic, functional
- towns abandoned
 - fewer villages in protective topography
- 80 % drop in population
- Change in diet
 - from cereals to pasture animals
- First colonists leave Greece
- **New writing system develops**



Lefkandi: Tomba

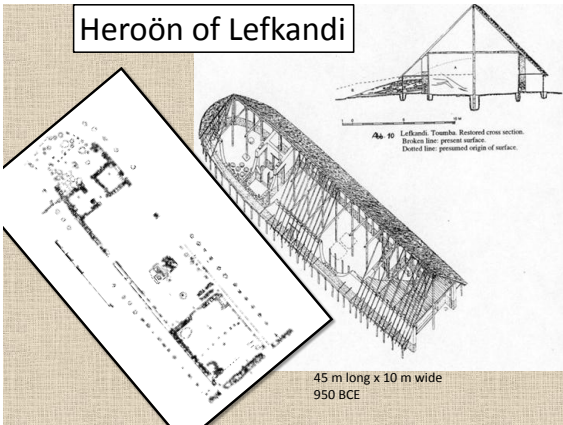


- On the Island of Euboea
- The entire structure, along with its artifacts, consistently dates to around 950-900 B.C.E.
- Heroön: grave-shrine of a “hero”
- human burial, cremation, sword and horse
- emblematic of “heroic” society, war-like adventurist spirit, obsession with honor and prestige; fear of opposite: shame, loss of face.

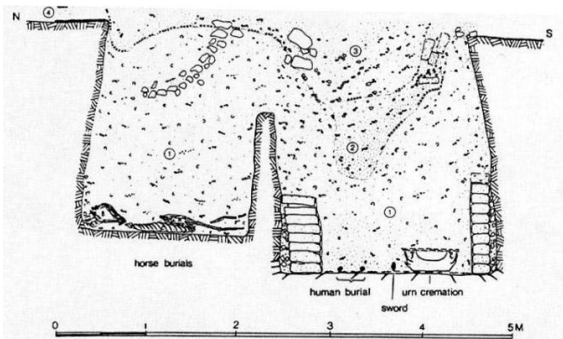


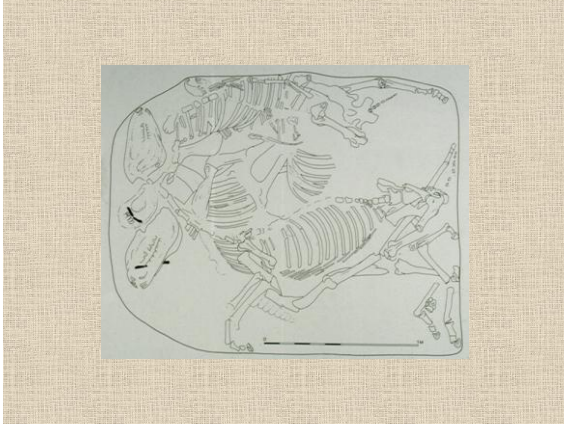
302 burials from Middle Geometric (1000-950)
both inhumation and urn cremation

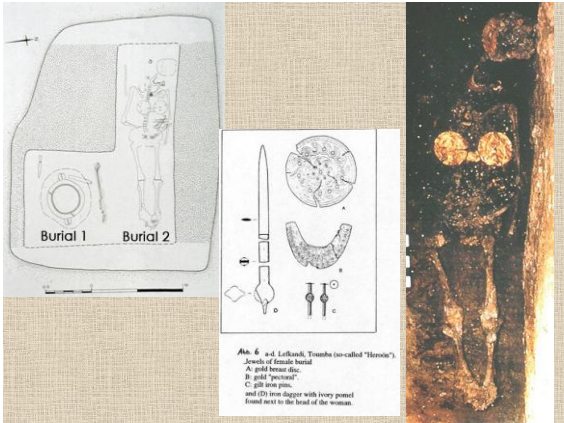
Heroön of Lefkandi



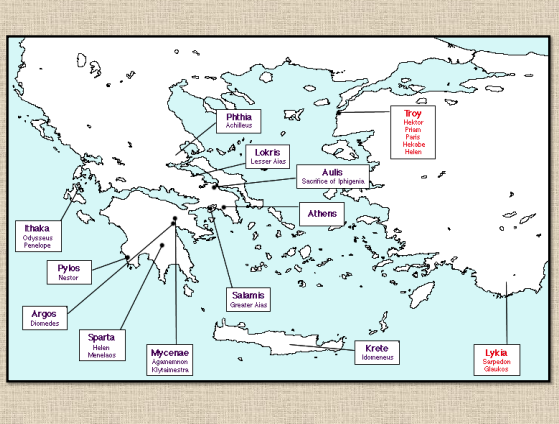
45 m long x 10 m wide
950 BCE











Homer's Iliad

- Collection of oral poems ascribed to Homer
- 15,000 lines covering a few weeks at the end of a war that had lasted for 10 years
 - <http://www.wiredforbooks.org/mp3/Iliad.mp3>
 - Describes a world of prolonged warfare
 - Best (and earliest) written source of Dark Age Greek combat styles
 - Standard canon of Western Civ. literature
 - codified in Hellenistic Period under Ptolemies at the Museon of Alexandria
 - Poems made a significant impact on Western Civilization
 - Gallipoli

Emphasis placed on the individual "hero"



- The poem deals with important social topics:
- honor
 - social reciprocity
 - kingship
 - militarism
 - valor
- awareness of the individual

Troy (2004)

- Achilles vs. Hector
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hf4loxEUmHM&feature=related>

Honor in Homer 1.149-157

“You insatiable creature, quite shameless.
How can any Achaean obey you willingly—
join a raiding party or keep fighting
with full force against an enemy?
I didn’t come to battle over here
because of Trojans. I have no fight with them.
They never stole my bulls or horses
or razed my crops in fertile Phthia,
where heroes grow. Many shady mountains
and the roaring sea stand there between us.

1.157-164

But you, great shameless man, we came with you,
to please you, to win honour from the Trojans—
for you, dog face, and for Menelaus.
You don’t consider this, don’t think at all.
You threaten now to confiscate the prize
I worked so hard for, gift from Achaea’s sons.
When we Achaeans loot some well-built Trojan
town,
my prizes never match the ones you get.

1.165-171

The major share of war's fury rests on me.
 But when we hand around the battle spoils,
 you get much larger trophies. Worn out in war,
 I reach my ships with something fine but
 small. So I'll return home now to Phthia.
 It's far better to sail back in my curved ships.
 I don't fancy staying here unvalued,
 to pile up riches, treasures just for you."

Troy (2004)

- *Manomachus* (man-on-man combat)
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buPRU02TofU>

10.303-20 (Hector's Speech)

"Is there someone who'll undertake for me
 an exploit, who'll do it for a worthy gift?
 I guarantee he'll get a fine reward.
 I'll give a chariot and two strong-necked horses,
 the finest ones there are by those fast ships
 of the Achaeans, to any man who dares,
who's fit to seize the glory for himself,
 by approaching close to those swift ships,
 to find out whether they're being guarded,
 as before, or whether those men, beaten
 at our hands, plan among themselves to flee,
 and no longer wish to keep alert at night,
 exhausted by their desperate efforts."

6.46-50

A Trojans begs to spare his life

“Take me alive, son of Atreus—you’ll get good ransom. My father is a wealthy man, owns lots of things—bronze, silver, well-worked iron. So he’ll give you a splendid ransom, if he learns I’m by Achaean ships, alive.”

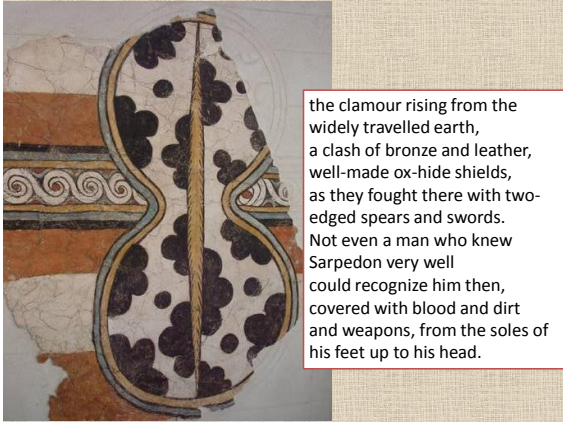
Arms and Armor in the *Iliad*

- donning metal corselet (chest), grieves (shins)
- Boar’s tusk helmet
- Chariot is of particular interest:
 - mentioned in the *Iliad*, but used only as a taxi to get a hero to battle
 - They jump out and offer to fight mano-a-mano



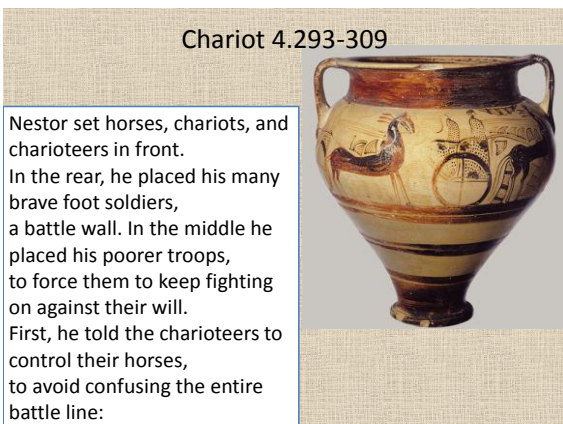
10.261-5:
Boar’s Tusk Helmet

On his head Odysseus set a hide cap, on the inside skilfully reinforced with leather thongs. Outside, wild boars’ white teeth were placed here and there, strategically and well. In between these layers was a piece of felt.



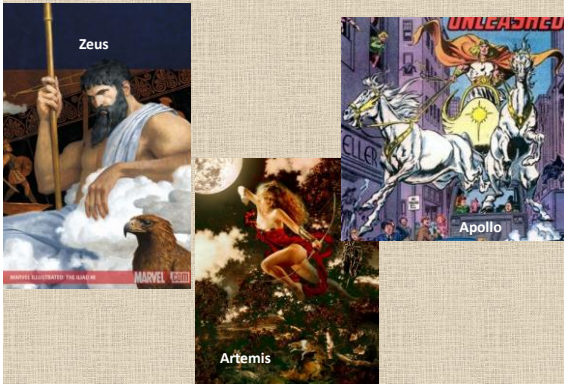
the clamour rising from the widely travelled earth, a clash of bronze and leather, well-made ox-hide shields, as they fought there with two-edged spears and swords. Not even a man who knew Sarpedon very well could recognize him then, covered with blood and dirt and weapons, from the soles of his feet up to his head.





Nestor set horses, chariots, and charioteers in front. In the rear, he placed his many brave foot soldiers, a battle wall. In the middle he placed his poorer troops, to force them to keep fighting on against their will. First, he told the charioteers to control their horses, to avoid confusing the entire battle line:

Divine Intervention plays a role





Final Analysis: Utility of Homer

- Homer blends Bronze Age and Dark Age weapons, armor and tactics
 - chariot
- Greeks and Trojans do not fight as a unit as much as heroes recording their conquests
 - Greater emphasis on individualism and honor in battle more than a corporate unit
- Interference of the gods on everyone
 - democratization of religion
