

Carpenter, Rhys, Folk Tale, Fiction and Saga in the Homeric Epics. U. of Calif, 1946

p. 27 " . . . it has become entirely feasible for us to check on Homeric culture and descriptive material detail and prove that the epic poets knew next to nothing about the civilization amid which they set their scenes."

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1. . . the Iliad ascribes to Troy temples which house cult images of the gods, and presumably imagines the Achaeans Greeks to have possessed similar structures: we are convinced that there were no temples, and think it most probable that there were no life-sized cult statues, in Helladic times.

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2. The Iliad seems to hold that the Achaeans could neither read nor write, being without means of communicating through written messages. Its warriors make only marks as symbols . . . Only in the Bellerophon story is there allusion to a written message; and here the reference is so veiled and cryptic as to suggest that, while it was necessary to the story, it was felt by the poet to be anachronistic and out of tradition. We on the other hand are convinced that the Mycenaean culture was literate, since we have dug up tablets and other objects of clay inscribed with its writing.

3. Homer believed that the Achaeans warriors normally wore suits of bronze armor, consisting of crested helmet, breastplate, and leggings, much like the accouterment of the classical hoplite: we are convinced that they did not.

4. Homer is silent about inlaid designs in gold and silver for sword and dagger blades; yet in describing the new and wonderful armor of Achilles he had such a perfect opportunity for introducing these Mycenaean marvels that his failure to avail himself thereof must persuade us that he knew nothing of them.

5. Under Minoan influence, Mycenaean female costume was elaborate, bizarre, sensational, while the male costume was at least distinctive: the experts qualified in such matters find that Homer knows nothing of such unclassical peculiarities, but deals exclusively in early classical Greek apparel. His brooches and hair-dress are equally un-Mycenaean. Nor does he ever mention finger rings and engraved seal stones, by which the Mycenaean set unusual store.

6. We know that the Helladic palaces were brilliant with human figures and decorative scenes painted in bright colors on their walls: Homer has never even heard of wall painting, else he would not so utterly have omitted it from his more ambitious architectural descriptions. Neither does he betray any familiarity with the beautiful craft of glazing terra cotta.

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7. His ideas of burial are at variance with the Mycenaean; and he never refers to the great vaulted stone tombs, which are the prime achievement of the Mycenaean builders.

8. As for the palaces in which his chieftains dwell, the more he goes into detail (as for Odysseus' house in Ithaca) the more apparent it becomes that their imagined plan depends, like that of the classical house, on courtyard, colonnaded vestibule, and inner room, with the women's quarters in an upper story, and shows none of the features of the intricately laid-out structures which the Helladic excavators have uncovered, with their dog-leg corridors around complex room blocks, their light wells and clerestories and broad winding staircases and heavily defended casemates. Only the bathroom, so characteristically Minoan-Mycenaean, might seem to ring true; but alas, the Homeric text really says nothing of bathrooms, but only takes its heroes to the "well-polished tub"!