

Arms and Armour, Frank H. Stubbings

The Homeric tradition rather than the historical intentions of the poet, has resulted in the epic picture of the heroic warrior preserving some details which belong to the Mycenaean period alone, and which might even have seemed obscure or odd to a Greek of the classical age. The force of the tradition has occasionally produced anachronisms: some details of military equipment in Homer may actually belong to a period anterior to that of the Trojan War. (p. 504)

GREAVES

It had been assumed that "greaves" must be made of metal and that metal greaves were unknown in Mycenaean times, and so all references to greaves in Homer must therefore be "intrusions" from a period after the introduction of hoplite armour early in the seventh century. But the word has in itself no metallic connotation. (p. 505) The Homeric text, moreover does not normally imply that the warriors' greaves were of metal.

Achilles greaves were of fine tin -- white metal tin.

Bronze greaves of Mycenaean date are extremely rare (p. 506)

Cuirass

It has in the past been argued that all Homeric mention of cuirass are "late" or "intrusive." Argument rested on false premise that the word means "breastplate", tacitly assumed to be of metal and that metal cuirasses were unknown in Greece before the development of hoplite arms and tactics. The word for "cuirass" (like the word for "greaves") has no inherent metallic connotations. (p. 506) Was of leather.

Recently it has been proved, by its identification on the Pylos tablets, that "cuirass" is at least as old as the 12th century.

A linen cuirass was something unusual in the heroic scene as known to tradition (p. 507)

Some form of cuirass actually was worn in Late Mycenaean times. (p. 508)

Shield

There are Homeric references to shields which can be explained only in terms of the early Mycenaean body-shield. (p. 511)

It would be rash to assume that shields of only one shape or material were in use among the Greeks who fought at Troy . . . There is consequently, as Miss Lorimer says, 'little hope that by examining the epic we should be able to discriminate between traditional matter incorporated by the poet and original descriptions of the warfare in his own day. Many formulae may be ancient; they would remain as applicable as on the day when they were first coined.' (p. 512)

The Helmet

Only one out of the four words for "helmet" in Homer has so far been found in the Mycenaean Greek of the Pylos and Knossos tablets. (p. 514)

. . . reference to archaeological evidence now available at least shows that in other respects the helmets of the epics do not present any characteristics which were unknown in Mycenaean Greece. (p. 515)

Helmets of bronze, once thought to belong only to historic times, are now known definitely to have existed in the Mycenaean period . . . p. 515