

CLASSICS@: Issue 3

The Homerizon: Conceptual Interrogations in Homeric Studies

Tumuli of Achilles

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Achilles died at Troy and was buried there, ancient myth and poetry agree. After his corpse was burned on a pyre, a great tomb, or *tumulus*, was heaped up over his bones. But the tumulus of Achilles is not just a mythological motif; it has also been regarded as a real piece of topography in the landscape of the Troad. At times in antiquity rituals were performed at what was considered to be the tomb, in cult worship of the hero. And many famous visitors, such as Alexander the Great, visited the burial place of Achilles to pay their respects. Over the past few centuries, a number of modern visitors have also sought out the tomb of Achilles, as have, more recently, archaeologists—though they often disagreed about which burial mound was the tomb of Achilles. This paper will explore the intersections between myth, ritual, politics, and archaeology in reference to the burial site of Achilles. The *tumulus* of Achilles is not just a poetic device or a cult center or an archaeological site; it must be considered from many perspectives. And it will become apparent that the *tumulus* of Achilles is curiously mobile, since it has been impossible to decide upon a single, "real" tumulus of Achilles, whether in a mythological, religious, or archaeological sense. The *tumulus* of Achilles is a fluid conceptual locus that had numerous functions as it was manipulated by different media, audiences, and time periods.

Those who have been interested in the tomb of Achilles have been inspired by various motivations. Local inhabitants would have had a different perspective on a *tumulus* of Achilles than outsiders inspired by the hero's panHellenic fame. The burial place of a Greek hero in an eastern setting could also be significant for East/West conceptualizations. Some approached the tomb of Achilles as a site for ritual, some as a physical connection to the hero's mythopoetic fame, some as a stage for propagandistic display; many have been motivated by some combination of the above. More recently archaeological work at different *tumuli* identified as belonging to Achilles has raised issues that are still with us in the post-Schliemann world. What is the relationship between myth and historical reality? Should a relationship be established? What is the significance of Troad topography for a Homerist?

Mytho-poetic Tumuli

The *Iliad* does not narrate the death of Achilles, but it certainly looks forward to it. The early death of Achilles at Troy is assumed by the hero and his mother from the beginning of the poem, and though Achilles plays with the notion of a return home without death, he grimly accepts his fate after the death of Patroklos, and his death at Troy is foretold in several prophecies. In *Iliad* XXIII the shade of Patroklos appears to Achilles and tells him that he wishes their bones to be buried together, in a golden urn provided by Thetis:

άλλο δέ τοι ἐρέω καὶ ἐφήσομαι αἴ κε πίθηαι·

μὴ ἐμὰ σῶν ἀπάνευθε τιθήμεναι ὀστέ' Ἀχιλλεῦ,

άλλ' όμοῦ ὡς ἐτράφημεν ἐν ὑμετέροισι δόμοισιν,

εὖτέ με τυτθὸν ἐόντα Μενοίτιος ἐξ Ἐπόεντος

ἤγαγεν ὑμέτερόνδ' ἀνδροκτασίης ὕπο λυγρῆς,

ήματι τῷ ὅτε παῖδα κατέκτανον Ἀμφιδάμαντος

νήπιος οὐκ ἐθέλων ἀμφ' ἀστραγάλοισι χολωθείς·

ἔνθά με δεξάμενος ἐν δώμασιν ἱππότα Πηλεὺς

ἔτραφέ τ' ἐνδυκέως καὶ σὸν θεράποντ' ὀνόμηνεν.

ώς δὲ καὶ ὀστέα νῶϊν ὁμὴ σορὸς ἀμφικαλύπτοι

χρύσεος ἀμφιφορεύς, τόν τοι πόρε πότνια μήτηρ.

Another thing I will say to you and request, if you will grant it; don't place my bones apart from yours, Achilles, but together, just as we were brought up together in your home, when Menoitios brought me to you as a child from Opoeis because of a grievous slaying, on that day I killed the son of Amphidamas, being childish, not purposefully, in anger over dice. The horseman Peleus, receiving me in his household, raised me kindly and named me your attendant; therefore also may a single urn, the two-handled golden amphora which your mother provided you, cover the bones for the two of us.¹

Soon after, when Achilles arranges the burial of Patroklos, he instructs his fellow Greeks to recover the bones of Patroklos, and build a smallish tomb to be enlarged after his death:

καὶ τὰ μὲν ἐν χρυσέῃ φιάλῃ καὶ δίπλακι δημῷ

¹ *Iliad* XXIII 82–92. On the authenticity of the *Iliad*'s reference to a golden urn, and the variant to these lines cited by Aeschines, see Dué 2001.

θείομεν, εἰς ὅ κεν αὐτὸς ἐγὼν Ἄϊδι κεύθωμαι. τύμβον δ' οὐ μάλα πολλὸν ἐγὼ πονέεσθαι ἄνωγα, ἀλλ' ἐπιεικέα τοῖον· ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ τὸν Ἀχαιοὶ εὐρύν θ' ὑψηλόν τε τιθήμεναι, οἴ κεν ἐμεῖο δεύτεροι ἐν νήεσσι πολυκλήïσι λίπησθε. ὡς ἔφαθ', οἳ δ' ἐπίθοντο ποδώκεϊ Πηλεΐωνι. πρῶτον μὲν κατὰ πυρκαϊὴν σβέσαν αἴθοπι οἴνῳ ὅσσον ἐπὶ φλὸξ ἦλθε, βαθεῖα δὲ κάππεσε τέφρη· κλαίοντες δ' ἑτάροιο ἐνηέος ὀστέα λευκὰ ἄλλεγον ἐς χρυσέην φιάλην καὶ δίπλακα δημόν, ἐν κλισίησι δὲ θέντες ἑανῷ λιτὶ κάλυψαν· τορνώσαντο δὲ σῆμα θεμείλιά τε προβάλοντο ἀμφὶ πυρήν· εἶθαρ δὲ χυτὴν ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἔχευαν, χεύαντες δὲ τὸ σῆμα πάλιν κίον.

"Let us place the bones in a golden container, in two layers of fat, until I myself am hidden in Hades. And a tomb, not very big, but such as is sufficient, I bid you to construct. Afterwards, you Achaeans who surviving me are left at the ships with many row-locks, build it both broad and high." Thus he spoke and they obeyed the son of Peleus. First they quenched the funeral pyre with red wine as far as the flame covered. And thick ashes fell. In mourning they gathered the whitened bones of their loved comrade into a golden container in two layers of fat; they then covered the urn with a linen cloth and placed it in the chamber. They marked off the mound, made a foundation for it about the pyre, and immediately heaped on it piled-up earth. Having heaped up a mound they went back.²

Though the *Iliad* ends before the death of Achilles, at the end of the *Odyssey* the shade of Agamemnon regales the shade of Achilles with an account of Achilles' death and burial. After the Greeks burned the corpse of Achilles at a magnificent funeral attended by Thetis and her fellow Nereids, the bones of Patroklos and Achilles are put together in the golden urn of Thetis, and a great mound is constructed over their remains:

ήῶθεν δή τοι λέγομεν λεύκ' ὀστέ', Ἀχιλλεῦ,

² *Iliad* XXIII 243–257. On the particulars of the burial and *tumulus* of Patroklos, see Petropoulou 1988 (whose argument is reflected in my translation).

οἴνῷ ἐν ἀκρήτῷ καὶ ἀλείφατι· δῶκε δὲ μήτηρ χρύσεον ἀμφιφορῆα· Διωνύσοιο δὲ δῶρον φάσκ' ἔμεναι, ἔργον δὲ περικλυτοῦ Ἡφαίστοιο. ἐν τῷ τοι κεῖται λεύκ' ὀστέα, φαίδιμ' Ἀχιλλεῦ, μίγδα δὲ Πατρόκλοιο Μενοιτιάδαο θανόντος, χωρὶς δ' Ἀντιλόχοιο, τὸν ἔξοχα τῖες ἁπάντων τῶν ἄλλων ἑτάρων, μετὰ Πάτροκλόν γε θανόντα. ἀμφ' αὐτοῖσι δ' ἔπειτα μέγαν καὶ ἀμύμονα τύμβον χεύαμεν Ἀργείων ἱερὸς στρατὸς αἰχμητάων ἀκτῆ ἔπι προὐχούσῃ, ἐπὶ πλατεῖ Ἑλλησπόντῳ, ὥς κεν τηλεφανὴς ἐκ ποντόφιν ἀνδράσιν εἴη τοῖς οῦ νῦν γεγάασι καὶ οῦ μετόπισθεν ἔσονται.

In the morning we gathered your white bones, Achilles, in unmixed wine and unguents. Your mother provided a golden amphora, and said that it was the gift of Dionysus, and the work of famed Hephaestus. In this lie your white bones, glorious Achilles, and mingled with them the bones of the dead Patroklos, son of Menoitios, and apart those of Antilochos. You honored him above all the rest of your comrades after the dead Patroklos. And over them we, the divine army of Argive spearmen, heaped up a great and noble tomb on a projecting headland by the broad Hellespont. Thus it could be seen from far from the sea both by men that now are and that shall be born hereafter.³

In the course of the *Iliad* several prominent burial mounds are mentioned. Some are associated with ancestors of the Trojans, and at times the *Iliad* seems to look forward to a time when others will be the prominent burial spots of Greek heroes. Besides the *tumulus* of Achilles by the Hellespont, foretold in the *Iliad* and described in the *Odyssey*, there is also an interesting passage in *Iliad* VII in which Hector challenges one of the Greeks to battle him in a duel. In a poetic flight of fancy, Hector boastfully imagines that the Greek who dares to face him will be buried in a mound at a headland jutting out by the Hellespont. The description is remarkably similar to the way that the *tumulus* of Achilles is described at the end of the *Odyssey*:

τὸν δὲ νέκυν ἐπὶ νῆας ἐϋσσέλμους ἀποδώσω,

ὄφρά ἑ ταρχύσωσι κάρη κομόωντες Ἀχαιοί,

³ Odyssey xxiv 72–84.

σῆμά τέ οἱ χεύωσιν ἐπὶ πλατεῖ Ἑλλησπόντῳ. καί ποτέ τις εἴπῃσι καὶ ὀψιγόνων ἀνθρώπων νηῒ πολυκλήϊδι πλέων ἐπὶ οἴνοπα πόντον[.] ἀνδρὸς μὲν τόδε σῆμα πάλαι κατατεθνηῶτος, ὅν ποτ' ἀριστεύοντα κατέκτανε φαίδιμος Ἔκτωρ.

But I will turn his corpse over to the ships with rowing benches, that the long-haired Achaeans may bury him, heap up a mound by the wide Hellespont. Then someone of later men will say as he sails his ship over the wine-dark sea, 'This is the mound of one who died long ago, whom as he fought nobly glorious Hektor once slew.'⁴

The epic poem *Aethiopis* also narrated the burial of Achilles. From the Proclus summary of the Epic Cycle we are told briefly of the same events: an elaborate funeral attended by Thetis and the Nereids, followed by the building of a funeral mound. One addition in the *Aethiopis* is the translation of Achilles from the pyre to an island of immortality, which would seem to contradict the *Odyssey*'s portrayal of Achilles in Hades. But for now let us put aside issues concerning the hero's afterlife; what we need to notice is that the *Aethiopis* agreed with the Homeric poems that a great mound was constructed for Achilles.

Later myth and poetry also consistently reported that the funeral of Achilles resulted in a great *tumulus* for him. Several fragments of Stesichorus seem to be concerned with the funeral of Achilles and may refer to future observation of this tomb by sailors on the Hellespont.⁵ Pindar briefly mentions Achilles' tomb when he describes how the Muses sang in his honor by his pyre,⁶ and Quintus of Smyrna reports the gathering of Achilles' ashes and burial of them in a tomb by the Hellespont.⁷

⁴ *Iliad* VII 84–90. Finkelberg 2002, employing Neoanalyst methodology, argues that the passage is an indirect reference to a *tumulus* of Protesilaos on the Thracian side of the Hellespont, as Eustathios had supposed. The phraseology parallels Homeric description of Achilles' *tumulus*, and Nagy 1979:28–29, 341 sees here ironically inverted delusions of Hector about slaying Achilles, whereas Kirk 1990:245 sees an allusion to Sivri Tepe, now commonly thought to be considered Achilles' tomb in antiquity (see below). Finkelberg's argument has the advantage that Hector was sometimes specified as the slayer of Protesilaos; it may be sufficient to see a general allusion to heroic *tumuli*.

Garner 1993:159–163. Garner brilliantly pieces together a narrative about the death and funeral of Achilles (in the *lliou Persis* of Stesichorus?) through close examination of a number of recent fragments. On the Homeric motif of a tomb visible from the sea, see Nagy 1979:338–343.

Pindar Isthmian 8.56–60

⁷ Quintus of Smyrna III 719–742.

The tomb of Achilles played a role in other Trojan war episodes, most infamously with the sacrifice of Polyxena.⁸ In the Euripides' *Hekabe* it is reported that the shade of Achilles appeared at his grave site to demand the maiden's death.⁹ Longinus reports that Sophocles portrayed an epiphany of Achilles before the departing troops, and that Simonides portrayed the scene better; these passages probably depicted the demand by Achilles that Polyxena be sacrificed.¹⁰ The Epic Cycle contained epiphanies by Achilles at his grave: in the Little Iliad Achilles appears to his son Neoptolemus, apparently by his tomb,¹¹ and in the Nosti Achilles appears, presumably at his tomb, to warn Agamemnon upon his departure (Proclus).

Ancient images of the tomb of Achilles are not numerous: there are occasional depictions of the initial burial mound of Patroklos, which is the basis of the later, greater burial mound of Achilles, and the tomb of Achilles is sometimes depicted in the few surviving images of the sacrifice of Polyxena. Its size is usually modest, often more like an omphalos, and sometimes signified by a pillar, probably for lack of iconographical space.¹²

Cults of Achilles

But Achilles was not just a figure of myth in the ancient world, he was also the recipient of cult worship. Hero cult in antiquity consisted of rituals performed in honor of a mortal who was believed to have achieved some special status in the afterlife.¹³ A small but significant subset of hero cult consists of the heroes featured in epic poetry, as in the case of Achilles. The ritual activity was very often carried out at the site where the hero was believed to have been buried, for it was thought that the shade of the deceased hero could arise from his burial site and cause good or harm for the surrounding area. In antiquity Achilles was worshipped in very many places, and the forms of his worship were various, but it should cause no surprise that Achilles received ritual attention where he was said to be buried, in the Troad.

Cult worship of Achilles in the Black Sea area was more prominent, however. In the Aethiopis and elsewhere Achilles was snatched off his pyre and translated to Leuke. An island in

⁸ See Gantz 1993:658–659 for the evidence. In 1994 a late sixth-century sarcophagus depicting the sacrifice of Polyxena was discovered in a tumulus excavated near the ancient battlefield of Granicus, on the northeast border of the Troad; see Sevinc 1996. For discussion in the context of other Polyxena sacrifice iconography, see Hedreen 2002:132-139.

Euripides *Hekabe* 35–44.

¹⁰

Longinus 15.7.

¹¹ The place is not specified in Proclus, but seems to be in a different fragmented prose summary: see Bernabé 1987:75; Gantz 1993:640, 875n70.

See LIMC, s.v. "Polyxena," 433-434 ("La mort d' Polyxèna"); and LIMC, s.v. "Achilleus," 139-145 ("Schleifung von Hektors Leichnam"). A tomb of human height, extending beyond the borders of the image, is indicated on the new Polyxena sarcophagus.

¹³ The bibliography is extensive; in particular cf. Pfister 1909-1912; Farnell 1921; Antonaccio 1995.

the Black Sea was eventually identified as Leuke, and ritual worship of Achilles was carried out there and elsewhere on the northern Black sea shore. Besides ancient literary references, there exists archaeological evidence for the Black Sea cult.¹⁴ The translation story has caused some disagreement or confusion in both the ancient and modern worlds. For example, Apollodorus rather oddly refers to a burial of Achilles with the bones of Patroklos at Leuke (Frazer in his edition excised the reference to Leuke).¹⁵ And critics have found the usual mythological account (as in the *Aethiopis*) of both a translation to Leuke and a Troad *tumulus* contradictory. Some have "solved" the problem by supposing the Troad mound was a cenotaph.¹⁶ One conception in antiquity, notably displayed by the Thessalian hymn to Thetis in Philostratus, accommodated both Leuke and the Troad through the dissolution of Achilles' body into divine and mortal parts on the pyre.¹⁷

Undoubtedly different conceptions of Achilles' afterlife status could have been competitively championed by different locales.¹⁸ But ancient views on the afterlife of heroes was often remarkably flexible. For example, it has been plausibly argued that a fragment of Alcaeus that refers to Achilles as "Lord of Scythia" was performed as part of Troad ritual worship of Achilles.¹⁹ And it is not just a matter of local cult worshippers being tolerant of other cult practices; heroic otherworld existence was often thought to be multi-local. In the *Heroikos* Protesilaos can spend time with Laodameia in Hades and also appear to humans in Phthia and in Elaious.²⁰ Achilles himself can appear both in the general area of the Troad and at Leuke, as can Ajax and Patroklos, though they are buried in the Troad.²¹ Seemingly contradictory mytho-poetic accounts of Achilles' afterlife potentially may have been considered harmonious.²²

If cult worship of Achilles in the Black Sea could co-exist with cult worship of Achilles in the Troad, evidence for the latter is scarce and literary in nature. The Homeric poems were certainly aware of hero cult, but they did not focus on it. Nagy has explained Homeric reticence about hero cult as panHellenic avoidance of local concerns, and he has suggested

¹⁴ On the Black Sea cult in general, see Hommel 1980; Hedreen 1991; Burgess 2001a:160–165.

¹⁵ Apollodorus *Epitome* 5.5. Ancient sources overwhelmingly consider Achilles to be buried in the Troad.

See Edwards 1985:224n23. Davies 1989:59–60 thinks this is a possible explanation. See Odyssey i 289–292. and iv 584 for a Homeric description of a cenotaph.

¹⁷ Philostratus *Heroikos* 53.10. For discussion, see Burgess 2001b.

¹⁸ Cf. the multiple claims to tombs of Trojan war heroes in the Troad: Erskine 2001:96, 108–111.

Hommel 1980:9–10 on Alcaeus 354 L-P; cf. Pfister 1909-1912:486–487.

²⁰ Philostratus Heroikos 11.7–8.

²¹ Philostratus *Heroikos* 22.1–2, 54.2–57; Pausanias III 19.13.

²² On multiple afterlife existences, see further Nagy 1979:151–173, 207–209.

some indirect indications in the Iliad of Achilles cult, especially in reference to the hero's burial and *tumulus*. The gold nature of Achilles' burial container may have cultic significance, for instance, as may the prominent visibility of the *tumulus* to sailors at sea.²³ The Epic Cycle poems are apparently more local in nature and therefore may have been more forthcoming about cult worship of Achilles. But the surviving summary, fragments, and testimony do not indicate this clearly. The Cycle poems are more open to immortality for heroes, but mythological narrative of heroic immortality should not be automatically equated with ritual hero cult. More suggestive are the Cyclic references to Achilles appearing at his tomb, and especially the sacrifice of Polyxena at Achilles' tomb. The epiphanies of Achilles seem to reflect cultic belief that a hero's powers are manifested at his burial spot, and the human sacrifice of the Polyxena story may be a horrifically exaggerated reflection of hero cult, where animal sacrifice is common.

A full and rich description of cult worship of Achilles at his tomb in the Troad is given by Philostratus in the Heroikos. Though the Heroikos is a rather fanciful yarn, its value as evidence about longstanding traditions of local cult practice has recently been recognized.²⁴ It is reported that Thessalians from the Greek mainland sailed to the Troad each year to practice rituals at the tomb of Achilles.²⁵ This is cult activity brought into the Troad by outsiders, independently of local inhabitants. The Thessalians come into harbor at night, they bring their own sacrificial animals, and they even bring their own wood and fire. The local shepherds are said to witness epiphanies of Achilles and other heroes, but the Greek heroes are hostile to them, as if the present-day inhabitants represent the Trojans of myth.²⁶ In Philostratus' *Life* of Apollonius, ritual worship is also carried out by an outsider (Apollonius), and the hero, in an epiphany, makes clear his hatred of Trojans.²⁷ The possibility of local cult worship of Achilles is briefly suggested by Strabo, who portrays the inhabitants of Troy as practicing cult worship of Achilles and other Greek heroes.²⁸ Also suggestive is the recently found Polyxena sarcophagus,

²³

Nagy 1979:209-210, 338-343.

Erskine 2001:110–111 sees the various testimony for ritual interest in Trojan war heroes as based on oral traditions. On the authenticity of cult practice in the Heroikos, cf. Aitken 2001; Jones 2001:146-148; Aitken and Maclean 2001:lxxii-lxxv, xli, 2004 passim (notably Dué and Nagy 2004). The primacy of literary inspiration for the work is instead stressed at Anderson 1986:241-257; Grosshardt 2004.

²⁵ Philostratus *Heroikos* 52.3–54.1.

²⁶ Philostratus *Heroikos* 18.1–23.1.

Philostratus Life of Apollonius 4.11–13, 15–16.

²⁸ Strabo XIII 1.32.

which appears to mix images of funerary ritual with the scene of Polyxena's sacrifice at Achilles' *tumulus*. 29

Political Visitations

The potential political significance of a Troad *tumulus* of Achilles of mytho-poetic fame and cultic importance was soon recognized.³⁰ In Herodotus' account of rivalry between Athens and Mytilene in the Troad, which apparently occurred in the sixth century, Mytilene established a town in the area called "Achilleion" after the Athenians took over Sigeion. This town apparently derived its name from a nearby *tumulus* identified as that of Achilles, as Strabo and Pliny later confirm.³¹ So by the sixth century BCE, at least, there existed a place in the Troad formally recognized as the burial place of Achilles, of such significance that it could give its name to a town established nearby. One surmises that in the struggle between Athens and Mytilene, both outsiders to the Troad, control of the tomb of Achilles, and by extension the glory of the Greek mythological past, was deemed of great political value.

A series of political leaders in antiquity went out of their way to visit Troy, and often the tomb of Achilles.³² The topography of the Troad and its surviving monuments served as a stage for enactment of ideological conceptions of East and West. What could be viewed and visited in the Troad could suggest the mythological past of the Trojan war, which had long functioned as an endlessly malleable allegory. Trojan war myth had obvious use as a metaphor for West and East, Greek and barbarian, but it also offered opportunities for much different interpretations. Sympathy for vanquished Trojans and foundation stories featuring Trojan dispersal into the Western world resulted in various and highly complex use of the Trojan war story. Even when a certain perspective identified with one side or the other of the Trojan war, respect could be displayed towards both sides; or rather, one might seek to appease one side even as one actively identified with the other.³³

As for visitation to the Troad, much depended on who was visiting and where they were proceeding after that. Xerxes stopped by Troy before invading Greece, sacrificing to

³² Cf. Pfister 1909-1912:280; Vermeule 1995; Sage 2000; Erskine 2001:225-253.

²⁹

The sarcophagus displays not just the sacrifice of Polyxena, but scenes of ritual that have been interpreted as funerary in nature, with an emphasis on female participants (Sevinc 1996:260–262). The linkage of myth featuring the tomb of Achilles with contemporary late Archaic funerary ritual, found on an artifact buried within a Troad area *tumulus*, suggests a late sixth-century cultic awareness of a Troad *tumulus* identified as Achilles'.

³⁰ In a forthcoming work, Nagy explores the political functions of different tombs of Achilles.

³¹ Strabo XIII 1.39, 46; Pliny Natural History V 33.125.

³³ Trojan war heroes seem to be evoked in the *Heroikos* of Philostratus with a bias against the East: Aitken and Maclean 2001:lviii-lx, lxxxiii-lxxxvii, 2004:xxiii-xxiv. Erskine 2001 demonstrates that for Greeks, Romans, and Troad inhabitants, the use of Trojan war myth could be complex, with an even-handed regard toward both Greeks and Trojans.

Athena and making libations to "heroes," though we do not hear of his visiting tombs.³⁴ In 334 BC Alexander the Great, styling himself a second Achilles conquering eastern barbarians, visited the tomb of Achilles. He ran naked to the tomb of Achilles and laid a wreath there, while his close friend Hephaistion performed similar rituals at a nearby mound identified as the tomb of Patroklos.³⁵ Later still Mehmet II, the conqueror of Constantinople, reportedly visited the tombs of Ajax and Achilles.³⁶ He was said to have fancied himself an avenger of Troy, but he may have seen a need to appease ancient Greek heroes in this mission, much as Alexander in his previous visit to Troy sought to placate the shade of Priam.

The Romans traced their lineage back to the Trojans, and so visiting Romans tended to focus on Trojan heroes. However, when Caracalla visited the Troad in 214 CE he dedicated a bronze statue to Achilles and honored him with sacrifices; what is more, he had his freedman Festus cremated there, with a great tumulus constructed over his bones, in imitation of the burial of Patroklos.³⁷ The tomb of Achilles was also visited by Julian in the fourth century.³⁸ The Troad had become a tourist site by the imperial period, and doubtless there were other undocumented visitations of Troad monuments by prominent figures.³⁹ On a more imaginary level, prominent tourists included Charon and even Homer himself. Lucian has Hermes, as tour guide, pointing out the tomb to Charon; it is said to be by the sea, in view of Sigeion and Ajax's tomb at Rhoetion (the tombs are "not big," sniffs Charon, unimpressed). A biographical anecdote reported that Homer was blinded when Achilles appeared to him in full armor at his tomb.40

Political considerations are prominent in Philostratus' account of the Thessalian cult worship of Achilles in the Troad. When the Thessalians sided with the Persians during the invasion of Xerxes, it is reported by Philostratus, they abandoned the cult of Achilles. Later under Macedonian rule they returned to the practice because of Alexander's fascination with Achilles.⁴¹ In other words, Thessalian attention to a Troad cult of Achilles reflected how their political rulers identified with the myth of the Trojan war.

³⁴ Herodotus VII 43.1–2.

³⁵ Arrian I 11.7–12.1; Plutarch *Alexander* 15.8–9.

³⁶ Vermeule 1995:277-278; Sage 2000:211-212.

Dio Cassius LXXVIII 16.7.

³⁸ Sage 2000:214, Vermeule 1995:477.

³⁹

Lucan IX 961–999. portrays Caesar visiting Rhoetion, the customary site of Ajax's tumulus, among other Troad locations, and reflecting on the heroes of the Trojan war.

Lucian *Charon* 23; for the Homer anecdote, see Graziosi 2002:159; Pfister 1909-1912:518.

Philostratus *Heroikos* 53.14–53.17.

Ancient Localizations

The location of the *tumulus* of Achilles in antiquity is not clear. In Homer it is said to be by the Hellespont and near the Greek camp. The camp and the *tumulus* have regularly been placed on the Trojan shore of the Dardanelles, but it seems that both ancients and moderns could look elsewhere.

A surprising localization of Achilles' *tumulus*, that on the European side of the Dardanelles, seems to be found in Euripides' *Hekabe*. At least the Greek troops are located there, becalmed until the sacrifice of Polyxena at the request of Achilles, who appeared at his *tumulus*.⁴² This may conflate Achilles' *tumulus* with another celebrated heroic *tumulus* in the area, that of Protesilaos.⁴³ Protesilaos' *tumulus* and cultic presence on the northern shore is famously featured at the end of Herodotus and later central to the *Heroikos* of Philostratus.⁴⁴ Euripides is either idiosyncratic in his placement of the *tumulus* of Achilles or remarkably disinterested in its location.

Flexibility about Achilles' *tumulus* is demonstrated elsewhere in the ancient world. Alexander's ritual actions at the Troad presume separate *tumuli* for Achilles and Patroklos, which contradicts the conception of Alexander's beloved Homer, according to which the bones of Achilles were mixed with the bones of Patroklos and the two were buried under one great funeral mound. This nonHomeric conception of separate *tumuli* for Achilles and Patroklos is reflected in other ancient sources,⁴⁵ and will often be found in post-antiquity, as we shall see. Not only is there little Homeric interest in the exact location of Achilles' *tumulus*, but some who claimed inspiration from Homer display little care for what the Homeric passages actually state.

This variance about the *tumulus* of Achilles may be compared with ancient references to Achilles' afterlife existence. Mentioned briefly above was the location of Achilles in Hades in the *Odyssey*. Other poetic accounts of Achilles' afterlife location refer to either Leuke, the Isles

⁴² Paley 1874:521 and Hopkinson 2000:172 conclude that Achilles appeared on the Trojan side before the Greeks departed as far as the Thracian side, which Mossman 1995:48n2 denies.

⁴³ It is ironic that Sigeion has occasionally been suggested as an alternative location for Protesilaos' *tumulus*. Boedeker 1988:35n18 disputes the notion, yet it reappears at Vermeule 1992:34, on the basis of a fourth-century BCE relief on an Attic treaty inscription that possibly depicts the hero in connection with Sigeion (LIMC, s.v. "Protesilaos," no. 12). A Troad burial would seem to follow logically from myth of Protesilaos' death upon the first landing of the Greeks, and Boedeker 1988:36 points out that Dares and Dictys do nothing to dispel this, though the hero's cult precinct was regarded in antiquity to be on the Thracian side at Elaious. Modern archaeological work has not located the site conclusively (cf. Demangel 1926; Aslan et al. 2003:187–189; Hertel 2003:180–182). See also Ovid *Metamorphoses* XIII 429–480, where Achilles is said to appear out of the earth on the Thracian side; though it is not specified that his tomb or the subsequent sacrifice of Polyxena occurs there. Hopkinson 2000:171 believes we are to understand that the Greeks travel back to the tomb on the Trojan side to accomplish the sacrifice.

⁴⁴ Herodotus IX 116–120. See Nagy 1987; Boedeker 1988; Jones 2001:145.

⁴⁵ Strabo XIII 1.32, Arrian I 12.1; see Pfister 1909–1912:306–307.

of the Blessed, or Elysium. Pindar has no qualms about specifying Leuke in one ode and the Isles of the Blessed in another.⁴⁶ When Leuke is mentioned in early Greek poetry, its location is understood to be in the Black Sea, but its exact nature is not consistent from one account to the next.⁴⁷ Later geographers also have difficulty with identifying and locating the Black Sea island; a second island near Olbia, Berezan, in particular caused confusion. It seems that even after Greek colonization the Black Sea remained distant, even otherworldly, to outsiders. The Black Sea island identified as Leuke became easily conflated with other cultic locations dedicated to Achilles on the north shore. Something of the same may have been happening with the *tumulus* of Achilles in the Troad. Myth of Achilles' burial in the Troad granted his *tumulus* panHellenic fame, but outsiders did not seem to have a consistent understanding of its nature and location.

Localizations in Post-Antiquity

When Europeans in modern times first began to visit the Troad, supposed heroic *tumuli* were the prime attraction.⁴⁸ There was not much else to see. Before Schliemann excavated at Hisarlik, there were few ruins of ancient Troy visible. Indeed there was widespread disagreement about the location of Troy or even whether there was a real Troy. So visitors often contented themselves with the mounds that dotted the local topography.

Prominent mounds on the slope below the high ridge of Yenisehir were commonly identified as heroic, and as early as 1548 one was identified as that of Achilles.⁴⁹ On the late eighteenth-century map by Lechevalier [Figure A], the largest one is labeled Achilles' tomb, while a smaller mound a few hundred meters inland is labeled Patroklos' [Figure B]. The identification of these two *tumuli* as Achilles' and Patroklos' became common thereafter. These mounds can be seen in several of the early nineteenth-century watercolors of Troad by Gell, including both the Sigeion *tumuli* from the sea [Figure C], a close-up of the larger Sigeion one identified as Achilles' [Figure D], and both Sigeion *tumuli* from the perspective of the plain [Figure E].⁵⁰ The Sigeion Cape as a location for the *tumulus* of Achilles is consistent with the Homeric portrayal of the tomb as being by the Hellespont and visible from the sea, though

⁴⁰ Pindar Nemean 4.49–50, Olympian 2.79–80.

⁴⁷ Euripides seems to confuse or conflate Leuke with another location of ritual activity for Achilles in the Black Sea, a peninsular spit of sand called the *Dromos: Andromache* 1260–1262, *Iphigeneia at Tauris* 427–438.

^{For a survey of Troad visitation in post-antiquity, with extensive bibliography, see Cook 1973:14–51. For a survey of the archaeological work at the ca. 40} *tumuli* in the Troad (ca. 30 near Troy), see Aslan et al. 2003.
49

Cook 1973:16.

⁵⁰ Gell 1804 provides excellent drawings of the area, including several scenes of *tumuli*; the Sigeion ones are identified as Achilles' and Patroklos'. The Lechevalier map also identifies Bournabashi as the mythical Troy; Lechevalier claimed to have located the famous hot and cold springs of Troy, as described in Iliad XXII, near there, and this identification that was to hold sway until Calvert convinced Schliemann to dig at Hissarlik in the next century.

Lechevalier was apparently content, like Alexander before him, to identify two separate tombs for Achilles and Patroklos in contradiction to the Homeric account.⁵

An excavation of this presumed *tumulus* of Achilles was undertaken at the end of the eighteenth century, and nothing was found that argued for a prehistoric date.⁵² There was evidence for a cremation burial, which Lechevalier considered the ashes of Achilles',⁵³ vet the vase fragments seemed to stem from the Classical period. A general sense of disappointment fueled much controversy over the quality and propriety of this excavation, and Schliemann tried his hand at it almost a century later.⁵⁴ He surely would have been delighted to find prehistoric evidence, but had to settle for an argument that the *tumulus* dated to the time of Homer. Even this is unlikely; it seems the mound cannot be dated earlier than the sixth century BCE. Schliemann's excavation of the nearby mound deemed that of Patroklos yielded no sign of burial and the same type of pottery. So no Achilles or Patroklos was buried here, though it is possible that the mounds were regarded as heroic by the Classical period.

In the last century a different tumulus has laid claim on the title of Achilles' tomb. This is Sivri Tepe near Besika Bay, to the south of Cape Sigeion along the coast [Figure F]. Occasionally in the past some thought the *tumulus* of Achilles may have been located here. In the early twentieth century, this localization acquired greater attention because of a new theory that the ships of the Greeks had been moored at Besika Bay, rather than on the shore of the Hellespont. Certainly in modern times this bay was often used as a stopping point for ships blocked by winds from entering the Hellespont. If the ships of the Greeks were located here, the argument went, then the location of the tomb of Achilles would be nearby. In the Iliad the camp of Achilles is located at one end of the Greek fleet, and Achilles and Patroklos were apparently buried near the camp of Achilles.

No naval evidence was found to support the Besika Bay theory, whose most prominent adherent was Dörpfeld, Schliemann's archaeological collaborator.⁵⁵ However, as a consequence of the theory much interesting archaeological work has been in the area. The highest *tumulus*

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Others identified the larger tumulus as the burial place of both Achilles and Patroklos, with the smaller identified as that of Antilochus or some other hero: Chandler 1825:52; Dalloway 1797:350. Lechevalier's explanation (1791:148-149) is that the tumulus identified as Achilles' contains the ashes of Achilles, Patroklos, and Antilochus together (cf. Odyssey xxiv) and the two tumuli identified as Patroklos' and Antilochus' are cenotaphs.

For excavations of the Sigeion tumuli, see Cook 1973:159–165; Hertel 2003:161–176. As was Lechevalier, the excavator Gormezano was sponsored by the ambassador Choiseul-Gouffier.

⁵³ Lechevalier 1791:150-152.

⁵⁴ If this was the same *tumulus*. Cook 1973:161 notes an early nineteenth-century report that the *tumulus* had been destroyed by excavation, adding dryly, "But it was irrepressible; for Schliemann's drawing of the early 1870s shows a tump of almost unexampled perfection" (Schliemann 1881:654 ill. 1513).

On this theory and subsequent archaeological work in the area, see Cook 1973:170–173.

in the Troad, Üvecik Tepe, which had been previously excavated by Schliemann, was poked and prodded some more by Dörpfeld, who wanted to see it as the tomb of Patroklos. The evidence actually suggests that Üvecik Tepe is the burial place for Caracalla's freedman Festus, perhaps with a core of Classical period date. Dörpfeld then decided that Sivri Tepe could be the tomb of both Achilles and Patroklos, which after all would be more Homeric. His efforts there, like Schliemann's before him, were inconclusive. Cook supposed that Sivri Tepe was for the most part Hellenistic in date, though perhaps with a smaller prehistoric form. More recent work by Korfmann and his team has basically confirmed this view, though with much greater precision and authority.⁵⁶ This means that though no remains of a Bronze Age hero have been found there, the *tumulus* was presumably the one that Alexander the Great performed his rituals around. It has been common recently to described Sivri Tepe as the *tumulus* that antiquity regarded as Achilles'. Yet it is clear that most ancient references to Achilles' *tumulus* assume a Sigeion location, and it has been possible for a sceptic to deny that Sivri Tepe had any status as Achilles' *tumulus*.⁵⁷

Sivri Tepe is not the only archaeological site of interest in the area. Already in 1973 Cook had logically deduced that Cape Burun [Figure G], which juts out into the sea just north of Besika Bay and near Sivri Tepe, was the most likely location of the ancient town Achilleion.⁵⁸ Recent archaeological work seems to make this argument plausible. Evidence of habitation at Cape Burun has been found, dated to various times: the third millennium, a brief period of time in the thirteenth century BCE, and then at a later time beginning around 600 BCE. The latest time is of great importance, because it is consistent with the creation of the town Achilleion by the Mytilenians in the sixth century BCE. If Achilleion was at Cape Burun, and not near Cape Sigeion to the north, as previously thought, then the nearby Sivri Tepe, though not yet enhanced to the full glory of its Hellenistic state, must have by then been regarded as the tomb of Achilles, at least by the founders of Achilleion. Of further interest is a prehistoric cemetery located between the bay and Sivri Tepe, dating to few decades in the fourteenth c. BCE. The data resulting from extensive excavation has now been excellently presented by Maureen Basedow. About 135 bodies were buried here, men, women and children. Some

⁵⁶ Besides Korfmann's early reports on the area in his *AA* articles in the 1980s, see Korfmann 1999:29–30, 2000:42– 43. Especially clear and concise summaries of recent excavation at Sivri Tepe: Rose 1999:61–63, 2000:65–66. At Aslan et al. 2003:178 ill. 14 is a satellite image, including Cape Burnu and the Besik cemetery. The expedition leaders leave open the possibility of a small prehistoric form of Sivri Tepe: Korfmann 1999:29–30, Rose 2000:66.

Hertel 2003:161–175, 200–203.

⁵⁸ Cook 1973:178–188.

pottery is of a Mycenaean type but is locally produced. There is no indication that the buried are of origin foreign to the area. 59

Sivri Tepe, it is true, is not located by the Hellespont, and in the Homeric passages the *tumulus* of Achilles is said to be right by the Hellespont. That the *Iliad* places the ships of the Greeks near the Hellespont generally militates against the whole Besika Bay theory. Explanations are possible, and have not been untried. For example, for a landlubber looking out to sea from the Troad, the islands Samothrace, Imbros, and Tenedos together block off the view of the Aegean to the northwest, and so the Hellespont could be regarded as a body of water that extended out from the Dardanelles, around Cape Sigeion, and down south along the coast. In this way Sivri Tepe can be conceived as being at a heading jutting out "by the Hellespont."⁶⁰ To what degree one wants to pursue such arguments depends much on the need and value one places on making mytho-poetic narrative correspond to real topography. An argument about the location of Achilles' tomb cannot be very cogent if it depends on the vexed question of the Homeric location of the Greek ships, which in turn invokes the ambiguous issue of the Trojan war's historicity.

Conclusions

The *tumulus* of Achilles is a plurality. There were multiple localizations of *tumulus* of Achilles in antiquity and post-antiquity, with various mytho-poetic, cultic, political, and archaeological motivations for identification of a mound in the Troad as the burial spot of Achilles. The actual location has been disputed. The *aporia* reached in a search for a *tumulus* of Achilles results not just from a lack of literary or archaeological evidence; it stems from disagreement among the ancients concerning the hero's tomb. Inhabitants in the area may have had different ideas about the identification of *tumuli*. Outsiders often displayed confusion over their location and identity, or even felt free to create notional *tumuli* without any basis in reality.⁶¹ The topography of the Troad itself changed, as *tumuli* came and went because of natural erosion and human intervention. Achilles' *tumulus* was fluid, usable concept that served different functions. The Homeric poems were often the inspiration of interest in his tomb, but not the only one. The *tumulus* was featured in nonHomeric myth of various media, and ritual activities were carried out at what was believed to be the hero's tomb. There were mounds about the area, and one could always be identified as the *tumulus* of Achilles.

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Basedow 2000. Summary of findings: Aslan et al. 2003:178–179. The new discoveries have been seized upon by historicists as evidence for a Mycenaean besiegement of Troy: Wood 1985:168; Luce 1998:138–141, 2003:27; Askin 2002:65. I do not see that the evidence supports this enthusiasm.

Korfmann 1984:167, 1986b:11–12; Janko 1992 *a*d 15.233–5. Cf. Luce 44, 237n44, 2002:11, 25 (review of Achaean harbor issue, with idiosyncratic solution).

Besides Hector's imagined *tumulus* of his slain foe, and Euripides' apparently Thracian tomb of Achilles, see the claim of Aeneas at *Aeneid* VI 505 to have created a cenotaph for Deiphobus, for which there is no other evidence (Bleisch 1999).

Archaeologists have failed to find what it seems they would really like to find, a Bronze Age tumulus of Achilles, though they have explored tumuli that may have been regarded as such in historical periods. Though recent extensive work of Korfmann and his team has aroused much controversy, its approach is ostensibly and self-consciously post-Schliemann. The old focus on treasure and walls has been widened enormously, and now a full range or environmental, economic, and cultural existence is being examined, with very up-to-date scientific equipment and methodologies.⁶² There is no explicit attempt to decide the old impasse between identification of Troy VI, interpreted as earthquake leveled by Blegen, and Troy VIIa, destroyed too late to be pinned credibly on the Mycenaean palatial civilization.⁶³ Troy VI is given lots of attention by the current expedition, but reconstructed as an important economic center with political significance and a strategic locale. Largely accepted is the moderate proposal that multiple skirmishes or battles in the area contributed to the development of a myth of a great war (with the result that evidence from both levels is mixed and matched, as it suits the argument). Yet the approach is still essentially historicist in nature.⁶⁴ The Troad would never have received so much archaeological attention if it were not for the Iliad.

The larger issue raised by my survey of the localization of Achilles' *tumulus* is the relation between myth and reality.⁶⁵ The spectacular discoveries of Schliemann gave license to a historicist approach to the myth of the Trojan war that turned out to be unwarranted, even if much valuable historical evidence was uncovered in the process. The Homeric poems are not guides to Bronze Age history and their allegiance is to mytho-poetic narrative, not reality. Especially troubling has been a disrespect for myth displayed by some explorers and archaeologists, an attitude that is readily applauded by our modern culture. The search for the "truth" behind the Trojan war is essentially a reductionist exercise designed to transform myth into a more valued reality. The oft-quoted comment by Byron, "We do care about 'the authenticity of the tale of Troy'... I still venerated the grand original as the truth of history (in the material facts) and of place. Otherwise it would have given me no delight", is emblematic of this attitude, all the more regrettable because it is the expression of, astoundingly, a poet.⁶⁶

⁶² Annual reports have been expeditiously published in *Studia Troica*. A collection of brief essays based on the expedition results, with extensive illustrations: *Troia. Traum und Wirklichkeit*. General account based on new findings, with emphasis on the evidence of Hittite texts: Latacz 2004. For an analysis of how recent debate over Bronze Age Troy reflects current current concerns in German society, see Haubold 2002.

⁶³ Recent comments on the two levels: Mountjoy 1999a, 1999b.

⁶⁴ At Korfmann 1986b:28 there is sympathy expressed for the historicist approach to the Trojan war and an "intuitive" belief that the Besik cemetery was contemporaneous with the Trojan war.

⁶⁵ For an appropriately cautious discussion of archaeology and Homeric questions, see Manning 1992.

Quoted at Wood 1985:41; Luce 1998:65 (who notes his approval).

mythology historicist game. For these reasons we should resist attempts to identify a "real" *tumulus* of Achilles (and, I would argue, a "real" Trojan war).

Yet topography and archaeology provide important contexts for philological research.⁶⁷ It would be unnecessarily limiting for philologists to consider the Trojan war narrative an exclusively notional construct. In terms of origins, it is significant that there was a Bronze Age city of Troy, in existence when Mycenaeans were prominent and war was common. Excavation at Troy may support a general sense, as suggested by lexical and cultural evidence, that the Homeric poems stem from longstanding traditions. As far as tumuli in the Troad are concerned, it is also true that they seem to be an Iron Age, not a Bronze Age phenomenon; as is often remarked, Homeric burial practice is not Bronze Age in nature. But the Homeric poems do display an acute awareness of landscape, and heroic tumuli are included among the physical monuments that have a featured place in this poetic world. It is likely that the Homeric poems were composed with knowledge of Troad topography and its heroic connections, including a hillock (hillocks?) identified as the *tumulus* of Achilles.⁶⁸ Certainly there is little Homeric interest in precise arrangement of topography, and there seems little point in "defending" the accuracy of Homer.⁶⁹ But it is also undoubted that any investigation of subsequent reception of the Homeric poems must take into account interest in Troad heroic tumuli, an interest that extended beyond the world of Homeric poetry to cult worship and political visitation. Topography of the area served as some inspiration for traditional narrative about the Trojan war, and interest in this topography interacted with these traditions as they developed and as they were received.

The ancients valued their direct experience of the actual world featured in Greek mythology. The viewing of topography provided a very strong and immediate contact with a traditional past that was immanent within the physical landscape.⁷⁰ Any opportunity for us in the modern world to see topography associated with myth should always be illuminating. Images of *tumuli* in the Troad, whether through published maps and photos or by direct

⁶⁷ As is well demonstrated for the *Heroikos* by Jones 2001; Alcock 2004; Whitmarsh 2004. More generally see Leontis 1995.

Heubeck 1992 *ad Odyssey* xxiv 84 argues that the description of Achilles' tomb was based on knowledge of an actual *tumulus* identified as Achilles'. Nagy 1979:160 interestingly suggests a Homeric awareness of *tumuli* metamorphoses: at *Iliad* XII 30–32 it is predicted that flood waters will smooth out land by the Hellespont (the Homeric location of Achilles' tomb), and the river Xanthus threatens to create a burial mound of silt for Achilles at *Iliad* XXI 316–323. These passages are in fact remarkably prescient about the subsequent mobility and transformation of Achilles' *tumulus*, or are perhaps rather testimony for the pre-Homeric nature of *tumuli* impermanence. Since a *tumulus* is supposed to serve as the material emblem of a hero's fame, the issue of *tumulus* durability is a very serious one. Scodel 1992:65-66 discusses epic as more effective than tombs for the preservation of heroic memory.

This is the stated motivation of Luce 1998. Despite my criticism, I found its account of investigation by autopsy most enjoyable.

⁷⁰ See the insightful remarks at Whitmarsh 2004:245–248.

autopsy, can only enhance our appreciation of the various accounts in antiquity of Achilles' tomb. My own knowledge, I readily admit, is limited; I am no archaeologist and my sole visit to the Troad lasted just a single day. But it was a most satisfying and even exhilarating experience to roam about the Troad in a rental car along dusty farm roads, chasing after *tumuli* as they seemed to appear and disappear on the horizon, and ultimately stand on the top of Sivri Tepe as the sun began to set over the sea [Figure H].

There is, of course, a danger of romanticism in visiting place linked with myth. The Homeric-like thunderclouds that scuttled quickly across the sky, spurred on by a steady wind, may have distracted me from the academic issues at hand, as may a quick dip in the Aegean after the sky cleared on that beautiful and warm September afternoon. But I do feel that the physical dimensions of my experience—the sights, the smells, the ability to move about and across the topography—all contributed enormously to my own comprehension of Homeric poetry, and Trojan war myth as well, in its various, rich, and manifold forms. No single *tumulus* of Achilles has been discovered, and I do not think that it is discoverable, but the search for heroic monuments in the Troad, though inconclusive, contradictory, and often misguided, is worthy of our attention. The physical world cannot be equated with the mythological one, but the two can be balanced and weighed in a mutually beneficial manner.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure A. Map from Lechevalier 1791 (frontpiece). Photograph courtesy of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto. Back to text

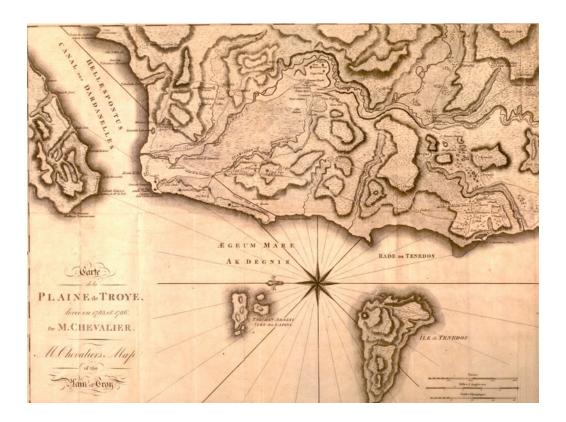


Figure B. Close-up of Cape Sigeion on map from Lechevalier 1791. Back to text



Figure C. View from sea of Cape Sigeion, including *tumuli* identified as Achilles' and Patroclus', Gell 1804 (Plate 11). Black and white photograph of watercolor drawing, courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum Library, Toronto. Back to text



Figure D. View of *tumulus* identified as that of Achilles, Gell 1804 (Plate 21). Black and white photograph of watercolor drawing, courtesy of the Royal Ontarion Museum Library, Toronto. Back to text

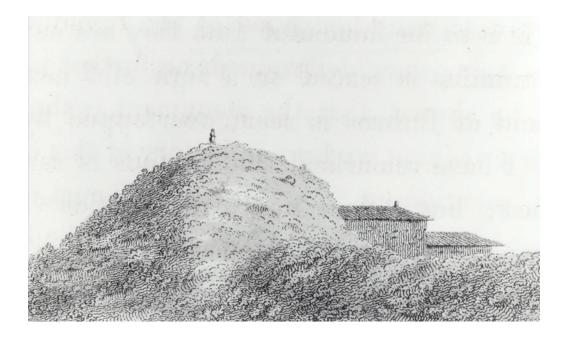


Figure E. View from plain of Cape Sigeion, including *tumuli* identified as Achilles' and Patroclus', Gell 1804 (Plate 17). Black and white photograph of watercolor drawing, courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum Library, Toronto. Back to text



Figure F. Sivri Tepe. Photograph by the author. Back to text



Figure G. Cape Burun. Photograph by the author. Back to text



Figure H. View of Cape Burun and the sea from top of Sivri Tepe. Photograph by the author. Back to text



Armstrong, Richard and Dué, Casey, eds, Classics@ Issue 3. For the full citation for this article please consult www.chs.harvard.edu/publications.sec/classics.ssp.