

MYTHS AND LEGENDS

TROY

LAST WAR OF THE HEROIC AGE



SI SHEPPARD

MYTHS AND LEGENDS

TROY

LAST WAR OF THE HEROIC AGE

BY SI SHEPPARD

ILLUSTRATED BY JOSÉ DANIEL CABRERA PEÑA
& ROCÍO ESPÍN PIÑAR



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
THE THOUSAND SHIPS	6
Forbidden Fruit ❧ The Warlords Assemble ❧ Black Ships Bound for Troy	
THE RAGE OF ACHILLES	22
The Arrows of Apollo ❧ Into Battle ❧ Gods and Men ❧ Trojan Ascendancy ❧ An Embassy to Achilles ❧ Hector at High Tide ❧ Battle for the Ships ❧ The Counterfeit Achilles ❧ Patroclus Stands Alone ❧ The Body of Patroclus ❧ The Aristeia of Achilles ❧ The Fate of Hector	
THE WIDER WAR	57
Penthesilea, Queen of the Amazons ❧ Memnon, King of the Ethiopians ❧ Achilles at the Scaean Gates	
ENDGAME – THE FALL OF TROY	65
The Next Generation: Eurpylus and Neoptolemus ❧ The Fall of Paris ❧ The Wooden Horse ❧ Flame and Fortune ❧ Aftermath	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	79

INTRODUCTION

“Rage – goddess, sing the rage of Peleus’ son, Achilles.” These words, from the translation by Robert Fagles, introduce Homer’s *Iliad*, the foundation text of western literature. Though set in a Bronze Age world over three millennia ago, the theme it explores – the price we pay for love and hate alike – resonates through time, for the conflicting obligations of power, honour, desire, duty, and family, are universal to the human experience. There is no stark definition of black and white in the struggle over Helen of Troy. Every character has plausible motivations. It is impossible not to sympathise with, and at the same time be critical of, all the players involved. That is the way of things; no-one is ever absolutely right or wrong. From such conflict even victory long hungered for tastes bittersweet.

TROY – FACT OR FICTION?

Lost to time, Troy passed from history into legend. Few placed much credence in German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann when he began excavations at the mound of Hisarlik in 1871. But he found Troy, or, more accurately, many Troys, layered one on top of the other. Which – if any – was Priam’s city? There is general agreement with the conclusion of Wilhelm Dörpfeld that Troy VI, sublevel h, is the most likely candidate. Although much of what was left of the sixth settlement was destroyed in the course of Schliemann’s excavations, enough of it survives to indicate that it represents the most flourishing phase of Troy’s existence, extending over a period of several hundred years in the second millennium before ending abruptly sometime around the middle of the thirteenth century BC. The remains of the great northeast bastion from this level calls to mind Homer’s imposing watchtower. The distinctive slope in Troy VI’s walls lends credibility to the account in the

Iliad of Patroclus’ attempts to scale the fortifications.

Tantalizing clues have also been found in the records of Anatolia’s Bronze Age superpower, the Hittite Empire. A reference is made around 1400 BC to a rebellion comprising twenty-two subject peoples, who apparently formed a confederacy, including the names Wilusiya and Taruisa. Were these the Hittite way of writing the names (W)ilios (Ilios) and Troia (Troy)? We know the Hittites were in diplomatic contact with the Achaeans (whose land is called Ahhiyawa in Hittite texts), and there was tension between them over spheres of influence in the Aegean borderland. Did this incorporate a major combined-arms expedition by the Achaeans against the most strategically sited of the Hittite client states? The debate continues. But, whatever conclusions can be drawn about the historical roots of the Trojan War, the saga will forever stand alone.