

Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

History and Archaeology

- **archaeology** is the most visible form of “recovered” history today
- rarely a “treasure hunt”
 - Tut’s tomb is the exception
- archaeology is, after all, rooting through other people’s garbage
 - so is it likely we’ll find anything of value?
- but the dirt dug up by archaeologists is pure “gold” to historians, cf. pollen

Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

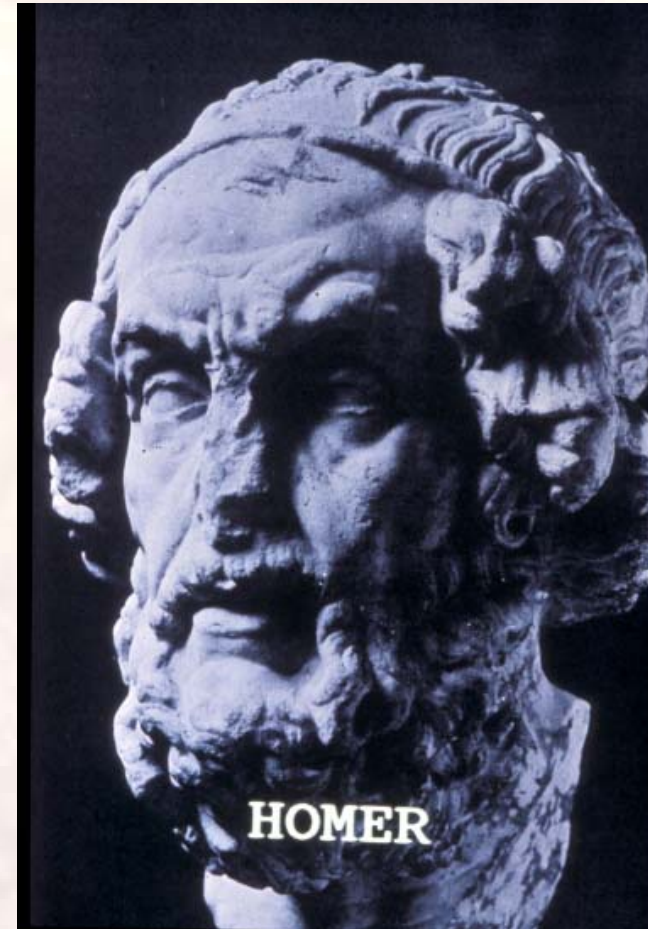
History and Archaeology

- cf. the **ivories** found in **Nimrud**
 - Nimrud was an important Neo-Assyrian city
 - ivories were dumped into a well
 - ivory itself was not valuable, cf. plastic
 - the gold and jewels were stripped off the ivories by the invading Medes
 - it was “garbage” to them!

Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

History and Archaeology

- let's look at one case where archaeology informs our understanding of history: how historical is Homer's Troy?



Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Heinrich Schliemann

- one of the most sensational news stories of the 19th century was the discovery by **Heinrich Schliemann** of what is now widely assumed to be the site of **Troy**
 - Troy is the setting of **Homer's *Iliad***
 - prior to Schliemann's excavation, most scholars considered Troy to have been merely a mythological place

Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Heinrich Schliemann

- Schliemann's life
 - young businessman proficient at languages
 - became rich as a trader in the Baltic region
 - retired in his 40's and decided to pursue his lifelong dream of finding Homer's Troy
 - *The Iliad* seemed so real to him he felt it must be based on history
 - people in later antiquity believed there was a site called “**Ilion**” (Ilium/Troy), cf. Alexander

Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Heinrich Schliemann

- Schliemann went to Greece where he married a woman named Sophie who could recite Homer from memory
- looked east for Troy
- especially, near the **Hellespont**
 - straits provide wealth in the form of taxes and tariffs



Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Schliemann's Troy

- Schliemann found a promising mound near the Turkish village of **Hissarlik**
 - just one of many promising **tells**
- though clearly this city was once important
 - has nine major levels
 - and large walls, just as Homer describes Troy



Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Schliemann's Troy

- Schliemann announced that he'd found Homer's Troy
 - the implication was that Troy was more than a mythical place but had some historical basis
- this opened the world's eyes to the value — and glamour! — of archaeology
 - or at least its potential for sensationalism
 - this led to funding for excavations at Ur, Goshen and other biblical sites

Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Schliemann's Troy

- Schliemann found a cache of “hidden” jewelry and dubbed it “**Priam's Treasure**”
 - and on top of this, told a remarkable story about sneaking this treasure out of the site under the noses of his Turkish guards

Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Schliemann's Troy

- but problems soon emerged with all of this
 - Priam's treasure is a motley collection of artifacts attributable to various styles/periods
 - moreover, Troy at its prime peaked too early to coincide with Homer's "Ilium"
 - **Troy VIIA** is a shabby resettlement of a formerly great city
 - and it has no burn level above or below it!
 - all in all, if Schliemann's Troy was Homer's Troy, archaeology didn't confirm literature

Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

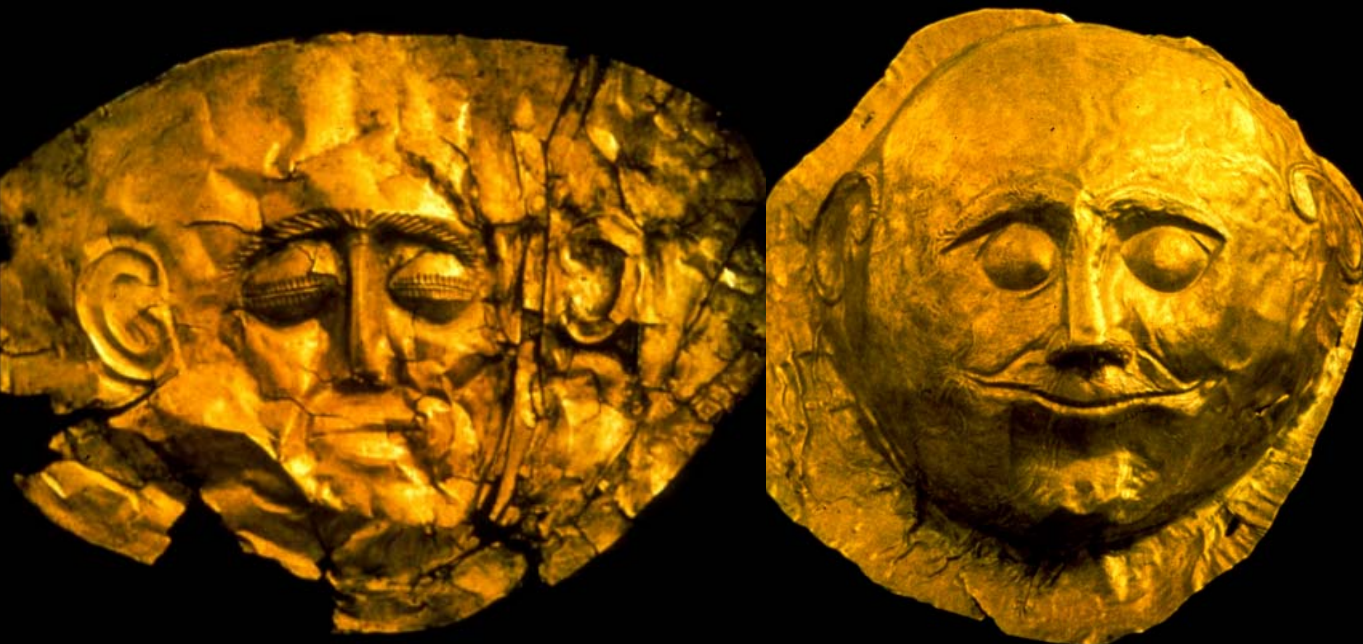
Schliemann and Mycenaean Civilization

- unfazed by such discrepancies, Schliemann turned his attention to **Mycenae**
 - Mycenae is Agamemnon's home city in myth
- he uncovered **Mycenaean civilization**

Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Schliemann and Mycenaean Civilization

- at Mycenae, Schliemann excavated the **Grave Circle** of Mycenaean princes
- in it he discovered a series of death masks
 - cf. Tut's death mask



Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Schliemann and Mycenaean Civilization

- when he found a particularly fine mask, he wired back to newspapers in Europe: “I have looked on the face of Agamemnon.”



– the **Mask of Agamemnon**

became one of the most famous archaeological artifacts ever brought to light

Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Schliemann and Mycenaean Civilization

- but what did Schliemann really find?
 - there's no doubt his “Troy” was an important city in the 2nd millennium BCE
 - and Mycenae was part of an important civilization on mainland Greece at that time
- but is Schliemann's “Troy” the Troy of legend?
- Did some real king named Agamemnon ever rule “Mycenaean” Mycenae?

Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Schliemann and Mycenaean Civilization

- because of these finds, Schliemann has been dubbed the “**Father of Mediterranean Archaeology**”
 - but how valid is the presumption that the world depicted in Homer’s epics represents what-really-happened — or even comes close?
 - remember that Homer was an oral poet writing at least three centuries after the Trojan War, with a dark age intervening!

Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

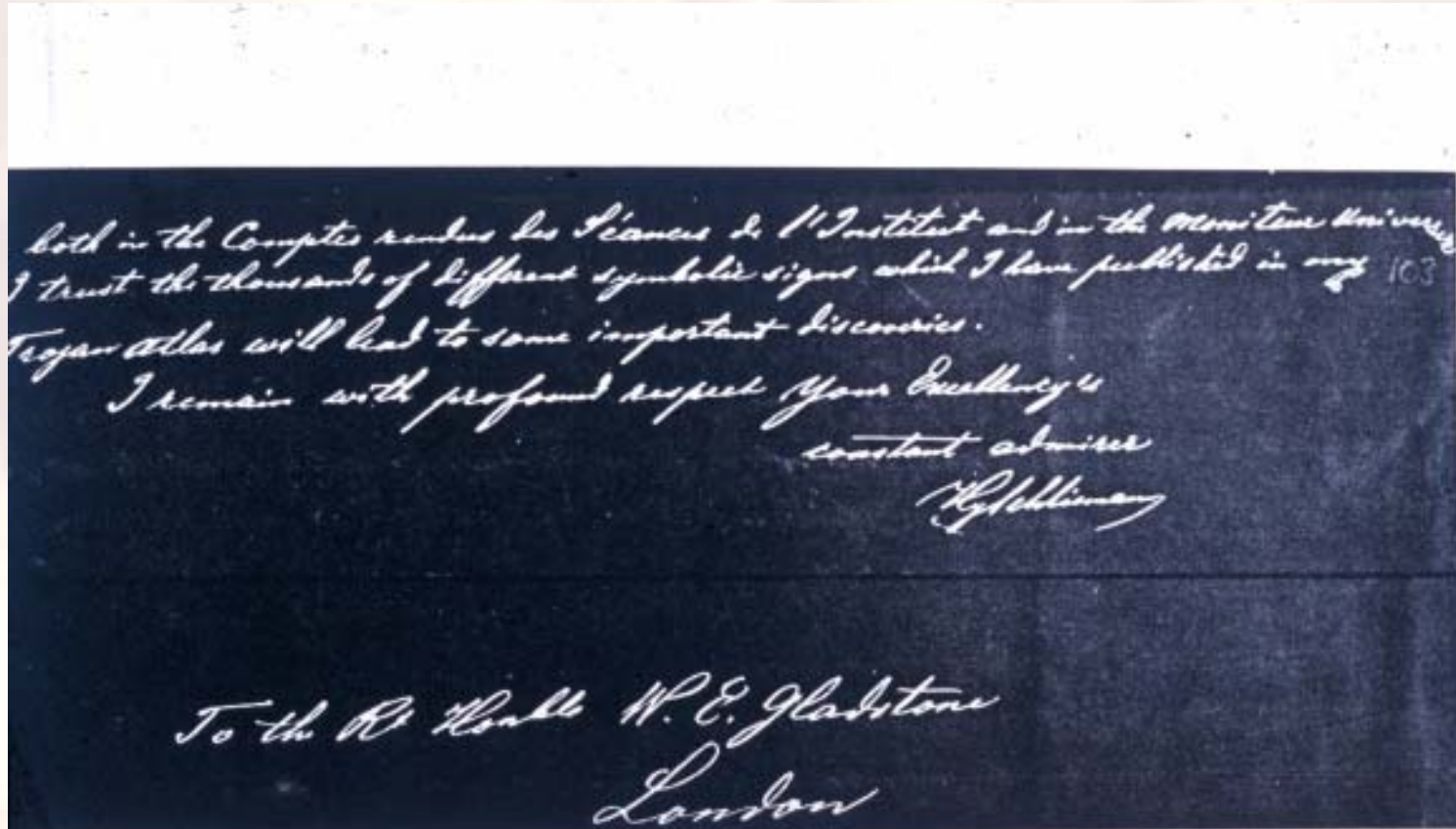
Who was Schliemann?

- Schliemann's real achievements:
 - laid the groundwork for scientific archaeology
 - popularized the discipline and trained many graduate students who were important later
- but he still had a foot in archaeology's more sensationalist past
 - for instance, he played up his “treasures”

Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Who was Schliemann?

- more important, Schliemann kept meticulous and voluminous records



both in the Comptes rendus des Séances de l'Institut and in the Moniteur Universel
I trust the thousands of different symbolic signs which I have published in my
Troyan tables will lead to some important discoveries. 103
I remain with profound respect Your Excellency's
constant admirer
H. Schliemann

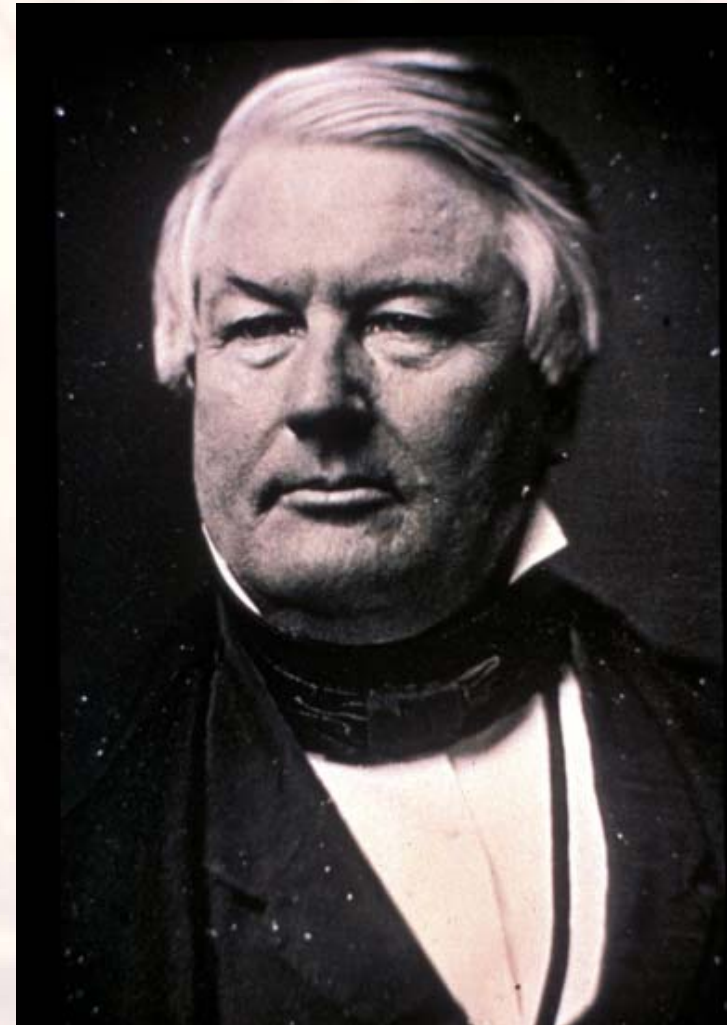
To the Rt Honble W. E. Gladstone
London

ost

Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Who was Schliemann?

- these records reveal disturbing tendencies in his character
- he says he met President Millard Fillmore, when he couldn't have
- he describes an earthquake in San Francisco when he wasn't there



Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Who was Schliemann?

- and the tendency to exaggerate does not seem to have stopped there
 - childhood dream of finding Troy?
 - Sophie and the discovery of Priam's Treasure?
 - is it just a collection of things he found in various graves at Troy?
 - it was lost until recently



Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Who was Schliemann?

- and the Mask of Agamemnon?
 - very different-looking from other death masks
 - especially the handle-bar moustache
- some scholars have suggested Schliemann forged this mask!
 - n.b. note in Schliemann's archives about a goldsmith



Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Who was Schliemann?

- and the Mask of Agamemnon?
 - very different-looking from other death masks
 - did Schliemann plan to say “I have looked on the face of Agamemnon” but first he needed an appropriate mask?
 - did he sneak it **in**—not out!—past the Greek guards at Mycenae?



Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Who was Schliemann?

- and the Mask of Agamemnon?
 - very different-looking from other death masks
 - or did he just improve an existing mask's look, i.e. add the handle-bar moustache?
 - see the article on reserve: “Behind the Mask of Agamemnon”



Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Who was Schliemann?

- and the Mask of Agamemnon?
 - very different-looking from other death masks
 - if so, it has to be one of the greatest con jobs in history!
 - the Greek government won't allow any testing on the mask, claiming it might damage a national treasure
 - more likely, tourism!



Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Who was Schliemann?

- from all this only one thing is absolutely certain: Schliemann would love all the press he's still getting!



Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

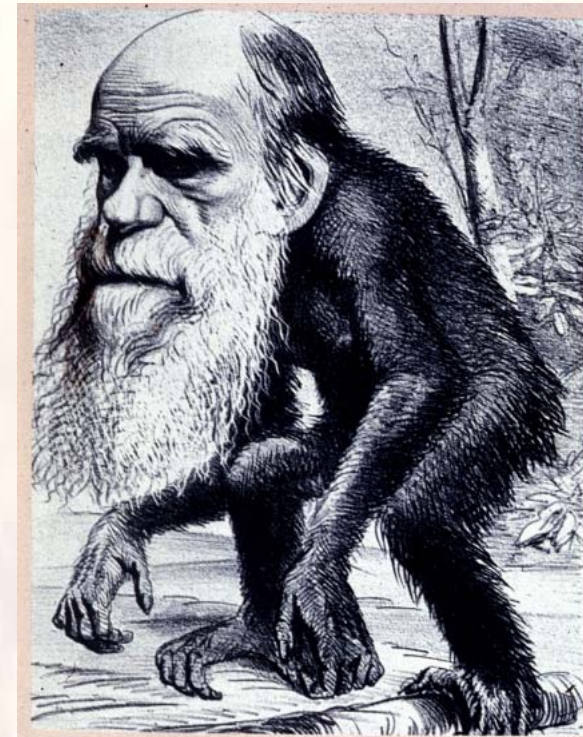
Conclusion: Archaeology and History

- what's the lesson to learn from Schliemann's life and career?
- and how much of the lesson is about the past versus the present?
- to answer questions such as these, we must look at Schliemann in his own day

Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Who was Schliemann?

- while Darwin was saying we “come from monkeys,” Schliemann was digging up evidence of a heroic past
- cf. Wagner’s operas about the heroes of German legend
- Schliemann handed Europe a past they liked much better, all neatly wrapped up in the trappings of science



Charles Darwin as a “venerable Orang-utang,” a caricature published in 1871.

Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Conclusion: Archaeology and History

- remember that this is the same age that denounced Herodotus as the “Father of History and Lies”
 - but they bought wholesale into the story of Sophie and Priam’s Treasure
- that’s the power of invented history!
- so whose death mask is this . . .

Heinrich Schliemann and Troy

Conclusion: Archaeology and History

