

p. 190 From these indications it seems that the Hittite and Egyptian records are not wrong, and that the Achaeans were a power to be reckoned with in ~~the~~ the fourteenth and subsequent centuries.

p. 191 No doubt in the process of years the facts were distorted, and for this reason it is impossible to press too far the account of the events which Homer gives. This was indeed a heroic age, and none of the main features which Homer describes, the kingdom of Agamemnon, the Siege of Troy, the Achaean domination, are in themselves impossible or even improbable. But beyond this all is fable. Even Agamemnon himself can only be a poetical figure till his name is found in historical documents of the time. Poetry is not history, and it is absurd to expect an epic poet to write a chronicle or even to take trouble with his names and details. He may telescope centuries and invent as his fancy pleases. But ultimately his story is founded in fact, and claims to tell of what has happened. Homer was too far removed from the heroic age to paint it accurately, but he had inherited the tradition of great things done, and like Herodotus after him, his subject was ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστά, τὰ μὲν Ἕλλησι, τὰ δὲ βαρβάροισι ἀποδεχθέντα.

. His details may be pure invention, but the general political situation which he describes seems to be based on fact.

Footnote 1. 'Great and admirable deeds, some done by Greeks, some by foreigners.'

p. 192 Early epic confounds fiction with fact, and the two elements are hard to unravel unless we have the independent testimony of history. So until the Hittite records confront us with the name of Agamemnon, we cannot tell whether he is a real man like Theodoric in the Germanic epic, or a creature of folk-lore like Beowulf, or a degraded divinity like Satan in Paradise Lost. Such questions, however fascinating, cannot yet be solved, but they lie far behind Homer.

Homer's Time and Place

p. 251 In antiquity, despite great divergences of detail, there were three main views of Homer's date. The first, held apparently by Hecataeus and repeated by Eratosthenes and other late writers, made him either a contemporary of the events which he described or within a century of them, thus placing him in the twelfth or eleventh century before Christ. The second view was that held by Herodotus, that Homer lived not more than four hundred years before himself, that is, in the latter half of the ninth century. A third view held by Theopompus placed him even later, making him a contemporary of Gyges and of Archilochus. Allowing for some divagations these three views still hold the field. Andrew Lang and the stricter unitarians hold that Homer lived at the end of the Mycenaean Age, and that he records the world he knew. Mr. Allen and Mr. Scott place him about 900. The third view seems to be held in an advanced form by Professor Murray, who regards the final form of the Iliad as the work of the rhapsode Cynaethus who lived in the sixth century. Roughly the question of date is the question of choosing between these three alternatives.