

Homeric Heroes

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VERSION 1.0 | PUBLISHED 21 SEPTEMBER 2022

Table of content

1. Introduction
 2. The Homeric epic
 - 2.1. Research history
 - 2.2. Phenomena and forms of representation
 - 2.3. Perspectives for future research
 3. Homeric heroes in the visual culture of antiquity
 - 3.1. Research overview
 - 3.2. Phenomena and forms of representation
 - 3.3. Perspectives for future research
 4. References
 5. Selected literature
 6. List of images
- Citation

1. Introduction

‘Homeric heroes’ are primarily the characters of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, epic poems attributed to Homer (2nd half of the 8th century BC, authorship and dating are disputed). The best-known examples are the respective protagonists Achilles (the *Iliad*) and Odysseus (the *Odyssey*). Secondly – but not discussed in detail here – any [heroes](#) in the tradition and historical reception of the Homeric epics can be called ‘Homeric’, if, for example, Odysseus himself appears in a later work or his characteristics are given to another character. As the earliest known works of European literature and as a canonical cultural reference point in antiquity (and, with some reservations perhaps, to the present day), the Homeric epics decisively defined European notions of heroism. The Homeric heroes are not only called “heroes” (ἥρωες), but their authority as great figures of myth and prehistory, as well as their embedding in the epic genre (later called ‘heroic song’ and ‘heroic epic’), made them models of [heroizations](#) and [heroisms](#). ^(Tilg)^[1]

2. The Homeric epic

2.1. Research history

Research on Homer, which is unwieldy even for specialists, contains much disparate material on Homeric heroes. In the studies specifically devoted to the subject of heroism, however, some focal points emerge. Since Rohde in 1894, the relationship of the Homeric heroes to the Greek hero cult has been much discussed.[2] In Homer, mainly warriors, but also other persons such as the singer Demodokos (*Odyssey* 8,483) or the servant Moulaios (*Odyssey* 18,423), formerly a herald, are called ἥρωες. The term means something like “warrior” or “noble man”; at least on the surface level, a religious meaning or references to hero cults cannot be found. Based on this observation, Rohde and others (recently e.g. Bremmer 2006) argue that the original Greek concept of heroes was the literary one, while hero cults only developed subsequently.[3] Today, it is more generally accepted that the two strands coexisted from the beginning, as argued by, among others, Bravo (2009) or Jones (2011), and that they could have become intertwined soon after Homer’s death.[4] Nagy (1999) and others argue for traces of hero cults in the Homeric heroes themselves.[5]

The question of what constitutes a Homeric hero, i.e. how to characterise the Homeric ‘hero concept’, pervades all Homeric research of the 20th and 21st centuries and has recently led to Horn’s 2014 attempt at a larger systematisation.[6] Following previous work, he characterises the Homeric heroes as part of an entire heroic society or heroic age whose individual members stand out in their pursuit of honour (τιμή) and (posthumous) fame/glory (κλέος). Seemingly, different heroes such as the war hero Achilles and the intellectual hero Odysseus could be derived from this common basic structure. A number of contributions see the Homeric heroes as an exaggerated reflection of the audience of the Homeric epics, aiming to construct its own identity in the epic mirror. As role models, the Homeric heroes serve here as positive or negative examples, depending on the context. Thus Effe (1988) interprets the figure of Achilles in the *Iliad* not primarily as a warrior hero, but as a moral figure between offended individual honour and social responsibility, a conflict from which the audience should then learn something for their own thinking and actions.[7] Howie (1995) and Danek (2010) take a similar approach.[8] The latter reads the *Iliad* as a “prime example of failed crisis management”, mainly because of Agamemnon’s bad decisions, which have consequences for the individual but also for the whole community.[9] In a more general sense, the Homeric heroes serve as role models when their humanity and human interest are emphasised. Despite their outsized epic stature, they make basic human experiences familiar to people throughout time (Althoff 2010).[10]

Schein (1984), for example, goes so far as to interpret the war depicted in the *Iliad* only as a backdrop for Homer’s interpretation of existential human tragedies, limitations and hardships. The epic thus becomes a “comprehensive exploration and expression of the beauty, the rewards, and the price of human heroism”.[11] Clarke (2004) extends this approach to both Homeric epics: while the *Iliad* problematises heroism, the *Odyssey* moves beyond the traditional heroic warrior ethos and shows a hero who adapts to his lowly circumstances and only through this achieves success. Thus, both epics, each in its own way, have “a deeper and more universal level, on which the miseries and exaltations of heroic experience become a device for exploring the universal realities of man’s struggle for self-validation under the immortal and carefree gods”.[12] This widespread humanist reading of the

Homeric heroes is challenged by occasional post-structuralist deconstructions, such as Buchan's 2004 scrutiny of the *Odyssey*. Here, the always unfulfilled desire (a category inspired by Lacan's psychoanalysis), doubt and destruction that emanate from the Homeric heroes are emphasised.^[13] The phenomenon of the self-heroization of Homeric heroes in the medium of their speech has received increased interest since the 1980s. Segal (1983) and Martin (1989) have drawn attention to similarities between the Homeric heroes and their creator, the epic poet and wordsmith. Segal argues that Odysseus, through constant reference to his deeds in the past (including his long autobiographical narratives at the court of the Phaeacians in *Odyssey*, 9-13), creates the (posthumous) glory (κλέος) typical of the epic hero in the role of the epic bard himself.^[14] Martin sees the Homeric heroes of the *Iliad* as 'orators' in a society in which individual excellence was also essentially defined by polished and convincing speech.^[15] The Homeric heroes, and above all Achilles, thus also justify their heroism by fighting with words. (Tilg)

2.2. Phenomena and forms of representation

An essential difference between the Homeric heroes and many later heroic conceptions is that they are part of a whole society or age of heroes. The characters of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are almost without exception heroes, which is reflected both in the distribution of the word ἥρωας (used indiscriminately for 'greater' and 'lesser' warriors, friend and foe) and in the common code of the values of honour and glory. However, in the patriarchal world of the Homeric heroes, which is characterised by warrior nobility, it goes without saying that this refers only to noble men – women only appear in supporting roles, are not called 'heroes' (ἥρωες) and do not strive for fame and honour in the same way; the same applies, with few exceptions, to socially lowly figures – if, as mentioned above, the servant Moulis is nevertheless called a 'hero' once in the *Odyssey*, this is presumably due to his earlier function as a herald in war. Individual achievement is indeed evident insofar as different figures – first and foremost Achilles and Odysseus – realise the heroic concept underlying the Homeric heroes to varying degrees. However, individual heroism in the sense that a single hero faces a society of non-heroes is alien to the Homeric heroes in their world.

The situation is different when one looks at the Homeric heroes from the point of view of the narrator and his audience. The narrator of the Homeric epics repeatedly makes clear that he belongs to a later, weaker generation compared to the Homeric heroes (e.g. *Iliad* 12,383). He looks back to an undefined prehistory in which heroism was normal in contrast to the decadent present. From this perspective, the Homeric heroes very much stand out from an unheroic society and can accordingly be more easily understood as extraordinary figures. They are characterised by a heightening of everything humanly possible, e.g. in strength, beauty, anger, intelligence, nobility and oratory. At the same time, however, the Homeric heroes are unable to overcome the barriers that are fundamentally given to human beings. Their abilities are enhanced compared to ordinary (later) people, but they are not supernatural – in this context scholars have sometimes spoken of Homeric "realism". Above all, however, Homeric heroes are mortal. Many have a direct or indirect divine lineage. Occasionally, the gods intervene in events for or against one of the heroes. Nevertheless, the Homeric heroes themselves do not have divine status and must deal with existential problems such as death, bitterness and the search for a home.

Honour (τιμή) and (posthumous) glory (κλέος) are the central values of the Homeric heroes, which they essentially share with their society. However, the individual realisation of these values can also bring them into conflict with society, as when Achilles, out of aggrieved honour, jeopardises the success of the entire Greek campaign against Troy. The hero of the *Iliad* typically realises heroic values in war. Achilles is distinguished by his “capacity for violence” (βίη). He is the strongest fighter of the Greeks, without whose participation in the war the rest of the army is helpless. Since the *Iliad* was created, war and violence have probably been the longest-lived and most enduring constant in the European conception of heroes; extensive descriptions of battles and duels have become part of the standard epic repertoire. Even in the 20th century, Achilles and other Homeric heroes were still perceived as war heroes, as Vandiver showed in 2010 using the example of British poetry during the First World War.[16] Nevertheless, the *Odyssey* demonstrates that Homeric heroes are not limited to war and violence. Odysseus is the hero who earns honour and fame through his intellect, his suffering and his adaptability. He could be called the first “new” and the first “modern” hero of European literature – it is no coincidence that the *Odyssey* and not the *Iliad* forms the subtext to James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. The (heroic) epic was the most important medium in which the fame of the Homeric heroes was disseminated. Without the mediating poet, the whole heroic endeavor would be in vain – an awareness of this is occasionally revealed by the Homeric heroes when they themselves speak of their posthumous fame or when the singers Phemios and Demodokos (who is himself called ἦρωες) appear in the *Odyssey* and recount the adventures of the Homeric heroes. For the narrative construction of the Homeric heroes, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* employ a whole arsenal of techniques that Homeric scholars have analysed, systematised and named with technical terms, e.g. “epitheta ornantia” (e.g. “the swift-footed Achilles”), “type scenes” (e.g. scenes of armour), “epic simile” and “catalogues”. They became stylistically influential for the wider epic tradition and continue to shape epic speech in the broadest sense to this day. (Tilg)

2.3. Perspectives for future research

Thanks to the considerable body of research on Homer since the 19th century, the fundamental questions regarding Homeric heroes have been clarified. Complex problems such as the relationship between literary Homeric heroes and the religious hero cult could only be solved based on new source material. An almost infinite wealth of possibilities for studying Homeric heroes, however, is offered by their history of reception. Here, one could examine the functionalisation and cycles of popularity characteristic of certain eras and contexts (such as Odysseus as a figure of the search for meaning and disorientation in the 20th century) as well as processes of transformation and hybridisation (such as Odysseus in connection with Heracles as a model for a heroization of Jesus Christ in Zilling 2011).[17] On a systemic level, it might be worthwhile to examine the extent to which later epics from antiquity to modern times adopt, change, counteract, etc. the ‘heroic society’ and the world of values of the Homeric heroes. Finally, although Homeric narrative techniques are already well researched, there are always new and interesting approaches from the narratological side, e.g. De Jong (1987) with the introduction of a “secondary focalization” by the characters of the *Iliad*, thanks to which Homeric heroes can be characterised more individually[18]; or Grethlein (2012) with the concept of the “epic plupast”, the heroic period *before* the generation of Homeric heroes, which they remember, towards which they orient themselves and to which they ascribe exemplary qualities.[19] (Tilg)

3. Homeric heroes in the visual culture of antiquity

In the visual culture of ancient Greece and Rome, Homeric heroes, i.e. the characters of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, were omnipresent between the 7th century BC and the 5th century AD. Their deeds appear in various visual media. They can also be found in narratives that precede or succeed the two epics in mythological chronology, such as the narratives of the so-called Epic Cycle around the 'Trojan War' (Cypria; Aethiopis; 'Little Iliad'; *Iliou persis* / 'Sack of Troy'), but also as isolated, actionless-static figures. Through the lense of these representations, cycles and transformations of interest in the Homeric heroes and the heroic qualities attributed to them can be discerned. (vdH)

3.1. Research overview

The studies on ancient images of Homeric heroes are almost innumerable. The material is recorded in the lemmata of the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*.^[20] Individual studies are available, for example, on Achilles^[21], Odysseus^[22], Aias^[23] and Aineias^[24], but also on images related to the *Odyssey*, the *Iliad* and other Trojan epics^[25]. Only a few surveys deal with the history of reception of Homeric heroes in ancient visual depictions comprehensively.^[26] It is the relationship between text and image that is most extensively discussed in research.^[27] Debates focus on when representations of Homeric heroes first appear in the early Greek art of the 8th and 7th centuries BC and on how the first mythological images relate to the Homeric epics.^[28] According to Bernhard Schweitzer and Roland Hampe^[29], Homeric heroes were depicted in rare vase-paintings of the late Geometric period (750-700 BC), for example Odysseus' shipwreck on the neck of an Attic clay jug in Munich (Staatliche Antikensammlungen Inv. 8696, see fig. 1). The interpretation of individual depictions of 'twin beings' played a role here, in which some wanted to recognise the sons of Actor appearing in Homer (*Iliad* 11, 750-52; 23, 638-42). However, this may also be a visual convention that is to be understood in a different way^[30], for the contemporaneous imagery as a whole was rather dominated by generic depictions of land and ship battles, funerary ceremonies, etc., especially on large funerary vessels.^[31] However, the overall less distinctive character of the geometric figures and scenes also led to the conclusion that mythical images could be recognised in *all* the action images of the 8th century^[32]; this is indicated by omnipresent 'heroic' attributes, whose extraordinary-Homeric semantics, however, remain questionable ('Dipylon shield').^[33] Finally, all figurative images of the geometric period were considered *generic scenes* because they consistently contradicted the Homeric epic text – as is the case on the jug in Munich; Odysseus' shipwreck is portrayed differently in Homer.^[34] According to this opinion, the first mythological images did not appear until the first half of the 7th century BC. Carter's and Fittschen's studies took a mediating position in this debate.^[35] The formal influence of oriental artefacts on the visual representation was also considered. Lastly, Snodgrass showed that images in the sense of illustrations of specific Homeric narratives cannot be identified before the 7th century BC.^[36]

More recently, other research perspectives have emerged. Giuliani adopted a narratological perspective^[37]: He described the scenic images of the 8th century BC as 'descriptive' in that they showed – similar to the description of the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad* (18, 477-608) – the state and condition of the world. Only through the depiction of extraordinary objects (Trojan horse on wheels) or deeds (blinding a drunken giant), which do not occur 'in the world', did this change – probably

under the influence of Homer – in the earlier 7th century BC to a ‘narrative’ style of representation, which required the naming of the actors (heroes) and unambiguous stories. Langdon, on the other hand, interpreted the geometric images (“released from the shadow of Homer”[38]) in a structuralist perspective as negotiations of social identities and ‘rites de passages’.

The following images of Homeric heroes, often named in inscriptions from the 7th century until the 4th century BC, have almost always been studied in the context of the pictorial corpus of all Greek myths about gods and heroes[39], and more recently also in the context of generic representations (‘life images’) that were contemporaneous and often closely related to them typologically. In the process, they have been explained – like myths *per se* in the early Greek period – as visual debates about problematic situations, norms, relevant social practices, role models and practices of the living world.[40] Junker concluded that many images of Homeric heroes of the 6th and 5th centuries BC represent “pseudo-Homerica”, i.e. they took up Homeric names and themes, but mainly attracted attention by building on and further developing their ‘Homeric’ content.[41]

Images of Homeric heroes from more recent periods have found little specific research interest, such as in Hellenistic pottery (‘Homeric cups’)[42], as decoration of Roman villas in reliefs (‘Tabulae Iliacae’)[43], sculptures (Villa of Sperlonga)[44] and wall paintings.[45] Late antique and early medieval representations of Odysseus have also been re-examined.[46] (vdH)

Fig. 1: Odysseus’ Shipwreck



Odysseus’ Shipwreck

Attic Geometric jug, late 8th century BC, height 21.5 cm. Munich, Antikensammlung, Inv. No. 8696.

Source: Image by Antikensammlung Munich
Licence: Quotation (German Act on Copyright, Section 51 / § 51 UrhG)

3.2. Phenomena and forms of representation

The emergence of the written Homeric epics from the oral tradition and the appearance of visual representations of their protagonists, whom Homer consistently refers to as heroes, seem to have proceeded simultaneously, even if they cannot be dated exactly, during the emergence of mythological imagery in Greece during the period around and after 700 BC. Direct dependencies or primary inspiration by Homer can hardly be proven. In quantitative terms, Odysseus stood out from circa 670 BC as the first Homeric hero to be figuratively portrayed, with his [collective](#) achievements (*Odyssey* 9, 166-566: blinding of Polyphemus, see fig. 2; escape from his cave) being of particular interest.[\[47\]](#) This was followed in the later part of the 7th century BC by Patroclus, Menelaus and Achilles, for example, and from the 6th century BC on by a large number of other Homeric figures such as Aias, Paris, Hector, Agamemnon, Sarpedon, etc. In terms of content, the focus increases on depictions of warriors at their departure (fig. 4), in battle (fig. 3) and as fallen. There are close connections to non-Homeric scenes until the 5th century BC.[\[48\]](#) Homeric heroes also appear in many other situations: Achilles' revengeful desecration of Hector's corpse (*Iliad* 22, 395-404) was especially popular in the 6th and early 5th centuries BC[\[49\]](#); until the 5th century BC, the ransoming of Hector's body (*Iliad* 24) is shown as a scene of Achilles' 'hubris' at a meal.[\[50\]](#) Conversely, there are also genre-like scenes[\[51\]](#): Achilles is depicted tending to the wounded Patroclus (fig. 5).[\[52\]](#) A board game between Aias and Achilles is the most popular Achilles theme from about 530 to the early 5th century BC (fig. 6), although we know of no textual reference.[\[53\]](#) Homeric heroes are thus shown, without being given a special status compared to other mythological figures, as representatives of aristocratic ideals and ways of life (war; *agon*; revelry), later also of democratic values (dispute over Achilles' weapons at a voting scene[\[54\]](#)) or paradigmatic, but not least also problematic, transgressive situations (revenge; suicide; violence). The fact that basic questions of dealing with fame (*kleos*) were also visually thematised has recently been established.[\[55\]](#)

Fig. 2 – 6: Visual representations in the 7th to 5th century BC



Fig. 2:
Blinding of Polyphemus (*Odyssey* 9, 166-566)

Attic neck amphora, c. 670 BC. Clay. Eleusis, Archaeological Museum, Inv. No. 2630.

Source: [User:Napoleon Vier / Wikimedia Commons](#)

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Fig. 3:
Duel of Menelaus and Paris (Iliad 3, 250-461)

Attic red-figure drinking cup, c. 490 BC. Clay.
Paris, Musée du Louvre, Inv. No. G 115.

Source: [User:Jastrow / Wikimedia Commons](#)
Licence: Public Domain



Fig. 4:
Achilles receives the weapons of Hephaestus from Thetis (Iliad 19, 1-36)

Attic black-figure hydria, c. 570/60 BC. Clay.
Paris, Musée du Louvre, Inv. No. E 869.

Source: [User:Jastrow / Wikimedia Commons](#)
Licence: Public Domain



Fig. 5:
Achilles puts a bandage on Patroclus' wound

Attic red-figure drinking bowl by Sosias, c. 500/490 BC. Clay. Berlin, Staatliche Museen/SMPK – Antikensammlung, Inv. No. F 2278.

Source: [User:Bibi Saint-Pol / Wikimedia Commons](#)
Licence: Public Domain



Fig. 6:
Aias and Achilles playing a board game

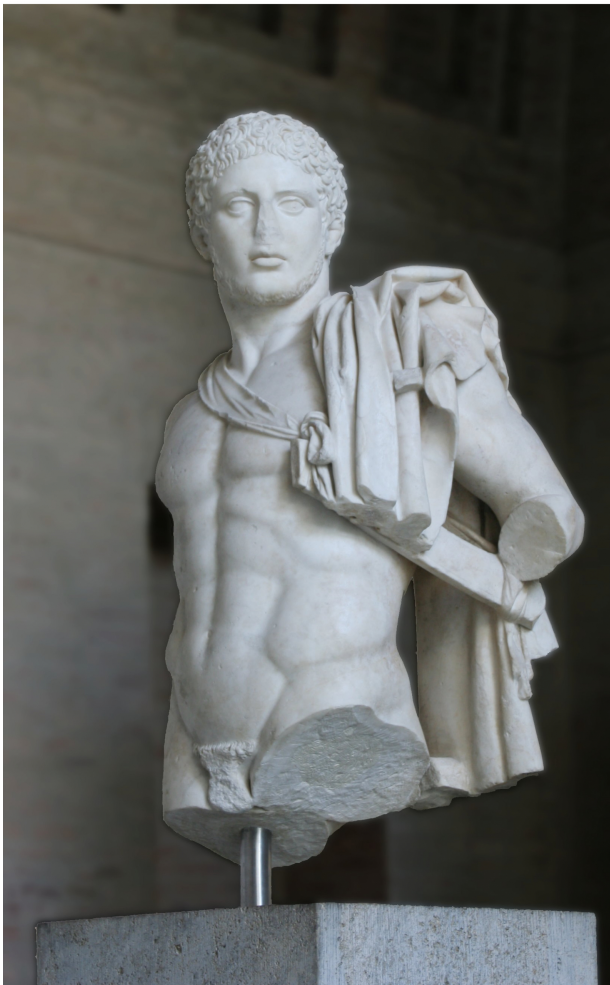
Attic black-figure amphora by Exekias, c. 530 BC. Clay. Rom, Musei Vaticani, Inv. No. 16757.

Source: [Jakob Bådagård / Wikimedia Commons](#)

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All in all, scenes with Homeric heroes never make up more than 30% of the Greek mythological imagery from the 7th to the 5th centuries BC.[56] Heracles was far more popular than Achilles – especially in Athens –, so Homer’s figures shaped visual culture far less, and far less frequently in terms of their successes in martial combat, than Homer’s esteemed reputation might lead one to expect.

Fig. 7: Statue of Diomedes



Diomedes

Roman copy of a statue of the later 5th century BC (Palladion missing). Marble. Munich, Glyptothek, Inv. No. 304.

Source: [User:MatthiasKabel / Wikimedia Commons](#)

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Until the end of the 5th century BC, images of Homeric heroes, like those of all myths, dominated paintings on luxury ceramics, ornaments on utensils and weapons, and from the 6th century BC on, elaborate architecture such as temples. Statuary representations of Homeric heroes are rare. For example, a statue of Penelope from the early 5th century BC and a statue of Diomedes from the later 5th century BC have survived in Roman copies, showing him with the Palladion stolen from Troy, an episode of the so-called 'Little Iliad' (fig. 7).[57] The well-known 'Doryphoros', a work of Polykleitos from the mid-5th century BC, is sometimes identified as Achilles, but this is not confirmed.[58] Alexander the Great (356–323 BC) referred to Achilles as a model, but there is no evidence of any pictorial work that explicitly demonstrates this.[59] Pliny the Elder reports in the 1st century AD (*naturalis historia* 34, 18) that statues of naked men with lances were called *effigies Achilleae*, i.e. Achilles was regarded as a model for the athletically trained warrior and athlete. However, [prefigurative](#) images relating to Homeric heroes played a subordinate role in Roman portraiture.[60]

A different kind of interest, more focused on illustration, is visible from the 3rd/2nd century BC onwards in narratively broader, cyclical depictions from the epics, as on the 'Homeric cups' or on the 1st century BC 'Tabulae Iliacae' (fig. 8), then also in Roman wall painting (Odyssey frescoes from the Esquiline in Rome, c. 40 BC).[61] In the Hellenistic period, sculptures were created that presented Homer's heroes scenically, freely and on a large scale, such as the 'Pasquino Group', which depicts Aias with the body of Achilles or Menelaus with that of Patroclus (fig. 9)[62], and Achilles holding the dying Amazon Penthesilea.[63] Reinforced by the emergence of large villas with rich pictorial decoration, especially in Italy, copies of these sculptures and newly designed larger figure ensembles were created, such as the sculptures in the grotto of the villa near Sperlonga around 30 BC, which staged an 'Odyssey in marble' (figs. 10-11).[64] Since the 1st century BC, Aeneias (Latin *Aeneas*) has been depicted more frequently in Rome as the founding hero of that city and the ancestor of the Iulian family from which Caesar and Augustus were descended, and has subsequently become an exemplar of Roman virtue (*virtus*) and Romanitas[65], for example on funerary monuments in the provinces. On coinage Italic families referred genealogically to other Homeric heroes as did cities in Asia Minor to Homeric traditions.[66] When relief sarcophagi with mythological scenes appeared as burial sites in the Roman Empire from around 120 AD onwards, Homeric heroes became a popular theme, especially in Greece, to illustrate the qualities of the deceased in relation to their heroic past.[67] Odysseus and the Sirens appeared on Italian sarcophagi in the 3rd century.[68] Scenes from the Vita of Achilles ('Tensa Capitolina')[69] were depicted on bronze fittings of a magnificent chariot in Rome at that time; metal tableware was showing the Achilles Vita until the 6th century (fig. 12).[70] Around 500 AD, the *Iliad* was illustrated in a text edition in Alexandria or Constantinople ('Ilias Ambrosiana', fig. 13).[71] Procopius' claim that the statue of the Eastern Roman Emperor Iustinian (527–565) at the Augusteion in Constantinople shows him in the *schema Achilleion* (*de aedificiis* 1, 2, 7-12) provides late evidence for the prefigurative character of Homeric heroes for the image of rulers. Depictions of Odysseus in the Siren Adventure represent a bridge to the Middle Ages' pictorial tradition.[72] (vdH)

Fig. 8 – 13: Visual representations from the 1st century BC onwards

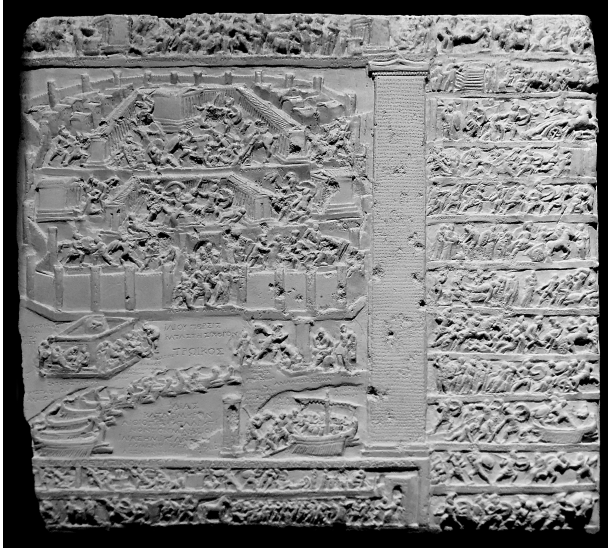


Fig. 8:
'Tabula Iliaca' with relief depictions of the Iliad

1st century BC/AD. Marble. Rome, Musei Capitolini Inv. No. 316.

Source: [User:Jastrow / Wikimedia Commons](#)

Licence: Public Domain



Fig. 9:
**Aias with the body of Achilles or Menelaus
with the body of Patroclus**

Roman copy of a Hellenistic statuary group (with modern additions). Marble. Florence, Loggia dei Lanzi.

Source: [Marie-Lan Nguyen / Wikimedia Commons](#)

Licence: [Creative Commons BY 2.5 Generic](#)



Fig. 10:
Scylla attacks the ship of Odysseus (Odyssey 12, 222-259)

Late Hellenistic statuary group (end of 1st century BC) from the villa at Sperlonga. Marble. Museo Archaeologico di Sperlonga.

Source: [steveilott / Flickr](#)

Licence: [Creative Commons BY 2.0](#)



Fig. 11:
Odysseus and his fellows blind Polyphemus (Odyssey 9, 166-566)

Reconstruction of a late Hellenistic statuary group (end of 1st century BC) from the villa at Sperlonga (reconstruction). Plaster (casts). Museo Archaeologico di Sperlonga.

Source: [Carole Raddato / Flickr](#)

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Fig. 12:
Plate with relief depictions from the life of Achilles

c. 350 AD. Silver. Augst, Römermuseum, Inv. No. 62.1.

Source: [Adrian Michael / Wikimedia Commons](#)

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[Unported](#)



Fig. 13:
Odysseus and Diomedes capture Dolon (Iliad 10)

Illustration in the Iliad Ambrosiana, 5th century AD. Milan, Bibliotheca Ambrosiana Cod. F 205 inf. Nr. 34.

Source: [Dsmdgold / Wikimedia Commons](#)
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3.3. Perspectives for future research

A comprehensive study of visual representations of Homeric heroes in antiquity is lacking. Research on the creation of such images in Homer's time and after has so far concentrated on the relationships between images and texts, rather than on examining the early pictorial concepts for the depiction of extraordinary figures.[73] The role of visual media in the heroization of individual Homeric actors and in heroisms related to them has therefore been reflected less than the reception of Homer. On the other hand, there are no systematic studies on whether and how images of heroes made use of certain pictorial formulae to indicate extraordinariness, for example through Homerising antiquaria[74] or by integrating local heroes into scenes with Homeric heroes.[75] Homeric heroes were visualised in antiquity on the one hand as models of honorable and thus glorious action. On the other hand – and this especially until the 4th century BC – they appeared as figures of a mythological discourse about norms and ideals of action, which by no means received the character of positive role models: Dangers of honor and fame or hubris were also visually negotiated, problematic heroes were just as important as exemplary ones. Other factors can be recognised in the Hellenistic and in the Roman imperial periods: Homeric heroes were now conceived as *exempla*, for example in forms of the *imitatio heroica*. Furthermore, they were depicted as actors in cyclical, narrative sequences of the epic, the representation of which was obviously linked to ideas of education and prestige in the Greek literary tradition. Links and boundaries between these phenomena could be examined more closely in order to better understand phenomena of heroization as well as those of the exemplarity of Homeric heroes. (vdH)

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6. List of images

- 0 Teaserbild:Aias with the body of Achilles or Menelaus with the body of Patroclus, Roman copy of a Hellenistic statuary group (with modern additions). Marble. Florence, Loggia dei Lanzi.
Source: [Marie-Lan Nguyen / Wikimedia Commons](#)
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- 1 Odysseus' Shipwreck, Attic Geometric jug, late 8th century BC, height 21.5 cm. Munich, Antikensammlung, Inv. No. 8696.
Source: Image by Antikensammlung Munich
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- 2 Blinding of Polyphemus (Odyssey 9, 166-566), Attic neck amphora, c. 670 BC. Clay. Eleusis, Archaeological Museum, Inv. No. 2630.
Source: [User:Napoleon Vier / Wikimedia Commons](#)
Licence: [Creative Commons BY-SA 3.0](#)
- 3 Duel of Menelaus and Paris (Iliad 3, 250-461), Attic red-figure drinking cup, c. 490 BC. Clay. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Inv. No. G 115.
Source: [User:Jastrow / Wikimedia Commons](#)
Licence: Public Domain
- 4 Achilles receives the weapons of Hephaestus from Thetis (Iliad 19, 1-36), Attic black-figure hydria, c. 570/60 BC. Clay. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Inv. No. E 869.
Source: [User:Jastrow / Wikimedia Commons](#)
Licence: Public Domain
- 5 Achilles puts a bandage on Patroclus' wound, Attic red-figure drinking bowl by Sosias, c. 500/490 BC. Clay. Berlin, Staatliche Museen/SMPK – Antikensammlung, Inv. No. F 2278.
Source: [User:Bibi Saint-Pol / Wikimedia Commons](#)
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- 6 Aias and Achilles playing a board game, Attic black-figure amphora by Exekias, c. 530 BC. Clay. Rom, Musei Vaticani, Inv. No. 16757.
Source: [Jakob Bådagård / Wikimedia Commons](#)
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- 7 Diomedes, Roman copy of a statue of the later 5th century BC (Palladion missing). Marble. Munich, Glyptothek, Inv. No. 304.
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Licence: [Creative Commons BY-SA 2.5 Generic](#)
- 8 'Tabula Iliaca' with relief depictions of the Iliad, 1st century BC/AD. Marble. Rome, Musei Capitolini Inv. No. 316.
Source: [User:Jastrow / Wikimedia Commons](#)
Licence: Public Domain
- 9 Aias with the body of Achilles or Menelaus with the body of Patroclus, Roman copy of a Hellenistic statuary group (with modern additions). Marble. Florence, Loggia dei Lanzi.
Source: [Marie-Lan Nguyen / Wikimedia Commons](#)
Licence: [Creative Commons BY 2.5 Generic](#)
- 10 Scylla attacks the ship of Odysseus (Odyssey 12, 222-259), Late Hellenistic statuary group (end of 1st century BC) from the villa at Sperlonga. Marble. Museo Archaeologico di Sperlonga.

Source: [steveilott / Flickr](#)

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- 11 Odysseus and his fellows blind Polyphemus (Odyssey 9, 166-566), Reconstruction of a late Hellenistic statuary group (end of 1st century BC) from the villa at Sperlonga (reconstruction). Plaster (casts). Museo Archaeologico di Sperlonga.

Source: [Carole Raddato / Flickr](#)

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- 12 Plate with relief depictions from the life of Achilles, c. 350 AD. Silver. Augst, Römermuseum, Inv. No. 62.1.

Source: [Adrian Michael / Wikimedia Commons](#)

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- 13 Odysseus and Diomedes capture Dolon (Iliad 10), Illustration in the Iliad Ambrosiana, 5th century AD. Milan, Bibliotheca Ambrosiana Cod. F 205 inf. Nr. 34.

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Citation

Stefan Tilg / Ralf von den Hoff: Homeric Heroes. In: Compendium heroicum, ed. by Ronald G. Asch, Achim Aurnhammer, Georg Feitscher, Anna Schreurs-Morét, and Ralf von den Hoff, published by Sonderforschungsbereich 948, University of Freiburg, Freiburg 2022-09-21. DOI: 10.6094/heroicum/homhe1.0.20220921

Meta data

DOI	10.6094/heroicum/homhe1.0.20220921
Licence	Creative Commons BY-ND 4.0
Category	Hero Types
Subject Headings (LOC)	Civilization, Classical , Civilization, Greco-Roman , Epic literature , Heroes , Mythology

Index	<p>Authors: Stefan Tilg, Ralf von den Hoff</p> <p>Persons and Figures: Achilles (figure), Agamemnon (figure), Demodocus (figure), Hercules (figure), Jesus, Moullos (figure), Odysseus (figure), Phemius (figure), Ajax the Great / Aias (figure), Patroclus (figure), Paris (figure), Hector (figure), Alexander the Great, Sarpedon (figure), Justinian I, Siren (figure), Augustus, Procopius of Caesarea, Penthesilea (figure), Doryphoros (figure), Polykleitos, Diomedes (figure), Gaius Julius Caesar, Pliny the Elder, Jacques Lacan, James Joyce, Aeneas (figure)</p> <p>Spaces and Locations: Mediterranean Basin, Greece, Ancient Rome, Constantinople, Rome, Augustaion, Athens</p> <p>Time and Events: Antiquity, Archaic Greece, Middle Ages, Modernity, World War I / First World War, 8th century BC, 7th century BC, 6th century BC, 5th century BC, 1st century, 3rd century, 4th century</p>
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Compendium heroicum

Das Online-Lexikon des
Sonderforschungsbereichs 948
„Helden – Heroisierung – Heroismen“
an der Albert-Ludwig-Universität Freiburg

In Kooperation mit dem Open Encyclopedia
System der Freien Universität Berlin
www.open-encyclopedia-system.org

Gefördert von der Deutschen
Forschungsgemeinschaft

Kontakt

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