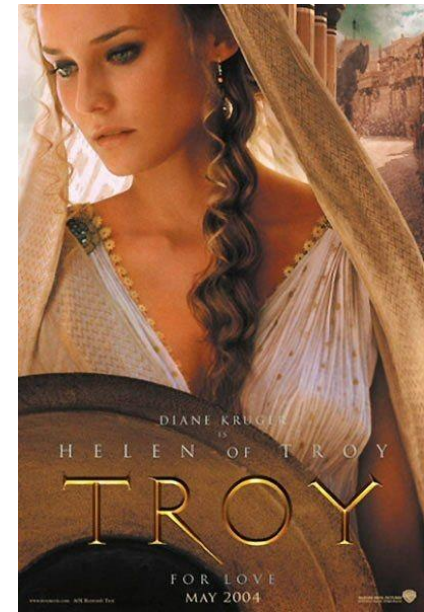


# Seafaring and ship construction in Homer



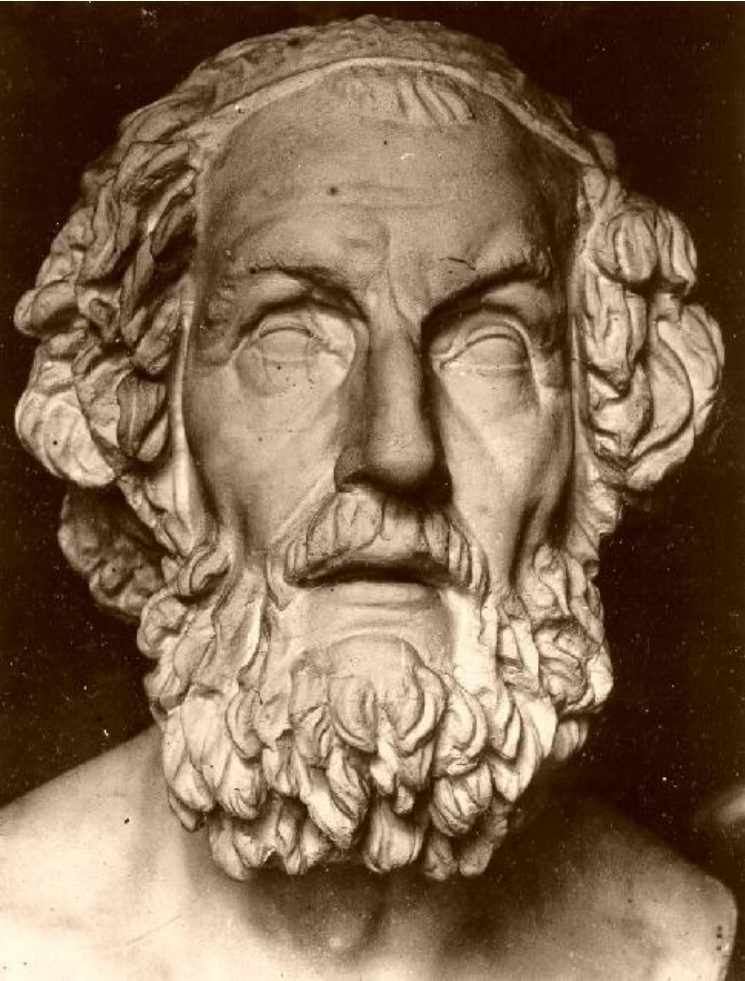
The *Iliad*  
(and the face)



The *Odyssey*  
(and the song)



Homer ca. 750-700 BCE: the Aegean was transforming from a rural, agrarian place to an urban and sophisticated one— end of the Early Iron ('Dark') Age, beginning of the Archaic Period



The Trojan War: believed to coincide with the collapse of the Late Bronze Age palatial system in the Aegean (ca. 1200 BCE)



The wooden Trojan horse: probably constructed like a ship would have been: Was Epeius (the architect of the horse) also a shipwright in the Greek camp?

Homeric glimpses into the Late Bronze Age past?: material culture in the epics that existed during the Late Bronze Age (in artifact or iconography), but has not been identified in later contexts

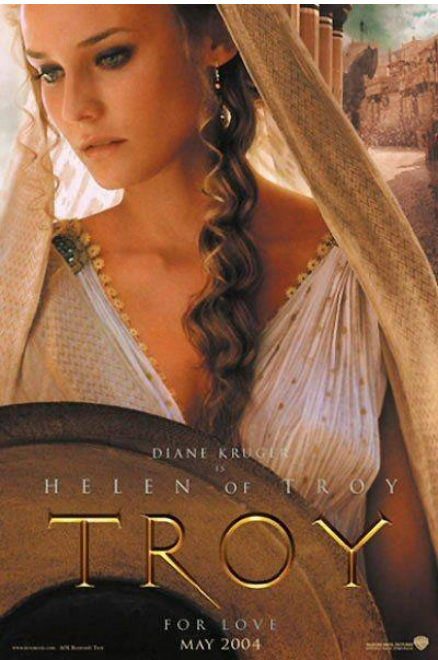


Boar's tusk helmets (Mycenaean figurine, and helmet from a grave). Odysseus wears one of these.

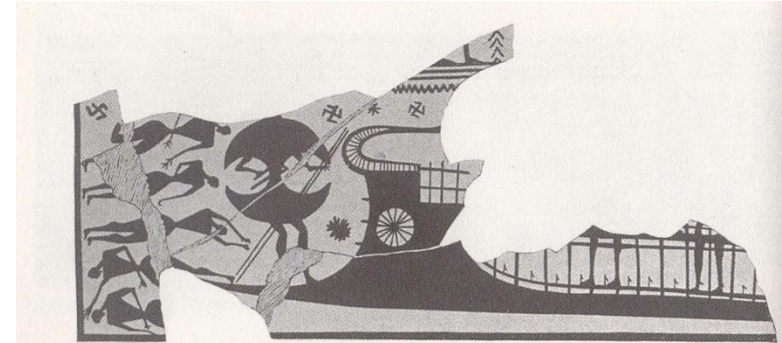


Tower shields (protecting length of the body), Mycenaean and Minoan representations. Ajax is armed with one of these.

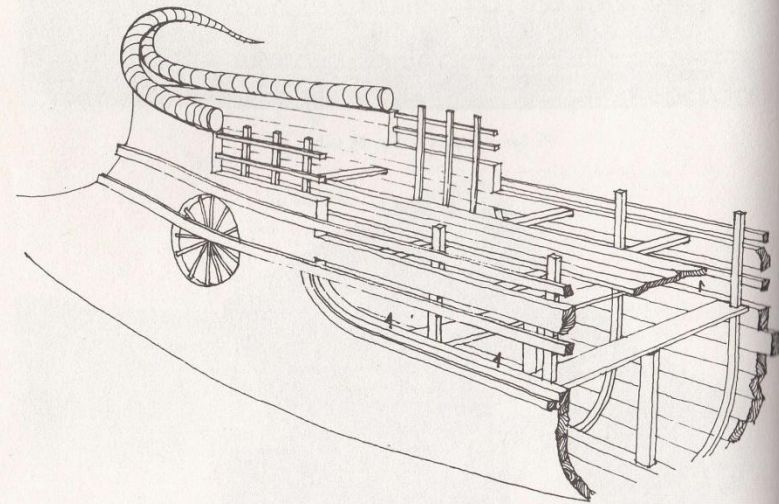
From a seafaring perspective does Homer reveal his world or a Late Bronze Age one?



‘The face that launched a thousand ships’: Helen from the 2004 blockbuster



68. Bow of a warship, mid-8th B.C.



69. Suggested reconstruction of the ship in Fig. 68

Phoenicians (Sidonians, from the city-state of Sidon) in the *Iliad*: two references to Phoenician/Sidonian luxury production and exchange between elites: could be revealing either period



Paris (the Trojan seducer of Helen) acquires finely embroidered Sidonian textiles from Sidon (as part of the seduction); they are stored in the treasure chamber of Troy



Achilles offers a 'richly wrought' and 'cunning' silver Sidonian bowl as a prize in the funerary games in honor of Patroklos (silver Sidonian bowls also exchanged as gifts between elites in the *Odyssey*)

## Phoenicians in the *Odyssey*

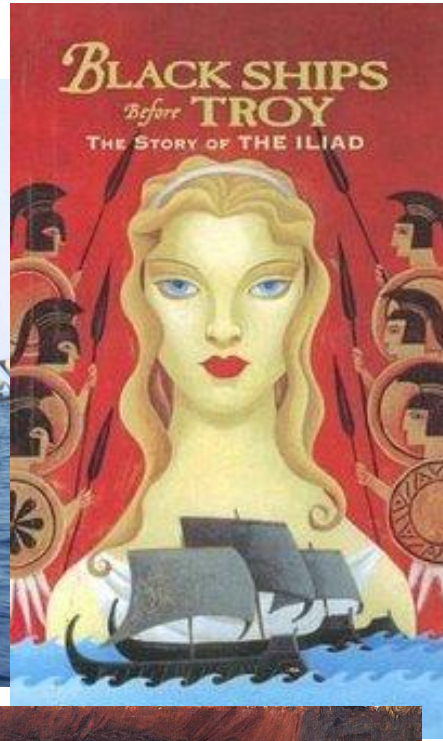


Phoenician *hippos* (horse) ship in background  
Odysseus claims to have fled the island of Crete  
on a Phoenician ship, buying his voyage with a  
part of the booty he was hauling from Troy



Phoenician merchant sailors 'famed for their ships'  
but greedy and deceitful

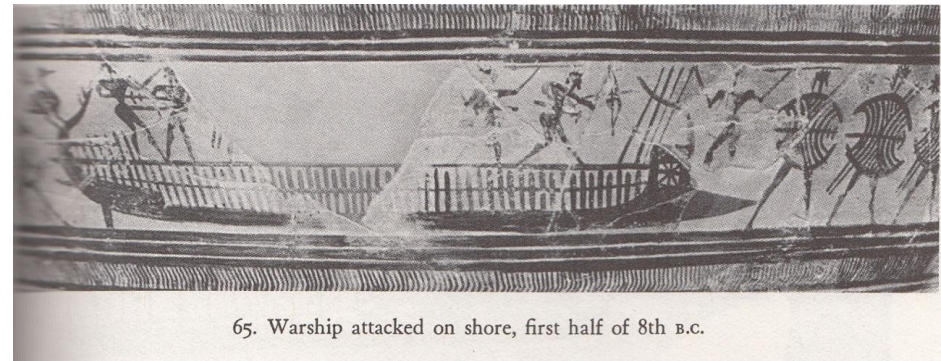
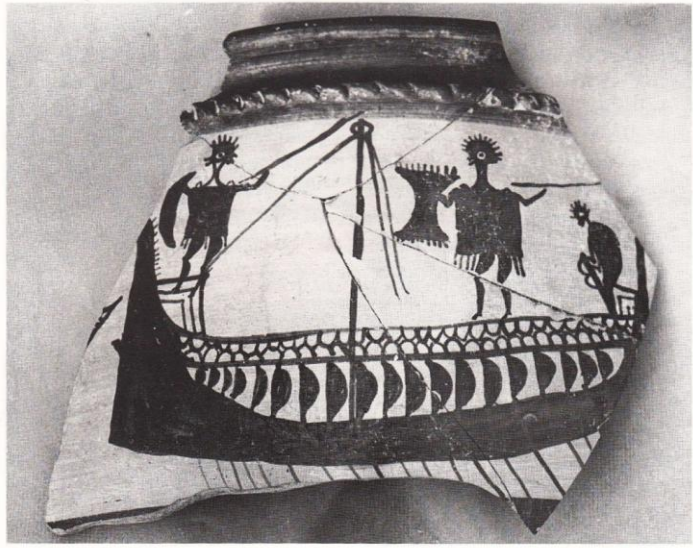
# Seagoing ships and seafaring in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*



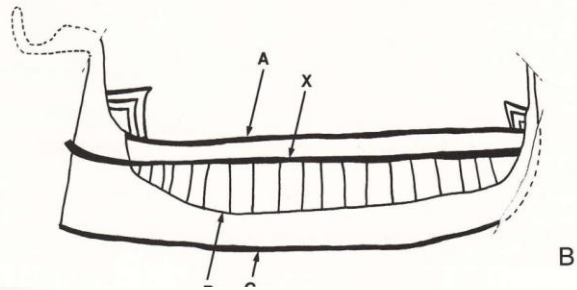
Common epithets for ships: 'swift', 'chariots of the sea', 'hollow', 'well-timbered', 'black ships'



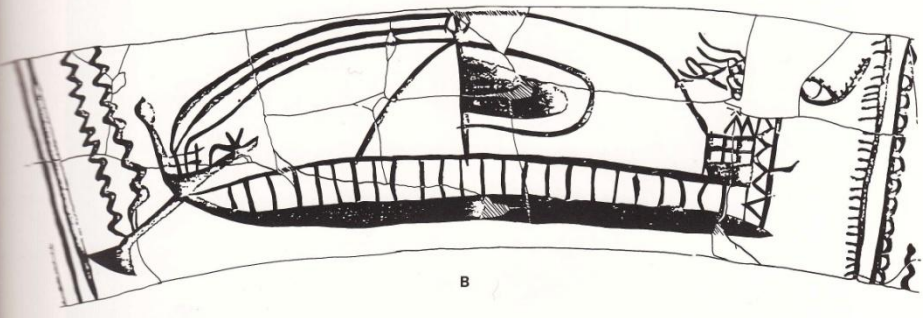
Galleys in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*: 20-oared (10 to a side, ordinary dispatch and transport) and 50-oared (25 to a side, troop transport): these were *not* used in naval engagements, and were *not* armed with rams



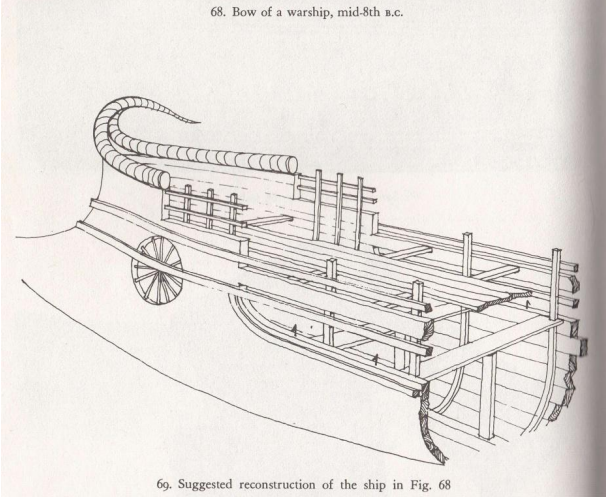
65. Warship attacked on shore, first half of 8th b.c.



68. Bow of a warship, mid-8th a.c.



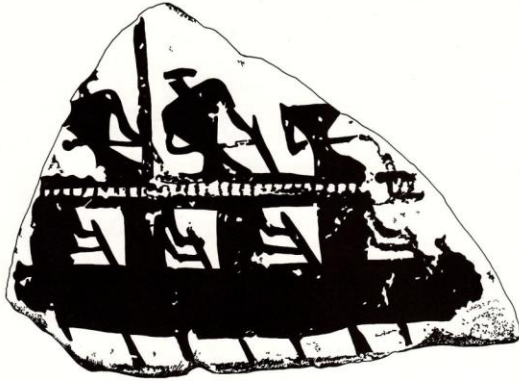
Late Bronze Age Aegean (ca. 1200 BCE)



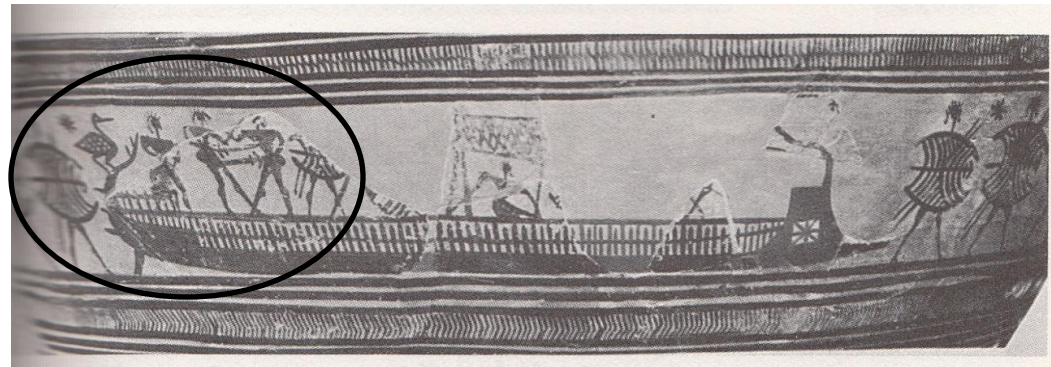
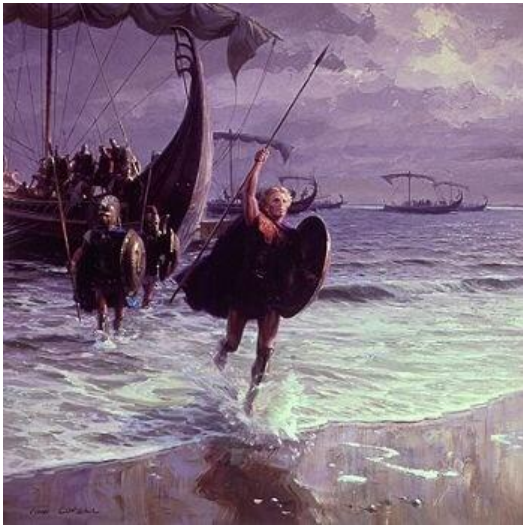
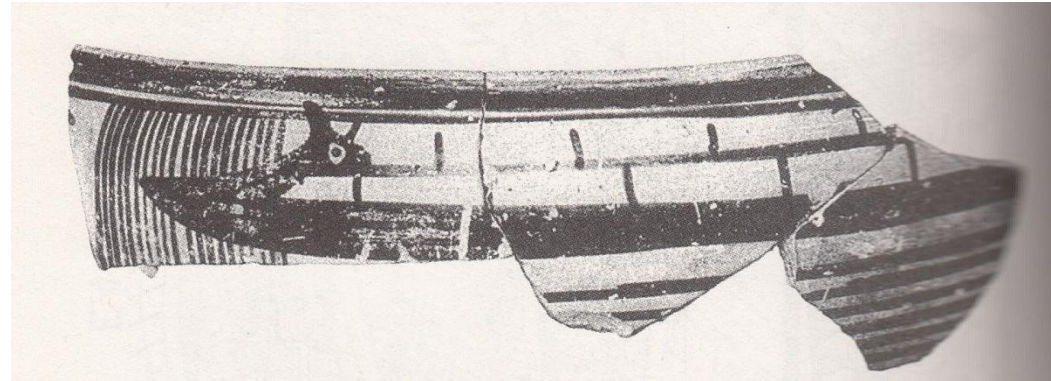
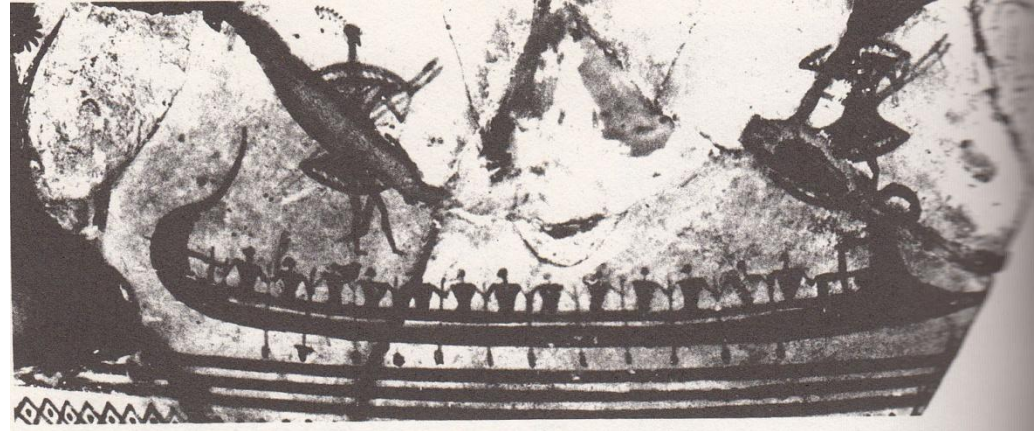
69. Suggested reconstruction of the ship in Fig. 68

Late Early Iron Age/early Archaic representations of galleys contemporary with the life of Homer (ca. 800-700 BCE)

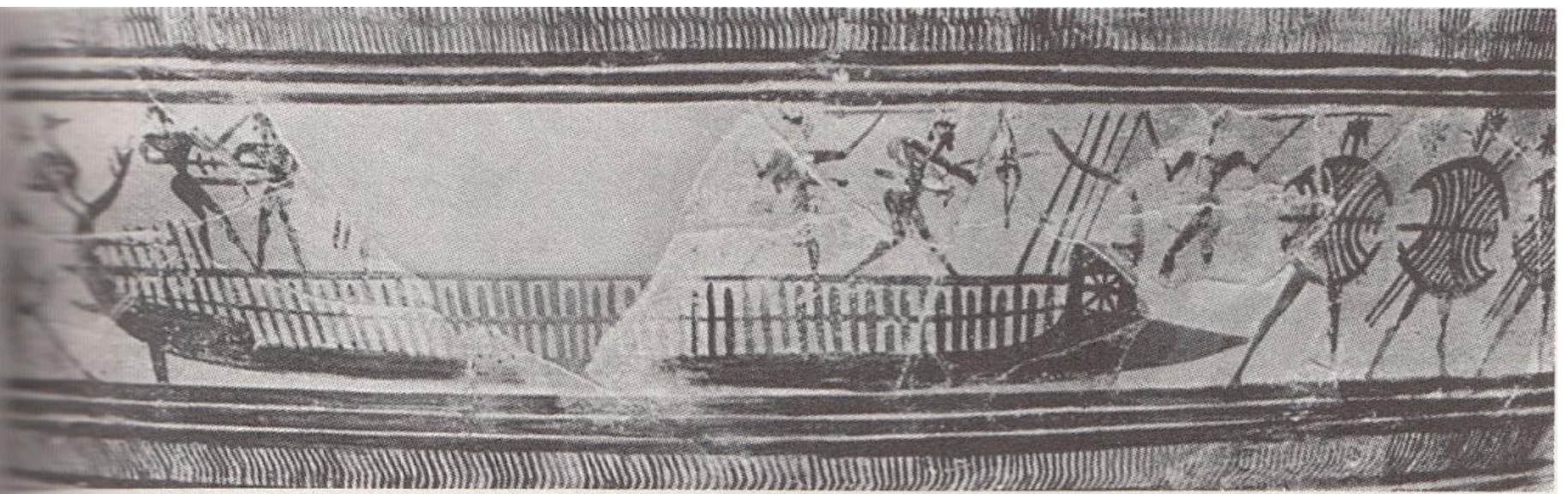
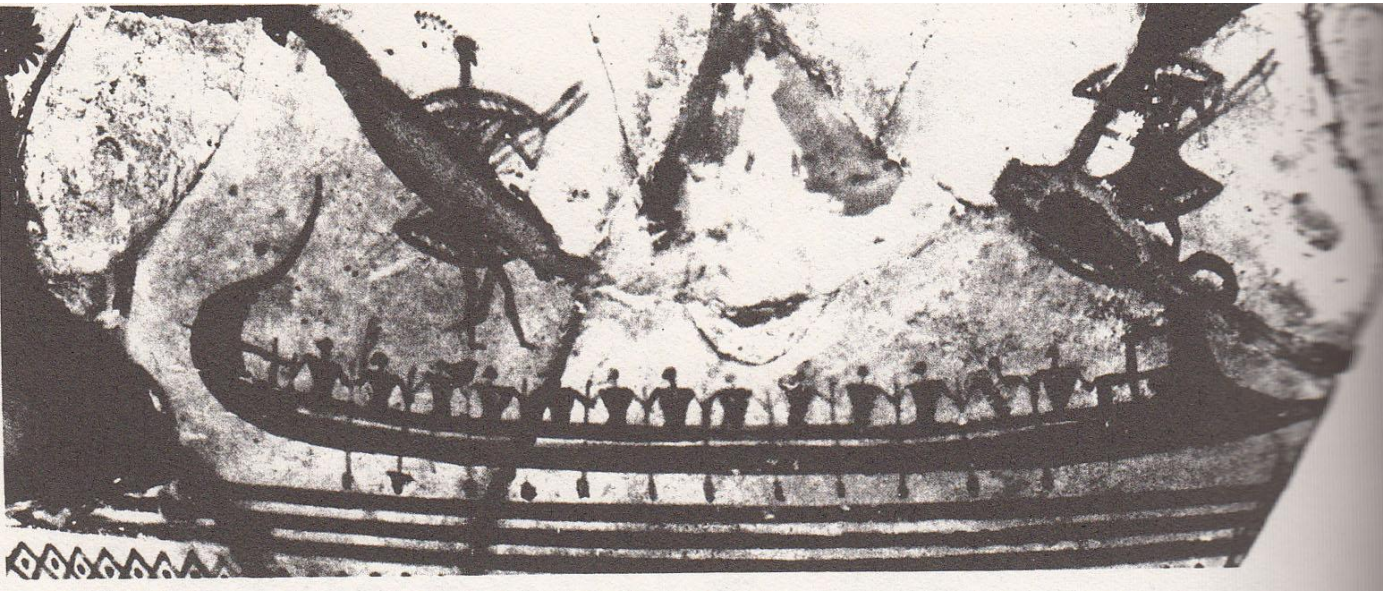
# Additional representations of galleys roughly contemporary with the life of Homer



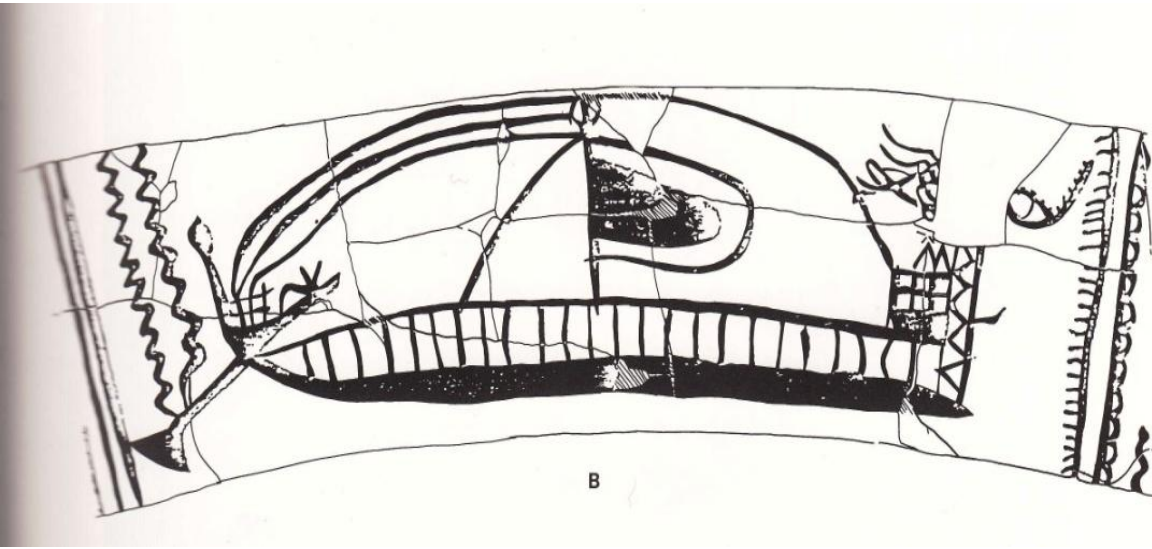
A two-banked galley: Homer does not mention these; but he does describe a battle scene on the beach where Hector leaps up and clutches an ornament from the stempost of an enemy Greek ship; in the same battle Ajax could leap from the gunwale to the ground



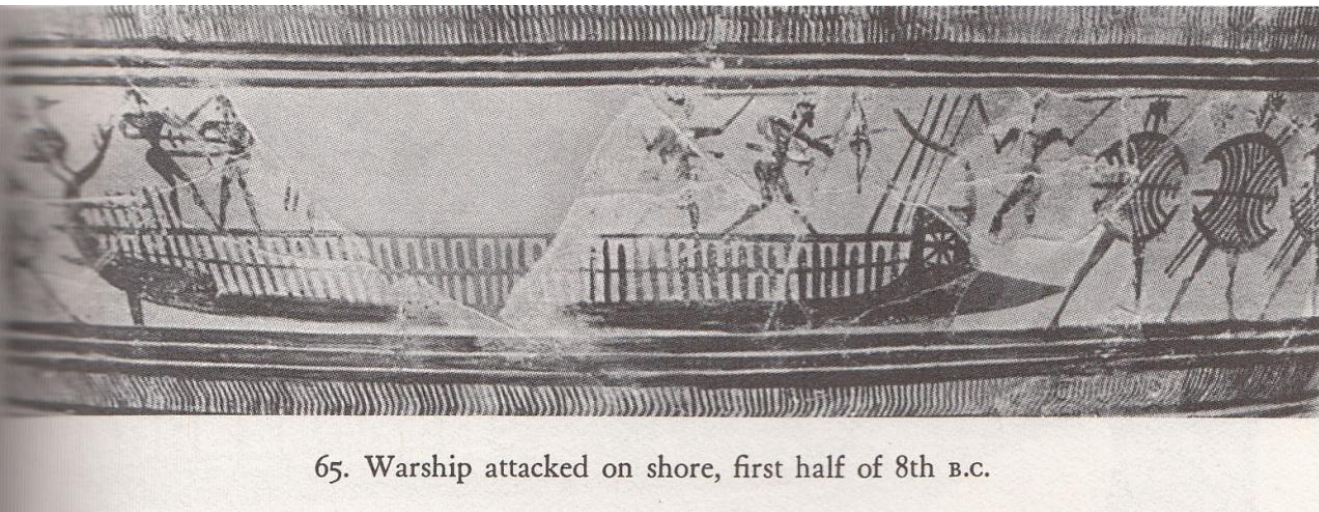
Homer compares the design of a galley to the 'straight horns of cattle'. What additional construction and design features can we gather from these Late Iron Age representations? What is missing?



Does Homer provide enough information to distinguish a Late Bronze Age (Trojan War) galley from an Early Iron Age one?



Late Mycenaean representation of a galley, ca. 1200 BCE (alleged date of the Trojan War)



Late Early Iron Age representation of a galley, ca. 800-750 BCE roughly contemporary with the life of Homer

# Odysseus builds a ship: details of construction revealed in the *Odyssey*



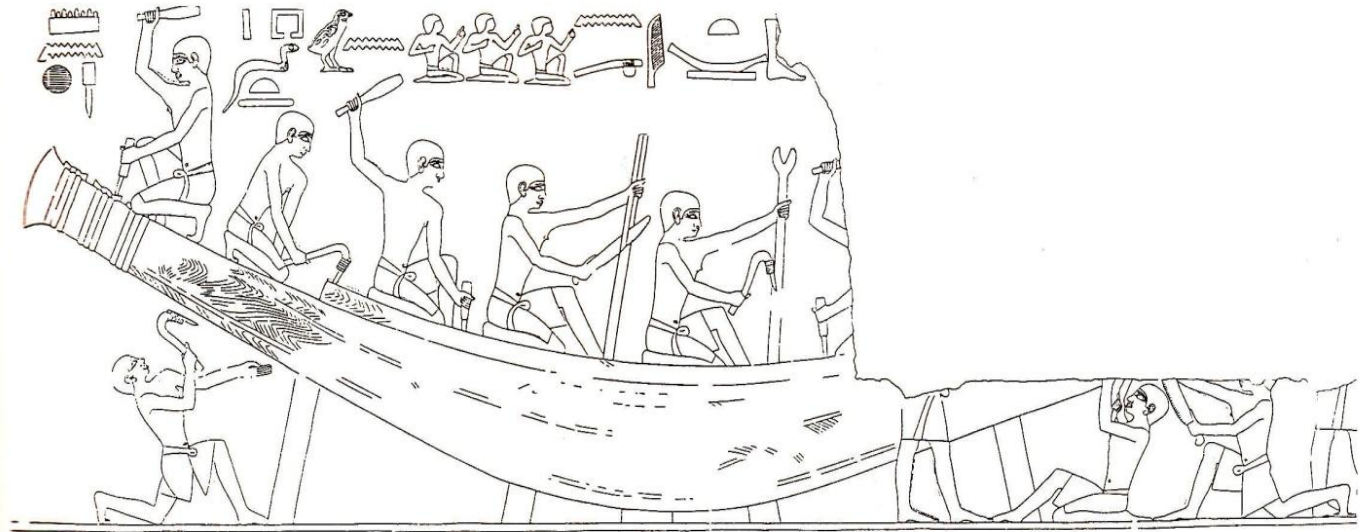
Odysseus and Calypso (another seduction, and flight from this captivity)

‘...he felled the timber...and he felled twenty in all, and then he roughly shaped them with the bronze axe, And he skillfully adzed and made them straight to his line. Meanwhile Calypso, the beautiful goddess, brought borers. He bored all the pieces and fit them one to another, and then with pegs and lacings he joined it together. As wide as a skilled carpenter marks off the curvature for the bottom of a broad merchant ship, so wide of beam did Odysseus build his ship. And setting up the deck, joining it to the closely spaced frames...and finished it with long pieces. He fenced it continuously with withies to protect against the waves of the sea and then filled it with brush’



What is wrong with this picture?

‘...he felled the timber...and he felled twenty in all,  
and then he roughly shaped them with the bronze axe,  
and he skillfully adzed and made them straight to his line.  
Meanwhile Calypso, the beautiful goddess, brought borers...’

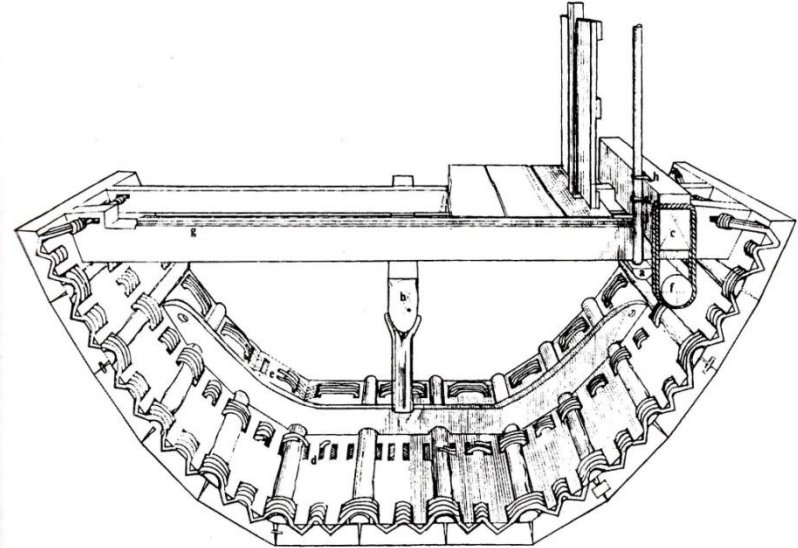
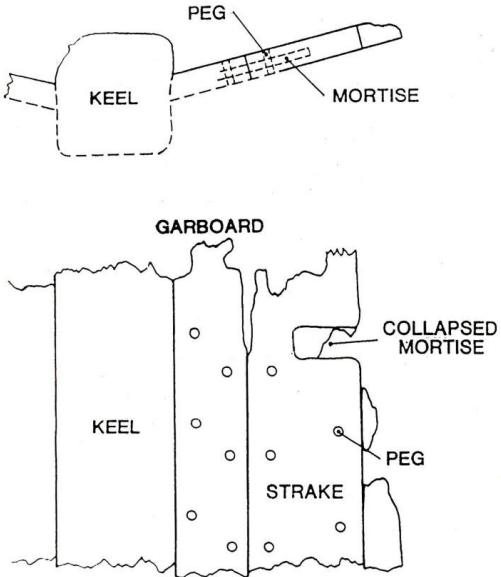


How similar to or different from this (now well-known!) Egyptian scene?

'He bored all the pieces and fit them one to another, and then with pegs and lacings he joined it together.'



Uluburun and Cape Gelidonya

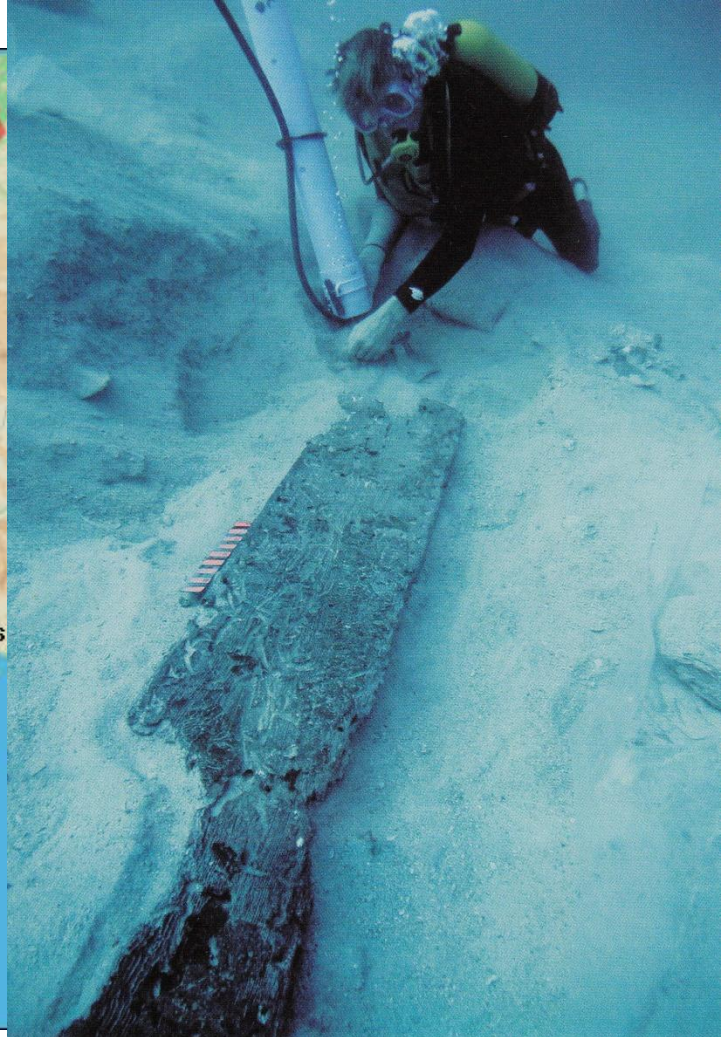


Egyptian



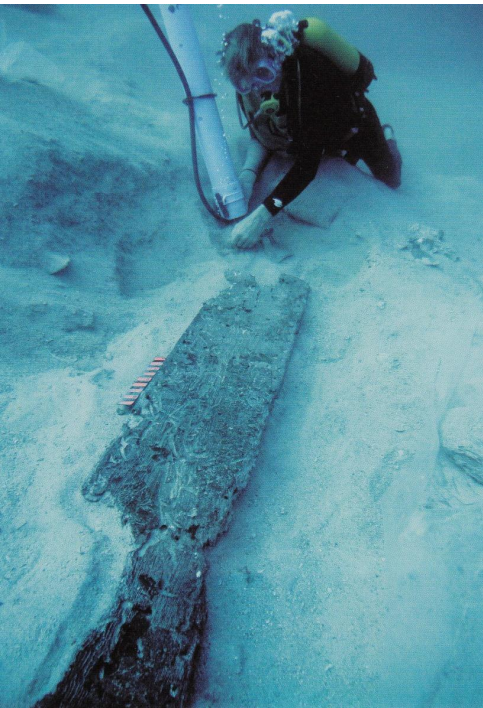
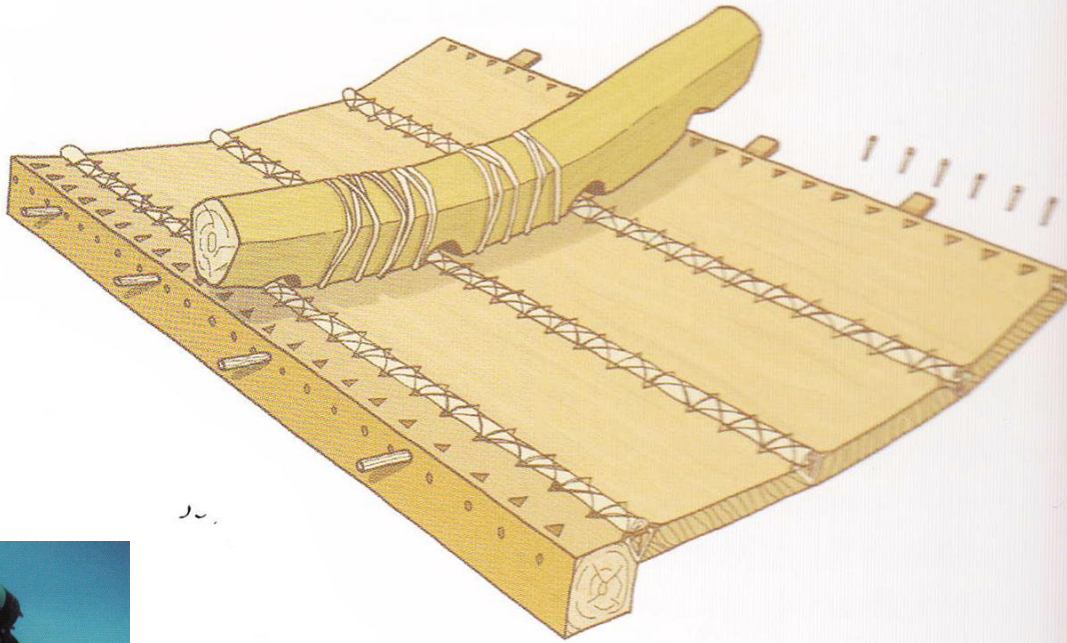


Pabuç Burnu: the earliest shipwreck with hull remains in the Aegean (ca. 530 BCE)



Excavation of the Archaic Period Pabuç Burnu shipwreck, sunk ca. 530 BCE near Halicarnassus, Aegean Coast of Turkey

# Archaic Period Pabuç Burnu: the earliest preserved hull in the Aegean region is laced!

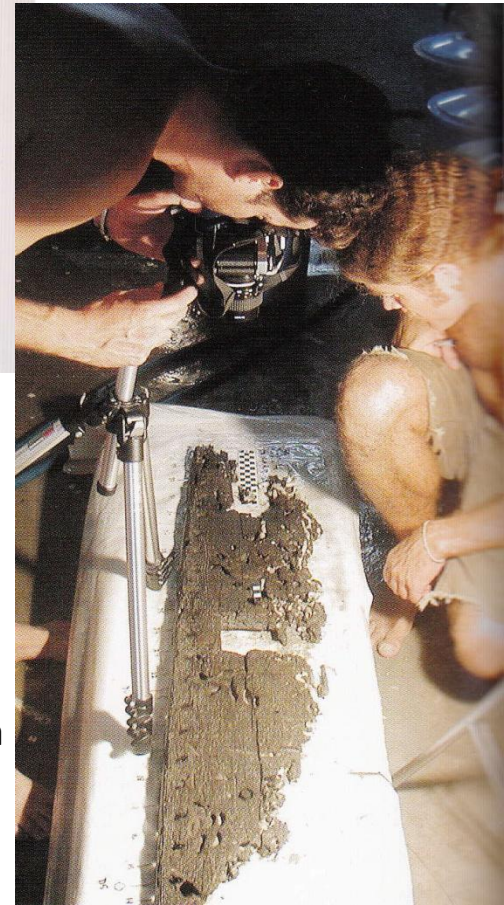


Odysseus fleeing the clutches of Calypso:

‘He bored all the pieces and fit them one to another, and then with pegs and lacings he joined it together.’

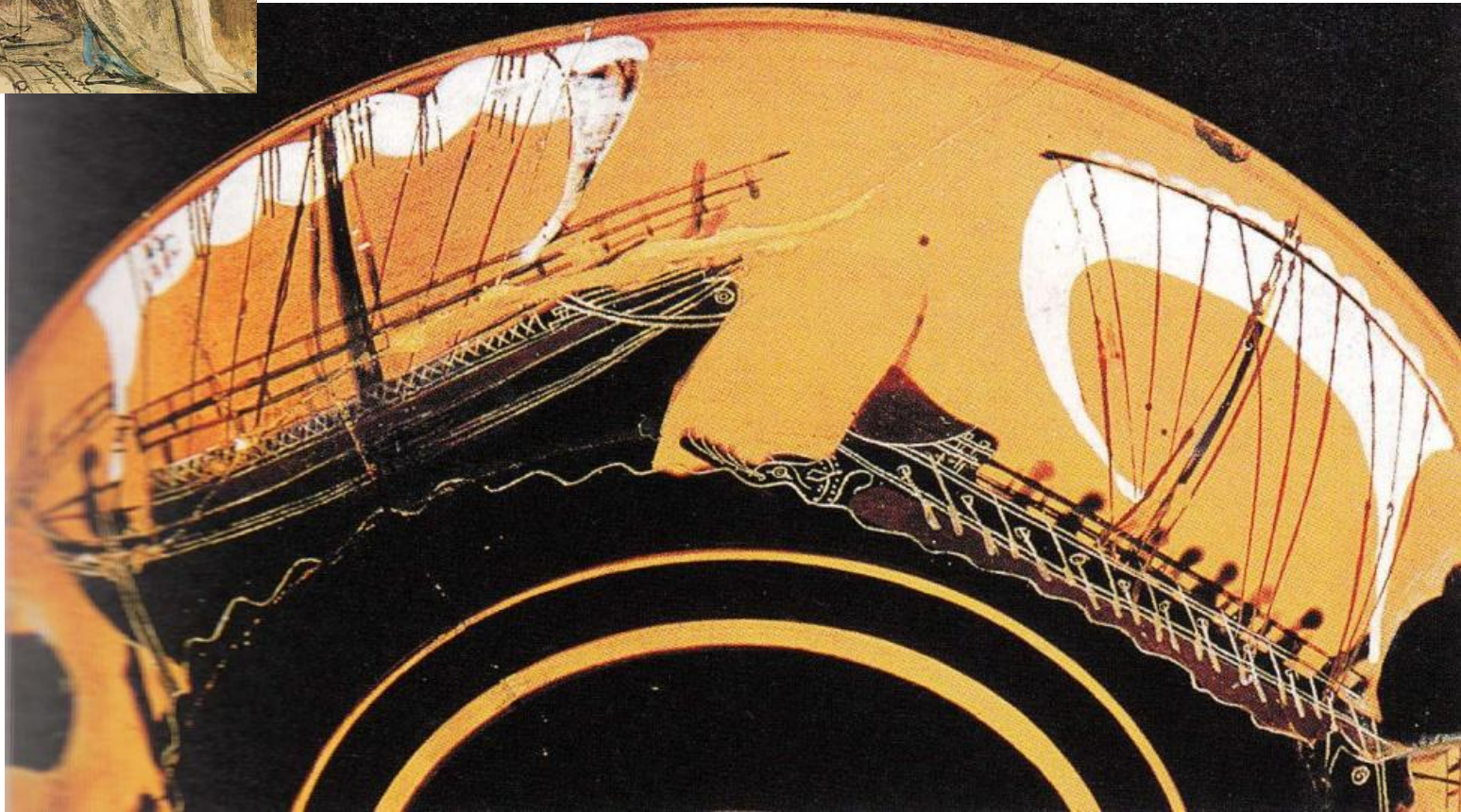
Contra L. Casson (from reading)! Odysseus did not build a mortise and tenon joined ship.

Pabuç Burnu supplies evidence to the contrary





'As wide as a skilled carpenter marks off the curvature for the bottom of a broad merchant ship, so wide of beam did Odysseus build his ship. And setting up the deck, joining it to the closely spaced frames...and finished it with long pieces. He fenced it continuously with withies to protect against the waves of the sea and then filled it with brush'



Archaic Period Black Figure cup (6<sup>th</sup> century BC): this is new in the Aegean: a representation of a merchant ship