

The Trojan Horses

When I first heard the story of the Trojan Horse, in grade school, I knew that it should not be taken at face value. All of the problems in the numbered paragraphs, occurred to me. It seemed impossible that anyone could have been fooled by the Trojan Horse, and, that no one could have thought so little of an opponent, to even try it. The Trojans could not have failed to think of any of the questions which occurred to me, at the age of eight or nine.

1) Why would anyone take such pains to memorialize their defeat?! Who ever heard of such a tribute, except to a friend? I changed my mind to concede this possibility, years later. I guess the Greeks could have conceived such a gesture as a salute to a worthy opponent, like a 'bow' or salute. If so, in combination with other considerations, it's impossible that the Trojans could have been taken in.

2) Can anyone devise a door, cleverly enough to completely mask its boundaries? It could have been on top, but that shouldn't suffice to hide it. The entry point would have been too obvious to miss. If the very size did not advertise the real intent, boldly enough, the merest flicker of wonder would ignite apprehension, which would prompt a probe of the exterior. The recipients must think, 'Look at the size of that thing! Why, it's big enough to hold — uh - m-m, I dunno — a bunch of people?!'. It would be impossible for any of them not to couple that thought with 'Hey, weren't we surrounded by an army, until just last night — for, like, I dunno, ten years?!'.

3} The plan depended on the Trojans leaving the horse alone, long enough for the Greeks to sneak out and open the city gates. If they did bring the horse into the city, it isn't possible that it would be left, unattended, soon enough for the Greeks, inside the horse, to succeed. Because they had won, the Trojans would have partied like it was 1999 B.C. The story even says they did, and that the Greeks waited until the Trojans were all partied out, to sneak out. A] Homer's plan requires that every person in the city, fail to notice anything stirring. It seemed impossible to me, when I first heard it, but, if there's anything I know, now, about the customs of "olden times", which I did not know in grade school, it's that the festivities would have continued for days. B] How would the Greeks know when the right moment had come? The horse would have to be made so precisely that no one could see in, from up close. How, then, would the invaders be able to see out well enough to know when everyone was completely incapacitated?!

Even disregarding Homer's ten year time line, as we must* the Trojans would have felt pretty cooped up, after any siege which lasted long enough to deserve the name, "siege". Because of the size of any place called a "city" at that time, people would be looking for a reason to get outside those walls, and where better to celebrate their first moment of freedom, than in the newly liberated air, outside the walls? The only question is whether the Trojans believed that their opponent had given up. If they were convinced the Greeks had left, they would have come out, to celebrate the victory and the end of their

confinement. Whether or not there was a horse, and whether they intended to crowd their little town by taking it, inside, they would have opened the gates, making this whole discussion pointless. Merely going out of the city, without military precaution, would have handed the victory to the Greeks. {*1) Ten years is too long. They could not have survived such privation. 2) The number “ten” is suspect for its divisibility by ten. You might as well accept the numbers 3, 7, 12 & 40 as literally true, whenever they occur in the Bible.}

The purpose of the ploy, was to get the gate open, and that would have been accomplished when the Trojans came out. If there was such a horse, the Greeks would attack as it was being moved, inside the city. They would have to be concealed, which means they couldn't be very close, but such a monument as Homer described, could not have been moved very quickly. The attack would begin as soon as the horse was half way in; too far, to back it out, not far enough to get it the rest of the way. The horse, itself, would block the gate from being closed before the Greeks could get there, from their hiding place. The weight of such a statue, makes the story plausible by serving the Greeks' plan to get the gate open. Having it stocked with soldiers is unnecessary and decisively debunks the story, as told. Having gotten them to open the gate, why would you risk letting them close it, again? Why wait and take a chance on the duration of their celebration and the total exhaustion of every single person to the point of unconsciousness, and trust your soldiers to, somehow, divine when that moment had arrived? It's impossible that the Greeks could have dreamt up such a strategy, except based on the hope that the trojans would block the gate, open, with the horse, as they took it inside. The city is surrounded by a plain, where it might be impossible to be secluded, closely enough to succeed. If they really did have to take all their soldiers away from the scene, they could not have observed the Trojans moving the horse, without being seen. The last hope of the monumental horse tale, is probably dashed to pieces on the plane terrain around Troy. It just depends on how fast the horse could be moved through the gate, compared to how fast the Greeks could cover the distance from where they were hidden. The point of making the horse colossal, would be to make it so slow to move that the Greeks could cover the distance from where they were hidden, to the gate, while the horse was part-way in.

If any of the problems with such a plan, destroy the story as told, we can still imagine a scenario which supports some aspects of the tale. The claim that the horse was taken inside the walls, is a device to move the plot in a certain direction. By straightening one detail which has been bent to fit the plot, we see a reason that the Trojans failed to be wary of this gift; that it could not have been interpreted as a token of surrender. Unless the Greeks were able to hide closely enough to attack while the gate was open, the single trophy horse never existed.

It has been suggested that the horse stands for a siege tower. It is known that siege towers were bent at the top, and even, that the top segment was designed or decorated as a horse head. That is consistent with the story: 1} Homer says the horse was placed next to the outside of the wall, as siege towers were. 2} Such towers do contain soldiers,

waiting to reach the top of the wall, by way of a staircase. It could be that Homer has combined many horses into one, and stupidized the Trojans enough to get them to take his agglomerated horse into the city, without examining it, or reconnoitering the landscape for their enemies.

The addition of the top, head segment of the towers, would mean that they were not straight, up and down. The heads would jut out in front of the towers, which would have given them a purpose, other than decoration. The heads would overhang the wall, so that the soldiers would already be inside the city wall, before they emerged. That purpose probably predated the decoration, because it must be as true in war as any endeavor, that form follows function. Although the serious purpose of the towers would dictate that pragmatism supersede art, symbols would be welcome where they did not hamper the soldiers. The Greeks used horses to represent power and wealth, and a tall vertical shaft, joined to the shorter, horizontal exit portal, at the top, would have suggested a horse's neck and head. The overhanging segment could be embellished to drive the point home. Although the Greeks had not learned to decorate the prows of their ships with sculpture, they did, later, acquire the skill in sculpture, for which we still remember them. By the time of the Trojan War, the horse heads may not have been too much of a challenge, and they didn't have to qualify as high artwork.

Soldiers could have been planted in the horse-headed siege towers, which were placed closely enough to each other, for an attack signal to be communicated to all. Somewhat as Homer tells it, the many horses would have functioned as one. Rather than a few soldiers emerging from one giant horse to open the city gate, all of the soldiers could emerge from many horse-head siege towers, to attack.

An attack signal would probably be unnecessary. The soldiers, inside, would know when their opponents were at their most vulnerable, because they could see out. Imagine any wall, made of wooden planks, like a picket fence. The closer you are, to it, the easier it is to see through it. Even if the construction were so tight that it might be hard to see inside, from several feet away, those inside the towers, would be close enough to the wall, to see out. The Trojans would be lit up by daylight, but the interior of the siege tower would be sheltered from light. You can see from a darkened space into lighted, but you cannot see from light into darkness. At night, with your lights on, you can't see outside, but you can see into a lighted house, from outside. In daylight, it's easy to see out, but hard to see into a building. The Trojans could not have seen the Greeks, until they were very close to the siege engines, but the Greeks would have seen the Trojans, the entire time they approached. The Greeks would have launched the attack after a crucial number of Trojans had left the city. By the time the Trojans would be close enough to catch on, they would be too far from the city walls to get back.

If the Greeks had placed their towers at the wall, it could only be taken as an attack. The Trojans would have assumed they were packed with soldiers, before it could even occur to them that it might be a token of surrender. Scattered in the field, the engines would have aroused no suspicion. They had to be left behind because they were too big to

transport. I've read that the Trojan wall was only 17 ft. high, but the towers would have to be taller. The Greek ships were 98-115 ft. (30-35m) long. The towers might not be too long if that was all you had on deck, but ships have obstacles on deck and the crew must be able to move around freely on what little area there is. Nothing as big as a siege engine could be carried, without critically threatening the sailors' ability to work the ship. In the Middle Ages, siege engines were always built on site, which cost precious time. If they could have been transported, they would have been built in advance.

If the over-hanging siege tower had been rendered useless by a tactical or technological innovation, in the four centuries between the Trojan War (ca. 1200 B.C.) and Homer (ca. 800 B.C.) the memory of them, could still have inspired some variation of Homer's story, similar to this. One discussion of the horse, says that siege engines had not been invented, yet. If horse-head towers were devised in the 400 years between the Trojan War and Homer's time, such a ruse as I have described, could have been used somewhere else. Anyone might think of it. Someone must have tried it. By having the Greeks roll the horse up to the wall, Homer hints, broadly, at siege engines, but he can't literally use the ruse which I have described (many sieges towers, apparently abandoned, packed with soldiers) on an audience who knows that siege towers did not exist at the time of the Trojan War.

Homer wanted to express a complex of ideas, and that war formed a perfect proscenium to frame it. Control of Troy, established access to the Black Sea, which means that capturing it, was a big step in the material progress of Greece. If the war had not been so important, the memory of it would not have survived long enough to inspire Homer to set his story, then and there.

10/17/06 – 3/06/23

Work Dates

10/17,18,23/06

1/08,17/07

5/27/07

6/18-21/07

7/24/07

9/6-8/07

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12/2,24,28,29,30,31/17

1/1,2/18

2/6/18

3/2/18

5/6/18

9/1,14/18