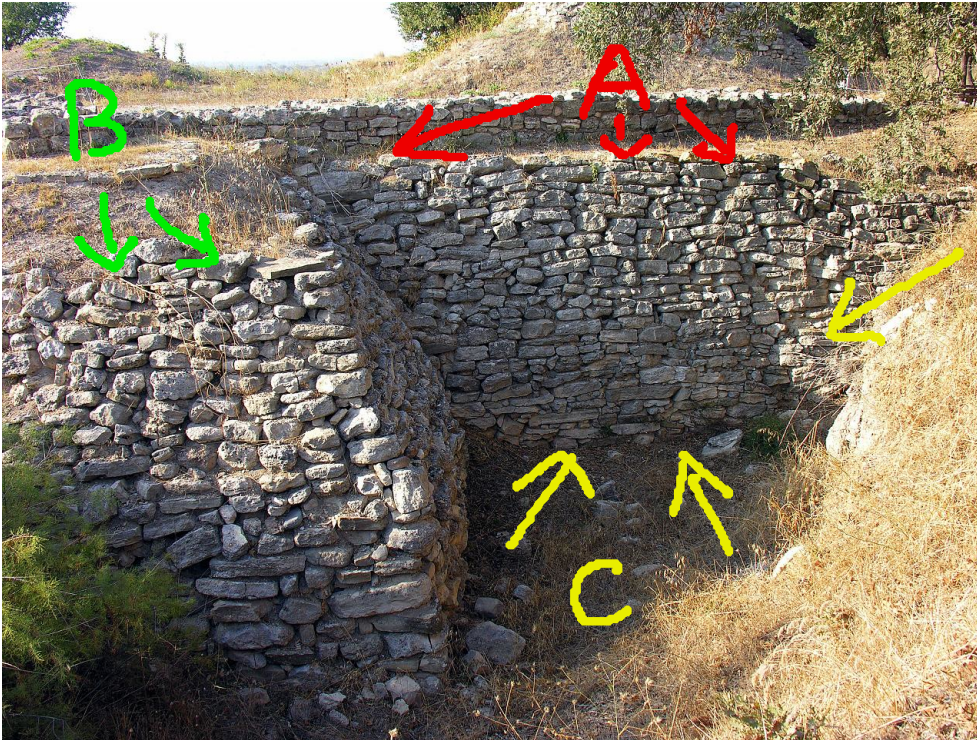


## Heinrich Schliemann and the walls of Troy

It has been recognised for some time that Troy's famous walls appear to have been deliberately constructed to incorporate, certainly in places or at times, a wave or curve pattern. Anti-seismic properties have been mooted as a plausible explanation<sup>1</sup>. That may well be true, but the effect or rationale doesn't look wholly convincing in the case of one of the earliest sections of wall. In the photograph below<sup>2</sup>, the wave or curve effect can be seen in the section arrowed A - the stone courses do not run parallel - but the facing of this apparently dry-stone walling does not look intrinsically robust, for example at B.



*South gate wall and tower, Early Troy I through Middle Troy II*

Ultimately, the proposition is likely to remain unverifiable as regards building intent. Importantly, though, it may not be the only explanation for the patterning.

To illustrate the point, I shall use below enlarged extracts from this same photograph, its area arrowed C. Strands of dead vegetation and

dappled oblique light can create some distortion, and I shall limit my observations to features unlikely to be so compromised. The colour quality of the photograph is especially useful. Other photos of this same section of wall are publicly viewable, and provide a control on the visibility of my proposals<sup>3</sup>.

To wit that stones have been deliberately selected and conjoined to create curves, but also so selected for size, shape and colour, and cracks between stones so disposed or engineered as to create the image or illusion of one or more variously profiled birds, notably swallows and water fowl. The effect is owing primarily to the rising gradient of several of the wall's stone courses as it provides the "base line" from which the shape and continuity of crack lines over more than one layer of stones (that is running variously upwards), and the shape and colour of stones, individually or in conjunction with others, can be fine-tuned to create multiple suggestions of the same or similar birds.

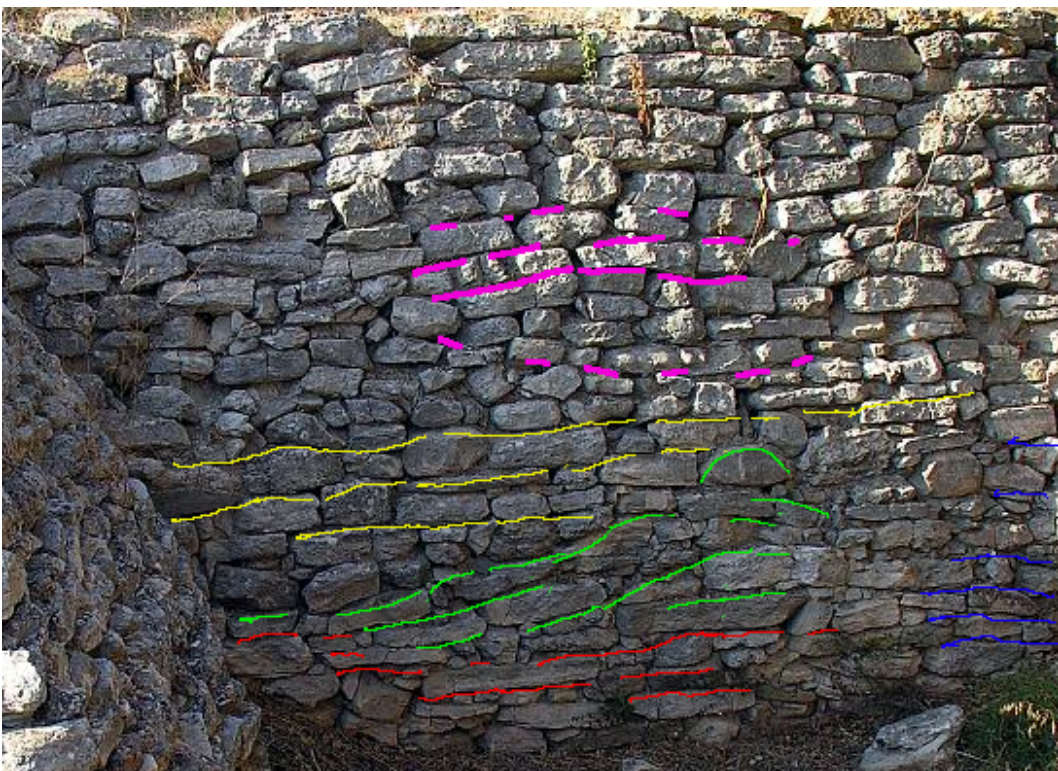
<sup>1</sup> So for example <https://www.troyexcavations.com/troia-vi-m-sarayi/?l=en> discussing house walls of Troy VI.

<sup>2</sup> By Dennis Jarvis from Halifax, Canada - Turkey-2941, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=23450246>. This my note is freely available for any lawful public or private non-commercial use so long as the source, and its sources, is duly acknowledged, and such use exercises rights regarding its own use by others that are no more restrictive. Regard should also be had for the rights of those whose work I have used, which may be different. My use of their material in no way reflects their approval or otherwise of my statements or graphics (including extractions from and enlargements of photos). All mistakes are my own. I cannot guarantee that web pages are still live.

<sup>3</sup> For example, <https://www.troyexcavations.com/savunma-duvari/?l=en> and <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=48055812>



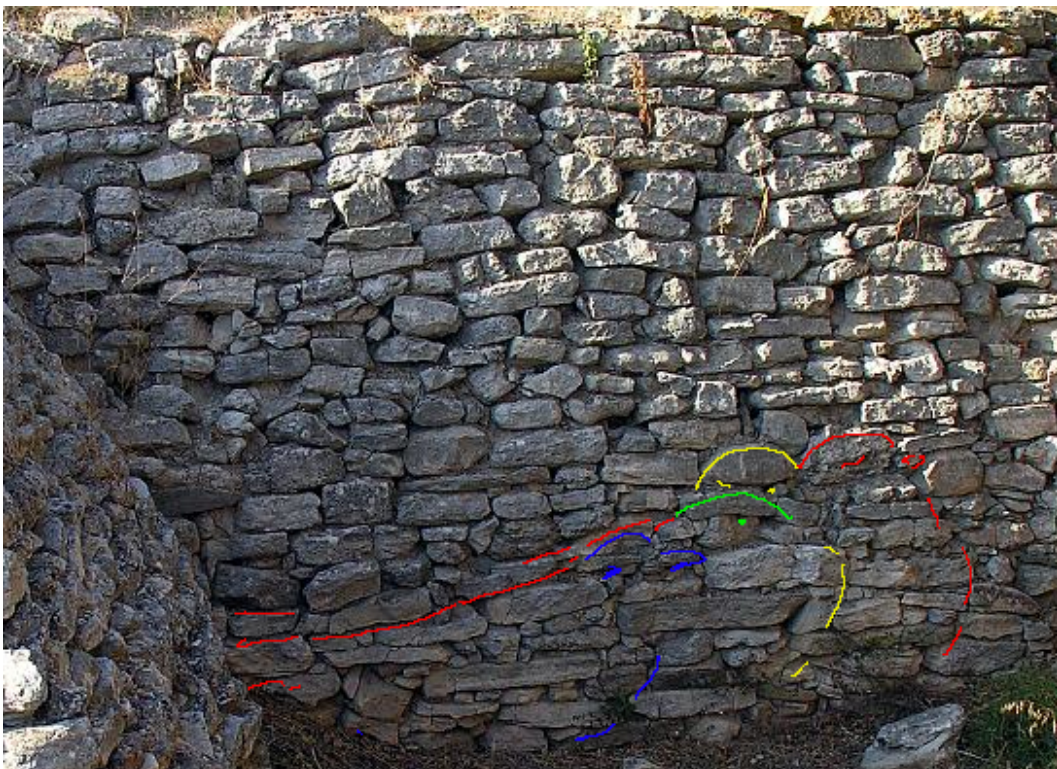
A



So, in more detail, in A above, the roughly parallel horizontal courses at the base (red) give way to others higher up responsible for a pronounced upward then slight downward curve (green) before the pattern reverts to the near horizontal (yellow), the layering on the far right being, at least at this level of the wall, again parallel and closer to horizontal or shallower rippling (blue). Higher up again are more and deliberate curves (purple).



B

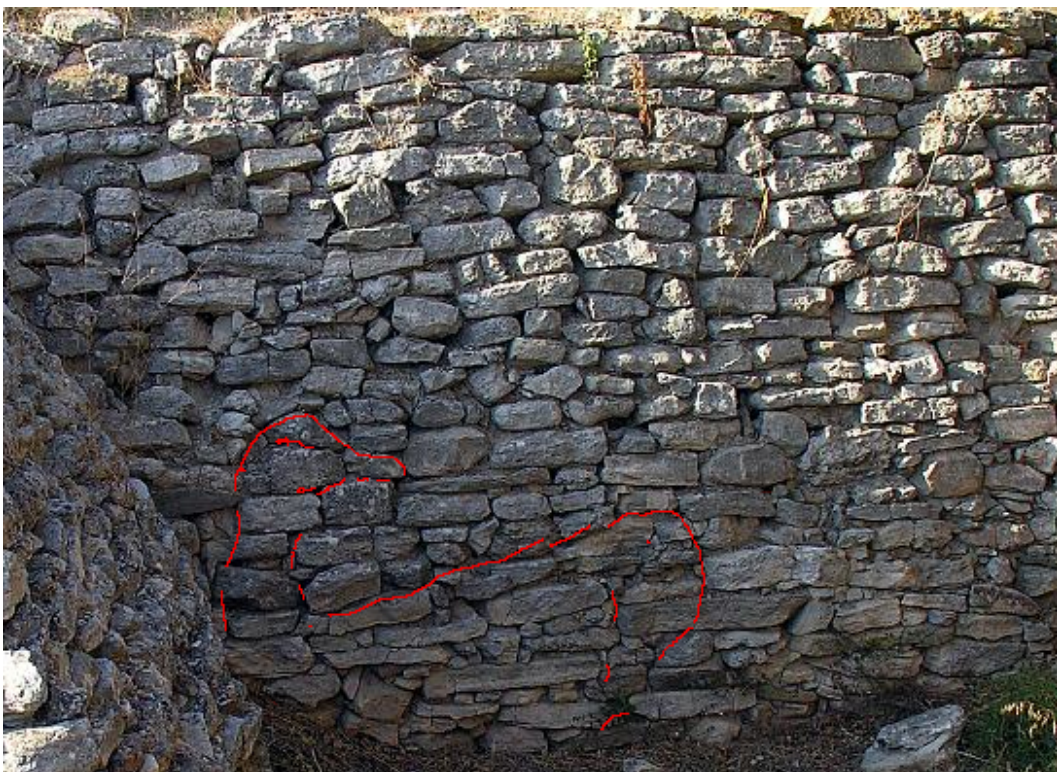


Highlighted in B are multiple suggestions of perched right-profiled swallows (though one head, highlighted yellow, is frontal), maybe other birds too. The gradient of the stone courses suggests back or wing, individual natural or worked stone shape and crack alignment the right side, head and beak of the birds, and choice of stone colour (red, white, blue-grey) reinforces both aspects.

The imagery isn't limited to swallows. The same techniques are used to insinuate what are again multiple images of water birds, such as duck, geese, swan. I have highlighted in C below just one example below of a left-profiled such bird, swimming or roosting, the formation of whose head is particularly clear.



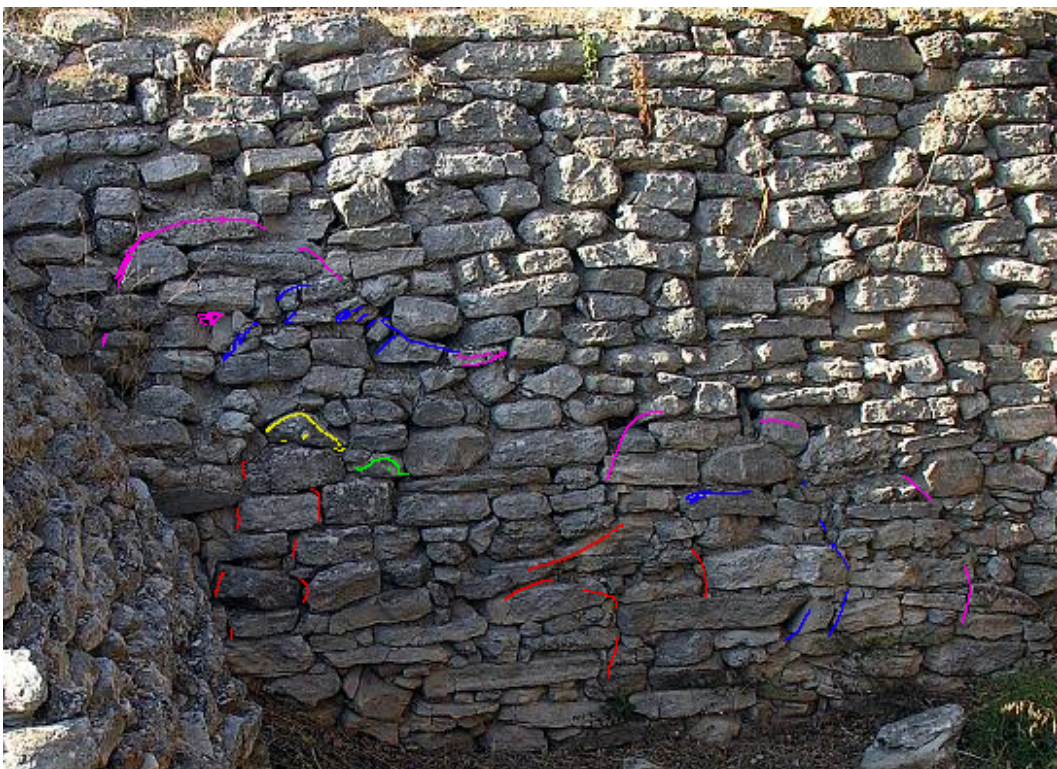
C



The right-pointing head of the bird is made up of two smaller stones (yellow and green at D below) that are themselves smaller scaler representations of duck or similar heads. Further above, the stones have been selected and disposed to create yet another suggestion of a slightly larger right-profiled duck head (blue), which may in turn be seen as a component of one still larger (purple). The interventions previously serving to suggest swallows' bodies now also serve to suggest the various sized bodies of the water birds.



D



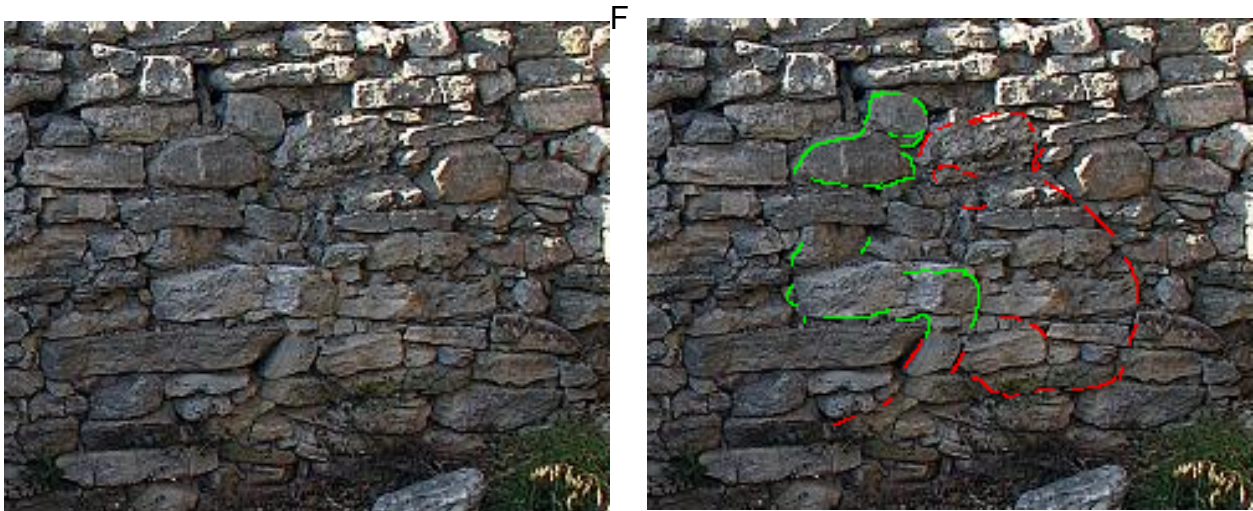
There are probably other yet larger (as well as smaller) projections of similar imagery. So, for example, at E below, a left-profiled swan. Once the basic structures have been established (curving levels, crack alignments), then multiple suggestion of such imagery is *relatively* easy. Light, weathering, vegetation make such identifications difficult. Different images may be visible only from certain angles, and may have been added over time.



E



Nor is the imagery limited to birds. Although the constraints of the scene and photographic conditions make such identifications yet more difficult, I would be reasonably confident about the intention to project the image (there is probably more than one of similar ilk) of a left-profiled seated or squatting boy (red at F below). The shin and thigh are suggested by shape and colour of stones, the curved back by alignment of cracks. A smaller right-profiled figure may be seen sitting opposite, turned away (green). It may be worth pointing out that in this area, as often elsewhere, the complexity of stone selection and arrangement seems almost totally unnecessary; fewer, larger stones could have been readily used without compromising anti-seismic integrity much, if at all.



Similar techniques and imagery may be seen on later walls, for example from Troy VI. I offer only one illustration based on an extract from another photograph<sup>4</sup>.



<sup>4</sup> By ccarlstead - Flickr, CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2912544>



G



H





In G above, the wave or curve technique is distinct, even allowing for some distortion from the photo angle. In H, the selection, arrangement and shaping of stones and cracks to create multiple images of, for example, birds, such as a large, right-profiled possibly swallow (red), incisions for the eye and tail feathers being particularly marked, and goose (blue), with, again, possible smaller component peers (e.g. green). Variant images, derived from the same interventions, can depend on the viewer's perspective. Thus the goose (blue) can be seen as right-profiled, but also as frontal, bursting out from the wall, the swallow as sparrow-like, tail suggested by the up slant of the goose's beak (red X). Highlighted yellow are various and various-sized human frontal visages, including arrowed baby. Many other images of similar and entirely different motifs are visible, based on the same or other interventions, even in just this one extract, but as there are various, non-trivial sensitivities involved in highlighting such things any further, I do not intend doing so.

### Further discussion

The art form or tradition at work in the creation of the above-described images appears to be what I have elsewhere called Linear and cult art<sup>5</sup>. Again, and for similar reasons, I do not intend further demonstration of that proposition here. It may suffice to note that motifs of migrant hirundines and water fowl, among other stereotypes, are commonplace in the art, celebratory, as it is, of the cyclical renewal of life<sup>6</sup>. No less diagnostic is its deployment of almost hidden imagery, suggested by minimal but key or precise interventions, and the sometimes almost chaotic proliferation of such incomplete images, partly by original design, but also arising from often repeated reuse of the same medium or surface over what may be very long periods of time, for the same graphic purpose.

The main issue I wish to focus on here, in closing, follows on from that last observation. For where any art form or tradition - including and perhaps especially Linear and cult art - is deployed over similarly long time-spans, and particularly where it uses or recycles earlier materials, it can be extremely difficult to date its first or earliest manifestations with any degree of confidence.

So, in this instance, the proposed art work of the Troy VI walls might suggest that, in some way, its artists had had access to the Troy I surfaces, so that any images represented on the latter reflect the activities not of its own, but later generations. A more challenging if usefully illustrative contention might even be that all the perceived art work of all the various walls results from interventions made since Heinrich Schliemann's excavations. A period of, say, just 50, let alone 150 years, is ample time for considerable artistic activity. In this connection, one may note Schliemann's own comments:

*"I beg to draw especial attention to the fact that, in the neighbourhood of Troy, several types of very ancient pottery - like those found in my excavations at a depth of 10 to 33 feet - have been preserved down to the present day. For instance, in the crockery-shops on the shores of the Dardanelles there are immense numbers of earthen vessels with long upright necks, the breasts of a woman, and others in the shape of animals... a remarkable proof of the fact that, in spite of manifold political changes, certain types of terra-cottas can continue in existence in one district for more than 3000 years<sup>7</sup>."*

<sup>5</sup> As page 4 of *The arrangement of tablets on the photographic plates of Scripta Minoa II*, <https://hcommons.org/deposits/item/hc:28441/>

<sup>6</sup> As the same birds vividly were and are in the neighbourhood of Troy, as evidenced by the similes of the Iliad or Heinrich Schliemann's wildlife observations in *Troy and its remains* (see note 7 below).

<sup>7</sup> *Troy and its remains* (English version), page 47, first published 1875, reprint edition 1976 by Arno Press Inc. Schliemann makes clear, in the section I have omitted, that he is talking about more recent production of ancient motifs.

So similar, howsoever much later activity might, in theory, account for at least some of the proposed wall imagery. But given the fact that, firstly, the Troy I walls are at the bottom of Schliemann's deep excavation, near or on bed rock, secondly, as discussed above, large portions of the art work seem to be an integral part of the original construction or design, thirdly, the sheer quantity of similar motifs and related technique (on all the stone and clay walls, of all periods) seems overwhelmingly large, then it seems reasonable to infer - partly from plausible deposition rates - that much of that art work is equally old, that is, in the case of Troy I, as much as 5,000 years. And, given the apparently already mature nature of the imagery and methods involved, necessarily older still in conception.

I have yet to find many or any examples of Linear and cult art which can be as securely pinned to such an early date. Assuredly, there is no shortage of other archaeological or anthropological finds that seem to incorporate the art form and which have been dated, one way or another, to even earlier times, but I sense that either the dating techniques are insufficiently robust, or, again, the possibility of - even far - later art work on reused or recycled items cannot be so firmly excluded as in the case of Troy's deepest walls.

Was Schliemann himself aware of the wall designs, their significance, their importance, particularly at those oldest levels? Despite his silence, I think there is no doubt that he was, or swiftly came to be so, but it would take too many extra pages to begin to validate the assertion adequately. Here I will offer just a fleeting indicator of its plausibility by extracting vessels 1819 and 1820 from *Tafel 87* of Schliemann's *Atlas*<sup>8</sup>, pretty well the earliest photographs he collated to illustrate the story of his Trojan finds.

For the two vessels appear to have been individually configured and collocated to suggest:

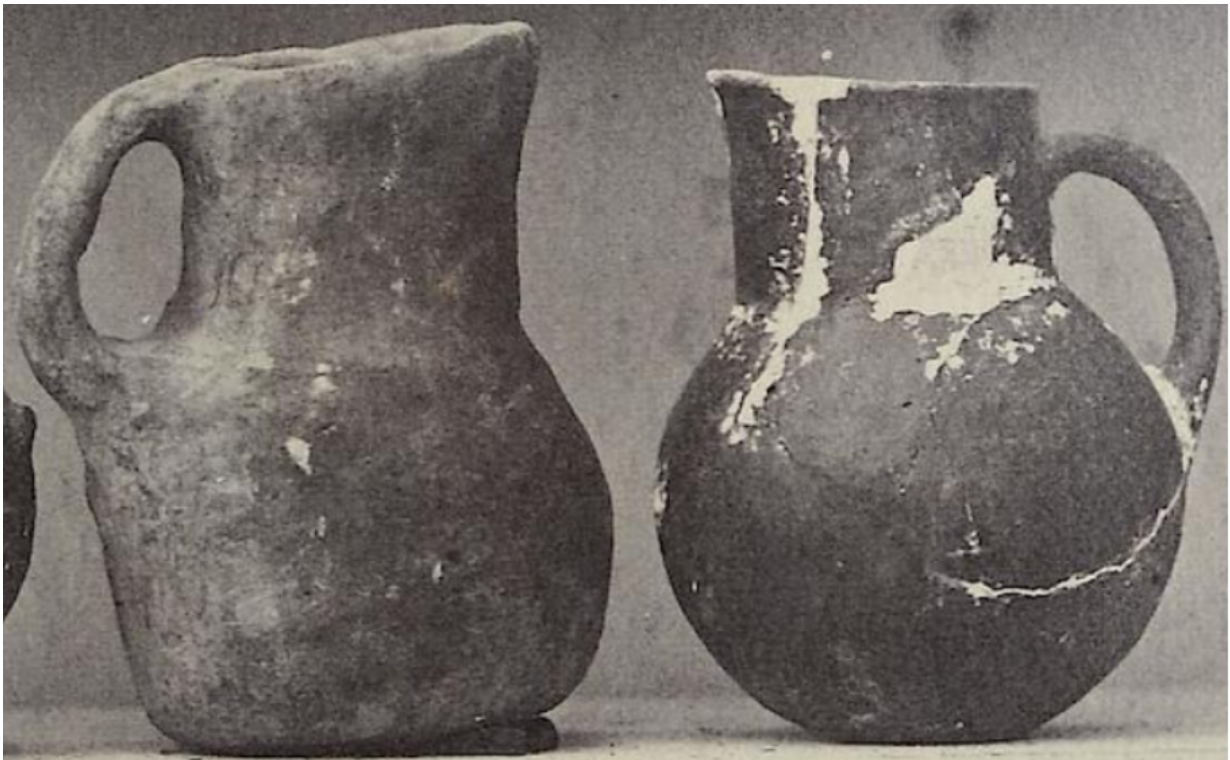
- at J, a right-profiled probably swallow (red), partially rear-profiled perched raptor (green), partially submerged frontal duck (blue, with variant tail purple), left-profiled maybe spring song bird (yellow), and much larger right-profiled water fowl head and beak (only, turquoise);
- at K, a frontal woman's profile, though many of the interventions contribute to or are conflated with the suggestion also of possibly a man boxing (blue) a punch bag (green).

Now each vessel carries other, self-contained imagery, but it is the fact that they have been so carefully positioned and photographed as to evoke such typical motifs (of which there are many more, of very different kind) across or between both (even in rotation) that is key. Plainly, it raises many questions, for example about the authenticity or identity of at least some of the Trojan artefacts and veracity or artistry of at least some of the *Atlas* photographic process, but I do not think those are fundamentally different from the similar issues, and maybe partial resolution, that I have already proposed in relation to what is in many ways the remarkably similar case of Arthur Evans and Knossos<sup>9</sup>.

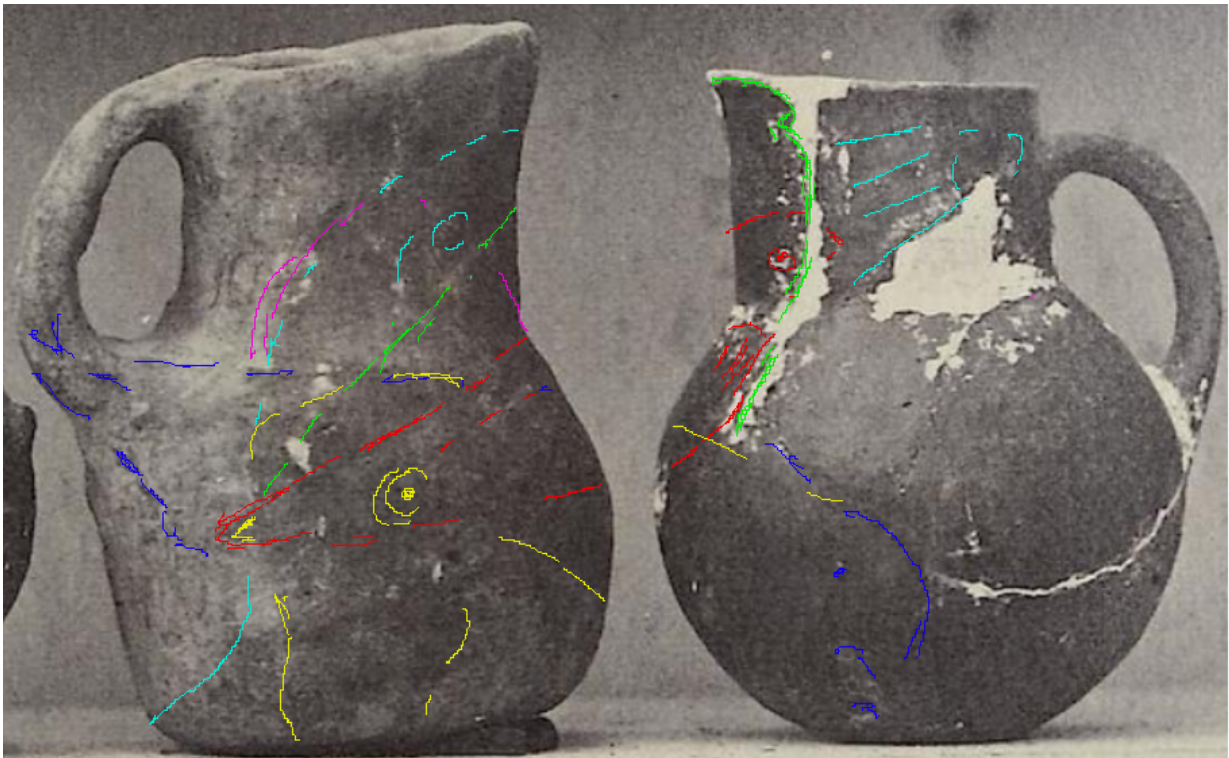
It is, of course, conceivable that Schliemann himself was unaware of the *Atlas* artifice, in which case it might be attributed instead to the photographer. But I do not think that that is likely if he took, as reported, such enormous pains and expense with the photographs (see note 8), and was, besides, an exceptionally observant and reflective man, as his, still pertinent comments, cited a little earlier above, appear, among many others, to confirm.

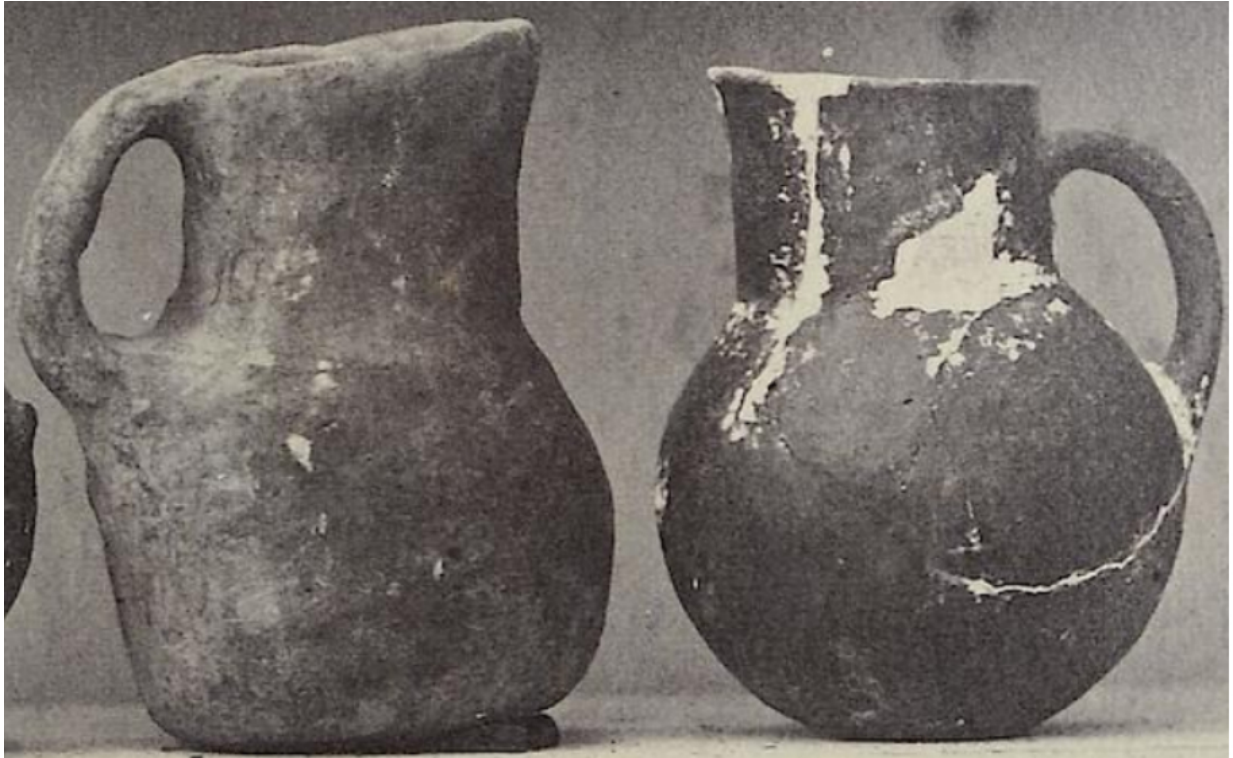
8 Schliemann, Heinrich, *Atlas trojanischer Alterthümer: Photographische Berichte über die Ausgrabungen in Troja*, Leipzig, 1874, online at Universitäts-Bibliothek Heidelberg, <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/schliemann1874>, with a useful introductory note about the compilation of the Atlas, though I disagree with some of its observations.

9 Page 11ff of *The arrangement of tablets* cited in note 5 above. I would now add that the course Evans and Schliemann chose to take in the face of highly challenging cult art is in some ways comparable to that of Victorian era patrons who renovated so many churches, containing no less compromising, largely external imagery, in the course of the latter 19th century. Whilst they destroyed much, they - in some cases apparently deliberately - retained some, albeit thenceforth far less visible in the context of the modernisation.



J





K

