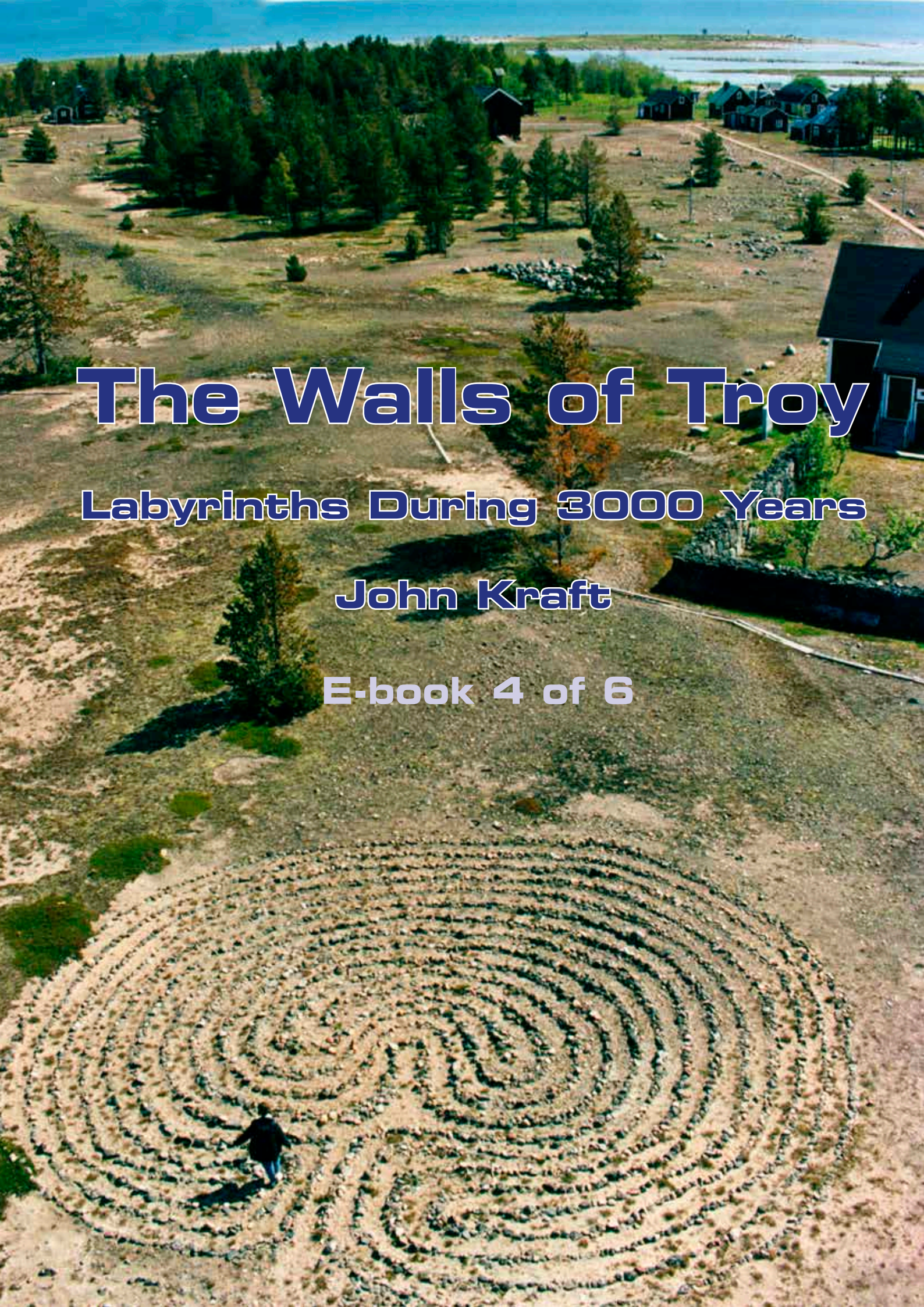

The Walls of Troy

Labyrinths During 3000 Years

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E-book 4 of 6

Contents

Part 4

Troy

46. Descendants of the Trojans

There are two similarities between the legends of Troy and the labyrinths. The first is that labyrinths in Scandinavia, the British Isles, southern France, the Basque Country, and among the Etruscans had names alluding to Troy. The jug from Tragliatella shows that angle-type figures were already associated with Troy around 650-600 BC.

The second is that the legends of the Trojan War are reminiscent of the games and legends in which a woman is taken out of a labyrinth. It is difficult to ignore the similarities between the Troy legends and these labyrinth traditions. But how should we interpret the connection? Were the labyrinth traditions inspired by the Trojan War? Or was the story of the Trojan War created from a core consisting of a labyrinth myth?[1]

The story of the Trojan war is well-known. Prince Paris of Troy abducts the beautiful queen Helen of Sparta, which results in a ten years long war between a great coalition of Greek states and Troy. The coalition is led by king Agamemnon of Mycenae, brother of Helen's humiliated husband king Menelaus of Sparta. The leading warrior and hero on the Greek side is Achilles. The great hero among the Trojans is Hector, son of king Priam of Troy.

The Greeks lay siege to Troy, but they cannot take the city. Finally they come up with the idea of making a wooden horse, that contains a group of warriors. The Greek fleet pretends to give up and return home. The Trojans find the wooden horse that is brought inside the walls. In the night the Greek warriors jump out of the horse, open a city gate from inside and make it possible for the Greek army to sack the city of Troy.

Another interesting story about Troy is the legend of Laomedon. It is briefly mentioned in the Iliad: King Laomedon of Troy had persuaded the gods Apollo and Poseidon to build huge walls around his city. When the work was completed, however, Laomedon reneged on his promise and gave no reward to the builders. In revenge, Apollo sent a plague to the Trojans and Poseidon sent a man-eating sea monster to guard Troy. To appease the beast, Laomedon was forced to sacrifice his daughter Hesione. But before this happened, Heracles arrived and killed the beast. However, Heracles was also deceived by Laomedon about the reward. Heracles then set out for the city of Troy, which he took by force, killing the king and his sons and allowing his aide Telamon to marry Hesione.

So, this little Troy story in the larger Iliad saga also culminates in the union of the city's enforcers with a young woman taken out from Troy.

Homer has been read and celebrated like few other poets in world history. It was long believed that one brilliant poet, Homer, created all the15,693 lines of verse of the Iliad and the 12,109 lines of the Odyssey.

But in the 1920s, a young American scholar, Milman Parry, was able to show that Homer's texts had a structure, with fixed expressions or 'formulas' reminiscent of orally transmitted verse that he was studying in Yugoslavia. This gave added weight to an old idea, first presented by F A Wolf in 1795, that the Iliad and Odyssey had their roots in oral poetry that had been written down at some time. This may have been done by someone called Homer.

There are different opinions on when the Iliad and Odyssey were written down. The estimates differ from the 8th century to the 6th century BC. Before that the poems were memorised and recited by rhapsodes. The rhapsodes probably continued to play an important role even later, since there were only a few written copies and most people couldn't read.

Although the metre (hexameter) provided some protection against distortion, it must be assumed that the rhapsodes had considerable scope for changing the content, not least by adding or subtracting verses. This means that the Trojan poems probably underwent many changes, large and small.

Homer's two poems the Iliad and the Odyssey are the most well-known narratives of the Trojan war. But they don't give a complete picture of the events. The Iliad only tells us about the events during 53 days in the last year of the war. The Odyssey describes Odysseus' long journey home after the end of the war.

Other literary works fill in gaps of the story. In antiquity, there was a significant literature on Troy alongside the Iliad and Odyssey. The so called Epic Cycle consisted of eight closely related epic narratives, two of them were the Iliad and the Odyssey. They all seem to be from the eighth to sixth century BC. But only the Iliad and Odyssey are complete. The rest were mostly lost, only portions remain, quoted or summarized by later authors.

Five depicted the Trojan War up to the conquest of the city, the Iliad being the second. The sixth epic was about the return home of the Greeks. The seventh was the Odyssey and the eighth told of the later life of Odysseus.

It seems to have taken a long time before the different parts of the legends of Troy were presented in one text. It was done by an author called Proclus, by many scholars identified as Eutychius Proclus, a grammarian and tutor of the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD).

The Iliad is only telling the story of Achilles' wrath, how in anger he refused to fight and how he finally came back to the battlefield and killed the Trojan hero Hector. It doesn't tell about the abduction of Helen, the judgment of Paris is only mentioned briefly, and it doesn't mention several other well-known episodes of the Trojan war.

The episode of the Trojan horse is for example not mentioned in the Iliad, probably for the simple reason that the poem ends before the war is concluded. The wooden horse is briefly mentioned in the Odyssey, but the most detailed and well-known account is found

in Virgil's Aeneid, which was composed much later, in honour of the emperor Augustus (63 BC-14 AD). However, we know that the Trojan horse has a long history, it was a popular motif in Greek art, it is for example easy to recognize it on the Myconus vase, c. 730 BC.

Research has shown that among the many vase paintings from Greek-speaking areas and Etruria, that are inspired by the Trojan War, relatively few are depicting episodes from the Iliad and the Odyssey. Minna Skafte-Jensen's conclusion is that the painters were inspired by the general, oral tradition of the Trojan War, not by the written works by Homer. "What we find documented all over the Greek-speaking areas right from the oldest preserved inscriptions from the second half of the 8th century BC is not the Iliad and the Odyssey but the general Homeric tradition of telling stories in hexameter".[2]

This means that the orally transmitted legends of the Trojan war were widespread and well-known in Greece and adjoining areas long before they were written down. There must have been an immensely rich pool of traditions containing different narratives of which the Trojan War was just one among many others.

In ancient times, the Trojan war was imagined as a real war. There was little doubt that Ilios/Troy was a 'real' city. The approximate location was known and at that place there was a city called Ilion or Ilium in Hellenistic and Roman times. It is said that the Persian king Xerxes, during his campaign against the Greeks, stopped there to sacrifice a thousand oxen. When Alexander the Great crossed the Hellespont in his war against the Persian Empire, he came to Ilion in 334 BC, where he is said to have run naked around Achilles' grave.

When Julius Caesar was pursuing Pompey after the Battle of Pharsalus, he visited the site of the city that had been burned down 40 years earlier by an expeditionary Roman force. A new city was founded on the same site under emperor Augustus. The mad emperor Caracalla came and sacrificed there, allegedly imagining himself to be Achilles. Emperor Hadrian visited the city of Novum Ilium in 124 AD. Emperor Constantine is said to have had plans to build a new Roman capital there, but he chose Byzantium instead.[3]

After that, the site lost its former importance but was never forgotten. While many considered it futile to seek a historical reality behind the legends of Troy, others were still interested in the remains of Troy. In the late 19th century, interest focused on a place called Hisarlik, where Heinrich Schliemann started to dig. In successive excavations 1870-1890 he amazed the world and added a new chapter to the Troy research.

Schliemann read the Iliad as if it were a history book where important information was taken directly from reality. However, he was met with much scepticism. The events and people described in the Iliad are difficult to anchor in the archaeologists' reality. The question is whether they were historical at all.

Schliemann got the sequence of layers slightly wrong, but it was later shown that Hisarlik contained the remains of at least nine layers or 'cities' built on top of each other. Later research has reached further and revealed 46 building phases. Wilhelm Dörpfeld, who in 1893-1894 continued the excavations after Schliemann, believed that Troy VI was the city described in the Iliad. But Carl Blegen who excavated Troy 1932-1938 was convinced that Troy VI had been destroyed by an earthquake, not by war. Troy VIIa was destroyed by a fire disaster that may have been caused by war. However there was a problem, Troy VIIa seems to have been a relatively insignificant village built up among the ruins of the magnificent Troy VI, it hardly corresponds to the poem's image of a powerful, impregnable royal castle.

Manfred Korfmann, who began excavations in 1988, found traces of a large Bronze Age town at the foot of the so far excavated citadel. In his opinion Troy VIIa begins around 1300 BC and ends c.1180, "due to destruction caused by war". But if Troy VIIa was destroyed that late, it may have been caused by the so called "Sea Peoples", not by Homer's Greek coalition, since the Mycenaean civilisation was at that time in an advanced stage of disruption.

The legends of Troy have given rise to much debate, with one question being how much of the narrative can be based on historical reality and how much is legend. How likely is it that a Greek coalition of city-states fought a ten-year war for the sake of a woman? It is hard to believe that in the Bronze Age such a protracted warfare could have been undertaken, even if it had been desired and agreed upon.

The plot of the Iliad is characterised by the intervention of bickering gods. They are present from the beginning to the end of the war. Their central role makes it difficult to interpret the poem as an historical account.

The gods are involved in the showdown. From their elevated position they watch events unfold as from a theatre box, and they are constantly intervening. At times, they mingle with the combatants. Zeus helps the Trojans while his brother Poseidon sides with the Greeks. Athena and Hera support Menelaus and the Greeks, while Apollo and Aphrodite support the Trojans. Ares, the fierce god of war, fights on the side of the Trojans and is badly wounded and suffers, but of course he doesn't die, as the gods are immortal.

Even some of the main characters that may seem historical are clearly rooted in the world of mythology. Helen, who accompanied prince Paris to Ilion, was also known as a vegetation goddess. Achilles was the son of King Peleus and the sea nymph Thetis. She tried to make her son invulnerable by submerging him in the river Styx in the realm of the dead. But she held his heel which became his vulnerable point ('Achilles heel'). He was not immortal, but it is clear that he had an elevated status.

In the Iliad, the city has two names: Ilios and Troy. Troy was the 'city of the Trojans.' Ilios/Ilion dominates in the Iliad, it is mentioned 108 times, while Troy is mentioned 53 times. But the inhabitants of the city are always called Trojans (636 times).[4] The common view has been that the name Troy came from the name of the landscape, Troas, where the Trojans lived, and the city was located.

But there have also been dissenting views. Konrat Ziegler argued that the troans and the name of their area, Troas, were borrowed from Homer for the area south-east of the Hellespont. Ziegler believed that the legendary material of the Iliad probably belonged in Greece and that the 'City of the Trojans' was not a specific location. He was therefore sceptical to the efforts of the archaeologists to find traces of Homer's Troy through excavations.[5]

Several clay tablets excavated in 1906-1907 in the Hittite capital of Hattusa, in present-day Turkey, mention a kingdom called Willusa. It seems that Willusa was identical to Ilion. If so, Ilion may have been a historical city. But the interpretations are controversial and what little is believed to be known about historical Willusa, through preserved clay tablets, bears no striking resemblance to the story of the Trojan War.[6]

What about Troy? Could Troy belong in the myth while Ilion was borrowed into the poem from historical reality? Ilion may have been a historical city that was sacked and burned at some time. But it is hard to believe that the core of the story, the abduction of Helen and the ten-year war to get her back, had any basis in history.

Eric H Cline sums up the debate in the following way: Hisarlik is probably identical with Ilios/Troy described by Homer. And there was probably an actual war fought in northwestern Anatolia, on which Homer's Iliad was based.

But there are traces of several "cities" in Hisarlik to choose from. And which war? The different sources mention several wars which have been fought in this area. Two wars are mentioned by Homer, four are mentioned in the Hittite sources and the archaeologists have found traces of two wars at Hisarlik.

Cline is of the opinion that Homer's poem was not meant to be a history book but rather an epic of national pride concerned with universal themes such as love and honor. Homer's Trojan war could be interpreted as a process rather than an event, incorporating details of people, places and events taken from several hundred years during the Late Bronze Age, not to mention the subsequent five hundred years that lay between the war and Homer himself. Homer could have woven material from older epics into that of his own. The basic outline of Homer's story rings true, whether or not Paris or Helen, Agamemnon and Priam, or Achilles and Hector actually existed. Cline states that lines between reality and fantasy might be blurred, but overall, the place and the war are right where they should be, in northwestern Anatolia and firmly ensconced in the world of the Late Bronze Age.[7]

Dieter Hertel is more sceptical He says that the legends of Troy have a very small historical core. He doesn't believe that Troy was identical with Willusa mentioned in the Hittite archive. Hertel turns down all attempts to find evidence for the "Trojan war" in the excavations of Troy VI, VIIa and VIIb. He accepts Blegen's interpretation that Troy VI was destroyed by an earthquake. But he doesn't believe that Troy VIIa might have been destroyed by invading mycaenaens, of the simple reason that at that time their own cities were hit by destruction. And the fires that destroyed Troy VIIb 1 and 2 were probably natural disasters.

Hertel emphasizes that some of the characters of the Troy legend have their roots not in actual history but in religion and cult, like Helen, Menelaus, Agamemnon and Odysseus. Many of the important elements of the legend of Troy seem to be have parallels in widespread folk tales, like a war triggered by the abduction of a women, the rescue efforts of two brothers, the summoning of supporters, hard fights about the pillaged and their treasure, the death of the best friend and the revenge on the killer, etc.[8]

With the rise of the Roman Empire, a Latin version of the Trojan war, the Ilias Latina or Homer Latinus, emerged as a short story of 1,070 lines. It is thought to have originated in the first century AD and was widely disseminated in the Latin schools of the Middle Ages.

More Latin accounts of the Trojan war soon appeared, partly challenging Homer's version. Dictys Cretensis' Ephemeris belli Troiani is thought to have been written in the 4th century AD. The alleged author is said to have participated in the Trojan war on the Greek side.

Even more popular was Dares Phrygius' De excidio Troiae historia, probably written in the 6th century. Dares is also said to have participated in the Trojan war, but on the side of the Trojans.

Dictys and Dares were probably fictional characters, the real authors are unknown. But that didn't stop these accounts from becoming popular, while Homer's ancient Greek text fell into oblivion.

Benoit de Sainte-Maure, who wrote Le roman de Troiae in the mid-12th century, was influenced by both Dictys and Dares. His story was widely disseminated in the West. Especially popular was the Sicilian Guido delle Columnis' Historia destructionis Troiae or Historia Troiana, published in 1287, which was translated from Latin into many other languages.

Interest in Homer's text was revitalised in 1488 when the first printed edition of Homer was published in Florence. It then became available at universities and schools across Europe.9 But before that, Homer's text hardly reached the public. In the Middle Ages the other often astoundingly independent versions dominated.

46:1 The labyrinth on Kyrkegångsskär at Kråkelund, described by Richard Dybeck in 1865.

The Latin texts were soon translated into the vernacular languages. Some versions of the so-called Trójumanna saga have been preserved in Icelandic manuscripts. They are based on Dares but also include elements from other books, such as the Ilias Latina, the Aeneid, Heroides and Metamorphoses. The translation may have been made in Iceland, probably no earlier than the mid-13th century.

Guido was also translated. In Sweden there is a manuscript, Historia Trojana eller Troya Borgdzs Chröneca from 1529, which is largely a faithful translation of Guido into Swedish. A translation of Guido into Danish was printed in Copenhagen in 1623 and appeared in several editions during the 18th century.

In Sweden there was also an old song, Paris och Helena with some 50 verses, and a Danish version, Paris og dronning Ellen, was printed in 1572. The Swedish song probably dates from around the same time.[10]

The accounts of the Trojan war that reached the Nordic countries in the Middle Ages were thus not Homer's Iliad, but very different versions written in Latin by other authors. When they were translated to the Scandinavian languages, little of the original stories remained, but the main features of the plot and the names of the main characters were retained. So, if the Trójumanna saga or the Swedish translation of Guido had any influence on the labyrinth traditions, one should easily recognise details from these translations. But such traces are missing in the Nordic labyrinth lore. The only thing that reminds us of the ancient legends of Troy is that the labyrinths are called Trojeborgar.

It is therefore unlikely that any of the medieval depictions of the Trojan War served as a source of inspiration for the legends and games in which a woman is to be extracted from the centre of the labyrinth. And since the Etruscans already associated the angle-type labyrinth figure with Troy around 650-600 BC, it is hardly likely that the labyrinths in France, the Basque Country, the British Isles and Scandinavia would have received their Troy names from the much younger literary works by Dares, Dictys or Guido.

The only version of the Troy legend that may have reached a wide audience in the Nordic countries is the folk song about Paris and Helen. But it came too late to explain the Trojeborg names of the Scandinavian labyrinths, which are recorded in Sweden and Denmark from the mid-14th century.

There is only one record that suggests that the song about Paris and Helen has left its mark on popular beliefs about labyrinths. In 1865, the Swedish antiquarian Richard Dybeck described a labyrinth on Kyrkegångsskär at the pilot station of Kråkelund, on the coast of Småland. An old man who showed him the stone figure recited some of the last lines of the song about Paris and Helen (see Appendix 24).

This single example, with debatable circumstantial value, shows how rare it was that the medieval Troy legend was confused with the popular labyrinth lore in the North. If the Nordic labyrinth traditions and Trojeborg names had their origins in the song of Paris and Helen or one of the medieval versions of the Troy legend, there should have been many more records reminiscent of the story from Kråkelund. But there aren't.

Gunnar Knudsen has found a legend linked to the Viking Age Trelleborg ringfort at Hejninge on Zealand, which was apparently inspired by the song about Paris and Queen Ellen (see Appendix 24). However, this legend is not linked to a labyrinth, but to the remnants of a prehistoric fort. The legend has been located at king Harald Bluetooth's fort, which must have happened many hundreds of years after the fort was built.

I think the Trojeborg names of the labyrinths, in Scandinavia, are much older than the folk song about Paris and Helen. It is difficult to imagine that the labyrinths in Scandinavia got their Trojeborg names from Dictys, Dares or Guido, or through their more or less distorted translations into the vernacular languages of the North. Long before the first Latin texts about the Trojan War reached the Nordic countries and were translated, a legendary city called Trojeborg was probably known. It was a city depicted in the form of a labyrinth figure.

The German mythologist Ernst Krause believed that the Laomedon story was a more original version of a legend that formed the core of the Iliad. In his view, the same basic idea appeared in a number of ancient stories. Perseus freed Andromeda by defeating a sea monster. Jason abducted Medea after killing a dragon in Ares' grove. Theseus took Ariadne away after killing the Minotaur in the labyrinth.

Krause found similar motifs in Serbian and Bulgarian folk tales and songs, where the name Troy also appears. He mentions several castle ruins with names like Trojanovgrad 'Trojan's castle'. In one version, the three-headed night and winter demon Trojano held a girl captive. In other versions, the girl is his own daughter, who is freed by St. George. According to one version, Trojano tried to cover himself with a cloak on the way home from his mistress and when it was pulled off him, he melted in the sunlight like a piece of ice. Krause's interpretation was that the demon Trojano represented the forces of winter and the underworld.

Sometimes the tales are confused with traditions about Roman emperor Trajan. For example, it was said that emperor Trajan, who had wings and three heads, used to fly at night to visit his lover who lived in another castle. But his enemies surprised him and locked him up with his mistress until noon. When he was then forced to fly home in the midday sun, his waxed wings melted, and he crashed.[11]

In Serbian songs, Krause found examples of the notion that Troy was a city suffering from a curse. A story about St. George and the Emperor of Troy is clearly coloured by the influence of Christianity: The inhabitants of Troy were not Christians, but only cared about gold and wealth. So, God decided to give them what they wanted most and let gold and silver come out of all 70 wells in the city instead of water. In the end, however, God opened a swamp three hours away from the city and gave them water. However, the water was guarded by a hideous monster that the people of Troy had to feed every day with a young girl. After three years, it was time for the emperor's own daughter to be sacrificed to the beast. On the way to the swamp, however, she met St. George on horseback. He defeated the beast and took it to Troy, where he finally killed it in front of the emperor and the people. Thereafter, the people of Troy were converted to Christianity and before long, water returned to the city's wells.[12]

The heroes of these tales, according to Krause, were all 'dragon slayers' or fighters of demons who symbolised the forces of winter, death and darkness. The purpose of the fight was to liberate the sun, the light, the life force, usually in the form of a young woman. The fight against the beast was thus originally a pagan seasonal drama set in spring and therefore, in a Christian context, quite naturally associated with the Christian resurrection drama of Easter.

According to Krause, the demon's home, the castle or lair, where the "sun maiden" was held captive, could be a labyrinth or Trojeborg, but could also take other forms, like a castle with many walls, surrounding moats, snakes, thorn hedges or fires. The castle could also be located on top of a steep mountain, sometimes described as a 'glass mountain,' other times the castle is said to have 'glass walls.'

There was great interest in Troy and the Trojans in ancient times. For example, a number of peoples cultivated the idea that they were descended from the Trojans. Most famous of those are the Romans. Their national epic the Aeneid, created by Virgil (70-19 BC), is about Aeneas, one of the bravest heroes of Troy. During the fall of Troy, Aeneas managed to escape with his lame father and his son Ascanius. They eventually reached Latium in Italy where Ascanius, later called Julius, founded the mother city of Rome, Alba Longa.

The Aeneid was a tribute poem to the emperor Augustus, whose family (the Julian lineage) is portrayed as descendants of the immigrant Trojans. The Aeneid quickly gained status as the national epic of the Romans when it began to circulate after Virgil's death.

During Caesar's Gallic War, his main opponent was Vercingetorix of the Arverni tribe. The Romans soon discovered, to their surprise, that the Arverni also considered themselves to be descended from the Trojans.[13] The Franks also believed they had Trojan ancestors. According to the Frankish Troy saga, the oldest known version of which dates from 658, after the fall of the city, some of the Trojans travelled north to the lower Danube. They eventually reached the Rhine, where they built the city of Troja nova (Xanten).

The British had their own Trojan story, according to which Brutus, son or grandson of Aeneas, came to Britain and founded the city of Caerdroi-Newydd on the Thames. This colony would later give rise to London.

There were other peoples who claimed descent from the Trojans. Krause claimed to have found traces of such traditions among the Franks, British, Venetians, Batavians, Hainauts, Irish, Welsh, Saxons and Scandinavians.[14]

Let's take a look at Scandinavia. The Younger Edda, also known as Snorre's Edda or the Prosaic Edda, tells us that Odin was descended from King Priam of Troy. Odin emigrated from Thrace to Saxony and later ended up in Scandinavia where his decendants founded kingdoms in Denmark, Sweden and Norway. In Gylfaginning the Icelandic author Snorre Sturlasson (c.1179-1241) gives a hint that Asgård, where the Æsir gods lived, was identical with Troy ("Next they made for themselves in the middle of the world a city which is called Ásgard; men call it Trója. There dwelt the gods and their kindred…"). Snorre also compares the god Thor with Hector and Loki with Odysseus.

I have made no effort to find out more about these tales of Trojan ancestors, but by coincidence I have recently found two more examples of a similar kind, one from the Greek city of Tenea, situated south-west of Corinth, the other one from western Sicily.

According to Pausanias, the founders of Tenea near Corinth were Trojan prisoners of war, whom king Agamemnon had allowed to build their own town.[15] According to Thucydides there were three groups of people on Sicily before the island was colonized by the Greeks and Carthaginians. In the western part of Sicily lived the Elymians. Their ancestors were supposed to have come from Ilion. After the fall of Ilion they had fled by ship to Sicily where they settled, west of the Sicani. Under Roman rule the Elymians were exempted from taxes in recognition of their claim of Trojan ancestry.[16]

We don't need to engage closer in these fanciful stories. Obviously, many people have believed that they were descended from the Trojans. It is clear that the notion of the Trojan origin of the Romans predates Virgil, who certainly built on an already known tradition. Greek sources from the 5th century BC suggest that Aeneas was the founder of Rome, and there are a number of later records that point in the same direction. When the Greek island of Delos wanted to form an alliance with Rome in the 100s BC, it was claimed that Aeneas had stopped at Delos on his way to Italy.[17] Hellanikos of Lesbos (born 490 BC) gives the earliest known account of the legendary founding of Rome by the Trojans.[18]

The Trojan origin stories show that there were widespread early traditions about Troy and the Trojans. At least three categories of Trojan tales can be distinguished. One is made up of the Epic Cycle and its successors, Dares, Dictys, Guido, etc. Another is the legends describing peoples who considered themselves to be descended from emigrated Trojans. A third group consists of the labyrinths with Troy names. In addition, there have been other legendary motifs alluding to Troy. The Roman equestrian play Lusus Troiae also shows how alive Troy was among the Romans 2000 years ago.

The earliest records of the Romans' descent from the Trojans are from the 5th century BC. The earliest evidence of angle-type figures being associated with Troy is found on the Tragliatella jug from around 650-600 BC.

There are major differences between these three 'families' of tales. But Troy is a common denominator. However, the labyrinth traditions have not borrowed any colour from the Epic Cycle. There are no names of the Homeric heroes, nothing about Paris and Helen, not a word about the Trojan horse. The only similarities with the Epic Cycle stories are that the angle-type was associated with Troy and that labyrinths were generally considered to represent cities or hard-to-defeat castles. In addition, there is a similarity between the old legends of Troy and northern European folk traditions where a young woman, 'a maiden,' is to be taken out of the labyrinth, i.e. from Troy.

It is fairly obvious that the Iliad, the Odyssey and the other stories belonging to the Epic Cycle were conceived in a cultural environment where the legends of Troy were well known. "Homer" (if he existed) didn't make up the general framework of the story, the Iliad and the Odyssey were elaborations of a theme already well-known to many people. Knowledge of the Trojan War was probably widespread in antiquity.

The legends of Troy must not be read as history books. They were probably inspired by elements of history as well as myth. They also adopted motifs which can be traced back to other legends. The early rhapsodes had a rich collection of tales to choose from and to transform into poetry.

Although there are elements in the legends of Troy that may have been borrowed from historical reality, the mythological parts play a major role. I think the poems were created without any apparent adherence to the world events at the end of the Bronze Age.

I suspect that the narrative of the Epic Cycle had an old mythological source of inspiration, an ancient myth of Troy, which is also behind the Laomedon tale. This is where we can find the explanation for the Trojeborg name of the angle-type and the oldest meaning of the labyrinth.

The core of a popular tale of the Trojan war, existing before Homer, could have originated from a seasonal fertility myth, where the vegetation goddess had to be liberated from a magic fortress in the shape of a labyrinth, called Troy. This could explain the Troy names of labyrinths and the similarities between many labyrinth tales and the idea that the Trojan war was fought in order to bring out a woman from Troy.

With this in mind it is time to take a closer look at Helen who played the central role in the Trojan war and the two brothers Menelaus and Agamemnon, who started a war too bring Helen back from Troy. In my opinion none of them were historical.

47. The Goddess Helen

The protagonist of the Trojan War is not Achilles or Odysseus, it is a woman: Helen. She is a tragic figure who is tormented by her guilt for the devastating war. Helen doesn't take up much space in the Iliad and the listener/reader doesn't get close to her, but her fate is the centre of the story.

Helen is known from the Troy legend as the Queen of Sparta, consort of King Menelaos. Other sources show that she was a well-known goddess, mainly in Sparta, but she is also found elsewhere in Greece.

Helen was the daughter of Queen Leda of Sparta and the god Zeus (in the form of a swan). The twins Castor and Polydeuces (the Dioscuri) were her brothers. Together with them, she was worshipped as a goddess of fertility. Like Artemis, Helen was imagined as a tree. In Rhodes, she was worshipped as the tree goddess *Helena Dendritis.*

The Swedish scholar Martin P. Nilsson argued that she was an ancient goddess with a background in Mycenaean mythology. In Sparta, a festival of Helenia was celebrated in her honour. Helen had two temples, at one of which she was associated with tree worship.

Helen was also associated with Attica, where Athens was located. It is said that she was kidnapped by the Athenian hero Theseus and his friend Peirithous. They hid her in the castle of Aphidna in Attica. From there she was later freed by her brothers Castor and Polydeuces (also known as Pollux).

According to Nilsson, a distinctive feature of Helena was that she was abducted. The rape of a goddess was a well-known theme in the cult. Pluto, identical to Hades, ruler of the underworld, abducted the goddess Kore, which Nilsson interpreted as a parallel myth to the abduction of Helen. Both Helen and Kore were vegetation goddesses.

Theseus and Peirithous also tried to remove the vegetation goddess Persephone, who was identical to Kore, from the underworld. She was the queen of the underworld. But the abduction of Persephone failed and Theseus and Peirithous were magically locked to their seats in the underworld.

The failed delivery of Persephone was interpreted by Nilsson as an attempt to defeat the underworld, i.e. to overcome death.

Ariadne was also a goddess of vegetation. She was abducted by Theseus after he killed the Minotaur in the labyrinth, but then she became the consort of the god Dionysus. So, both Helen and Ariadne were vegetation goddesses. Both were abducted by Theseus. Nilsson recognised this as an old myth where the goddess of vegetation (Helen, Ariadne, Kore or Persephone) was abducted by one or two heroes (Theseus and Peirithous). He believed that these vegetation goddesses were closely related to each other.

The male protagonist Theseus was primarily the hero of the Athenians. Nilsson considered Theseus to be a successor to Heracles, who also performed a number of great deeds.[1] As already mentioned, Heracles once saved the Trojans from a man-eating beast, but when he was cheated out of the reward, he attacked Troy, which was taken by force. His assistant Telamon was then allowed to marry the slain king's daughter Hesione.

Jack Lindsay, who wrote a book on the various aspects of Helen, claimed that she was worshipped as 'mother earth.' He compared her to goddesses such as Artemis, Persephone, Europa, Harmonia and Ariadne, all of whom have similarities and may have been 'earth goddesses.' Helen is sometimes described as the 'hanged' goddess, as are Artemis and Ariadne. Helen is a necklace goddess, as are Harmonia and Pandora.

After Theseus killed the Minotaur, he sailed off to Delos with Ariadne and the freed hostages. On the island of Naxos, he then abandoned her, and she became the consort of the god Dionysos. On Naxos, Ariadne was worshipped as a vegetation goddess who dies and is reborn again with the changing seasons.

Like Nilsson, Lindsay believed that the same mythological pattern can be traced behind Helen and Ariadne, both playing the role of 'mother earth.' He also compared Helen to Kore and concluded that the labyrinth in Crete and the city of Troy symbolised the same thing.

So, Helen is hardly a historical figure, she is a goddess of vegetation. The story of her being taken away to Troy and having to be retrieved again probably has mythological roots. Her counterparts appear under names such as Ariadne, Artemis and Persephone.

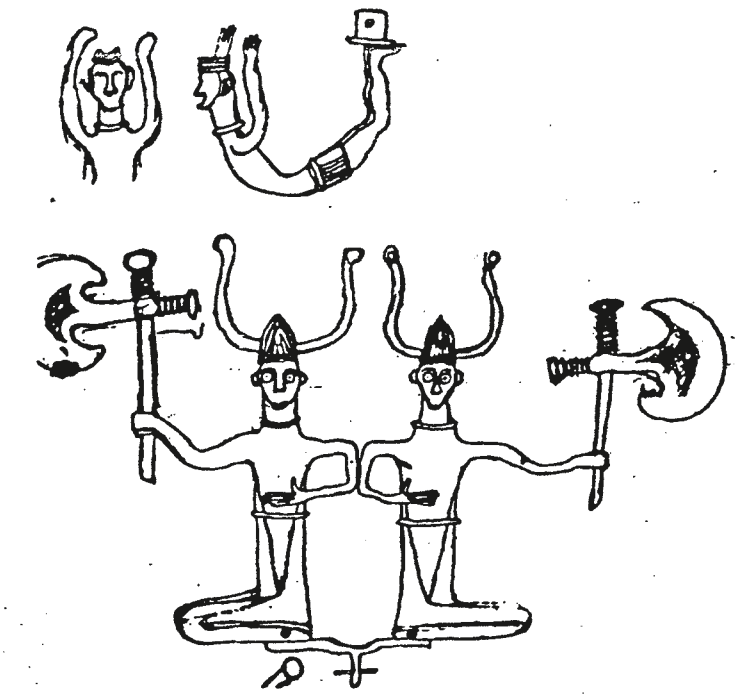
There are many indications, then, that the core of Homer's plot was borrowed from an old seasonal myth, which creative rhapsodes have reworked and expanded with both imaginative and realistic digressions.

48. Sons of the Sky God

The twins Castor and Polydeuces, known as the *Dioscuri,* were the brothers of Helen, sons of the sky god Zeus. They are closely associated with Helen, whom they liberated after she was abducted by Theseus and Peirithous to the castle of Aphidna in Attica.

'Divine twins' are not unique to the Greeks. They appear, for example, in Indian mythology (the *Aśvin*) and in Baltic folk songs. The presence of twins can also be seen in Scandinavian petroglyphs and on some Bronze Age artefacts. In Denmark, doubled bronze figures with large axes and helmets with curved antennae have been found. One interpretation is that they represent the divine twins.

Much has been researched and written about the twin motif, which most scholars agree is very old. The Aśvins are found in India's main religious document, the *Rigveda*, which is usually dated to the second millennium BC, perhaps around 1500 BC.



48:1 Drawing 1778 of bronze figures from Grævens væng, Denmark.

In a booklet in 1985, I briefly mentioned that two of the main characters in the Indian epic *Rāmāyana*, Rama and his aide Lakshmana, have been interpreted as equivalents of the divine twins.[1]

Since al-Bīrūnī depicted the demon Ravana's castle in the epic *Rāmāyana* as a labyrinthine figure, I suspected a connection between the twins and the oldest labyrinths. My simple guess was that the sky god was represented by a male twin, Rama and Lakhsmana, who freed the vegetation goddess Sita from her labyrinthine prison.

I linked this to the images of the jug from Tragliatella, where two riders appear to be riding out of the labyrinth, one with a strange, huddled figure behind him on the horse. Why were there two? My suspicion was that the huddled figure on the horse was the newly liberated goddess of vegetation, while the two riders represent the twins. The images of two loving couples to the right of the labyrinth, interpreted by several scholars as *hieros gamos,* would fit well into such a pattern.[2]

Staffan Lundén expanded on this idea in a seminar paper in archaeology in 1989. His digging in the literature on the divine twins led him to see further than I had. It is obvious that he was fascinated by the idea, but he also saw difficulties that I had not yet considered. Here are some glimpses of what he found out.

The twins of Indian mythology, the Aśvins, like the Greek Dioscuri, had a sister. The relationship between the twins and her was characterised by her being abducted and the brothers coming to her aid.

The Aśvins were sons of the sky god *Dyaus* and they were also called *Divo' nápata* 'sons of God.' This corresponds fairly well with the Greek mythological dioscuri Castor and Polydeuces, who were sons of the sky god Zeus and Leda (*Diós Kouroi* 'Boys of Zeus'). In Baltic mythology there are similar names: Latvian *Dieva deli* and Lithuanian *Dievo suneliai* both mean 'sons of God.'

In the *Rigveda* the sister of the twins is called *Surya,* which is feminine of *Suryas* 'the sun.' In Latvian the sister of the twins is called *Saules meita* and in Lithuanian she is called *Saules dukterys,* both names meaning 'daughter of the sun.' In Greek mythology, Helen is the daughter of the sky god Zeus.

In the Veda hymns, the Aśvins are not only Surya's brothers but also her suitors and even her husbands. The Latvian Dieva deli are also suitors of the sun daughter, they take her along in a boat. The Indian Aśvins take Surya along in their chariot. The Greek Dioscuri bring Helen home in a chariot.

These are a few samples that show the similarities between the Aśvins, Dioscuri and Twins in Baltic folk songs. There are more ancient myths that share the same pattern. This vast material has been analysed by Donald Ward and summarised in a scheme of characteristic features.

Let's return to the Trojan War. Helen is abducted to Troy and then a long war ensues to get her out of there. The driving force is the aggrieved King Menelaos of Sparta who was married to Helen. The Greek alliance is led by Menelaos' brother King Agamemnon of Mycenae. So, according to Homer, Helen would be brought out of Troy by two brothers! The pattern is reminiscent of the aforementioned twin myths.

Researchers were quick to recognise this.[3] Staffan Lundén has added the idea that there could be a wider connection with a labyrinth myth and the story of the Trojan War.

Like me, Lundén suspected that the core of the story of the Trojan War was inspired by an old myth where a goddess (Helen) is to be taken out of the labyrinth (Troy). Two brothers must solve the task. Menelaos and Agamemnon can thus be interpreted as hypostases of the Dioscuri, the divine twins.

The two kings are called the Atreides in the *Iliad* because they were the sons of King Atreus of Mycenae. Around the brothers and their father, a complicated tapestry was woven of mythical stories of power struggles, horrific abuse, and untimely death. Agamemnon and Menelaos married the sisters Clytemnestra and Helen, who, like Castor and Polydeuces, were children of the god Zeus and Queen Leda of Sparta. A recurring feature of these myths is that the main characters are siblings. Even Atreus has a brother, Thyestes, who tries to overthrow Atreus' kingship and eventually succeeds.

It has not escaped the attention of scholars that the Indian epic *Rāmāyana* has similarities with the *Iliad*. One possible explanation is that Vālmīki, who has been identified as the author of *Rāmāyana*, was inspired by the *Iliad*. But the German mythologist Heino Gehrts, who was a sharp critic of attempts to interpret historical events in the ancient poems, instead suggested that both the *Rāmāyana* and the *Iliad* are based on an ancient ritual motif. Noting that both the mythical city of Troy and Ravana's castle have been depicted as labyrinthine figures, he invokes Krause's theory.[4]

Gehrts has investigated the ritualistic background of *Rāmāyana*. He discerns an underlying twin myth that has parallels in the well-known mythological motif of "two brothers and a bride."[5]

The plot of the *Rāmāyana* centres on the two brothers Rama and Lakshmana. They wore shining armour and looked like shining flames of fire. But otherwise, they are not very similar. Rama is a magnificent warrior while Lakshmana is a faithful servant. According to Donald Ward, this difference is typical of the Indo-European twins.[6]

Rama marries Sita. He is then forced into exile with Sita and Lakshmana. This too is reminiscent of the pattern in the *Rigveda*. Later, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita travel in a burning gold chariot and cross water on a raft.

In some oral versions, Sita is the sister of the two brothers, which is also consistent with the supposed Indo-European structure.

Sita is abducted by the demon Ravana who takes her to his castle in Lanka. The brothers try to rescue her and are assisted by two monkey kings, Sugriva and Hanuman, also known as the *sons of the Aśvins*. The two monkeys are the exact counterparts of the two brothers in character. Sugriva, like Rama, is a great warrior. Hanuman, like Lakshmana, is a faithful servant. Sugriva is mortal while Hanuman is immortal.

With the help of the monkeys, a bridge is built across the sea to Lanka and eventually Sita is saved. At the end of the epic, Sita gives birth to twins. Perhaps they should be seen as a new incarnation of the divine twins, similar to Rama and Lakshmana who were an earlier incarnation of the Aśvins.[7]

The backbone of the plot of the *Rāmāyana* may thus be an ancient twin myth. But when did the labyrinths come into the picture? A statement at the end of the *Rāmāyana* that Rama and Sita, after their victory, circled seven times around the castle in Ravana's chariot, suggests that Ravana's castle was already perceived as a labyrinth when the *Rāmāyana* was written down, i.e. probably around 300 BC or sometime in the 200s BC. This would be consistent with my conjecture that labyrinths were introduced into India sometime after Alexander the Great's campaign in the Punjab in 326 BC. Al-Bīrūnī's text at the labyrinth image representing Ravana's castle should, according to Lundén, be interpreted as *Yavani-Kote* 'Greek castle.' This also supports the idea that the labyrinths came to India from Greece.

But if the angle-type labyrinth figure is borrowed from the Greeks after 326 BC, it means, as Lundén rightly points out, that there can be no ancient Indian labyrinth myth behind the *Rāmāyana*.[8] *Rigveda's* Aśvins are much older than the Indian labyrinths.

Like Lundén, I find it hard to believe that there were labyrinths in India as early as the creation of the *Rigveda*, i.e. sometime around 1500 BC. If, in the future, such old labyrinths will be found in India, the situation would be different, but on the basis of what we know today, it is adventurous to attribute a greater age to the labyrinths in India than around 300 BC.

The *Rāmāyana's* background is open to speculation. Perhaps an older Indian seasonal myth, involving the Aśvins, was combined with the labyrinth figure borrowed from Greece. It is also conceivable that both the labyrinth motif and the seasonal myth were borrowed from the Greeks, who also knew about divine twins. And it is of course possible that the labyrinths had no close connection at all with the *Rāmāyana*.

This uncertainty suggests that caution should be exercised in conjecturing about the ancient significance of the Indian labyrinths. Al-Bīrūnī's labyrinth drawing is imaginative, it invites bold guesses, but it provides no firm basis for conclusions.

Let us now return to Greece. There are many indications that the story of the Trojan War is built around a core of mythological material. Helen is an ancient goddess of vegetation. She, like her brothers the twins Castor and Polydeuces, seems to have roots in an old seasonal myth. Troy may be identical to the underworld or the realm of the dead where the goddess of vegetation resided during the time of year when vegetation was at a standstill. She must be freed in order for the forces of growth to prevail.

So, the framework of the *Iliad* may have been derived from an ancient seasonal myth that is evident in the abduction of Helen, Menelaos' and Agamemnon's war to bring her back, and the impregnable Troy that can only be conquered by an artifice, the wooden horse.

Such an interpretation fits well with the Nordic and British labyrinth lore. In particular, the Troy names of the labyrinths point in this direction. The angle-type figures have been associated with Troy in Scandinavia, the British Isles, southern France, the Basque Country, and the Etruscans around 650-600 BC. Numerous labyrinth names, images and records of folk traditions show that labyrinths were perceived as cities in both Europe and India.

A number of games and stories show that in the Nordic countries, and perhaps in some other areas, labyrinths were associated with a liberation drama in which one or two young men had to get a woman out of the labyrinth.

All this fits with the plot of the Trojan War. This makes it reasonable to look for a mythological background to both the labyrinths and the story of

the Trojan War. There are many indications that an ancient seasonal myth lies behind the *Iliad*.

I see no decisive obstacles to such an interpretation. It is possible, in my opinion, even probable, but it cannot be proved. Those who demand proof do not have much to celebrate in Troy research at all.

This is a circumstantial case. The solution of the great mystery of the labyrinths, their original meaning and use, can be glimpsed, but that is as far as it goes. So, the mystery of the labyrinths remains.

49. The Realm of Death

The Theseus legend's depiction of the labyrinth as a building, so constructed that anyone who entered it could not return, suggests that the labyrinth was perceived as an image of the underworld or the Realm of Death. Ariadne's thread was supposed to help Theseus find his way out of the labyrinth; he apparently did not need any help to find his way in to the Minotaur. There are several indications that, in antiquity, the labyrinth of the Theseus legend was also perceived as a cave or a cave system, which also gives a hint that the labyrinth was identical to the underworld.

The Minotaur who ruled the labyrinth can easily be interpreted as a demon of the underworld, or the ruler of the underworld. With the rise of Christianity and the use of the Theseus legend in Christian metaphors, it seemed natural to assign Minotaur the role of Satan, the ruler of the underworld.

There is little evidence from the Middle Ages that the labyrinth was perceived in a positive light. Sometimes it symbolises the sinful world and often it is perceived as the devil's abode.

When the hero Theseus defeats the Minotaur and makes it back out of the labyrinth, it was a victory over death. In Christian terms, it was Jesus who overcame death. Hermann Kern gives a comprehensive account of this circumstantial evidence.[1]

As already mentioned in Chapter 12, Jill Geoffrion and Alain Louët point out that labyrinths in medieval manuscripts are often associated with danger, evil, conflict and battle. The centre of the labyrinth was a fateful place, a symbol of the inevitable. This contrasts with later, more positive perceptions of labyrinths.

But there are exceptions to this. An English manuscript from the beginning of the 11th century shows that the figure was understood as an image of the seven levels of the celestial kingdom. And the famous floor labyrinth in Chartres Cathedral is said to have been called *Ciel* 'heaven.'

There is of course a big difference between heaven and hell, but in this context the most interesting thing is that both places are beyond earthly life.

The labyrinth represents the Realm of Death, argued the Norwegian scholar Wilhelm Brede Kristensen (1867-1953), who in his book *Livet fra døden (*1925) compared the Osiris mysteries in Egypt with the Greek mystery festivals at Eleusis. He emphasised that in ancient times the Realm of Death was thought to have seven walls, each with a gate. In Egypt, the land of Osiris, the god of death, was believed to be divided into seven parts with seven gates. The Babylonians had the same idea. Uruk and Kutha were the names of two cities but also of the Realm of Death.

The city of Thebes in Greece was thought to have seven gates, as mentioned in the Iliad, but in reality there were probably only three. The city's main deity was Demeter, the goddess of the underworld. Kristensen describes Thebes as a 'city of Hades.'[2]

According to Kristensen, initiation into eternal life was the goal of the Greek mystery cult. He discussed, among other things, the fighting games that were usually associated with death and funerals. Such games occur among the most diverse peoples. When their cultic significance faded over time, they were nevertheless preserved as folk festivals without religious seriousness. Kristensen referred to Mannhardt's and Frazer's research on such later folk festivals, which may have been remnants of ancient cult activities in the worship of vegetation gods.

The mystery cult at Eleusis, not far from Athens, included gymnastic competitions. They were thought to be the oldest ritual combat in Greece. The winner received a bushel of grain from a sacred field. Fighting games also took place in Epidauros, which was a place of worship for Asclepius, the god of medicine.

According to Kristensen, the Roman equestrian game *Lusus Trojae*, performed by armed young men, was such a fighting game. He believed that the images on the jug from Tragliatella represent a dance with weapons and he compared it to the Theseus legend, which tells us that after Theseus killed the Minotaur on Crete, he sailed with Ariadne and the freed youths to Delos, where they performed the so-called *geranos* dance 'the crane dance.' According to Plutarch, the dance on Delos was said to describe the passage through the labyrinth. According to a later lexicographer, it represented 'the exit from this place of death.'

Like many other scholars, Kristensen considered the Cretan labyrinth to be an image of the underworld. And he compares it to the stone labyrinths of northern Europe.[3]

But he also included Troy. In an earlier essay, he wrote that Troy-Ilion is the city that would represent the underworld. "Labyrinth and Troy become two images of the same place."[4]

Kristensen thus perceived both Troy and the Cretan labyrinth as images of the underworld. And he also drew parallels with Thebes. Gertrude Levy has also highlighted some interesting parallels. According to the legends, both Troy and Thebes were built using music. Troy was built to the sound of Apollo's lyre. Amphion, together with his brother Zethos, built the walls of Thebes with the seven gates, using the lyre.[5]

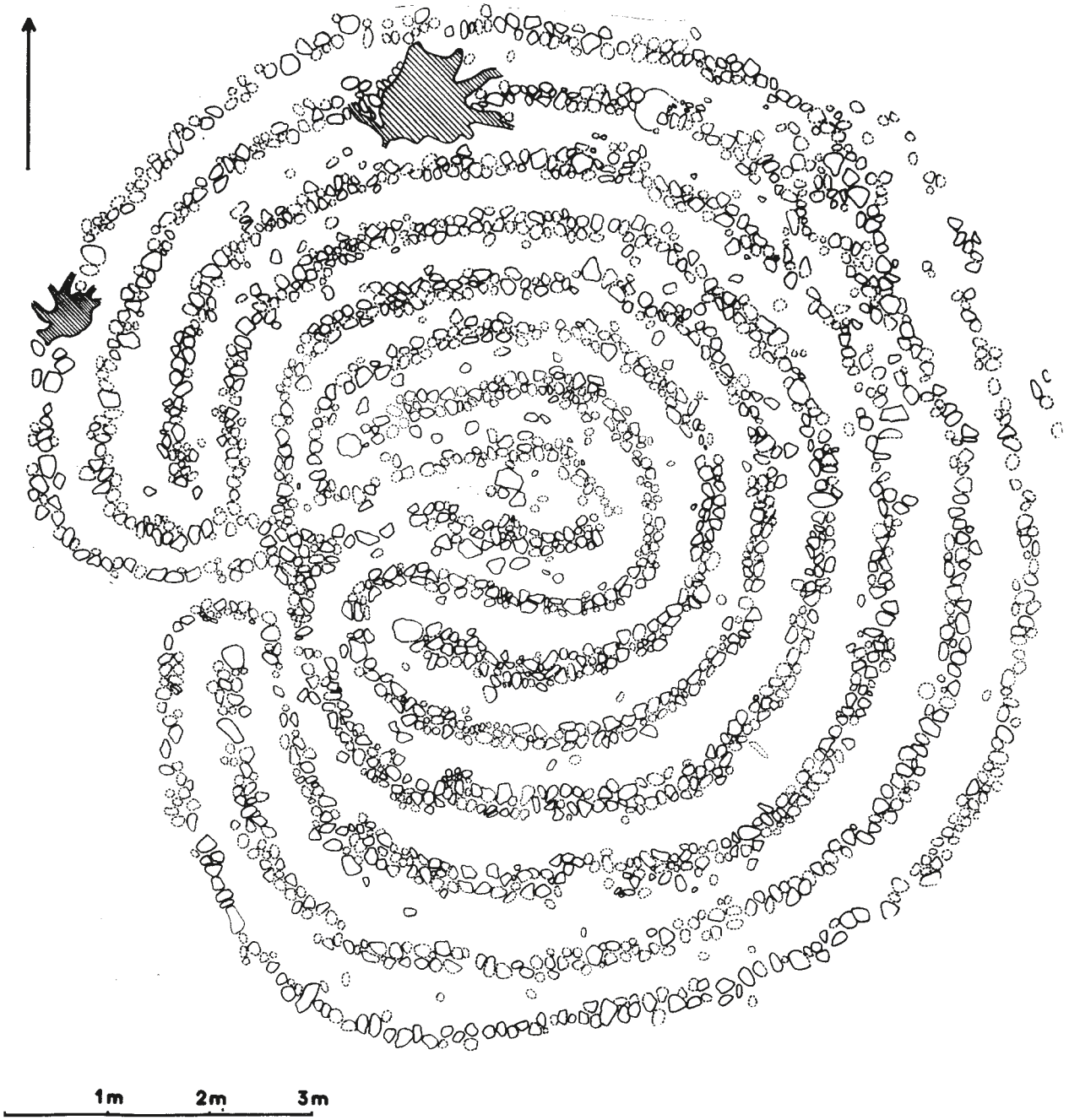
49:1 The labyrinth at Rösaring in Uppland. The stones around the entrance have been disturbed somewhat, but the design is obvious, as is the orientation of the entrance. The black "lumps" are trees that were still present in the stone figure. In the 1980s, the trees were removed, and the labyrinth was surrounded by a protective low wooden fence. Unfortunately, this has not prevented further destruction. The labyrinth is difficult to recognise today.

According to Triphiodoros' (2nd or 3rd century AD) account of the conquest of Troy, the city fell to the sound of trumpets. So, there are also similarities with the biblical account of the fall of Jericho.[6]

In the *Divina Comedia*, Dante alludes to the pre-Christian notion that the underworld had seven walls and as many gates. In *Inferno,* he describes how he visits the underworld and, in the company of Virgil, encounters four of the great writers of antiquity: Homer, Horace, Ovid and Lucian. They arrive at a magnificent castle surrounded by seven high walls. The party entered through seven gates.

Hermann Kern found an engraving from Florence after a lost drawing by Botticelli in 1481 that depicts this episode in Dante's story.[7] The engraving depicts seven concentric walls, each with a gate tower, not a real labyrinth. It is interesting that this notion of the underworld corresponds so well to the Jewish tradition that Jericho was surrounded by seven walls. Jericho may also have been perceived as an image of the underworld, which the Israelite hero Joshua managed to conquer.

In the *Aeneid*, Virgil tells how the main character, Aeneas, visits a famous temple of Apollo at Cumae



49:2 Trelleborg, 800 metres north of Vittaryd church.

on the Bay of Naples. There was a cave that led to the underworld. Many people went to the temple with the cave to ask for divination from the sibyl Deiphobe. Aeneas received advice from her when he wanted to visit the underworld. With a golden bough in his hand, he entered the cave, crossed the River Styx and entered the underworld, where he met his deceased father. He then achieved the feat of returning to life. According to Virgil, the gateway to the temple, i.e. the passage between the two worlds, had images from the Theseus legend, including the Cretan labyrinth.[8]

We don't know how Virgil imagined the image of the labyrinth at the temple gate. Did he think of an angle-type figure? Or did he perceive the labyrinth as a building?

The *Aeneid* certainly resonated with contemporary notions of the passage between the world of the living and the Realm of Death. A number of scholars have explored the possible symbolism of the labyrinth at the threshold of the 'other world.' Renowned social anthropologist James Frazer borrowed the title of his seminal work *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915) from the *Aeneid*.

In the sanctuary of Asclepios at Epidaurus in Greece there was a circular temple, *Tholos,* which has now been razed to the ground. However, the temple has a preserved "basement floor" of concentric walls with narrow passageways. The corridor system corresponds to a reduced figure of the angle-type, with the angles omitted.

Asclepius is known to posterity as the god of medicine. According to mythology, he made the dead alive, because of that he was killed by Zeus' light-

ning. He thus ended up in the Realm of Death. He is depicted with the underworld goddesses Demeter and Kore on reliefs found in the sanctuary of Asclepios on the Acropolis in Athens.[9] The mysterious labyrinthine walls of Tholos could thus represent the underworld or the path to the underworld, as several scholars have suggested.

India's national epic *Rāmāyana* has been interpreted as a seasonal myth in which the hero Rama is an incarnation of the sky god Vishnu and Rama's wife Sita is an incarnation of the earth goddess Sri. The plot revolves around how the demon Ravana abducts Sita and takes her away to his magical castle in Lanka. After many complications, Rama finally manages to subdue the castle and free Sita.

According to the Hindus, Lanka was the home of the demons. Lanka is in the south, which in India was considered to be the direction of the underworld. Ravana's castle may therefore have been an image of the underworld.[10] Since al-Bīrūnī in 1045 depicted Ravana's castle as an angle-type labyrinth, it is tempting to interpret the labyrinth as an image of the underworld.

In ancient Egypt, the west was considered to be the direction of the underworld since it was the direction in which the sun set. There, the sun god disappeared every night and reappeared the next morning in the east. Researchers have found traces of the same idea in other environments, and one cherished idea is that rock art in Scandinavia during the Bronze Age was characterised by similar ideas. Perhaps the orientation of the entrance among the Nordic stone labyrinths can therefore provide guidance.

No clear trend emerges among the coast labyrinths. However, the inland labyrinths that are situated next to prehistoric graves or for other reasons can be suspected of being prehistoric, have in several cases the entrance in the west. Three of them, in Tibble, Rösaring and Vittaryd, have the entrance directly to the west. The labyrinth at Linköping Cathedral, which was drawn on a map in 1734, also has the entrance directly to the west. The problem with it, however, is that it is uncertain whether it is a stone labyrinth or a garden labyrinth. The labyrinth at Storeberg in Gothenburg has the entrance in the south-south-west. The Visby labyrinth has the entrance in the north-west.

Only two have the entrance in the east. The Ulmekärr labyrinth has the entrance in the north-east and the labyrinth at Lindbacke, outside of Nyköping, which may not be very old, has the entrance in the east.

There are no folk traditions in the Nordic countries indicating that the labyrinths symbolised the underworld. But the orientation of the entrances gives a hint that the probably oldest labyrinths in Scandinavia may have been perceived as images of the underworld when they were built.

Hermann Kern points out that many church labyrinths in Italy and France had a western entrance. These include the great floor labyrinths of Chartres, Amiens and Arras.

The labyrinth images in medieval manuscripts usually have the entrance down the page, which according to Kern may be related to the fact that in medieval cartography the west was usually located in that direction. In both the manuscripts and the church labyrinths, Kern reads a pattern of labyrinth figures having the entrance in the west, which was the direction of sunset and death.[11]

Kern points out that all the labyrinth petroglyphs in Val Camonica in northern Italy have the entrance in the west, the direction of the sunset that symbolised death. All but one are also characterised by the entrance pointing downwards into the terrain.

Kern also points out that among the petroglyphs at Pontevedra in north-west Spain, two of the three perfect angle-type figures have the entrance in the west, which also happens to be the direction of the sea.[12]

Staffan Lundén is, however, critical of Kern's observation that all the labyrinths in Val Camonica have the entrance in the west and that almost all of them also have the entrance downwards. According to Lundén, this may be due to the fact that a large part of the petroglyphs in Val Camonica are found on the eastern side of the valley, which makes it quite natural that the entrances of the labyrinth images are orientated both to the west and downwards.[13]

Italian archaeologist Emmanuel Anati associated the labyrinth with Cerberus and the Minotaur and considered it to symbolise the transition between life and death. Annamaria Zanettin makes similar interpretations and guesses that the labyrinth symbolised the mother, woman, initiation, rebirth and sexual union. She believes that the labyrinth may have been associated with notions of life and death, rebirth and liberation.[14]

In the folk traditions of the Nordic countries and the British Isles, it is often said that it is easy to get into the labyrinth, but difficult or impossible to get out again. Given the construction of the angle-type, this is strange. It is impossible to get lost in it. Anyone can see that it is as easy to get out as it is to find the centre. Yet this statement is repeated time and again.

One possible explanation is that labyrinths were long ago perceived as images of the underworld. Everyone knew that it was easy to get in, but no one could get out of the underworld.

It is possible that the idea of the underworld explains the absence of prehistoric images of labyrinths in northern Europe, as well as on Greek pottery vessels. People may have been reluctant to depict the underworld.

Several scholars have suggested that labyrinths, representing the Realm of Death, were used for *initiation rites*. The mystery cult at Eleusis has been interpreted

as a gathering where participants were initiated into the mysteries of death. According to Kristensen, initiation into eternal life was the goal of the Greek mystery cult. One can easily understand that such a cult gathered many participants.

A number of scholars have drawn support for the theory of initiation rites and *life-death-rebirth* beliefs from anthropological research in very different environments, such as the islands of Malekula in Vanuatu in the Pacific and Ceram in eastern Indonesia. However, I am sceptical of such far-reaching comparisons, not least because the intricate figures found on these islands bear no resemblance to the angle-type.

My impression is that there is no evidence that convincingly links the angle-type labyrinths with initiation rites. Such a use is of course conceivable, but there is nothing in the Northern European labyrinth lore that suggests it. And what is known about Greek and Roman initiation rites shows no clear connection with labyrinth figures. I do not dispute that the mystery cult at Eleusis contained initiation rites, but there is no evidence that angle-type labyrinths existed there.

Norwegian archaeologist Björnar Olsen has suggested that labyrinths were used by the Sami people on the Arctic coast for their funeral rites. He believes that they marked the transition from life to death (*rites de passage*).[15]

His hypothesis fits well with the evidence suggesting that labyrinths in ancient times symbolised the passage to the underworld. But I am still sceptical. It is hard to believe that those who built labyrinths on the Arctic coast in quite late times perceived the stone figures as symbols of the underworld.

It is most likely that the coast labyrinths in the Nordic countries were built by people who had never heard that the stone figures depicted the Realm of Death. All coast labyrinths seem to have been built in Christian times. The clergy obviously showed tolerance for the magic in the stone figures to bring luck in fishing and favourable weather. But the church would probably have put a stop to it if the labyrinths were associated with more central religious ideas such as the passage to the underworld.

Even if no proof is possible, there are a number of indications that labyrinths have been perceived as images of the underworld since ancient times. This is true in northern Europe, as well as in India and the Mediterranean in ancient times.

50. A Seasonal Myth

There are many indications that the labyrinths were linked to a cultic seasonal drama, where a woman in the centre of the labyrinth should be freed and brought out by one or two men. The woman represented mother earth, the earth goddess, or the goddess of vegetation. The liberators represented the sky god or his twin sons. The liberation of the earth goddess released the forces of vegetation and thus initiated growth and breeding. In simple terms, this can be described as fertility rites.

The labyrinth probably represented the underworld or the passage to the underworld, where the goddess spent the time of year when vegetation was at its lowest point. It was perceived as a city, Troy, with magic walls.

After the liberation of the earth goddess, the seasonal drama was completed by a life-bringing wedding, *hieros gamos,* between the people who played the roles of the sky god and the earth goddess. Such rites ensured good growth and breeding in the coming year.

I argued this for the first time in 1980 and have since returned to the same interpretation several times, most extensively in a booklet *The Goddess in the Labyrinth* in 1985. I have sometimes been criticised, and it seems that some of my critics have thought the whole thing was my invention. But that would be magnifying my role, the same interpretation has been proposed by others, long before me.

Around the world, traces of ancient seasonal myths have been encountered. There has been a need to explain the changing of the seasons and the beginning and end of vegetation periods, which have left their mark on pagan cults in the most diverse environments.

Certainly, such myths arose independently in many places. But it is also likely that some of the seasonal myths, as well as a number of other elements of pagan beliefs, migrated long distances from people to people. For example, it is not unreasonable to think that Scandinavia received impulses from the Mediterranean region already during the Bronze Age, perhaps through intermediaries.

For a long time, there was a lot of interest in seasonal myths among scholars. Over time, however, this interest waned and was replaced by scepticism, but the pendulum has swung again and there is now an openness to discussing seasonal myths. I am convinced that this was a common feature of the pre-Christian myths among people who were heavily dependent on the changing seasons.

The seasonal myths of ancient Greece received early attention from scholars. Particularly well known was the cult of the vegetation goddesses Demeter and Kore/Persephone. Their mythological roles can be summarised as follows:

Hades, the god of the underworld, abducted Kore and made her his consort in the underworld. Kore's mother Demeter was devastated and showed her anger by causing famine in the world. Finally, with Hades' consent, Zeus decided to allow Kore to return and live among the living for half the year.

This myth played a central role in the mystery festivals celebrated at Eleusis, 18 kilometres west of Athens. Every year, the Athenians made a huge procession to Eleusis where a mystery play was performed. What happened there was shrouded in secrecy, but it is likely that cultic officials staged a seasonal drama based on the story of the myth. Each

year, rites were performed in which the goddess of vegetation was resurrected, and death was temporarily overcome. One element was the sacred wedding of the priest and priestess of Demeter.

Greek seasonal myths also appeared in other places and in other versions. A number of goddesses have been modelled on old vegetation goddesses. The role of the god Hades has also been played by Dionysos, for example.[1]

We are already familiar with Helen's role as the goddess of vegetation. For Jack Lindsay, it was clear that the labyrinth on Crete and the city of Troy symbolised the same thing. Wilhelm B. Kristensen came to the same conclusion in 1910, but even earlier was Ernst Krause in 1893.

Although I have studied much of the literature on the subject, I am not entirely sure who first linked the angle-type and the city of Troy to a seasonal myth. But it was probably Ernst Krause, who is at least the most famous for this.[2]

In two books, Krause developed a theory that the Troy legend took many forms and originated in an ancient seasonal myth. Every spring, a hero would defeat a winter demon to free the sun in the form of a 'sun maiden.' During the winter, she was confined to a castle, Troy or Trojeborg, and had to be freed in the spring to ensure good vegetation for the rest of the year.

Krause believed that the Troy legend had Nordic origins, and at the time he was not the only one to fantasise about powerful cultural flows from north to south. According to him, Helen was the old Germanic sun goddess captured in the Trojeborg.[3]

Thus, Krause saw a connection between the labyrinths, the seasonal myth and the Troy legend. This is roughly what I concluded, almost 90 years later, after much searching for evidence. But Krause was first, he argued for this already in 1893 and he was bold enough to do it without having much to support his interpretation.

In Sweden, the influence of Krause can be seen in the work of the archaeologist Oscar Almgren. Almgren wrote a popular booklet on Sweden's ancient monuments, which was published in several editions. In 1901 he devoted six lines to the "labyrinthine stone settings ... which the people often call Trojeborg or the like." In 1904 the labyrinths were given one and a half page, which shows that the subject interested him. By 1923 the section on the labyrinths had expanded to almost four pages and he cites Wilhelm B. Kristensen who, like Krause, associated the labyrinths with a seasonal myth. Almgren writes that the "original meaning of the labyrinths must have been to depict the liberation of the fertility goddess and her husband from the kingdom of death."[4]

The same text with minor adjustments is found in Almgren's next version in 1934. Kristensen is not mentioned, but the text about the liberation of the fertility goddess and her husband from the kingdom of death is unchanged.

Almgren's little book was read by many. Some Swedish archaeologists who later dealt with the subject seem to have relied on Almgren's presentation, but most have refrained from general interpretations. When archaeologist Nils Sundquist in 1956 wrote a paper on the labyrinths in Uppland, he quoted almost all of Almgren's text.

Almgren did not refer to Krause but used his illustrations. This proves that he had read Krause. My impression is that his text was more influenced by Krause than by Kristensen.

The British scholar W.F. Jackson Knight (1895-1964) was an expert on Virgil. He made an English translation of the *Aeneid*. In a couple of books and a number of essays from 1930 to 1936, he developed his views on labyrinths and the Troy motif.

Knight believed that the city of Troy in Asia Minor probably got its name because it was somehow associated with labyrinths with Troy names, the city's real name being Ilion. He believed that Homer's *Iliad* has elements of historical reality interwoven with a labyrinth myth. The mythical elements include, for example, the details of the wooden horse, which in his view reflects a myth of a magical horse that had the power to break the defences of the enchanted walls.[5]

Knight saw a labyrinth myth in the *Iliad*, with a woman held captive to be freed from outside. Theseus and Achilles are compared as direct equivalents, as are Helen and Ariadne. He considered that the Theseus legend may have evolved from an older myth in which Ariadne was in the centre of the labyrinth where she was freed by the hero.

It is easy to see parallels between Knight and Krause, but Knight rarely invokes Krause. What surprises me is that Knight, who worked in England, did not include the north European labyrinths of turf and stone in his discussion.

Neither Krause nor Knight tried to draw a dividing line between the Theseus legend and the angle-type with its Troy names. That division is my idea, it is the working hypothesis of this book.

But how can we explain the fact that several researchers have seen an old seasonal myth behind both the Theseus legend and the traditions of the angle-type and its Troy names?

The explanation is perhaps simple. Seasonal myths have been found in many parts of the world. Even those that are closely related have developed in different directions and can therefore display a number of different features. The result is that seasonal myths have some common features, but there have also been major differences. The literary works in which researchers believe they can trace seasonal myths therefore differ from each other in many ways.

It is therefore not surprising that the Theseus legend describes the underworld as a cave or a building,

which was called *labyrinthos,* while another seasonal myth depicts the underworld as an angle-type figure representing the city of Troy.

It is thus not a new idea that angle-type figures far back in time played a role in connection with a seasonal drama, where the underworld was perceived as a labyrinthine city named Troy. Several researchers have reasoned along these lines, and some did so long ago. My contribution is limited to compiling a large amount of material that gives greater credibility to an old theory.

51. The Krause legacy

Ernst Krause (1839-1903) was a naturalist with broad interests. He was a committed supporter of the Darwinian theory of evolution and wrote extensively, often under the pseudonym Carus Sterne. Over time, he became interested in the study of ancient legends and myths.

Krause's time was a boom period for grandiose theories. Ingenious ideas could still be born in simple circumstances by lone enthusiasts, often without the support of universities, research grants and laboratories. Mendel recognised the fundamentals of heredity; the chemists began to grasp the periodic table. Marx and Engels tried to explain the mysteries of class society and economics with some scientific theories. Most remarkable of all was Darwin's theory of evolution, which Krause pursued with great vigour. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that Krause soon saw the big picture when he entered the field of mythology.

Krause believed that the round arcs of the angle-type figures represented the path of the sun in the sky, so the labyrinth had an astronomical aspect. The sun maiden who was to be taken out of the labyrinth fits into this context. The liberation of the sun maiden from the labyrinth was the central element of a seasonal myth. The labyrinth was an image of the underworld where the maiden resided during the winter. Krause was also convinced that there were strong cultural flows from north to south in Europe. The labyrinths originated in the sun cult of the north, from where the figures and their ideas had spread southwards.

Much of this was wrong. Archaeologists no longer believe in strong cultural flows from the north, but especially in Germany this was a long-cherished idea.

The idea that angle-type figures illustrate the movements of the sun has been longstanding but is difficult to substantiate. The angle-type easily sets the imagination in motion and invites speculation about celestial bodies. But so far, all such thinking has been futile.

Over the years, I have been in contact with the astronomer Curt Roslund at the University of Gothenburg, who has been interested in archeo-astronomy and has examined a number of ancient remains in the search for evidence that can link them to astronomical observations. Among other things, he has investigated some labyrinths, but without finding convincing evidence that they were related to the movement of celestial bodies.

However, some of Krause's other ideas have been taken up and integrated into the more established labyrinth research. This includes the idea that the labyrinth was an image of the underworld or the passage to it. But the "sun maiden" is forgotten by most scholars. The interpretation that the labyrinths were connected to a seasonal drama was supported by several researchers for quite some time but has since been forgotten as interest in seasonal myths has faded among mythologists.

Krause was creative, but not everything was his own idea. The framework of his theory was borrowed from Friedrich Creuzer (1812) who compared the Theseus legend with other ancient myths and fairy tale motifs. Creuzer introduced the 'sun maiden' into the discussion of the Cretan labyrinth and described Heracles and Perseus as 'solar heroes.' He argued that when Theseus entered the labyrinth, he was entering the realm of death. The labyrinth was an image of the path of the sun and the migration of souls. However, Creuzer makes no mention of the turf or stone labyrinths of northern Europe.[1]

Krause could also rely on a paper by H.F. Massmann (1844) which discussed some turf labyrinths in Germany, including the one in Eberswalde and those then recently constructed by "Turnvater Jahn." Massmann also wrote a little about garden labyrinths and some of the 'labyrinths' identified in ancient sources. He had just read von Baer's article on the stone labyrinths of the Baltic and Arctic coasts.

Krause also had access to a paper by Wilhelm Meyer (1882) which provided a thorough review of labyrinth images in manuscripts and churches. Meyer touched upon the Egyptian labyrinth and other labyrinths identified in ancient sources. He mentioned some Roman mosaic labyrinths as well as the graffito on Lucretius' house in Pompeii and he wrote quite a lot about the labyrinth images on Cretan coins.

Meyer paid great attention to the turf labyrinths in Germany but also to the stone labyrinths in the north. Like Massmann, he referred to von Baer's article and had apparently read a translation of Simon Nordström's lecture at Strängnäs in Sweden in 1877. He was interested in labyrinth images and texts in Icelandic manuscripts and mentioned three of Iceland's field labyrinths. In a supplement he also mentioned the stone labyrinth at Visby on Gotland. However, there is no indication that Meyer had read Edward Trollope's 1858 article; the British labyrinths are remarkably poorly treated.

For Krause, the fact-packed articles by Massmann and Meyer must have been a goldmine. Most of what he has to say about labyrinths is taken from there. But what he himself added is of great importance to his theory. He read Aspelin's article in German from

1877, which briefly describes the games in Nyland, where boys had to get a girl out of the labyrinth. Krause also picked up a brief summary of local folk traditions about the maiden in the Visby labyrinth. And just as Krause's first book went to press, he came across information about the jug from Tragliatella, which led him to publish a follow-up book the same year. There he mentions Edward Trollope's 1858 article, which deals mainly with British turf labyrinths and labyrinth figures in French and Italian churches.

Krause thus had access to a wealth of material. His great achievement was that he immersed himself in mythological research, especially the Troy motif, and tried to link the mythological material with the field labyrinths of the north. He was a pioneer in looking beyond the Theseus legend and to include Troy in his interpretative endeavours. He focused on the Troy names of the northern labyrinths and had the audacity to associate them with the mythical treasures of the Mediterranean world.

Whatever one thinks of Ernst Krause's interpretations, there is no escaping the fact that he is a central figure in the history of labyrinth research. Anyone studying the subject must relate to his ideas. I suspect that some researchers have been ashamed to refer to him, but still in their writing unveil the influence from him.

One reason for this is that he touched on so many aspects of the subject. So, it is almost inevitable that if you try to study labyrinths, you will touch on some of his ideas. Some may not have even realised they were following in his footsteps.

Most people who study labyrinths today tend to distance themselves from Krause, but he has had some followers in recent times. I have not studied this part of the labyrinth debate very deeply, but those who are interested can probably find many references in the books by the Swedish labyrinth researcher Frithjof Hallman (1913-2000). About a hundred years after Krause, he wrote two books (1988 and 1994) that quite comprehensively reproduce Krause's positions and that refer to a number of later researchers whose ideas went in a similar direction. My impression is that Hallman was essentially in favour of Krause's conclusions.[2]

I read Krause's books early on, but was hardly enamoured. There was much that was difficult to take seriously. His idea of a sun maiden has not gained many followers and his belief that the Troy legend originated in the north seems preposterous. He took a bold approach and the price he paid was that many people did not take him seriously.

Many have read Krause, but most have probably been repelled by his sweeping guesses. Krause's conclusions were daring and the evidence he relied on was fragile. Already in his temperamental 26-page preface on "the darkness of German learning," in which his opponents are cut to the bone, one senses an indomitable loner.

After more than 40 years of reflection, I have become more respectful. My impression is that the material has now caught up with one of Krause's central conclusions, namely his idea of a seasonal myth. Instead of pointing the finger at his mistakes, one should recognise those of his ideas that pointed in the right direction.

I have found new evidence suggesting that the labyrinths were used in a seasonal drama involving the liberation of a woman. A number of folk traditions in the Nordic countries favour such an interpretation, and there are reasons to believe that the story of the Trojan War had an old seasonal myth at its core. I prefer to interpret the maiden in the labyrinth as a vegetation goddess instead of a "sun maiden," but I acknowledge that my conclusions are closely related to Krause's theories. I also suspect, like Krause and many others, that the labyrinths were perceived as images of the underworld or the passage to it. Like Krause, I believe that the labyrinth/underworld was perceived as a magical fortress that was early called Troy. However, I do not share his view that the original home of the labyrinths was in Northern Europe or that the angle-type figures depicted the course of the sun in the sky.

52. Frey's Proposal to Gerd

So, can we be sure that fertility rites in the form of a seasonal drama in which the sky god would liberate the earth goddess also occurred in Scandinavia? No, we can't be sure, but it is a reasonable guess and there are some indications that point in that direction.

The goddess Njärd, who can be recognised in a number of theophoric place names in Scandinavia, is probably identical to the goddess Nerthus mentioned by Tacitus (98 AD), whom he calls *terra mater* 'mother earth.' This suggests that an earth goddess was worshipped in Scandinavia and that there was probably also a sky god. The distribution pattern of the theophoric place names suggests that Ull may be the Nordic sky god. A reasonable assumption is that this couple of gods, like the couple Frey-Freya (Frö-Fröja in Swedish), was at the centre of fertility rites in spring celebrations.

Although there is no evidence, it is likely that also in Scandinavia they tried to promote vegetation and breeding by staging a seasonal drama every spring.

Some ancient myths reinforce these suspicions. The eddic poem *Skírnismál* tells the story of the god Frey's love for Gerd, a woman who belonged to the family of giants:

Frey had settled in Odin's high seat, Hlidskjalf, where he could look out over all the worlds. In the world of the giants he saw a beautiful girl, the giant Gyme's daughterGerd, whom he could not forget. Frey's father Njord saw that something was missing from his son. He asked Frey's servant Skirne to find out what was causing Frey such anguish.

Although neither the gods nor the giants could tolerate such a union, Skirne promised to convey Frey's proposal. In order for him to succeed in this difficult endeavour, he had to borrow a sword that fought by itself and a horse that could carry him high above the fences of fire that surrounded the world of the giants.

The road was long and difficult to the giant Gyme's farm where Gerd lived. The farm was surrounded by palisades and guarded by bloodthirsty dogs. It was also protected by dangerous flames of fire. But thanks to his horse, Skirne was able to overcome the obstacles and get to Gerd.

However, the prospective bride was reluctant. Skirne tried to woo her with a gift, eleven golden apples. But Gerd was adamant. Skirne then promised her a famous gold ring, but to no avail. Even when he threatened to cut off Gerd's head, she did not give in. Only when he threatened her with magic spells and gave a series of detailed examples of the horrible fate that awaited her, did she give in. She promised to meet Frey in the grove of Barre within nine days.

This well-known poem was interpreted in the early 20th century by Norwegian philologist Magnus Olsen as a spring myth in which the sky god Frö has the vegetation goddess Gerd brought up from the underworld to join her in a life-bringing spring wedding. Olsen believed that Gerd represents 'mother earth' while Skirne, whose name means 'the radiant one,' is a double of Frey. He compared the plot to the Greek myth of Persephone.[1]

Olsen's interpretation was criticised by Jöran Sahlgren,[2] but the theory still seems to have stood up fairly well. Based on the poem *Ynglingatal*, Folke Ström has attempted to show the dominant place of fertility rites in the sacred kingdom. He argued that the Svea kings must have assumed the role of the fertility god and performed some of the actions suggested in *Skírinismál*. In his search for foreign parallels, Ström settled on the Greek vegetation goddess *Helena dendritis*.[3]

Karl Schneider interprets *Skirnismál* as an originally Dioscorian myth.[4] The god Frey and his servant Skirne have similarities with the other twin pairs. The task of using a magic horse to retrieve the desired woman from a place protected by difficult obstacles has parallels in other myths.

Ursula Dronke interprets *Skírnismál* as an old fertility myth, a union between heaven and earth. She believes that the poem undoubtedly describes the sacred wedding.[5]

Anders Bæksted interprets *Skírnismál* as a poetic, perhaps also mimetic representation of the sacred wedding between heaven and earth. He believes that the dialogue form in the poem may possibly go back to an original cult hymn's exchange of lines between different people at the cult festival.[6]

Britt-Mari Näsström is cautious about the interpretation of Frey as the sky god and Gerd as the earth goddess, but she believes that it is undoubtedly a sacred wedding that takes place between the two in Barre's grove.[7]

Skírnismál has no hints of Troy, or of labyrinths. However, the plot is reminiscent of the legends and games of retrieving a woman from the centre of the labyrinth. Interestingly, the mission is made possible by the horse, which carried Skirne across the fences of fire that surrounded the world of the giants. To get Helen out of Troy, the Greeks also used a (wooden) horse: according to the *Odyssey* it was hollow and filled with warriors; according to other versions, it was massive and jumped over the walls of Troy.

Skírnismál was apparently known in the Nordic countries during the Viking Age. But nothing prevents the seasonal myth to which it probably refers from being much older.

Skírnismál is the most obvious example, but there are other Nordic sagas that could be based on a seasonal myth. One example is the story of how the fertility goddess Idun is abducted by the giant Tjatse. This caused the gods to age, as Idun kept the golden apples that gave the gods eternal youth.

The gods forced Loki to try to get Idun and her apples back to Asgard. Loki flew in the form of a falcon to Jotunheim, managed to turn Idun into a nut and flew with her back to Asgard. Tjatse followed in the shape of an eagle and chased the falcon. As soon as Loki was safe, the gods lit a great fire. When Tjatse came flying close behind, he flew into the fire, his feathers caught fire and he lost his ability to fly. Then the gods killed him. And so, life could go on.

Idun is discussed by Krause, who compares her to Helen. He also emphasises the Syrith myth as told by Saxo Grammaticus in his History of Denmark. Krause also draws parallels to the tale of Sigurd and Brynhilde, where the hero Sigurd, with his horse Grane, managed to jump over the obstacles surrounding Brynhilde's prison when he freed her.[8]

53. Njärd's Sacred Grove

Finally, let us return to the trojeborg at Tibble in Badelunda, where this book began. Several indications suggest that it is very old. It has a characteristic position for early labyrinths on the crest of a gravel ridge and it has the entrance in the west. It has also been situated in a grave field.

Richard Dybeck wrote in 1874 that the labyrinth lay among countless burial mounds of the smallest kind. One of them, which he examined in 1843, contained coal and bones, iron rivets, small beads and pieces of a ceramic vessel.[1] The labyrinth was thus situated in a large Iron Age grave field. All the graves were later destroyed by gravel extraction, but in 1940 a ceramic vessel with burnt bones was rescued. The archaeologist Mårten Stenberger concluded that it is an urn grave from the pre-Roman Iron Age (500 BC - 0). If he is right and it is assumed that the graves were built next to an existing labyrinth, the Trojeborg at Tibble should be more than 2000 years old.

53:1 Jeff Saward in the Tibble labyrinth during a visit to Sweden in 1999. Today the labyrinth is surrounded by dense forest that obscures the view in all directions. But when the photo was taken, the trees were newly planted and you could imagine what it looked like long ago when the ridge was not forested. The cross on the photo shows where you could see the farm Närlunda, named after the goddess Njärd's sacred grove.

Just 850 metres north of the labyrinth is Anundshög, probably Sweden's largest burial mound. Next to it is a collection of magnificent ancient monuments from the late Iron Age. Directly adjacent to Anundshög are two large, interconnected stone ships with a total length of more than 100 metres. There are also several other large mounds, some with impressive dimensions, and several grave fields. In front of Anundshög is a row of standing stones and a rune stone from the 11th century that mentions the erection of the stones. A row of enigmatic stone foundations has recently been excavated that may have marked a ceremonial path or a boundary. In the Middle Ages there was a courthouse here.

At the Tuna farm, less than two kilometres northeast of Anundshög, a burial ground has been excavated with more than 80 graves, including eight boat graves from the Viking Age where women were buried without cremation. A chamber tomb from the 3rd century contained rare, magnificent artefacts made of gold, glass and bronze.

At Anundshög, from the 6th to the 11th century, there seems to have been a centre with few equivalents in Sweden. And the so-called "gold grave" at Tuna gives a hint that this was an important place already in the 3rd century. I suspect that the Trojeborg is even older. Maybe the labyrinth once made Badelunda the focal point of a large surrounding area.

Just one kilometre east of the Trojeborg is the Närlunda farm, whose oldest record (*in Nerdalunda* 1386) reveals that this was the sacred grove of the goddess Njärd. Today the labyrinth is surrounded by forest, but further back in time the surface of the gravel ridge was open pasture with only a few trees. Then there was a clear view between the labyrinth on top of the ridge and Njärd's grove.

Four kilometres southeast of the Trojeborg is Ullvi (*in Vllaui* 1371), a place of worship for the supposed sky god Ull. 10-13 kilometres northwest of the labyrinth at Tibble are Frösvi (*in frøswj*, *frøswi* 1357) and Frövi (*de frøwi* 1342), two farms with names reminiscent of the cult sites of the god Frey (Frö) and the goddess Freya (Fröja). The couple's places of worship were only four kilometres apart.

What happened in Närlunda and Tibble, when the Iron Age farmers gathered in the spring, we can surmise but never really get a grip on. My guess is that a seasonal drama was performed in the labyrinth every spring to ensure good harvests and good breeding.

But that was not all. The fertility cult may also have taken other forms. When Tacitus in the year 98 AD wrote about the Germanic earth goddess Nerthus, he described how seven Germanic tribes collectively worshipped her:

"On an island in the ocean there is a grove that has never been defiled by humans, and there is a consecrated chariot covered by a curtain. Only the priest may touch the chariot, only he knows when the goddess is there. With deep reverence he accompanies her on her journey in the cow-drawn chariot. Then happy days come, and there are celebrations at all the places the goddess visits. No wars take place, no one is allowed to carry weapons, all iron is hidden away. Peace and quiet is all that is thought of, it is all that is desired, until the goddess has had her fill of intercourse with mortals and the priest takes her back to her sacred place. Then the chariot and its trappings and the divinity itself are washed in a secluded and hidden lake. The washing was performed by slaves, 'whom the same lake immediately afterwards swallows up' (which would seem to imply that those who saw and touched the image of the deity were afterwards drowned)."[2]

54. Summary

My attempt to write the history of the angle-type has become a cruise through both well-known and almost unexplored waters. It is not easy to sort out from this vast material what is original and sift out distortions, superimposed news and red herrings. Although much

remains obscure, it is possible to discern certain main features.

The angle-type is at least 3 200 years old (the clay tablet from Pylos around 1180 BC). The association of the angle-type with the legendary city of Troy can be traced back to just over 2,600 years ago (the jug from Tragliatella around 650-600 BC). The idea of a woman being taken out of the labyrinth/Troy is impossible to date, but most people believe that the legends of the Trojan war were written down in the mid-8th century BC.

The oldest use and significance of the angle-type is therefore far back in time. The distance in time is so great that we have to make do with guesses and suspicions as to what the mysterious figures were used for.

There is reason to believe that more than two thousand years ago, the angle-type figures served as arenas for fertility rites. By performing a seasonal drama, it was believed to ensure good growth and breeding. Cultic officials imitated a myth in which the sky god or his sons liberated and retrieved the earth goddess from the underworld. The labyrinths were perceived as a city, Troy, identical to the underworld or the way to it.

There is reason to believe that ancient seasonal myths formed the backbone of famous stories such as the legends of the Trojan War, the *Rāmāyana* and the *Book of Joshua* in the Bible. But nothing can be proven. For a long time, I hoped that some new redemptive piece of the puzzle would be revealed, but now I am resigned. We will have to live with the uncertainty and make do with circumstantial evidence and suspicions.

It is impossible to say where the angle-type originated, but there are many indications that it happened in Greece, where the earliest securely dated angle-type labyrinth has been found. There are also examples of the seed pattern appearing on pottery and in other contexts.

However, there is another possibility that the angle-type first appeared on the Iberian Peninsula, where petroglyphs with labyrinth motifs could be much older than the images from Greece.

Seasonal myths involving labyrinths probably spread early in Western and Northern Europe, possibly during the Pre-Roman Iron Age or already during the Late Bronze Age. One can imagine different routes of spread, but I am most inclined to believe that the angle-type migrated northwards along the Etruscan trade routes. In that case, it should have happened sometime during the Etruscan heyday around 700-400 BC.

From the Mediterranean, the same idea spread eastwards to India. It is conceivable that the Greeks brought the angle-type to Punjab in connection with Alexander the Great's campaign there in 326 BC.

It is only from around 300 BC that there is evidence of the angle-type being associated with the Theseus legend. Coins were then minted in Crete combining the angle-type with images of the Minotaur. And at about the same time, the angle-type is found on seals from Knossos and Itanion in Crete.

Thereafter, the evidence for the association of the angle-type with Theseus, Ariadne and the Minotaur gradually increases. When the old cultic significance of the angle-type declined in the Mediterranean region, the Theseus legend took over. Some labyrinth images may still have had a magical significance, but they often become simply decorative figures. New designs appear among the Roman mosaic labyrinths but after a few hundred years of popularity they disappear completely.

During the Roman Empire, the angle-type retreats from the countries around the south-eastern Mediterranean. It disappears in North Africa, Egypt and Syria. Isolated examples in Asia Minor and the Balkans show that the angle-type was borrowed into early churches and used in connection with Christian prayers. But soon almost all traces in the eastern Mediterranean disappear. The Byzantine empire has left remarkably few labyrinths, and they occur very sparingly in the vast areas that came to be dominated by Islam.

However, the angle-type survived in Western Europe, and from the late 8th and 9th centuries it is found in several manuscripts and a little later in some churches in Italy, Spain and France. In this western relict area, there are examples of the angle-type from the time around the birth of Christ to the 15th century. It then disappears. In the Basque Country, however, the angle-type still existed in the 17th and 18th centuries.

A new design, the Chartres-type, soon overshadowed the angle-type in manuscripts and in the continent's churches. This is a learned labyrinth tradition in which the Theseus legend is the major source of inspiration. In churches and manuscripts, labyrinth figures were often used as metaphors for Christian messages.

Floor labyrinths were built in the 13th century in a number of French cathedrals. They were large enough to walk in and some have been used for Easter dances, while others may have been used for symbolic pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

During the Renaissance, the construction of garden labyrinths at castles and manor houses became popular, especially in France. This fashion, which is also rooted in the Theseus legend, soon spread to much of Western Europe. There are no angle-type figures among the garden labyrinths, but the influence of the Chartres-type is clear.

In northern Europe, large field labyrinths of turf or stone were common. Turf labyrinths have been found in the British Isles, in present-day Germany and Poland, and in southern Scandinavia. Further north, stone labyrinths were built instead.

The names and folk traditions of these northern field labyrinths show no trace of the Theseus legend. However, many of the turf labyrinths in the British Isles have names that allude to the City of Troy (*Walls of Troy, Troy town, Caerdroia*) and in Scandinavia labyrinths made of stone or turf have been called Trojeborg.

In the British Isles there are a few angle-type turf labyrinths, but most of the surviving ones have designs inspired by the Chartres-type. Thus, the learned labyrinth tradition of the manuscripts seems to have influenced the designs of turf labyrinths. There may also have been a mutual influence between turf labyrinths and garden labyrinths.

However, in the Nordic countries and in Germany and Poland, there is almost no trace of the learned Western labyrinth tradition of Chartres-type figures and beliefs based on the Theseus legend. The same applies to the labyrinths of India.

In the Nordic countries in particular, there is a rich heritage of labyrinth lore showing that the labyrinths were perceived as cities, especially as images of the City of Troy. The labyrinths have obviously been attributed magical significance, i.e. people have conjured in them. They were also associated with legends and games involving the retrieval of a young woman from the labyrinth. A number of records indicate that labyrinths were used in springtime.

There are striking similarities between Nordic and Indian traditions. Both in India and in Northern Europe, labyrinths have been perceived as fortified cities. Protection magic has been another common denominator. The idea of a man retrieving a woman from the labyrinth, which was widespread in the Nordic countries, also appears in India and Afghanistan. And the angle-type dominates in both areas.

In Scandinavia, there is evidence of an early distribution area covering Denmark, south-eastern Norway and Sweden south of the Dalälven river, where labyrinth names of the Trojeborg type were common into late times.

There are also a number of labyrinths associated with burial sites. They are from different periods, but a remarkable number are from the early Iron Age (500 BC - 375 AD). Since the labyrinths are probably often older than the adjacent graves, one can suspect that labyrinths existed in Scandinavia already during the pre-Roman Iron Age (500 BC - 0) or possibly already during the Bronze Age.

The theophoric place names in central Sweden also suggest that the labyrinths there may be more than 2000 years old and were associated with Nordic fertility gods such as Njärd, Ull, Frey and Freya.

One can therefore suspect that the early labyrinths in Scandinavia played an important role in the fertility cult. But this fertility cult may have faded towards the end of the Viking Age. The seasonal drama in the labyrinths was probably reduced to rather innocent spring games. After Christianisation, the remains of such old customs were probably considered so harmless that they were tolerated by the church.

However, labyrinths have retained their magical significance. It was believed that the figures could bring prosperity and protection from danger, misfortune or evil. Several labyrinth images in medieval Nordic churches probably have such a background.

As early as the Middle Ages, Trojeborg names in Scandinavia were probably transformed into more easily understood names such as Treddenborg and Tryggeborg, suggesting that the sense of what Trojeborg originally meant had been lost.

When fishing in the north boomed in the 12th and 13th centuries, stone labyrinths took on a new role. To protect themselves from the dangers at sea or for good luck in fishing, stone labyrinths were built on islands and skerries at the seasonal fishing sites where coastal farmers stayed for short periods each summer.

The coast labyrinths were probably first introduced on the Swedish west coast but soon spread to the coasts of the Baltic and from there eastwards and northwards to the Arctic coast. The labyrinth names suggest that the spread from the west coast first went to the northernmost part of the Baltic Sea, to the western side of the Gulf of Bothnia, where an organised Swedish colonisation took place in the 1320s and 1330s.

Swedish settlers then took the idea of coast labyrinths eastwards to new Swedish settlements in Finland and Estonia. Hundreds of coast labyrinths were built around the Baltic, and in some places they have continued to be built into late times. Along the coast of northern Sweden, many labyrinths were built between 1500 and 1650. The earliest ones that have been dated by measuring lichen growth on the stones of the labyrinths are from the period 1250-1350.

From the Gulf of Bothnia, the angle-type probably spread eastwards along the great rivers to the White Sea and especially the Solovetsky Islands, where many stone labyrinths have been found. From there, the labyrinth idea travelled further along the coasts of the Kola Peninsula and Finnmark in northern Norway.

Coast labyrinths probably played a role in the magic practised by the coastal population in connection with seasonal fishing. The old fertility cult and the idea that labyrinths represented the underworld probably did not survive Christianisation, but the games where a man would retrieve a young woman from the labyrinth have survived.

The turf labyrinths of present-day Germany also spread eastwards in the Middle Ages. Through military expeditions and subsequent colonisation by German peasants, German boundaries were advanced from the rivers Elbe and Saale, eastwards as far as East Prussia. Among the easternmost labyrinths, the name Jerusalem was common. A record from Ostpreussen in 1333 shows that the German knights entered such turf labyrinths to symbolically contribute to the defence of Jerusalem in the Holy Land.

In northern Europe, the angle-type has survived in a large relict area covering the British Isles, the Nordic countries, Russia's north-western Arctic coast and parts of Estonia's coast. There, the angle-type has dominated and in many places field labyrinths have continued to be built into recent times. In Scandinavia, Troy names have been common. Around the Baltic Sea and on the coast of the Arctic Ocean, new types of names have emerged, but they are linked to ancient labyrinth traditions in that many of them allude to famous cities.

In parts of inland Sweden and along the coasts of the Baltic Sea, an inner relict area can be discerned where old labyrinth lore has been particularly long-lived. In recent times, people have gathered at labyrinths at specific times in the spring or early summer. Even into the 20th century, games were performed in which a man would retrieve a woman from the labyrinth. There have been living traditions telling of the labyrinths as strangely arranged cities, in many cases named Trojeborg. And as late as the 1950s, there have been examples of people conjuring in coastal labyrinths to appease the weather or bring luck in fishing.

The angle-type figures have been built and used for more than 3000 years. Their use and importance have changed over time, but they have survived. From a long-term perspective, the angle-type has retreated, but there are also examples of remarkable advances.

In scholarly circles, the angle-type was already superseded by the Chartres-type in the Middle Ages. But in the popular mind, the angle-type lived on for a long time. It showed astonishing adaptability and vitality. It moved with the wave of German settlers eastwards beyond the Elbe and Saale. When fishing took off in the north, the angle-type was first established in the archipelagos of the Swedish west coast, around the Baltic Sea and the Arctic coast. In the 19th century, the angle-type reappeared as a pastime among Nordic schoolchildren who learnt to draw the ancient figure. It is remarkable that such an old phenomenon has shown such survival and vitality.

How do my conclusions compare with those of others? There is no room here to fairly summarise everything that others have thought and written about labyrinths, because the debate has been extensive. All I can do is to give a picture of the main features of the debate with a few quick brushstrokes. This is summarised in Appendix 27.

Today we live in a time when old folk traditions are fading away. In the Nordic countries, it is probably too late to find more old people who can tell us what the stone figures meant. All that now remains are the records in museums and archives. From that point of view, the time is ripe to summarise the fascinating history of the angle-type. In northern Europe, there is probably not much more to come.

But even though the time has come to write history, this does not mean that the angle-type is dead. On the contrary, it is very much alive. Labyrinths have entered a new period of expansion. Never before have so many labyrinths been built around the world as today. Many are of the angle-type.

The enigmatic figures are widely used as decoration, artists play with the patterns of the winding paths. New garden labyrinths are created, often with previously untried designs, but many show affinities with the angle- or Chartres-type.

It's not all about aesthetics. Since the late 20th century, many people have started using labyrinths for meditation. They can be found in private gardens, built from turf or stones or other materials. Some people play in them, others approach the figures with great seriousness. Some have a New Age background, and some priests borrow the figures into Christian churches. New books tell how to build and use labyrinths.

Particularly in North America, but also in Western Europe, interest in labyrinths has gained momentum in recent decades. An association for labyrinth enthusiasts, The Labyrinth Society, was founded in 1998. Large conferences are organised annually in the USA. Many labyrinths are being built. An online register (www.labyrinthlocator.org) included more than 5,900 labyrinths in 2020, which means a growth of about 300 new labyrinths per year since 2004. Since not all labyrinths are registered, it is probably safe to assume that at least one new labyrinth is built every day somewhere in the world.

When I attended one of the annual conferences in 2001, there was a serious discussion about building a chain of labyrinths from coast to coast in the USA. The idea says something about the strength of the new labyrinth interest. Many people at that conference were interested in the history of labyrinths, but I didn't get the sense that retrospectives were high on the agenda. The new labyrinths are used here and now. Once again, the old figures mean something.