

# Scenes from Homer found in Cyprus 'warrior tomb'

## Paintings include Iliad battle, escape from Cyclops

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**NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) -- A 2,500-year-old sarcophagus with vivid color illustrations from Homer's epics has been discovered in western Cyprus, archaeologists said Monday.**



This image shows two warriors on a chariot, one of several scenes from Homer painted on the

Construction workers found the limestone sarcophagus last week in a tomb near the village of Kouklia, in the coastal Paphos area. The tomb, which probably belonged to an ancient warrior, had been looted during antiquity.

"The style of the decoration is unique, not so much from an artistic point of view, but for the subject and the colors used," said Pavlos Flourentzos, director of the island's antiquities department.

Only two similar sarcophagi have ever been discovered in Cyprus before. One is housed in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and the other in the British Museum in London, but their colors are more faded, Flourentzos said.

Flourentzos said the coffin -- painted in red, black and blue on a white background -- dated to 500 B.C., when Greek cultural influence was gaining a firm hold on the eastern Mediterranean island. Pottery discovered in the tomb is expected to provide a more precise date. Experts believe the ornate decoration features the hero Ulysses in scenes from Homer's Iliad and Odyssey -- both hugely popular throughout the Greek world.

In one large painting, Ulysses and his comrades escape from the blind Cyclops Polyphemos' cave, hidden under a flock of sheep. Another depicts a battle between Greeks and Trojans from the Iliad.

Archeologists think the scenes hint at the status of the coffin's occupant.

"Why else take these two pieces from Homer and why deal with Ulysses? Maybe this represents the dead person's character -- who possibly was a warrior," Flourentzos said.

Other drawings depict a figure carrying a seriously injured or dead man and a lion fighting a wild boar under a tree. These are not believed to be linked with Homer's poems.

Reflecting a long oral tradition loosely based on historic events, Homer's epics were probably composed around 800 B.C. and written down in the 6th century B.C.

The tomb was found in an area containing several ancient cemeteries which belonged to the nearby town of Palaepaphos, 11 miles inland from modern Paphos.

First settled around 2800 B.C., Palaepaphos was the site of a temple of Aphrodite -- the ancient goddess of beauty who, according to mythology, was born in the sea off Paphos.

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