

The Chariot Race on the François Vase

The François Vase (Florence 4209, c. 570–60) has been endlessly discussed (Shapiro et al. 2013), and the frieze of the chariot race is especially celebrated because it shows what is generally understood as an Iliadic scene, the funeral games for Patroclus. The image belongs to a series of paintings about Achilles, with the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, the killing of Troilus, and Ajax with the hero's corpse. The labels for the race give Achilles as prize-giver, Odysseus apparently in the lead, Automedon, Diomedes, and two names not in the *Iliad* at all, Hippothoon and Damasippos (in ps. Apollodorus 3.126 brother of Penelope). Only Diomedes is found in the race in the *Iliad*, and the painting has led scholars to conclude either that the painter did not know *Iliad* 23 (since the omitted Eumelus and Antilochus generate the most interesting narrative material; so Wachter); that Kleitias; simply botched the labels; that very different "Iliadic" versions circulated in the first half of the sixth century (Finkelberg 2017, 33-35; Lowenstam 1997, 27–28; Burgess 2001, 81–82), or that Kleitias alluded to the rest of the games (Lattimore 1997).

However, the picture is odd in at least two ways beyond its difference from the familiar narrative. First, Odysseus does not just not compete in this race, but he does not even have a chariot in the *Iliad*. In the *Odyssey*, Telemachus declines the gift of horses offered by Menelaus, because Ithaca is too hilly for horses (*Od.* 4.605-8). The only horse with which Odysseus is associated is the Wooden Horse. Second, Automedon is the charioteer of Patroclus himself. He must be using the horses of Achilles, which seems socially inappropriate not only with Achilles as the organizer, but because Achilles in the *Iliad* says that his horses are in mourning. (*Il.* 23.374-84), and that they would win if they raced.

If Diomedes, as in the *Iliad*, drives the horses that he captured from Aeneas, Odysseus must be driving the horses of Rhesus. In the *Iliad*, these magnificent horses (*Il.* 10.436–7) are put with those of Diomedes and never mentioned again.

If the painting actually represents the Funeral Games of Patroclus, then, it looks like a version that directly responds to and contradicts the *Iliad*. By removing Menelaus, Eumelus, and Antilochus, the narrative implied by the painting also removes everything that is problematic about the race, whose results would be straightforward and involve neither disputes nor divine interference. Since it is very hard to imagine any actual narrative in which Automedon competed in games for Patroclus after serving as his charioteer (*Il.* 16.145, 148), if the literary source, if there was one, did not narrate the death of Patroclus or the grief of the horses.

But it is also possible that the vase is not representing the game for Patroclus, but games for Antilochus. While in the *Aethiopis* all the crucial events seem to have happened on the same day (Memnon kills Antilochus, Achilles kills Memnon, Paris and Apollo kill Achilles), this need not have been the only version. While the *dinos* of Sophilos (National Archaeological Museum, Athens, inv.15499; the drivers cannot be identified) is labelled "Games of Patroclus," the François vase labels the character but not the scene. Achilles, who loved Antilochus best after Patroclus, might still conduct his games, but it would make more sense that his horses would participate. Eumelus would not have had time to repair his chariot. At *Il.* 8.97–8, Odysseus does not respond to Diomedes' request to help Nestor; if this incident reflects wider thematics of the rescue-of-Nestor tradition, his apparent victory in the frieze is even more interesting.

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