

# Laomedon's Corpse, Laomedon's Tomb

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“AND LAOMEDON'S CORPSE is being carried out by Sinon (Odysseus' companion) and Anchialos. And another dead man is drawn, with the name Eresos; but of Eresos and Laomedon, so far as we know, no poet has sung.”<sup>1</sup> So Pausanias, towards the end of his description of Polygnotos' *Troy Taken* in the Lesche of the Cnidians at Delphi. He is listing the dead, shown lying within the city, not far from the house of Antenor, which seems to have closed the picture at one end. The commentators have little to say on these sentences. Frazer,<sup>2</sup> and Hitzig and Blümner,<sup>3</sup> refer to Tzetzes<sup>4</sup> on Sinon's relationship to Odysseus; and the latter mention Anchialos as the name of a Greek killed by Hector in the *Iliad* (5.609),<sup>5</sup> and of Mentès' father in the *Odyssey* (1.181). They refer also to a Trojan Laomedon mentioned by Quintus Smyrnaeus (2.293). Gunning in Pauly-Wissowa<sup>6</sup> and Höfer in Roscher,<sup>7</sup> make the same reference, and the latter suggests the possibility of identifying the figure in the painting with Quintus' man; adding that obviously Polygnotos cannot have meant to show the great Laomedon, Priam's father and builder of the walls of Troy. This opinion is clearly implied also in the other comments, and was evidently Pausanias' own. Only one scholar, so far as I know, M. Charles Vellay,<sup>8</sup> has expressed the view that Polygnotos' Laomedon is no other than the great one. This seems to me

<sup>1</sup> Paus. 10.27.3, Λαομέδοντος δὲ τὸν νεκρὸν Σίνων τε ἑταῖρος Ὀδυσσεύς καὶ Ἀγχιάλος εἶναι ἐκκομίζοντες. γέγραπται δὲ καὶ ἄλλος τεθνεώς ὄνομά οἱ Ἔρεσος τὰ δὲ ἐς Ἐρεσὸν τε καὶ Λαομέδοντα, ὅσα γε ἡμεῖς ἐπιστάμεθα, ἦεν οὐδεὶς.

<sup>2</sup> Pausanias's *Description of Greece*, transl. and comm. J. G. Frazer, V (London 1898) p.371 *ad loc.*

<sup>3</sup> Pausanias, *Graeciae descriptio*, ed. H. Hitzig / H. Blümner, III.2 (Leipzig 1910) p.775 *ad loc.*

<sup>4</sup> *Schol. vet. ad Lycophronis Alexandram* 344.

<sup>5</sup> There are a few other occurrences of the name Anchialos (*RE* and Roscher, *s.v.*). Eresos is cited as the eponymous hero of the Lesbian city of that name: *RE* and Roscher, *s.v.*; Hitzig and Blümner, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.3) p.776; Carl Robert, *Die Iliupersis des Polygnot* (*Hal-lisches Winckelmannsprogramm* 70, Halle 1893) 53.

<sup>6</sup> *RE* 12 (1924) col. 755 *s.v.* LAOMEDON 2.

<sup>7</sup> Roscher, *Lex.* II (1894–97) col. 1846 *s.v.* LAOMEDON 3. F. Vian, ed. *Quintus de Smyrne, La Suite d'Homère*, I (Budé, Paris 1963) p.67 n.1, makes the reference in reverse.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Vellay, “Le Règne de Laomédon,” *ClMed* 8 (1946) 84.

demonstrably right; and since M. Vellay's reference is almost parenthetical and it was no part of his purpose to consider the description of the painting, it is perhaps worth arguing it more fully; for the group, properly interpreted, seems to me of some importance to the understanding of the artist's intentions.

To take the negative arguments first: the hero named by Quintus Smyrnaeus was killed in the battle between Achilles and Memnon outside the walls of Troy, before the deaths of Achilles and Paris. His body has no place in a picture of the sacked city, and at most the passage shows that the name could be used for a casual Trojan.<sup>9</sup> The figure shown in the painting, however, must have been someone of major importance. The other bodies, including Priam's own, are left lying; but this is being carried out by two Greeks. This fact led Robert (who can be relied on to see and face difficulties) to conjecture that this Laomedon was a Greek, killed in the night battle.<sup>10</sup> He can cite Apollodorus<sup>11</sup> for a son of Herakles by that name; but in a picture of Troy, surely such a famous Trojan name could be given only to a Trojan, and there was only one famous Trojan Laomedon. Moreover, although he had died so long before, a positive reason for his corpse being seen here can be found.

In Plautus' *Bacchides* the slave Chrysalus, making the famous comparison of his achievements to the sack of Troy, says: "For Ilium I've heard there were three dooms, which should bring about its ruin: if the image should be lost from the citadel; a second likewise the death of Troilus; the third when the upper lintel of the Phrygian gate should be riven"; and later, "Now the upper lintel is riven; now ruin is here for Ilium; the wooden horse is making trouble nicely."<sup>12</sup> Servius, commenting on *Aeneid* 2.13, *fatisque repulsi*, says: "According to Plautus there were three; to wit, the life of Troilus, the preservation of the Palladium, the inviolability of Laomedon's tomb,

<sup>9</sup> Gunning, *loc.cit.* (*supra* n.6), calls this Laomedon a grandson of the great one, son of Lampos, Klytios or Hiketaon, but he does not cite his authority, which I cannot find. The appearance of the name as that of a son of Hector and Andromache (*ibid.*, s.v. LAOMEDON 3) seems, as there noted, to be a mistake for Laodamas.

<sup>10</sup> *loc.cit.* (*supra* n.5).

<sup>11</sup> Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.7.8. He also (*Epit.* 7.29) gives the name to one of the 44 Zakyntians among the 136 suitors he assigns to Penelope.

<sup>12</sup> 953ff: *Ilio tria fuisse audivi fata quae illi forent exitio: | signum ex arce si periisset; alium etiamst Troili mors; | tertium cum portae Phrygiae limen superum scinderetur.* 987f: *Nunc superum limen scinditur, nunc adest exitium Ilio, | turbat equos lepide ligneus.*

which had been in the Scaean gate”;<sup>13</sup> on 2.241: “For we know that while Laomedon’s tomb, which had been above the Scaean gate, was inviolate, the fate of Troy was safe.”<sup>14</sup> On 3.351 he gives the origin of the Scaean gate’s name as “from Laomedon’s corpse, that is *Scenoma*, from the *εκρήνωμα* which had been in it above the lintel.”<sup>15</sup>

The wooden horse was introduced into Troy by enlarging the Scaean gate, evidently upward,<sup>16</sup> so violating the tomb. In the brief allusions by which we know the story nothing is said of the Greeks moving the corpse; but such a detail must have occurred in a version current in the fifth century and known to Polygnotos. That one of those taking part in the removal is Sinon must be significant. Pre-Virgilian treatments of this anti-hero are not well documented, but it is beyond doubt that his name was early associated with the tricks by which the Greeks secured entry to the city.<sup>17</sup>

I have elsewhere argued that Polygnotos probably showed a fountain outside the wall of the city, and pointed out that to a contemporary this must immediately have suggested the ambush of Troilus by Achilles.<sup>18</sup> The fallen statue of Athena, clasped in Cassandra’s arms,

<sup>13</sup> *Secundum Plautum tribus, scilicet vita Troili, Palladii conservatione, integro sepulcro Laomedontis, quod in Scaea porta fuerat.*

<sup>14</sup> *Nam novimus integro sepulcro Laomedontis, quod super portam Scaeam fuerat, tuta fuisse fata Trojana.*

<sup>15</sup> *A cadavere Laomedontis, hoc est Scenomate, ἀπό τοῦ κρηνώματος, quod in ejus fuerat superliminio.* This very odd expression seems to suggest that its author conceived of the body as exposed on a kind of stage above the lintel (“Give orders that these bodies | High on a stage be placéd to the view,” *Hamlet* 5.370–71). As Vellay, *loc.cit.* (*supra* n.8), has well noted, the idea of entombing a great monarch over the city-gate finds a perfect parallel in Herodotus’ story of Queen Nitocris at Babylon (1.187). The idea that a hero’s spirit can protect the spot where his body is laid also recurs: for example Eurystheus, killed and buried on one of the roads into Athens (Eur. *Heracl.* 1027–44).

<sup>16</sup> See R. G. Austin, ed. Vergil, *Aeneidos, Liber secundus* (Oxford 1964) n. on line 234, *dividimus muros.*

<sup>17</sup> Austin, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.16), introductory note to lines 57–75; RE and Roscher, *s.v.*

<sup>18</sup> BSA 62 (1967) 5–12. To the references *ibid.* p.6 n.10, for the idea that water-carrying is properly a task for women, not for men, add the scholiast’s comment on Ap.Rhod. *Argon.* 1.1207f (τόφρα δ’ Ὑλας χαλκή ἐν κάλπιδι νόσφιν ὀμίλου | δίζητο κρήνης ἱερὸν ῥόον) in *Scholia in Apollonium Rhodium Vetera*, ed. C. Wendel (Berlin 1935) p.110: ἀπρεπὲς δὲ νεανίαν ὑδρίαν βαστάζειν Ὀμηρος (ἡ 20) δὲ πρεπόντως παρθένον. πιθανώτερον δὲ ἦν ἀμφορέα εἰπεῖν, ὡς Καλλιμαχος (fg 546 Schn.). I owe this reference to N. G. Wilson. Whether the last sentence of the scholion is to be taken closely with the rest is not clear. If so, it perhaps implies that a boy might properly carry the water to put in the wine at a feast, if this was normally brought in an amphora and not in a hydria or kalpis. Certainly in pictures of symposia I do not remember seeing hydriai shown, while of two pointed amphorae brought to the mixing-bowl on Smikros’ Brussels stamnos (A 717; Beazley, ARV<sup>2</sup> I p.20 no. 1; *idem*, *Paralipomena*

will likewise have called to mind the Palladium stolen from the citadel;<sup>19</sup> and in the group of Sinon and Anchialos carrying out the body of Laomedon, the artist made more direct allusion to the violated tomb above the gate: the third and last spell broken.

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to *ABV and ARV* [Oxford, forthcoming] 322 with refs., including *AntK* 8 [1965] pl.14) one might be thought to hold wine, the other water; and when Herakles himself goes to the fountain it is with pointed amphorae, not hydriai (*BSA* 62 [1967] 9 nn.30 and 31; Berlin 4027, now illustrated by A.-B. Follmann, *Der Pan-Maler* [Bonn 1968] pl.8,2 and 3).

<sup>19</sup> Paus. 10.26.3; Robertson, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.18) 10ff.