

§12. Dolon

Book 10, usually called the Doloneia, has a unique position in the Iliad, in that it is a complete incident in itself, and could be removed from the epic without leaving any trace. The wonderful horses captured by Diomedes are never referred to again, not even in the chariot race . . . in Book 23.

– *Willcock Companion 113*

Such are the reasons to doubt Id 10. Willcock’s first sentence in the basic test for an interpolation: if it is removed, the text on both sides will close up, like your finger when you take a splinter out. Further points in support are:

- The exploit of Diomedes and Odysseus takes place, not just at night (there is no other night battle in the Iliad), but in the *same* night as the planning of the Embassy in Iliad 9; it makes a very crowded night indeed.
- Dolon is an “insignificant person” (Willcock ap 323); in fact, a low-class person. The only other Iliad example is Thersites, in a passage in Iliad 2 which we have found to be not only an interpolation, but specifically, an Odyssean interpolation. Humble folk like herdsmen Eumaios and Philoitios are vital to Odysseus in his slaying of the suitors. The social world of the Odyssey is different, and the use the poet makes of that world, in working out the story of Odysseus’ return, is also different.
- Bath tub (βάμινθος). The word occurs only at 10:576 in the Iliad, but 10× in the Odyssey; it is another Odyssean trait. It is also an inconvenient item to have along with one in a crowded ship; it implies rather a palace context. Palaces abound in the Odyssey, but all we have on the beach at Troy is just that beach. The poet of Iliad 10 is assumes a world like that of the Odyssey.

We take that as decisive.¹ Next, consider Rhesus. In Id 10, the Trojan spy Dolon is killed. The Greek spies enter the enemy camp, kill the newly arrived Thracian king Rhesus while he is sleeping, and steal his horses, returning with them to the Greek camp. There exists a play by Euripides, the *Rhesus*, which covers much of the same ground. Ritchie **Rhesus** has shown that Euripides’ play derives from Iliad 10, and is one of his earliest plays (p348):

The sum of the evidence leaves us with a strong preference for dating *Rhesus* as the earliest of Euripides’ extant works. There are good grounds for placing its composition between 455 and 440 . . .

We will take c450 as the date of Euripides’ play. The Doloneia must have been in place before then. How *long* before, we do not know. We ask meanwhile, To what else in the Iliad does the Doloneia relate? Seemingly, to passages which give Odysseus, besides his role as wise advisor, a significant military identity.

¹West **Iliad** 233, “It is the almost unanimous (and certainly correct) view of modern scholars that this rhapsody is an insertion in *Il* by a different poet . . . The preceding considerations would be compatible with the *Doloneia*’s being a last insertion by P. But its peculiarities of style, language, and composition are such that one cannot believe it is by the same poet as the rest, even allowing for evolution of his technique over time.”

Odysseus' brief Id 5 *aristeia* seems genuine, but the "father of Telemachus" passages in Id 2 and Id 4, imply this more military identity.² They are not only post-Homer, and post-Odyssey, they postdate the *rewriting* of the Odyssey³ which gave Telemachus a stronger role in the slaying of the suitors. Odysseus' more splendid *aristeia* in Id 10 gives him full possession of that new identity.

A Possible Connection?

Consider now David. In 1 Sam 24, Saul, unknowing, goes to sleep in the cave where David is hiding. David declines to slay him. As Saul departs, David reveals his forbearance; Saul acknowledges that David "surely will be king." Then in 1 Sam 26 we have much the same story, but this time David goes by night to Saul's camp, finds him sleeping, and declines to slay him. Saul awakes, they confront each other, again Saul gives a blessing and a prophecy, "Blessed be thou, my son David; thou shalt both do mightily and shall surely prevail."⁴ David makes a gratuitous visit to Saul's camp, only to display his forbearance.

Between the two stories, and as inspiration for the second, might there be a story where a hero enters the camp of a sleeping enemy, and *does* kill him? If so, the second David story would gain power by the contrast. Might that precedent be the *Doloneia*?⁵ 1 Sam 25-30, like the second Festival code in Exodus, is an update of the preceding material.⁶ The point of 1 Sam 26 is to enhance David's piety, and the legitimacy of his later rule. The update might be pre-Exilic, that is, pre-0580, or it might be an upbeat response to the rebuilding of the Temple after the c0520 Return. Does the chronology work?

The *Iliad*'s home was in Chios, and it might have been known in nearby Palestine soon after its completion. It was more widely known only after its addition to the Panathenaea festival (founded 0566), that addition being the work of Pisistratus' elder son Hipparchus (perhaps c0525). Such are the alternatives, as they look from this end. How they may look from the other end, we leave herewith to the judgement of those those properly qualified to say.

The addition of a whole book, the *Doloneia*, marks a new, more drastic phase in the treatment of the *Iliad*. Interpolation no longer sufficed, as a way of modifying its message. We now turn to the much beloved Shield of Achilles, a long interpolation in Id 18, and then to the still more beloved whole-chapter additions, Id 23 and 24. They are the new *Iliad* ideology: its Peace message.

²For the many identities of Odysseus, in and out of Homer, see also §8.

³See in detail §33.

⁴The two incidents are nicely contrasted in Miscall I Samuel 00.

⁵The parallel has been noticed by West **East** 374.

⁶See Auld **Samuel** 281f. For the Exodus case, see Brooks **Festival**.