

Nigel NICHOLSON

Bride of Quietness: Copenhagen 109 and the Commemoration of Chariot Victories

Chariot racing was one of the most public of the Greek elite's leisure activities in the archaic and classical periods, and, not surprisingly, the meaning of success in chariot races was highly contested. At stake was not just whether such victories were more benefit or danger to the broader community, but whether the victories demonstrated the superiority of the aristocrats themselves and of their ways of organizing society. A little known vase that seems to commemorate a chariot win, Copenhagen 109, represents a striking intervention in the contest for the meaning of chariot victories.

Dated to around 550 by Beazley (*ABV* 135.33), Copenhagen 109 melds together a one-person racing chariot and a Homeric two-person war-chariot. Like two other memorials, *SEG* XXIII.38 (from around 550) and Pindar's *Pythian* 5 (from 462), Copenhagen 109 seems to attempt to project the idea that the charioteer had an enduring relationship with the victor (who rarely drove his own chariot), by suggesting that, like a Homeric charioteer, the charioteer was a friend, relative or henchman of the man he drove for.

This insistence that victor and charioteer are related should be understood against the background of the nascent commodification of chariot driving. Charioteer and victor were beginning to become separated, as successful charioteers began to serve a number of patrons, some of whom they had no prior connection with. But this commodification of chariot-driving posed considerable problems for the aristocratic owners, since it implicated them in a mode of exchange against which they defined themselves. In merging a Homeric chariot with a racing chariot, Copenhagen 109 seems, like *Py.* 5 and *SEG* XXIII.38, to promote the aristocratic credentials of the victory by assuring us that the victor did not step outside his usual relationships to win his victory.

Yet, we should take pause before assuming that this vase can be interpreted by reference to other victory memorials. It differs in two major respects: first, vases were cheaper and more readily available than dedications or odes, and, second, although probably intended for purchase by a victor, Copenhagen 109 was not specially commissioned by one. Thus, although seemingly readily understandable in terms of other memorials, Copenhagen 109 asks us to consider how unified the production of victory memorials was.