An Iconographical Study of Helen and Paris Alexandros in Etruscan Art

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An Iconographical Study of Helen and Paris Alexandros in Etruscan Art

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Abstract:

Images of the Judgment of Paris and images of Helen became popular in Etruscan art from the Archaic Period through the Classical Period, especially as depicted on female possessions for personal adornment and marriage, namely Etruscan bronze hand-mirrors. Images of the Judgment of Paris and of Helen were assimilated into Etruscan iconography, and perhaps Etruscan mythology, with meanings unique to elite Etruscan women, who seemed to have chosen specific imagery relevant for personal display on their possessions. This thesis demonstrates that Paris Alexandros and Helen were highly revered and idolized by elite Etruscan women. In Etruscan art, images of Paris Alexandros and Helen were recontextualized to symbolize and complement culturally-important ideals and values prominent in aristocratic society: love, family, marriage and fertility. I argue that Etruscan representations of the Judgment of Paris were popularized by Etruscan women as a symbol of love and marriage. I argue that Helen became an icon to elite women, who desired to emulate her beauty and opulent lifestyle, as it is recounted by Homer, Hesiod, the poets of the Cypria and attested by her imagery on painted Greek vases. Furthermore, based on the iconography of Paris Alexandros, Helen and their relationship depicted on women's adornment-mirrors, I argue that their marriage was celebrated by Etruscan women as a model example of an ideal Etruscan marriage based on love, happiness, prosperity and unity, which has no parallel with the Greek perception of their “immoral” love affair.

Introduction: The Arrival of the Chigi Vase in Etruria

From the earliest seaborne contacts with the Greeks, the Etruscans were introduced to not only imported Greek objects, but also to Greek mythological narratives. Some of the earliest Greek narratives to reach Etruscan shores were those from the poems of the Epic Cycle relating the histories of the Trojan War. As attested by frequent appearances in Etruscan art, specific narratives from Homer’s Odyssey and the Cypria, the first poem of the Epic Cycle, were assimilated into Etruscan culture; moreover, representations of the stories of the Judgment of Paris and Paris Alexandros’ marriage to Helen, as they were recounted in the Cypria, appear often in Etruscan art, most often on the reverses of Etruscan bronze hand-mirrors. An illustration of the Judgment of Paris on the 7th century Chigi vase, a
wine jug, discovered in an Etruscan tomb, confirms that the Etruscans were becoming familiar with the images of Paris’ fateful decision as early as the 7th century BCE.

The original owner of the Chigi vase, most likely an affluent Corinthian symposiast, would have been familiar with, and entertained by, the action and drama illustrated on his wine jug. Three figural narrative friezes symbiotically compose a tale of becoming a man.¹ The lowest frieze of the Chigi vase depicts three free-spirited youths and their dogs, innocently hare-hunting for sport. The central frieze of the Chigi vase is not so benign. Four Corinthian adolescents mercilessly hunt and spear a ferocious lion that retaliates by crushing a fallen youth with his powerful jaws. Blood gushes from the adolescent’s arm, but with the help of his comrades, he might survive to complete his military training and grow up to be a proud Corinthian man after all (Fig. 1). According to Hurwit, these four adolescents are completing the military training that will enable them to fulfill their civic obligation of Corinthian hoplites. The narratives of the lower and central frieze on the Chigi vase underscore the Greek attitude of 7th-century Corinth and purport the initiatory rites expected of Corinthian youths before they become military citizens and Hoplites who commonly wage war against their enemies, as it is represented in the upper frieze of the Chigi vase (Fig. 2).² The symbiotic relationship between the three figural friezes recites a journey from boyhood to adolescence, and then culminates in the upper frieze where the adolescents become hoplite warriors and, thus, men.³ Although this interpretation of the reading of the Chigi vase could be have been entirely understood through these three narrative bands, the Chigi Painter also included a subtle and somewhat unexpected scene of the Judgment of Paris in the central band of the vase. At first glance, the scene may seem contradictory with Hurwit’s explanation of the figural bands; however, I argue that the Judgment of Paris actually complements and completes Hurwit’s interpretation on the reading of the Chigi vase.

¹ Hurwit, 2002; 18.
² Hurwit, 2002; 17-18.
³ This hoplite battle is the earliest hoplite battle represented in art. Hurwit, 2002; 14.
Discovered in an Etruscan tomb on the Italian property of Prince Mario Chigi in 1881, the eponymous vase is the earliest extant example of a type of wine jug known as an olpe. Reputed as the trailblazing objet d’art of many vase-painting innovations in Corinthian art, this vessel harbors the earliest representation of the Judgment-of-Paris story known to date. Located just below the handle of the Chigi vase, the scene is discreetly illustrated in the central frieze between the lion-hunt and a cavalcade of youths (Fig. 3). Homer alludes to the Judgment of Paris in his Odyssey so fleetingly in Book XIV, that it is seldom-regarded with any significance:

[The Gods] urged Hermes to steal the body [of Hector away], a plan that pleased all but Hera, Poseidon and [Athena,] the Grey-Eyed One, who were steady in their hatred for sacred Ilion and Priam’s people ever since Paris in his blindness offended these two goddesses and honored the one who fed his fatal lust. (Odyssey 24.26-34)

However laconic his reference to the Judgment of Paris, we can deduce that Homer’s audience was aware, to some degree, of the story. Written down sometime between the completion of Homer’s Odyssey and the painting of the Chigi Vase (c.640BCE), the epic poem, the Cypria – the first poem of the Trojan Cycle – recounted the complete narrative of the Judgment of Paris; however, the poem is unfortunately no longer complete. The Cypria is fundamentally understood as the prologue preceding the Trojan War. It justifies a cause and details the sequence-of-events that begets the war: Zeus wills to decrease the human population with a great war; Peleus and Thetis exchange divine nuptials; the

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4 Hurwit, 2002; 3.
5 Rasmussen, 2003; 62.
6 Hurwit posits that the handle of the Chigi vase may function as a visual cue – a pointer emphasizing the scene – but only when the vase is lifted at the handle when pouring wine. Hurwit, 2002; 17. Of the extant, yet fragmentary scene, it is Paris’ Epic-Cycle epithet which is inscribed: Αλεξανδρος. Rasmussen, 1993; 62.
7 Translation from Lombardo, 1997; 468.
8 Evelyn-White concludes that the Cyclic poets advertently omitted the return of Odysseus (The Odyssey), because that was Homer’s stamping-ground. See Evelyn-White, 1914; xxx. Ironically, the dating of the Cypria is often corroborated (by scholars) by the Chigi vase’s Judgment of Paris scene and the inscription of Paris’ Cyprian epithet, Αλεξανδρος; thus dating the poem to, at least, the mid-seventh century BCE, when Cyprus was still under Assyrian hegemony. See Burkert, Walter. The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age. Harvard University Press, 1992; 103. There were five non-Homeric poems completing the entire Trojan narrative from beginning to end: the Cypria, the Aethiopis, the Iliupersis, the Nosti and the Telegony. See Evelyn-White’s Introduction for more information concerning the individual narratives.
shepherd-prince Alexandros (an epithet of Paris) is compelled to arbitrate a contest, after Eris, the
goddess of strife, crafts her wicked deeds. According to the story, which persevered in the remnants of
the *Cypria*, the shepherd-prince Alexandros (Paris) is unexpectedly approached by Hermes, Hera, Athena
and Aphrodite.\(^9\) Hermes asks Paris to decide, of the three estimable deities,

...Hera, Athena and Aphrodite, as to which of them is fairest. The three
are led by Hermes at the command of Zeus to Alexandrus, on Mount Ida
for his decision, and Alexandrus, lured by his promised marriage with
Helen, decides in favor of Aphrodite.\(^10\)

This is the original literary account of the Judgment of Paris, which is to be subsequently illustrated on
the Chigi vase some years later (c. 640BCE) (*Fig. 4*). Many later depictions of the Judgment-of-Paris
scene in Greek art remain true to the words of the *Cypria*.\(^11\) Even though the cast of characters and
setting remain fairly rigid and easily-recognizable in Greek art, the context and meaning of Paris’
judgment evolves and adapts as the myth makes its way to Etruria.

Because the Chigi vase was discovered in an Etruscan tomb in Etruria and because it depicts the
earliest known representation of the Judgment of Paris, it is important to understand the meaning and
context of its mythological scene. The modest scene is self-contained and demarcated by the turned
backs of the flanking youths. Although the composition is simple, the Chigi Painter employed great
prudence in detailing Paris’ judgment. To enhance the multifarious style of the Corinthian vase –
exemplified by the geometric vertical bands of Orientalizing motifs and figurative friezes – the Chigi

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\(^9\) Paris is said to have procured the virtues of beauty, courage and strength as he diligently governed his flock atop
lofty Mt. Ida under the care of Agelaus – a former servant of Paris’ biological father, King Priam of Troy. Priam had
the boy exposed due to the seer Aesacus’ forewarning that Troy would fall if the boy were to live. Agelaus pitied
the boy. Paris was bequeathed the name Ἀλέξανδρος (Alexandros) – “warder-off of [other] men,” after he
courageously defended his flock from thieves. Alexandros’s story and virtues are found in *Library (Bibliotheca)*
University Press; London, 1921. See Powell’s section on *The Judgment of Paris* (pgs. 540-542) for the interpretation
of the name Alexandros. Hermes is barely identifiable by the tip of his caduceus scepter, his only extant attribute.

\(^10\) Translation by Evelyn-White, 1914; 491. Scholars do not know precisely who was the author of the *Cypria*,
nevertheless, it has been ascribed to *Stasinus* and/or *Hegesius* according to the fragments of the *Cypria*.

\(^11\) The most common compositions of the Judgment of Paris depict Hermes leading Hera, Athena and Aphrodite in
tandem to be judged by Paris.
Painter attractively illustrated the figures of Alexandros, Athena and Aphrodite, who, when juxtaposed to the cookie-cutter hoplites and the similar-looking youths, appear particularly idiosyncratic. Each figure is also personalized by their inscribed names; Alexandros’ and Aphrodite’s names are fragmentary, but Athena’s is well-preserved.\textsuperscript{12} Alexandros is young and beardless, perhaps the same age as the Corinthian youths around him. He wears a heavy chiton and appears more disciplined and astute than the scantily-clad, contiguous lion-hunters, as if the Chigi Painter was trying to underscore Alexandros’ piety and devoutness as an unadulterated shepherd-prince.\textsuperscript{13} The figure representing Hera is no long extant, but the heads of Athena and Aphrodite do survive. Athena brandishes a blooming flower and Aphrodite holds, perhaps, Eris’ golden apple or an allusive pomegranate – a symbol of fertility, rebirth and love.\textsuperscript{14} These subtle details highlight the significance of the Judgment-of-Paris scene depicted on the Chigi vase. Because of the detail and effort implemented in the scene, it is clear that the Chigi Painter advertently painted the narrative to serve some purpose, rather than to fill an empty space. Hurwit postulates that the Judgment-of-Paris scene acts as a forewarning to the symposiast, dissuading him to make hasty decisions before considering their consequences, similar to Alexandros’ fateful decision, which leads to the Trojan War.\textsuperscript{15} However, I believe that there are two other ways of interpreting the Judgment-of-Paris scene and its relationship to the other figural bands.

First, I propose that the Chigi Painter included the Judgment-of-Paris scene as a prologue to justify the cause of the hoplite battle transpiring in the upper frieze, just as the hare-hunt and the lion-hunt symbolize youths becoming men in 7th-century Corinth. The parallels the Trojan War, as the war had a cause, justifiable or unjustifiable – Alexandros’ judgment. The use of the Judgment-of-Paris scene

\textsuperscript{12} One of the earliest legible inscriptions in vase-painting. Rasmussen, 1993; 62.
\textsuperscript{13} Albeit anachronistic, Alexandros’s virtues are listed by 1st-century BCE Pseudo-Apollodorus in Library (\textit{Bibliotheca}) (3.12.5); translated by Frazer, Sir James George, F.B.A., F.R.S. in \textit{2 Volumes}. Harvard University Press; London, 1921.
\textsuperscript{14} Haynes, 2000; 284. Spivey, 2006; 68.
\textsuperscript{15} Hurwit, 2002; 13.
may allegorically indicate that a war is about to take place. This war would be the hoplite war in the upper frieze.

Second, I suggest that the Judgment of Paris is an interlude, symbolizing a life-transition in a Corinthian man’s life. The coming-of-age in militaristic Corinth during the 7th century was a strenuous and demanding time in a young man’s life. Between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, post-pubescent youths underwent formal military training in order to become full military-citizens at the age of eighteen. Although wholeheartedly committed to serving the common interest of their polis, these martial youths were not just war-machines, but humans with natural human sentiments.\(^\text{16}\) During war, marriage would have served as an interlude in a young man’s life, and the Judgment of Paris on the Chigi vase exemplifies such an interlude by alluding to Alexandros’ impending marriage to Helen promised by Aphrodite, the goddess of love and lust.\(^\text{17}\) Although Helen isn’t physically depicted in the Judgment of Paris on the Chigi vase’s frieze, she would have been commonly recalled in mind by those who saw the Judgment-of-Paris scene and knew the antecedents of the Trojan War. The rite of marriage may have been a fleeting and smaller part of a man’s life-transitions – as it is attested by the size of the Judgment-of-Paris scene in relation to the rest of the friezes – but it was a valuable transition when ascending to maturity. I do believe that the Judgment-of-Paris scene marks that interlude, that last transition into manhood underscored by, not only Alexandros’ prospective marriage to Helen, but also the presence of Hermes, a god whose many attributes include transitions. This scene completes the horizontal and vertical symbiotic reading of the vase’s friezes and, on a whole, the poetic transcendence upon the Chigi vase. Although we do not know who commissioned the Chigi Painter to craft this enigmatic vase, or for

\(^\text{16}\) For the coming-of-age see Morris, 2006; 41. On a side note, whether the *lion-hunt* like the one depicted on the Chigi vase is a specific requisite to becoming a hoplite, is hard to say, but it is likely that military training integrated large-game pursuit.

\(^\text{17}\) Their union is corroborated by the *Cypria* fragment-one text; translation by Evelyn-White, 2000; 491. For more on Paris and Helen see Grimal, 1990; 176.
what original purpose the wine jug served – if not to simply to serve wine and kindle conversation at a symposium – we do know that it somehow made its way to an Etruscan tomb.

The Chigi vase’s narrative-scene may have well been the very first representation of the Judgment of Paris in Etruria, but by no means was it the only such visual representation of the story. Its iconography became extremely popular among the Etruscans by the 7th century BCE and pervaded all forms of art: in vase painting, in panel painting and, most frequently, on women’s adornment-mirrors – an article associated best with beautification and marriage in Etruscan culture. From the onset, the Judgment of Paris, as told in the Cypria, seems to have quickly become associated with the daily life of Etruscan noblewomen who appropriated its imagery to decorate their feminine affairs. Approximately a century after the Chigi vase was crafted (c. 640BCE), images of Paris Alexandros’ judgment are first united with images of Helen on the Boccanera plaques (c. 550-540BCE), confirming that the assumed relationship between Paris Alexandros and Helen is, indeed, the focal point in Etruscan renditions of the Judgment of Paris, which I will further discuss below. While Helen and Paris Alexandros aren’t actually prescribed their Etruscan names in Etruscan art until the 5th-3rd centuries BCE, their unification and symbolic iconography is commonly alluded to through the Judgment of Paris.

Since the Judgment of Paris and images of Helen became so popular in Etruscan art, most prevalently on women’s hand-mirrors, I propose that Paris Alexandros and Helen became revered icons to elite Etruscan women, symbolizing the virtues of marriage, and later, family, love and fertility. I will investigate how and why they became idolized by elite Etruscan women by evaluating Etruscan society and culture, as well as by juxtaposing Etruscan images of the Judgment of Paris and Helen with the Greek narratives and iconography from which they derive. I argue that elite Etruscan women felt a special connection with Helen and revered her attributes of beauty, womanhood and maternity. I also believe that Etruscan women thought Paris Alexandros was Helen’s rightful husband and counterpart,
who complemented Helen’s own virtues with his own. By examining the role, status, privileges and the
environment within which elite Etruscan women lived, I will attempt to demonstrate that their lifestyles
and mores shaped their way of thinking about Paris Alexandros’ and Helen’s union in the Cypria and
Greek iconography of the Epic Cycle. I believe that the Greek images and tales of Paris Alexandros and
Helen became Etruscanized, that is to say they were selected by Etruscan women as iconographical
exempla for the ideal couple and eventually symbolized the important Etruscan values of love, family,
maintenance and fertility.

Chapter One: Cultural Antecedents and Influence in Etruscan Art

The Reception of Greek Narrative in Etruria

Toward the very end of the 7th century BCE, near the island of Giglio, just off the coast of Etruria
proper, a mixed cargo containing a panoply of goods and commodities — Corinthian aryballoi (perfume
flasks), bronze Corinthian helmets and arrowheads, Samian amphorae, I onian cups, Greek bars of iron
and lead and copper ingots stamped with Greek letters — spilled out onto the ocean floor as the Greek
ship sunk into the depths of the Tyrrhenian Sea. 18 Without a doubt was the cargo ship headed to one of
the many emporia established along the coastline in order to meet Italian demands of Greek imports.
Seaborne trade was a lucrative business for manufacturers of goods, vessels and vases living at Samos,
Phokaia, and Corinth — the home of the Chigi Painter. 19 What forced the Greek ship to sink is unclear,
though, it is likely that it perished in a storm, or perhaps, was sunk by a botched plunder from notorious
Etruscan pirates. According to Strabo, the 4th-century BCE historian Ephorus claimed that, by the 8th
century BCE, Etruscan pirates held a thalassocracy over the Tyrrhenian Sea. 20 However, the definition of

19 Haynes, 2000; 64. Haynes suggests that the cargo ship was originally from either Phokaia, off the coast of Asia
Minor, or the island of Samos, while making a commercial stop at Corinth before sailing to southern Etruria.
Heinemann, Ltd. 1924. Torelli, Bonfante, 1986; 52.
piracy does not hold the same in antiquity as it does in modern terms; the Greeks called Etruscan seamen merchants pirates, referring to their role in regulating commerce and trade in their home territory. They encouraged and benefited from trade with their neighbors and the East, yet were also prepared to defend themselves if attacked, even becoming aggressive if absolutely necessary. Etruscan “pirates” were not violent plunderers; they were considered more like sea-trade moderators than maritime bandits. After all, the Greeks did continue to sail the Tyrrhenian Sea. Although the Etruscans allowed the Greeks to navigate the Tyrrhenian Sea, they made it clear that the sea belonged to them. Itinerant Greek prospectors never succeeded in establishing colonies north of the Bay of Naples, or even near the borders of southern Etruria, although individual Greek merchants, artisans and craftsmen seemed welcome to settle in preexisting Etruscan settlements.¹¹

One seafarer to migrate to Etruria was a Greek potter named Aristonothos.²² He is most famous for his mid-7th century krater discovered in an Etruscan tomb at Cerveteri now referred to as the Aristonothos krater, which bears his signature.²³ On one side of his eponymous krater, a deadly battle is looming between an Etruscan merchantman, heavily armed with a defensive plow, and a Greek warship, harnessed with a waterline spur used for penetrating a ship’s hull (Fig. 5).²⁴ We can assume that such naval battles broke out during trade between the Etruscans and the Greeks, and that pirates from both sides did coexist. What is most striking about the Aristonothos krater are the painted Corinthian hoplites aboard a Greek warship comparable to the hoplites on the contemporary Chigi Vase. Even more pertinent is the fact that there is a Homeric mythological-scene depicted on the krater complementing the action transpiring on its other side, just as the Judgment of Paris complemented the action on the Chigi vase. The scene is from Book IX of Homer’s Odyssey – the Blinding of Polyphemus –

²¹ Haynes, 2000; 51. Small all-Greek enclaves were established in some of the larger Etruscan cities, similar to our modern Chinatowns or Little Indias, but no evidence has emerged to corroborate a full colony.
²² Haynes, 2000; 64.
²³ Haynes, 2000; 64. Inscribed above Polyphemus’ head is written: Aristonothos epoiesen; Spivey, 2006; 56-57.
²⁴ Haynes, 2000; 63.
making it one of the earliest known representations of Greek mythology to be discovered in Etruria.

Along with the Judgment of Paris, it, too, was familiar to the Etruscans, at least iconographically, as it shows up frequently in Etruscan art. The most famous rendition of the Blinding of Polyphemus is found painted in the 4th-century BCE Tomb of the Orcus III at Tarquinia (Fig. 6). It is likely that the owner of the tomb, as well as the owner of the Aristonothos krater, identified with the myth and its characters in some way. Perhaps they were seafarers who would have heard the stories of Odysseus during their travels and experienced similar hardships as he did, wherefore, the Blinding of Polyphemus may have been a popular analogy for the obstacles that seafarers endured on the open waters, which would have left a memorable mark in his life. If this is the case, then it is safe to assume that the Etruscans adopted Odysseus as a hero, an idol and an icon, proving that the Etruscans freely idolized images of mythological characters from the earliest times. The relationship between the narrative scenes depicted on the Aristonothos krater is comparable to the relationship shared between the narratives on the Chigi vase. Just like the Chigi Painter, Aristonothos also seems to have been creating a symbiotic relationship between a mythological narrative and a scene from real life, attesting that mythological situations applied to real-life situations. For the Etruscans, mythological circumstances may have been used as symbolic analogies which their daily-life situations may have paralleled.

Together, the Aristonothos krater and the Chigi vase corroborate the notion that, by the mid-7th century BCE, the Etruscans were continuously being exposed to, and becoming increasingly familiar with the iconographical representations of the narratives of the Epic Cycle. There is no doubt that the Etruscans enjoyed images of Greek mythology; they most likely identified with some of the episodes, situations and characters, whom they began to admire and idolize.

_Etruria, Environment and Culture_

26 Haynes, 2000; 64.
Izzet states that, “Etruscan behavior, attitudes and ideas would have been shaped by the material world surrounding them.” 27 Not only does her statement imply Greek imports, especially painted narrative-vases, but also the Etruscans’ own indigenous resources. Etruria was a land of fecundity favored by the mild Italian climate. The soil was cultivatable without over-complication and was also very productive, allowing them to accrue a surplus of the most pertinent staple crops, most notably, grain, vines, olives and flax. This facilitated sustainability for the Etruscans, which allowed them to spread their concentration around to other enterprises. With food sustainability comes craft specialization and the Etruscans worked with what their surrounding environment had to offer. 28 Although the fertility of their fields will have always been the backbone of their aggregated wealth, the Etruscans, from the earliest times, began to exploit Etruria’s rich mineral resources found in various areas of their country: Latolfa hills, Colline Metallifere (the metal-bearing hills), and the Tyrrhenian island of Elba, where iron was mined exclusively by the Etruscans for centuries. 29

Characterized by a patchwork of small settlements, the earliest Etruscans, called Villanovans, emanated quickly as a complex-culture from their mineral resources and fertile lands. Their subsistence-economy was heavily dependent on agriculture, which fulfilled the requisite to practice animal husbandry. 30 The Villanovans had no need to worry about land, food or wealth, thus allowing more time to concentrate on producing a rich material culture. The material culture of the Villanovans was fairly homogeneous, discernable only by regional nuances; nonetheless, each region attained very similar paraphernalia, attested by the uniformity in goods found in their graves and tombs. 31

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27 Izzet, 2007; 24.
28 Feder, 2007; 456-457.
29 Torelli, Bonfante, 1986; 47.
30 The proto-Villanovans, the ancestors of the Villanovans, date to the late Bronze Age in the 11th and 10th centuries BCE. On the other hand, the Villanovans date to the Iron Age – the 9th and 8th centuries BCE. The distinction is burial types; there was a shift from inhumation to cremation burials in urns; consequently, both seemed to be used concurrently. Torelli, Bonfante, 1986; 49-50.
31 Torelli, Bonfante, 1986; 50.
Villanovan cemeteries and the regularity of grave and tomb goods are indicative of an egalitarian society, whose labor seems to be solely divided according to sex, not class.\textsuperscript{32}

Toward the end of the 8\textsuperscript{th} century BCE, certain tombs of the Villanovans began to show an increase in wealth; male tombs contained bronze and iron weapons, crested helmets, razors, fibulae (clothes pins) as well as pottery from Euboea and the Cyclades. Females were considered of equal status, and given the same type of burial as men; both biconic ash urns and hut urns held the ashes of men and women.\textsuperscript{33} Female tombs even seemed to contain more sumptuous goods than those belonging to men. Imported golden hair-spirals, hair combs, chains, rings, bracelets, fibulae, pendants, necklaces, bone beads, faience, perfume bottles and pyxes have been discovered. One pyxis was even carved with familiar \textit{Odyssey} scenes on it.\textsuperscript{34} This could be the earliest representation of a Greek myth on a female toilet article, which may have belonged to a lady who identified with the mythological characters in some way. It seems as though female adornment-articles were becoming common grave-offerings interred with affluent women, which suggests that these articles were becoming more commonly-used in daily life as well. Toward the end of the Villanovan Period, Villanovan culture began to show the onset of a stratified society.\textsuperscript{35} Some had more luxurious goods and commodities than others, and, because of the increase in armor and weapons, scholars have deduced that there was a burgeoning defensive warrior-class setting themselves apart from the rest; however, there is no indication that a hierarchy existed until the Archaic Period, when ancient sources briefly mention that the twelve leaders of twelve unspecified Etruscan cities annually assembled to maintain alliances, forming the Etruscan League.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{32} Torelli, Bonfante, 1986; 51.
\textsuperscript{33} Haynes, 2000; 44.
\textsuperscript{34} Torelli, Bonfante, 1986; 51. Borelli, 2004; 18-19, 22.
\textsuperscript{35} Torelli, Bonfante, 1986; 51.
\textsuperscript{36} Haynes, 2000; 135. The ancient source Haynes refers to is Livy \textit{History of Rome} 4.23, 5.1, 10.16.
From the Villanovan Period onward, wealthy women’s funerary goods contained a myriad of objects associated with women’s activities within the community, alluding to the economic roles which they assumed as daughters and mothers. Spindle whorls, spindles, distaffs, loom weights and an abundance of spools for thread all made of either bronze or amber have been discovered.\(^\text{37}\) It appears that affluent Etruscan women enjoyed the occupation and the craft of weaving, especially with the use of rich materials. Among the earliest female burials, not only did rich materials for weaving and sumptuous jewelry for personal adornment comprise much of the goods in female-occupied tombs, but also bronze figurines and furnishings, which depict representations of a family unit or a married couple, both of which become an increasingly important motif in Etruscan art and an ideal within Etruscan society. This suggests that the continuity of the household and the family was to perpetuated and maintained in the afterlife.

Although most Etruscan art from the Late Orientalizing-Period and the Early Archaic-Period of the 7\(^{\text{th}}\) and 6\(^{\text{th}}\) centuries BCE are found within their tombs, plenty of small bronze statuettes representing a household unit have been found outside of tombs, underscoring the importance of the family and married couples in real life. These small statuettes represent votive offerings comprising one male figure, one female figure as his wife, and a domestic animal symbolizing their property.\(^\text{38}\) One of the earliest examples of the family unit in Etruscan art was found entombed with its affluent female occupant. Discovered among other sumptuous furnishings in a woman’s trench tomb at Bisenzio, near Lake Bolsena, was a four-wheeled incense burner supporting a bronze bowl still containing remnants of burned resin within (Fig. 7). A small group of bronze figurines decorate the bronze support beams of the burner, representing daily-life scenes. Particularly, on one side of the burner is a three-member family unit, one might even say, a bronze-figurine family portrait. On the right, a woman is holding a water

\(^{38}\) Bonfante, Foley, 1992; 324
vessel atop her head with her left hand. She places her left hand on the genitals of her husband, who is of equal stature to herself. He is a warrior-figure with a crested helmet and a spear. He places his left hand on his wife’s right breast and reaches out, with his right hand, to their small child, dressed in a loincloth. The gestures of the man and his wife indicate fertility and procreation that unite them as a family.³⁹

A similar three-member family unit is represented on a labeled, late-7th century oinochoe jug from Tragliatella (near Cerveteri), comparable to the Chigi Vase (Fig. 8). On the reverse of the jug, a man, Ammarce, wearing only a belt with an Orientalizing cross-hatching design, offers his wife, Thesathei, a circular object, which may represent an allegorical egg as a symbol of fertility, life and/or rebirth.⁴⁰ Thesathei, dressed in a heavy, cross-hatching mantle, returns the gesture with one of her own eggs, implying a reciprocal gift-exchange between the couple. Standing directly below the egg-exchange between Ammarce and Thesathei is a small girl named Velelia, who, dressed in a similar mantle as Thesathei, holds the arm of Ammarce and waves to get Thesathei’s attention. She is presumably the daughter of the family group.⁴¹

Etruscan art reflects Etruscan culture and values. Their sumptuous grave goods attest that many Etruscans enjoyed a rich and luxurious lifestyle, which, because of their prosperous lands and their mineral wealth, they were able to afford. It seems as though, from the earliest times, Etruscan society maintained a degree of gender equality. Many men and women were allotted the same burial types, and, in fact, aristocratic women’s tombs were frequently more sumptuous than male tombs. The depictions of the family unit in art and iconography suggest that the Etruscans have always valued family and marriage, and many of their rich family tombs suggest that many of these families were prosperous.

⁴¹ Haynes, 200; 97-99.
With the advent of Etruscan vase-painting and tomb wall-painting, more evidence of the importance of a prosperous and successful family will emerge.

Chapter Two: Etruscan Narrative Painting and the Greek Influence

Painted Pots

Painted narratives in Etruscan art seemed to develop contemporaneously with the arrival of imported Greek vases. Boatloads of painted Greek vases poured into Etruria in antiquity; in fact there were more Greek vases by the 6th century BCE in Etruria than there were in Greece.\(^{42}\) Most were likely used at home or at public and private banquets and, only then, later entombed, just like the Chigi vase and the Aristonothos krater.\(^{43}\) By the beginning of the 7th century BCE, several Greek colonies had been established along the coast of central Italy, and, through close contact, the Etruscans became familiar with the Greek potter’s wheel. The potter’s wheel facilitated the execution of fine vases, which they could paint in the latest Greek geometric vogue, albeit imperfectly; then, they fired their creations in closed kilns at extremely high temperatures. The Etruscans emulated Orientalizing and geometric styles of abstract birds, animals, fish and, small scenes of epic narrative on their vases. Painted vessels quickly became associated with the wealthy, and their novel lifestyle of heterosexual banqueting. Banqueting and social drinking originated in Assyria and, through trade, was adopted by the Greeks and the Etruscans; but it is only the Etruscans who uniquely permitted their wives to recline, feast and socialize among the men.\(^{44}\) Just as the Greeks had special wine vessels for symposia, such as the Chigi vase (olpe), the Etruscans also had their own elaborately-painted vessels for their own banqueting occasions, probably to kindle conversation and entertain the proprietors and their guests.

\(^{42}\) Warren, Peradotto, Sullivan, 1984;235.
\(^{43}\) Steingräber, 2006; 124-125.
\(^{44}\) Haynes, 2000 ; 52-55.
The Krater of the Painter of the Heptachord

One of the oldest Etruscan kraters, likely to have been used to mix water and wine at a banquet, was discovered at the Monte Abetone necropolis at Cerveteri, and was painted in an early Orientalizing motif by the so-called Etruscan Painter of the Heptachord.\(^45\) Dating to the second quarter of the 7\(^{th}\) century BCE, depicted on one side of the krater are conventional Orientalizing elements: lions, horses and a peculiar pentagram. On the other side are two very large-scale figures, a couple of a man and a woman, dominating most of the vase’s surface space; this is clearly the emphasis of the krater (Fig. 9). The man wears grieves and stands with a clenched fist; he may be a warrior, similar to the couple of the warrior and his wife on the Bisenzio incense burner. To his left, the woman reaches out toward his face and fondly touches his chin. She is wearing a stylized dress of cross-hatching accompanied by a belt, and her long and rich hair is artistically emphasized. De Grummond and Haynes both postulate that this may be a mythological episode from Homer’s *Iliad* illustrating Helen beseeching her aggressive husband, Menelaus, who threatens to kill her after he reclaims her from Troy.\(^46\) If this is the case, this would be the earliest Greek mythological narrative referenced by an Etruscan artist. However, because there is no tangible evidence for their theory, I posit instead that this scene represents a more familiar scene of a loving married-couple, which, as time progresses, becomes more and more prevalent in Etruscan art. Needless to say, this krater would have made a great centerpiece for a familial banquet.

The Paris Amphora

During the Archaic Period, an Etruscan painter from Vulci, posthumously named the Paris Painter, revived the Judgment-of-Paris iconography in Etruria on an amphora – not witnessed since the

\(^45\) This name comes from an amphora in Würzburg depicting a seven-stringed kithara player accompanied by sword-wielding acrobats painted by the same painter. Haynes, 2000; 55.

\(^46\) Her gesture toward Menelaus may be a specific gesture known from Greek art and literature as the gesture of mercy. Haynes, 2000; 55. See also, De Grummond, 2006; 3.
Judgment-of-Paris scene on the Chigi vase one hundred years before.\textsuperscript{47} Influenced by the style of Ionian Greek prototypes, the Paris amphora (c. 540BCE) is executed in black-figure, encompassing the entire upper-belly of the amphora clearly emphasizing the Judgment of Paris.\textsuperscript{48} The figures are prominent and the two-framed narrative has to be read by turning the amphora around the handles to perceive the details in its entirety. The organization of the figures is comparable to Judgment of Paris on the Chigi vase; however, there are new, discernable details and elements which render the scene certainly Etruscan in style. On one side of the amphora is Alexandros, wearing a white chiton covered in diagonally-aligned red crosses; he holds a shepherd’s goad in his left hand \textbf{(Fig. 10)}. Directly behind the shepherd-prince is his herd, comprising of three very large oxen moving in the opposite direction as Alexandros. In an amusing way, they appear to be leaving, ignored and unsupervised by Alexandros, who may have just heard of the wonderful opportunity for him to marry Helen. He waves to the divine procession and greets the deities with a smile.

On the reverse of the amphora are two men. One of them is clearly the god Hermes, defined by his caduceus and his traveler’s hat. His body faces Alexandros, but his head is turned around, most likely to give his last-minute instructions to the three goddesses in tandem \textbf{(Fig. 11)}. The other man is an enigma; he sports a white beard in sharp contrast with his pure black chiton. It is he who happens to be conversing with Paris, not Hermes. Brendel suggests that this could be Zeus in disguise; however, he admits that this is only speculation.\textsuperscript{49} He may represent an Etruscan character corresponding with an Etruscan comprehension of the myth about which we are unaware. Or, perhaps he is an Etruscan himself, someone who wanted to identify with the iconography and desired to be a part of the narrative. Following the two men are the handsome goddesses Hera, Athena and Aphrodite.

\textsuperscript{47} Archaic Period: 600–480BCE; Macnamara, 1991; 30.
\textsuperscript{48} The provenance of the amphora is unknown but it was most likely entombed at or near Vulci – the home of the Paris Painter.
\textsuperscript{49} Brendel, 1995; 153.
respectively. Each goddess is quite distinct from the other. Hera is about to unveil herself before Paris. Athena, brandishing a spear in her left hand, wears an unconventional Etruscan hat, a skirt and a provocative top emphasizing her figure. She smiles at Paris and her right hand sinuously gesticulates a conciliatory greeting in an Etruscan manner.\(^\text{50}\) Behind her is Aphrodite, the only deity to appear in pure Etruscan fashion, suggesting that Alexandros is to choose this *Etruscanized* Aphrodite, who is loosely associated with the goddess *Turan* – the Etruscan goddess of harmonious love and unity.\(^\text{51}\) She walks on remarkable upturned-toe shoes, known as *calcei repandi* – a very fashionable style at this time in Etruria. Her braided hair is pulled up on top of her head in a cone-shaped bun known as an Etruscan *tutulus* – a trendy coiffure for Etruscan women during the Archaic Period.\(^\text{52}\) In an Etruscan manner, she gesticulates a greeting with her elongated and curved hand and wears a bright smile on her face. She pulls her mantle up to reveal her legs delineated through her translucent chiton, which provides an element of humor for a vessel, likely used at a banquet.\(^\text{53}\)

It is clear that the Paris Painter was attempting to emulate the Greek story; however, because of the unique Etruscan conventions in this Judgment-of-Paris rendition – the unknown third male-figure, the *Etruscanized* Aphrodite, i.e. Turan, and the employed use of Etruscan humor and joy, indicated by the smiles on the characters’ faces and their welcoming gestures – it can be easily deduced that this narrative was advertently recontextualized. The Paris Painter does not heed to the typical Judgment-of-

\(^{50}\) Etruscan gesticulation is unique and discernible. Many figures in tomb paintings show bizarre, uncomfortable and/or unrealistic hand motions and posture: twisting and turning in different directions. Sometimes they are interpreted as dance moves; sometimes they represent salutatory greetings.

\(^{51}\) Turan seems to be an original Etruscan deity before the conflation with the Greek Aphrodite, attested by her unique name, which is always spelled the same in Etruscan: *Turan*. Turan is the goddess of love in the Etruscan pantheon; however, she does not necessarily represent excessive and lust and forced desire as Aphrodite sometimes represents. She is a peaceful deity who appears when love is created. See De Grummond, Simon, 2006; 60 for more information.

\(^{52}\) *Calcei repandi* were worn by both Etruscan men and women, especially fashionable Etruscan ladies who wanted to accentuate their ensemble. We see them worn in many aristocratic banquet scenes. Bonfante, 2003; 59-62. The *tutulus* was commonly misunderstood as a hat until recently; 76.

\(^{53}\) Because of the elaborate decoration, the Paris amphora was likely meant to be seen by family and/or guests, and not for storage. I agree with Brendel that the Etruscan who painted the frieze implemented a sense of humor, which was probably added to distinguish the piece and to incite conversation; Brendel, 1995; 153-154.
Paris composition, but appropriates the myth to correspond to his or his commissioner’s desired arrangement and understanding. The Etruscans may have been highly influenced by images of Greek mythological-narrative, but, as reflected in their own art, they accommodated scenes to suit their own needs and comprehension. This will later frequently manifest on the reverses of women’s hand mirrors, especially with scenes of Helen and Alexandros, during the Classical Period, as well as one other well-preserved amphora featuring the Judgment of Paris.  

*Winged-Sandals Amphora*

Crafted approximately 70 years after the Paris amphora, a black-figure amphora was also discovered at Vulci (c. 470BCE), which I will refer to as the *Winged-Sandals amphora* after its most conspicuous characteristic (Fig. 12). On a superficial level, the amphora appears Greek, but the characters are clearly Etruscan in style and iconography. Although the artist is unknown, the painter prescribed a light-hearted approach to his rendering of the Judgment of Paris, just as the Paris painter did in his rendition. The procession is moving toward the right this time. Wearing his distinctive winged sandals and carrying his caduceus, Hermes leads the divine procession toward Alexandros. The three goddesses follow closely behind. Hermes turns his head back, as if to speak to them, comparable to the Hermes who does the same on the Paris amphora. Actively moving about and smiling gaily, the three goddesses show off their heavily-crumpled garments and kempt hair-styles. It is difficult to differentiate between the three of them. However, the second goddess whips her head back to show the goddess behind her the circular object which she holds in her elongated hand. This may very well identify the goddess as Aphrodite, holding the golden apple, although the object peculiarly resembles an egg. If this

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54 Classical Period: 480-300BCE; Macnamara, 1991; 41.
55 Borelli, Targia, 2004; 98.
56 Hermes also carries a ram around his neck. This may be a representation of *Hermes Criophorus*, Hermes the Ram-bearer, who is said to have protected shepherds - suiting for the Judgment of Paris, since Paris himself is a shepherd. Grimal, 1991; 198-199.
circular object was an egg, it may be alluding to Helen and her divine birth from an egg – a Greek story which the Etruscans admired, attested by their many representations of the myth in their art (see discussion below). In front of Hermes is a diminutive Paris; he is quite smaller than the gods. The artist of this scene may have reduced the scale of Alexandros for many reasons. His size may represent that he is just an innocent boy or that the gods are mightier than men. Or, the artist may have wanted to emphasize the three beautiful goddesses, insinuating that the Etruscanized Judgment of Paris is about feminine beauty – a vain ideal which seemed to be inextricably important to young, nubile women. Whatever may be the case, the diminutive Alexandros brandishes his shepherd’s goad in one hand and an alabastron (perfume jar) in the other – an obvious and foreboding gift for Helen.57

Due to the light-spirited and gleeful mood of the characters, the scene may be recalling the impending matrimony between Alexandros and Helen, eliciting their happy marriage – a theme celebrated in later examples of Etruscan art. Even though Helen isn’t physically in the scene, she doesn’t have to be; she is always implicitly recalled in mind by those who knew the prologue of the Trojan War. There are also subtle iconographical allusions to Helen within this scene: the egg, which the second goddess (Aphrodite/Turan?) may be holding, may represent Helen’s divine birth, as well as Alexandros’ alabastron – unequivocally a forthcoming gift for Helen. As images of the Etruscan married couples become increasingly prevalent in Etruscan art, so do scenes of the Judgment of Paris and Helen, which become favorable scenes on banqueting vessels and women’s toilet-mirrors, related to a woman’s adornment – an important prelude to a marriage ceremony.

Scholars do not know the archaeological context in which the Paris amphora or the Winged-Sandals amphora were found, besides the fact that they were discovered in Etruria and made there. However, it is likely that the painters painted these amphorae for wealthy Etruscans, which were, then,

57 Torelli, 2001; 595.
later entombed with him or her after their death. Because of their subject matter, the Judgment of Paris, and the fact that the narrative recurs on women’s mirrors, it is not impossible to assume that this amphorae belonged to Etruscan women. Inscriptions found in aristocratic tombs corroborate that aristocratic Etruscan women did actually own their own wine vessels: two *thina* (the Etruscan word for krater) were discovered in a wealthy chamber-tomb at Cerveteri eponymously named after the Dogtooth Frieze painted on the chamber walls dating to the end of the 7th century BCE. Two of them are inscribed with their proprietresses’ names; one inscription says: *mi pupai(a)s thina karkanas* and the other: *mi pupaias karkanas thina*, meaning: *I am the thina of Pupaia Karkana* – an Etruscan woman’s name. This Etruscan noblewoman owned two vessels! And her case is not an isolated incident; a similar red impasto (Etruscan ware fired at a very low temperature) from another Cerveteran tomb bears an inscription which reads: *mi squrias thina mlach mlakas*, stating that the proprietress’ name was Squria.

Lastly, a noblewoman’s tomb at Tarquinia (c. 700-675BCE) contained the usual grave goods and jewelry as any noblewoman’s burial would, plus two local impasto stands, which once supported two globular wine-vessels used during banquets for mixing water and wine. Therefore, it is not unlikely that the Paris Painter’s amphora belonged to a noblewoman, female ownership of wine vessels was not uncommon among the Etruscans, but it was surely a sharp contrast to Greek women who did not own their own wine vessels, nor were they allowed to attend Greek symposia. For example, in a Greek trial (c. 400BCE), an orator named Isaeus, tried to prove, in his defense, that the alleged adulteress on trial is not a man’s wife, but a courtesan, justifying her acts of adultery:

...No one, I presume, would dare to serenade a married woman, nor do married women accompany their husbands to banquets or think of feasting in the company of strangers, especially mere chance comers.

(Isaeus 3.14)

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58 Haynes, 2000; 9, 80-81, 96-97.
59 Bonfante, Fanthem, 1994; 249, with translation by Forester, 1983.
In the Near East, elite men reclined on *klinai* while their wives sat up on individual chairs, but Isaeus’ defense purports that honorable Greek women were not supposed to be present at the banquet at all.\(^{60}\) The idea of heterosexual reclining at banquets was purely Etruscan. I purposefully avoid using the term *symposium*, because the Etruscans did not heed to the Greek ideology of the symposium. In Greece, the symposium, was a rite-of-passage for aristocratic youths amongst the company of mature men, whereas, the Etruscan banquet, even though highly influenced by the iconography of the symposium, assimilated into Etruscan culture as an aristocratic social event for men and women.\(^{61}\) The symposium became *Etruscanized*, similar to their manipulation and recontextualization of Greek myth.

**Etruscan Tomb Painting**

By the second quarter of the 7\(^{\text{th}}\) century BCE, we begin to see a rise in aristocratic monumental tomb architecture with tumuli and elaborate chamber tombs. We also begin to see the early stages of wall painting in Etruria, especially at Cerveteri, Veii and, by the end of the Orientalizing Period, at Tarquinia, where we find the most elaborately decorated tombs. Etruscan wall painting was mainly based on painted vases, both domestic and imported; thus, Greek sympotic vessels, especially those depicting banqueting scenes, only added to the repertoire of Etruscan tomb-painting.\(^ {62}\) Beginning in the Archaic Period, in many of the surviving tomb-paintings, elite Etruscan women are shown attending a banquet. They are first seen accompanying their husbands and children – rendering the scenes as a familial banquet. Then, they are seen attending social gatherings, reclining with several men and women. In fact, of the 201 representations of women painted on Etruscan tomb walls, 58 of them are taking part in banquets (79 are dancing, four are playing instruments, three are acrobats, 13 are serving and 10 are spectators at public events). Besides dancing, the banquet was also an affair of

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\(^{60}\) Nielson, Lovén, Strömberg, 1998; 75.

\(^{61}\) The women depicted in many Greek episodes of symposia are *hetairai* – high-class escorts, or courtesans – not to be confused with *pornai* (prostitutes); Morris, 2003; 36.

\(^{62}\) Steingräber, 2006; 31-36.
noblewomen, attested by their representations tomb wall-paintings; women do not seem to be present for the sole purpose of a man’s pleasure, but as dignified and honored guests in their own right. The banqueting scenes that depict a couple and/or with their children are deliberately familial and underscore the importance of the family unit and marriage, while the scenes of several adult couples banqueting together allude to the fact that social bonding and fraternization between communities held strong.

It is very difficult to prove that the images painted in their tombs either represented real, everyday Etruscan life or ideal depictions of the afterlife; both are probably correct, and we have to assume that the paintings contain allusions to the world of the living and the world of the dead as Steingräber asserts that,

the [Etruscan] banqueting scenes, for example, can be thought of both actual events, important moments from the lives of Etruria’s aristocracy or funeral banquets in honor of the deceased, and as a kind of wishful thinking about the sort of “heroic” existence awaiting them in the afterlife.

We do, however, have one extremely important example of a banqueting scene in a non-funerary context, which also happens to be the earliest representation of a kliné scene in Etruria and the earliest to depict elite women reclining at a banquet amongst their husbands, confirming the acceptances of noblewomen as part of society and as an equal representative within her family. Originally, aristocratic Etruscans dined on thrones and chairs before couches, as is attested by the Cerveteran Tomb of the Five Chairs (second half of the 7th century BCE), where three male and two female terracotta statuettes are seated on thrones before a rock-carved dining table; this is the earliest

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63 Of the 920 men, 173 are banqueters; Scheffer, Lovén, Strömberg, 2007; 37-41.
64 Steingräber, 2006; 68.
65 Steingräber, 2006; 69.
66 Sheffer, Lovén, Strömberg, 2007; 44.
example of an Etruscan banquet (Fig. 13). But, at the site of Poggio Civitata at Murlo, a large residence emerged, revealing four terracotta narrative scenes, which once decorated the residential complex where women take a prominent position in three of the four plaques, c. 575BCE. The four plaques comprise of a horserace in action, a procession of a man and wife in a covered wagon, an assembly of noblemen and noblewomen, and a kliné banquet-scene with both sexes reclining together. In the banquet scene, eight figures and two klinai are shown; three androgynous cupbearers offer cups of, presumably, wine to the four reclining aristocrats (Fig. 14). The sex of two recliners is unclear, but the other two are unequivocally identified as a man (sporting a pointed beard) and a woman with a very-prominent bust. The woman brandishes a flower from the palm of her hand. In her other hand she holds a kyx as her cupbearer beckons to get her attention in order to refill her cup. This woman is more than just a daughter or wife of some aristocratic man; she is a quintessence of privilege and status of Etruscan noblewomen, as well as an equal in her own right among men. Perhaps the two androgynous banqueters are representations of the children of the bearded man and buxom wife, as children play a significant role in familial banqueting scenes decorating the tomb walls of the elite.

Centralized on the back wall of the Tarquinian Tomb of Hunting and Fishing is a well-preserved depiction of a familial banquet scene (c. 520-510BCE); a richly adorned couple, presumably those who were once buried within the tomb, dines and reclines together in a romantic embrace upon a kliné (Fig. 15). The woman is bejeweled and heavily draped in brightly-colored textiles; she offers her husband a wreath, about which he appears elated. A cista (toilet box) hangs above their head, demarcating the interior space and emphasizing female adornment within the scene, not a sword or a shield, which could

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67 The genders of these five figures is still hotly debated; it is posited that female heads were erroneously restored on male bodies. Haynes, 2000; 92-94.
68 Archaeologist aren’t sure which wall or what part of the wall these plaques adorned; Rathje, Annette. Murlo, Images and Archaeology. Etruscan Studies Vol. 10 Article 14: 2007, pgs. 175-184. Haynes, 2000; 120-126. That they were once painted is mentioned by Steingräber, 2006; 90. Date provided by Bonfante, Foley, 1992; 327.
70 Steingräber, 2006; 68.
have easily been added to emphasize male aspect. To the left of the couple are two seated young girls preparing festive wreaths to be hung around the pediment, as if virtually interacting with the actual space of the tomb. The girls are probably the couple’s daughters, helping beautify the interior setting around the elite couple. Similarly, in the Tomb of the Painted Vases (c. 500 BCE), a cista hangs above a loving couple in which the man fondly caresses his wife’s chin, reminding us of the woman who tenderly touches the chin of her husband on the krater of the Painter of the Heptachord (Fig. 16).

Approximately contemporary to the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing is a terracotta sarcophagus depicting a loving married couple from Cerveteri (c. 525 BCE); a joyous, smiling man caresses his sympathetic wife as they recline together on a kliné, perhaps at a banquet (Fig. 17). A similar married couple comparable to the couple in the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing and the Cerveteran sarcophagus is found on a 5th-century BCE bronze Etruscan mirror from Vulci. Reclining on a kliné, the husband lovingly wraps his arm around his wife’s shoulder as she gazes intently into his eyes with warm smile. A cista hangs on the back wall, which frequently appears in conjugal scenes (Fig. 18). The iconography of the Cerveteran sarcophagus and the mirror from Vulci is a testament to the importance of the portraiture of an affectionate married couple and heterosexual banqueting, not only at Tarquinia, but also in the art of other Etruscan cities as well—an Etruscan social norm, which goes unparalleled in Greek art.

At first, banqueting scenes illustrated in tomb paintings seem to emphasize a singular conjugal couple, but as time progressed, couples are depicted amongst the company of other couples, reconnecting the early Etruscan ideology of community involvement and interaction. The addition of this new motif in banqueting reflects the political conditions of Etruria during the Archaic Period. Even

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71 Steingräber, 2006; 96. Also see Haynes, 2000; 228.
72 Painted on another wall within the Tomb of the Painted Vases are painted amphorae with figural scenes (hence the name), not too dissimilar to such figural scenes painted on the Paris amphora and the Winged-Sandals amphora, which were, no doubt, used or displayed at a banquet.
73 Beazley, 1949; 20.
74 Haynes, 2000; 217.
though the Etruscan cities remained autonomous, aristocratic families gathered together at banquet parties to perpetuate their socio-religious and familial bonds, as well as, to keep alliances stable against an intruding Rome.\textsuperscript{75} Single \textit{klinē} scenes morph into triple \textit{klinai} scenes, becoming what the Romans eventually called their dinner-party dining room, a \textit{triclinium} – the new custom in Etruscan banquet scenes beginning in the 5\textsuperscript{th} century BCE. The best example of this is painted on the central wall of the Tarquinian \textit{Tomb of the Leopards}, c. 480-470BCE (\textbf{Fig. 19}). Three married couples recline on three \textit{klinai}; the men and women are distinguished by their contrast of light and dark skin tones. One of the wives presents her husband with a wreath, parallel to the couple in the pediment of the \textit{Tomb of Hunting and Fishing}. Another man holds out an egg to his wife – the symbol of life and rebirth – recalling the jug from Tragliatella (\textbf{Fig. 8}), which depicts Ammarce presenting his wife Thesathei with an egg, 150 years earlier than the \textit{Tomb of the Leopards}.\textsuperscript{76} Similar aristocratic triclinium-scenes occur in \textit{Tomb 5513} (c. 450BCE), \textit{Tomb of the Triclinium} (c. 470BCE), the \textit{Tomb of the Deer Hunt and Maggie Tomb} (mid-5\textsuperscript{th} century BCE), and \textit{Tomb of the Maiden} (end of the 5\textsuperscript{th} century BCE), whose banqueters also proffer eggs as a symbol of life, life-giving and/or fertility.\textsuperscript{77} The many aristocratic banquet scenes of the Archaic Period, during the 6\textsuperscript{th} and the 5\textsuperscript{th} centuries BCE, illuminate the high social position of an elite, married woman. She is ostentatiously in the view of, presumably, other important and prominent men and women of the upper echelon of Etruscan society, showing off her beauty, wealth and status as an equal contributor of her family unit.\textsuperscript{78}

\textbf{From the earliest contact between Greece and Etruria, the Etruscans adored Greek art and custom.} We know that the Etruscans were quite aware of, and highly influenced by painted Greek vases illustrating epic narratives, such as those from the Chigi vase and the Aristonothos krater. Because of

\textsuperscript{75} Haynes, 200; 135-137.
\textsuperscript{76} Steingräber, 2006; 131.
\textsuperscript{77} Steingräber, 2006; 134-159.
\textsuperscript{78} Nielson, Lovén, Strömberg, 1998; 85.
the close contact they had with painted Greek vases, there is little doubt that the Etruscans familiarized themselves with the iconography of Homer’s epics and the *Epic Cycle*. And because of the environment which shaped their culture and made them wealthy, the Etruscans were better able to comprehend, relate and adhere to the fantastic lifestyles of Homer’s Bronze-Age characters on painted Greek vases, especially aristocratic women who could afford to emulate a queenly lifestyle, indicated by their elite positions in tomb paintings. To the majority of Greeks, on the other hand, the sumptuous lifestyles of Homer’s characters would remain only a literary fantasy of lavish excess, whereas, the Etruscans had the means to make epic a reality. And for women, this reality meant assuming a lifestyle comparable to the magnificent life of Helen in Greek art, made even more splendid in Etruscan art.

*Helen of Sparta and Her Literary and Iconographical Background*

In order to better comprehend and interpret the images of Helen in Etruscan art, it is essential to provide her literary background as it is recounted by the poets of the *Epic Cycle*, since it is these stories which have inspired Greek artists to illustrate particular mythological episodes. Etruscan artists, on the other hand, were not directly inspired by the literary sources of the *Epic Cycle*, but rather by proxy, i.e. oral account or images from Greek art, as I will demonstrate.

Having been most likely carried orally via seafaring and trading with the Greeks, it can be safely assumed that the Etruscans knew of, at least, the basic and most popular stories of the *Epic Cycle*, evinced by the detail of the Blinding of Polyphemus from Book IX of the *Odyssey*, painted in the *Tomb of the Orchus III*, and the sacrifice of Achilles’ Trojan prisoners from the *Iliad’s* Book XXIII, painted in the 4th-century BCE *François Tomb*.79 However, that the Etruscans ever read and fully understood with a Greek perception the literary works of Homer, Hesiod, the poets of the *Cypria* and their Greek perception and understanding is less evident, given that the Etruscans spoke their own language and had their own

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79 François Tomb; Steingräber, 2006; 237.
alphabet. However well or not well they knew the words of these literary works and their descriptions of the characters, Etruscan women, as indicated by their own, personalized artistic renditions of the stories from the *Epic Cycle*, subscribed only to parts of the stories which were agreeable to them and with which they felt a personal connection. It seems as though elements of the *Epic Cycle* were frequently confused, contorted and/or deliberately altered to fit an Etruscan woman’s own perception of ideals and values. As we will see, this frequently occurs with Paris Alexandros and, especially, with Helen. Depicted on the reverses of many women’s adornment-mirrors, Helen is not married to Menelaus. Rather, Etruscan women almost unanimously willed Paris Alexandros to take Menelaus’ place as Helen’s rightful husband. Was this a unanimous mistake made by Etruscan women who misinterpreted the iconography of painted Greek vases? Perhaps; however, I believe that it was deliberate. By no means were the Etruscans obligated to heed to the Greek perceptions and understandings of Greek literary works and Greek iconography. Although the Etruscans loved Greek art and its iconography, they were not Greeks, and they seemed to do whatever they pleased with mythological imagery, as indicated by their own personalized and *Etruscanized* renditions of borrowed Greek myth, especially the *Epic Cycle*.

To the Greeks, Helen was obviously a polarizing character in Homer’s *Iliad*. Despite the fact that her face sent two great countries to war and caused the deaths of many innocent men, Helen was valued and admired by her in-laws, Hector and Priam, not only for her beauty, but also for her kindness, intellect and humility. Homer alludes several times in the *Iliad* that Helen was not at fault for the war. Priam himself tells her that,

...you are not to blame for this war with the Greeks, the Gods are. (*Iliad*, 3.172-173)\(^1\)

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\(^{80}\) Lefkowitz, 1986; 135.  
\(^{81}\) Translated by Lombardo, 1997; 55.
She was indeed the cause of the war, but she was not to blame. Although she was partial to her in-laws, Helen makes it clear in the Iliad that she does not belong in Troy and desires to return to Sparta where she led a dignified and pious life, as she replies to Priam:

Reverend, you are to me dear father-in-law, a man to hold in awe. I’m so ashamed. Death should have been a sweeter evil to me than following your son here, leaving my home, my marriage, my friends, my precious daughter, that lovely time in my life. (Iliad 3.18-185)\(^82\)

She also makes it evident that she does not love Paris Alexandros, according to Homer. In Book III, Paris is pulled out of his battle without forewarning by Aphrodite and sent to his bedchamber; she snatches Helen from Troy’s lofty walls, as she disguises herself as a maidservant. Helen consents to meet Paris Alexandros in his bedchamber where she sat down in a chair opposite him and says:

Back from the war? You should have died out there, beaten by a real hero, my former husband. (Iliad 3.456-457)\(^83\)

Homer does not conceal Helen’s desire to return to a life that she once loved. In fact, in his Odyssey, Helen returns to Sparta where we get a glimpse of her happiness, lifestyle and womanly virtues – all of the things that Etruscan women admired about Helen. Even though scenes from both the Iliad and the Odyssey appear in Etruscan art, it seems that the narratives from the Odyssey better resonate with the Etruscans, perhaps because of its connection to seafaring and the importance of family unity – values which the Etruscans identified with – rather than battles and war, which are rarely evidenced in Etruscan art during the Archaic Period.

However, it does not seem evident that the Etruscans knew the finest details of Homer, Hesiod or the poets of the Cypria; their mother tongue was not Greek, nor did they use the same alphabet, albeit letters were borrowed. Although the Etruscans may not have perceived Helen in the same way

\(^{82}\) Lombardo, 1997; 55.  
\(^{83}\) Lombardo, 1997; 63.
that the Greeks did, I still believe that they knew, at least, the fundamental components of these stories from which she derives, the *Epic Cycle*. This happened, not only through oral exchange from trade and contact with the Greeks, but also through Greek iconography – from the ca. 30,000 surviving Greek vases found in Etruscan tombs. Iconographical episodes of Helen and Paris Alexandros specifically recounted in the *Iliad* do not exist in Etruria. There are no Greek or Etruscan vases, or any Etruscan mirrors, which purport a somber and regretful Helen or a cowardly Paris Alexandros, as they are described above. More importantly, there are also no renditions of their union purporting a deceitful and unhappy couple. Only the contrary can be found, corroborating that the Etruscans did not comply with the Greek perception of their shameful and immoral relationship. On the other hand, Greek and Etruscan iconography of Helen from the *Odyssey* and that of her union with Paris Alexandros from the *Cypria*, frequently recur in Etruria.

In Book IV of the *Odyssey*, Menelaus and Helen are in the midst of throwing a party in their great hall to celebrate the double marriages of his son, born of a slave woman, and of their daughter Hermione, when Telemachus, and Nestor’s son, Peisistratus arrive to their palace from their journey. Menelaus’ relatives and friends enjoyed themselves to the lyre and its songs as they watched the dancing acrobats. After being bathed, oiled and dressed in elaborate garments, Telemachus and Peisistratus were seated with the king before a banquet table of fine gold and silver tableware, feasting their eyes on the bronze, gold, amber, silver and ivory which decorated the grandiose hall. While Menelaus was deliberating his stories about sailing the open waters,

Helen came down from her lofty perfumed room, looking like Artemis with her golden distaff. Adreste drew up for her an elegant chair; Alcippe brought a rug of the softest wool; and Phylo carried her silver work-basket, a gift from Alcandre, wife of Polybus, who lived in Egyptian Thebes, where the houses are furnished in more sumptuous style than

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anywhere else in the world... In addition his wife gave Helen beautiful gifts for herself, including a golden spindle and a basket that ran on wheels that were made of silver finished with a rim of gold. This was the basket that her lady, Phylo, brought in and put beside her. It was full of fine-spun yarn, and the spindle with its dark wool was laid across it. Helen sat down on the chair, with a footstool for her feet, and at once asked her husband about everything. (Odyssey 4.120-140)\textsuperscript{85}

Helen’s life in the Odyssey is, indeed, an anomaly and an exception to what we know about real women in Greece. Even though she shares in common the domestic tasks of spinning and weaving, Helen does not exemplify or epitomize the reality of most Greek women living in the Archaic Period. However, to the Etruscans, she does not have to represent the lives of real women, but she does seem to represent an example of what an affluent Etruscan woman could be, if she wanted to. The sumptuous goods in this scene recall the many luxurious goods excavated from the tombs of elite Etruscan women: golden distaffs, elegant chairs, silver, golden spindles, fine-spun yarn, dark wool. It is almost as if these deceased women, before they died, requested that they be buried as Helen would have wanted to be.

Also in this scene, it is apparent that Helen comes down from her own private adornment room, dressed lavishly to look her best for her guests; no one seems to object or question her appearance as she sits as an equal among the men. Homer’s description of Helen banqueting among men would have been warmly admired by, and familiar to, aristocratic Etruscan women, who also banqueted among men. These Homeric banqueting episodes may have reinforced a preexisting-Etruscan lifestyle, making Etruscan women feel as though their own lives closely resembled the opulent lifestyle of a mythological queen and vice versa. Elite Etruscan noblewomen, at least those who understood the emancipation of Helen at Sparta, would have had no problem finding a connection with and bonding to her; they seemed to enjoy and revere similar liberties and luxuries, feasting and fraternizing as an equal among men.

\textsuperscript{85} Translated by E.V. Rieu, 1991; 48-49.
Homer mentions several times that the palace and its splendor equally belong to Menelaus and Helen. Homer also makes it clear that Menelaus and Helen have their own personal quarters where Menelaus has his room at the back of high buildings and Helen has her “lofty perfumed room.” It is essential to note that Helen had her own private room for adornment and preparation. It is evident that Greek vase-painters took note of this, as many Greek painted-vases feature Helen sitting in a domestic setting adorning herself or being adorned by others. For example, on a labeled red-figure hydria from Rhodes, a beautiful illustration of Helen is depicted seated on a chair, narcissistically gazing at her visage, reflected in her hand-mirror (Fig. 20). Paris Alexandros approaches her from the left, wearing his conventional Phrygian cap. Although the provenance of this hydria is not Etruria, there is no doubt that Etruscan women were directly inspired by such adornment scenes of Helen at her toilet, holding an adornment-mirror.

Similar images of Helen at her toilet painted on Greek vases do, as well, appear in Etruria, corroborating that the Etruscans were exposed to, and inspired by Helen’s exuberant lifestyle. For example, illustrated on a Greek oinochoe found at Spina (an Etruscan port), Helen is seated on a chair, holding up a necklace which, presumably, came from the box resting on her lap (Fig. 21). There is no doubt that this is a gift from Paris Alexandros (standing next to her) with which to adorn herself before their wedding, as attested by the Cypria. Indeed, even if Etruscan women were completely unfamiliar with the literary sources of Homer and the other poets of the Epic Cycle, the Greek iconography of Helen’s opulent lifestyle, as well as images of her and Paris Alexandros would have been sufficient enough to formulate many of their own Etruscanized interpretations – most of which involve a happy and celebrated union between Helen and Paris Alexandros, as well as Helen adorning herself in her private chambers before their wedding.

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86 Odyssey 4.138-140; translated by E.V. Rieu, 1991; 49.
87 Beazley, J.D. Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters, 2nd edition (Oxford, 1963): 1516.81, 1697.
Homer does not describe the interior decoration of Helen’s private suite in great detail; however, I imagine that it would be just as grandly decorated as the way he describes the rest of the palace:

Telemachus and his friend opened their eyes in wonder at all they saw as they passed through the king’s palace. It seemed to them that this lofty hall of illustrious Menelaus was lit by something of the sun’s or the moon’s splendor… [Telemachus says,] “Look round this echoing hall, son of Nestor, friend of my heart. The whole place gleams with bronze, gold, amber and silver and ivory. What an amazing quantity of treasures! …The sight feels me with awe.” (Odyssey Ab. 4.43-76)

Although there is no tangible evidence that such Homeric Bronze-Age palaces, similar to Menelaus’ and Helen’s, ever existed in Etruria, we do know that rich Etruscan tombs and their intrinsic grandiose architecture did reflect Etruscan domestic architecture, most likely to perpetuate the deceased’s familiarity, comfort and lifestyle in the afterlife. Boëthius postulates that some Etruscan chamber tombs are so large that they must have once imitated Etruscan palaces, such as the Cerveteran Tomb of the Shields, Tomb of the Greek Vases, Tomb of the Tablinum, and the Tomb of the Capitols, which all contained large reception halls before branching out to their other multi-room chambers (Fig. 22). The resplendence of tomb decoration with its many sympotic vessels, quotidian paraphernalia, images of banquet scenes, furniture, doors, windows and domestic divisions is a major proponent supporting the hypothesis that the Etruscan’s multi-room funerary-chambers emulated the homes of the living, giving scholars insight to the actual interior spaces of aristocratic Etruscan houses.

Even though the only evidence which survives of Etruscan houses is their foundations and ground plans, making it difficult to reconstruct their internal appearances, there may very well be actual evidence of domestic interior decoration discovered at Cerveteri. Five painted terracotta plaques,

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89 Translated by E.V. Rieu, 1991; 46-47.
90 Boëthius, 1978; 84.
91 Heurgon, 2002; 152-161.
92 Izzet, 2007; 162.
known as the Boccanera plaques, may have once decorated a Cerveteran home before they were appropriated to the grave. Three of these plaques comprise a continuous frieze illustrating the familiar Judgment-of-Paris scene, followed by a procession of women who approach a woman adorning herself; she I believe to be Helen, or Elinai in Etruscan. Because of its subject matter, I agree with the opinion of Briguet who proposed that the Boccanera plaques may have decorated a building within the city of Cerveteri before being deposited in a tomb. Spivey further suggests that such plaques may have even been used to decorate reception rooms. That these narrated plaques, the Boccanera plaques, once decorated a woman’s private adornment chamber – recalling Helen’s “lofty perfumed room” – is not inconceivable, given the nature of the scene.

Etruscan Panel Painting: The Boccanera Plaques

“About one hundred paces from the Tomb of the Reliefs, the Signori Boccanera in 1874 discovered a tomb of very small size, with a doorway only just large enough for a man to creep through, which, nevertheless, contained objects of rare interest. Lying, some on the rock-hewn benches, which flanked the tomb, some on the floor, were found five large tiles of terra-cotta, about 40 inches long, by 22 wide, painted with figures of very archaic character, and which bore traces of having been originally attached to the walls as decorations, just as the chamber in the royal palace at Nimroud were lined with marble slabs covered in reliefs. Two bore a figure of a sphinx, and appeared to have been placed one on each side the doorway. The other three formed a continuous series, and seemed to have occupied the inner wall.”

In June 1876, George Dennis, a British explorer and amateur Etruscologist in the mid-19th century, personally saw the Boccanera plaques (c. 550-540BCE) in the possession of the Boccanera brothers from whom he learned of their discovery, before they ended up in the British Museum where they are today (Fig. 23). According to Dennis, two terracotta plaques were lying on benches which flanked the tomb,

93 Steingräber, 2006; 122.
95 Spivey, 2006; 89-90.
96 Dennis, Hemphill, 1985, 257.
97 Dennis, Hemphill, 1985; forward. Date provided by Brendel, 1995; 156.
while the other three lay on the floor. He continues to suggest that they show traces of evidence that suggest that they were once attached to the walls of the tomb, presumably. This may be the case. However, the fact that they were found lying on the tomb floor supports my hypothesis that they probably came from elsewhere and used in a daily-life context before their appropriation as tomb decoration; thereafter, they may or may not have been affixed to the tomb walls.

Another set of five painted plaques, known as the *Campana plaques* (c. 530-520BCE) – forming a continuous frieze of mythological scenes and an uninterrupted, red-and-white tapestry-style dado – were discovered in a similar tomb in the same Cerveteran necropolis as the tomb where the Boccanera plaques were discovered (Fig. 24). Structural details and an unscrupulously-cut edge suggest that these plaques had once adorned an interior space before being deposited in the tomb.  

Non-sepulchral buildings at Cerveteri are known to have been originally decorated with painted terracotta plaques depicting mythological scenes, corroborated by the excavations on the city plateau. In 1940, a group of fragmentary terracotta plaques were discovered within the city limits bearing mythological scenes of Gorgons, Perseus and a panel depicting the remnants of bare-footed soldiers carrying shields (Fig. 25). Excavated at the Vigna Parrocchiale urban area of Cerveteri, more fragments of painted terracotta plaques, with designs of polychromatic meanders and rosettes, once decorated an aristocratic dwelling, similar to the residential complex at Poggio Civitate.  

Non-sepulchral, decorative terracotta plaques were not limited to the Etruscan city of Cerveteri; the aforementioned terracotta plaques from Poggio Civitate decorated the walls of this aristocratic residential structure (see above). The terracotta plaques from Poggio Civitate, interestingly enough, happen to share in common the intertwined guilloche design found on the upper band of the Boccanera plaques. Perhaps this unique design defines an interior space and was a popular motif used to decorate the borders of interior walls. It seems that the

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100 Spivey, 2006; 86-90. Haynes, 2000; 212.
Boccanera plaques and the Campana plaques are the only extant examples of painted terracotta slabs found in tombs at Cerveteri, whereas, within the precincts of the city, more and more painted terracotta remnants emanate as excavations continue. Because the Campana plaques show signs of removal from another location and a very similar artistic-style to the Boccanera plaques, it seems likely that the Boccanera plaques, too, came from the city and was later deposited in a chamber tomb at Cerveteri.

The iconography depicted on the Boccanera plaques is very feminine in subject. It consists of two opposing narratives: one of the Judgment of Paris and the other of the Toilet of Helen, as first proposed by Briguet.\textsuperscript{101} In Etruria, the Judgment of Paris and the Toilet of Helen become very popular among elite women’s toiletries, especially mirrors, from the 5\textsuperscript{th}-3\textsuperscript{rd} centuries BCE. Apart from the fact that all of the artifacts that depict the Judgment of Paris and the Toilet of Helen – vases, the Boccanera plaques and women’s toiletries – come from Etruscan tombs, there is no evidence to suggest that any of these artifacts have any initial funerary context, but were only appropriated to the grave when their owners, who used these artifacts during their lifetime, died. This ensured that their owners may continue to use them in the afterlife. I argue that the Boccanera plaques decorated a private room in an elite residence, more specifically, a noblewoman’s adornment quarters, similar to the “lofty perfumed room” mentioned in the Odyssey, Book IV.

There is a total of five Boccanera plaques, each approximately 40 inches high; however, two of them do not belong in the continuous narrative scenes of the Judgment of Paris and the Toilet of Helen.\textsuperscript{102} These two plaques depict framed sphinxes, most likely painted by the same hand as the narrative scene, but clearly don’t align with any of the other plaques found within the tomb; they may have been another commissioned piece owned by the proprietor/proprietress or occupant of the tomb. The other three plaques comprise of three courses: an upper guilloche motif, the figural narrative-frieze

\textsuperscript{101} Briguet, Bonfante, 1986; 156-157.
\textsuperscript{102} Spivey, 2006; 209.
and the lower red-and-white tapestry-style dado. Together, the three panels narrate the Judgment of Paris and the Toilet of Helen. Even though the composition of the three plaques is in their correct position, the narrative may have once continued with several more plaques which, either did not survive, or were looted before the Boccanera brothers arrived. Perhaps they remain in situ on the city plateau.

There are nine figures: two men and seven women. Together they stand on a red-and-white dado comprised of vertical stripes, which may represent painted tapestries suitable for decorating an interior space. The Etruscans were known to paint tapestry-style motifs on their tomb ceilings and walls to imitate the interior décor of their homes; this can be seen in the Tomb of the Leopards (Fig. 19). At the extreme left of the composition, Alexandros is handsomely illustrated with a large, robust build; he joyfully welcomes his guests and politely gesticulates and smiles at his visitors. He is wearing a suitable shepherd’s hat and clutches a branch to suggest that he is in the countryside. Wearing his peculiar traveler’s hat, Hermes approaches Alexandros, but this time he brandishes a herald’s staff crowned with a bull figurine, instead of his typical caduceus. Following closely behind Hermes are the three divine goddesses in tandem; Athena, Hera and Aphrodite. Each goddess strides forward, carrying personal attributes. Athena, dressed in an embroidered red tunic and plain-black Etruscan calcei repandi, leads the goddesses as she carries a wreath in one hand and her identifying attribute, her spear. Presumably, Hera comes second; she wears red calcei repandi and a monochromatic red tunic which she lifts up to reveal her white-linen chiton. She carries a pomegranate branch with three small fruit buds. Aphrodite ushers forward, carrying a similar pomegranate branch with seven fruit buds – perhaps insinuating that she is the most fruitful, promising a childbearing wife and a legacy. She wears a red tunic, which she provocatively lifts to reveal her bare legs and her more fashionable and stylish red

103 Steingräber, 2006; 123-124.
104 Brenzel, 1995; 264.
105 Bonfante, Swaddling, 2006; 12.
calcei repandi, than those of the other two goddesses. The procession has an inherent sense of lightheartedness and humor – evinced by Hera and Aphrodite who try to win over Alexandros by lifting up their dresses – similar to the Judgment-of-Paris scene on the Paris amphora, where each figure smiles and greets Alexandros warmly. Alexandros, Hermes and Athena comprise the first plaque. Depicted on the central plaque are Hera and Aphrodite, behind whom there is a natural break in the narrative; then a third figure, on the same plaque, proceeds in the opposite direction away from the Judgment of Paris. Even though she is depicted in the same space as Hera and Aphrodite, she is clearly the rear of an all-female procession toward the right end of the whole composition.

The all-female procession at the right is not unanimously agreed upon to the same extent as the Judgment-of-Paris scene at the left. There have been various interpretations. First and foremost, I agree with Spivey who postulates that the break between the two processions is advertent and implies a gap in space, time and subject.106 Alexandros’ branch is indicative of an outdoor setting for the entire left procession; however, the attributes carried by the all-female figures in the right procession indicate and indoor setting where a toilet and adornment scene is taking place. The rear female figure of the right procession (sharing the same plaque as Hera and Aphrodite) is dressed in a simple, red chiton and a short, black mantle. She proceeds toward the third plaque barefoot and carries a pyxis (toilet box), which was often used to carry feminine toiletries, jewelry and cosmetics. The next two female figures are veiled and elaborately dressed in long chitons. One female wears a red-striped chiton and a black mantle to match her black Etruscan calcei repandi shoes. The other wears a white-striped chiton and a red mantle to match her red calcei repandi shoes to differentiate and individualize these characters. These two women bring forth alabastra (perfume containers) to the last female figure in the composition. They do not seem to be generic maidservants due to the care taken to elucidate their idiosyncratic features. The last woman is wearing a long, red chiton with a black-and-white stripe

106 Spivey, 2006; 90.
running down the center. She is adorned with simple bracelets and seems to be fastening a long, sinuous belt around her waist, as if she were getting ready. She stares intently beyond the edge of the plaque, almost as if she was looking into a mirror while she adjusts her belt. This scene is clearly an adornment scene – a prominent female figure is preparing herself while her three female attendants come to her with her perfume bottles and her pyxis. Although many scholars have varying interpretations of whom these women represent, I agree with Briguet, who was first to interpret that this was a scene of Helen at her toilet. This is where Spivey’s interpretation of the time-and-space gap becomes important. On the left is the Judgment of Paris where Alexandros presumably chooses Aphrodite in exchange for marriage to Helen. The artist of the Boccanera plaques created a natural narrative break moving the narration forward in time, where we see Helen adorning herself for her marriage to Alexandros.

The wedding of Alexandros and Helen is mentioned in the Cypria fragment one, the same fragment which tells the story of the Judgment of Paris:

Then Alexandrus builds up ships at Aphrodite’s suggestion... Alexandrus next lands in Lacedaemon and is entertained by the sons of Tyndareus, and afterwards by Menelaus in Sparta, where in the course of a feast he gives gifts to Helen. After this, Menelaus sets sails for Crete, ordering Helen to furnish the guests with all they require until they depart. Meanwhile, Aphrodite brings Helen and Alexandrus together, and they, after their union, put very great treasures on board and sail away by night...From there he sailed to Troy and celebrated his marriage with Helen.107

The Etruscans may or may not have known the specificities of the Cypria, nonetheless, there are elements of the Cypria which the Etruscans, especially elite Etruscan women, would have recognized as an identifiable Etruscan value and those in which they adhered to. This had a great impact on figural and narrative art, especially scenes of Alexandros and his celebrated marriage to Helen brought together and harmonized by the goddess of love (Aphrodite or, more likely, Turan, the Etruscan goddess

107 From Cypria fragment one (Proclus’ Chrestomathy). Translation by Evelyn-White, 2000; 491.
of harmonious and familial love), as attested by the Boccanera plaques. Just as important as their “celebrated marriage,” the poem tells of “gift-giving” by Alexandros to Helen, which may be happening on the Boccanera plaques as well: three female attendants make their way toward Helen bearing a pyxis and two alabastra. This recalls the Winged-Sandaled amphora where were see Alexandros holding an alabastron in one hand, which is probably a bridal-gift for Helen (Fig. 12). Because they proceed to the right, in the same direction as Alexandros, they could be seen as intermediaries bringing Alexandros’ gifts to Helen. Gift-giving was just as dynamic of a practice between the Etruscans as it was between the Greeks.

The question remains why Helen’s union with Paris was celebrated, not only on the Archaic-Period Boccanera plaques, but by the many scenes of Alexandros and Helen depicted together as a happy couple on Classical-Period Etruscan adornment-mirrors (see below)? Why is her marriage to Menelaus never celebrated in Etruscan art, since Homer’s Odyssey explicitly states that Helen was never happy with Paris Alexandros in Troy, and that she missed Menelaus and her luxurious life at Sparta? First, I argue that, since there is no text recalling a marriage ceremony between Menelaus and Helen, the scene does not exist in art. Second, it seems plausible that the Etruscans were completely unaware of the details in the literary works, or they just simply picked and chose what was agreeable to them and what was not. However, what is evident is that the Etruscans were exposed to copious Greek images of the union between Helen and Paris Alexandros. And if their union in Greek art was supposed to signify their adulterous relationship in a Greek context, it is doubtful that this perspective would have been understood only by visual observation. The Etruscans, most likely, instead saw a happy and handsome Paris Alexandros coupled with a lavish and beautiful Helen. For example, illustrated on a Greek hydria discovered near the Black Sea, a magnificent Helen is seated on an elaborate throne with a footstool (Fig. 26). She is heavily adorned in sumptuous garments, a necklace and a diadem. Paris Alexandros greets her from the side. He smiles at her and places his right hand over her shoulder. Helen smiles
back and extends her right arm out to him to caress his back. Two beautiful attendants gather around them, waiting nearby with a fan, a bowl and a jug. Two Erotes fly above. Although the provenance of this hydria is not Etruria, Greek scenes similar to this would have led Etruscan women to believe that the marriage celebrated between Paris Alexandros and Helen was everything but unhappy and immoral, but rather, quite the opposite. Gifts, smiles, and fond embraces between the couple are apparent in Greek art both in and out of Etruria. It is quite easy to understand that Etruscan women may have confused the true Greek implications of Paris Alexandros’ seduction and Helen’s adultery for a marriage based on kindness happiness, rich gifts and beauty. As for the literary sources of their relationship, the Cypria insinuates that Helen did, indeed, love Alexandros. Whether this love was inherently true or immoral lust, it does not specify.\textsuperscript{108} However, if Etruscan women did know the story of their union and marriage from the Cypria, it is plausible that they still understood their relationship as a healthy one.

Finally, Greek and Etruscan images of Paris Alexandros and Helen as a couple are enhanced and complemented by images of Paris Alexandros in Judgment-of-Paris scenes. Because of his pious behavior and uncomplicated and leisurely life as a shepherd from Mt. Ida, Paris Alexandros became an idol and icon to elite Etruscan women in his own right. It is feasible that his own pastoral, free-spirited and self-sustaining lifestyle, unencumbered by hostility and warfare, would have been thought to be ideal to the Etruscans, who strove to maintain a peaceful society within Etruria.\textsuperscript{109} Depicted on painted Greek vases, Paris Alexandros frequently appears to be a virtuous, skilled and amicable young man – commendable by any viewer. For example, on a labeled red-figure Greek kylix discovered at Vulci, a typical Judgment-of-Paris scene is taking place. However, this time, ensconced in his flock of sheep and goats, a young Paris Alexandros is sitting on a rock, rejoicing in the sound of his lyre, which he peacefully

\textsuperscript{108} Sappho, writing in the 6\textsuperscript{th} century, illustrates in Fragment 16 that it was the power and persuasion of love – perhaps induced by Aphrodite – between Helen and Paris which compelled her to leave behind everything she knew without objection. English translation of fragment 16 provided in Lombardo, Stanley. Sappho: Poems and fragments. Hackett Publishing: 2002; 31.

\textsuperscript{109} There is no evidence of internal warfare.
thumbs (Fig. 27). There is little doubt that such images found in Etruria would have seduced the imagination of Etruscan women and influenced the Etruscan artist of the Boccanera plaques, who illustrates Alexandros as a spirited and joyful character.\textsuperscript{110}

Several images of Menelaus emanate in Etruria as well, painted on imported Greek vases. However, images of Menelaus in Etruria tend be rather negative, and this displayed negativity sets the precedent for the antagonistic Menelaus in Etruscan art. For example, on a red-figure Greek kylix discovered at Tarquinia, Helen is illustrated sprinting away as fast as she can, while a hostile and enraged Menelaus takes up his sword and pursues her, as if about to murder her (Fig. 28). Such scenes clearly indicate that Helen and Menelaus do not represent a happy and healthy marriage. From the iconography found in Etruria alone, there is little reason to believe that Etruscan women ever thought of Helen and Menelaus as an iconic couple or a symbol of marital virtue and morality. By the 4\textsuperscript{th} century BCE, similar scenes appear in Etruscan art as well. On a labeled Etruscan bronze-mirror from Cerveteri dating to the 4\textsuperscript{th} century BCE, the notorious episode of the Rape of Cassandra by Ajax during the siege of Troy is contorted and Etruscanized by the Etruscan artist; Ajax is replaced by Menelaus (Menle) and Cassandra is substituted by an exquisite rendition of Helen. Judging by the melancholy expression on her face, Helen is in anguish as she clings to the Trojan statue of Athena (the Palladion) for her dear life, while Menelaus thrusts his sword toward her body. Thetis (Thethis) and Turan (Greek Aphrodite) try to stop him from killing her, while Ajax (Ainas) and Polyxena (Phulphsna) stand by to watch (Fig. 29).\textsuperscript{111} The Etruscan artist of this scene, following the tradition from Greek vase painting, did not see Menelaus and Helen as a happy couple, contrary to their life together in the Iliad and Odyssey. However, if Etruscan women did know their relationship from the literary sources, then it is possible that they disliked Menelaus because it was not Menelaus who initially won over Helen’s heart; for she was wooed by

\textsuperscript{110} On the other side of the kylix, Alexandros and Helen quickly run off together.
\textsuperscript{111} Bonfante, Swaddling, 2006; 20. De Grummond, 2006; 93.
proxy. In the absence of Menelaus, Agamemnon had to woo her for his brother. It was never Helen’s choice to marry Menelaus; after all, they had never even seen each other. Agamemnon brought with him Menelaus’ greatest gifts, presumably for Helen’s stepfather and her two brothers, Castor and Polydeuces, according to Hesiod in his Catalogues of Women and Eoiae.\(^{112}\) On a labeled Etruscan hand-mirror from Perugia, Menelaus (Menle) tries to woo Helen (Elina) with a vanilla necklace. However, Helen wants nothing to do with him or his necklace and quickly beseeches Turan, as if to plead to whisk her away (Fig. 30). There is a definitive sympathy for Helen in Etruscan art when she appears in scenes with Menelaus, whereas when she is seen with the younger and most-handsome Alexandros, for example, she exudes joy and often radiates with a gaze of bliss, exemplified by the Barbarini mirror (Fig. 31).

Because Paris Alexandros was renowned as a pious shepherd-prince from Mt. Ida living a happy, uncomplicated and traditional life, and because the Cypria states that an actual wedding is celebrated between him and Helen, the iconography on the Boccanera plaques becomes clear. As I mentioned earlier, Alexandros on the left appears strong, handsome and full of joy. Time is then progressed by means of the advertent spatial gap on the central plaque, and then we have the outcome of Alexandros’ judgment. Helen is on the far right adorning herself for the wedding at her toilet. She is strapping on her sinuous belt, which Bonfante and Swaddling believe is a symbol of marriage.\(^{113}\) Her wavy, rich hair, which Hesiod refers to many times in his Catalogues of Women and Eoiae, is highly conspicuous as it flows down to her knees.\(^{114}\) The three female attendants are most likely Helen’s personal maidservants, who are bringing to her the rest of her toilet. Alexandros and Helen are harmoniously composed on the

\(^{112}\) Hesiod. Catalogues of Women and Eoiae fragment 68a lines 13-28; translated by Evelyn-White, 2000; 192-195.
\(^{113}\) Bonfante, Swaddling, 2006; 13.
\(^{114}\) Hesiod. Catalogues of Women and Eoiae; translated by Evelyn-White, 2000; 193-199.
Boccanera plaques in a parallel manner, each one joyously carrying out the events which will unite them as a successful couple.\textsuperscript{115}

Due to the plaques' figural narrative of the Judgment of Paris and the Toilet of Helen, and because it is likely that the plaques' original location was situated within the city of Cerveteri and not within the tomb in which they were found, I believe that the Boccanera plaques did, indeed, decorate a feminine space – most likely a space for female adornment – within an elite Etruscan residence. However, the importance of the Boccanera plaques is not which space they decorated, but the symbolic iconography of Alexandros and Helen. Why would an elite Etruscan have these painted plaques commissioned in this manner? Because the iconography represents the Etruscan idea of a successful marriage, which we now know was a very important motif in Etruscan art and real life, centered on the family household and family unit. Images of Helen of Sparta, because of her alluring beauty, her luxurious lifestyle and her relationship to the pious and gift-giving Paris Alexandros, became the ideal lady for Etruscan women to idolize. Helen has everything, and aristocratic Etruscan women could afford to imitate her lifestyle, making epic and romance come true. There is no doubt that elite Etruscan women wanted to emulate her lifestyle and her marriage to Alexandros in an Etruscan context. It is probably that these women were affluent adolescent girls, who were ready to ponder marriage and a prosperous, familial future. Marriage was extremely important social value in Etruscan society, and the iconography of Alexandros, Helen and their marriage, seemed to symbolize a successful marriage. As illustrated on the Boccanera plaques, Alexandros and Helen not only represented romance and fantasy, but they are also Etruscan symbols of a happy couple and representatives of an ideal marriage.

\textsuperscript{115} Bonfante, Swaddling, 2006; 13.
Alexandros’ marriage to Helen is never elaborated upon within the extant texts of the *Cypria*. No detailed account is ever given; however, it is likely that their marriage would have been thought of as a traditional Etruscan wedding with elite, aristocratic traditions. In the minds of Etruscan noblewomen, Helen would have been prepared for the marriage ceremony within the confines of her toilet room or private chamber, not dissimilar to her “lofty perfumed room” described in the *Odyssey*. In fact, Helen mentions her “bridal chamber” as she addresses Menelaus and her guests at their banquet table (*Odyssey 4.234-264*). Similar to the Toilet-of-Helen scene on the Boccanera plaques, Helen’s maidservants would have brought many toilet articles and lavish gifts to her private chamber for her to sift through before choosing the perfect combination for her adornment. Along with the two alabastra and the pyxis, which she is presumably receiving on the Boccanera plaques, Helen would have been overwhelmed with choices of dress, hairstyles, diadems, necklaces, earrings, fans and, above all, hand mirrors to use during her adornment. Images of the Judgment of Paris and the Toilet of Helen permeate the reverses of Etruscan mirrors. In 1843, the authors of *Etruskische Spiegel* estimated that, of the known Etruscan mirrors, at least twenty-two of them are representations on Etruscan variations of the Judgment of Paris; however, there are probably many more.\(^{116}\) Eighteen hand mirrors are inscribed with the name Alexandros (Etruscan Alechsentre, or more often Elcsntre) and the name Helen appears twenty-three times on hand mirrors (Etruscan Elinei, or more often Elinai).\(^{117}\) Others are not inscribed, but can easily be identified by the iconography – the attributes of the characters and setting.

Although the Boccanera plaques may be the only extant piece of Etruscan art which shows the Judgment of Paris and the Toilet of Helen as a sequential narrative, Etruscan mirrors purport that both, unique renditions of the Judgment of Paris, and images of Helen were desired as decorative scenes on

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\(^{116}\) Lord, 1937; 602.  
\(^{117}\) Bonfante, Bonfante, 2002; 193, 195.
toilet articles, as are depicted on a few Praenestine cistae and many adornment-mirrors. No one mirror is incontestably decorated with these two scenes shown together as a sequential narrative; however, there are a few peculiar examples of conflated iconography — the Judgment of Paris merged within a female toilet-scene — unequivocally linking Judgment-of-Paris scenes with women’s bridal adornments in Etruscan art. This clearly demonstrates that the Judgment of Paris and female adornment do, in fact, correlate, rendering the iconography on the Boccanera plaques valid. Many of these “hybrid” adornment-mirrors depicting both, a rendition of the Judgment of Paris, and a female toilet scene, may be miniature and condensed versions of the more fully-expanded narrative illustrated on the Boccanera plaques, which feature the Judgment of Paris and the Toilet of Helen. These mirrors testify to the validity of the Boccanera plaques’ iconography, as well as the importance of marriage and the use of Alexandros’ and Helen’s union to symbolize marriage.

The Toilet of Helen and the Judgment of Paris

By the end of the 6th century BCE, a few decades after the adornment scene on the Boccanera plaques was painted (c. 550-540 BCE), Etruscan tombs began to yield tangible evidence on the importance of female adornment. Not only were affluent Etruscan tombs still being used as a repository for personal goods, house wares, and jewelry, but also hand mirrors became an increasingly common grave offering. The appearance of Etruscan hand mirrors in the archaeological record was sudden; however, they began to appear physically and concurrently with many of the tomb wall-paintings in Etruria, which feature heavily-adorned elite Etruscan couples reclining and banqueting with their close acquaintances, or even more intimate scenes, similar to the couple painted in the Tomb of Hunting and

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119 Izzet, 2007; 50.
Fishing and the couple in the Tomb of the Painted Vases (Fig. 15 and Fig. 16), as well as the 5th-century BCE hand-mirror from Vulci, now at the Vatican Museum (Fig. 18). It has been estimated that between 3000 and 4000 Etruscan hand-mirrors – the majority made of bronze – have been discovered in Etruria, dating from 530BCE-200BCE. Very few Etruscan mirrors have been discovered outside of Etruria, suggesting that mirrors were not manufactured for export. Frequently engraved or incised on the reverses are decorative motifs, comprised either of ornamental elements, figural scenes or popular mythological episodes. The latter became the standard by the 5th century BCE. However, toilet scenes, bathing scenes and/or adornment scenes were also in vogue. Whether the images of these women, who are making their toilet, are mythological, allegorical, realistic, self-representations or idealized portraits, there is no doubt that vanity was a part of Etruscan feminine-culture, corroborated by the ownership of adornment-mirrors. The hand mirror was primarily the province of elite Etruscan women, evinced by archaeological contexts and also representations of mirrors in Etruscan art. They were often given as gifts for special occasions. Such is the case for Tite Cale, who “gave his mother this mirror as a gift” (Tite Cale: atial: turce: malstria: cuer). This phrase is inscribed on the obverse of a hand mirror and on the reverse is an illustration of Turan and her young lover Adonis (Etruscan Atunis).

According to De Grummond, the types of assemblages within which mirrors were interred were extremely wealthy and rich in female paraphernalia, i.e. jewels, necklaces, alabastra, hairpins and spindle-whorls. There are a few exceptions, however; of the extant thirteen mirrors with proprietary inscriptions, five belong to men.

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120 Izzet, 2007; 44, 50. The dating of mirrors provided by Hooker, 1990; 347.
121 Carpino, 2003; 4.
122 Izzet, 2007; 44.
123 Although it is quite possible that less-affluent Etruscan women used mirrors, there is no archaeological evidence to corroborate this notion.
124 Hooker, 1990; 347. And Izzet, 2007; 73.
125 Van der Meer; 1995; 26.
However, it is the mirror itself which evinces a majority of female utilization and ownership. Several mirrors are illustrated on the reverse of Etruscan mirrors themselves; these mirrors are being used by women for women. For example, on the highly-detailed mirror, inscribed with the identifications of the characters, Zipna, seated on the left, is, either looking into a hand mirror she is holding in her left hand, or proffering the mirror as a special gift to Alpan and Achvizr – the couple embracing in the center (Fig. 32). Thanr, seated on the right, proffers a small bird – probably a symbol of good fortune for the embracing couple – and Alpan holds a symbolically-special egg out to Achvizr. This scene could be a commemoration of a union or marriage celebration – an appropriate setting for an instrument of beauty.

Beauty and adornment were clearly important to Etruscan women, and the adornment of a woman seemed to be the prelude to marriage. An adornment scene illustrated on an everyday, utilitarian implement, such as a hand mirror, may have also symbolized a pivotal rite-of-passage – an important life-marker worth commemorating for a young woman. This recalls the Chigi vase and its rites-of-passage, which the artist thought worthy of commemorating for a young Corinthian youth who transcends certain stages of life, particularly the rite of marriage indicated by the Judgment-of-Paris scene on the central frieze of the Chigi vase. Great care was taken to elaborate and transform the female body for this marriage, again a rite-of-passage and the next step in a woman’s life.

Not only did elite Etruscan women enjoy the processes of adornment, but the purpose of their adornment seems evident enough, that they are to be viewed by others. The bride was, not only seen by her husband, but the entire celebration of marriage appeared to be a public event. The representation of the marriage ceremony is very rare in Etruscan art; however, the representations which do survive demonstrate that the ceremony was, indeed, a public affair, attended by family

126 De Grummond, 2006; 164.
members and guests. A fragmentary relief from Chiusi depicts a wedding taking place (c. 500BCE). Two attendants hold a fringed canopy over the bride and groom, as well as over the priest or minister of the ceremony. To the left of the ceremony is an aulos player and two other spectators in celebration (Fig. 33). The marriage ceremony was, perhaps, not as evident in Etruscan art – contrary to the popular representations of the wedding adornment and banqueting scenes – due to the fact that it was probably just a small part of the entire celebration. Just like today, most marriages are planned well in advance and the preparations done before “the big day” is extremely significant to the bride. After many hours of dressing, make-up, hair-styling and rehearsal, the ceremony commences, only lasting for a short period of time. Then the celebration, banqueting and consummation of the marriage take place – the most memorable moments of marriage. On a cippus relief from Chiusi (c. 490BCE), a couple is shown preparing for their wedding (Fig. 34). The groom is seated on the left, about to be donned with a garment by his attendant behind him. He raises his right hand, either to greet his bride, or his gesticulation may be a ceremonial rite. His bride is seated on the right, facing him; she is about to be donned with a garment by her attendant, and similarly gesticulates back to her husband. On the other sides of the cippus are scenes related to their marriage preparation: the wedding procession, a dance and a banquet scene.

Although a mirror lacks sufficient space to harbor all the events occurring during a marriage celebration – in opposition to a four-sided cippus – one unlabeled mirror may corroborate that a celebratory feast followed suit after the preparations for marriage were completed. On a skillfully-decorated bronze mirror, a ravishing Etruscan woman is sparing no expense during her adornment, which I will refer to as the Ravishing mirror (Fig. 35). She is lavishly having herself adorned by her all-female entourage with luxurious articles: beads, necklaces, pendants, bracelets, charms, earrings,

127 Bonfante, 1994; 250-252.
128 Borelli, Targia, 2004; 59.
ribbons and sumptuous garments. Two of her female companions are stylizing her hair, while another is about to apply perfume from her alabastron to her mistress. Izzet compares the bride to a Christmas tree; rightly so.129 Winged figures – perhaps representations of love, such as Erotes figures – encompass the adornment scene, bearing gifts of alabastra, bracelets, ribbons and ornamental trinkets. This illustrious scene recalls the scene from Hesiod’s Catalogues of Women and Eoiaei, which recounts the many suitors who come to the house of Tyndareus in order to court Helen and woo her over with lavish gifts (Catalogs of Women and Eoiaei, Fr. 68; 20-74).130 At the top of the mirror is a banquet scene with figures fraternizing, drinking wine and listening to a reclining aulos player. Helen’s opulent lifestyle depicted on many imported Greek vessels may have been the impetus to design such a scene. The Etruscan proprietress of the mirror may have seen the many scenes of Paris Alexandros giving Helen sumptuous gifts in Greek art, and, thus, willed this adorned woman, whether a real portrait or an allegorical figure, to follow suit. Whoever this woman may be, there is little doubt that she is undergoing the processes of marriage-preparation to be seen and adored by her audience and her husband, just like Helen’s adornment before her marriage to Alexandros.

Because Helen was often portrayed on painted Greek vases sitting on an elaborate chair and adorning herself or being adorned by others in a domestic setting, as indicated by her imagery on the red-figure hydriae from Rhodes and Juz Olba (Fig. 20 and Fig. 26) and the red-figure oinochoe from Spina (Fig. 21), it can be safely assumed that Etruscan women thought Helen’s sumptuous adornment took place in her bridal suite, similar to Homer’s description of her “lofty perfumed room.” Many Etruscan mirrors show women undergoing adornment. And several of these mirrors appear to be representations of Helen herself, also known as the Toilet of Helen by several Etruscan scholars, as has already been described above on the Boccanera plaques. On a labeled mirror from Todi, now at the

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129 Izzet, 2007; 70-71.
130 Translation by Evelyn-White, 2000; 195-199.
Naples Archaeological Museum, a beautiful young woman, not too dissimilar from the woman on the 
*Ravishing mirror*, is being heavily adorned by an equally beautiful nude woman who occupies the central 
space of the mirror (Fig. 36). The nude woman seems to have just taken off her diadem and is now 
placing atop the head of the woman being adorned. Although the identifying inscriptions of the 
characters are fragmentary, it can be safely deduced that the nude figure is Turan, due her prominent 
position on the mirror, her beauty, her nudity and the fact that she is gracefully placing her diadem on 
the adorned woman's head with her right hand, while she gently touches the woman’s chin with her 
left. The veiled woman in the background may be Hera, comparable to the veiled Hera on the Paris 
amphora. One of the other two women preoccupied with the adornment may be Minerva, but she is, 
nevertheless, ambiguous to point out. Three other figures occupy the right side of the mirror. One is 
distinctly an older, bearded man, but the sex of the other two figures is also ambiguous. The 
inscriptions are, for the most part, incomprehensible; however Van der Meer attests that, on the right 
side of the mirror, one of the inscriptions reads –*enth*, and another reads –*anth*. Van der Meer asserts 
that –*enth* has to be part of the name *Alcsenthre*, and –*nath* is part of the inscription *Snenath*.

*Alcsenthre* is clearly Alexandros, and *Snenath* means “companion” in Etruscan.\(^{131}\) Because it is likely that 
Alexandros and Turan are two of the eight characters on the mirror, it has been proposed by Bonfante 
that the woman-in-adornment is evidently Helen, rendering this scene as the Toilet of Helen, for which 
the mirror is named after – the *Toilet of Helen mirror*.\(^{132}\) Helen is undergoing her adornment – quite 
similar to the woman on the *Ravishing mirror* – during her betrothal to Alexandros, standing nearby. 
Helen was indubitably an idol and icon representing beauty, adornment and marriage.

Whether a purely Etruscan addition to the *Epic Cycle*, or details of the *Cypria* now forever lost (it is 
highly possible that, one day, Etruscan iconography may help us piece together missing sections of the 

\(^{131}\) Van der Meer, 1995; 154. 
\(^{132}\) Warren (Bonfante), 1964; 40.
Epic Cycle), Helen’s beauty was admired and her marriage-adornment was imitated by affluent Etruscan women – at least superficially on hand mirrors, but most likely in real life as well. Comparable scenes exist with the names of, presumably, real Etruscan women, as well as many other unlabeled toilet scenes. For example, on a labeled 4th-century hand mirror, now lost, Turan affixes a diadem to a woman’s head during her adornment, symbolically designating her as a bride-to-be (Fig. 37). Her inscription identifies her as a woman named Malavisch – an Etruscan name which does not correspond with any mythological character. Some scholars think that this is a personal name of a real Etruscan woman, others believe that the name may be the Etruscan word for “bride;” nevertheless, all Etruscologists agree that she is to be identified as a bride at her toilet. Malavisch is undergoing a complete make-over, most likely, before her wedding ceremony. Malavisch sits on a throne, while Reschualc (left) is about to append a blooming flower to her hair, while Turan adjusts Malavisch’s diadem, just as she did on the Toilet of Helen mirror. Could Turan also symbolize an Etruscan deity of marriage? It would not be inconceivable to symbolically depict a goddess of love, unity, beauty and, perhaps, marriage as the adorer of a real bride. Today, it is no different when a Hollywood actress is asked, “Who are you wearing?” She may reply, “I’m wearing de la Renta,” i.e. “I have been adorned by Oscar de la Renta,” or, in this case, “I have been beautified by a benevolent goddess for my wedding day, and my friend Reschualc helped, too.”

Although other adornment mirrors similar to the Ravishing mirror and the Malavisch mirror survive, the iconography of Helen at her toilet seem to prevail as an Etruscan woman’s symbolic emblem of beauty, adornment and marriage. For example, depicted on the similar Cetona mirror is, indubitably,

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133 Beazley, 1949; 10.
134 De Grummond, 2006; 159-160.
135 Carpin, 2003; 56. Reschualc also has no correspondence and may also be the name of a real Etruscan woman, perhaps the bride’s friend or family member.
another Toilet-of-Helen scene, now in a private collection (Fig. 38). The mirror is unlabeled, however the iconography is clear. Helen is seated on an articulated throne, gazing intently into a hand mirror. Strikingly parallel to the Malavisch mirror and the Toilet of Helen mirror, Turan dons Helen’s diadem with one hand and gently touches Helen’s chin with her other. Alexandros, wearing his attributive Phrygian cap, is standing behind Turan and smiles at Helen with admiration. The figure admiring Helen to the right could represent a number of possible characters. I speculate that this character is an Etruscan variation of Hermes (Etruscan Turms). The figure wears a traveler’s hat, sports a fine pair of wings and there is no indication that this is a female. His wings do not necessarily have to be on his sandals; in Etruscan art, Hermes is often depicted sprouting wings from his shoulders. The Toilet of Helen mirror and the Cetona mirror purport to show Helen being readied by Turan for her union with Alexandros, judging by his presence in Helen’s adornment scenes.

Although these two scenes are explicitly Toilet-of-Helen scenes, they both harbor subtle elements of the Judgment of Paris. On the Toilet of Helen mirror, Turan is most likely the adorner of Helen and the woman behind her is probably Hera. Van der Meer suspects that the bearded man at the far right is Alexandros (Alchsenthre); however I believe that the figure to the right of Turan, may, in fact, be the real representation of Alexandros. Although this figure appears effeminate, he or she is not wearing a necklace or earrings like all of the other unambiguously-female characters. The chest is also unarticulated and undefined, dissimilar to the breasts of the others. The figure’s headdress may not be a feminine diadem, but a victory crown. If this is Alexandros, then the name Snenath (“companion”) inscribed above becomes clear, for the older, bearded man next to him would be Alexandros’ companion, whose characteristics are strikingly parallel to those of the mysterious, bearded figure in the Judgment-of-Paris scene on the Paris amphora. However, on the Cetona mirror, not all of the goddesses

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136 Gerhard, 1865; 33.
137 De Grummond, 2006 ; 123-124.
are present. Nonetheless, Hermes, leader of the divine triad in Judgment-of-Paris iconography, is present. So, are the scenes on these mirrors Toilet-of-Helen scenes with Judgment-of-Paris elements, or are these conflated Judgment-of-Paris scenes emphasizing Helen’s forthcoming role in the story in these Etruscanized, pseudo-mythological renditions? In either case, the outcome is the same.

Evinced by the Toilet of Helen mirror and the Cetona mirror, the conventional setting of the Judgment of Paris, as seen on the Boccanera plaques, the Paris amphora and the Chigi vase, has changed. On Etruscan mirrors of the 4th-3rd centuries BCE, the procession in tandem has vanished, along with Hermes, and the characters are not in any unanimous order. For example, discovered in one of the richest tombs in the Peschiera necropolis near Todi, one of the finest and most intriguing Judgment-of-Paris scenes is illustrated the reverse of a labeled bronze-mirror dating, called the Todi mirror, c. 300BCE (Fig. 39). The tomb also contained a female skeleton, a pair of gold earrings, a pendant, a bronze patera, and an alabastron imported from Egypt – a testament to the female ownership of the mirror, rendering Judgment-of-Paris scenes the province of Etruscan women. A young Alexandros (Alcsntre) is seated on an intricate throne. He does not display any of his canonical attributes and resembles more of an affluent Etruscan man than a foreigner. Facing the same direction, Hera (Uni) stands to Alexandros’ side and gesticulates toward a heavily-draped Minerva (Menrva), wielding her spear. Turan draws up the rear and disrobes herself to reveal her provocative, nude body. She wears an opulent necklace and a diadem different from those of Hera and Minerva, setting her apart. There is a surprising male figure present in the scene named Teurs who has been interpreted by De Grummond as Teukros, an early Trojan king long before the time of Paris Alexandros or his father, King Priam. He is an older, bearded figure who carries a staff and leans on the back of Alexandros’ throne. He recalls the additional older, staff-wielding gentleman who accompanied Hermes and the three goddesses to Paris on the Paris amphora (Fig. 11, see discussion above). Could this be a representation of the same figure, specific to

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138 De Grummond, 2006; 90. Van Der Meer, 1995; 151.
an Etruscan interpretation? Or, perhaps he is related to Alexandros’ bearded “companion” depicted on the *Toilet of Helen mirror*. Unparallel to the *Toilet of Turan mirror*, Alexandros looks passed all three goddesses, as if they didn’t exist, and waves his hand to a very young and pretty girl who carries a grandiose fan behind Turan. Her description says *Sneneth Turns*, “Companion of Turan.”

This rendition of the Judgment of Paris is purely Etruscan. Etruscan women seemed to enjoy the story of the Judgment of Paris and recounted individualized variations of the theme on the reverses of their adornment-mirrors.

The closest conventional, yet still highly *Etruscanized* Judgment-of-Paris scenes occur on two labeled hand mirrors. The first bronze mirror is older, dating to the 4th century BCE: a youthful Alexandros (*Elcsntre*), wearing a Phrygian cap and a tunic – exceptionally similar to the representation of Alexandros on the *Cetona mirror* – joyfully scrutinizes the beautiful goddesses before him. Hera (*Uni*), elaborately bejeweled and sporting a kempt hairstyle, leads Turan and Minerva (*Menrva*) to Alexandros. Turan is accentuated, not only indicated by her central position within the scene, but she is also erotically nude, reminiscent of the Turan on the *Toilet of Helen mirror*, who wears only sumptuous jewelry (Fig. 40). Her diadem is allusive, as many toilet and adornment scenes employ the use of a diadem to indicate the bride-to-be. In this case, it may very well allude to Helen as the bride-to-be, as we have seen on the *Toilet of Helen mirror* and the *Cetona mirror*. On the second labeled mirror from Tarquinia (3rd century BCE), Alexandros (*Elachmentre*) sits half-nude on a rock wearing his customary Phrygian cap and carries a staff in his left hand, comparable to the staff-wielding Paris on the Paris amphora (Fig. 11). Taking the place of Hermes, and wearing only a diadem atop her head, Turan leads a nude Hera (*Uni*) and a conservative fully-clad Minerva (*Menrva*) to Alexandros (Fig. 41). The Judgment of Paris is an obvious selection for these hand mirrors, these instruments of beauty.

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139 Bonfante, Bonfante, 2002; 205.
Although Alexandros’ role as arbitrator in Judgment-of-Paris scenes never goes out of vogue, he does assume other roles on Etruscan bronze mirrors, especially roles celebrating his beauty, pious virtues and his victory of winning Helen. Depicted on the Latin-inscribed *Victoria mirror* from Praeneste, shepherd-prince Alexandros (Ilixentros) is sitting in a peaceful, pastoral environment with his sheepdog by his side, his shepherd’s goad in hand and a heifer in the exergue, emphasizing his rustic and idyllic lifestyle (*Fig. 42*).¹⁴⁰ His cap rests behind the nape of his neck, exposing his head to winged *Victoria*. Victoria strides gracefully toward Alexandros, as she prepares to adorn his head with a victory crown. It is conceivable that the proprietress of this mirror regarded Alexandros as an amicable, pious, hardworking, yet leisure-enjoying man, who would be commended by all. Similarly, depicted on the *Throne mirror* – one the most renowned, complicated and thought-provoking mirrors from Vulci – Alexandros receives another victory (c. 325BCE). The mirror is divided into two registers and depicts an unusual and heavily-*Etruscanized* panoply of mythological characters, both conflated Homeric characters and some other figures, who are uniquely Etruscan (*Fig. 43*). The focal point of the lower register is none other than Helen (Elinai), seated in the center on her sophisticated throne. To her immediate right is a young, boyish Menelaus (Menle), whom she disregards to shake hands, in a conciliatory way, with his older, more astute-looking brother, Agamemnon (Achmemrun). To her right is a provocatively-nude Alexandros with his sheepdog nearby. He is turned three quarters back to receive his victory crown from winged *Mean* (Greek Nike).¹⁴¹ The meaning of this scene is unclear and hotly debated. However, what is clear is that Alexandros gets the girl; not only is he the victor, but Helen seems to be wearing a Phrygian cap – a testament to her desire to be Alexandros’ wife. Helen seems to

¹⁴⁰ Date unknown, but judging by the location where it was made (Praeneste) and the style, I would suggest late 3rd century BCE.
¹⁴¹ De Grummond, 2006; 66, 156.
have reconciled with Agamemnon, welcoming him to her court. Menelaus is deemphasized and seemingly unimportant; he appears to be only an auxiliary component to the scene.  

Not only was Alexandros touted in Etruscan art as victor, but his image was sometimes also adulterated and, perhaps, sexually exaggerated on bronze mirrors, mostly likely to emphasize his intrinsic beauty. On a 4th-century BCE labeled *Alexandros mirror*, now at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, Alexandros (*Alixentre*) is so greatly embellished, that he appears to have been almost deified by the artist, who may have been commissioned by a proprietress who found Alexandros quite appealing (Fig. 44). Alexandros is clearly the focal point of the scene. He is depicted completely nude, save a cape and clasp. An unlabeled, winged figure – either Eros or Hermes – grabs Alexandros and brings him to a dignified and noble Helen (*Elina*). Alexandros offers his hand, which Helen warmly accepts. Behind Alexandros stands a young and nude Menelaus (*Menele*), who carries a spear, an alabastron jar and a peculiar strigil. His gifts are too late, for love seems to already have been established between Alexandros and Helen. The woman seated opposite Helen is unlabeled; however, a likely candidate is Turan, Helen’s tutelary deity and the personified symbol of the love shared between Helen and Alexandros.

*Helen and Alexandros as the Etruscan Model for a Successful Family and Marriage*

The Etruscans had a strong predilection for Greek mythology, especially for stories within the *Epic Cycle*; however, they were not always fond of the tension, negative relationships and pessimistic outcomes of events and episodes in Greek myth. Therefore, the Etruscans compensated Greek myth by reinterpreting myth and its intrinsic iconography in their own way. In Etruscan art, they mimicked only what pleased them, whatever they felt a connection with and/or whatever was relevant to them. If a
mythological scenario was not in accordance with their understanding, desire or even their sense of humor, it was their prerogative to “rectify” it, i.e. Etruscanize it. The Etruscans went beyond assimilation of Greek myth, mythological characters and Greek deities. Using Greek myth and Greek imagery as a template, the Etruscans illustrated episodes and characters according to their own ideals and values. Such is the case for the conclusion of Alexandros’ and Helen’s relationship in Etruscan art, and, perhaps, Etruscan mythology.

According by the reverses of Etruscan mirrors, Helen and Alexandros do end up together as a happy couple, and these mirrors do not appear to be merely isolated incidents. Comparable to the Alexandros mirror, which shows an Eros-figure (or Hermes) bringing Alexandros and Helen together, several other Etruscan mirrors also depict their union, often initiated by Turan. For example, depicted on the heavily-battered, labeled Union mirror, Turan introduces (or reintroduces) Helen (Elina) and Alexandros (Elchsntre), who are both sitting in profile, vis-à-vis (Fig. 45). The expression on Alexandros’ face is indeterminate due to the corrosion of the mirror; however Helen appears to be gleaming with joy. It is interesting to note that, not only are Alexandros and Helen wearing matching armbands – similar to the armbands of the bride on the Ravishing mirror –but Helen holds an adornment-mirror in her hand. Could these be bridal gifts from Alexandros? After all, an engraved hand-mirror would make a fine bridal gift for the bride-to-be in Etruscan culture. Beazley speculates that this is a depiction of the episode in Iliad Book VI, where Aphrodite tries to reconcile Paris’ and Helen’s relationship; however, Bonfante and De Grummond argue that this is more likely to be the introduction of Paris to Helen in Sparta. However, I suggest that, although it is likely to have been modeled after a Greek illustrated episode from the Epic Cycle, this scene is meant to be more generic, representing their union as a

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144 Two Judgment-of-Paris parody mirrors are known. One depicts Elcsntre lifting his chiton in front of the divine triad who happens to be judging him. The other is almost a perfect rendition of the Judgment, save Turan’s male genitals, rendering her a hermaphrodite; De Grummond, 2006; 90-94.
145 A labeled mirror from Perugia, now at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, depicts a very similar scene: Carpino, 2003; 27, Plate 35.
146 Bonfante, 1997; 36 and De Grummond, 2006; 93, 95.
symbol of a loving couple, brought together by harmonious love in the personified form of Turan. I propose that this may be a depiction of Helen and Alexandros preparing for their wedding. The imagery is strikingly parallel to the bride and groom illustrated on the Chiusi cippus, who also happen to be undertaking their wedding preparations, while they sit in profile, vis-à-vis (Fig. 34). This would account for Helen’s adornment-mirror – a symbol of marriage in Etruscan iconography.

On the unlabeled *Corpus Christi mirror* from Praeneste (c. 400BCE), a theme-related mirror shows another three-figure composition comprised of Alexandros, Helen and Turan, (Fig. 46). Although the identifications of the figures are not inscribed, the scene is interpreted to be of Alexandros and Helen visited by Turan, according to Gerhard.147 Alexandros, wearing only a himation around his waist, is seated on the left in what appears to be an outdoor setting, indicated by the intricately-designed free-standing column in the background and a floral-decorated arrangement on the ground line. Helen stands beside Alexandros with her arm around his shoulders. Both of them seem to be conversing with Turan, opposite them. Turan appears to be letting down her mantle from her head, as if she has just arrived. Alexandros’ conciliatory hand-wave and smile corroborate this notion. It seems as though the Etruscan proprietress of this mirror has supplemented the story of Alexandros and Helen beyond what can be inferred by the Greek literary sources; she is continuing and advancing-in-time the outcome of Alexandros’ and Helen’s relationship in a positive and harmonious scenario. Although the scene doesn’t represent any direct episode from the *Epic Cycle*, maintaining harmony, friendships and alliances was an Etruscan value, as is attested by many of their populated banquet scenes, such as the aristocratic banquet at Poggio Civitate (Fig. 14), the triclinium scene in the *Tomb of the Leopards* (Fig. 19), as well as the aforementioned alliance of the twelve cities of the Etruscan League.

147 Gerhard, 1865; 27, Plate CCCLXXX. Several other scenes scenes with Alexandros on Etruscan mirrors show a free-standing column in the background as a location device for Troy. See Plate CLXXXII.
Even the greatest of enemies could not escape reconciliation in Etruscan art. For example, on the Reconciliation mirror of the 3rd century BCE, sworn enemies have been stripped of their battle regalia and are, instead, lightheartedly fraternizing (Fig. 47). The scene is divided into two couples. On the left is Achilles (Achle) and Chryseis (Crisitha) and on the right, Helen (Elinei) and her husband Alexendros (Elchsntre). Helen is fondly leaning against Alexendros, as they both attentively listen to Achilles. Achilles holds his infamous shield, but also wears a Phrygian cap, similar to Alexendros’. Could Achilles have reconciled with his enemies, perhaps coupling with Chryseis after Agamemnon took Briseis away from him, and switched sides, joining the Eastern-prince Alexendros and his happily-wedded wife, Helen? Regardless of the true intentions of the artist (or his/her commissioner), couples continue to be a prominent theme and important value in Etruscan art, as well as marriage, evinced by Alexendros’ and Helen’s union on the Corpus Christi mirror and the Reconciliation mirror.

Alexandros was doubtlessly idolized by many proprietresses of decorated hand-mirrors, not only the mirrors which depict the Judgment of Paris, but also the many mirrors which place him in the limelight, such as the Victoria mirror and the Alexandros mirror. It is not inconceivable that Etruscan women saw him as the paragon for an ideal man. Countless representations of Paris Alexandros in Greek art depict him with many virtues, which are easily admired by the Etruscan women who saw him: young, pious, handsome, skillful, kind and peaceful. Helen, on the other hand, was equally idolized by elite Etruscan women. Called Elinai in Etruscan mythology, Helen was assimilated into Etruscan culture as the paradigmatic role-model of everything a noble Etruscan woman should be. According to Homer and Hesiod, her lifestyle was regal and luxurious, and her demeanor, actions and speech were confident, never contradicted. In Greek art, Helen represents the quintessence of beauty and luxury. In Etruscan art, she represents these characteristics, with the addition of love and marriage. However, these are not the only virtues for which Helen seems to have been exalted by Etruscan women. Attested by many
examples in Etruscan art, it appears that her divine birth from an egg was also extolled as a symbol of family, family unity and fertility.

*The Etruscan Egg and Its Relationship with the Egg of Helen*

Family and family unity have always been an aristocratic Etruscan value ostensibly displayed in Etruscan art as far back as the 8th century BCE, evinced by the Bisenzio, which depicts a family unit comprised of a husband, wife and child ([Fig. 7](#fig7)). Family unity is also attested in the archaeological record beginning with the Orientalizing period, when elaborate chamber tombs superimposed by tumuli were constructed to house, not only the immediate family, but also the extended family and, then, entire generations of families.148 Among many of these large family-unit tombs are found several depictions of eggs, whether they are hollowed eggshells as part of the assemblage of burial goods, eggs depicted on funerary gifts, or eggs illustrated in the many tomb wall-paintings, usually seen being given from one spouse to another as a symbolic offering. For example, in the 6th-century *Tomb of Isis* at Vulci – a rich chamber tomb filled with sumptuous goods and male and female relatives – an incised and elaborately-painted ostrich egg was discovered as part of the panoply of luxurious funerary goods.149 On the aforementioned Tragliatella oinochoe (see discussion in Chapter One, [Fig. 8](#fig8)), discovered in a 7th-century BCE chamber tomb, Ammarce and his wife, Thesathei are exchanging eggs, while their daughter, Velelia, holds onto her father’s arm and reaches out to her mother to bring her parents closer together. Painted in the 6th-century *Tomb of the Lionesses*, and the 5th-century *Tomb of the Leopards* ([Fig. 19](#fig19)), *Tomb of the Funerary Bed*, and *Tomb of the Maiden*, several figures, both reclining men and women, ostensibly hold eggs in their hands. In the *Tomb of the Maiden*, an elaborately adorned elite woman, wearing a gold necklace, bracelet, large earrings, a gold diadem and an intricately-designed mantle,

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148 Haynes, 2000; 71-73.
149 Hynes, 2000; 58-59, 154-155. Ostrich eggs have also been found at Populonia, Vetulonia, Quinto Fiorentino, Tarquinia, Cerveteri, Rome: Bonfante, 1986; 67.
reclines with her husband. She turns toward him, smiles and gracefully offers him an egg. Similarly painted in the 4th-century *Tomb of the Shields*, another sumptuously-adorned woman named *Velia*, wearing a semitransparent chiton, an embroidered mantle, a diadem and a golden ring, sits next to her husband, *Larth* (Fig. 48). She faces Larth, intimately touches his shoulder with her left hand and offers him an egg with her right. On a nearby *kliné* sits Larth’s mother and father, *Ravnthu* and *Velthur*, attesting to the importance of family unity. The “Etruscan egg” seems to be symbolically connected with the family, especially married couples. Scholars unanimously conclude that the egg in Etruscan art is the symbol of life-giving and fertility. However, furthermore, I also argue that an associated significance of the “Etruscan egg” is unity, both of couples and the family.

The “Etruscan egg” also appears on the reverses of Etruscan bronze mirrors. For example in Figure 32, to reiterate, two figures, *Alpan* and *Achvizr*, lovingly embrace, while *Zipna* (left) holds a mirror up to her visage. The most peculiar object within the scene, however, is what *Alpan* proffers *Achvizr*: an egg. De Grummond postulates that this scene is full of allegories conveying the messages of good fortune and well-being to celebrate and commemorate a new marriage. If this is the case, which I strongly believe it is, the egg is a perfectly feasible symbolic gift to offer one’s partner-in-matrimony to consummate their life together, fertility between the couple and also unity of their new family.

Comparatively, on the unlabeled *Lausanne mirror* dating to the 4th century BCE, a smiling Hermes, wearing his traditional winged traveler’s hat, presents an egg to a seated young man, in profile, facing a young, ornate woman, who holds an adornment-mirror (Fig. 49). Their composition is strikingly similar to the composition of Alexandros and Helen on the *Union mirror*, where Helen, too, holds an adornment-mirror, symbolizing marriage (Fig. 45). The youthful, beardless man extends his hand to

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150 Steingräber, 2006; 174-175.
151 Haynes, 2000; 308-312. The long inscription above their heads is Larth’s eulogy describing his accomplishments, his titles; it also identifies the figures in the scene.
153 De Grummond, 2006; 164.
receive the egg from Hermes. Could Hermes be bringing an egg – a symbol of life-giving, fertility and unity – to a couple who is about to get married? In fact, the iconography of Hermes presenting an egg to a married couple recurs in Etruscan art, both on bronze-mirrors and on Etruscan vases. And scholars have attributed its significance to an exclusively Etruscan episode from Etruscan mythology. The premise of the scene is Greek in origin, known informally as the “Birth of Helen.”

According to the Cypria fragment eight, Nemesis gave birth to Helen, having copulated with Zeus, after having attempted to evade him by shape-shifting into avian and sea creatures. In his 5th century BCE play Helen, Euripides was among the first to propose that Helen was the adopted daughter of Leda, whose union with Zeus, in the form of a swan, produced an egg, from which Helen was born.

In his Bibliotheca, Pseudo-Apollodorus, too, recounts Helen’s birth from an egg:

But Zeus in the form of a swan consorted with Leda, and on the same night Tyndareus cohabited with her; and she bore Pollux and Helen to Zeus, and Castor and Clytaemnestra to Tyndareus. But some say that Helen was a daughter of Nemesis and Zeus; for that she, flying from the arms of Zeus, changed herself into a goose, but Zeus in his turn took the likeness of a swan and so enjoyed her; and as the fruit of their loves she laid an egg, and a certain shepherd found it in the groves and brought and gave it to Leda; and she put it in a box and kept it; and when Helen was hatched in due time, Leda brought her up as her own daughter.

Although Pseudo-Apollodorus was compiling his library of mythological stories in the 2nd-1st centuries BCE, it seems as though the Etruscans were aware of the story of Helen’s divine birth, as attested in Etruscan art. The delivery of Helen’s egg became a popular theme in Etruria; however, the Etruscans modified and regenerated their own version of the account, as they did with many Greek myths.

Depicted on the Lausanne mirror, Hermes delivers Helen’s egg to Tyndareus (left) and Leda (right),

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154 De Grummond, 2006; 125-128.
which is a version of the story uniquely found only in Etruscan art. The fact that Helen’s egg is being brought to Leda testifies that the Etruscans didn’t believe her to be Helen’s biological mother, but, rather, assumed the role of the foster mother, who “brought her up as her own daughter,” as Pseudo-Apollodorus has stated. Interestingly enough, a small goose beneath Leda’s seat flaps her wings. Carpino posits that this bird may refer to “the bird responsible for the family’s gathering” – Nemesis, who also happened to be an Attic fertility deity. Because of the probable allegories of fertility, i.e. the egg and the goose, and because of Tyndareus’ ostensibly youthful appearance and Leda’s symbolic adornment-mirror, it is not inconceivable to assume that Helen is uniting the couple, helping to form a new family unit as an addition to the family. Helen’s egg represents unity in this scene, comparable to the symbolism of the “Etruscan egg” depicted on Etruscan vases, e.g. the Tragliatella oinochoe, in Etruscan tomb-painting, as well as incised on bronze mirrors.

In fact, two Etruscan vases and six mirrors corroborate that the delivery of Helen’s egg had significance as a symbol of unity. Bonfante proposes that the delivery of Helen’s egg reflected the importance of the family in Etruscan society, since Helen’s egg gathered together the members of her foster family. Her proposal is exemplified on a labeled mirror from Porano (near Orvieto), c. 350-325BCE, where the emphasis is placed on Helen’s egg and the assembly of her family (Fig. 50). Helen’s egg isn’t delivered by Hermes this time, but rather Helen’s brother, Castor (Castur). Castor, fifth from the right, presents the egg to an ostensibly older, bearded Tyndareus (Tuntle), seated on his curule (folding chair). An unknown woman, Helen’s other brother Polydeuces (Pultuce), and Leda (Latva),

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158 Carpino, 1996; 33-37.
159 Carpino, 2003; 47.
160 De Grummond, 2006; 126. Castor and Pollux were Helen’s brothers in some accounts. Homer mentions them as her brothers in book III when Helen is on the wall; however, he fails to mention who their mother truly is. Pseudo-Apollodorus gives both accounts: that Helen, Castor and Polydeuces were born from Leda, and that other authors attributed her parentage to Zeus and Nemesis.
seated at her throne, gather around to admire the egg. De Grummond asserts that this is the moment of anticipation where the egg is about to hatch, due to the chariot of dawn’s rising in the upper exergue. It may be of value to note that the mirror’s borders are rich in fertile vegetation, which could be allegorical imagery, symbolizing the egg-of-Helen’s other role in fecundity, prosperity and abundance. There also is a small goose depicted in the upper exergue, which, I suggest, is an allusion to Nemesis and her attributes of fertility and the bringer of life. The presence of Helen’s egg is not uniting Tyndareus and Leda for the first time, as was occurring on the Lausanne mirror, but rather, her egg is reinforcing their already-established relationship, uniting them once again as a mother and a father, since it is clear that their two sons have already grown up. Turan, nude and bedecked in fine jewelry, is also present (second from left). Her appearance probably symbolizes the familial love which Helen will bring to her foster parents and her brothers, who seem to be quite fond of her in many images in Etruscan iconography. It should also be mentioned here that there is a proprietary inscription in the border of the mirror indicating that this mirror belong to a woman named Ceithurneal. The grave in which this mirror was discovered contained other bronze objects, all of which provided the same proprietary inscription and inherently belonged to Ceithurneal: an incense burner, an oinochoe wine-jug and a patera.

Helen, once again, brings her family together on another theme-related, labeled mirror from Perugia, c. 350-325BCE (Fig. 51). Her armed brothers, Castor (Kastur) and Polydeuces (Pultuke), flank the central scene, where Helen (Elenei), nude (probably to emphasize her character and beauty), leans on the throne of a regal figure identified as Lamtun, the very-early Trojan King Laomedon. Most scholars who have interpreted this scene believe that this male figure is a representation of Tyndareus,

161 Only five names are inscribed above the heads of the figures; the female figure next to Turan is peculiarly unlabeled. However, there is an inscription on the mirror which indicates that this mirror belonged to Ceithurneal. Could this be an image of Ceithurneal?
162 De Grummond, 2006; 191.
163 Van der Meer, 1995; 133.
the children’s father, since there seems to be no reference or correlation between King Laomedon, Castor, Polydeuces and Helen. Scholars unanimously agree that this is an error on the part of an inattentive artist.164 Down in the lower exergue of the mirror is the visage of a beautiful woman. Could this be an image of Leda, completing Helen’s family portrait? Peculiarly, there is also an egg-shaped mark on Helen’s torso.

Although this scene is not an illustration of the “Birth of Helen,” the setting of Helen’s family gathered around her may indicate that Helen, whether in the form of an egg, or an adolescent woman, is still a symbol of family unity, kinship, child-bearing prosperity, and familial love. Helen and her egg arguably parallel the symbolism of “the Etruscan egg” found in so many Etruscan contexts. I speculate that the Greek accounts of the “Birth of Helen” were assimilated into Etruria and were modified and Etruscanized to represent many of the symbolic allegories of the “Etruscan egg,” which had already been well-established by the 7th-century BCE, attested by the egg iconography incised on the Tragliatella oinochoe. By the 4th century BCE, the iconography of Helen’s egg on Etruscan mirrors may have had the same connotations as the “Etruscan egg” – life, life-giving, fertility and unity.165

The Birth of Hermione Mirror

The Etruscan ideals and values of family, marriage and love are greatly amplified on one last labeled mirror featuring Alexandros and Helen. The iconography represented on the mirror is purely and uniquely Etruscan, corroborating that at least one Etruscan noblewoman wished to bend her way the events of the Epic Cycle. Dated to the early 5th century BCE, the reverse of the mirror depicts a birthing scene, a life-giving scene. However, this time it’s not Helen’s birth, but her daughter Hermione’s (Fig. 52).166 After having just come out of labor, Helen recuperates on her kliné and holds

164 De Grummond, 2006; 191-192; Van der Meer, 1995; 107-108.
166 Carpino, 2003; 24.
swaddled Hermione (*Ermania*) against her breast. Similar to her visit on the *Corpus Christi mirror* (Fig. 46), Turan comes by for a visit to offer the gift of a blooming flower to the new mother and father; however, the father is not Menelaus, but Alexandros (*Elachsantre*)! Alexandros sits by Helen’s side, conversing with Turan, the goddess of familial love, who initially united them as a couple. It is improbable that the representation of Alexandros in the place of Menelaus is a fallacy; Alexandros is clearly young, peaceful and handsome, and the presence of Turan legitimizes the marriage and relationship between Helen and him.

According to the *Cypria* fragment nine, Helen did, indeed, bare Alexandros a son, Aganus, Helen’s fourth child! The same passage mentions Helen’s third child, Pleisthenes; however, it does not mention who fathered him.\(^{167}\) Hermione, daughter of Helen and Menelaus according to Hesiod’s *Catalogue of Women and Eoiae* fragment seventy, was Helen’s second child. Her first child was the son of Ares, Nicostratus.\(^{168}\) Although the only child of Helen’s to appear with an inscription in Etruscan art is Hermione (*Ermania*), it is likely that the Etruscans were quite aware of Helen’s productivity as a bountiful bearer of several children – a giver of life. Helen was fertile; therefore, it is probable that images of Helen, or Etruscan *Elinai*, symbolized a reverence for fertility, which was an ideal greatly valued in Etruscan society, exemplified by an Etruscan 5th-century BCE limestone ash-urn from La Pedata (Fig. 53).\(^{169}\)

Multiple layers of symbolism are elicited from the *Birth of Hermione mirror*. First, it is Helen and Alexandros who begat Hermione, not Helen and Menelaus. Second, their love and unity are personified by the appearance of Turan, who comes for a visit. Lastly, their marriage has led to the establishment of a family and a family unit. Helen’s fecundity is not only exemplified by the birth of

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\(^{167}\) *Cypria* fragment nine (*Schol. on Eur. And. 898*); translated by Evelyn-White, 2000; 501.

\(^{168}\) Hesiod’s *Catalogue of Women and Eoiae* fragment seventy (*Laurentian Scholiast on Sophocles’ Electra 539*); translated by Evelyn-White; 2000; 205.

\(^{169}\) Countless stone statuettes of swaddled babies and mothers nursing their infants have been found at many Etruscan sites, testifying to the importance of motherhood in Etruscan society; this is incongruous to the almost non-existent images of nursing mother in Greek and Hellenistic art; Haynes, 2000; 361.
Hermione, but perhaps also by the twin geese illustrated in the lower exergue. It is also interesting to note the intricacies in detail implemented by the artist. Helen reposes on an elaborately designed *kliné* with a stylized meander around the frame. Below her *kliné* is a footstool, on which Alexandros sits, carved into two heraldic sphinxes. In stark contrast to her fine taste in furniture is Helen’s ostensible lack of luster; she wears no jewelry or diadem and her conical coiffure is bound up in a 5th-century *tutulus* style – a common vogue for Etruscan women at the time. Helen clearly is illustrated to resemble an everyday Etruscan woman in a daily-life scene – a scene where there is no need to dress opulently for an occasion such as a wedding or an important banquet, however, a scene which purports that she had the means to do so if she pleased. With her tutelary deity of familial love, Turan, nearby, her newborn infant, Hermione, in her arms and her loving husband, Alexandros, by her side, Etruscan Helen has a successful familial-life, which many Etruscan women, most likely, admired. This is the proprietress-of-the-mirror’s final outcome and conclusion to her rendition of the Judgment of Paris – a prosperous and happy family.

**Conclusion**

Even before the familial bond between Etruscan Alexandros and Helen was progressively established on the reverses of Etruscan mirrors (and perhaps even in Etruscan mythology), Etruscan ideals and values were firmly rooted around the family and especially around the unity shared between a man and his wife. In the 8th century BCE, long before the advent and influx of Archaic and Classical Greek art infiltrated Etruria by way of trade, the Bisenzio incense burner, featuring one of the earliest representations of a family unit in Etruscan history, testifies to the significance of the family, fertility and procreation among the earliest examples of Etruscan art (**Fig. 7**). On the right, a woman poses a water-carrying vessel on her head with one hand and touches, with her other hand, the genitals of her spear-wielding husband, standing next to her. Her husband clasps his left hand around her right breast, while
he extends his right hand to embrace his son next to him, thus creating a small, albeit significant, family portrait with an emphasis on fertility. The importance of fertility and procreation is further underscored by the 7th-century BCE Tragliatella oinochoe and its intrinsic family unit – Ammarce and his wife, Thesathei, exchange symbolic eggs, while their daughter, Velelia, holds her father’s arm with one hand and extends her other toward her mother to unite the family as an integral whole (Fig. 8).

By the 6th century BCE and the progressive wave of painted Greek pottery inundating Etruria – as many as 30,000 vessels – the Etruscans began to incorporate Greek mythological scenes into their art, integrating and forming these scenes into their preexisting values. Greek mythology and its iconography greatly influenced Etruscan artists; however, the Etruscans were not Greeks, nor was Greek their native language. Therefore, the Etruscans did not necessarily heed to the Greek meanings of Greek mythological scenes. They took their prerogative and freely chose which myths and characters to consider of value or importance, while regarding others as insignificant or irrelevant to them. For example, images of Hephaestus (Sethlans), Poseidon (Nethuns), Ares (Laran) and Jason and Medea (Easun and Metaia) are extremely rare in Etruscan art contrary to Greek art. It is probable that, because many Etruscans were gifted blacksmiths who worked the mines around Populonia and Vetulonia, there was no need to propitiate the god Hephaestus. The Etruscans also controlled the Tyrrhenian Sea and were expert seafarers long before the assimilation of Poseidon, Greek god and ruler of the sea. Images of Ares seem quite inappropriate in a civilization which attempted to avoid, as much as possible, animosity and hostility amongst themselves, their foreign relationships and amongst their deities. Images of Jason and Medea are particularly irrelevant, for their story transgresses all Etruscan virtues.
and values of family, love and their reverence for marriage. The thought of killing their own flesh and blood was, most likely, incomprehensible to any Etruscan family. After all, it is said that the Etruscans raised all of the children, never being forced to expose infants due to extreme circumstances, as sometimes happened in Greece. Overall, it appears that the Etruscans hardly bothered to embrace certain Greek mythological characters which did not appeal to them or with which they could not identify.

On the other hand, the Etruscans did choose to embrace mythological characters who underscored their cultural values and could be implemented as allegories in Etruscan art. For example, images from Homer’s *Odyssey* are prevalent in Etruscan art, as attested by the Aristonothos krater and the Tomb of the Orcus III (Fig. 5 and Fig. 6), most likely because the Etruscans themselves were notorious seafarers and probably enjoyed images of Odysseus’ adventures with which they could relate. The same applies for images of Etruscan Alexandros and Helen, whose basic background story arrived to Etruria via the iconography of the 7th-century BCE Chigi vase and, then, over the course of several centuries, was adapted and reappropriated to allegorically symbolize a loving and successful marriage, founded upon happiness, procreation and fertility.

The Judgment of Paris, as illustrated on the Chigi vase, the Paris amphora, the Winged-Sandals amphora and the Boccanera plaques all appear to be symbols of marriage in an Etruscan context. The former three are all wine vessels to be utilized at an Etruscan banquet – an integral part of Etruscan wedding celebrations. The iconography of the Judgment of Paris symbolizes an inevitable and successful marriage – Alexandros does, indeed, marry Helen. Therefore, these wine vessels are signs of good omen, signifying that the marriage will happen and that it will be happy and successful. This would be an appropriate gift to give a newly-wedded couple on their wedding day, presupposing that these may

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175 4th-century BCE Greek historian Theopompus, in his 43rd Book of *Histories*, recounts that the Etruscans raised all of their children, even if they didn’t know who the father was. Bonfante, 1986; 234-235.
have been given as gifts of marriage. The 6th-century BCE Boccanera plaques purport the same good omen. Moreover, their iconography of the Judgment of Paris and the Toilet of Helen together marks the transition from symbolizing marriage to a novel incorporation and expansion on the rites-of-marriage, i.e. adornment, as well as the ostensible idolization of Alexandros, Helen and their conjugal relationship.

By the 5th century BCE, images of the Judgment of Paris become popular on the reverses of bronze Etruscan hand-mirrors, remaining consistent for at least three centuries; however, the artists and/or owners of the mirrors – the vast majority of them belonging to elite Etruscan women – took their prerogative to manipulate the conventional Greek story and illustrated them in a manner which suited them. Sometimes the emphasis of the iconography was placed on the beauty of the goddesses – an appropriate variation on the theme of the Judgment of Paris for instruments of beauty (Fig. 40 and Fig. 41). Other mirrors soften the roles of the goddesses and emphasize the role of Alexandros, showing him to be a handsome and dignified man – a suitable rendition for an instrument of women (Fig. 39). Even beyond Etruscan adaptations of the Judgment of Paris, Etruscan Alexandros manifests as the central figure and the prominent focus of the scene (Fig. 42, Fig. 43 and Fig. 44). His beauty and strength are renowned by all, even Homer, evinced by Hector’s speech in Book III and Book VI of the Odyssey.176 It is not inconceivable that Etruscan noblewomen took notice of the Greek iconography of Alexandros as a skillful and pious shepherd, living a rustic and simple life atop Mt. Ida. Although it all sounds highly romanticized, the virtues of Alexandros would have befitted any virtuous Etruscan man, whereas Menelaus, who represented brute strength, warfare and lethal revenge – especially when he initiated the Trojan War to recover Helen and then tried to murder her after she was acquired – would have not been a plausible icon for Etruscan women. For this reason, Etruscan Alexandros became idolized as a

176 Homer portrays Paris Alexandros in a negative light full of cowardice; however Hector’s speech to Paris Alexandros in 3.45-56 and 6.549-558 does not deny that Paris Alexandros is, not only handsome, but skilled in combat and strength. Translation by Lombardo, 1997; 51, 127.
suitable figure which adolescent women could draw comparisons with among marriageable Etruscan men.

It appears that nubile Etruscan women thought a lot about marriage. The wedding ceremony was a cheerful and celebratory occasion enjoyed by the family, and perhaps the public. The limestone fragmentary relief from Chiusi, c. 500BCE, corroborates to the notion that an elite Etruscan wedding was celebrated accompanied by music and dance (Fig. 33). The cippus relief from Chiusi, c. 475BCE, demonstrates the wedding preparations for an Etruscan bride and groom, as well as the other rites of marriage on the other three sides of the cippus (not shown): the wedding banquet, dance and procession (Fig. 34). Attested by the heterosexual banquet scenes in so many of the wall-paintings in their tombs, the Etruscan fete was opulent and luxurious. The terracotta plaque from Poggio Civitate, c. 590-585BCE, depicts a sumptuous heterosexual banquet among reclining couples; the tables are laden with food, their hands are preoccupied with wine, the air is filled with a lyre player’s music and attendants wait on them hand and foot (Fig. 14). A similar terracotta plaque, belonging to the same group of terracotta plaques from Poggio Civitate, depicts a procession comprised of an elite couple in a covered, horse-drawn wagon, accompanied by attendants carrying fans and balancing a female pyxis box and chair on their heads.¹⁷⁷ This is most likely a representation of the wedding procession preceding the sumptuous banquet scene. A few decades later (c. 550-540BCE), due their iconography, I argue that the Boccanera plaques once decorated the female quarters of an Etruscan residence at Cerveteri. On the left side of the panels is the Judgment of Paris, counterbalanced with the Toilet of Helen on the right. As I have mentioned earlier, there is no extant account of the marriage ceremony between Alexandros and Helen in the Cypria, or elsewhere; however, the Etruscans, through their art, seemed to purport that Helen sumptuously adorned herself at her toilet before her marriage to Alexandros. The Boccanera plaques bridge and substantiate the relationship between Helen’s allusive role of marriage in

Judgment-of-Paris scenes and Alexandros’ allusive role as future husband in Toilet-of-Helen scenes as early as the 6th century BCE.

Helen’s lifestyle in Homer’s *Odyssey* may have only been a Bronze-age fantasy for Archaic Greek women; however, for Etruscan women who saw many Greek images of Helen on Greek vases, Helen was the ideal candidate for a female icon. Helen’s beauty and opulence were achievable goals for elite Etruscan women. Noblewomen had the means to afford resplendent commodities – products and instruments used to beautify themselves, evidenced by sumptuous female grave-goods, some inscribed with female proprietary inscriptions. Helen’s lifestyle in Greek art was relatively congruous with the lifestyles of some Etruscan women – those opulently adorned in many tomb banquet-scenes. Therefore, it is plausible that Helen stood as a role-model for Etruscan women; in essence her mythological life simulated an elite Etruscan woman’s and vice versa.

However, it is her visage for which she is most famous. In Hesiod’s *Catalogues of Women and Eoiae* fragment sixty-eight, Helen’s beauty is compared to Aphrodite herself – the personification of love and desire:

...and he came to Tyndareus’ bright city for the sake of the Argive maid, [Helen], who had the beauty of golden Aphrodite, and the sparkling eyes of the Graces... (*Catalogues of Women and Eoiae* 68.3-6)\(^{178}\)

When Helen was ready to be married off, the noblest of suitors came to Lacedaemon to woo her over with lavish bridal-gifts; for her beauty was so great, that every man who could, bid Helen to marry. Hesiod, from this same passage, nominates at least twelve suitors; however, fragment sixty-eight is quite fragmentary and there may have been many more named suitors. Helen’s reputed beauty blazed through the Greek kingdoms, leaving no ear inattentive. The knowledge of her beauty, both by word-of-mouth and by imported Greek vases, traversed the Mediterranean. And, as early as the middle of the

\(^{178}\) From the Berlin Papyri 9739: translated by Evelyn-White; 2000; 193.
6th century BCE, attested by the Boccanera plaques, Helen became an idol and an icon of beauty *par excellence*.

Henceforth, Helen became a favorite subject of which to decorate the reverses of Etruscan women’s bronze mirrors; rightly so, for Helen is a suitable figure to illustrate on an object of beauty. Twenty-three mirrors bear her Etruscan name, and countless other mirrors can be contextually and iconographically identified as depicting Helen. Her renowned beauty was, indeed, greatly admired by Etruscan women. Helen is, however, never represented alone in any figural scene, presumably, because images of Helen embody more than just beauty, but also marriage and family. On the majority of mirrors, Helen is either shown near Alexandros or with her family, albeit a couple of mirrors show Helen trying to escape the wrath of cruel and warlike Menelaus (Fig. 29 and Fig. 30). Therefore, to the Etruscans, Helen is more than just a beautiful face; she clearly represents something more than vanity, although vanity is an integral component to her symbolism. This is testified by the Boccanera plaques, the *Toilet of Helen mirror* and the *Cetona mirror* (Fig. 23, Fig. 36 and Fig. 38), which all illustrate Helen at her toilet, readying herself for her marriage to Alexandros, who is present in all three scenes. In contrast with scenes featuring the Judgment of Paris, whose iconography fundamentally alludes to a loving and happy marriage, scenes featuring the Toilet of Helen, although they too invoke marriage, allude to one of the Etruscan rites of marriage – the female adornment. Elite Etruscan women, such as the wives in the *Tomb of Hunting and Fishing* and the *Tomb of the Painted Vases*, as well as Velia in the *Tomb of the Shields*, enjoyed beautifying themselves for special events, in this case for a banquet with their husbands (Fig. 15, Fig. 16 and Fig. 48). Although we may never know for which specific events a noblewoman adorned herself, Etruscan art seems to assure that the marriage ceremony was, indeed, one of these special events. Juxtaposed to the images of Helen at her toilet, *Malavish* depicted in Figure 37 and the unlabeled woman in Figure 35, may be real Etruscan women who were influenced by Toilet-of-Helen scenes, thinking that they had the prerogative to emulate Helen’s image, in effect “becoming Helen,” or,
at least, “becoming as beautiful as Helen” on their wedding day. Images of Helen at her toilet may have, also, set an example and provided a reference for Etruscan women, as they use their hand mirrors for their own, personal adornment. Etruscan women may have, certainly, compared their own image reflected on the obverse with the reference of Helen on the reverse, thus attempting to emulate Helen’s beauty before their wedding ceremony. Once the adornment has been completed, the decorated bride may join her husband in matrimony and seen by the public. There are hardly any examples of the wedding ceremony depicted on Etruscan mirrors, but we do have at least one, according to Haynes. The mirror dates to the late 6th century BCE, making it one of the oldest surviving Etruscan mirrors (Fig. 54).

The central figure of the three-figured scene is an elaborately adorned woman wearing heavy garments and grandiose earrings; her hair is done up in the tutulus style, a sign of the fashion of the time period. An older, bearded man stands before her gesticulating towards the man standing behind her. The man behind her is young and beardless. He is dressed in a heavy mantle and reciprocates his gestures toward the older, bearded man. Haynes believes that this may be an act of marriage, where the father is giving away his daughter to her new husband.179 The female is clearly dressed for a special occasion, demonstrating that adornment and beauty-achievement were important requisites before an elite Etruscan wedding-ceremony.180

One of the most remarkable features of Helen’s image on the reverses of bronze mirrors is that her beauty is not always the focus or overarching theme of the scene in which she appears. She appears in a number of family scenes, such as in Figure 51, as well as a number of mirrors with her two brothers, Castor and Polydeuces.181 However, the majority of Helen’s family scenes do not illustrate Helen as a fully-grown woman, but as an egg. Depicted on a 3rd-century kylix cup from Monte San Savino and at

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179 Haynes, 2000; 240-241.
180 A mirror from Umbria (c. 450BCE) shows another three-figured wedding ceremony. The mirror includes a proprietary inscription belonging to a male: mi malena larthia puruhenas (I am of Larth Puruhena). See Van der Meer, 1995; 22-23 for image and detail.
181 De Grummond, 2006; 191-193.
least four 4th century Etruscan mirrors, including the Lausanne mirror (Fig. 49), Helen’s egg is delivered to her foster-parents via Hermes. On an Etruscan red-figure stamnos from Vulci and at least two other 4th century mirrors, Castor and/or Polydeuces deliver the egg. In Figure 50, Castor (labeled) is presenting Helen’s egg to Tyndareus and Leda, while the whole family gathers around. Bonfante has concluded that the delivery of Helen’s egg in Etruscan art emphasized the importance of the “family” in Etruscan society, with which I completely agree. Images of Helen, whether as an egg or as an adult, brought her family together.

Helen and her egg may also symbolize more than just the gathering of the family; images of Helen’s egg may be an auspicious omen representing fertility, procreation and abundance. One of Helen’s alleged mothers, Nemesis (who bore Helen from an egg), was a fertility goddess in Attica, and her symbolism may have carried over to Etruria. Helen was also a life-giver herself; according to the Homer, the Cypria, and Hesiod’s Catalogues of Women and Eoiae, Helen had at least four children, although more have been reported from various ancient and modern sources. Helen was fertile and her image may have been a symbol of good fortune to Etruscan women in respect to fecundity and productiveness. On the unique and symbolically-charged Birth of Hermione mirror (Fig. 52), the fertility of Helen (Elina) is the predominant focus of the scene, Hermione’s birth (Ermania). Just as the delivery of Helen’s egg gathered together and united her family, Hermione, on this mirror, is delivered into the world and gathers together her own new family: Helen, Alexandros and Hermione, whose familial love shared between the three is personified by the presence of Turan. Also, the Etruscan Helen is not heavily adorned here, nor is here beauty accentuated, which supports my hypothesis that Helen exemplified more than just beauty and vanity. In effect, she resembles a real Etruscan noblewoman, wearing an Etruscan tutulus coiffure, nursing a swaddled infant and lying next to her husband – all

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183 Carpino, 2003; 46.
common motifs in Etruscan art. It is as if the artist or proprietress of the mirror desired to transform the idea of “Helen,” with all her glory, splendor and beauty, into a real Etruscan woman, rather than manipulating her own image to emulate Helen’s.

Nevertheless, Helen of the East was assimilated and *Etruscanized* into Etruscan culture and iconography as *Elinai* of the West – a female role model, idol and icon for elite women who owned one of the innumerable engraved bronze hand-mirrors illustrated with Helen’s portrait, as well as the Judgment-of-Paris mirrors, which allegorically invoke her image. Attested by the Homer’s *Odyssey*, Helen of Sparta was, not only an intelligent and emancipated woman, but also a woman of feminine virtues which would have been indubitably admired by Etruscan woman: a mother, a weaver and an integral part of the family household. According to Hesiod’s *Catalogue of Women and Eoiai*, Helen is metaphorically compared to Aphrodite and desired by the greatest men in all of Greece, thus, making her the most beautiful woman in the world. The *Cypria* emphasizes her role in her elopement and marriage with Alexandros and frames their relationship as a symbol of love. Deriving their own iconography from Greek images of these literary works, Etruscan artists and/or proprietresses of adornment-mirrors chose to design the reverses of their mirrors with images of Alexandros and Helen. Their relationship is illustrated on several mirrors not unlike the *Corpus Christi mirror* and the *Reconciliation mirror*, where they are seen together as a happy and shameless couple (*Fig. 46* and *Fig. 47*). Their marriage and love, personified in the form of Turan, doubtlessly seduced the imaginations of Etruscan women. The iconography of this successful couple, whose values and virtues paralleled many of the Etruscans’ own, was understood; and their familial unity set the model example of family.

Real Etruscan family-scenes are rarer on the reverses of mirrors than mythological family-scenes, probably because family portraits were relegated to other media – most likely sculpture, portraiture and domestic wall-painting, comparable to the many family *kliné*-scenes in Etruscan tomb-
painting. However, a few survive. On a labeled bronze-mirror from Vulci (c. 400-350BCE), a nude woman, *Talitha*, tenderly caresses the cheek of her nude husband or lover named *Cruisie*, who gives her a flower (Fig. 55). The couple appears to be exchanging gifts – an alabastron for *Talitha* and a cista for *Cruisie*. The message of love is clear; the proprietress, probably *Talitha*, desired to perpetuate her love for *Cruisie* on the reverse of her own personal object of beauty. A similar scene appears on a labeled mirror, now in Paris, c. 500BCE: a woman named *Thana* proffers an indeterminate gift, perhaps a flower, fruit or egg to her husband, *Arnth*, who lovingly embraces her and pulls her in for a kiss (Fig. 56).

Finally, illustrated on an unlabeled, familial mirror dating to c. 300BCE, a husband and a wife sit together in a domestic setting, as if posing for a family portrait (Fig. 57). The husband extends his entire left arm around his wife to fondly embrace her. In his right hand he holds a circular object. It may be a pomegranate or an egg, which, in either case, fundamentally is a symbol of unity whether by love or life-giving fertility. He gazes into the eyes of his wife, who smiles at him, while she endearingly touches the bottom of his chin with her fingers. With her left hand she holds a spindle whorl with a carding of wool. She also happens to be opulently dressed and adorned for a woman of domesticity and domestic virtue. A necklace, a pair of earrings and a small diadem articulate her visage. Behind the husband is a small, standing, nude boy. He softly touches the nape of the husband’s neck. Is he the couple’s son? Or could he be a wingless Eros-figure – a symbol of their love, just as Alexandros’ and Helen’s love is personified by the presence of Turan in several scenes? It is not inconceivable, however, to propose that this is another familial scene illustrating Alexandros and Helen in a domestic setting, comparable to their daily-life scene on the *Hermione mirror*. Their life together would be perpetuated by the presence of Eros, who brought them together on the *Alexandros mirror*, and Helen’s prosperity and fertility would be symbolized by the presence of the egg. If this is the case, then, not only does this mirror corroborate that Helen and Alexandros were idols and icons to elite Etruscan women, but that the iconography of

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184 Van der Meer, 1995; 183-185.
185 Van der Meer, 1995; 25-26.
their marriage still stood as an example of an ideal couple and a symbol of Etruscan family values, based on love, marriage and fertility. Their life together, through the course of Etruscan iconography, can be seen as the Etruscan paradigm of life’s transitions – falling in love, adornment preparations, marriage and, then, family.

Figure 2: Hoplite warfare. The Chigi vase. Veii, 640BCE. Villa Giulia, Rome. http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/art_war_gallery_01.shtml

Figure 3. Paris’ Judgment in the central frieze subsequent to the lion-hunt. The Chigi vase. Veii, 640BCE. Villa Giulia, Rome. http://pages.uoregon.edu/arthist/arthist_204/monumentimages/chigi2.gif
Figure 4: Detail of Al[exand]ros (left) and the extant goddesses, Athanaia and Aphrod[ite] (right). The Chigi vase. Veii, 640BCE. Villa Giulia, Rome. Rasmussen, 1993; 61.

Figure 5: Hoplite incursion. The Aristonothos krater. Cerveteri, mid-7th century BCE. Musei Capitolini 172. Haynes, 2000; 65.

Figure 6: Blinding of Cucl (Polyphemus) by Uthuste (Odysseus). 4th century BCE. Tomb of the Orcus III, Tarquinia. Bonfante, 2006; 19.
Figure 7: Bisenzio incense burner with man, wife and child. 8th century BCE, Bisenzio. End of the 8th century. Villa Giulia, Rome. Haynes, 2000; 22.

Figure 8: Tragliatella oinochoe: Husband, wife and daughter. Right to left: Thesathei, Velelia and Ammarce. 630-600BCE, Tragliatella (near Cerveteri). Capitoline Museum, Rome. Haynes, 2000; 97.

Figure 9: Krater of the Painter of the Heptachord. Second quarter of the 7th century BCE. Museo Archeologico, Cerveteri. Haynes, 2000; 54.


Figure 13: Terracotta female banqueter seated next to four others in front of a dining table. Tomb of the Five Chairs, Cerveteri. 650-600BCE. British Museum. Haynes, 2000; 94.
Figure 14: Aristocratic banquet scene with prominent noblewoman third from the left. Terracotta plaque from Poggio Civitate (Murlo). 590-585BCE. Haynes, 2000; 123.

Figure 15: Elite couple reclining at banquet. *Tomb of Hunting and Fishing*, Tarquinia. 520-510BCE. Borrelli, Targia, 2003; 46.

Figure 16: Reclining husband fondly caresses his wife’s chin. *Tomb of the Painted Vases*, Tarquinia. 500BCE. Bonfante, 1994; 244.
Figure 17: The reclining Bride-and-Groom sarcophagus, Cerveteri. 525 BCE. Louvre, Paris. Haynes, 2000; 214.

Figure 18: Etruscan couple on a bronze mirror. Vulci, 5th century BCE. Vatican Museum. Beazley, 1949; 20.
Figure 19: Reclining couples’ banquet under painted tapestry. *Tomb of the Leopards*, Tarquinia. 580-570BCE. Steingräber, 2006; 130.

Figure 20: Paris and Helen at her toilet. Attic red-figure hydria (No. 231037). 400-300BCE, Rhodes. Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin. http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/XDB/ASP/browse.asp?tableName=qryData&newwindow=true&id={D7B3053C-FF43-4916-928D-4A11B3D51405}.

Figure 21: Seated Helen with Necklace and box. Attic red-figure oinochoe (No. 215971). 450-400BCE, Spina (Spica), Etruria. Museo Nazionale di Spina. http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/XDB/ASP/browse.asp?tableName=qryData&newwindow=true&id={C5DFE3F5-3424-4F72-9CB1-DDC0249F3073}. 
Figure 22: Multi-room Tomb of the Greek Vases with grand central hall, Cerveteri. 6th century BCE. Boëthius, 1994; 89.

Figure 23: The Judgment of Paris and the Toilet of Helen. The Boccanera plaques; Cerveteri. 550-540 BCE. British Museum. Steingräber, 2006; 125.

Figure 24: One of the five Campana plaques forming a continuous narration; Cerveteri. 530-520 BCE. Louvre, Paris. Steingräber, 2006; 63.
Figure 25: Cerveteran fragments of terracotta wall-paintings found within the city precincts. Mid-6th century BCE. Spivey, 2006; 87.


Figure 28: Helen flees from Menelaus’ sword. Attic red-figure kylix (No. 204395). 500-450BCE, Tarquinia, Etruria. Museo Nazionale Tarquiniense. 
http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/XDB/ASP/browse.asp?tableName=qryData&newwindow=true&id={9B9EA5C1-C194-4C7C-BC9B-50D362510C42}.

Figure 29: Menelaus (Menle) attempts to slay Helen (Elinai). Left to right: Thethis, Menle, Turan, Elinai, Aivas and Phulphsna. Bronze mirror from Cerveteri, 4th century BCE. British Museum. De Grummond, 2006; 97.
Figure 30: Helen (Elino) beseeches Turan, while Menelaus (Menle) tries to woo her. Bronze mirror, Perugia. Naples Museum. Beazley, 1949; 7.

Figure 31: Barbarini mirror: Turan uniting a joyful Helen and Phrygian-capped Alexandros. Engraved Etruscan bronze mirror, Barberini Collection. Gerhard, 1865; Tafel CCCLXXVI.
Figure 32: Embracing couple during a marriage celebration. Left to right: Zipna, Alpan, Achvizr and Thanr. 300BCE, Staatliche Museum, Berlin. De Grummond, 2006; 164.

Figure 33: Bride and groom under a fringed canopy at their wedding ceremony. Limestone relief from Chiusi, 500BCE. Bonfante, 1994; 252.

Figure 34: Bride and groom being show the trousseau on their wedding day. Cippus relief, Chiusi, 475BCE. Museo Barracco. Borrelli, Targia, 2004; 59.
Figure 35: *Ravishing mirror*: adornment and banqueting. 4th century BCE, Praeneste. Izzet, 2007; 70.

Figure 36: *Toilet of Helen mirror*. Todi, 300BCE. National Archaeological Museum, Naples. Van der Meer, 1995; 135.
Figure 37: Malavisch mirror: Left to right: Reschaulc, Malavisch and Turan. 350-325BCE, now lost. Carpino, 2003; Plate 83.

Figure 38: Cetona mirror: The Toilet of Helen. 4th century BCE. Private Collection, Cetona, Italy. Gerhard, 1865; Plate CCCLXXXIV.
Figure 39: Todi Mirror: Judgment of Paris. Left to right: Teurs, Alcönere, Uni, Menrva, Turan and Snenath Turns. Bronze mirror from Todi, 300 BCE. Villa Giulia. De Grummond, 2006; 92.

Figure 40: Judgment of Paris with inscriptions. Left to right: Elcsntre, Uni, Turan and Menrva. 4th century BCE. Izzet, 2007; 66.
Figure 41: Judgment of Paris with inscriptions. Left to right: Elcsntre, Turan, Uni and Menrva. Tarquinia, 3rd century BCE. Oberlin College. De Grummond, 2006; 90.

Figure 42: Victoria mirror: Victoria crowns Alexandros (Ilixentros) as victor. 3rd century BCE, Praeneste. Castellani Private Collection. Gerhard, 1884-1897; Tafel 106.
**Figure 43**: Throne mirror: Reconciliation of Helen and Alexandros’ victory. Upper register left to right: Turan, Hercle, Epiur, Tinia, Thalna. Lower register left to right: Aevas, Mean, Elchnetre, Elinai, Menle, Achmemrun, Lasa Thimrae. 325BCE, Vulci. De Grummond, 2006; 66.

**Figure 44**: Alexandros mirror: Alexandros (Alixentre) introduced to Helen (Elina). Left to right: Elina, Eros/Hermes(?), Alixentre, Menele, Turan(?). 4th century BCE, Bibliothèque Nationale Cabinet des Medailles, Paris. Gerhard, 1865; Plate CCCLXXVII.
Figure 45: *Union mirror*: Turan unites. Left to right: Elina, Turan and Elchsntre. 4th century BCE, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Inv. 1296. Carpino, 2003; Plate 36.

Figure 46: *Corpus Christi mirror*: Alexandros and Helen converse with Turan. 400 BCE, Praeneste. Corpus Christi College, Oxford University. Nichols, 1993; Figure 2a.
Figure 47: Reconciliation mirror. Enemies reconcile. Left to right: Achle, Chrisitha, Elinei and Elchsntre. 3rd century BCE. New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. Bonfante, 1997; Figure 17a.

Figure 48: Velia offers her egg to Larth. 4th century BCE, Tomb of the Shields, Tarquinia. Haynes, 2000; 310.
Figure 49: Lausanne mirror: The delivery of the egg by Hermes. 4th century BCE. Musée Cantonal d’Archéologie et d’Histoire, Inv. No. 82, Lausanne, Switzerland. Carpino, 2003; Plate 63.

Figure 50: Castur delivers Helen’s egg to Tuntle and family. Left to right: Tuntle, Turan, Unknown, Pultuce, Castur, Latva. Porano (near Orvieto). 350-325 BCE, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Florence. De Grummond, 2006; 129.
**Figure 51**: Helen’s family reunion. Left to right: Kastur, Lamtun, Elinei and Pultuke. Perugia, 350-325 BCE. Museo Acheologico Nazionale, Perugia. De Grummond, 2006, 192.

**Figure 52**: The birth of Hermione. Left to right: Turan, Elachsantre, Ermania and Elina. Early 5th-century BCE, Praeneste. Villa Giulia, Rome Inv. 16691. Carpino, 2003; Plate 30.
Figure 53: Mother and swaddling infant limestone ash urn. 5th century BCE, La Pedata. Museo Archeologico, Florence. Haynes, 2000; 297.

Figure 54: A wedding ceremony. Late 6th century BCE, Tarquinia. British Museum. Haynes, 2000; 241
Figure 55: Talitha and Cruisie. 400-350 BCE, Vulci. Museo Civico Archeologico, Bologna. Van Der Meer, 1995; 184.

Figure 56: Thana and Arnth. 500 BCE, Paris. Gerhard, 1884-1897; Tafel 147a.
Figure 57: Loving couple (Alexandros and Helen?). 300BCE. Glyptothek, Copenhagen. Bonfante, 1986; 238.


