

FOUR ETRUSCAN MIRRORS  
IN THE ELLA RIEGEL MEMORIAL MUSEUM  
AT BRYN MAWR COLLEGE \*

(Con le tavv. XXIII-XXV f. t.)

1. Bronze mirror (Museum number, M-114), (*tav.* XXIII, *fig.* 1). Gift of Mrs. Lincoln Dryden (Formerly in the collection of C. Densmore Curtis). Purchased in Italy.

Preserved L., 0,191 m. Diameter of disk, 0,154 m. Part of the disk and tang missing.

This badly damaged mirror is of decent quality as is shown by the simple but harmonious composition of two seated figures. No exact parallel exists for this group even though the figures are clearly types frequently used in the repertoire of Etruscan mirrors. The semi-nude male at the left, convincingly foreshortened and drawn with sharp and secure incisions, recalls a number of youths. A general comparison may be seen on a mirror in Berlin (1).. There Hermes, nearly a mirror image of our male, is drawn with less flowing lines. A seated Athena on a mirror in Paris (2) suggests that our figure on the right may also be an Athena. The finely delineated base palmettes are common on Etruscan mirrors of this type. An example from Palestrina, now in the Villa Giulia (Inv. n. 42221) (3), has both a related palmette and an ivy and berry vine. The ivy-vine is probably consciously created, as noted by Pampanini, in order to combine two popular decorative elements (4). An earlier example of the ivy and berry may be seen in a mirror from S. Cergone (Populonia), now in Florence (Inv. n. 81962) (5), while a nearly contemporary piece from Perugia, now also in Florence (Inv. n. 86774) (6), demonstrates that the motif is common.

The form of our mirror, with its slightly raised and beaded rim for protecting the engraved surface and the tang for insertion into a separate handle, indicates a date in the fourth century B. C. or at most very early in the third as postulated

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(1) GERHARD-KÖRTE, *E. S. V*, pl. 71. Mirrors with two seated conversing male figures, many with ivy-vines, are studied by M. A. DEL CHIARO, *Two Etruscan Mirrors in San Francisco*, in *AJA* LIX, 1955, pp. 277-286, pls. 78-81.

(2) GERH., *E. S. II*, pl. 193 and *E. S. III*, pl. 258 fig. 2.

(3) G. MANSUELLI, *Materiali per un supplemento al Corpus degli specchi etruschi figurati*, in *St. Etr.* XVII, 1943, n. 8, pp. 506-508, fig. 6 on p. 507 and pl. 36.

(4) R. PAMPANINI, *Le piante nell'arte decorativa degli Etruschi*, in *St. Etr.* IV, 1930, pp. 313-314, fig. on p. 311.

(5) G. MANSUELLI, in *St. Etr.* XVI, 1942, n. 1, pp. 532-533, pl. 40 fig. 1.

(6) *Ibidem*, pp. 533-535, pl. 40 fig. 2.

by Miss Richter in her study of the bronzes in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (7).

2. Bronze mirror (Museum number, M-12), (*tav.* XXIV *a-c*). Gift of Mrs. Lincoln Dryden (Formerly in the collection of C. Densmore Curtis). Purchased in Italy.

L., including handle, 0,136 m. Diameter of disk, 0,113 m. Old label on reflecting surface: L-399-14 and A 133, 18 pounds.

The mirror, solidly cast in one piece, is complete except for the lower portion of the handle. The decorated surface is slightly concave and is set off by a concentric ledge inscribed with a cable pattern. The rim splays out from the concave face and is emphasized by hatching.

M-12 is a good example of a large class of late Etruscan mirrors decorated with four-figure compositions. Many variations occur in the arrangements of figures, their dress and attributes, and the secondary elements such as furniture, arms, and architectural props. A mirror from Caere, at one time in a private collection in Munich, is close to our example: however, the male figure at the l. is leaning on a low pilaster while our figure leans against a crudely drawn shield (8). A second related mirror from the Castellanos collection now in Madrid (9) utilizes rudimentary architectural elements as a backdrop for the composition, and both male figures lean on pilasters. The tondo frame of the Madrid mirror is decorated by a wreath rather than a cable as in M-12. A third mirror, now in New York (Acc. n. G.R. 122) (10), is similar to the Madrid example except that it lacks the architectural backdrop. Although many other parallels could be noted, these three examples indicate the possibilities of change within the basic group.

The only standard and consistent feature of the composition is the presence of two male figures placed on either side of the tondo and facing in towards two other figures. These men may be nude as in a mirror formerly in the Cammarmont Collection but now in the British Museum (11). On a number of mirrors, of which one from Grosseto serves as an example (12), the male figure at the r. is nude while the figure at the l. remains draped. This last mirror provides yet another variation because the female who is nude in M-12 is now draped. A second major variation occurs again with the male figures. They may be seated, either draped as in mirrors in Paris (13) and Siena (Museo archeologico, Room 4, Case 6: Collection Bargagli Petrucci, from Sarteano n. 427) or nude as seen in a mirror from Chiusi (14) and another now at Edinburgh (15).

(7) G. M. A. RICHTER, *Greek, Etruscan and Roman Bronzes*, 1915, p. 273 ff.

(8) GERH., *E. S.* III, pl. 277 fig. 4.

(9) J. BLAZQUES, *Espejos etruscos figurados del Museo Arqueologico Nacional de Madrid*, in *Arch. Españ. Arqu.* XXXIII, 1960, p. 145 ff.; number V, pp. 152-155, figs. 2 and 4.

(10) RICHTER, *op. cit.*, n. 819, p. 283.

(11) GERH., *E. S.* III, pl. 275 fig. 5.

(12) D. LEVI, *Monumenti etruschi inediti: Specchi bronzei di Chiusi e di Grosseto*, in *La Balzana* I, 1927, pp. 254-259.

(13) E. BABELON - J. BLANCHET, *Catalogue des bronzes antiques de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris, 1895, n. 1317, p. 528; GERH., *E. S.* III, pl. 277 fig. 5.

(14) LEVI, *op. cit.*, n. 1, pp. 254 and 255.

(15) M. JOHNSTON, *Etruscan Collections in the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, and the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, Edinburgh*, in *St. Etr.* XI, 1937, p. 387 ff. Especially p. 394, pl. 50 fig. 4.

The two central figures also vary. A nude male may be substituted for the nude female as on a mirror now in New York (Acc. n. G.R. 126)(16) or both women may be draped as in the mirror previously mentioned from Grosseto.

It is difficult to give names to the mythological figures. Our mirror shows the male figures wearing oriental caps and therefore the Dioscouri spring to mind. Related examples, however, show one figure without a cap(17) or both figures bare-headed as on a mirror now in Leiden(18). Are these the Dioscouri or other characters? At times one of the draped female figures wears an aegis(19). Clearly she is Minerva. The problem of attribution has been well summarized by Levi who states: « ... una volta sono nominati Ulisse, Cassandra, Minerva e Diomede, un'altra Ercole, Marte, Artemide e Apollo; una terza Alessandro, Clitennestra, Minerva ed Enea; oppure sono citati Laran, Turan, Minerva ed Apollo, o altre volte i Dioscouri e Minerva, e via dicendo. Si crede che l'idea originale fosse l'associazione dei due Dioscouri e di Elena... »(20). The difficulty of attribution is not a modern scholarly game but stems directly from the Etruscan practise of pressing the four-figure composition into use for a number of different deities and episodes. For example a mirror in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris preserves the Etruscan names of Jupiter, Juno, Heracles, and Iolaus(21) while a second mirror from the same collection gives us Venus, Minerva, Apollo, and Laran(22). A final and extremely elegant piece, now at Oberlin College, is a Judgment of Paris(23). Paris, Venus, Juno, and Minerva are all named. In our mirror, because of the caps, one may accept the identification of the Dioscouri for the male figures. The two women are much less certain but perhaps may be called, through analogy with other mirrors, Minerva and Venus.

A precise date is impossible to establish but the second century B. C. seems most probable(24).

3. Bronze Mirror (Museum number, M-75), (*tav. XXV a-b*). Gift of Mrs. John Jay Whitehead. Place of origin, unknown.

L., including handle, 0,201 m. L. of handle, 0,101 m. Diameter of disk, 0,112 m.

The disk, formed by pressing a thin sheet of bronze over a convex core so that the sharply turned-up rim protects the reflecting surface of the mirror, is attached to a solidly cast handle by small modern nails. The handle is composed of two distinct elements. The farther end terminates in a stylized animal's head while the end attached to the disk is in the form of a simplified capital and a plant. When viewed from the concave side, this element displays a large beaded cushion which resembles the echinus of an Ionic capital. Above is an « abacus block » which supports the disk. On the other side of the mirror, the same element

(16) RICHTER, *op. cit.*, n. 820, p. 284.

(17) JOHNSTON, *op. cit.*, p. 394 and pl. 50 fig. 4.

(18) GERH., *E. S. III*, pl. 259 fig. 2.

(19) GERH., *E. S. III*, pl. 273 A fig. 1.

(20) LEVI, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

(21) BABELON-BLANCHET, *op. cit.*, n. 1283, p. 498; GERH., *E. S. IV*, pl. 346.

(22) *Idibem*, n. 1291, p. 507; GERH., *E. S. III*, pl. 257 C fig. 1.

(23) L. LORD, *The Judgment of Paris on Etruscan Mirrors*, in *AJA* XLI, 1937, p. 602 ff., fig. 5. D. G. MITTEN-S. DOERINGER, *Master Bronzes from the Classical World, The Fogg Art Museum*, 1967, n. 218, p. 215.

(24) J. D. BEAZLEY, *The World of the Etruscan Mirror*, in *JHS* LXIX, 1949, p. 1 ff. According to Beazley's scheme our mirror belongs to class « Z ».

resembles a plant. Now the beaded cushion is the part of the flower from which the simplified calyx springs. The three leaves of the calyx extend beyond the edge of the mirror and support the disk which may be considered a large unopened bud. A shaft, adorned by a torus moulding set off by two beaded bands, connects the two decorative elements of the handle. The shaft proper terminates at the base of the animal's skull with a third beaded band.

The handle of our otherwise plain mirror is not too common. The «deer» head has numerous parallels in late Etruscan mirrors; however, the upper member is rare. Parallels may be found in Florence (Inv. n. 652) (25), Dresden (26), and Arigon (27).



fig. 1. - Bryn Mawr, M - 114

No precise date may be given but the third century B.C. seems likely.

4. Bronze Mirror (Museum number, M-72), (*tav.* XXV *c*). Gift of Mrs. Lincoln Dryden (Formerly in the collection of C. Densmore Curtis). Total L., 0,196 m. Diameter of disk, 0,165 m.

The rim of M-72 is slightly thickened in order to protect one of its surfaces. A stylized vine pattern is weakly inscribed above the short tang on both sides. The general shape of the mirror, its tang for insertion into a separate handle, and the slight vine indicate that it is Etruscan and probably should be dated to the late fourth or third century B.C.

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(25) Unpublished.

(26) GERH., *E. S. I.*, pl. 60 fig. 4.

(27) GERH., *E. S. I.*, pl. 60 fig. 1.



a-c) Bryn Mawr, M - 114



*a*



*b*



*c*



*a-b*) Bryn Mawr, M - 75; *c*) Bryn Mawr, M - 72