

# MVSE

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## Hercle and Turms on an Etruscan Engraved Mirror

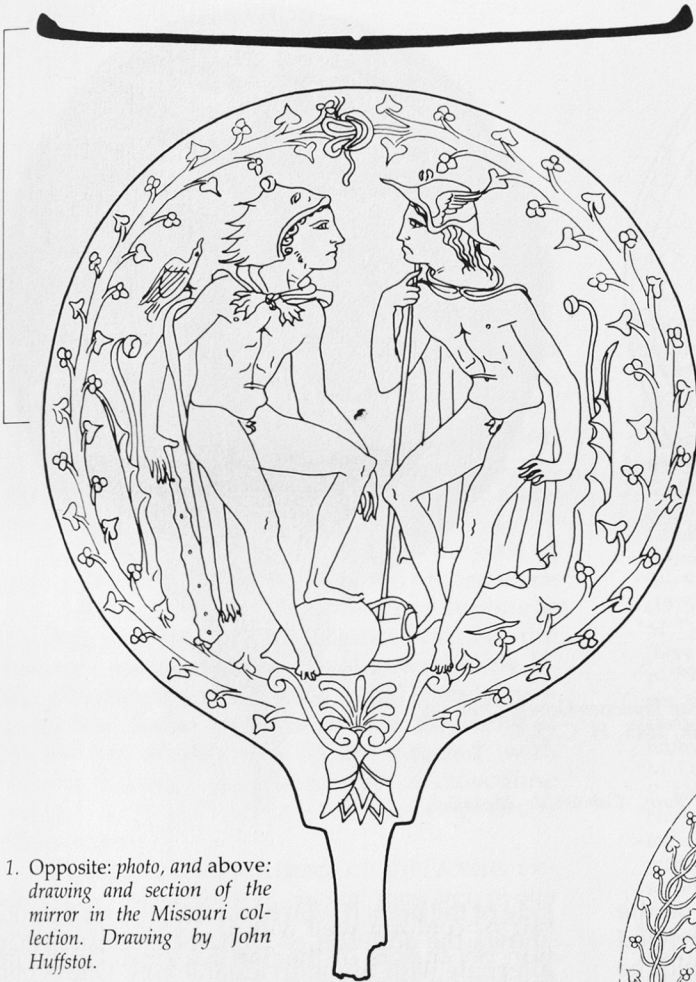
A new acquisition by the Museum of Art and Archaeology (Fig. 1) has provided an excellent opportunity for me, after an interval of twenty-five years, to return to the "San Francisco Group" of Etruscan bronze mirrors.<sup>1</sup> This special group of more than thirty mirrors was first brought together on the evidence of two specimens in San Francisco, study of which soon attracted numerous other mirrors that bore a characteristic two-figured composition depicting males—generally nude, and one or both figures young (clean shaven) or old (bearded)—who confront each other (as if conversing) in an awkward half-seated, half-leaning posture. Although the figures may sit on or lean against a shield, club, rock, or the like, such supports are usually omitted or merely implied by the engraver who has unwittingly created a rather precarious pose often present on mirrors of the group, but especially conspicuous on "descendent" mirrors of the group, which show debased representations of the Dioskouroi.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the seemingly restrictive nature of the composition and pose of its figures, the engraved scene on mirrors of the San Francisco Group may attain a surprising variety owing to the addition of certain details or attributes: spears, mantles, wings, lionskin and club for *Hercle* (Greek Herakles), winged hat and caduceus for *Turms* (Greek Hermes), etc., and, more effectively, by the modification or alternation of gesture and/or position of head, arms and legs. Further variations are achieved by the choice of decorative border—ranging from simple to ornate—which encircles the main scene, and by the single motif (lotus, palmette, etc.) engraved at the base of the disc just above the tang that was originally inserted into a handle of some material other than bronze—bone, ivory, or wood.<sup>3</sup>



The general composition, the posture of the "seated" figures and the character of the encircling ornamental border on the new Missouri mirror conform well with the engraved decoration on mirrors of the San Francisco Group. In place of the more usual winged or wingless youths, however, the Missouri mirror shows *Hercle* and *Turms*—a duo who have appeared together on only two of the mirrors (Figs. 2 and 3) assigned to the San Francisco Group.<sup>4</sup> A mirror in Paris (Fig. 4)<sup>5</sup> may now be added since its portrayal of *Hercle* and *Turms* as protagonists in the two-figured composition is appropriate to the group. *Hercle* and *Turms* are also engraved as two of a threesome on a handsome mirror in Bologna which, together with the adjunct feet of the celebrated Ficoroni Cista, are included in my study of the San Francisco Group for arguments iconographical and chronological.<sup>6</sup>

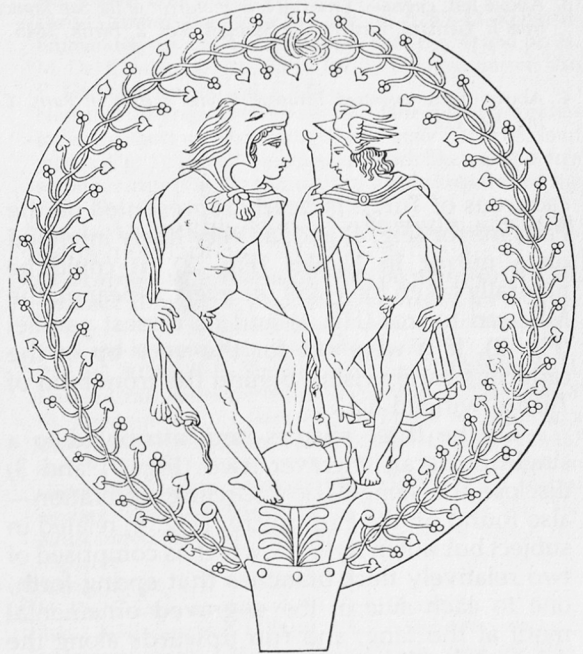
Of the four mirrors here brought together for comparison, three (Figs. 1-3)—despite the stylistically insignificant differences which may

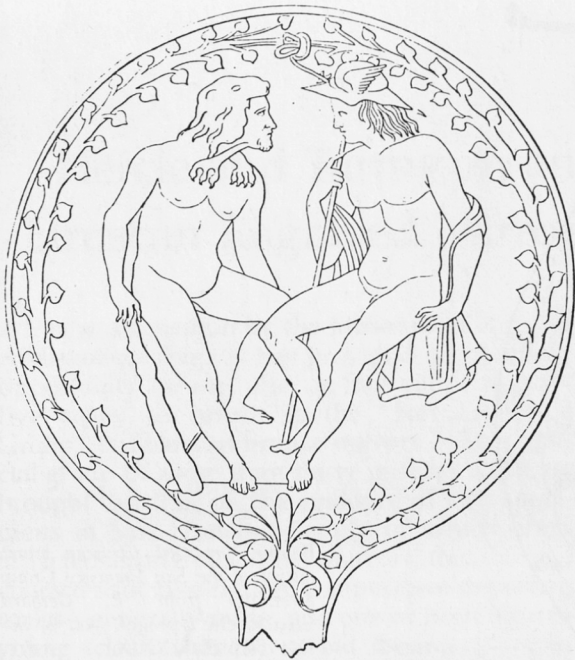


1. Opposite: photo, and above: drawing and section of the mirror in the Missouri collection. Drawing by John Huffstot.

be seen in the manner that lionskin and mantle are worn, and the presence or absence of plant forms in the field, a bird at Heracles's shoulder, and amphora at his feet—are unquestionably the works of a single Etruscan engraver. Granted that a nineteenth-century drawing does not provide as reliable a basis for attribution as does a photograph, it suffices to point out the consistency in the general proportions and the contours of the bodies, the profiles of both Heracles and Turms<sup>7</sup>—especially the winged *petasos* (hat) and long hair of Turms. Although the staff-like

2. Below: engraved Etruscan bronze mirror of the San Francisco Group. Drawing from E. Gerhard, *Etruskische Spiegel*, Vol. 2, Berlin, 1845. Pl. CXXIX.





3. Above left: engraved Etruscan bronze mirror of the San Francisco Group. Drawing from E. Gerhard, *Etruskische Spiegel*, Vol. 2, Berlin, 1845. Pl. CXXX.



4. Above right: engraved Etruscan bronze mirror in Paris. Cabinet de Medailles, Inv. No. 1285.

caduceus of Turms is clearly represented on the Paris mirror (Fig. 4) and, as very likely intended on a mirror in Naples (Fig. 2), it could be naturally taken for a staff, or even a spear on the Missouri mirror (Fig. 1) and its closest parallel (Fig. 2), if it were not for the very tip of the caduceus barely visible behind the front brim of Turms' winged hat.

Of the three mirrors here attributed to a single Etruscan engraver, two (Figs. 1 and 3) disclose the same basic encircling decoration—also found on the Paris mirror (Fig. 4) related in subject but not in style<sup>8</sup>—which is comprised of two relatively thick branches that spring forth, one to each side of the engraved ornamental motif at the tang, and run upwards along the curve of the disc to meet at the top of the mirror where they are tied together with a fillet. A single heart-shaped ivy leaf sprouts from each

side of the branch which, on the Missouri mirror, shows the addition of triple-berry clusters that alternate with the individual leaves. One of our mirrors (Fig. 2), however, carries alternating ivy leaf and berry clusters, but in a far more elaborate fashion; i.e., continuous intertwined tendrils instead of a single thick branch.<sup>9</sup>

For the Missouri mirror and its closest parallel (Fig. 2), attention must be called to the overturned amphora at the feet of Heracle—a detail which adds some interest to an otherwise dull scene. Hence, a third mirror which formed part of the original San Francisco Group may once again be cited because Heracle appears with similarly located amphora. In place of Turms, however, a youth inscribed *Vile* (Iolaos)<sup>10</sup> appears as Heracle's companion. The association of Heracle and overturned amphora on certain mirrors of the San Francisco Group and the compo-

sition with Turms on the previously mentioned Bologna mirror,<sup>11</sup> prompted my consideration of this latter mirror as a link between the San Francisco Group and the Ficoroni Cista by reason of the remarkable sculptural counterpart of the cista's adjunct feet to the Bologna mirror's engraved scene.<sup>12</sup>

In view of the amphora beneath the foot of Herclé, I believe such scenes refer to his presence at a fountain or spring,<sup>13</sup> and consequently sought correlation between the adjunct feet of the Ficoroni Cista and its elaborate engraved scene.<sup>14</sup> Rebuffat-Emmanuel, on the other hand, proposed that Turms' inclusion within the scene of Herclé and amphora is to be equated with "Hermes agonios," representative of masculine "valeur" in the games for which the amphora is Herclé's prize.<sup>15</sup>

Although interpretation of the scene engraved on the Missouri mirror may yet prove unsatisfactory and elusive, there can be no doubt that the well-preserved mirror, new to the Museum of Art and Archaeology, finds its rightful place within the San Francisco Group as a handsome example dating to the end of the fourth century B.C. As Fischer-Graf's recent study may well indicate, it may prove to be a product of a Vulcian workshop.<sup>16</sup>

MARIO A. DEL CHIARO  
University of California  
Santa Barbara

<sup>11</sup>M. Del Chiaro, "Two Etruscan Mirrors in San Francisco," *American Journal of Archaeology* 59 (1955) 277-286. I wish to thank Osmund Overby (Director) and Jane C. Biers (Curator of Ancient Art) of the Museum of Art and Archaeology for permission to study and publish their new Etruscan mirror, Acc. No. 80.191 in this number of *Muse*. Preserved length, 22.7 cm.; diameter of disc, 16.6 cm.; average thickness, .0025 cm. It will appear in color (cat. no. 83)

in *Illustrated Museum Handbook: A Guide to Collections in the Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Missouri-Columbia*, edited by Osmund Overby, to be published this fall.

<sup>12</sup>See *Studi Etruschi* 25 (1957) 384, fig. 13 and 392, fig. 24; R. De Puma, "The Dioskouroi on Four Etruscan Mirrors in Midwestern Collections," *Studi Etruschi* 41 (1973) 159-170; D. Rebuffat-Emmanuel, *Le miroir étrusque d'après la collection du Cabinet des Médailles* (Paris 1973), pls. 24-26; R. Lambrechts, *Les miroirs étrusques et prenestins des Musées Royaux d'art et d'histoire* (Brussels 1978), nos. 40-45, 66 and 71.

<sup>13</sup>See S. Weinberg, "Etruscan Bone Mirror Handles," *Muse* 9 (1975) 25-33.

<sup>14</sup>M. Del Chiaro, op. cit., 282, no. 20 (here Fig. 2) and no. 21 (here Fig. 3), the latter also D. Rebuffat-Emmanuel, op. cit., pl. 89. See also E. Gerhard, *Etruskische Spiegel* (Berlin 1845), pls. CXXIX and CXXX.

<sup>15</sup>Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, inv. no. 1285: D. Rebuffat-Emmanuel, op. cit., no. 3 (whence here Fig. 4) and pl. 74.

<sup>16</sup>M. Del Chiaro, op. cit., 284ff. For the Bologna mirror: also E. Gerhard, op. cit., pl. CXXXI.

<sup>7</sup>Note that the engraver responsible for the three mirrors has indicated short whiskers along Herclé's jaw on the Missouri mirror (Fig. 1); placed the whiskers much like a goatee on a second mirror (Fig. 3); and omitted them altogether on the third (Fig. 2).

<sup>8</sup>See also M. Del Chiaro, op. cit., pl. 80, figs. 5 and 6; pl. 81, fig. 13.

<sup>9</sup>Other encircling border decorations on mirrors of the San Francisco Group may disclose laurel wreath; ivy or grape leaves—with or without berries—sprouting from a continuous and sinuous stem: see *ibid.*, pls. 78-81.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, pl. 80, fig. 7; E. Gerhard, op. cit., pl. CXXVIII; and U. Fischer-Graf, *Spiegelwerkstätte in Vulci* (Berlin 1980) 106, V 88. I see now (cf., L. Bonfante, "A Mirror in the Indiana University Art Museum," *Studi Etruschi* 45 [1977] 149-167 and E. Simon review of A. Pfiffig, *Religio etrusca in Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* [1980] 206f.) that my original reading "Pile" (Pelias) is better translated as *Vile*, the etruscanized form of Iolaos as suggested by Simon and Bonfante.

<sup>11</sup>Supra, note 6.

<sup>12</sup>M. Del Chiaro, op. cit., pl. 81, figs. 14 and 15.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 283ff. See also J. Bayet, *Etude critique des principaux monuments relatifs à Hercule étrusque* (Paris 1926) 162-186.

<sup>14</sup>See also U. Fischer-Graf, op. cit., 121ff.

<sup>15</sup>D. Rebuffat-Emmanuel, op. cit., 153ff.

<sup>16</sup>U. Fischer-Graf, op. cit.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

WILLIAM BIERS, Professor of Classical Archaeology in the Department of Art History and Archaeology at the University of Missouri-Columbia, has excavated extensively in Turkey, Israel, Greece and now Portugal, and is a frequent contributor to *Muse* (see volumes 5, 6, 7 and 13). His book, *The Archaeology of Greece*, published by Cornell University Press, is a standard text for university students in archaeology.

JOSE CAEIRO is a member of the Archaeological Service of the Southern Zone of Portugal and teaches at the University of Evora. Specializing in Roman Provincial archaeology, he has excavated extensively in Portugal.

CANDACE CLEMENTS received her B.A. in Art and French from Austin College, Texas, and has just completed her M.A. in Art History at the University of Missouri-Columbia with a thesis on the 1762 edition of the *Contes* of La Fontaine. At present she holds a curatorial internship at the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, Nebraska, and recently received a fellowship to pursue doctoral studies at Yale.

WILLIAM COULSON is Associate Professor of Classics and Classical Archaeology at the University of Minnesota where he has taught since 1968. He received his Ph.D. degree from Princeton University and has worked as a senior staff member on excavations at Nichosia (Greece) and Tel Mikhal (Israel). He is at present co-director of the Naukratis excavations and of the Kavousi Project in East Crete.

MARIO DEL CHIARO is Professor of Art History at the University of California-Santa Barbara. A member of Phi Beta Kappa, he received his Ph.D. from the University of California-Berkeley in 1956. He has participated in archaeological excavations in Turkey, Yugoslavia, Italy and Sicily and directed the University of California-Santa Barbara excavations at Ghiaccio Forte, Tuscany. He has written numerous articles and reviews, is author of two books on Etruscan red-figured pottery and is currently preparing a *Guide to Italic and Etruscan Art in United States Public Collections*.

SHARON HERBERT is Associate Professor of Classical Archaeology and Research curator of the Kelsey Museum, University of Michigan and is a graduate of Stanford. She is co-principal investigator of the excavations at Tel Anafa. Her previous reports have appeared in *Muse* 12, 13 and 14.

ALBERT LEONARD, JR. is Associate Professor in the Department of Art History and Archaeology at the University of Missouri-Columbia. With a Ph.D. in 1976 from the University of Chicago, he has been director or co-principal investigator of archaeological investigations in Greece, Italy and Jordan, and is currently co-director of the Naukratis excavations in Egypt.

NANCY B. REED is Associate Professor of Classical Art and Archaeology at Texas Tech University in Lubbock. While her excavation experience has encompassed Greece, Texas, and most recently Florida, her primary research interests are in the Greek Orientalizing period and Cretan Daedalic art.

DAVID SOREN is Chairman of the Art History and Archaeology Department at the University of Missouri-Columbia. "Search for Apollo," a film produced by the University under the direction of David McAllister about the Kourion excavations on Cyprus where Soren has been co-director (see *Muse* 14), has won a number of awards: the Ciné International Golden Eagle; two Angenieux awards from *Industrial Photography Magazine* and the Midwestern Regional Case Award. Soren's first volume on the excavations at Kourion is being published by the University of Pennsylvania Museum. He has also excavated at several sites in Tunisia.