Presence of Etruscan Women Far from Etruria. Marriages and Funerals

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Etruscan women and historical ladies in the western mediterranean in pre-roman times

Archaeological studies of the feminine world have expanded significantly in recent years, in particular with regard to the later 'proto-historical' period. Within this field, the position of women in Etruria appears exceptional, both in the classical texts and as revealed by archaeological finds.[3] Etruscan tombs are, of course, a key source of information, though there have as yet been few studies of the actual human remains found and burials have largely been gendered based on grave goods. According to the gender stereotypes transmitted by Greek literature (Theopompus, *FGH* 115F204 (=Athen., 12.517d-518a) and iconography, the spear is associated with men and textiles with women, and the same is true of social roles: men go to the gymnasium, attend banquets and drink wine, activities from which their wives are excluded, while the main role of women seems to be to fetch water from the fountain. With regard to the stereotypical association of women with fabrics, meanwhile, research has linked the appearance of Etruscan writing in the late eighth century BCE with testimony of spinning in the form of weights, spindle whorls and reels marked with signs and letters.[4] Meanwhile, depictions of the use of mirrors only ever show them in women's hands, although they sometimes appear among male grave goods. Likewise, onomastic inscriptions on mirrors refer exclusively to female owners. We will return to this matter in our discussion of finds beyond Etruria itself.

Meanwhile, scenes depicting encounters between Etruscan notables, including high-ranking women, begin to appear as their civilization grew in the seventh century BCE. Representations of this kind are found either incised or embossed on bucchero ware.[5] The status of the women portrayed in these scenes is reflected in the emblems of power held by the men (as scepter and *lituus*, figure 1). Furthermore, epigraphic studies and evidence reflecting the legal situation of women in ancient Rome attest to the matrilineal rights of Etruscan women. Even so, we must be careful not to overstate female power in Etruscan society, for we have no evidence of women holding any kind of civic office. However, epigraphy does provide information about female shopkeepers and workshop owners,[6] as well as a number of Etruscan words related with childbirth.[7] It has also been suggested that the

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[3] Heurgon 1961, and later: Amann 2000; 2015; Atti Chianciano 2007; Bartoloni, Pitzalis 2011; Catalogue Amsterdam 2011; Catalogue Verucchio 2007; Rallo 1989; Spivey 1991.
[4] Domínguez-Arranz 2011.
[5] Gran-Aymerich 2017, 2018, 2022, 2023a. On the reception of some of the most representative forms in Attic workshops: Tonglet 2018.
[6] Colonna 1993.
[7] Hadas-Lebel 2021.

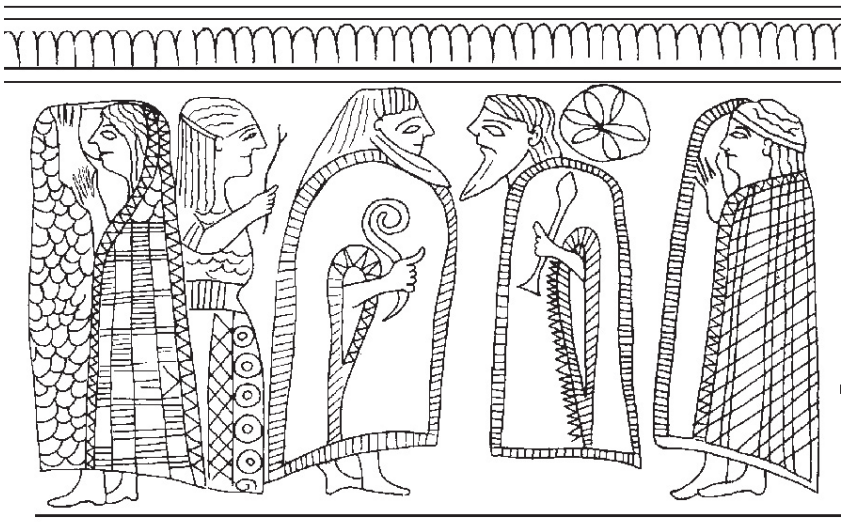

Figure 1. Women and men holding a *lituus* or scepter in a ceremonial gathering. Incised bucchero olpe from Caere. Musée du Cinquantenaire, Brussels (G-A 2017, pls. 298–299).

religious function of *hatrencu*, priestesses supposedly charged with the worship of *Mater Matuta* and recital of prayers related with fertility and marriage, may have been reserved for women.[8] According to Larissa Bonfante, however, 'Their prominence in a public role may be shown by a group of inscriptions from a tomb at Vulci that identify women with the title of *hatrencu*. A recent study convincingly suggests that this is a civic rather than a religious, priestly title, perhaps even an official magistracy, assumed by Etruscan mothers in particular historical circumstances.[9]

It has traditionally been held that the status of Greek women was low in the Mediterranean context, and they were seen as confined to the roles of motherhood, nurture and nourishment determined by biological essentialism. In a patriarchal system, women passed straight from the guardianship of their fathers to that of their husbands. However, recent gender studies have readdressed this monolithic conception of women's status in Ancient Greece, branching out from the conventional one-size-fits-all approach to describe a more diverse reality depending on the geographical context. By comparing Dorian Sparta or Cretan Gortina with Athens, we may discern a series of connected yet markedly distinct social worlds. Again, examination of the chronological context reveals differences in the status of women between the Homeric era and the Hellenistic period.

Women and mothers have remained largely absent from studies of the Phoenician diaspora and the new lifestyles adopted by the Levantine immigrants and their descendants in the colonies' early centuries. Nevertheless, the focus of research has now shifted to place these people centre stage.[10] There can be little doubt that the paucity of textual and iconographic evidence for western Phoenician communities compared to their Greek and Etruscan counterparts has played a part in the late start of gender archaeology in the field of Punic studies.

[8] Lundeen 2008: 34-61.
[9] Bonfante 2013: 431.
[10] Delgado Hervás 2016.

Figure 2. Etruscan votive bronze statuette, from Carthage, Dar-Seniat. The National Bardo Museum (G-A 2017, pl. 356).

Three women left their mark on the dawn of history in the western Mediterranean: the mythical Elissa or Dido, queen of Carthage; the legendary Gyptis, co-founder of Massalia-Marseille; and the majestic Tanaquil, driving force behind the ascent of the Etruscan dynasty at Rome.

The Phoenician Elissa (Dido) and Carthage

Elissa was the daughter of Mattan I, king of Tyre, and the sister of Pygmalion. Her fame as the founder of Carthage is largely due to the account given by the poet Virgil in his epic *The Aeneid*, which tells of Aeneas' wanderings after the fall of Troy, his sojourn in Carthage and his arrival in Italy, where his descendants would found the city of Rome. Nevertheless, Elissa's actual role in the emergence of Carthage c. 814 BCE is disputed, given the lack of historical evidence in either eastern or classical sources, and the story appears to be more myth than reality. Pompeius Trogus relates the city's founding in detail and Justin provides a summary of his account (18.4-6 and 9). Trogus may have used a Greek source, which in all likelihood would have been Aristotle's *Politeia of the Carthaginians.* Meanwhile, Timaeus uses two names for the legendary queen, Elissa and Dido. The former is Semitic in origin and the latter is a Roman soubriquet used by Virgil in *the Aeneid* (*A.* I.338-368).

The story begins by telling how Elissa outfoxed the initially hostile Berber natives by cutting the ox hide their king, Iarbas, had offered to demarcate the land he would cede to the new settlement into thin strips (*A.* I.367). According to Appian (*Pun.* 1), the city was founded by noble Tyrian families and priests, and its ritual origins involved human sacrifice. In the foundation myth, Elissa kills herself to save Carthage in what may be seen as a political rather than a personal gesture, which instantly won her recognition as divine. According to Trogus-Justin (18.4-5), Elissa would be honoured as a goddess by her people for as long as Carthage might stand. The Roman historian gives a theatrical account of Elissa's heroic suicide, telling how she ascended the pyre to address

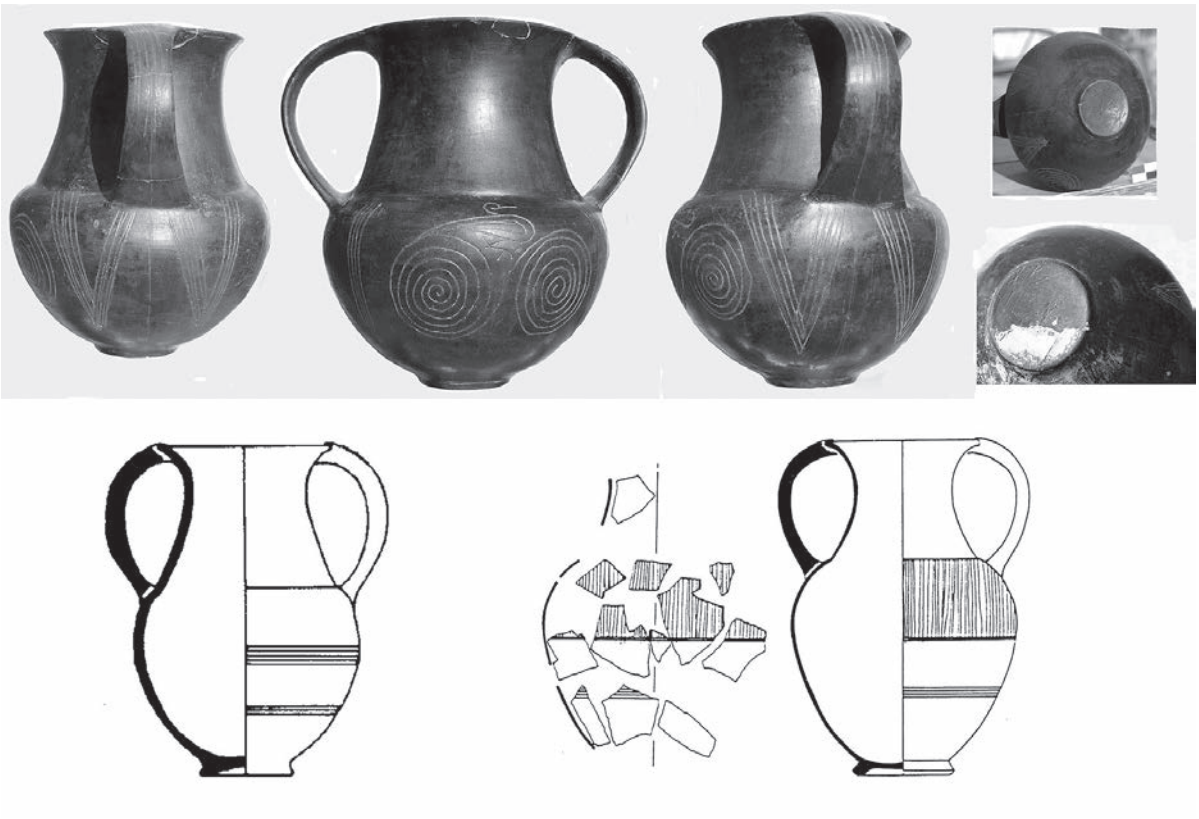

Figure 3. Bucchero unguent flasks (*anforette*): globular vessels from Caere. Top and bottom left: from Carthage. Bottom right: from Cerro del Villar, Málaga. Museums of Bardo, Louvre, and Málaga (G-A 2017, pls. 68, 197, 355, 373, 389; G-A 2020, fig. 4; G-A 2023, figs. 145, 149a).

her people before falling on Aeneas' sword. Two distinct moments may be discerned in the variant tellings of the city's beginnings: first, acceptance of the colonists by the Libyans upon the foundation of the city, and second, the sharp clash between them. The second part of the story is illustrated by the account of Elissa's romantic involvements, which are no minor subplot but rather the pretext for this hostility.[11]

The Gallo-Ligurian Gyptis (Petta) and Massalia

The legend of Gyptis and Protis recounts the founding of Massalia by Phocaean colonists around 600 BCE. The myth, which is mentioned by Antiochus of Syracuse, has existed since the fifth century BCE. There are two principal sources, Aristotle's *Constitution of the Massaliotes*[12] and Trogus' *Historiae Philippicae*, both of which are lost but are excerpted in Justin (43.3-4). Though there are differences between the two versions, both mention the marriage of Gyptis (Petta), daughter of the local chief, to Protis (Euxenus), a Phocaean seafarer.

The accounts given by the sources with regard to the foundation of cities like Carthage and Massalia in the western Mediterranean by Phoenician and Greek colonists reveal significant parallels, including the welcome offered by the native population to the settlers in their chosen destination, while

[11] App. *Pun*.1; Tsirkin 2013: 169.
[12] Strabo (IV.179-189) used Aristotle's work in his description of the city's institutions.

Figure 4. Decorated Etruscan mirrors. Left: from Ampurias. Center: from Vélez-Málaga. Right: near Troyes, Champagne (G-A 2017, pls. 371, 374, 384).

mythical romances and mixed marriages are used to downplay the rivalry between the native and foreign cultures and explain the locals' acceptance of the newcomers. At the same time, economic arrangements consist initially of trade deals and the exchange of goods, only later extending to control and exploitation of the land.[13]

The Etruscan Tanaquil and Rome

Tanaquil (or *Thanchvil* in Etruscan) was the wife of Lucumo or Lucius Tarquinius Priscus (c. 656-578), the fifth king of Rome and founder of its Etruscan dynasty. She was given the name Gaia Caecilia upon her deification in Rome, where her statue stood in the temple of *Sancus* on the Quirinal Hill alongside the utensils she had used to weave the royal toga worn by Servius Tullius, which was later moved to the temple of *Fortuna* according to Pliny the Elder (*Nat.* 8.74.194). In her lifetime, Tanaquil proved a skilful builder of alliances, earning her husband, and later her son-in-law, their thrones and herself the distinction of *king-maker* (Liv. 1.34). Tanaquil personifies the feminine side of the Etruscan aristocracy and female privileges, which included control over her own estate and the right of bequeathal. It is not unusual for such noblewomen and mother to appear on an equal footing with men in Etruscan funeral iconography. One example of this is the polychrome terracotta sarcophagus of the matron *Seianti Hanunia Tlesnasa*, whose sculpted form reclining on the coffin lid is identified by her dress and various objects proper to her status of aristocrat. The accompanying inscription in Etruscan throws light on another feature that distinguishes these women from their Roman peers-use of their own names together with both paternal and maternal family names.[14]

[13] Tsirkin 2013: 181.
[14] Domínguez Arranz 2021: 141, 2022; Swaddling 2002: 769-780.

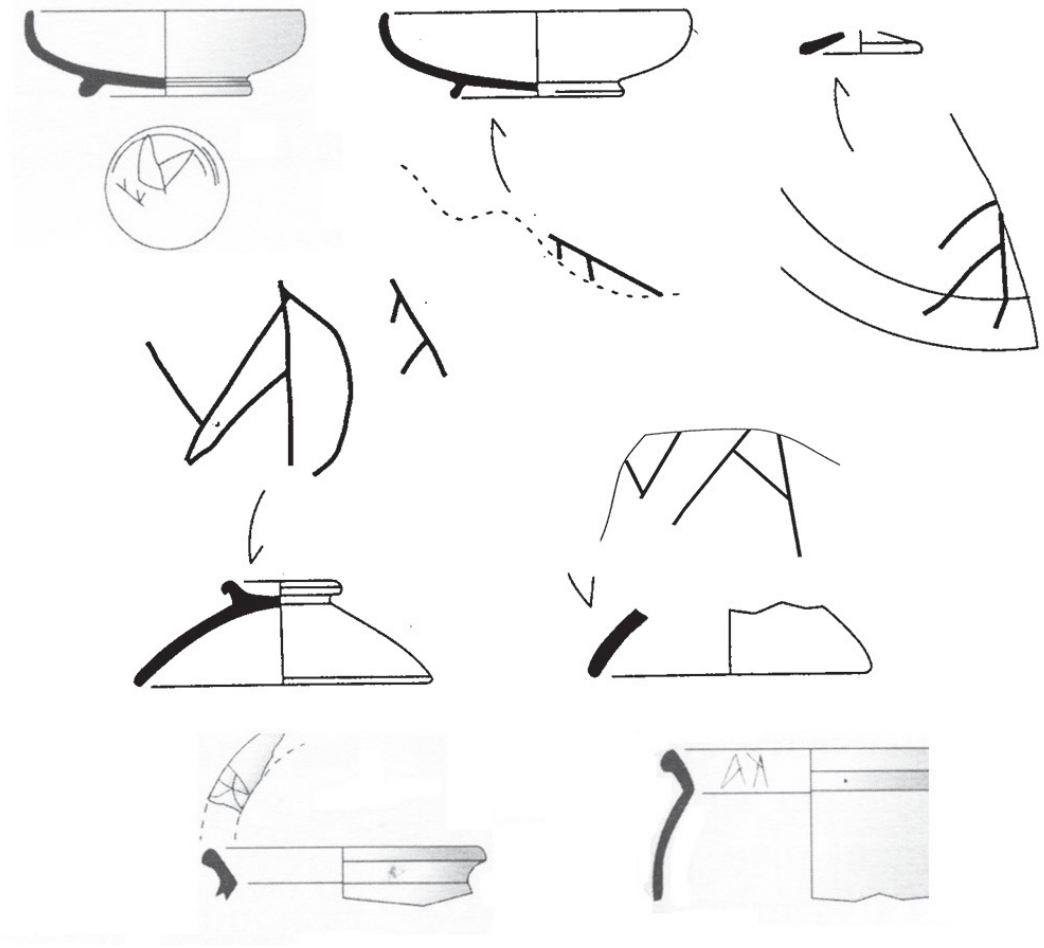

Figure 5. Bucchero and impasto pottery with Etruscan inscriptions from Lattes (G-A 2017, pl. 366).

Given the limitations of our sources, it remains uncertain whether Tanaquil was a legendary figure or an actual historical person who lived sometime between the seventh and sixth centuries BCE. If she was a real woman, she would have been the first bold enough to wield political influence in a matter as important as the election of the monarch in the pre-Republican period and hence the forerunner of Livia Drusilla, wife of Augustus. Three successive sovereigns ascended the throne thanks to mothers as Tanaquil, one of whom, Servius Tullius, was not even the biological offspring of the reigning monarch but an adopted son.[15]

Far-flung etruscan artefacts and objects belonging to the feminine world

The distribution of Etrurian manufactures throughout Europe and the Mediterranean speaks to the growth of Etruscan commerce on land and by sea, driven by aristocratic exchanges and by burgeoning trade relations. This expansion was carried on both directly by Etruscans and through intermediaries, and it confirms Etruria's position as a dynamic trading hub, especially in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE. However, their maritime trade beyond the Tyrrhenian Sea differs from

[15] Berrino 2004: 27; Domínguez Arranz 2021: 144; Hallett 2021.

Figure 6. Women at the Fountain of Troy, complementary to the scene of Troilos and Achilles. From Carthage. The National Bardo Museum
(G-A 2020, fig. 7; 2023, fig. 173c-d).

contemporary Phoenician and Greek networks in that they lacked their own colonial outposts. However, the *fondouk* hypothesis may explain their position in the Phoencian and Phoecaean cities of Carthage and Marseille, where numerous artefacts originating from Etruria have been found.[16] A *fondouk* was an Etruscan port of trade operating in a Phoenician or Greek colony under diplomatic agreements, as would have been the case at Carthage and Marseille (as well as Málaga and Ampurias), or under the aegis of the local authorities, as at Saint-Blaise and Lattes (as well as Ullastret and Huelva).[17]

Very few of the archaeological sites where Etruscan goods have been found in the Mediterranean and European hinterland now throw light on the women who used them, whether Etruscan or local. This means that any evidence documenting the feminine world is of immense interest. We shall now go on to examine three key dossiers, the first two of which describe findings in the southern and north-western Mediterranean (Carthage and Málaga in the former case and Lattes and Ampurias in the latter), both key areas for Etruscan finds. We shall then go on to discuss bronze mirrors, that most emblematic category of objects belonging to the *mundus muliebris*.

Feminine artefacts of Etruscan origin in the south-western Mediterranean: Carthage and Málaga

The early years of Carthage are shrouded in the mists of time, defying historical and archaeological analysis alike, although the emergence of Qrthdsht/Karthago, the 'New City', as a regional power can be confirmed in the seventh century BCE. Over the next hundred years, the trading port forged a web of alliances with Etruscan cities like Caere, evolving into a major fortified metropolis with a powerful fleet and armies by the fifth century BCE, and it would not be long before it clashed with Rome for dominion over the *Mare Nostrum.* Perfume flasks, cosmetics boxes, palettes and other typically feminine beauty care items have all been found in ancient tombs at Carthage. In parallel, small amphorae, alabastra, and aryballoi of Etruscan manufacture begin to appear in the late seventh and early sixth century BCE.[18]

Meanwhile, the remains of an Etruscan man buried at Carthage are confirmed by the presence in his tomb of a phallic stele typical of Caere, which is now in the Carthage National Museum on Byrsa Hill.[19] Other tombs containing divers Etruscan vessels of a markedly feminine character, which would have held aromatic oils and unguents, suggest the grave goods either of Etruscan or local women. We may mention the cases of tomb Byrsa A.185, which held an alabaster unguent flask and a delicate bucchero cup with slender horizontal handles (different from and older than the bucchero kantharoi typically used at male-only *convivium* ceremonies); and the grave goods found in tomb Dermech 327, which contained perfume flasks, including a small bucchero amphora, and three Etrusco-Corinthian dishes.[20] The world of Etruscan women is particularly identified in Carthage with vessels for unguents and oils. If aryballoi can be related with the world of women but are predominantly masculine articles, alabastra and other such containers, carved or shaped like hares and in other forms, belong squarely in the feminine world. Several dozen in the Corinthian-style have been found. The same applies to the small strap-handled bucchero amphorae (figure 3a) characteristic of seventh and sixth century BCE Caere, a number of which have been found at Carthage.[21]

One of the most intriguing finds from Carthage includes a bronze statuette of a kore, a type well known in Etruria, which was found at Dar-Seniat, south of Sidi Bou-Saïd (figure 2). It is interpreted

[16] Gran-Aymerich 2008, 2013.
[17] Gran-Aymerich 2017: 250-251, 2020.
[18] Gran-Aymerich, Domínguez-Arranz, Bonnet 2010; Gran-Aymerich 2017, pl. 355; id. 2020, fig. 4-6.
[19] Gran-Aymerich 2017: 235-237, pl. 355.
[20] Cristofani 1983 (1989): 50-51, fig. 36; Gran-Aymerich 2017: 235-237, pl. 355; Thuillier 1985.
[21] Gran-Aymerich 2017: 235, pl. 355, 2020: 733, fig. 4-5.

as a votive gift made by a woman at a sanctuary dedicated to a maternal goddess. Dating from the end of the sixth or beginning of the fifth century, this offering belongs to a moment when diplomatic relations between Caere and Carthage were particularly intense.[22] The ivory *tessera* with an Etruscan inscription found in a tomb at Carthage bears witness to the closeness of Etrusco-Punic relations.[23] Women are also depicted on a number of imported objects in scenes unrelated with the iconography of Phoenician-Punic goddesses found at Carthage. These include three women at a fountain on an early sixth century Corinthian-style polychrome flask (figure 6) and profiles of Etruscan ladies on a set of fourth century Genucilia dishes from Caere (figure 7).[24]

Figure 7. Profile of an Etruscan woman on a *Genucilia* dish from Caere. Found at Carthage. The National Bardo Museum (G-A 2023, fig. 173e).

Etruscan finds have also been made in Málaga (the Punic Malaka), both in the city centre and at sites around the bay. These date from the late seventh century BCE to the end of the sixth and consist primarily of ceramics related with the world of wine (bucchero kantharoi and oinochoai, and impasto amphoras used in transportation). We might also mention the magnificent bronze handle bearing the image of an ephebe found at the foot of the Alcazaba, which is now in the Canivell collection. Another exceptional find in this context was the small strap-handled bucchero amphora unearthed at Cerro del Villar at the mouth of the Guadalhorce river (figure 3b). This is an *anforetta globulare*, and its profile and decoration of rectilinear geometric incisions identify it clearly as a product of Caere made in the late seventh century BCE. Similar finds have also been made at Carthage.[25]

Feminine artefacts of Etruscan origin in the north-western Mediterranean: Lattes and Ampurias

Overlooked by Montpellier and the oppidum of Substantion, the port of Lattes bears witness to a particularly intense Etruscan presence. Among the numerous late sixth century BCE Etruscan transport amphora and bucchero-ware ceramics found at this site, several bear inscriptions in the Etruscan language referring to a lady by the name of Uci (figure 5), which has been taken as evidence for mixed marriages.[26]

At the same time, Ampurias stands out in the north-east of the Iberian Peninsula for the exceptional quantity and variety of Etruscan finds there. Bucchero wares dating from the sixth century BCE have been found, along with transportation amphoras and painted ceramics in the Etrusco-Corinthian style, including perfume bottles and alabastra typical of the feminine world. Among the more singular finds are three *navicella* fibulas (as well as a specimen unearthed in the nearby countryside), which probably belong to the same female domain. Other Etruscan finds at Ampurias include a series of

[22] Gran-Aymerich 2013: 331, fig. 17.12, 2017: 235, pl. 356.4.
[23] Gran-Aymerich 2017: 235, pl. 355, 2023b: 218, fig. 141a-b, restored in its *capsa* fig. 141c.
[24] Gran-Aymerich 2017: 235-237, 2020; Jolivet 1980. Inscriptions of women's offerings at Carthage: Amadasi Guzzo 1988.
[25] Gran-Aymerich 1994, 2006, 2008, 2017: 241, pl. 373.2, 2020.
[26] Colonna 1980, 2006; Cristofani 1983 (1989): 48-49; Gran-Aymerich 2017: 245-246, pl. 366.25-31.

bronze figurines (three human and one in the shape of a lion), a bronze lion's head, a fragment from a *simpulum* that is similar to others discovered in the Spanish provinces of Alicante and Extremadura, and part of a tripod, which is comparable to one found at Cap d'Agde on the coast of Languedoc but also bears an inscription in Etruscan. Finally, the decorated mirror discussed below has also been ascribed to a tomb at Ampurias.

Etruscan mirrors outside Etruria

The numerous mirrors found in Etruscan tombs are one of the culture's most distinctive artifacts. These objects begin to appear early in the first millennium BCE, a salient example being a mirror believed to originate from Egypt or Mycenae found in a Villanovan tomb at Tarquinia.[27] Most Etruscan mirrors are plain, although many examples have been found with incised decoration and even inscriptions on the unpolished side. Decorative themes are related with the *mundus muliebris*, and the mirrors were clearly made for and used by women. Outside of the Italian Peninsula, Etruscan mirrors have been unearthed in Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica, where no less than fifteen mirrors were discovered at the necropolis of Aleria, although only one presents the characteristic incised decoration.[28] More distant finds of mirrors recognized as being, at least potentially, of Etruscan origin are few and far between, and they have not so far been the subject of specific research.

Mirrors are uncommon among grave goods in Carthage, although they have turned up from time to time since the very first excavations. As far as we know, however, none of the mirrors found at Carthage are Etruscan or present the typical Etruscan ornamentation. Nevertheless, A.L. Delattre briefly described a tomb in 1905, which contained two plain mirrors and the famous bronze box decorated with a profile relief of a woman's head, which he judges to be 'obviously' Greek work given its artistic quality. It is now displayed in the Bardo museum. Another major early find, tomb 27 at Dermech, was described by P. Gauckler in 1899. It contained female remains wearing gold and silver jewellery inset with ivory and semi-precious stones. A plain bronze mirror lay by her right hand, and among the numerous perfume flasks, there were an aryballos and an alabastron painted with figures in the Corinthian or Etrusco-Corinthian style. Next to this tomb with its characteristically feminine mirror, a man's tomb was discovered, which contained a silver scarab ring, two gold cylinders and a bucchero kantharos and a cup of Etruscan origin. In the absence of any detailed study, however, these grave goods have yet to be interpreted scientifically, as is also the case of other Carthaginian tombs containing mirrors. Within the Carthaginian sphere, the mirror found on the Spanish coast at Vélez-Málaga could belong to one of the late Punic tombs of the Jardín necropolis, which are contemporary with the terminal phase of the Phoenician port of Los Toscanos and were, unfortunately, despoiled sometime around 1960. The incised decoration on the mirror depicts the Dioscuri, and it is similar to other Etruscan specimens found in Sicily (figure 4b).

Meanwhile, an Etruscan mirror found at Ampurias in the north-western Mediterranean area dominated by Massalia is decorated with a scene depicting the judgment of Paris. It has been dated around 300 BCE (figure 4a) and is believed to come from an Ampurian tomb, though all context and other evidence have been lost. This mirror formed part of the Guiol i Ricart collection in Barcelona until its acquisition by the Archaeology Museum of Catalonia in 1935.[29] It is displayed separately from another four complete mirrors and five handles in the museum, all recognized as Etruscan, which come either from the former Santa Agata Museum or Massot collection, or which cannot be precisely attributed. The Ampurias mirror was ascribed to a local find in a paper published by L. Pericot in

[27] Álvarez 2022, 2023; Camporeale 2006; Delpino 2001.
[28] Gran-Aymerich, Jehasse 2007; Jolivet 2022; Rebuffat 1980.
[29] Asensi 2011: 16-17; Gran-Aymerich 2013: 325, 328, fig. 17, 2017: 238, pl. 371; Paris Catalogue 1992: 177, 259; Pérez Cascallar 2022.

Figure 8. Festive gatherings with toasts (*convivium*): two eminent figures seated opposite one another. Upper scene: both hold Etruscan *kantharoi*. Lower scene: one man raises an Etruscan *kantharos*, the other a Greek *kotyle* (G-A 2017, pls. 6, 292, 341, 350).

1934, and by A. García and Bellido in 1936 and M. Almagro in 1949. However, J. M. Blázquez makes no mention of these attributions. Ampurias has also yielded a number of exceptional bronzes and numerous Etruscan ceramics.[30] A fragment of a decorated mirror, believed to have come from the oppidum of Enserune, was also found further along the same coast in the Languedoc region, allegedly 'between Nissan and Colombiers'.[31]

The matter of Etruscan mirrors and bronzes in general found in the Celtic hinterland is a knotty question, and published research reflects a host of conflicting views. However, it is widely recognised that an extraordinary quantity and variety of bronzes did find their way from the Italian Peninsula into the western Celtic world. Early examples dating from the eighth and seventh centuries BCE are in the Villanovan style and were exported via overland routes across the Alps. Some of these finds have been decontextualized and others are disputed, yet firm evidence exists that still more were imported in ancient times. Among these, Etruscan decorative pieces belonging to the feminine world appear to reflect privileged social status and personal contacts with the Italian side of the Alps. Some Etrusco-Italic *sanguisuga* or *navicella* fibulas found in Gaul are clearly related with the feminine world. We may also mention the Villanovan-style belts with large bronze lozenge-shaped plaques adorned with the geometric decoration typical of the Etruscan *mundus muliebris* discovered at Wörgl in the Inn Valley (Tyrol) at Châtel-Gerard between the course of the Seine and the river Yonne, and at Nantes on France's Atlantic seaboard.[32] Early mirrors dating back to the fifth century BCE have been found in Celtic tombs such as the Motte Saint-Valentin tumulus and in princely dwellings like the Heuneburg on the upper Danube, site of the former Celtic town of Pyrene, where a fragment was unearthed. They are generally believed to originate from the Mediterranean area and, perhaps, Etruria, although some may be imitations of other imported artefacts. Contested archaeological finds in France include mirrors bearing characteristically Etruscan decoration, but in most cases the location of discoveries is uncertain or interpretation of the pieces is difficult, as in the case of a mirror unearthed from a Roman tomb in Paris.

A number of mirrors from the Celtic hinterland consist of a plain disc of uncertain provenance, although the finds are contextualised. These include the possibly Etruscan mirror found in tomb 2

[30] Asensi 2011: 16-17; Graells 2012; Gran-Aymerich 2017: 238-239, pl. 371.1-7.
[31] Jolivet 1980, p. 701.
[32] Gran-Aymerich 2013, 1992: 376-377; Kimmig 1984; MacIntosh Turfa 2013; Paris Catalogue 1992: 181, 184, 194.

of the Motte Saint-Valentin tumulus at Courcelles-en-Montagne (Haute-Marne, Champagne), which bears a vegetal design on the handle and is dated to the fifth century, and a specimen from the Thury tumulus at Côte d'Or. Other finds are likely local imitations inspired by Mediterranean products and would include the early fourth century mirrors with stylised anthropomorphic handles found in tombs at Reinheim and Hochheim am Main (Hesse).[33] Also, a fragment of a plain mirror is mentioned as having been found at the Heuneburg in a context rich with Mediterranean imports and influences dating back to the sixth century BCE, and let us not forget the recent discovery of a wealth of grave goods belonging to a princess at the nearby Bettelbühl necropolis (Baden-Württemberg). A number of confirmed Etruscan mirrors of uncertain archaeological provenance also exist, such as those now in Orange, Saint-Remy-en-Viennois and Besançon. The most surprising find is, however, the Séez bronze (Savoie) now in the Geneva Museum, which is believed to be a mould for the manufacture of mirrors. It is decorated with representations of Minerva and Perseus and also bears an inscription in Etruscan. The interpretation of a third century mirror decorated with the Dioscuri found in an imperial Roman tomb under the Boulevard de Port-Royal in Paris is also fraught with difficulty. This example epitomises the complexity surrounding some Etruscan finds in France, which have been interpreted as reused objects, an explanation proposed for the small gold *sanguisuga* fibula, clearly classifiable as a female object dating from the sixth century BCE, found at Saint-Aignan south of Nantes. A recent dig at the late Roman villa of Appoigny north of Auxerre yielded a figurine in the upper stratum, which is the appliqué of a fifth century Etruscan candelabrum. It was also in Auxerre, along the road from Vix to Bourges, that the contested find of an Etruscan bronze tripod was made, not to mention the well-documented discoveries of various fifth century tombs containing several Etruscan bronze vessels.[34]

To sum up, the authenticity of a number of Etruscan mirrors found along the Mediterranean coast and in the Celtic hinterland is disputed, but it is certain that such objects did travel in ancient times. This is shown by the recent find of a mirror decorated with the winged goddess Lasa (figure 4c), in tomb III of 'Marivas' at La Vendue-Mignot (Aube, near Troyes in the Champagne).[35] In this regard, we may recall a basic rule of logic: negative cases are evidence of nothing, but one positive is proof.

Hypotheses: marriages, miscegenation, women's ceremonies, burials of Etruscan ladies[36]

Multiple differing and concordant aspects of the Etruscan finds discussed above allow interpretation of the functions of these artefacts in their context, including probable mixed marriages and evidence of cultural and biological miscegenation in Lattes and the north-western Mediterranean; specifically female votive offerings and ceremonies in Carthage; and funeral objects or grave goods (perfume flasks, mirrors and so on), which make up the largest group of Etruscan objects belonging to the *mundus muliebris*. The common denominator linking these feminine finds is their function as *status symbols*, allowing Etruscan and perhaps native matrons to show off exotic wealth. A paradigmatic case is that of the 'princess' of Vix.

- Possible mixed marriages and miscegenation in the north-western Mediterranean. The best evidence of possible mixed marriages between Etruscans and native people is provided by a number of graffiti found on Etruscan ceramics at the port of Lattes (figure 5).[37] Miscegenation is

[33] Álvarez 2022, 2023.
[34] Mazet, Grasso 1918.
[35] Denajar 2005: 595, fig. 489; Dubuis *et al.* 2021; Gran-Aymerich 2017: 248-249, pl. 384.13; Rouquet 1985: 13, on the question of the aristocratic center of Troyes.
[36] Regarding possible Etruscan or indigenous women, who owned and displayed Etruscan products in the far west as a 'status symbol', we mentioned, but though we did not adopt, the term 'Etruscanised'. Because it appears exaggerated, just as the term 'Hellenised' would seem exaggerated forbe the Celtic elites or 'Orientalised' for the Tartessians.
[37] Colonna 1980; Cristofani 1983: 48-49; Py 2009; Gran-Aymerich 2017: 245, pl. 366, 392.

evidenced by an inscription on the base of a fifth century Attic cup discovered in Saint-Blaise, which has been interpreted as an Etruscan-language dedication to the goddess Uni-Astarte written in Greek letters.[38] The find has been connected with the remains of a sanctuary at the top of the oppidum.[39] This unusual offering may have been made by a native, but in view of the Etruscan character of the divinity invoked, it is in any case a clear example of cultural, and possibly biological, miscegenation perhaps resulting from a mixed marriage with an Etruscan woman.

- Feminine votive offerings and ceremonies in Carthage. The Dar-Seniat devotional figurine is an exceptional example of an Etruscan votive offering, which was probably made by an Etruscan lady at a women's sanctuary in the Punic capital (figure 2). More recently, a late seventh or early sixth century Etruscan vessel has been identified as having been altered, likely at Carthage. It is a small bucchero globular amphora with strap handles and incised *ante cocturam* decoration consisting of two double spirals, water birds and large 'V' patterns. The alteration consists of two vertical lines, each scratched *post cocturam* on each handle and on the body down to the flat base. These lines highlight the axis of the handles, ritually splitting the vessel and decoration into two symmetrical parts. Also noteworthy is the presence of various graphs incised in a pseudo-script on the outside of the base (figure 3a). This alteration of an unguent flask seems to be related with the feminine world.[40]
- As documented, the most representative Etruscan finds related with the *mundus muliebris* beyond Etruria itself are concentrated among grave goods. Most come from tombs at Carthage, where dozens of small bucchero amphoras, alabastra and other Etrusco-Corinthian style containers in animal form belonging to the late seventh and early sixth century BCE have been unearthed. Curiously, the first representation in Carthage of women in a scene from daily life appears on a contemporaneous Corinthian-style polychrome flask (figure 6). We may further observe that the grave goods interred in several Hellenistic-era tombs at Carthage include a number of Genucilia-style plates from Caere decorated with ladies' profiles adorned with exuberant hairstyles and jewellery (figure 7).
- Southern France and the northeast seaboard of the Iberian Peninsula provide the most significant concentration of Etruscan sites and finds outside of Italy. With some key exceptions, however, documented objects that can currently be identified with the world of women are few and far between. Meanwhile, the Celtic hinterland has proved one of the more fecund regions outside Etruria itself for the discovery of Etruscan bronzes. These objects are generally related with banqueting and, in particular, with the consumption of Mediterranean wine. Fibulas are among the oldest artefacts of Etrusco-Italic origin found in the Celtic world, beginning in the eighth century BCE. Some of these, notably *sanguisuga* and *navicella* brooches, clearly belong to the feminine sphere. It has been suggested that they should be interpreted as more than merely personal items used in dressing but rather as status symbols, obtained through individual contacts or, perhaps, through personal acquaintanceship with actual foreigners from far-off lands in a general context of trade relations and *hospitium.* It has also been proposed that such fibulas may bear witness to marriages between members of leading families from north and south of the Alps.[41] One example of a female bronze object of this kind is the Villanovan-style belt buckle kept at Nantes, although the actual location of the find is uncertain.[42] Meanwhile, bronze mirrors, whether plain or decorated, are particularly important in French archaeology: aside from the case of the Corsican Aleria in the Tyrrhenian Sea, we have a small number of

[38] Colonna 2006, 2015.
[39] Gran-Aymerich 2017: 245, pl. 364, 2023b: 150, fig. 94.
[40] Gran-Aymerich 2020: 733, fig. 4.
[41] Paris Catalogue 1992: 182.
[42] Kimmig 1984; Milcent 2006.

significant finds from the coastal region, not to mention the still contested dossier of mirrors from the hinterland.

- The following proposal has recently been made with regard to finds in inland France and the female role among cosmopolitan elites: 'Les femmes remplissant parfois le rôle d'ancêtres fondateurs jouent un rôle diplomatique, au coeur de la construction de nouveaux réseaux de contacts lointains. Voir même l'apparition ou développement de lignages à descendance utérine. Poussant le raisonnement et si l'on se réfère aux dépôts des tombes les plus riches de la période, ou bien à des exemples postérieurs (princesses de Vix et de Reinheim) on peut avancer l'idée que dans certaines communautés des femmes exercèrent un pouvoir'.[43] The study of such proto-historical 'strategic marriages' has recently begun.[44] The paradigmatic case of the 'princess' of Vix takes us to the banks of the Seine in Burgundy. Her grave goods, the richest ever found in the Celtic world, were discovered intact. Though the surprising figurine on the lid of the Greek krater represents a female offeror,[45] none of the four bronzes clearly identified as Etruscan in this tomb is explicitly feminine in nature: the beak-spouted flagon (*Schnabelkanne*) would have been used to pour wine but it may also have had a ritual function, while the two trays with handles and the omphalos bowl would probably have been used to serve food at banquets but could equally have had some ceremonial purpose. This find made at the foot of the Hallstatt-culture site of Mont Lassois was recently rounded out by the discovery of several primitive Celtic sculptures in stone and the remains of a palatial dwelling at the top of the hill.[46]

Despite the numerous published papers on the subject, many key aspects of the Vix tomb remain unexplained. Who paid for this lavish sepulchre and who was the lady buried with so many extraordinary objects from far beyond the Celtic world? The most widely debated possibility is that the Lady of Vix was either a princess or a priestess, although one does not exclude the other. We will probably never know her identity or where she came from. The tomb itself must have been built by some rich and powerful chief, perhaps her husband, who controlled the upper reaches of the Seine from the oppidum at Mont Lassois and was able to benefit from the Saône-Rhône trade link with the Mediterranean.[47] Analysis of the imported objects among the grave goods, including the exceptional Greek krater and Etruscan bronze tableware, suggest the hypothesis that the deceased 'princess' was a foreigner of noble, perhaps Etruscan, stock. Such a marriage would have sealed a diplomatic and trade agreement. In any event, the extraordinary quality and variety of the grave goods confirms the existence of long-distance exchanges between local lords, which would have been among the forces shaping early European culture. The study of the Vix tomb is still ongoing, but it underscores the role played by high-ranking women and the use of mixed marriages in diplomatic and trade deals.[48] Such agreements would have involved *hospitium* ceremonies of the kind occasionally represented in the 'shadow theatre' provided by the images incised or stamped on seventh and sixth century bucchero ware, in which the central characters are usually men (figure 8) although elite ladies or mothers also appear in a few scenes (figure 1).

Conclusion

The study of archaeological remains related with high-ranking women from sometimes distant lands is still in its infancy. Numerous examples from the early history of the Mediterranean region and more widely in Europe reflect an archaeological context of frequent imports that is commonly,

[43] Milcent 2004, p. 211.
[44] Anthoons 2022.
[45] Gran-Aymerich 2000.
[46] Brun, Chaume, Sacchetti 2021.
[47] Arnold 1991, 2012; Brun, Chaume, Sacchetti 2021; Knüsel 2002; Milcent 2003; Péré-Noguès 2011; Verger 2003, 2009.
[48] Gran-Aymerich 2000, 2013, p. 336-342, 2017, p. 250-251, 2020.

although not uncontroversially, considered a 'colonial' period, in which the emergence of dynasts and princely social structures is accompanied by phenomena of acculturation and proto-urban development.

It was a time of rich maritime and overland exchanges of goods, people and cultural influences in the Orientalizing period and the archaic epoch in the western Mediterranean, when eminent women first appear. This exceptional backdrop of long-distance travel and development between the late seventh and the fifth century BCE likely drove revolutionary change. Something of this kind seems to have brought about the shift to the proto-urban world of the early Iron Age, often described as a world of 'chieftains' and 'princesses', and the downfall of the Hallstatt culture (Heuneburg, Vix, Bourges). The fall of the Etruscan dynasty at Rome appears to be another such case. Some studies also point to the possibility of major political change in fifth century Carthage.

Be this as it may, the phenomenon of 'ahistorical women' is illustrated once again by the presence of ladies who were either Etruscan themselves or were consumers of Etruscan goods after the end of the archaic period in the Mediterranean area and in the Iron Age in western Europe as a whole. This is a subject which both archaeologists and historians see as a ripe for exploration and a valuable research goal.

We may provisionally conclude, insofar as investigation of the archaeological evidence is still ongoing, by echoing the words of Jacques Heurgon: 'Of course it is true that many individual problems still have to be faced if we want to see the concrete details of events. Perhaps future research will throw light of them.'[49]

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[49] Heurgon 1973, p. 256.

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