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**THE STORY OF PARIS AND HELEN IN ITALIAN RENAISSANCE DOMESTIC PAINTINGS  
FROM THE LANCKOROŃSKI COLLECTION**

(PL. 1-14)

To Ellen Callmann, in memoriam

*Great was the grief he began when he came to Ida's  
Hermes, Zeus' and Maia's son, glens,  
leading there a lovely band  
of goddesses, a triple team,  
contenders in beauty, accoutred for black, ugly strife,  
to the cowherd's steading,  
the young recluse's cottage,  
and lonely hearth.*

(Euripides, *Andromache*, 274-282)<sup>1</sup>

The extraordinarily vivid tale of the Trojan prince, Paris-Alexander, which has been recounted in many ways since Homer, is one of the most popular subjects of Italian marriage chests or *cassoni*<sup>2</sup>. Karol Lanckoroński's collection contained two painted versions of this story, both dating back to the mid-1450s but executed in two different cities: one in Florence, the other in Verona. The first version comprises three pictures (Fig. 6, 10, 20); two of which are relatively well-known thanks to Shrubring's *cassoni* corpus<sup>3</sup>, whereas the third one was published only after the Lanckoroński collection was donated to the Royal Castle in Kraków (known as the Wawel Castle) in 1994<sup>4</sup>. The second version of the tale of Paris decorates a *cassonne* (Fig. 1) with paintings on the front as well as the side panels (*lateralis* or *fianchi*), which has been preserved in its entirety. The side panels show in profile the busts of emperors or kings wearing crowns (Fig. 2)<sup>5</sup>. There are two small scenes with Paris inside six-leaved-shaped compartments on the front panel. They are located on either side of the coat of arms of the original owners of the *cassonne*, which is in the centre of the panel. Both narrative paintings show three nude goddesses standing and Paris, who is depicted once seated and once in a standing position. As is the case in many other 15th century mythological representations, these scenes are somewhat enigmatic since no-one has yet

explained why two similar depictions appear on the same *cassonne*. Unfortunately this *cassonne* did not reach Kraków. After the Second World War, through the intermediary of Julius Boehler, the well-known Munich antiques dealer, it was sold to a private collection in Germany or Switzerland. The present owner, who wishes to remain anonymous, did make accessible the diapositives showing the item in question<sup>6</sup>.

Lanckoroński did not mention the Verona chest in his 1903 guide to the collection or in his *Einiges über italienische bemalte Truben* of 1905 – being a brief description of his collection of domestic paintings. However, this *cassonne* can be seen on a photograph, probably dating from 1906, showing the Italian Room in the Lanckoroński palace at Jacquingasse 18 in Vienna (Fig. 3).

This paper is an attempt at a complete analysis of both versions of the myth of Paris from the said collection. Since the *cassonne* from Verona is inaccessible, we shall focus on the paintings presently housed in the Wawel which, unlike many other of the works of art belonging to the Lanckoroński collection, have not yet undergone restoration work. One of these in particular, interpreted as *The Dream of Paris* (Fig. 10), is both fascinating and unique in the art of the early Renaissance. It has recently been the subject of an interpretation which still fails to explain its iconography. We shall also be examining a painting from the Burrell Collection in Glasgow (Fig. 13), which was most probably originally part of the same series as the Wawel paintings. However, before discussing all the works of art mentioned above, we should give a brief presentation of Count Lanckoroński and his collection of mythological paintings and then take a look at the most important literary sources of the story of Paris and Helen.

<sup>1</sup> Quote from STINTON 1965, p. 13

<sup>2</sup> For this subject see, among others, KING 1938, p. 55-72; RODNEY 1952, p. 57-67; SCHERER 1963, p. 15 ff.; ead. 1966-1967, p. 367-383. See also ROSENBERG 1930; DE TERVARENT 1946, p. 25-26. A recent monography on the theme is DAMISCH 1996 (1st French edition 1992)

<sup>3</sup> LANCKOROŃSKI 1905, p. 13; SCHUBRING 1923, nos. 166-167; VAN MARLE 1928, vol. X, p. 570, fig. 347 (*The Dream of Paris*); DE TERVARENT 1946, p. 21 (without reproduction); WOHL 1980, p. 154-155, 192-193 and plates

185-186. This panel is also listed in REID 1993, p. 822 and 832

<sup>4</sup> MIZIOŁEK 1995, p. 35, fig. 27; *idem* 1997-1998, p. 113-116, figs. 20-22. This third panel is mentioned but not reproduced in Lanckoroński 1905, p. 13 and Van Marle 1928, vol. X, p. 570

<sup>5</sup> From the Boehler catalogue (K/91/0007) we know that the device on the side panels is that of the Algarotti family from Verona.

<sup>6</sup> SCHUBRING 1923, no. 648. See also VAN MARLE, vol. VII, 1927, p. 333

## Count Karol Lanckoroński and his collection of Italian Renaissance domestic paintings

Count Karol Lanckoroński (1848-1933), an amateur art historian, classical archaeologist, eminent art collector and writer, spent his life in Vienna where he received his doctorate in law in 1870<sup>7</sup>. In his youth he already showed a great interest in art history and classical archaeology. It would seem that Wilhelm von Hartel (Fig. 4), a famous classical philologist, and Alexander von Warsberg, the author of *Homerische Landschaften* (1884) and *Odyseische Landschaften* (1887), had a great influence on his studies. Throughout his life Karol Lanckoroński remained a great admirer of classical antiquity and the classical tradition in the arts. In the mid-1880s he organized and financed two important archaeological expeditions to Asia Minor, and ten years later undertook archaeological and conservation works in the cathedral in Aquileia. The results of the expeditions to Asia Minor and of his research in Aquileia were published in monumental books, including Lanckoroński's introductory essays which continue to provide indispensable material for further studies on these subjects. In the 1880s he took a trip around the world which he described beautifully in his *Rund um die Erde* (1891), also published in Polish in 1893. In this book his love for Italy is transparent when he says: "I am happy about my visit to India [...] however my heart belongs to this land between the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian Seas. Along with Robert Browning, I can say: 'Open my heart and you will see /Engraved inside Italy<sup>8</sup>.'" Count Lanckoroński was also the author of numerous other books and papers about his other travels, the problem of restoring historic monuments, and museology, all of which are a reflection of his broad interests, and erudition. He also wrote some poetry, mostly about Italy and masterpieces of Renaissance art<sup>9</sup>.

Lanckoroński's collection, which was composed of antique, medieval and modern art amassed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, included a large number of Italian Renaissance paintings<sup>10</sup>. Initially, the collection was housed in a residence in Vienna at Riemergasse 8, then at Schenkenstrasse 10, Wasagasse 6 and finally, from 1902, in a spacious palace at Jacquingasse 18 near the Belvedere in the heart of Vienna. It contained over two hundred Italian paintings of which more than thirty were produced between 1400 and 1530 in Tuscany and Northern Italy for a domestic setting. They derived from *cassoni* (marriage chests), *spalliere*, *cornici* (wainscotting) and *lettucci* (day-beds), and mostly depicted mythological and secular subjects<sup>11</sup>. *Forzier ilcassoni*, often in the shape of ancient or medieval sarcophagi, were usually executed on the occasion of weddings, and were almost always produced in pairs. Very often the subject depicted on such *cassone* fronts recounted only one story, a myth or a legend shown in numerous small scenes pictured in the manner of a continuous narrative spreading over both panels. The side panels of the chests were also sometimes adorned with narrative paintings.

In 1939 the collection was confiscated by the Nazis, and in 1943 a major part of it was moved to the salt mines in Alt Aussee and Immendorf. Some of the panels were destroyed during, or soon after, the Second World War. In the late 1940s, the collection was deposited in a bank in Switzerland and only in the early autumn of 1994 was it donated by Professor Karolina Lanckorońska (one of the Count's daughters and then only living member of the family) to the Royal Wawel Castle in Kraków. The donation included twenty-six domestic panels and about sixty other paintings. The domestic paintings from the Lanckoroński collection, even in their incomplete state, comprise one of the largest groups of this artistic genre in the world. Among the most interesting of these are the three panels with the *Story of Paris and Helen*, now on permanent display in the Study Gallery of the Wawel Castle (Fig. 5).

<sup>7</sup> For Lanckoroński and his collection see K. Lanckorońska in: DA 1996, vol. 18, p. 692. *AUSGEWÄHLTE KUNSTWERKE* 1918; MIZIOŁEK 1995, p. 27-49; *idem* 2003, with earlier bibliography. See also KÄSS 1987, p. 191-200. Like his predecessors Karol Lanckoroński held an important position at the court and administration in Vienna. He was Emperor's secret advisor and a hereditary member of the House of Lords of the Austro-Hungarian Parliament. In 1903 the Emperor Franz Josef I made him a Knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece, and in 1914 he appointed him *Oberstkammerer*, the Great Chamberlain, a function which was connected, among others, with being in charge of culture and the conservation of monuments. Because of this on the title page of some volumes of one of the most important periodicals/yearbooks on art

"Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhösten Kaiser-hauses" are to be found the count's name as its editor.

<sup>8</sup> LANCKOROŃSKI 1891, p. 4; *idem* 1893, p. 3. *Id.*, *The Towns of Pamphylia and Pisidia*, see Bibliography: LANCKOROŃSKI 1890-1892, including a total of 500 pages with numerous maps, plans, drawings and plates, appeared also in French (Paris 1890-1893) and in Polish (Kraków 1890-1896).

<sup>9</sup>See TWARDOWSKI 1934

<sup>10</sup> For his collection of antique art, now dispersed, see OENBRINK 1998, p. 159-181

<sup>11</sup> For religious paintings see *TO THE DONOR IN HOMAGE* 1998; for domestic paintings see MIZIOŁEK 2003

## The myth of Paris and Helen in literary sources

The Trojan war broke out most probably because of an inadvertence<sup>12</sup>. There was a great banquet on the occasion of the wedding of Achilles's parents – Peleus and Thetis – at which the uninvited Eris (Discord) threw an apple bearing the inscription “for the most beautiful” among the Olympic goddesses Hera/Juno, Athena/Minerva and Aphrodite/Venus. As nobody wanted to risk selecting a winner, Zeus/Jove ordered Hermes to force a shepherd named Alexander of Mount Ida (better known as Paris) to make the decision. Venus promised him that if he chose her, he could claim the most beautiful woman in the world for his wife. This was Helena, the sister of the Dioscuri and the wife of Menelaus, king of Sparta. Her subsequent abduction to Troy resulted in the city's total devastation, following a ten-year siege. The myth of Paris is of Greek origin but many well-known versions were also written by the Latin poets and mythographers. In the Middle Ages and in Modern times the myth was repeated frequently, sometimes acquiring a new meaning.

The Judgement of Paris is first mentioned in the *Iliad* (XXXIV, 25-30), but it is not unlikely that the relevant verses were added only in the Hellenistic era<sup>13</sup>. Numerous Greek writings from the 6th and 5th centuries BC in which the tale of Paris is prominent are known only from fragments or from later summaries, for example, in the work of the famous mythographer Apollodoros of Athens<sup>14</sup>. His version of the myth of the Trojan prince is modelled on *Kypria* from the 7th or 6th century BC, which was also referred to by other authors including Sophocles and Euripides. It is important to point out that in Sophocles' piece entitled *Judgement (Crisis)* the main *dramatis personae* are allegorized: Aphrodite is 'Delight', while Athena stands for 'Wisdom', and 'Virtue'<sup>15</sup>. He says nothing about the symbolism of Hera, or it could be that the passage referring to her has not survived. Euripides mentions Paris in several of his works on the Trojan war, for instance in

*Andromache*; the Trojan is presented in the traditional way, as the shepherd of Mount Ida chosen to judge the beauty of the three goddesses whom Hermes has brought along<sup>16</sup>. However, his decision is not made on the basis of charm and beauty of the goddesses but the attractiveness of their promises. Later, in the 4th century BC, in a rhetorical piece on Helen, Isocrates states that Paris simply could not have made a judgement about the three goddesses because he was too overwhelmed by their beauty and was, therefore, forced to make a choice based on what they were offering him<sup>17</sup>. In his exposition of the myths entitled *Mythologiae* written in the late 5th century AD, Fulgentius, the bishop of Ruspe (North Africa) pictured the Judgement of Paris as a choice between a sensual (Venus), a contemplative (Minerva) and an active (Juno) life<sup>18</sup>.

Other interesting versions of the myth, although based on Alexandrian sources, are to be found in Ovid's *Heroides* (Letters 5, 16 and 17) and Lucian of Samosat's *The Judgement of the Goddesses*<sup>19</sup>. According to Margaret J. Ehrhart (the author of the important study on the myth of Paris and Helen in literature), despite the fact that Lucian's *Dialogues* were written in Greek they were to be an important source of inspiration not only during the Renaissance, when Lucian's works were translated into Latin, but also in the Middle Ages. This was due to the numerous compilations and summaries<sup>20</sup>. In Lucian's version Paris was selected as arbiter because, as Hermes put it, repeating Zeus's words: “you are handsome yourself, and also well schooled in all that concerns love, Zeus bids you be judge for the goddesses<sup>21</sup>.” However, when Hermes tells him who his guests are and whose beauty he is to judge, Paris is astounded and terrified, although he soon regains his self-confidence and asks the goddesses to appear naked, which is an innovation compared with the earlier versions of the myth<sup>22</sup>. *The Judgement of the Goddesses* introduces yet another new element: the golden apple inscribed with the words ‘for the fairest’ which is given to Paris by Hermes. The apple with this inscription also appears in *Excidium Troiae* (6th or 9th century)<sup>23</sup> and *Istoriotta troiana* (from

<sup>12</sup> The literary sources are conveniently assembled in REID 1993, p. 821-823. See also KING 1938, p. 55-72

<sup>13</sup> See DAMISCH 1996, p. 101-102 with bibliography.

<sup>14</sup> *Biblioteca*, III, 12, 5, see APOLLODORO 1996, p. 263-265

<sup>15</sup> EHRHART 1987, p. 3-4

<sup>16</sup> EURIPIDES 1942, p. 439. For a commentary on this and other passages in which Euripides refers to the Judgment of Paris see STINTON 1965

<sup>17</sup> EHRHART 1987, p. 4-5

<sup>18</sup> FULGENTIUS THE MYTHOGRAPHER 1971, p. 64-67

(II, 1)

<sup>19</sup> OVID 1947, p. 61 and 203 (Letter V: *Oinone to Paris*; Letter XVI: *Paris to Helen*); LUCIAN 1921, vol III, p. 384-409. See also APULEIUS, *Metamorphoses*, X, 30-32

<sup>20</sup> EHRHART 1987, p. 9

<sup>21</sup> LUCIAN 1921, vol. III, p. 385 and 395

<sup>22</sup> OVID 1947, p. 203; LUCIAN 1921, vol. III, p. 395; see also APULEIUS 1935, p. 280-281 (X, 32)

<sup>23</sup> *EXCIDIIUM TROIAE* 1944, p. 3-5

the 13th century), which will be referred to later<sup>24</sup>. For most Ancient writers Paris's choice was deliberate, but Dares the Phrygian, writing probably in the 1st century AD, (the author of *De excidio Troiae historia* – known only from late Antique Latin versions), stated that choosing the most beautiful goddess was not a real event but a dream<sup>25</sup>. Notwithstanding its poor literary level, his work was very famous in the Middle Ages and even in Modern times. Its huge success was mainly due to the lack of Latin translations of Homer's epic (until the second half of the 14th century) and the romantic character and popularity of the piece. Dares' version of the judgement as a dream-vision was adopted by most Medieval authors and was thus presented in art until the early 16th century, especially north of the Alps (Figs. 11 and 26). It should be pointed out that dreams and visions, often described in the literature of Antiquity including the Bible, became one of the favourite motifs of Medieval and early Renaissance literature and art<sup>26</sup>.

Poets and mythographers present different ideas about the circumstances and the exact place of Helen's abduction. Some say it was Sparta, while others claim it took place on the island of Cytherea<sup>27</sup>. According to Homer (*Iliad*, III, 445-452) and many other authors, Helen left Sparta voluntarily and gave herself to Paris in the first port they came into. Only a few authors have tried to exculpate her by stating that she was abducted by force. According to Ovid's *Heroides*, Helen must have been induced to leave her lawful spouse with promises of many gifts. Paris' letter to Helen says: "And yet let me not presume to look down upon your Sparta; the land in which you were born is rich for me. But a niggard land is Sparta, and you deserve keeping in wealth; with fairness such as yours this place is not in accord. Beauty like yours it benefits to enjoy rich adornments without end, and to wanton in ever new delights<sup>28</sup>". Nevertheless, Helen's answer to this proposal is very cautious and left practically without conclusion. Both versions of the event can be

found in the literature and art of the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance. Both Benoît de Sainte-Maure in his monumental work *Le roman de Troie* from the second half of the 12th century<sup>29</sup> and Guido delle Colonne from Sicily in his famous *Historia destructionis Troiae*<sup>30</sup>, written a hundred years later, affirm that Helen did not overly resist being taken away to Troy. In fact, she went of her own free will. In Boccaccio's *Esposizioni sopra la Comedia di Dante* and *De claris mulieribus* there are fragments which describe Paris' and Helen's mutual love, although Helen still feels obligated to her husband Menelaus and is led to the ship against her will<sup>31</sup>.

The story of Paris' early years was written much later than the tales about his judgement and the abduction of Helen. The story of a prophecy was made up to somehow explain the circumstances of the famous judgement. Therefore, the fall of Troy was not only due to the fact that Eris had not been invited to Thetis' and Peleus' wedding party, but also because several visions and prophecies had been ignored. One of these prophecies said that Priam's wife would give birth to a boy who would be the "brand of a great fire." Pindar was the first famous poet to write about this, and the same version can also be found in the work of Sophocles and that of Euripides<sup>32</sup>. Meanwhile in the *Aeneid* Virgil refers to the tale as follows: "Blood of Trojan and Rutulian shall be thy dower, maiden, and Bellona awaits thee as thy bridal matron. Nor did Cisseus' daughter alone conceive a firebrand and give birth to nuptial flames" (VII, 317-320)<sup>33</sup>. It is also mentioned in Ovid's *Heroides*<sup>34</sup> and again in Hyginus' *Fabulae* which contains all the key motifs<sup>35</sup>. It is also recalled by many Medieval and Modern writers such as the anonymous author of *Compendium historiae Troianae-Romanae*<sup>36</sup>, Armannino Giudice (also known as Armannino da Bologna)<sup>37</sup> in his *Fiorita* and Giovanni Boccaccio<sup>38</sup>. These authors also relate Paris' birth and the events directly following it.

<sup>24</sup> *ISTORIETTA TROIANA* 1959, p. 538-541

<sup>25</sup> *TROJAN WAR* 1966, p. 138-139

<sup>26</sup> *SOGNI NEL MEDIOEVO* 1985; *TRÄUME IM MITTELALTER* 1989; See also MEISS 1966, p. 348-362 with several illustrations.

<sup>27</sup> For fame of this island in the Renaissance period see PALETTA 1993, p. 101-106. According to EURIPIDES 1942, p. 467-471 (*Helen* 1-69) Paris only brought a phantasm of Helen to Troy.

<sup>28</sup> OVID 1947, p. 211 (Letter XVI: *Paris to Helen*).

<sup>29</sup> BENOÎT DE SAINTE-MAURE 1998, p. 163-165

<sup>30</sup> GUIDO DELLE COLONNE 1974, p. 74 (VII, 318-319) There are also several Italian versions of this book, see GUIDO DELLE COLONNE 1986

<sup>31</sup> BOCCACCIO 1963, p. 75; *idem*, *Esposizioni sopra la Comedia di Dante*, in: *idem* 1972, p. 430

<sup>32</sup> EURIPIDES 1942, p. 439 (*Andromache*, 280-300). For the text of Sophocles see EHRHART 1987, p. 13

<sup>33</sup> VIRGIL 1925, vol. 2, p. 25

<sup>34</sup> OVID 1947, p. 201 (Letter XVI: *Paris to Helen*)

<sup>35</sup> HYGINUS 1960, p. 82-83 (*Fabulae* XCI and XCII)

<sup>36</sup> *COMPENDIUM HISTORIAE TROIANAE* 1886

<sup>37</sup> Armannino Giudice, in: GORRA 1887, p. 532-561, in particular 539. For this author who lived at the turn of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries and his *Fiorita* written ca. 1425, see *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*.

<sup>38</sup> BOCCACCIO 1951, p. 302-303 (VI, 22); *idem*, *Esposizioni sopra la Comedia di Dante*, in: *idem* 1972, p. 430

### Paris' infancy and youth

As already mentioned two of the three Florentine paintings inspired by the myth, which reached Kraków, are understood as being the *Dream of Paris* and the *Abduction of Helen*. The third fragment of approximately the same dimensions as the other two and undoubtedly painted by the same artist, as indicated by the similar colouring and the identical way in which the people and nature are depicted, is practically unknown (**Fig. 6**)<sup>39</sup>. In the background there is a hilly landscape with a city surrounded by high walls in the upper part, and in the foreground a male figure is handing over a newborn baby to another, older man. In the background to the right, there is a woman with another infant seated in front of a modest hut. This could be the next scene in the same episode, in which the baby is confided to his new mother's care. It is clear that the author was not trying to render Antique reality. All the personages in the picture are dressed in typical early Renaissance clothes, such as the characteristic caps, tight trousers and short *guarnaca* coats. The man holding the baby has a long sword buckled to his belt and the city in the background resembles most mid-fifteenth century Italian cities. Given the context of these two scenes it would seem that this picture does indeed show the episode from Paris's life in which he is given as a newborn baby to a shepherd family<sup>40</sup>.

In his *Fabulae*, Hyginus not only writes about the prophecy that Hecuba and Priam's newborn son will bring Troy to ruin, but also how he was saved and the circumstances of his return to the bosom of his real family as a handsome young man<sup>41</sup>. The infant is condemned to death but a merciful servant leaves him in the forest where he is found by a family of shepherds who bring him up<sup>42</sup>. Paris returns to the bosom of his family thanks to the games which took place in Troy whither he went because of a shapely bull which was taken from his herd by Priam's servants and which he wanted to regain at all costs. When in the city, he enters the games, defeats all the other contestants and thereby (or thanks to his sister's vision) is recognized. According to other versions, also known in the Middle Ages, the tale of the bull contained yet another thread: one day a new bull appeared in Paris'

herd and defeated all his own bulls and although the animal did not belong to his herd, the shepherd placed the wreath of victory on its head. This is why he was deemed – and by the gods also – a fair judge and, in time, considered worthy of being an arbitrator in the venerable beauty contest<sup>43</sup>.

To return to Paris' infancy it should be noted that (e.g., in *Compendium historiae Troianae-Romanae*) it is Priam who decides that the baby should be killed, but the mother orders that a servant be charged with killing her newborn son is to give him to the shepherds, so that they can take care of him. In Armannino Giudice's *Fiorita*, Alexander is not killed but taken to some far-away country so that Hecuba will never be able to fathom out where he is. The baby is abandoned in a valley where it is found by shepherds and given to a woman who is awaiting her parturition and who looks after him with love and tenderness. It is, thus, quite probable that it was the *Compendium*, or some other text modelled thereon, which was the literary source of the picture.

The story of the abandonment of Paris is not one of the most popular themes in art. It was, however, of interest to Giorgione, but his painting of this has unfortunately disappeared and is only known from copies and an excellent engraving by David Teniers (**Fig. 7a**)<sup>44</sup>. It depicted the moment when Paris was found by the shepherds, as in the version described both in the *Fabulae* and *Fiorita*. Many other depictions of the myth were executed in Venice in the first half of the 15th century. They adorn caskets made of bone (sometimes even ivory) and wood by the Florentine – Venetian Embriachi family<sup>45</sup>. Some of these objects which probably originally served as gifts for young brides depict episodes from Paris' early life. The caskets housed in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford and the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna not only show the moment of the baby being delivered to the shepherd but also his birth, the scene in which he is being carried away from the city, and finally the scene in which the shepherd gives the baby to his new mother (**Fig. 8**). The cycle finishes with the bull episodes, the election of the most beautiful goddess and the abduction of Helen.

<sup>39</sup> This panel is mentioned but not reproduced in LANCKO-ROŃSKI 1905, p.13. It was unknown to Schubring, however, it is referred to by VAN MARLE 1928, vol. X, p.570 (without reproduction). It was first published by MIZIOŁEK 1995, p. 36, fig.26

<sup>40</sup> Such an interpretation was proposed by MIZIOŁEK 1995, note 86; *idem* 1997-1998, p. 113 and 116, fig. 20

<sup>41</sup> HYGINUS 1960, p. 82-83 (*Fabulae* XCI and XCII)

<sup>42</sup> Apollodoros, III, 12, 5, see APOLLODORO 1996, p. 263-265

<sup>43</sup> *EXCIDIVM TROIAE* 1944, p. 4; *Istorietta troiana* in: GORRA 1887, p. 381- 382

<sup>44</sup> PIGNATI 1978, p. 131 and 143, figs. 221, 224-225; ANDERSON 1997, p. 317

<sup>45</sup> SCHLOSSER 1899; MERLINI 1988, p. 267-282, esp. 274 and fig. 8. See also KING 1938, p. 69, note 37

The other versions also show the scene of the failed attempt to put the baby to the sword (Fig. 9).

The uniqueness of the Wawel picture is somewhat astonishing, even within the category of *cassone* paintings. The subject which is depicted cannot be found in any other example of Tuscan Renaissance art. As far as I know the only representations from this period are to be found on two small panels produced in Veneto which were once housed in a private collection in Milan; their photos are available in the Berenson Phototeca at I Tatti (Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, Florence-Settignano, (Fig. 7b-c)<sup>46</sup>. One of them depicts the moment of the finding of the abandoned son of Priam by the shepherds (as on the Teniers' engraving) while the others shows the scene of handling him to his new mother (as on the Lanckoroński panel). Bernard Berenson was of the opinion that both paintings were produced within the Giorgione school; he also assumed that these were originally fragments of a furniture and could, therefore, be included in the category of *cassoni* paintings.

### The dream of Paris and the election of the most beautiful goddess

The most interesting of the three Wawel paintings representing the story of Paris is the second one (Fig. 10). It shows two scenes taking place in a hilly area on the outskirts of a forest or in a clearing. In the first scene, on the left, a young man is asleep, he has a refined coiffure and his head is resting characteristically on his right hand. He is wearing black and red trousers, as is the man handing over the baby in the first picture, and a short yellow *guarnaca* with a hood. Three beautiful golden-haired ladies in long, colourful dresses have approached a stone well nearby. Two of them are shown in profile and seem to have their eyes fixed on the water, on the surface of which are diagonal lines which probably represent splashes of water. The goddesses are putting their hands in the water in a very symptomatic way, as if they want to wash them or rather take something out of it. The way in which the two scenes are arranged and the fact that they are located in a hilly, forest wilderness lends a certain air of mystery to the picture.

It was Schubring, and Van Marle in his wake, who first published the painting. They were both of the opinion that it depicted Paris and the three goddesses Hera, Athena and Aphrodite, although they did not explain its iconography<sup>47</sup>. Schubring pointed to Ovid's *Heroides* (Letter 5: *Ojnone to Paris*) as its literary source, but the text makes no mention of a sleeping Paris or the goddesses at the well. There was only one further, ambitious attempt to solve the enigma of the Lanckoroński panel, made by Fiona Healy in her book on Rubens' depictions of *the Judgement of Paris*. She attempted an in depth discussion not only of the great painter's works but also compelling representations of this subject in Renaissance art. Healy says: [...] *it is clear that the Lanckoroński panel illustrates two distinct aspects of the story leading up to the fateful decision: shepherd sleeps and the goddesses wash their hands, a scene which to my knowledge is unique*<sup>48</sup>. She also believes that the passage from Euripides' *Andromache* recounting that the goddesses took a bath in the stream before they appeared in front of Paris might be the painting's literary source<sup>49</sup>. However, even if Euripides' work was known in mid-fifteenth century Florence, it is hardly recognizable as the painting's literary source since it does not mention Paris' dream. Nevertheless, Healy is correct in stating that the picture is unique. We can agree with her opinion in one other point, which agrees with Schubring and Helmut Wohl's suggestion that the panel should be associated with the one depicting *The Judgement of Paris* housed in the Burrell Collection in Glasgow (Fig. 13)<sup>50</sup>, in which he is seated on a rock and is handing the golden apple to Aphrodite. However, before making a more in depth analysis of this painting, it is necessary to solve the mystery of the panel in the Lanckoroński collection. Here an important point, worthy of mention, is the fact that Hermes appears in neither picture.

Thus it was Dares the Phrygian who (in his *Excidio Troiae Historia*) first treated the *Judgement of Paris* as a dream-vision and not a real event<sup>51</sup>. In his version Paris is a hunter and not a shepherd. Like many other Medieval writers Dares knew nothing of Paris' childhood among the shepherds. He recounts the story very briefly: *while hunting in the woods on Mount Ida, he [Paris] had fallen asleep and dreamt as follows: Mercury*

<sup>46</sup> BERENSON 1957, p. 86; REID 1993, p. 818

<sup>47</sup> SCHUBRING 1923, no. 166, p. 261; VAN MARLE 1928, vol. X, p. 570, fig. 341

<sup>48</sup> HEALY 1997, p. 12-13, fig. 11. See also VIDAS 1997, p. 122-123, fig. 9

<sup>49</sup> The passage indicated by Healy is as follows: "These, when they came to the wooded glade on the mountainside, /washed

their bodies, gleaming white, /in water gushing from a spring; /then they came to Priam's son, /bidding high with spiteful words, /the rivals; the Cyprian won with her soft-spoken wiles, /a delight for the hearer /but a cruel upheaval /for the towers of Troy", quoted from STINTON 1965, p. 13-14

<sup>50</sup> SCHUBRING 1923, no. 165; WOHL 1980, no. 27, p. 154-155, plate 184

<sup>51</sup> TROJAN WAR 1966, p. 138-139 (chap. 7)

brought Juno, Venus, and Minerva to him to judge of their beauty. Then Venus promised, if he judged her most beautiful, to give him in marriage whoever was deemed the loveliest woman of Greece. Thus, finally, on hearing Venus' promise, he judged her most beautiful<sup>52</sup>. Dares even fails to mention the "apple of discord." Later, the dream-story was elaborated on by Benoît de Sainte-Maure and Guido delle Colonne. The former places the action at the well in the Cytherean Valley (Val des Cythariens) and emphasizes the fact that the golden apple had an inscription in Greek on it (a version repeated by Guido)<sup>53</sup>. In more than sixty verses dedicated to this event by Guido delle Colonne, Hermes gives the apple to Paris the hunter and narrates the story about the goddesses' dispute and their tempting promises<sup>54</sup>. After the verdict Paris immediately awakens. Many writers repeated Dares' version of the Judgement of Paris as a dream-vision including Benoît de Sainte-Maure, Guido delle Colonne and many authors writing in the 14th century such as Christine de Pisan<sup>55</sup>, Armannino Giudice<sup>56</sup> and Giovanni Boccaccio<sup>57</sup>.

However, the literary source of the Lanckoroński panel was most probably the *Istorietta troiana* written in the 13th century, but its earliest copy (bound together with Ovid's *Heroides*) comes from the beginning of the 14th century. It is largely based on *Le roman de Troie* by Benoît de Sainte-Maure. Nevertheless it does contain some important new elements<sup>58</sup>. For instance it recounts how Paris, exhausted during hunting, found a fountain (*una chiara fontana*), washed his hands in it and fell asleep close by. At another beautiful fountain nearby there appeared three goddesses who were quarrelling over a golden ball engraved with the words 'let the fairest have it' (*una palla d'oro, ove era scritto pulchriori detur, cioè Alla più belle sia data*) which had been thrown in their midst. Since they could not decide amongst themselves, they went to the forest in search of an arbiter. They soon came across the sleeping Paris, whom they knew to be a fair judge from the fight of the bulls. The goddesses roused Paris from his sleep and, having heard their promises, he gave a verdict which caused both Hera and Athena to be angry. Thus, there are two distinct episodes

– in the first a tired Paris lies down on the ground and falls asleep, and in the second he is an arbiter who is totally aware of his verdict. Therefore, the judgement cannot have been a vision in a dream but a real event, as written about by the ancient mythographers and poets. What is interesting is the absence of Hermes (the wedding of Thetis and Peleus also remains unmentioned) and the fact that the golden ball is thrown amongst the goddesses by unidentified forces – it simply falls from the sky. The judgment described in the *Istorietta* clearly refers to earlier sources (among them Benoît de Sainte-Maure, who mentions Paris' dream by the fountain), but the concept of the two fountains and, above all, the idea of Paris being awoken by the goddesses, is an original invention of *Istorietta*'s author. Also, the painter showed great imagination since he probably added yet another new element. It would seem that the water spraying over the well was a sign that the golden ball had fallen into it. No similar depiction is known to me except, perhaps, that on the *cassone* in the Palazzo Davanzati in Florence which will be discussed later (Fig. 17). Therefore it will not be easy to prove the hypothesis which has been put forward, although there is one more factor which speaks in its favour: the way in which the goddesses are putting their hands into the water suggests they want to take something out of it. In the next panel in this cycle which belongs to the Burrell Collection (Glasgow), a large ball appears in Paris' hand.

Several scholars have noticed that the Glasgow painting is one of the earliest examples in the art of the Italian Renaissance depicting totally naked goddesses (Fig. 13)<sup>59</sup>. Slender, long-legged and still slightly Gothic in appearance, the deities present the charms of their heavenly bodies while assuming different poses, as though taking part in a pantomime. The first is in three-quarter view facing the front, the second is shown almost frontally and the third in three-quarter view from behind. On the caskets from the Embrachi workshop, the goddesses sometimes appear stark naked (Fig. 14)<sup>60</sup>, but on the Florentine paintings from the first half of the fifteenth century, for instance on the *deschi da parto* ascribed

<sup>52</sup> BENOÎT DE SAINTE-MAURE 1998, p. 135

<sup>53</sup> GUIDO DELLE COLONNE 1974, p. 59-61 (chap. VI, 188-247). On representations of the sleeping Paris, see DE Tervarent 1946, p. 15-20

<sup>54</sup> GUIDO DELLE COLONNE 1974, p. 60-61 (VI, 205-253)

<sup>55</sup> CHRISTINE DE PISAN 1970, p. 73-75 (chap. LX)

<sup>56</sup> Armannino Giudice in: GORRA 1887, p. 541

<sup>57</sup> BOCCACCIO 1951, p. 302-303 (chap. VI, 22)

<sup>58</sup> *Istorietta troiana* in: GORRA 1887, p. 381-382. Similar

elements are to be found in *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César* being the oldest version of the chronicle of the world written in *volgare*, see BUCHTHAL 1971, p. 4-5; EHRHART 1987, pp. 62-63. Here neither the marriage of Tetis with Peleus nor the presence of Mercury are mentioned; as in the *Istorietta troiana* the goddesses wake up Paris and ask him to be the arbiter of their beauty.

<sup>59</sup> WOHL 1980, no. 27, p. 154-155, plate 184; HEALY 1997, p. 12-13

<sup>60</sup> SCHLOSSER 1899, plate after p. 262; MERLINI 1988, fig. 8

to an artist called the Master of the Judgement of Paris, they are fully dressed (Fig. 12)<sup>61</sup>. The same applies to the works of the Master of the Argonauts in the Fogg Art Museum or those of Botticelli (or his follower) in the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, produced in the last quarter of the 15th century<sup>62</sup>. At this point it is worth noting that the nudity of the goddesses is not a common subject either in the literature or in the art of this period. The first authors to mention their being naked at Paris' request were Ovid in his *Heroides*, Lucian in *The Judgement of the Goddesses* and Apuleius in *The Golden Ass*<sup>63</sup>. Dares, Benoît de Sainte-Maure, the *Istorietta troiana* and many other authors make no mention of this. Guido delle Colonne, however, does refer to it by describing the judgement as a dream in which Mercury, not the goddesses, informs Paris of the gifts he would obtain from each lady if he gave her the golden apple. So says Paris in Guido's book: *I, however, when I had heard of these promises and gifts from Mercury, replied to him that I would not give the truth in this judgment unless they all presented themselves naked to my sight, so that by my observation I might be able to consider the individual qualities of their bodies for a true judgment*<sup>64</sup>. What is interesting is that even though the earliest examples of the *Judgement of Paris* from the 14th century can be found in the manuscripts of the works by Benoît de Sainte-Maure and Christine de Pisan (*Epître d'Otbea*), most of the time they depict the scene as described by Guido, with naked or half-naked deities<sup>65</sup>. Once in a while a new element is added such as the fountain inspired by Benoît's text or (as some scholars have suggested) the description of the fountain in the *Roman de la Rose* (although it contains no mention of the Judgement of Paris)<sup>66</sup>. A beautiful, Gothic fountain (and not a well) adorns a small terracotta tondo dating from the mid-15th century and housed in the Schweizerisches Landesmuseum in Zurich (Fig. 11). The composition is very decorative, due to the large number of banderoles covered with inscriptions containing the words of the goddesses and Mercury who appears in this painting. The author of the terracotta took great pains to accentuate the charms of the virtually naked god-

esses who are wearing only ropes of pearls and sophisticated headdresses. The sleeping Paris, lying in a flower-filled meadow, is neither a shepherd nor hunter but typically of transalpine art, a knight in armour armed with a sword.

Before trying to demonstrate that the paintings from the Lanckoroński collection (*The dream of Paris*) and the Burrell Collection (*The Judgement of Paris*) have much in common with the paintings adorning the front of the *cassone* from Verona (Figs. 1 and 19-20), some other examples of this subject in Italian art should also be mentioned. One of these is the Embriachi *cofanetto* housed in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (another almost identical one belongs to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London); it shows two scenes referring to the election of the most beautiful goddess (Fig. 14)<sup>68</sup>. In the first of the paintings the three goddesses are dressed, and in the second one they are stark naked. Only Paris' strange pose, who is recumbent and pointing at the deities with his left hand, is the same. There is no doubt that both paintings depict the sleeping Paris who, as described by Guido delle Colonne, decided that he could only judge the goddesses' beauty if they appeared to him stark naked. There is an interesting analogy between these scenes and a *cassone* front by Francesco di Giorgio Martini dating from circa 1470, housed in the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles (Fig. 15)<sup>69</sup>. In this picture, which has been considerably repainted, only Aphrodite is completely naked, while Hera (in the centre) and Athena (identifiable due to the shield at her side) are wearing some clothing. Paris is recumbent, in golden armour, and although his eyes are open he is undoubtedly asleep. This is obvious not only from his pose but also by the fact that he is not looking at the goddesses but in another direction. It could, therefore, be said that the painting contains two scenes in one. A further connection between these representations and both the Wawel and Burrell paintings is the absence of Hermes who is also not present on the *deschi da parto* by the so-called Master of the Judgement of Paris, the *fianco* in the Rudolfinum in Prague<sup>70</sup>, an woodcuts adorning the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (Fig. 16)<sup>71</sup>, as well as on

<sup>61</sup> NERI LUSANNA 1989, figs. 10-11; DE CARLI 1997, nos. 21-22

<sup>62</sup> Both paintings are discussed by HEALY 1997, figs. 8-9

<sup>63</sup> See notes 19 and 22

<sup>64</sup> GUIDO DELLE COLONNE 1974, p. 60-61 (chap. VI, 235-245)

<sup>65</sup> EHRHART 1987, p. 211-229, figs. 1-6, see also BUCHTHAL 1971, p. 37-39, figs. 34a-b

<sup>66</sup> EHRHART 1987, p. 221

<sup>67</sup> DAMISCH 1996, fig. 38

<sup>68</sup> MERLINI 1988, fig. 8. The cofanetto in the Victoria and Albert Museum is reproduced and discussed by HINZ 1993

<sup>69</sup> TOLEDANO 1987, no. 36, p. 96. The artist also produced a bronze plaque with the same subject which is now housed in the National Gallery of Art, Washington. This time Paris is seated on a rock and is listening to one of the goddesses, see *idem* no. 49, fig. 129. For the Getty *cassone*, see also important observations by Caciorgna in: CACIORGNA, GUERRINI 2003, p. 193-201

<sup>70</sup> SCHUBRING 1923, no. 163

<sup>71</sup> FRANCESCO COLONNA 1964, p. 157

two *cassone* fronts which will be discussed soon. The *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, especially the scene in the background which probably represents Paris waking up, is worth mentioning. In the foreground with a wreath on his head he is handing over the golden ball to Aphrodite, thus irking the other two goddesses.

Finally, there is a badly preserved *cassone* front in the Palazzo Davanzati in Florence (Fig. 17)<sup>72</sup>. This panel, which has been cut off at the bottom, was at a later stage inserted into a modern chest of a rather poor quality. It is adorned with three compartments containing narrative scenes put among *pastiglia dorata*. The first compartment shows a polygonal fountain in which a lady is bathing, while two other women are standing nearby; in the sky zone there is another female figure but only the upper part of her body can be seen. In the second compartment the three ladies, this time fully dressed, are walking through the forest in a procession towards the right; the first of them is holding a small golden ball. In the last compartment they are standing in front of a young man who is seated and are talking to him or trying to wake him up. This panel has not been mentioned very often in the relevant literature; Schubring was of the opinion that it represented scenes from the myth of Paris. In the light of our previous considerations it can be assumed that the lady in the sky in the first scene is Eris throwing the golden apple into the fountain. In the second scene, as in the text of the *Istorietta troiana*, the goddesses are strolling through the forest with the ball in search of a judge who can put an end to their dispute. Originally the chest formed a pair together with another chest probably adorned with representations of successive episodes in the story: they may have depicted the real judgement over the nude goddesses, the journey to Sparta, or the abduction of Helen. Paradoxically, as if continuation of the Palazzo Davanzati *cassone* narration can be found on the front of another chest, this time surely of Florentine origin. On this chest, which once belonged to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the narration starts with the *Judgement of Paris*, continues with the scenes at sea (perhaps the expedition to Sparta, or the journey to Cytherea) and most probably finishes with a depiction of the abduction of Helen (Fig. 18)<sup>73</sup>.

The catalogue of the Boehler antiques shop contains a reference to the Verona *cassone* once belonging

to the collection of Karol Lanckoroński (Figs. 1 and 19): “The right painting depicts a young man with a lute at his side, three nude women before him, one handing a ball pointing at it with her raised finger, a landscape with hills, trees, fortresses and towns in the back. The left painting depicting the same young man with the three nude women handing the first one the ball. The rocky landscape with the sea and a ship in the background inhabiting small figures, some fighting with each other. [...] Schubring interpreted the paintings as depictions of Paris who is being given the golden apple by Jupiter (on the right) and Paris who is handing the golden apple to Aphrodite (on the left). These depictions, however, do not represent the usual iconography. It can be therefore assumed that the scenes refer to a humanist novel, in particular if one sees our chest in the context of its pair in the Princely Collections of Lichtenstein, Vaduz, which displays scenes from the life of a woman. These representations do not seem to be references to mythology or history<sup>74</sup>. Thus there is no doubt that Schubring never saw this *cassone* and this is where his mistake about Jupiter originated, since he, of course does not appear in this painting<sup>75</sup>. In the light of the arguments presented above it seems highly unlikely that the artist was inspired by a text ‘of a humanist novel’, as the author of the Boehler catalogue description suggests, but rather by the version contained in the *Istorietta troiana* or another text of the kind. It would then be possible that the picture on the right simply shows Paris being woken up as indicated by his passive behaviour (hands on his knees and his head sloping downwards), and the instrument lying on the ground. Another fact worth noticing is that in this picture the goddesses are not totally naked since their *pudenda* are covered up by sashes. The sashes are absent in the left-hand scene, which is evidently not the first painting in the narrative sequence but the second. Here we can see the verdict being given and Paris, standing with his left foot forward, handing over the golden ball. If this interpretation is correct, then the iconography of the painting on the *cassone* front from the Boehler antique shop is similar to that of the Burrell and Wavel panels. The author of the chest from Verona, or the person commissioning the chest, must have been a great admirer of nude females, since in both scenes the goddesses reveal their nakedness in all its sublimity.

<sup>72</sup> MUSEO DI PALAZZO DAVANZATI 1972, p. 199-200, fig. 49. See also SCHUBRING 1923, no. 905, dated ca. 1440 and attributed to the Florentine School.

<sup>73</sup> ZERI, GARDNER 1971, p. 103-105

<sup>74</sup> Boehler catalogue (as in note 5) with reference to

SCHUBRING 1923 (1915), no. 648

<sup>75</sup> In the illustration to be found in SHUBRING 1923, plate CXL, in fact one can easily be misled with the identifications of the dramatis personae.

Depictions of the *Judgement of Paris* appeared in the art of the Quattrocento not only on *cassoni* but also on *spalliere*. One of these, which unfortunately has not survived, was painted by Paolo Uccello and was to have adorned the apartments of the Medici palace in Florence on Via Larga (now Via Cavour)<sup>77</sup>. Whether the goddesses were depicted as being naked or dressed, as in the pictures under discussion, is not known. In spite of their small format and the fact that they were made in the early phases of the Renaissance, the paintings in the Lanckoroński and the Burrell Collection are perhaps the most charming version of the subject in the art of the Quattrocento.

### The Abduction of Helen

The third panel with the story of Paris, currently housed in the Wawel Castle, is not particularly mysterious (Fig. 20). The number of characters portrayed is here reduced to a minimum; apart from Paris, who is effortlessly carrying Helen (she resembles more a statue than a real woman), there is only one other male figure, who is running in the direction of the ship on the seashore. Paris' comrade, or his servant, is armed with a long spear and is only a step ahead of his master. The ship they are heading for has characteristic stern shaped like a shed covered with a ridge roof without coping. In the upper left hand corner of the painting there is a monopteros supported by Doric columns and a statue on a high plinth in the centre. These elements clearly indicate that it is a depiction of the abduction from Cythera. According to Dares Helen's abduction took place in the temple of Apollo and Diana<sup>78</sup> or perhaps that of Venus, as described by Guido delle Colonne<sup>79</sup> and the author of the *Istorietta troiana*<sup>80</sup> and not in Sparta, as described in the works of Ancient mythographers. The scene is a kind of *pars pro toto* of the whole event which includes the despoilation of the temple's treasures and the battle

against the Greeks who defended it. As mentioned previously, many authors (such as Guido delle Colonne and Arnannino Giudice) claimed that Helen boarded the ship of her own free will<sup>81</sup>. Almost the same version can be found in the *Istorietta troiana*, but in this particular case Menelaus' wife hesitates and in the end says: *the force is on your side (la forza è tua)*. She lets Paris take her by the hand and lead her towards the ship ("[...] *e Paris di cio' la rende grazie e presela per mano eccon sua compagnia la condusse infino alle navi*")<sup>82</sup>. Boccaccio, however, describes her resistance explicitly; it is his description which was most probably shown in the painting in question; his version reads: "*E così, avendo preso la citta presene Elena, resistente quanto potea*"<sup>83</sup>.

The *Abduction of Helen* was much less popular in the art of the Renaissance than the *Judgement of Paris*<sup>84</sup>. There are, however, some interesting depictions of this scene which deserve to be cited here, for instance a small panel (most probably the *fianco* of a *cassone*), dated ca. 1440, housed in the Narodní Galerie, Prague<sup>85</sup>. Only Paris and Helen can be seen on the temple's portico; Paris – although not so effortlessly this time – is carrying the woman whom Venus promised and who is obviously resisting. As in the Lanckoroński panel there is also a ship, but this time it is situated on the left hand side of the painting. There are some analogies to the Wawel paintings in two other depictions of this subject housed in the National Gallery in London (Figs. 21-22) also executed in the mid-15th century. The first is a work by the Master of the Judgement of Paris, while the second is ascribed to a follower of Fra Angelico<sup>86</sup>. Both paintings depict a temple – on the former it is rather small and dedicated to Apollo, whereas on the latter it is much larger with a statue of Venus, and there is a ship on the seashore and many participants to the event. The scene on the *desco da parto* depicting slender, elegant women, remains noticeably Gothic. The panel by Fra Angelico's follower is similar in style to the panel from the

<sup>76</sup> After SCHUBRING 1923, the only illustration of this *cassone* is available in LUCAS CRANACH 1994, p. 5; it depicts only the right compartment of the *cassone* front in question. Both this illustration and the transparencies sent to me by the present owner of the panel leave no doubt that this *cassone* must have recently been cleaned and restored.

<sup>77</sup> See BORSI 1992, p. 308 ff., cat. no. 14

<sup>78</sup> See DARES OF PHRYGIA 1873, p. 11 ff.; TROJAN WAR 1966, p. 141-142

<sup>79</sup> GUIDO DELLE COLONNE 1974, p. 70-74 (chap. VI, 70-320). The Temple of Apollo is mentioned in the *Fiorita*, see Arnannino Giudice in: GORRA 1887, p. 543

<sup>80</sup> *Istorietta Troiana*, in: GORRA 1887, p. 386

<sup>81</sup> See note 24. For the image of Helen in European literature see BACKÈS 1984

<sup>82</sup> *Istorietta Troiana*, in: GORRA 1887, p. 387-388

<sup>83</sup> BOCCACCIO 1972, p. 430. Cf., however, BOCCACCIO 1963, p. 75

<sup>84</sup> For depictions of this subject in the art of the early modern period see DE TERVARENT 1946, p. 21-24

<sup>85</sup> SCHUBRING 1923, no. 164

<sup>86</sup> Both are reproduced and discussed by DE CARLI 1997, p. 27-28 and 108-109. See also NERI LUSANNA 1989, p. 416, fig. 8. Some of the authors ascribe this panel to Benozzo Gozzoli, see PITTURA DI LUCE 1990, p. 109-117, fig. on p. 116

Lanckoroński collection, but is of a higher artistic quality and much better preserved. There is a great tumult, yet without any visible signs of a battle, despite the presence of many witnesses; Paris is carrying the elegant and very beautiful Helen over his shoulder, with other Greeks in his wake – some are walking towards the ship carrying the women who have already been abducted, while others are trying to follow their example. Francesco di Giorgio Martini also depicted this subject ca. 1470, although this time not on a *cassone* front but on a *spalliera* which, unfortunately, was cut into pieces<sup>87</sup>. His work also clearly shows an abduction and not Helen voluntarily making her way to the ship. Evidently the authors – or the clients who commissioned the paintings which served as wedding gifts – preferred more dramatic scenes. According to *Li nuptiali*, by Marco Antonio Altieri, dating back to the beginning of the 16th century, the kidnapping of women (*rapimento, ratto*) was nothing but a presage to the wedding<sup>88</sup>. This is what happened to the daughters of Leucippus, the Sabines and Chloris, raped by Zephyr who later married her. When commissioning the scenes from the myth of Paris and Helen, it was as if the 15th century Italians did not want to be reminded of Homer's words about Aphrodite's 'gift of debauchery' (*Iliad*, XXIV, 25-30) or about the adultery, which is accentuated in many versions of the myth. They were obviously fascinated by the beauty of Paris and Helen. It is no coincidence that the paintings depicting a handsome young man with a beautiful, naked girl which adorned the inside of *cassone* lids are sometimes identified with Paris (**Fig. 23**) and Helen. In his discussion on subjects suitable for the bedroom, Leone Battista Alberti wrote the following: "[...] in that apartment which is peculiar to the master of the family and his wife, we should take care that nothing be painted but the most comely and beautiful faces; which we are told may be of no small consequence to the conception of the Lady,

and the beauty of the children"<sup>89</sup>. Ernst H. Gombrich also refers to this semi-magical power of the visual arts in his study on Apollonio di Giovanni's *cassoni*<sup>91</sup>.

### The authorship and the original function of the Wawel paintings

What was the original function of the paintings from the Lanckoroński and Burrel collections and who was their author? Schubring and Van Merle attributed them to an anonymous, still enigmatic painter called the Master of Paris<sup>92</sup>. Helmut Wohl suggested they were made in the workshop of Domenico Veneziano<sup>94</sup>. I myself originally believed that Domenico di Francesco (1417-1491), known as Domenico di Michelino (from the name of his Florentine master, the *cassone* painter)<sup>94</sup> might have been their author. Domenico di Michelino's oeuvre is mentioned in written sources since 1440. According to recent research, in the mid-15th century he made several *cassoni*, preserved to date, housed for example in the Musée du Petit Palais in Avignon and in a private collection in Switzerland<sup>95</sup>. Comparing the Wawel paintings, especially the scene showing the *Abduction of Helen*, with the scene of the *Escape of Theseus and Hyppolita* on the *cassone* from the latter collection, some similarities can be seen in the way the people, mountains, trees and even the ship with the characteristic shed-shaped construction are depicted (**Fig. 24**). However, a more in depth study of the Wawel paintings and the pictures by Michelino in Avignon and those in the collection in Switzerland shows that the former are much more refined and of a much higher artistic quality. It would, thus, seem that Helmut Wohl's suggestion is to some degree correct.

Domenico Veneziano (Domenico di Bartolomeo da Venezia, who worked in Florence between 1438 and 1461) probably came from Venice and was one of the founders of the modern Florentine painting<sup>96</sup>. His works

<sup>87</sup> BISOGNI 1976, p. 44-46

<sup>88</sup> ALTIERI 1873, p. 62

<sup>89</sup> SCHUBRING 1923, nos. 156-157, 184-185, 289-290

<sup>90</sup> ALBERTI, *De Architectura*, book IX, 4, quoted after LYDECKER 1987, p. 75

<sup>91</sup> GOMBRICH 1966, p. 21

<sup>92</sup> SCHUBRING 1923, nos. 165-167; VAN MARLE 1928, vol. X, p. 570. They ascribed several paintings to this anonymous artist. It should not be mistaken with another painter known as the Master of the Judgment of Paris, cf. NERI LUSANNA 1989, p. 409-426

<sup>93</sup> WOHL 1980, p. 154-155, 192-193 and figs. 185-186

<sup>94</sup> COLNAGHI 1986 (first edn. 1928), p. 181-182; *PITTURA IN ITALIA* 1987, vol. 2, p. 619 with bibliography. For an identification of the painter of the panels in question with Domenico di Michelino, see MIZIOŁEK 1997-1998, p. 116

<sup>95</sup> For the *cassone* in Switzerland see FREULER 1991, cat. no. 96, fig. on p. 245-246 with a wrong interpretation as being the *Rape of Helen*; it was rightly deciphered as the *Story of Theseus with Hyppolita* by CALLMANN 1995, p. 37. The literary source is Boccaccio's *Teseida*, I, 91-143, see BOCCACCIO 1972, vol. 2, p. 285-299. Domenico di Michelino's *cassone* in Avignon is reproduced and discussed by LACLOTTE, MOGNETTI 1987, nos. 86-87; see also KANTER 2000

<sup>96</sup> CHRISTIANSEN, s.v. Domenico Veneziano in: DA 1996, vol. 9, p. 97-104

dated ca. 1440, such as the *Homage of the Magi* in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin, are still part of the Gothic International style because of their decorativeness, but they are also characterized by a brilliantly painted landscape, the wonderful composition and bright colouring. The altar of Saint Lucy holds a special place in the artist's production and the main panel is housed in the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence, while the *predelli* a panels can be found in several European and American museums<sup>97</sup>. One of these – depicting *Saint John the Baptist in the wilderness* – in the National Gallery of Art in Washington (Kress Collection, **Fig. 25**), seems to provide some interesting analogies to the paintings discussed herein: a rocky landscape, the way in which the leaves of the bushes and trees are painted and even the manner in which the people are depicted. However, any real attempt at comparing the Lanckoroński paintings with the works of Domenico Veneziano will only be possible when the former have undergone conservation to remove all the dirt and layers of discoloured varnish.

Schubring already suggested that the panels with *The Sleeping Paris* and *The Abduction of Helen* derive from the same *cassone* as *The Judgement of Paris* in the Burrell Collection, but he was convinced they adorned the front of the chest. Van Marle and Callmann were of the opinion that they constituted the *lateralis*, that is the side panels of this *cassone*<sup>98</sup>. Like Fiona Healy, these scholars were unaware of the existence of another painting, already discussed above, showing *The Infancy of Paris*. It would seem that all four panels, which are of almost the same size and clearly constitute the same cycle, could not have had any other function than that of the side panels of a pair of chests commissioned on the occasion of the same nuptials. Could they have been the *lateralis* of *cassoni* ordered in 1447 and executed a year later for the wedding of Marco Parenti and Caterina Strozzi?<sup>99</sup> It is known from written sources that it was Domenico Veneziano who painted the chests for this wedding. The front panels have not survived or perhaps have not yet been identified. The most important part of the *cassoni* decoration i.e. the fronts was probably executed by the master himself, while the *lateralis* were painted by his collaborators based perhaps on a design by Domenico. Nevertheless, this fascinating issue requires a separate study.

## The myth of Paris in the context of Renaissance Kraków

One of the aims of my research on the Lanckoroński collection of domestic paintings is to show how much Kraków and the Castle on Wawel hill, built by Italian artists in the first half of the 16th century, have an 'aura' of their own which the gift donated by Professor Karolina Lanckorońska complements. A few years after the wedding of the Italian princess Bona Sforza d'Argona with the Polish monarch Sigismund I in the Wawel apartments (it took place in April 1518), a play entitled *Iudicium Paridis* (which had been written 20 years before by the German humanist Jacob Locher, Philomusus) was presented. It was staged in February 1522 under the direction of the master Stanisław of Łowicz, while the king went to Lithuania. As if in an ancient theatre, all the parts were played by men – students of the Kraków Academy, the 'inhabitants of the Jerusalem Dormitory'; the part of Discord was played by Jakub Krzyski, Pallas by Jerzy Latański, Juno by Szymon of Łowicz, Venere by Paweł Głogowski etc<sup>100</sup>. The play begins with the scene of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis and finishes with the abduction of Helen which presages the outbreak of the war between the Greeks and the Trojans. In this version of the story Mercury orders Paris to take the golden apple and give it to the most beautiful goddess and asks him to be a fair judge and not to be deceived by their 'false gifts'<sup>101</sup>. The Wawel spectacle must have been an extraordinary event. Already in the January of that same year the entire Latin text of the drama had been published (and what is more, it was translated into Polish and frequently staged for the general public, yet the translation was published only in 1542). The title page was decorated with a fitting woodcut depicting the judgement as a dream-vision (**Fig. 26**)<sup>102</sup>, modelled on the 1508 engraving by Lucas Cranach the Elder known, among others, from the copy housed in the Muzeum Narodowe in Warsaw. The Cranach engraving shows a mature Paris on the left with his horse (which is mentioned by Guido delle Colonne), while Mercury and the three goddesses approach from the right. Here, Paris is neither a shepherd nor a hunter, but a knight in armour. The difference between the Kraków illustration and its prototype lies in the fact that it does not depict Paris' steed

<sup>97</sup> PITTURA DI LUCE 1990, p. 65-71

<sup>98</sup> VAN MARLE 1927, p. 570; CALLMANN, s.v. *Cassone* in: DA 1996, vol. 6, p. 3

<sup>99</sup> For the wedding of this couple and the ordering of marriage chests for it, see PHILLIPS 1987, p. 40-43

<sup>100</sup> KRÓL, MROZIŃSKA, RASZEWSKI 1954, p. 3-22. For the myth of Troy in Poland see LEWARTOWSKI 2002, p. 1209-1219

<sup>101</sup> TEATR POLSKIEGO RENESANSU 1988, p. 39-65

<sup>102</sup> IUDICIUM PARIDIS 1522; MIZIOŁEK 2001, p. 300-316, fig. 5

and that Paris himself is a young man with a serene face. The title page leaves no doubt that the denouement of the play and, most probably, of the woodcut which decorates it, was taken from the above-cited work by Fulgentius: *Iudicium Paridis de pomo aureo inter tres deas, Palladem, Iunonem, Venerem, de triplici hominum vita contemplativa, activa ac voluptaria* [“The Judgement of Paris over the goddesses Pallas, Iuno and Venere over the golden apple, that is of the three ways in which a human can live: contemplative, active and pleasure-seeking”]. An unknown reader – who defaced this copy of Locher’s work, and was oblivious of the moral of this scene, tried to conceal the nudity of the goddesses by smudging their groins with a pencil. It should be added that in the fifteenth and at the beginning of the sixteenth century this version of the *Judgement of Paris* became the subject of many paintings and xylographs by artists from Northern Europe<sup>103</sup>. Paris was depicted as a man in armour probably because most of the writings cited above refer to the war and furthermore causes, and in the art of the countries north of the Alps from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century the warriors were usually shown as knights in armour, and not only in the battle scenes. *The Judgement of Paris as a dream-vision* also became popular in simple artefacts, as proven by the recent publication of a tile dating from the late 15th century, found at the foot of the Lech Hill in Gniezno<sup>104</sup>. It is the earliest known depiction of this subject in Polish art; it predates the woodcut which decorates the Kraków edition of Jacob Locher’s play by about fifty years. Nevertheless, it is immediately obvious that the image on the tile is much more medieval than the scene in the woodcut. The Mercury on the tile is recognizable only by the context and the comparative material, as he has no attributes, whereas in the illustration on the title page of *Iudicium Paridis*, his headpiece is almost a real *petazos*, i.e. a winged hat, as in ancient art.

The rather insignificant works by self-taught artificers from the late 15th and early 16th centuries can be treated as a prelude to the rise of the new art of humanism (created mostly by the Italians) in the times of Sigismund I, when numerous themes and motifs from antiquity were depicted in the *all’antica* style which was

elaborated in Florence in the late Quattrocento. The appearance of the *Judgement of Paris* in Polish artistic culture around 1500 is not at all surprising. The fact that the Polish version of the *Tale of Troy* was published two or even three times is proof of its popularity. The compositions by Dares and Guido were read in Poland long before the sixteenth century and the preserved codices date back to the 14th or the beginning of the 15th century. The *Historia destructionis Troiae* was referred to, among others, by a professor of the Kraków Academy, Adam Grzymała of Poznań. A manuscript from his library executed in 1441 survives to this day in the Jagellonian Library (Ms. no. 2193).

To come back to the panels by Domenico Veneziano’s follower, it should be noted that what connects them with the Kraków woodcut from 1522 is the magic of the dream-vision and the goddesses’ nudity. Although, the painting with the central scene – *The Judgement of Paris* – is housed in the Burrell Collection and not in the Wawel the later is in possession of the depiction of the *Dream of Paris*, which is unique in the whole art of the Italian Renaissance. Its ‘aura’ of the cult of the antiquity and its myths, seen in the context of the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance, is similar to the xylograph on the front page of the play by Locher, which was adapted so exquisitely by Stanisław of Łowicz. However, while the Florentine painter tried his best to depict the Paris story without any implied meanings and allusions, the Kraków engraving emphasises more the moral values, as does the staging of *Iudicium Paridis*, which is more of a moral play than a genuine humanistic work.

### Postscriptum

Only when the present paper went to press I could read Michele Tomasi’s paper entitled „Miti antichi e riti nuziali: sull’iconografia e la funzione dei cofanetti degli Embriachi (‘Iconographica’, II, 2003, p. 126-145) in which are to be found interesting observations concerning the story of Paris in the literature and the visual arts of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

<sup>103</sup> See DAMISCH 1996, figs. 33, 35-36, 38, 40-47

<sup>104</sup> MIZIOŁEK 2001, p. 300-316, fig. 1; LEWARTOWSKI 2002, p. 1210

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Fig. 1. *Cassone* from Verona with scenes depicting the myth of Paris, tempera and *pastiglia dorata* on poplar wood, ca 1450, once part of the Lanckoroński collection, now in a private collection



Fig. 1. Portrait of an Emperor, side of the *cassone* from Verona, ca 1450, once part of the Lanckoroński collection, now in a private collection

PLATE 2



Fig. 3. *The Italian Study in Lanckroński's Viennese Palace on Jacquingasse 18*, photograph from the beginning of the 20th century



Fig. 4. Rudolf von Alt, *Karol Lanckoroński and Wilhelm von Hartl in Lanckoroński's Viennese residence on Schenkenstrasse 10*, 1869, watercolour, current whereabouts unknown

Fig. 5. *Studiolo* in the Royal Wawel Castle, northern wall



Fig. 6. Domenico Veneziano Workshop (?), *The childhood of Paris*, tempera on wood, 46 cm x 53.2 cm, ca 1450, Kraków, Royal Wawel Castle, inventory no. 7917



PLATE 4



Fig. 7a. David Teniers, engraving after Giorgione's painting of the *Birth of Paris*

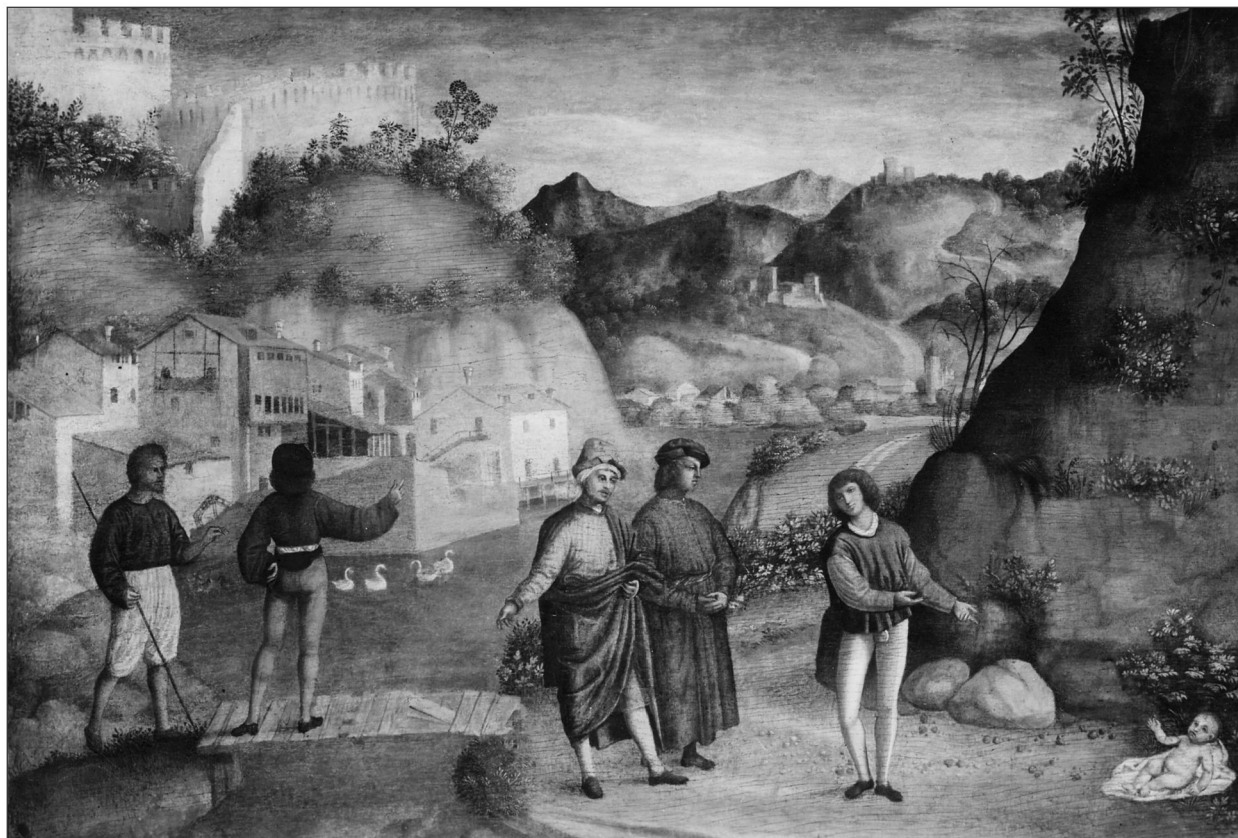


Fig. 7b. School of Giorgione, *The Infant Paris found on Mount Ida*, once in a private collection in Milan



Fig. 7c. School of Giorgione, *The handing of Infant Paris to a Nurse*, once in a private collection in Milan



Fig. 8. Workshop of Embriachi, *Scenes from the life of Paris*, casket (betrothal box), carved bone elements on a wooden core

PLATE 6



Fig. 9. Workshop of Embriachi, *Scenes from the life of Paris*, casket (betrothal box), carved bone elements on a wooden core



Fig. 10. Domenico Veneziano Workshop (?), *Paris's Dream-Vision and the three goddesses by the well*, tempera on wood, ca 1450, Kraków, Royal Wawel Castle



Fig. 11. *The Judgment of Paris*, terracotta, third quarter of the 15th century, Zurich, Schweizerisches Landes Museum



Fig. 12. Master of the Judgment of Paris, *The Judgment of Paris*, desco da parto, tempera on wood, ca 1430, Florence, Bargello

PLATE 8

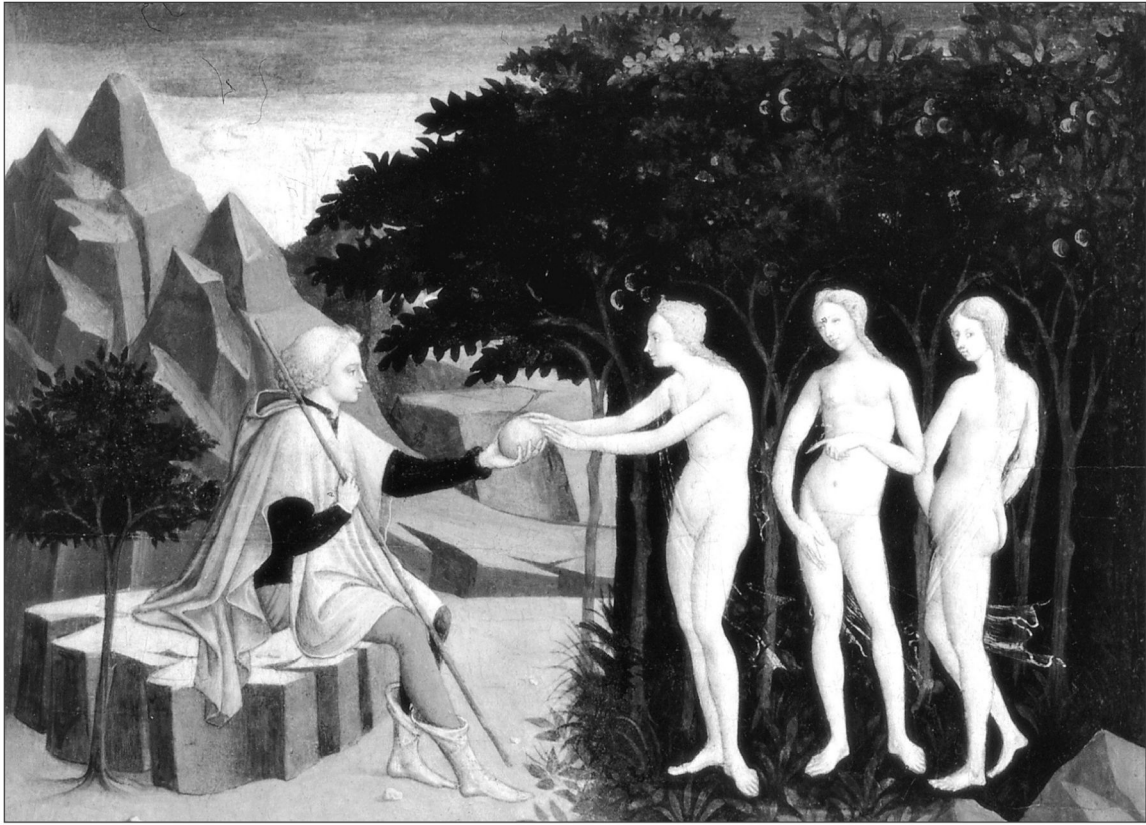


Fig. 13. Domenico Veneziano Workshop (?), *The Judgment of Paris*, tempera on wood, ca 1450, Glasgow, Burrel Collection

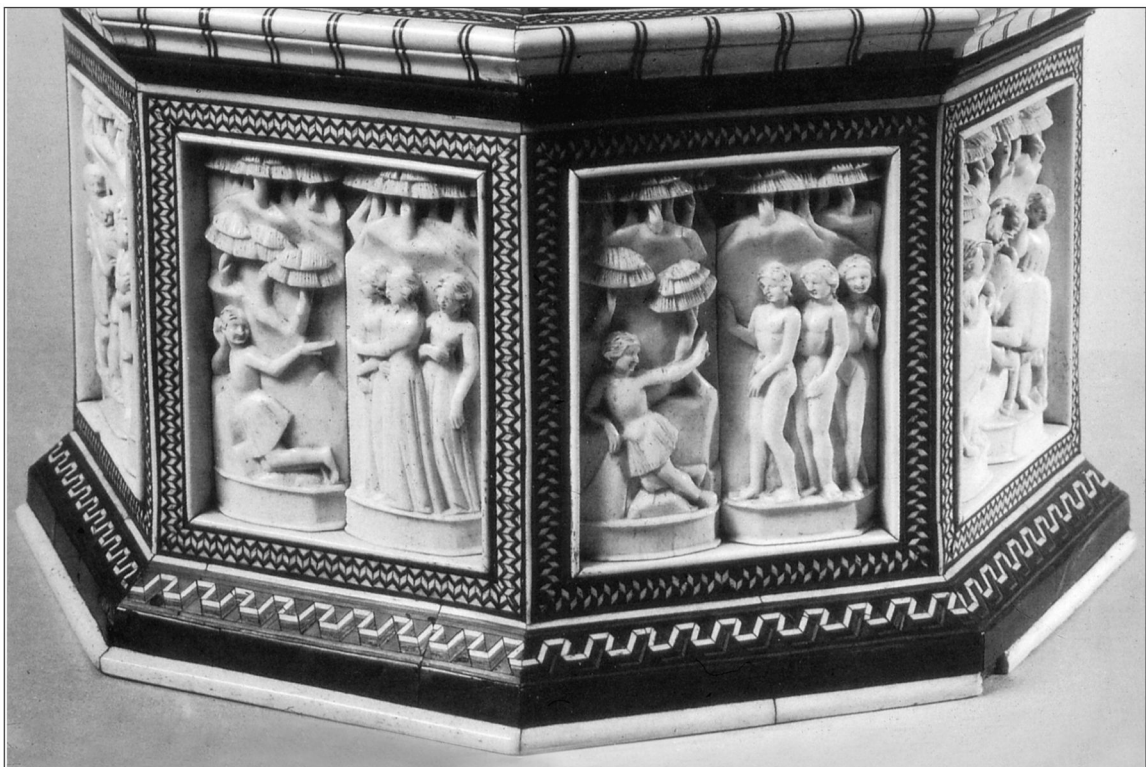


Fig. 14. Embriachi, *The Judgment of Paris*, casket (betrothal box), carved bone elements on a wooden core, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum



Fig. 15. Francesco di Giorgio Martini, *The Judgment of Paris as a dream-vision*, fragment of a *casone* front, tempera on wood, ca 1470, Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum



Fig. 16. Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, Venice 1499, *The Judgment of Paris*, woodcut

PLATE 10



Fig. 17. *Cassone* with scenes from *The Story of Paris*, tempera and *pastiglia dorata*, ca 1430, Florence, Palazzo Davanzati



Fig. 18. *Cassone* front with scenes from *The Judgment of Paris*, tempera on poplar wood, mid-fifteenth c., New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art



Fig. 19. Awakening of *Paris* and the *Judgement of Paris*, front of the *cassone* from Verona, detail of fig. 1



Fig. 20. Domenico Veneziano Workshop (?), *The Rape of Helen*, tempera on wood, 43.4 cm x 50.3 cm, ca. 1450, Kraków, Royal Wawel Castle, inventory no. 7931



Fig. 21. Master of the Judgment of Paris, *The Rape of Helen, desco da parto*, tempera on wood, ca 1430, London, National Gallery

PLATE 12



Fig. 22. Follower of Beato Angelico, *The Rape of Helen*, tempera on wood, ca 1440, London, National Gallery



Fig. 23. *Paris*, the inside of a *cassone lid*, tempera on wood, mid-fifteenth c., Florence, Museo Horn

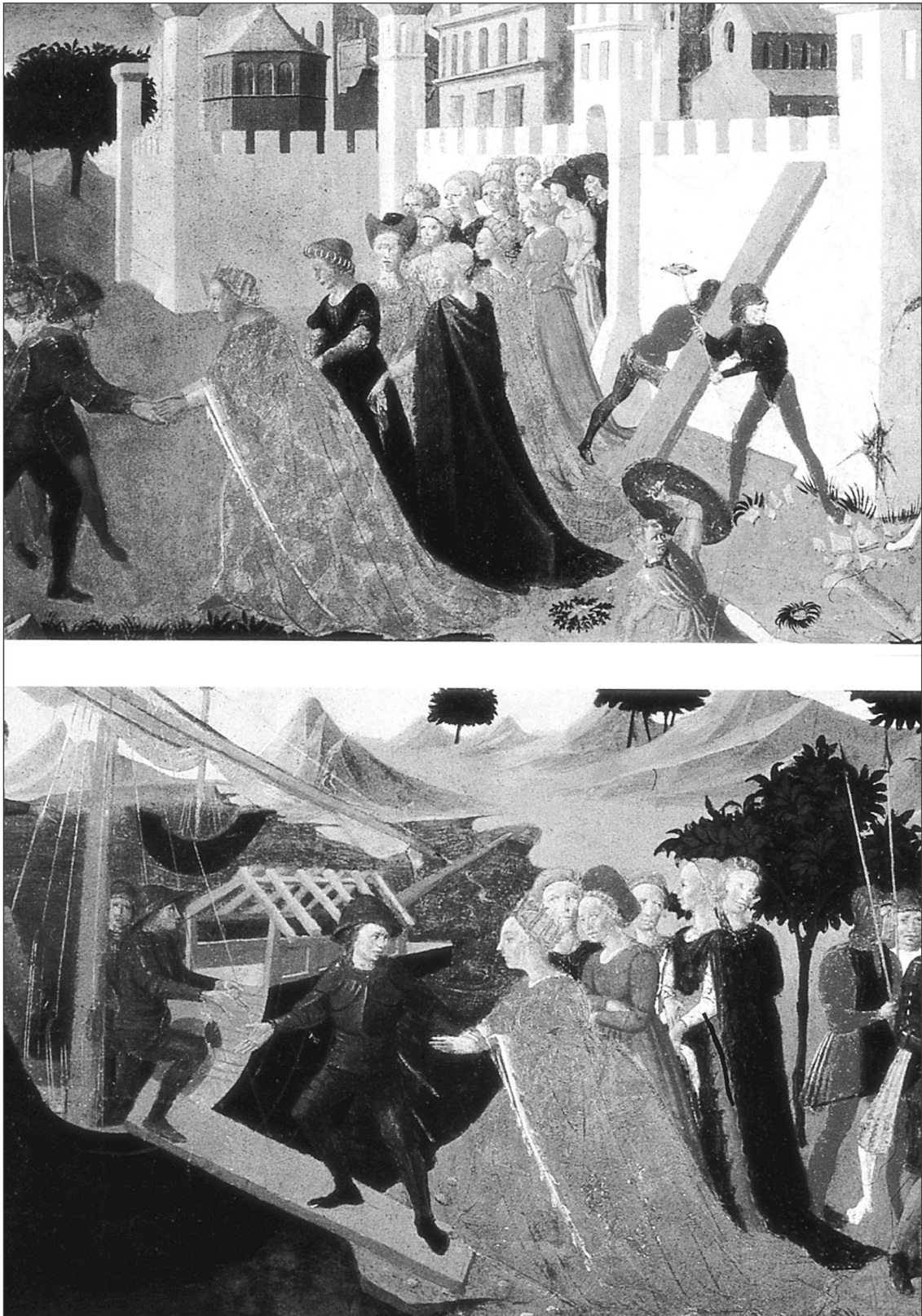


Fig. 24. Domenico di Michelino, *The Flight of Theseus and Hippolyta*, beginning of the second half of the 15th century, fragment of a *cassone*, from a private collection in Switzerland

PLATE 14



Fig. 25. Domenico Veneziano, *John the Baptist in the Wilderness*, tempera on wood, ca 1445, Washington, National Gallery of Art



Fig. 26. Title Page of *Iudicium Paridis* by Loher, Kraków 1522, Warsaw, Biblioteka Narodowa