

Common Points of Etruscan Women and Assyrian Trade Colonies and Late Hittite Period Women in Terms of Social Position In Written and Visual Resources¹

¹ (This article was taken from parts of PhD thesis in continue titled "Women Iconography in Etruscan Sarcophagi and Wall Paintings")

² Işık Albasan

² PhD Student, Department of Classical Archaeology, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, TURKEY)

ABSTRACT

Etruscan written and visual resources provide the opportunity to comment on Etruscan women's position and social status in society. In the article, firstly, in the context of gender archaeology, it is mentioned how to look at the social position of women by referencing written and visual sources in Etruscan basis. Then, similarly, the colonies established in the Assyrian Trade Colonies Age in Anatolia and the Late Hittites are examined. Based on the comments of the researchers through archaeological and philological materials, the women in the colonies established in Anatolia during the Assyrian Trade Colonies Age, the women in Late Hittites and Etruscan women are compared in the context of their status, position in society and their similarities, their common points are mentioned. As a result, although there is a difference in time and geography, almost every society preserves its specificity at certain points; every society is influenced by each other and influenced each other. Thus, it is emphasized that a multicultural society structure emerges and this situation reflects in the written and visual works, an expression of the social structure.

KEYWORDS - Anatolia, Etruscan, Women, Social Status, Society.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Etruscans, with their multicultural nature and their own language, have attracted the attention of many researchers. The history, the geography, the art and the language of the Etruscans have been studied to this day and still continues to be studied. [1] However, with the gender archaeology coming to the fore in Italy since the mid-1980s an interest in Etruscan women also starts. Questions about the position of women in Etruscan society, the relationships between men and women, the social status of women are asked and the answers of these questions are tried to be found. [2] In this context, the positions of Etruscan women in society are discussed, based on the banquet scenes, which are thought to give information about the social situation of the Etruscan women by referring to written sources such as ancient writers, inscriptions and visual sources such as sarcophagi, wall paintings and urns. When the social status of Etruscan women is examined by considering the studies of the researchers on this subject, it is understood that a similar situation is seen in Anatolian women during the Assyrian Trade Colonies and Late Hittites.

II. SOCIAL STATUS OF ETRUSCAN WOMEN IN WRITTEN AND VISUAL SOURCES

When looking at ancient authors and inscriptions within the scope of written sources, it provides information about Etruscan social life and women. First of all, the Greek historian Theopompus, lived in the 4th century B.C., tells us about Etruscan social life. Theopompus states that in banquet scenes the woman is shown together with the man equally, Etruscan women take part in all public and political-social areas, participate in sports activities and there is a matriarchal structure in the general structure of society. [3] Again, the Greek writer Aristotle, lived in the same period with Theopompus, emphasizes that Etruscan women eat and drink together with men, listen to music and the couples are described in a sincere manner by hugging each other with love. [4]

In addition to Greek writers, Roman writers talk about Etruscan social life. Titus Marcius Plautus, lived in the 3rd century B.C., tells that Etruscan women are shown very elegantly in all artworks, Etruscan women sit equally

with the men or lie down side by side on the kline at the banquet.[5] Roman writer Horatius, lived in the 1st century B.C., defines that Etruscan woman, man and child as individuals and as free . [6] Roman historian Titus Livius, lived at the same time with Horatius, states that women are involved in the decisions with the man, they lie down together in the banquet, sit, eat, drink and accompany music because they have similar conditions with a man. [7] Finally Cassius Dio, one of the writers of the 2nd century B.C., tells us story of the noble Etruscan woman Tanaquil such as Tanaquil's foreign husband using his wife's social rights and Tanaquil's husband being king. These stories of Cassius Dio provide us with an idea of the position of a noble Etruscan woman. [8] Apart from ancient writers, incriptions found in Etruscan tombs contain clues about the social status and social structure of the Etruscan woman. [9] For example; in the statement of an Etruscan sarcophagus, dated to the 5th century B.C., is written : "The son of Laris and Tanaquilla Culcni, Velthur died at the age of 25"(Vlevur Lairsal clan Culcnial oan xvilus lupu avils XXV). In this statement the names of both mother and father are mentioned together. In another example is written : "Judge Ramtha is the wife of Larth Spitus"(Semni Ramva siptus Larval puia). It is seen that Ramtha, an Etruscan woman, is acting as a judge. [10] Based on the ancient writers who write about Etruscans and the names of working Etruscan woman, mother or wife in inscriptions, the researchers point out that the Etruscan women have individual, free and equal rights in many ways. [11] Apart from written sources about the social status of Etruscan women, visual sources give us a different perspective. In Etruscan sarcophagi, it can be seen that men and women lie down side by side, similar to the banquet scenes. [12]



Figure 1Sarcophagus of the Spouses
Source: Cummings, 2004: 32

In addition, as can be understood from the inscriptions on the sarcophagi, these figures are defined as husband and wife. [12] In banquet scenes of the Etruscan murals, women are portrayed as rich and aristocratic women, sitting with a man, lying down, eating and drinking together and accompanying music. [13-14]

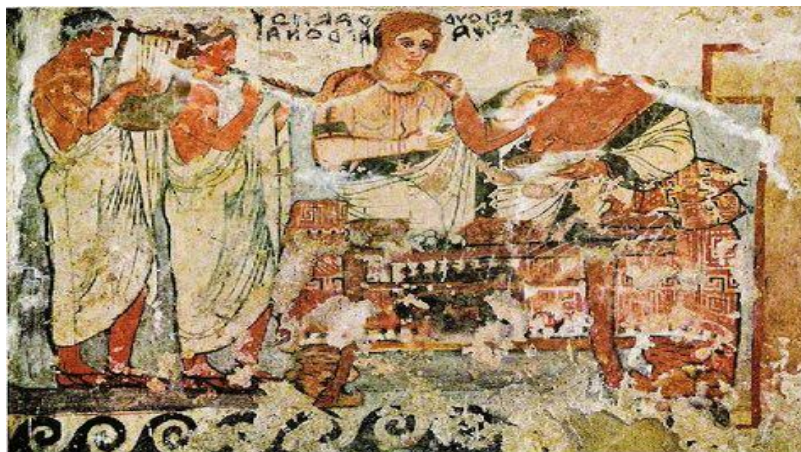


Figure 2 Tomb of Shields
Source: Rizzo, 1989: 28

Similarly, some of the Etruscan mirrors depict banquets or scenes of daily life. These scenes shed light on the Etruscan daily social life. In the scenes with descriptions of daily life, men and women sitting side by side, hugging each other sincerely and gestures that reflect a warm relationship between them are depicted. [13-14]



Figure 3 An Etruscan Mirror from the Collection of Carlsberg
Source: Rallo, 1989: 9

Scenes like this can be found in many Etruscan art works. Based on these scenes, Etruscan researchers emphasize that Etruscan women are shown as equal or similar in many settings with men, they attach importance to marriage and the bond of love between spouses, gender equality in Etruscan society. [15] Traces of that society can be found in both written and visual works, because these works are an expression of the social structure of that society. For this reason, Etruscan written and visual sources also help us to understand the Etruscan social structure and where women stand within this structure. By referring to what the researchers say, it is possible to say that in Etruscan women are side by side with men in many settings, are described equally, are named as individuals, and marriage is valuable in Etruscan society.

When is asked “is this only for women in Etruscan society?”, it can be said that they have social similarities with Etruscan women when looking at women lived in Anatolia in the Assyrian Trade Colonies Age and the Late Hittite Period.

III . SOCIAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE ASSYRIAN TRADE COLONIES AGE AND LATE HITTITES PERIOD IN WRITTEN AND VISUAL SOURCES

Just like Etruscans, written and visual sources allow us to have an idea about women who lived in colonies, established in Anatolia during the Age of Assyrian Trade Colonies (2nd millennium B.C.) and Late Hittite Age (1190-600 B.C.). [16] During the Assyrian Trade Colonies Period, Assyrian merchants establish colonies in Anatolia. One of these colonies is Kültepe-Kaniş located in Anatolia. Interpreting the tablets found in Kültepe, researchers such as Alparslan, Bilgiç and Darga say that these tablets give us important information about women and social structure. [16-17-18]



Figure 4 Kültepe Tablets
Source: Bilgiç, 1951: 230

According to the tablets and inscriptions found in these regions, rubatums who are called city queens have individual decision-making powers on their own. One of the tablets goes like this: “With her decision, Rubatum has the Merchant Pusuken arrested for selling illegal goods”. [16-17-18]

Similar expressions and other materials are considered as a sign of the ruling position of noble women and their equality with men. [18]

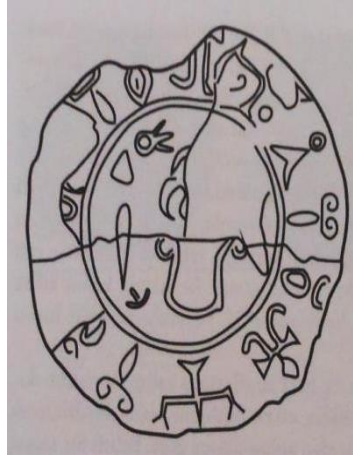


Figure 5 Seal of A Woman

Source: Dinçol, 2008: 8

Researchers who has worked on this issue, state that the similar situations are seen not only for noble women; but also seen in folk women. The names of the folk women are also mentioned in the business letters and other written documents found in the excavations. For example; in one of these letters, a woman named Lamassi is the boss and she forms a team of women workers in her workshop. [19] According to another letter, the woman named Madavada is both a merchant and a usury. These women (both noble and folk women), lived in colonies in Anatolia during the Assyrian Trade Colonies Age, seem to have a very active role in the society. Scientists, who have worked an written sources, emphasize that women in the Hittite Age (1700-1100 B.C.) and women in the Late Hittite Age (1190-600 B.C.) after the Assyrian Trade Colonies Age have social activity and social status similar to men. [20] Apart from written sources, visual sources have been enlightening for us. Particularly, the tomb steles with banquet scene and couple sculptures in the Late Hittite Period are enlightening about the structure of the society of this period. Men and women are equally depicted on steles which are found in Zincirli, Karaburçlu, Islahiye and Maraş. For example; in the banquet scene that is depicted on Zincirli tomb stele, men and women are sitting together, eating and drinking. [21]



Figure 6 Zincirli Tomb Stele

Source: Darga, 2013: 233

In the banquet scene in Maraş tomb stele, two women join the banquet alone and sit opposite each other. [21]



Figure 7 Maraş Tomb Stele
Source: Dentzer, 1982: 38

Again in a couple sculpture that is found in Maraş, the figures who is defined as husband and wife hug each other and reflect the intimate relationship between them. [18]



Figure 8: Maraş Tomb Stele
Source: Darga, 2013: 237

Based on the statements of both the written and visual sources and the researchers, it is possible to say that women are side by side with men, are shown equally and exist as individuals in Anatolia during the Assyrian Trade Colonies Age and the Late Hittite Age.

III. COMPARISON

Based on the written sources and the researchers who interpret these, it is possible to say that Anatolian women in the Assyrian Trade Colonies and the Late Hittite Period have similar rights to their husbands and play a role in social life as a working woman. It is common for both Anatolian and Etruscan women to include the names of women as well as men in the inscriptions. In addition to the written sources, if we proceed with the visual materials, the sources and the researchers and the scientists who evaluate them, we can see similarities and common points between Anatolian women in Assyrian Trade Colonies Age, Late Hittite Age and Etruscan women in terms of the position and social status of women in society. Women in Anatolia of the Assyrian Trade Colonies and Late Hittite Age, just like Etruscan women, participate in banquets on an equal basis with men. The woman sits with the man, they eat, drink together and have fun together.

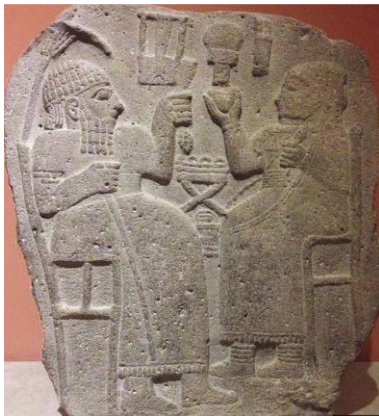


Figure 9 Maraş Stele
Source: Darga, 2013: 239

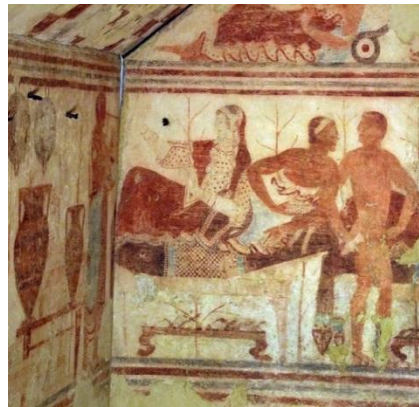


Figure 10 Tomb of Ship
Source: Rizzo, 1989: 154

It can be said that there is a visual equality in terms of female and male figures. The male figure is not in the foreground compared to the female figure; the female figure is also not in the background compared to the male figure. It is possible to say that the descriptions reflect an equal, warm and sincere relationship between the two figures.



Figure 11 Maraş Tomb Stele
Source: Darga, 2013: 237



Figure 12 Tomb of S
Source: Rizzo, 1989: 27

As another sign and clue to this point, in both Anatolian and Etruscan examples, male and female figures hug and touch together.

IV. CONCLUSION

As a result of the comparisons made through both written and visual sources, it is clear that there are common points and similarities among Etruscan women, Late Hittite women and Anatolian women of the Assyrian Trade Colonies age in terms of women's social position and status in society. What ancient writers tell, information in the inscriptions, the visual materials (sarcophagi, murals, urns, mirrors, reliefs, steles) and the statements of the researchers who interpret and evaluate all these separately within themselves support us and shed light on this point of view. Although there is a difference in time and geography between these societies, there are similarities in terms of the social status of women among the women in the colonies established in Anatolia during the Assyrian Trade Colonies Age, Late Hittite women and Etruscan women. As a result, although almost every society preserves its specificity at some points, societies affect each other and are affected by each other. Thus, multicultural social structures emerge. It is possible to say that they have a multicultural society structure for both Anatolian and Etruscan societies and this situation is reflected in the written and visual works of art, which are an expression of social structures and social structures. It should not be forgotten that almost every society has a close or distant relationship with the societies before, their contemporaries and later ones. These interactions shed light on our understanding of these societies and to track them down.

REFERENCES

- [1] R. Dalla Libera, La Fortuna Espositiva degli Etruschi, *ArcheoTuscia*, 7(2), 2015, 1-39.
- [2] R. Di Poce, L'immagine della donna in Etruria, *Torino University Papers*, 17, 2009, 1-39.
- [3] C. Theopompus, *Testimonia and Fragments* (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 1939)
- [4] Aristotle, *Athenaion Constituion* (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 1989)
- [5] T.M. Plautus, *Comoediae* (Oxford: Oxford Scholarly Editions, 1903)
- [6] Q. Horatius, *Odes and Epodes* (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 2004)
- [7] T. Livius, *History of Rome I-IV* (Oxford: Oxford Classical Texts, 1974)
- [8] D. Cassius, *Dio's Roman History II.* (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 1914)
- [9] A. D'Aversa, *La Donna Etrusca* (Roma: Paideia Editrice, 1985)
- [10] G. Di Capua, *La Donna Etrusca* (Roma: Scipioni, 1987)
- [11] A. Rallo, *Le Donne in Etruria* (Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1989)
- [12] L. Cummings, The Portrayal of Death and the Afterlife in Etruscan Sarcophagi, *Art History*, 24, 2004, 31-33.
- [13] E. Macnamara, *Vita Quotidiana degli Etruschi* (Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1982)
- [14] M. Rizzo, *Pittura Etrusca* (Roma: Leonardo Arte, 1989)
- [15] L. Bonfante, *Etruscan Women* (Chicago: Detroit, 1973)
- [16] M. Alparslan, Hititlerde Kadın, *Aktüel Arkeoloji Dergisi*, 32, 2013, 72-74.
- [17] E. Bilgiç, Hititlerden Önceki Anadolu Halkının Evlilik Hukunun Orijinal Tarafları, *Dil Tarih Coğrafya Dergisi*, 9/3, 1951, 227-232.
- [18] M. Darga, *Anadolu'da Kadın* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2013)
- [19] A. Dinçol, *Die Prinzen und Beamteniegel aus der Oberstadt von Boğazköy- Hattuša* (Berlin: Mainz, 2008)
- [20] K.R. Veenhof, *Aspects of Old Assyrian Trade and Its Terminology* (Netherland: Leiden University Press: 1972)
- [21] M. Dentzer, *Le motif du banquet couche dans le prouche-orient et le monde grec du VII au IV siecle avant J.C.* (Paris: Ecole Française, 1982)