

Etruscan women

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



Etruscan Women: An Analysis of Larissa Bofante's Article The comparisons between the Etruscan, Greek, and Roman way of life are similar in many respects and each contributes to the other, however, each civilization has its differences. The Etruscan society in the 5th to 7th c. BCE was one of luxury, lust, innovation, and they are thought to have been very skilled technicians: these attributes made them stand out among the rest.

Larissa Bofante's article, *Daily Life and After Life*, points out these distinguishing factors of the Etruscan society that left everyone else envious to what they had, even though most thought them to live barbarically. In Bofante's article she discusses all aspects of the Etruscan life, from architecture, jewelry, art, religion, sex, wealth, festivities, and more in all great detail. An important aspect that Bofante chooses to discuss in her article is the role of women in the Etruscan society, and this is very important to know when learning about their culture.

In this analysis, I plan to maintain, as Bofante points out, that women were of much greater importance in the Etruscan culture than in Greece and Rome. Larissa Bofante's article *Daily Life and After Life* highlights many points about the Etruscan way of life, and the part that I found to be the most interesting was about Etruscan women. There is substantial evidence to show that they were held in high regard and were considered equal to men.

Bofante points out a few passages written from Greek writers and historians who depict scenes of the Etruscan life, she argues that while these may be "cliche", the information may have come from eye witness accounts of Greeks who travelled to Etruria: of these scholars there was Theopompus, a Greek Historian of the 4th century BCE and Athenaeus, a Greek writer in 200
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AD. Atheneus has a passage written in his book titled, Brilliant Dinner Party Conversation, about women and men dining together and sharing in multiple sex partners.

Women would always dine with their husbands and be seen together in many other aspects of daily life, this was seen as distasteful to the Greeks and was in contrast to the way Greek women acted; the mingling of sexes in this way was not respected in Greek society. Besides the written text, we can see this “ mingling of the sexes” in the art that was coming out of Etruria at that time. Tombs and sarcophagi depicted scenes of festivities and events; Bofante mentions the Sarcophagus of Ramtha Visnai Vulci, with married couple in bed 300 c.

BCE. This sarcophagus shows a husband and wife lying with one another, which is a common scene for Etruscan artwork. One of the more famous tomb drawings (not mentioned by Bofante) is the Tomb of the Leopards 480 c. BCE. In this scene, elite men and women are joined together for a banquet, and the women are not slave girls as in the Greek depictions of similar scenes, they are instead eating alongside the men and celebrating as equals. Etruscan women also had luxurious items like jewels, clothes and toiletries such as mirrors.

These mirrors depicted similar scenes on them, all with men and women being displayed together, often married couples together at banquet, and also at home such as the Engraved Mirror with couple standing before a double bed 500 c. BCE. This life style, as stated by Bofante, was seen as “ breach of Greek culture and good taste”, which just further shows the different society that Etruscans had and the role of women in it. Another

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element in Bofante's article regarding the high rank of women in the Etruscan culture was that of giving names.

A Roman woman for example had no name of her own but was known by her father's name, this was not the way it was for the Etruscan women however. Bofante mentions that Etruscan funerary inscriptions had the mothers name as well as the father's name of the deceased on them, and some tomb facades even had women's names alone, which indicates that Etruscan women could own property. All of this shows the " legal and social importance of Etruscan women. " Larissa Bofante's article Daily Life and Afterlife, mentions many elements of what we believe the Etruscan society was like.

Her article was very factual and listed many aspects of Etruscan life such as architecture, artifacts, mirrors, jewelry, daily activities and more. From depictions and imagery on tombs, mirrors, vases, and written text we can put the pieces together about how they lived. One conclusion that Bofante comes to, as well as many others including myself, is that women of the elite group were thought of as equals to men, or at least they were treated as such.

Women attended many events with men and sat alongside them during festivities and banquets, and the husband and wife were shown together in a variety of scenes. Women may have even owned property, and their name was of importance. All of these aspects of Etruscan women highly contrast with what we know about Roman and Greek women. While Bofante discussed many interesting aspects of Etruscan life, the role of women was very important and was a crucial element in her article.

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