

# **A comparison of the reclining women in Pompeii house murals with the Greek Hetaira an analytical study of archeology and art**

**Dr. Heba Farouk El nahas**

Lecturer of Greek & Roman Archaeology, Department of Archeology.

Faculty of Arts, Tanta University

[Heba\\_alnahas@yahoo.com](mailto:Heba_alnahas@yahoo.com)

## **Abstract:**

- The Greek symposium – or drinking together – was characterised by the appearance among the men of a kind of woman called *Hetaira*, distinguished from the women of the age in general and other women allowed into symposia in particular by specific conditions. They attended in order to entertain the men, and their literary and artistic status was generally accepted as is clear from the pottery drawings on drinking vessels and from literary sources that cite them directly. In some Pompeii houses dating from 50 BC to 79 AD – the Lovers House and the Sofas House, for example – images of ladies reclining among drinking men in a way similar to the Greek symposia were found on the walls, even though there are no sources that indicate for sure the existence of this Greek habit in Roman society. Rather references are to the Roman convivium – or living together – which differed in its nature and composition from the Greek symposium and was restricted to men and all-male banquets; it is not clear whether any women attended. In this paper, assuming that the murals depict a real phenomenon, an attempt is made to work out who those Roman women were. By tracing literary sources (the texts are concerned with the presentation of the women of Rome and the presentation of the differences between them in an attempt to arrive at a term that may apply and fit with the women of Pompeii's houses) and analyze the surrounding environment for those paintings (whether related to Roman society in general and Pompeii society in particular, as well as the society of men's councils. Represented by the Greek Symposium and its comparison with the Roman Convivium), then architecturally ( by explaining the house plans in which the paintings were found and the locations of those paintings in specific rooms of the house) and artistically (by linking those paintings to other paintings in the house or similar homes - as well as to some of the engravings found in homes) to find out why the status of these women was distinguished from the women of their time. On the couches and the participation of men in the pleasure and pleasure of the majlis from drinking and conversations in a position that society refused to show its women artistically in a position almost equal to that of a man in his majlis. By comparing them with the Hetaira women the many similarities with them will be clarified and the difference that distinguishes them from the Hetaira women in particular and the women of their era in general will be highlighted.

## **Keywords:**

Hetaira·concubines·pomeii,convivium