

Missing the Forest for the Trees: Identifying the Italian Sacred Grove

Sacred groves served a key function in Pre-Hellenic Italian Religion, yet what exactly they were to ancient Italians is unclear. A few groves, such as Diana's at Aricia or the grove of Dea Dia, have received attention, but others like the grove of Feronia have received little attention. This topic is intimately connected to all of Classics, and a thorough analysis of the field is required to understand the matter. Sources from antiquity, like Ovid's *Fasti* or tablets detailing worship at groves, are examined, as well as the scholars of modern times. Evidence from linguistics, archaeology, and paleoecology is brought up, and then a new understanding of Italian sacred groves is reached: a place of shade where Romans worship gods who fertilize either soil, livestock, or people, as well as defend from threats of invasion and disaster. This grove also sees sacrifice of plants or animals, not man, on the trunks of the trees or the altar, not hanging from the branches.

The poster centers on a map of Italy, marked to show the peoples, migrations, and groves. For every grove, a line extends to a portion of the poster with images and text relating to that grove. For example, Nemi will be marked, with a line leading out. At the end of that line is a picture of coins depicting Diana's statue there, with text from Ovid's *Fasti*, Preller's *Römische Mythologie*, and my own observations written beneath the image. In the lower right corner are my overall conclusions.