

Dressing Demons: An Examination of Demon Garb in Painted Etruscan Tombs

Painted Etruscan tombs frequently feature depictions of demons acting as psychopomps, shepherding the souls of the deceased from the realm of the living to the dead. Unnamed demons and famed Etruscan deities of death, such as Charu and Vanth, played integral roles in the transition between life and death. They are often depicted in action, grasping the arms of the newly deceased, crouching behind boulders, or wielding hammers, ready to strike. While the appearance of such figures in a funereal setting is not inherently curious, the decision to depict demons wearing particular garments invites closer examination. Larissa Bonfante, who has written extensively on the subject of Etruscan clothing, touches briefly on the types of clothing seen on representations of demons in her book *Etruscan Dress*. While Bonfante does not focus specifically on demon dress, her identification of various forms of Etruscan dress provides an invaluable foundation to analyze the demons according to the status that their garments suggest. For example, Bonfante notes that older styles of clothing such as the short tunic, were worn by enslaved individuals starting during the sixth century BCE. The application of Bonfante's mode of attributing clothing styles to societal roles may provide information as to how the Etruscans viewed the role of certain demons existing to serve the deceased in perpetuity (Bonfante 2003). This paper analyzes various instances of demon dress, adornment, and iconography as seen in painted Etruscan Tombs from the Archaic Period to the Late Period. A careful examination of the various facets of their representation may reveal new avenues to interpret and identify the role of demons in Etruscan afterlife beliefs.

Works Cited

Bonfante, L. 2003. *Etruscan Dress*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.