

Extracting Divine Favor by Interring the Dead: The Placement of Etruscan Necropoleis and Their Role within Sacred Landscapes

This paper explores the placement of necropoleis relative to settlements in Northern and Southern Etruria. Using data from a Google Earth map marked with Etruscan archaeological sites, I establish the geographical relationships between the necropoleis and their settlements. I then overlay onto the map a reproduction of the Piacenza liver, revealing where necropoleis were situated relative to the Etruscan conception of a sky divided into 16 segments, each controlled by a deity. The majority (58%) of necropoleis occupied the *Tin θne* section and the southeast quadrant, the area inhabited by ‘favorable’ deities, including *Eθ* and *Tecum*. Where a necropolis, associated with a settlement surrounded by two or more cemeteries, was not in a ‘favorable’ zone (17%), another necropolis in the ‘more-valuable’ area balanced the settlement.

I suggest that ritual practices affiliated with tombs reinforced the sanctity of a meaningfully situated necropolis as a whole. The interment of the dead within a stone and/or subterranean tomb resembles the ritual destruction and burial of offerings, similar to how a *mundus* marked the interment of sacrificial remains. The appendages of tombs, such as assembly areas, altars, and cippi, were not only used for burial rituals and ancestor worship, but also to further honor the god ruling over the tomb. I argue that the necropoleis themselves, taking on a votive function as an eternal offering to the god or goddess who resided above them, acted as adulatory complexes on a micro (family) and a macro (city-wide) scale. The religious activities executed by families at the tombs maintained a connection between the living and the ancestors. The accumulation of these frequent acts of worship in necropoleis, with smoke from sacrifices linking the terrestrial altars to the heavens, strengthened the community’s relationship with the overseeing deity, which brought favor to the associated settlement.