

Classics Presents ...

2023-24 Colloquium Series

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Wednesday, March 13, 2024

2:30 pm to 4:00 pm

Watson Hall Room 517

Drunken Women with Spears? Funerary Practices and Female Identity in pre-Roman Apulia

Before the Roman conquest, Central Apulia was inhabited by a population traditionally known as the Peucetians. Although the Peucetians have left no written records and were largely ignored by ancient sources, the thousands of tombs excavated in Central Apulia speak of a society with a complex social hierarchy and long-range commercial contacts with Etruria, Greece, and other parts of Southern Italy.

Perhaps unexpectedly, these graves also show that in the Classical and Hellenistic periods, Peucetian women enjoyed a more emancipated existence than their Athenian counterparts. Besides objects related to what are traditionally understood as female roles (e.g., weaving, child rearing, performing libations) funerary assemblages dated between the 6th and 4th century BCE also included full banqueting sets, virtually identical to those found in male tombs. A few older women were even buried with spears, maybe to indicate their exceptional role in the community. This talk explores the relationship between the consumption of artifacts and the lives of Peucetian women in antiquity and discusses more broadly about how our modern ideas about “female assemblages” are often in contrast with the reality of the archaeological record.



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