

Chapter 2

Notes on Etruscan Cosmology: The Case of the Tumulus of the Crosses at Cerveteri



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Abstract The aim of this contribution is to test the possibility of the use of cosmological principles connected with Etruscan religion, for composing an inscription which is incised on the wall of a passageway running beneath a ramp attached to the northeast side of the Tumulus of the Crosses, in the Banditaccia necropolis at Cerveteri. The ramp features a stairway leading to a flat ceremonial platform.

On the basis of the letterforms the inscription may be dated to the end of the seventh or the beginning of the sixth century BCE. It is a rare example of a monumental inscription of the Orientalizing period of Etruscan Civilization. Directly beneath the inscription is a sign (*siglum*) formed by a cross inscribed in a circle. This sign has been recognized as the representation of the Etruscan concept of sacred space, whose crucial attributes are delimitation, division and orientation.

A recent new reading of the inscription points out four theonymic elements, which recall divinities that, in the Etruscan cosmology, it may be argued, occupied the northeastern quadrant of the sky.

Any amplification of this recent new reading must take into account interdisciplinary research focused on a possible relationship, in the field of archaeoastronomy, between the theonymic elements and the physical space that they occupy on the wall of the passageway, since the ramp is a crucial element of Etruscan funerary cultic practices.

A Case Study: The Tumulus of the Crosses and Its Inscriptions

The Tumulus of the Crosses (or of the Brooms; see Fig. 2.1) is located in the Banditaccia necropolis at Cerveteri (100 km North of Rome). Its base and the ramp attached to its northeast side were carved into the rock. The ramp is oriented at 22.5° east of north, featuring stairs leading to the top of the Tumulus where cultic

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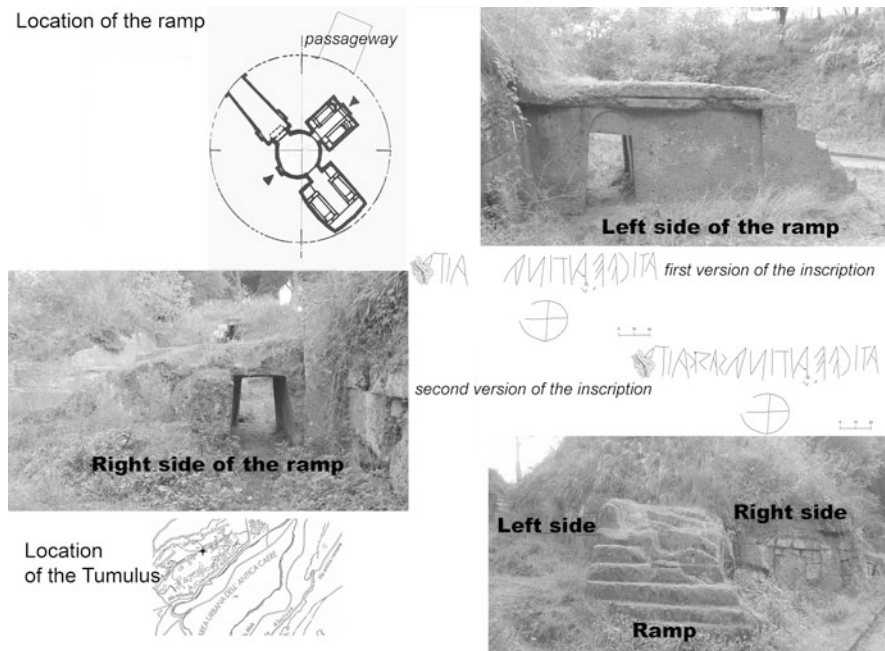


Fig. 2.1 Plans of the Banditaccia necropolis (Cerveteri) and of the Tumulus of the Crosses; views of the Tumulus and of the two sides of the ramp with the passageway; and drawings of the inscription located on the north-east oriented wall of the passageway

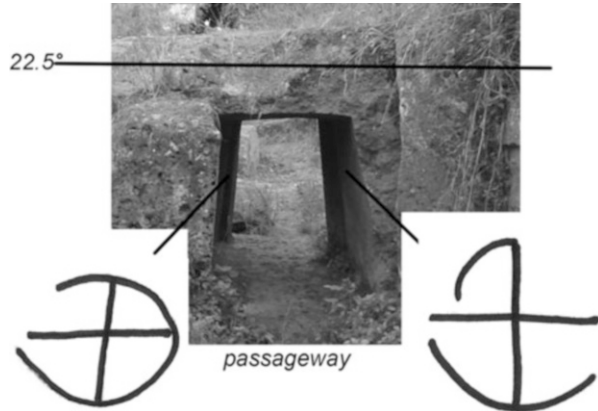
practices were celebrated in honour of the predeceased (Fig. 2.1). In Etruscan funerary cultic practices, the ramp is a crucial element, and this is shared with a number of Orientalizing *tumuli* at the same necropolis (Colonna 1986: 398). The ramp, however, is rarely pierced by a passageway, as happens in this case (Bagnasco Gianni 2008).

On the north-east oriented wall of the passageway there is a long inscription reading from right to left (1.48 m long; letters 12–19 cm high); its centre corresponds to that of a sign (or better *siglum*) formed by a cross inscribed in a circle, lacking its upper left arc and located directly beneath the inscription (Fig. 2.1). On the opposite wall an identical sign is reproduced, mirroring the lacking arc of the previous one (Fig. 2.2).

The paleography and layout of both inscriptions (text and *siglum*) suggest that they were engraved together during the late Orientalizing period of the Etruscan Civilization (end of the seventh—beginning of the sixth century BCE) (Bagnasco Gianni 1996: 67–69). Later, but still during the Orientalizing period, four letters were added to the text (Bagnasco Gianni and Facchetti 2015: §1).

It is worth noting that this monumental wall-inscription is the only one known so far.

Fig. 2.2 The passageway under the ramp of the Tumulus with reproductions of the two mirroring *forma quadrans in circulo* located on the two opposite walls



The Epigraphic and Textual Evidence

The most ancient inscription was divided into two parts and cited four theonymic elements, whose linguistic aspects have been explored by Fachetti (Bagnasco Gianni and Fachetti 2015): *atic veai tina* is separated from the last word *aita* by a space (Fig. 2.3).

The suffix *-c* links *Ati*, which means ‘mother’ in Etruscan, to *Vei*, who is considered a chthonian goddess associated with the generative power of the Earth, counterpart of the Italic goddess of the harvest *Ceres* and of the Greek goddess of fertility *Demeter* (Bellelli 2012; Simon 2006). The term of kinship with which she is qualified in this inscription underlines her maternal aspect as in the case of other divine entities (Colonna 2012: 206). It is worth noting that this inscription matches Varro’s statement about *Ceres*, who also is ‘mother’ (Rust. 3.1.4): “nec sine causa terram eandem appellabant matrem et Cererem.”

Tina, the most important god in the Etruscan pantheon and counterpart of *Jupiter/Zeus* (Simon 2006: 60), is connected to the daylight, *tin* in Etruscan (Fachetti 2015).

According to the recent reconstruction by Fachetti (Bagnasco Gianni and Fachetti 2015), the second part of the inscription, after the space, cites *Aita*, the god of the underworld and of the night, the counterpart of the Greek *Hades* (Colonna 2012: 206–207; Krauskopf 2013: 524–525; Rissanen 2012: 129; Simon 2006: 57). Thus, the original version of the inscription, reading from right to left, may be translated as: *Mother Veai Tina*, space, *Aita*.

The second, amplified version of the inscription is obtained by filling the gap of the previous one with four letters, smaller in size: *-sask-* (Fig. 2.4). According to Fachetti (Bagnasco Gianni and Fachetti 2015), they can be split into the derivative morpheme *-asa-* (“what lays beyond”) and the suffix *-c* (used in adjectival formations), added to the former *Tina*. The new word *Tinasask* means “the place/land beyond the Light/Tina (Jupiter)”, which is suitable for *Aita* and perfectly matches the information given by the first version of the inscription.



Fig. 2.3 Cerveteri, Tumulus of the Crosses: the first version of the inscription



Fig. 2.4 Cerveteri, Tumulus of the Crosses: the second version of the inscription

The meaning of the inscription is now as follows: Mother *Veai* and *Aita* of the “place/land beyond the Light/*Tina*”, i.e. “without light” (Bagnasco Gianni and Facchetti 2015).

The *Siglum* Formed by a Cross Inscribed in a Circle

The name of Tumulus of the Crosses was given by Prayon since he recognized in the cross inscribed in the circle the representation of the *Himmelskreuz* (1975: 90), the crucial attributes of which are: orientation, delimitation and division according to Pallottino’s definition of the Etruscan concept of sacred space (Bagnasco Gianni 2008). It appears as a mark on a significant number of artifacts, especially vases, used in cultic and funerary practice, disseminated in Etruria over a considerable period of time (Bagnasco Gianni et al. 2016). It has been designated recently as

forma quadrans in circulo in the signary of the *International Etruscan Sigla Project (IESP)* (Bagnasco Gianni and de Grummond forthcoming).¹

What Does the Case Study Depict?

The relationship between the inscriptions and the Tumulus can be summarized by means of the following indicators:

1. The *forma quadrans in circulo*, which recalls the shape of the Etruscan sacred space, is inscribed exactly under the centre of the inscription, corresponding to that of the ramp, where the letter ‘T’ of *Tina* is inscribed;
2. The missing upper left arc of the *forma quadrans in circulo* is mirrored in the identical sign reproduced on the opposite wall of the passageway;
3. The centre of the ramp is oriented at 22.5° east of north;
4. In the first version of the inscription the name of the god *Aita*, counterpart of the night, is inscribed away from the “Mother *Veai*” and *Tina* by means of a gap;
5. In the second version the location of *Aita*—away from the “Mother *Veai*”, in the “place/land beyond the Light/*Tina*”, or “without light/*Tina*”—is specified by means of completion with four more letters (-*sask*-); and
6. The citation of the “Mother *Veai*” is close to *Tina*, the Etruscan counterpart of Jupiter, in both versions of the inscription.

The inscription on the north-east oriented wall of the passageway of the Tumulus is located in the quadrant of the Etruscan cosmos in which Pliny the Elder establishes the most favorable prophecies (*summa felicitas*). Among and in accordance with other literary sources, Pliny describes the *Etruscan* system of dividing the *sky* into a favorable eastern half and an unfavorable western half by means of the north-south axis; a second division generates the basic scheme of four quadrants by means of the east-west axis (*HN* 2.55.142–144); the resulting four quadrants are divided four more times into 16 regions, each of 22.5° (*HN* 2.55.143; Cicero, *De div.* 2.18.42).

The sequence—*Aita*/place (or land) beyond the Light/*Tina*, Mother goddess—matches the beginning of two already known lists of 16 gods reported by two different sources (Table 2.1):

1. The external margin of a bronze stylized sheep’s liver, for haruspication,² found at Piacenza in 1877 and dated to the first century BCE (Colonna 1984); and
2. The initial regions of a late author’s description of the gods invited to the marriage of *Philology* and *Mercury*: Martianus Capella’s *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* (1.45–61) (fifth century CE).

¹<http://www.etruscologia.unimi.it/index.php/progetti/80-progetti/127-etruscanexpo-project>

²For a recent extensive literary review of haruspication and its formation in Etruria see Bellelli and Mazzi (2013).

Table 2.1 Comparison between the beginning of the lists of 16 gods reported by the Liver and Martianus

Sources	Adjacent positions				
	<i>Cilensl</i>	<i>Tin Cilen</i>	<i>Tin Thuf</i>	<i>Tins Then</i>	<i>Uni Mae</i>
Martianus' sequence of regions	<i>Nocturnus</i> <i>Ianitores</i>	<i>Jupiter</i> <i>Dii Consentes</i> <i>Penates</i> <i>Salus</i> <i>Lares</i> <i>Ianus</i> <i>Favores opertanei</i> <i>Nocturnus</i>		<i>Jupiter</i> <i>Quirinus Mars</i> <i>Lar militaris</i> <i>Iuno</i> <i>Fons</i> <i>Lymphae</i> <i>Dii Novensiles</i>	

The Liver and Martianus' text are our most important sources for the location of the gods according to Etruscan cosmology, but neither source refers to the position of the north.

A number of monuments, mostly stones marked by a cross (*decussis*), show a concrete application on the ground of the division of the Etruscan sky, according to the principles of the *Etrusca Disciplina* (Sassatelli 2017: 188–189; for a different opinion see Maggiani 2009: 236). The Liver is the only evidence we have of an object used for reflecting the cosmos. However, scholars do not unanimously share the same ideas on its orientation (Grenier 1946; Maggiani 1984; Pallottino 1956; Prayon 1991; Stevens 2009; van der Meer 1987).

Since the Tumulus of the Crosses is an oriented monument and the north is well ascertainable, is it possible to use its orientation to find out that of the Liver?

Before trying to answer this question, evidence from literary sources and the bronze liver of Piacenza should be briefly examined as regards the location of *Aita*, counterpart of the Night and of the “place/land beyond the Light/*Tina* (Jupiter)”, and of his neighbours.

Connections Between Literary Sources and the Liver

Pliny's and Martianus' division of the sky into 16 regions matches the epigraphic evidence of the 16 cells distributed along the border of the Liver (Colonna 1994; Cherici 2013; de Grummond 2013: 545–546; Krauskopf 2013: 513–514; Maggiani 1984; van der Meer 1987: 22–29). Similarities with the “place/land beyond the Light/*Tina* (Jupiter)” are:

1. The presence of a same divine entity, who is named *Nocturnus* by Martianus and *Cilens* in the Liver, in two adjacent cells (Maggiani 1984: 60, note 34; Pallottino 1956: 225; Torelli 1966: 304–305; van der Meer 1987);

2. The presence of Jupiter in three contiguous regions of Martianus and of *Tina*, his counterpart, in three contiguous cells of the Liver (authors mentioned above); and
3. The quotation of a female goddess after that of *Jupiter Nocturnus* (Martianus)/ *Tina Cilens* (Liver).

Differences Between the Liver, Martianus and Pliny

The main differences concern:

1. The name given to the female goddess located to the left of *Tina*: *Uni Mae* (Liver) and *Juno* (Martianus);
2. The size of the 16 units, which is regular in Pliny (22.5°), irregular in the Liver (de Grummond 2013: 542), and unspecified by Martianus; and
3. The list of gods of the Liver does not exactly match that of Martianus' text and obliges a shift of two regions forward for example in the case of *Uni Mae/Juno* and of *Cathal/Celeritas Solis Filia* (de Grummond 2006: 48–51; Pallottino 1956: 229).

The Name of the Female Goddess and Her Identity

A word inscribed on an Etruscan mirror, *uniapelis*, reflects such a connection between *Uni* and *Mae*, which corresponds to *Maia* and to the name of the month of May, since a gloss (Pallottino 1968: n° 805) explains that the month of May is called *Ampiles* (i.e. *Apelis*) in Etruscan (Briquel 2006: 305; Maras 2009: 308–311; Roncalli 1971–1972: 96–97). Roncalli considers this combination an expression of a particular day devoted to *Uni*. A different interpretation of *Mae* as one of the names of Jupiter is given by van der Meer (1987: 41–43).

However, Macrobius, reporting Cornelius Labeo (*Sat.* I, 12.20–21), explains that *Maia*, due to her *magnitudo*, was also one of the designations of the Earth (. . . *Maiae, id est terrae . . .*) (Torelli 2009: 127) and of a goddess whose name, *Bona Dea*, was secret and unpronounceable (Biondi 2016: 137).

In the sanctuary of Monte Li Santi-Le Rote (Narce, in the Faliscan territory) popular worship addressed Demeter, Persephone, Minerva, *Maia* and Fortuna from the fifth to the second century BCE. *Maia* belongs to the later phase and could both depict an aspect of Minerva “*major*” (Biondi 2016: 135–141), but also the above-mentioned prerogatives of the Earth and of *Bona Dea* (Mastrocinque 2014: 34–35).

Recent evidence from Etruscan sanctuaries shows that from the archaic period *Uni* seems associated with a goddess of the Earth. This happens at other times: at *Veii*, at the sanctuary of Campetti Nord, in which the agrarian aspect of *Vei*, confirmed by a dedication to *Ceres*, is associated with the matronly and protective assignments carried out by *Uni* in the social context (Carosi 2016); at the ‘monumental complex’ of Tarquinia where, in the archaic period, the chthonic aspect of

Uni (χ ia) appears in an agrarian setting, which recalls *Ceres* (Bagnasco Gianni 2014); in the votive deposit of the sanctuary of Fontanile di Legnisina at Vulci, where the cult is focused on *Uni* (inscription) and *Demeter* (bronze statuettes) (Ricciardi 2003); and at the northern sanctuary of Pontecagnano (Bailo Modesti et al. 2005: 38), where the chthonic aspect of the main goddess is shared by *Uni* (χ ia) and a goddess of the earth, **Luas*, a “mother” belonging to Saturn’s sphere of influence (Colonna 2009). This association was recently recognized at Marzabotto (Govi 2017: 163–165; Sassatelli 2017: 194, note 25).

It is currently accepted that every pantheon actually is a “stratification” (Devoto 1967: 184), and this is particularly evident in the case of the city of *Veii* homonymous of its poliadic goddess (Bellelli 2012), who was instead identified with *Juno Regina* when *Camillus* took her away from the conquered city in 396 BCE, after her *evocatio* (Colonna 2012: 204, 214; Krauskopf 2013: 514).

The Layout of the Liver

The circumscription of the position of all ancient literary sources and of scholars since the end of the nineteenth century CE, carried out by Pernigotti (2015–2016), points out that scholars still disagree on how it is possible to reconcile the shape of the Liver, the layout of its convex side, and the irregular size of its cells with Pliny’s regular scheme of cardinal points. As a matter of fact Pliny’s scheme still obliges to look for a sequence of regular cells of the same dimension since Pallottino’s analysis (1956: 224) and this is probably one of the reasons why discussion on the orientation of the Liver is ongoing (Gottarelli 2018).³

Since we have no evidence to fit the lists of Martianus and the Liver in Pliny’s regular scheme, it is worth focusing on the layout of the Liver, which is the only concrete evidence we have so far (Fig. 2.5, with a numbering of the cells according to Maggiani 1984).

Part of the right lobe on the concave side is occupied by the *processus pyramidalis*, the *processus papillaris*, and the *gall-bladder*. The whole surface is divided into 40 cells by engraved lines: 16 run along the margin (1–16); the remaining 24 (17–40) are included in a grid (right lobe, 17–28), in a wheel-like division (left lobe, 31–36) and in the space in between, which corresponds to the direction of the *suspensorium hepatis* on the convex side of the Liver (29–30; 37–40). The *suspensorium hepatis* divides the convex side of the Liver in two lobes: the right lobe is labeled with the name of the Sun (*Usils*) and the other with that of the Moon (*Tiur*).

Cells on the border of the concave side are of unequal size: the smallest are on the right lobe (1–5) where they become increasingly larger (6–8); those on the left lobe

³While my paper was already in proofs, I had no time to discuss and integrate recent work by A. Gottarelli (2018).

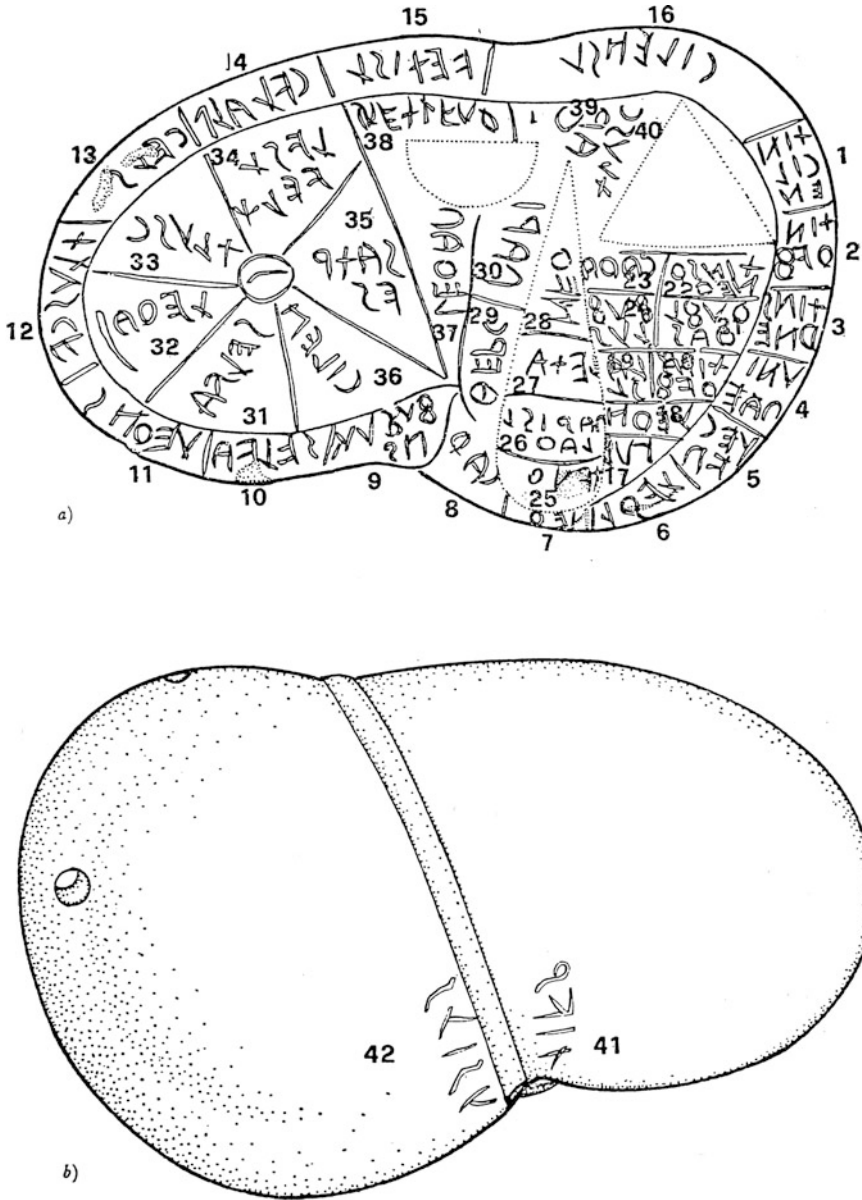


Fig. 2.5 Reproduction of the bronze Liver of Piacenza: (a) concave side; (b) convex side (after Maggiani 1984: Fig. 1)

are definitively large; the one on the right lobe behind the *processus pyramidalis* (16) is the largest and has always attracted scholars' attention (Maggiani 1984: 57).

Five cells on the border of the right lobe (1–5) contain two inscribed lines arranged in the *up-down direction*; the others contain a single inscribed line: starting from that behind the *processus pyramidalis*, inscriptions run anticlockwise (12–16) and meet the remaining six, which run clockwise (6–11), near the extreme edge of the left lobe (between 11 and 12).

All inscriptions, except for one of the inner cells (*metlumth*), are written from right to left (Maggiani 1984: 58; van der Meer 1987: 13).

Discussion of the Epigraphic Layout of the Liver

Scholars have explained the *ductus* of the inscriptions as a deliberate choice to make the Liver easily readable and the size of the cells of the Liver as errors of evaluation of space made by the scribe, starting from Pallottino's position in the second part of his contribution (Pallottino 1956: 231–232; cf. Maggiani 1984: 57–58).

According to Maggiani (1984: 57), the engraver started his list of 16 cells from the *incisura umbelicalis* anticlockwise (8–1) and then clockwise (9–16), producing the erroneous disproportion of the last cell (16), due to his miscalculation of the space available. Pallottino's explanation in the first part of his article (1956: 223) is more convincing, given the importance of the bronze Liver for Etruscan cosmology. His idea is that: “. . .nell'oggetto fosse applicato il sistema dei 'limiti' secondo la disciplina etrusca”. As a consequence, the impressive difference in size between cells 16 and 1 could coincide with the engraver's starting point and with the north, since these two adjacent cells also contain the names of two gods (*Cilensl*; *Tin Cilen*), who correspond to the two gods of Martianus' series (*Nocturnus*; Jupiter Nocturnus) (Pallottino 1956: 229). This evidence represents the major difficulty in locating north between cells 2 and 3 according to van der Meer (1987), who follows Deecke's and Thulin's positions.

Maggiani accepted Pallottino's thesis of a cosmological use of the Liver (Maggiani 1984: 68), and the location of the north between cells 16 and 1. However, he noted that, in this case, the engraver could not have started from that point because the strong inclination of the trait separating the two cells does not follow the correct radial orientation centred on the contour line, nor the line established by the base of the *processus pyramidalis*.

Only Colonna (2012: 208) has recently explained the leftwards direction of the gods' names (cells 12–16) through their chthonic nature.

Starting from the assumption that in the Liver haruspication is linked to cosmology (Bellelli and Mazzi 2013: 38; Maggiani 2009: 223), a number of elements noticed by Pallottino and Maggiani could open the way to another perspective on the division of the concave side of the Liver according to a different cosmological ratio:

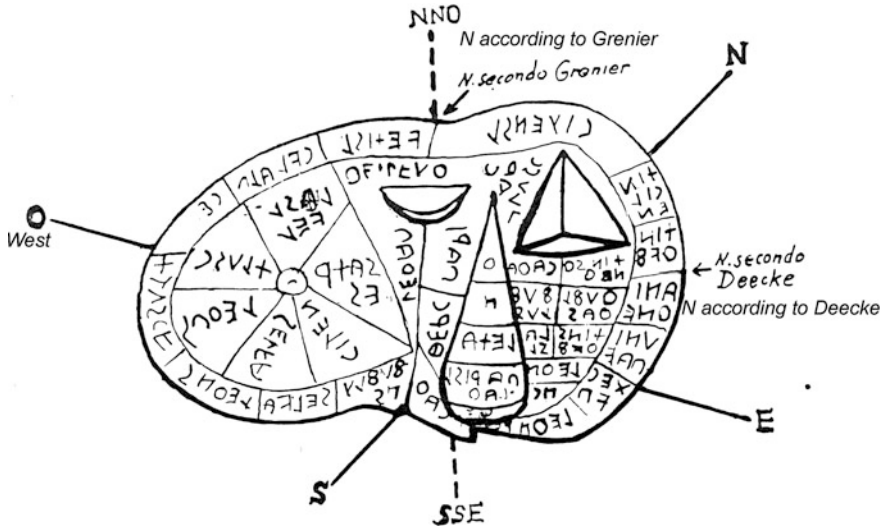


Fig. 2.6 Graphic representation of Pallottino's division of the Liver (unlabeled axes) with the indication of other scholars' theses (after Pallottino 1956: 230)

1. The differences in the sizes and epigraphic layouts of cell 16 and cell 1, which mark the beginning of a change in listing the gods' names down to cell 5 (Pallottino);
2. The peculiar orientation of the trait marking the limit between cell 16 and cell 1 (Maggiani);
3. The north-south axis dividing the surface of the Liver and starting from the limit between cells 1 and 16 does not orthogonally cross the east-west axis; in both cases they do not adhere to the shape of the Liver (Pallottino 1956: 230–232) (Fig. 2.6); and
4. The importance assigned by Varro (Varr. pr. Frontin., in *Corp. Agrim. Rom. I*, p. 27) to the bipartition of the areas of the Moon and the Sun, which should be one of the key points of the Liver as a model for augurs, is underestimated according to Pallottino (1956: 232).

Starting from the evidence that no current theory resolves the problem of the non-orthogonal crossing of two axes, the solution could be to abandon definitively any attempt to fit the cells of the Liver in Pliny's regular scheme and accept the indication given by the epigraphic layout. The purpose could have been to achieve an easier reading of the inscriptions, and also cosmological observations. For example, the effects of the passage of the Sun on the surface of the bronze Liver seems to be depicted on an Etruscan mirror (Fig. 2.7) (Bagnasco Gianni 2012: 300–301). In this case too the inscriptions had to be easily readable.

Following are the epigraphic indicators (Fig. 2.8):



Fig. 2.7 Reproduction of the mirror at the Museo Gregoriano Etrusco with a possible scene of haruspication carried out by the female character in front of the male who is regulating light and shadow with his cloth (Vatican) (after Bagnasco Gianni 2012: 313)

1. On the convex side of the Liver the inscriptions *Usil* and *Tiur* are on the two lobes of the Liver close to the *suspensorium hepatis*;
2. The divergent trait noticed by Maggiani between cells 16 and 1 suggests that one should draw a straight line from this point and reach the opposite edge of the Liver between cells 11 and 12 where the clockwise and anticlockwise *ductus* of the inscriptions meet; and
3. Cells 1–5 containing two lines of inscriptions represent a coherent section; the trait between cells 5 and 6 marks the beginning of another straight line, which separates cells 15 and 14.

Elaborating on the epigraphic indicators:

1. The convex side (Fig. 2.5b): *Usil* and *Tiur* by the *suspensorium hepatis* indicate that this is the north-south axis, according to Grenier's theory (1946); the two areas of the Moon and the Sun respectively coincide with Pliny's main areas (*pars dextera* and *pars sinistra*);
2. The concave side (Fig. 2.9): the two angles produced by the crossing of the two lines mentioned above are regular: two sharp (66°) and two obtuse (114°); and
3. This means that the orientation of the two crossing lines is very near to that of the line of the solstices in Etruria: 60° (sunrise of the summer solstice, 57°); 126° (sunrise of the winter solstice, 123°); 240° (sunset of the winter solstice, 237°); 306° (sunset of the summer solstice, 303°).

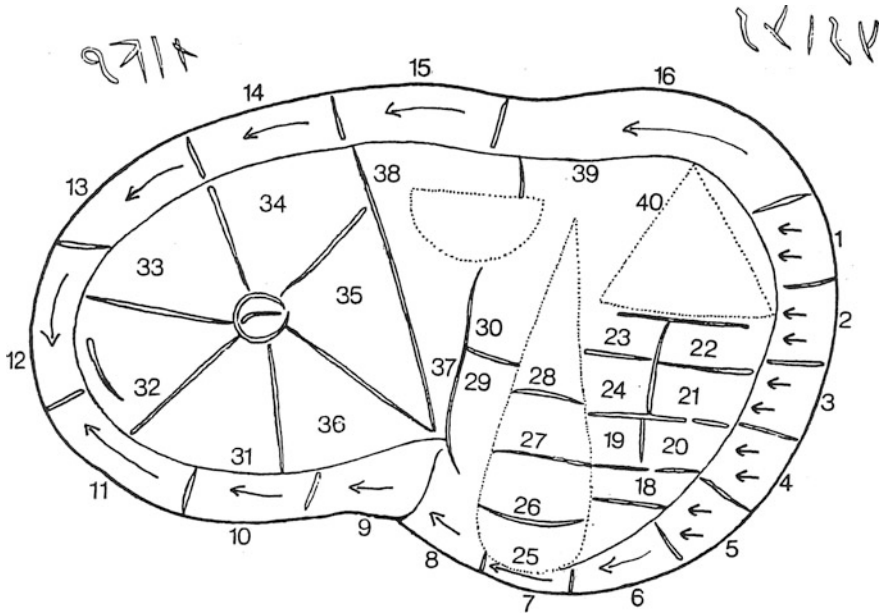


Fig. 2.8 Direction of the inscriptions inside the 16 cells

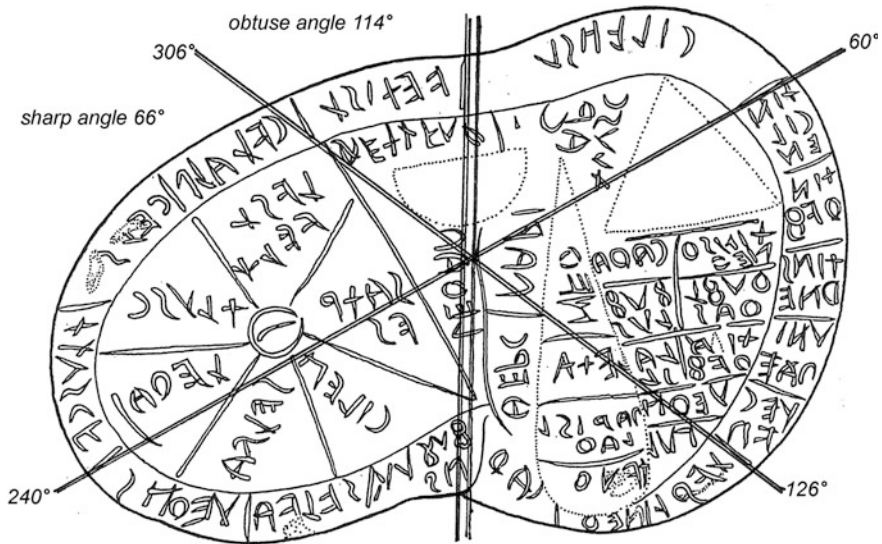


Fig. 2.9 A graphic representation of the projection of the solstices according to the author on Maggiani's drawing of the Liver. The double line in the middle is oriented north-south according to Grenier's theory (1946) and corresponds to the *suspensorium hepatis* on the underside of the Liver, which divides the lobes of the Sun (*Usil*) and the Moon (*Tiu*)

As a consequence of applying the ratio of the solstices, the Liver shows four major coherent areas:

1. with cells 1–5, the Sun rises and lights up the front;
2. with cells 6–11, the Sun never rises and lights up the front; this is the condition of the majority of Etruscan temples (see Pernigotti in this volume);
3. with cells 12–14, the Sun sets and can illuminate while setting; and
4. with cells 15–16, this is really the “place/land beyond the Light” or “without light” inhabited by *Nocturnus/Cilens*.

The Evidence of the Tumulus of the Crosses Compared with That of the Literary Sources and the Liver

The boundary between the two regions occupied by the same god, *Nocturnus* in Martianus/*Cilens* in the Liver, has been considered coincident with the north (between regions 16 and 1 (Maggiani 1984; Pallottino 1956). However, as mentioned above (§2.4), neither source refers to the north.

The section of the inscription of the Tumulus containing the indication of the area “beyond the light/*Tina*”, where *Aita* stands alone, is oriented to the east of the north since the ramp was located in the north-east quadrant. According to the literary sources (Pliny, Cicero), we are still in the most favorable half of the chart of the sky.

The four theonymic elements of the inscription of the Tumulus appear to correspond to the divine entities quoted in the same order by Martianus and the Liver, even if the Liver is almost five centuries later and Martianus’ text almost ten. The profile of the female goddess points out an association between or integration of *Uni* and *Veī*, and the whole group corresponds to other situations in Etruscan sacred areas.

Something similar to the situation depicted by the inscription of the Tumulus is recorded at the sanctuary of the Vigna Parrocchiale at Cerveteri. Here a male god, called *apa* (father), sharing the corresponding infernal and dark prerogatives of *Tina*/Zeus, Dionysus, *Veiovis*, *Dis Pater* (Colonna 2012: 205–207, 211), is associated with *Veī*/Demeter, while in another area of the same sanctuary an inscription addresses *Unilχia* (Bellelli 2011: 112–114).

In the sanctuary of Volterra there is a similar situation after discovery of a recent fragmentary epigraphic evidence of the name *χia*. The other inscriptions address a male god, called *apa* and *papa* (grandfather), associated with a chthonian goddess named *ati* corresponding to Demeter (Bonamici 2009: 271–272, 275–276; Colonna 2012: 206) in the very context of local ritual practices.

Such correspondences open the way to figure out an encounter between the spheres of competence of *Veī* and *Uni* by means of their chthonian, maternal and terrestrial qualities, which is also shown by the fact that they share the same offering

of the piglets (Rafanelli 2013: 574–575). The two goddesses could both be part of the homologation of the maternity cycle with that of wheat, as already pointed out for *Ceres* in the case of the table of Agnone, where she is quoted side by side with a chthonian Jupiter (Prosdocimi 1996: 515–517).

In conclusion, it now seems possible to anchor the beginning of the sequence of the divine entities mentioned on the Liver and by Martianus (see Table 2.1) in the north-east quadrant by means of the orientation of the ramp of the Tumulus: the “place/land beyond the Light/*Tina*” occupies an area east of the north. After space the Light/*Tina* marks his place and, immediately after, there is that of the “Mother”.

This order recalls that of the Liver in which the region immediately on the right of the *suspensorium hepatis*, dividing the lobes of the Sun and the Moon on the convex side of the Liver, is occupied by *Cilens* (i.e. the counterpart of *Nocturnus*, according to Martianus) on the concave side, whereas similar dark gods inhabit the westerner regions: *Vetis* (Liver) and *Veiovis* (Martianus). This last correspondence between the two sources matches the above-mentioned nature of darkness shared by *Aita* and *Veiovis* together with the other similar gods identified by Colonna, who also introduces an important difference between chthonian and infernal/dark gods (2012: 208). These last entities occupy Pliny’s *regiones maximae dirae* (i.e. the worst regions of the Etruscan cosmos) and match Plautus’ description of *Nocturnus* as the god of the starry sky (Amphitryo, 271–284) (Maggiani 1984: 60, note 34; Torelli 1966: 305). Such regions are inhabited by dark gods—*Cilens/Nocturnus* and *Vetis/Veiovis*—regardless of whether they are males or females, which is one of the most specific aspects of the Etruscan theology (Cristofani 1993).

As a consequence, the cell of the Liver with the names *Tin Cilens*, which follows eastwards the one occupied by *Cilens* alone, where the Sun never rises, could correspond to the beginning of the decreasing of the light (*Tin*) after the sunrise of the summer solstice. From this cell onwards the list of gods of the Liver and that of Martianus hardly coincide, but this is probably due to the absence in the Liver of the main Etruscan goddesses, such as *Vei*, *Menerva* and *Turan*, a problem that should not be underestimated (Colonna 1994: 127). From the point of view of the selection of gods, the Liver could address a local community in a particular situation that has been depicted by Colonna in the framework of the political and historical events of the Hellenistic period (Colonna 1984).

The lacking arc of a circle in the *forma quadrans in circulo* (Fig. 2.2), mirrored by the one on the opposite wall, corresponds to the direction of the axis coming from the north-west and directed inside the Tumulus. The perception of the location of the gods inhabiting the worst regions of the sky could have been reflected in the shape of the *siglum*, intentionally carved without this specific arc of a circle.

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