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Female ritual protagonists of Archaic Daunia (southeast Italy)

The religious life of the inhabitants of Archaic Daunia is little known: there exists in the archaeological record no structures overtly built for sacred use nor the votives, idols and other such cultic paraphernalia that can be found elsewhere in contemporary Italy. Images on the Daunian statue-stelae, however, point to a rich and embedded ritual system that, on closer inspection, can be seen reflected in iconographies of indigenous groups across the peninsula. In Daunia, a kinship based agrarian society that likely placed great importance upon fertility and ancestry, it appears that it is women who are central to these ritual proceedings.



L) Daunian stele (female); R) reconstruction of Daunian woman (drawn by Kelvin Wilson)