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## **Burial Trends in Early Iron Age Boeotia, a comparison between urban and rural sites.**

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Before the emergence of the Theban Polis around the early 7th century BCE, during the Early Iron Age, we see a divisive split in the custom of mortuary practices between the urban site of Thebes and the few burial necropoleis found in rural Boeotia. For this period there are three to four organised cemeteries within the settlement of Thebes, but no cohesion in the types of graves found. However, in rural Boeotia, inhumation in Cist Tombs and Primary Cremation rites seems to be the most common burial form, with cluster burials performed on the periphery of settlements, which outside of Thebes seemed to be either a small village or hamlet in size. The differences found in the archaeological record were perhaps not a random occurrence but a social and political statement, with each grave containing goods that displayed the inhabitant's ideological identity, as well as reflecting the families social status within the community at large. The masses of used pottery found within grave contexts indicates that funerals were a social and quasi-religious occasion, and thus every facet of burial would have been scrutinised by the community, as well as social rivals from other settlements. The fact that burial practices differ from Thebes reflects the power vacuum and defragmentation of this period, and Thebes own lack of internal uniformity in the mortuary record, coupled with the urban complexity of its social composition, may indicate internal competition emulation between different families, social factions, or elite rivals during this period.