



THE POWER OF FOUR

International Museum Day 2022 - "The Power of Museums"

Four clay plagons (dolls) from 5th and 4th cent. BC tombs of the western necropolis of Ambracia, a tombstone of the Roman imperial period from the eastern necropolis of Nikopolis, and two lead oracular tablets from the sanctuary of Dodona have been temporarily removed from the permanent collections of the archaeological museums of Arta, Nikopolis, and Ioannina to join similar thematic sections of the permanent exhibition of the Archaeological Museum of Igoumenitsa.

At the same time, selected objects from the collection of the Archaeological Museum of Igoumenitsa will be hosted correspondingly in the halls of the other museums participating in the action.

The Archaeological Museum of Igoumenitsa, in the context of the celebration of the International Museum Day 2022, collaborates with the neighboring archaeological museums of Epirus to organise a joint action entitled "The Power of Four", inviting the public to discover common aspects of the history and archaeology of Epirus.

Archaeological Museum of Igoumenitsa

Look for the showcases marked with the special logo of the celebration in order to see the exhibits:

Lead oracular tablets from Dodona

Unit II: Settlements of the Historical Period - Elea: The first political centre

Clay plagons (dolls) from Ambracia

Unit IV: Private life - Toys and games for the young and the old

The grave stele of Evarestos from Nicopolis

Unit V: The archaeology of death - The Roman influence



Archaeological Museum of Igoumenitsa



ΔΙΕΘΝΗΣ ΗΜΕΡΑ ΜΟΥΣΕΙΩΝ

Η Δύναμη των Μουσείων



Lead oracular tablets from Dodona

During the excavations at the sanctuary of Dodona, more than 2,500 inscribed lead tablets have been found, most of which are included in the collection of the Archaeological Museum of Ioannina. These are thin sheets of lead on which the pilgrims of the oldest Greek oracle engraved their questions which they addressed to the worshiped deities, Naios Zeus and Dione, and more rarely to Themis. The inscriptions cover a period of four centuries, from the middle of the 6th to the middle of the 2nd cent. BC., and are written in a variety of alphabets and dialects.

A small number concern questions of public content, i.e. questions addressed to the gods by cities and residents of smaller regions (Corfu, Ambracia, Phoenike of Chaonia, Taranto, and Heraklion of Southern Italy, etc., with the largest number coming from the inhabitants of Dodona), Epirote ethne (Chaonians, Molossians, Atintanes), as well by political formations and coalitions (Koina-Leagues and Alliances), with content concerning religious issues, sea expeditions, military operations, etc.

The vast majority of the inscriptions, however, contain private queries coming from men and women alike, about universal issues that have preoccupied mankind through time and concern family, marriage and dowry, procreation, widowhood and infidelity, the maintenance of health, and the treatment of various diseases, professional activities, securing property, personal well-being, the emancipation of slaves, etc.

Pilgrims of the oracle wrote their question on one side of the sheet and then folded it up. Some of the plates are palimpsest, meaning they have been used many times without erasing the original inscription. In very few tablets, on the reverse side, the answer of the god with the mediation of the priests is preserved.

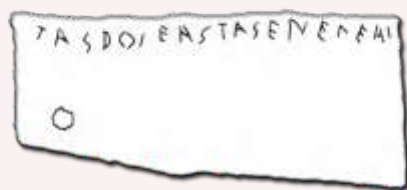
Among the numerous of oracular tablets very few refer to ethne or cities of Thesprotia. Two tablets bearing inscriptions of public character record the name Elea. Is this the thesprotian settlement that from the middle of the 4th cent. BC developed in the valley of Kokytos and issued a coin bearing the inscription ΕΛΕΑΙΩΝ (of the Eleates)? Or does it refer to the Greek colony Elea that was founded on the western coast of Italy at the end of the 6th cent. BC?

A nomination has been submitted by the Ministry of Culture and Sports for the registration of the lead oracular tablets of Dodona in the UNESCO "Memory of the World" Register.



[---έν] Ἐλέα [ι---]

Lead oracular tablet from Dodona [inv. no AMI 12375 (M325)]. On its one side it bears the name Elea, which is probably identified with the center of the thesprotian ethnos of the Eleates.



Ἰὰς δῶρεᾶς τᾶς ἐν Ἐλέαι

Lead oracular tablet of the early 5th cent. BC from Dodona [inv. no AMI 11481 (M824)]. The question, written in the alphabet from Elis, concerns a donation to Elea, either in the sense of an inheritance or a bequest or an offering to the gods.

Clay plagons (dolls) from Ambracia

The objects come from excavations of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Arta in the western necropolis of ancient Ambracia. They were found in children's graves where they had been placed to accompany the unfortunate deceased to their afterlife. They belong to the type of neurospast and they usually represent female figures, without missing examples of male plagons.

Among the most favourite and timeless toys for girls, we find it in the written sources with various names: plagon, glene, kore, nymph, neurospaston. Until the 6th cent. BC it served mainly religious, as a symbol of fertility and worship of a female deity.

The first toy dolls with movable limbs that imitated human movements are called neurospasta and they first appeared in the 7th-6th cent. BC in Boeotia. A string or strip connected the body of the plagon to the upper and lower limbs. In these early dolls, which wore a short chiton and had a cover on the head, the details of the clothes were indicated by color, while later, at the end of the 5th cent. BC, the type of the naked doll. Replicas of furniture, but also miniatures of everyday clay vessels, clothes, clothes and other accessories often complemented the play with dolls.

Apart from children's graves, dolls have also been found in shrines. They were probably girls' gifts on the eve of their wedding, marking the passage into the adult world.

The plagons were originally improvised with rudimentary materials. Later, specialised workshops appear and the previously unsophisticated handmade dolls are replaced by more elaborate ones, which the manufacturers of clay figurines produced with the aid of molds.

Depending on the method of construction, the time period, and the financial affluence of the client, different materials were used: mainly clay, but also wood and bone for the majority of clients, as well as more sophisticated materials such as ivory, wax, cloth, and stone for the more well off customers. The construction techniques and characteristic features of the toy, such as clothing, hairdressing, coloring, etc., vary according to the period, the fashion of the time, and the craftsmanship of the manufacturers.



α. Male plagon-neurospast, missing the upper limbs, 5th cent. BC. Clothes are rendered in white, red, and black colours. (inv. no 10053)

β. Male plagon-neurospast, 2nd half of the 5th cent. BC. (inv. no 10809)

The grave stele of Evarestos from Nicopolis

ΕΥΑΡΕΣΤΟΣ
ΑΓΡΙΠΠΑ
ΕΤΩΝ ΙΗ
ΧΑΙΡΕ

Evarestos lived in the 2nd cent. AD and passed away at the very young age of 18. The marble grave stele marking his grave was found in the eastern necropolis of Nicopolis. As his name suggests, he must have been a likable and pleasant youth of Greek origin. In four lines are written the name of the deceased, the patronymic, Agrippa, the age, and the final farewell (ΧΑΙΡΕ).

Grave stelae are tomb markers and function for the living as the identity of the deceased. A large number of grave stelae have been found at Nicopolis. Made of marble or limestone and rectangular in shape, they were placed vertically or horizontally on the cover of the tombs. They are plain in form and are inscribed only with the particulars of the deceased, most commonly in Greek and very rarely in Latin. Inscriptions usually take up three or more lines stating the name and age of the deceased along with the farewell. Few examples may report the office they held in life. More than 200 personal names are known from the funerary inscriptions of Nicopolis, the majority of them being Greek. The presence of a second, Roman name, when it occurs, shows that the deceased of Greek origin or one of his ancestors had received Roman citizenship (*civitas Romana*).

In Thesprotia on the other hand, the use of grave stelae was not widespread in Thesprotia. Few have been identified, among which the adjacent exhibited stele of the twenty-five-year-old herdsman named Polinicus, son of Heracleon, from the cemetery of Mazarakia, dated to the 1st-2nd cent. AD. In this inscription, however, the Latin language is exclusively used, even though the names Polynikos and Heracleon are Greek. This indicates a possible origin from Magna Grecia, as well as an integration of Greek and Western elements.



The grave stele of Evarestos from Nicopolis of the Roman imperial period (AMN 00058)