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SHORT GUIDE

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Hellenic Ministry of Culture  
Ephorate of Antiquities of Thesprotia

# Archaeological Museum of Igoumenitsa

## Short Guide



Igoumenitsa 2023

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## Introduction

The Archaeological Museum of Igoumenitsa has been open since 2009 in a purpose-built edifice at the town's northern entrance. The building's construction and the organisation of the permanent exhibition were carried out within the framework of co-funded programmes (2nd and 3rd Community Support Frameworks). The exhibits, many of which were previously displayed or stored in the archaeological museums of Corfu and Ioannina, come from archaeological excavations conducted throughout Thesprotia since the 1960s.

The settlement, social and economic organisation in ancient Thesprotia was largely shaped by its particular geomorphological features. The mountainous and fragmented terrain contributed to the long-term maintenance of an agro-pastoral economy and a political-administrative organisation in small tribal communities, the *ethne*, initially related to each other by kinship. The Thesprotians were later organised into a *Koinon* (League), to participate after the middle of the 4th century BC in broader state formations, first *Apeiros* or Epirote Alliance and later the Epirote *Koinon*, together with the other Epirotic *ethne*.

In a key position, with its smooth coastline on the Ionian Sea and facing the opposite Italian coast, Thesprotia was also a meeting point of cultures, ideas and people. Its ports, "*Erimos Limin*" and "*Glykis Limin*", mentioned by Thucydides and Strabo, apart from being fields of historical conflicts, were important communication hubs. The cultural affiliation with Corinth and the colonies that were developed along the west coast and on the Ionian islands, as well as the early diffusion of people and goods from the Italian peninsula, are reflected in the exhibits of the Archaeological Museum of Igoumenitsa.

The permanent exhibition, entitled "Thesprotians' Land", is displayed on the three floors of the building, covering a large time span from the Middle Palaeolithic up to the late Roman times, while it comprises a small number of exhibits of the Byzantine – post Byzantine era. With five thematic sections and more than 1600 exhibits, the long history and rich past of Thesprotia is presented, focusing mainly on the Hellenistic period, which is an era of wealth and prosperity and particularly representative of the region.

On the ground floor of the Museum, after an introductory section on the history of the region, which outlines in chronological order human presence from the prehistoric to Byzantine times, there follows a presentation of the most important ancient settlements that have been investigated in Thesprotia. Aspects of the public and private lives of the ancient Thesprotians are highlighted through the objects that are exhibited in the corresponding sections on the mezzanine floor. These are divided into individual thematic units focusing on economic organisation, political institutions and important public buildings. Other topics include war and weapons, shrines and cults, daily occupations and professions, life at home, clothing, beautification and personal hygiene, toys, games and entertainment.

The final hall of the exhibition hosts a special section dedicated to funerary practices and perceptions of death. Finally, the courtyard hosts objects from the Roman colony of Photike and its harbour, the coastal settlement of Ladochori in Igoumenitsa.

The selection of museum objects presented in this Short Guide projects the multiple aspects of human activity in Thesprotia over a very long period, from the appearance of Neanderthal hunter-gatherers in its wetlands and mountain passes to the arrival of Roman settlers. Objects from the Byzantine and post-Byzantine periods further highlight the intertemporal occupation of ancient settlements.

## **Point**

### **from Megalo Karvounari**

### **Middle Palaeolithic period**

Made from flint, the chipped stone point from Megalo Karvounari is a characteristic tool of the Middle Palaeolithic period. Thin and triangular in shape, the two lateral worked edges converge to form a point.

The triangular flake was detached from a core using the Levallois technique. The unique aspect of this method, which was in use by Neanderthals (*Homo neanderthalensis*) during the Middle Palaeolithic (100,000 – 40,000 before present), enabled tools to be partially shaped prior to being struck from the core, allowing the production of tools of predetermined shapes, such as points. Some of these were then retouched in order to further perfect the shape, as is the case with the point from Karvounari.

Mousterian points reveal the abstract thinking and the ability of Neanderthals to design technologically original objects. Studies have highlighted the multifunctional character of many of these tools, used as hunting weapons, but also for the cutting and processing of meat, leather or wood. When used in hunting, the points were hafted into wooden shafts, allowing animal prey to be brought down from a distance.

Based on research so far, the earliest evidence for human occupation in Thesprotia dates back to the Middle Palaeolithic. Neanderthal hunter-gatherers moved seasonally from the lowland wetlands of Morphi and Karvounari to higher elevation passes, as at Eleftherochori. These areas provided them with the stone raw materials to make their tools, as well as access to water and prey. Geologically, the largest of these areas are karstic basins of permanent or seasonal wetlands, filled now with reddish soil deposits, the typical terra rossa of Thesprotia.

Human activity continued in the same ecological zones during the Upper Palaeolithic (40,000 – 10,000 before present), as indicated by the presence of stone tools typical of this era.

The point (inv. no. ΘΕ 6920) is exhibited in Hall 1 – Section I:  
“Archaeological – historical retrospect – The first achievements”.





## **Clay kylix and bronze spearhead from Stenes Grika Late Bronze Age**

This partially preserved kylix (drinking vessel) is wheel made of fine yellowish clay. It has a deep hemispherical body, a tall cylindrical foot and a disc-shaped base. Traces of a decorative black band are preserved around the rim along with a few remnants of paint on the body. The vessel dates to the Late Bronze Age (Late Helladic IIIA2, third quarter of the 14th century BC). Unlike the orange-coloured kylikes and other handmade vessels from the same site, this wheel-made kylix was an imported product from a Mycenaean centre.

The bronze spearhead accompanied the deceased in one of the two cist graves found in the same area. It has a leaf-shaped blade with central groove and a relatively short conical stem, which had small holes on both sides for fixing the wooden shaft of the spear with nails. It dates to the Late Bronze Age (LH IIC, early 12th century BC).

The finds from Stenes are associated with the remains of a small, probably sedentary, settlement, practicing mixed farming and livestock husbandry and dated to the Late Bronze Age (14th – 12th century BC). The presence of the seasonal lake Chotkova in the vicinity of the settlement would have encouraged its establishment. Similar examples of the Late Bronze Age (1600 – 1100 BC) have been investigated elsewhere in Epirus, namely in the river valleys of Acheron and Kokytos and the Ioannina Basin.

As indicated by the presence of imported pottery and the spearhead, the location of Stenes between the river valleys of Kokytos and Kalamas and near the mountain passage of Eleftherochori facilitated communication both with the hinterland of Epirus and the Mycenaean centres of southern and western Greece.

The kylix and the spearhead (inv. no. ΘΕ 8953, ΘΕ 4070)  
are exhibited in Hall 1 – Section I:  
“Archaeological – historical retrospect – The first achievements”.



## Clay sealings

### from Prytaneion, the Archive Building of Gitana 3rd – 2nd c. BC

#### Clay sealing with the inscription ΘΕΣΠΡΩΤΩΝ

Depicted on this sealing is the head of a male figure turned towards the right. To the right of the figure is the inscription THESPROTON (Thesprotians). This is a depiction unknown in Thesprotian coins.

During the 4th century BC, the Thesprotian *ethne* were most likely united within a broader political formation, the *Koinon* (League) of the Thesprotians as can be deduced from the epigraphic reference to a *prostates* and other clay sealings from Gitana with the inscription of *grammateus* (secretary).

#### Clay sealing with the inscription ΓΙΤΑΝΑ

The sealing bears the depiction of the head of a female figure turned to the right. On it there is a *kausia*, a round flat-brimmed hood which was a typical head cover worn by the ancient Macedonians. To the right of the figure is the inscription ΓΙΤΑΝΑ (GITANA).

The name of the city, GITANA, appears on at least 14 other sealings. The female figure with the *kausia*, which is a personification of the city, finds its parallel to the *kausia*-wearing personification of Aetolia on coins of the Aetolian League (239 – 229 and 170 – 160 BC).

The approximately 3,000 clay sealings found in the room of the Archive, in the *Prytaneion* – Archive Building of Gitana, were intended for the validation of public correspondence. They were small pieces of damp clay used for the sealing of official documents written on papyrus sheets. They were placed on the outside of the document, usually directly on the rolled sheets or on the *linos*, the flax rope used to bind the scroll. The author's sealing ensured the confidentiality of the document and at the same time indicated its provenance.

The locations where the sealings were found suggest that the scrolls were stored inside a *pithos* (large storing vessel), on shelves, and, in some cases, in wooden boxes. When the building was destroyed by fire, the damp clay was baked and, unlike the papyrus scrolls, the sealings were preserved.

Depicted on the sealings are gods, heroes and mythical creatures, animals and birds. Most common, though, are the depictions of public emblems with the names and symbols of the various Epirote *ethne*, the Thesprotians, Molossians, Chaonians and Eleates, of state formations such as ΑΠΕΙΡΩΤΑΝ (Epirote Koinon) and ΑΙΤΩΛΩΝ (Aetolians), and of political functions and public officials, such as ΒΟΥΛΑΣ (parliament), ΣΥΝΕΔΡΩΝ (delegates), ΑΓΟΡΑΝΟΜΟΣ (market overseer), ΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΕΥΣ (secretary) and ΑΓΩΓΕΥΣ (prosecutor). Sealings with the inscriptions of ΠΑΡΘΙΝΩΝ (Parthinoi) and ΑΜΑΝΤΩΝ (Amantes) document contacts with the *ethne* and cities of Illyria. The Macedonian symbols are frequently present, pointing to the close ties between Epirus and the kingdom of Macedonia.

The sealings (inv. no. ΣΦ 288, ΣΦ 319) are exhibited in Hall 1 – Section I: “Archaeological – historical retrospect – From the genus to the city” and Section II: “Settlements of the historical period – Gitana: the organised city”.



## **Glazed plate from Doliani Middle Byzantine period**

Shallow ceramic plate depicting a griffin within a circular frame. The object represents an example of high quality glazed polychrome ware on white clay, the decoration of which has been executed using mainly deep blue and white, along with some orange and gold. The griffin, the ancient mythological creature, was adopted in Byzantine art as a symbol to ward off evil. During the Middle Byzantine period it was frequently depicted on architectural sculptures, small works of art, illustrated manuscripts, and textiles.

Based on iconography and style, the plate can be dated to the second half of the 10th – early 11th century AD and attributed to a workshop in Constantinople or its immediate surroundings, such as Nikomedia or Nice.

The plate was found in Doliani, a fortified settlement identified with the ancient Thesprotian city of Phanote, which was continuously inhabited between the Archaic and the post-Byzantine era. Of the period to which the plate is dated no settlement remains have been found. Habitation both in Doliani and its wider region (Riziani, Korytiani and Parapotamos), is only indirectly indicated by the existence of extensive cemeteries.

The plate is a unique object for Mid-Byzantine Thesprotia, where there were no major centres that this luxurious object could have reached through trade or as personal property of an important official; therefore we can only hypothesise about how it came to Doliani. Maybe it arrived with a high-ranking individual passing through the region or it was a heirloom that changed hands from generation to generation and was found, many years after its manufacture, in Doliani during the Late Byzantine period.

The plate (inv. no. ΘΕ 8313) is exhibited in Hall 1 – Section I: “Archaeological – historical retrospect – The Roman rule and the advent of Christianity”.







## Stone stele with manumission – votive inscription from the Kalamas Dam 4th c. BC

The stele was found in the wider area of Gitana, during the construction of the dam on the the river Kalamas. The inscription refers to the emancipation of the slave Falakros from his master Xenys, son of Nikanor. The act of manumission took place in the month Gamilios, the year in which Alexander was *prostates* of the Thesprotian League, while the priest of Themis, to whom the slave was dedicated, was Fystaios. The act took place with the joint approval of Andron, son of Nikanor, probably Xenys' brother, and another person probably named Antigonos.

In many cases manumission had religious connotations. Slaves were freed under the supervision of the gods and dedicated to them, often with the obligation to offer services to their temple. In this inscription, Falakros is dedicated to Themis, whose worship at Gitana is attested by the presence of the name of the goddess on roof tiles.

The inscription also provides information about the political organisation of the Thesprotians. The existence of a *prostates*, a position equivalent to that of the *eponymous archon* (chief magistrate), suggests that the Thesprotian *ethne* were probably united within a wider political formation, the *Koinon* (League) of the Thesprotians, as is similarly attested in the inscriptions of the neighbouring *ethnos* of the Molossians.

The ethnic name Ikadotos, attributed to Xenys, together with the name of his father, might correspond to one of the smaller Thesprotian *ethne*. The reference to the *prostates* of the *Koinon* and the priest of Themis serves as a chronological reminder of the manumission decree. Finally, the reference to the Corinthian month Gamilios, the ninth month of the year which began in early autumn, confirms that in Epirus they had adopted the Corinthian calendar, or a variant of it.

The stele (inv. no. ΘΕ 9290) is exhibited in Hall 2 – Section III:  
“Public life – Political organisation”.



Ἀγαθαὶ τύχαι · ἐπὶ προ[σ]-  
τάτα Θεσπρωτῶν Ἀλε-  
ξάνδρου, ἱερέος δὲ Φυ-  
σταίου, μηνὸς Γαμιλί-  
ου, ἀφῆκε Ξένυς Νικάν-  
ορος Ἰκαδωτος Φάλακ-  
ρον ἐλεύθερον καὶ ἀν-  
έθηκε τᾷ Θέμιτι, συν-  
ευδοκούντων Ἄνδρω-  
νος τοῦ Νικάνορος, [Σω]σ-  
[-] Ἀντιγον[-----].



## A hoard of silver coins from Elea Late 3rd – 2nd c. BC

This coin hoard was discovered in a small clay vessel behind the wall of the eastern stoa of the Agora in Elea. It comprises 41 silver coins, thirteen of which were from the mint of the Epirote League. On the obverse is the depiction of Dodonian Zeus crowned with a wreath of oak leaves, or, in other cases, the heads of the divine couple of Zeus and Dione with a thunderbolt. On the reverse is the inscription ΑΠΕΙΡΩΤΑΝ. Twenty-nine of the coins are silver drachms of Apollonia and the remaining seven are drachms of Dyrrhachium. On the obverse, they depict a cow with a suckling calf and a name, probably of the person in charge of the mint. On the reverse, star-shaped anthemia are depicted together with the ethnic letters ΔΥΡ and ΑΠΟΛ, referring to the initials of the two Illyrian cities, and the name of the *eponymous archon* (chief magistrate). The coins date between the final decades of the 3rd century BC and 168 BC.

The composition of the hoard, consisting only of silver coins, does not reflect everyday transactions conducted with copper coins of lower value. It was probably the savings of a wealthy merchant who hastily hid it in the agora of Elea, near his shop, fearing the threat of the Third Macedonian War (172 – 168/7 BC). It is also possible that the burying of the hoard happened at the time when, a year after the defeat of the Macedonian king Perseus at Pydna in 167 BC, the Epirotic cities were compelled by the Romans to surrender their reserves in gold and silver to be delivered as war trophies to the Roman legions.

Numismatic hoards refer to groups of coins found together. Their owners kept them in cloth or leather pouches and clay or bronze vessels and hid them inside walls, under house floors, in the precincts of shrines and other public buildings, or offered them as grave gifts. Hoards fall into various categories depending on why they were put in hiding, the most common ones being burial, votive or of forced concealment when hidden perforce in periods of war or natural disasters. Also, they were often simply put away as savings.



The hoard is exhibited in Hall 2 – Section III:  
“Public life – Economic organisation”.



## **The armature of a prominent official in a tomb from Prodromi 4th – early 3rd c. BC**

The accidental discovery of a cist burial in 1978 in the village of Prodromi in Paramythia brought to light several impressive pieces of armature and other objects. Accompanying the warrior on his last journey was an iron cuirass, two iron helmets, one of which with a silver coating, a sword and its sheath, a gilded wreath with leaves, acorns and berries of oak and myrtle, an iron key and a strigil. The ashes of the cremated deceased were placed in a bronze urn decorated with a Dionysian scene. Based on the finds, the tomb could be dated to the transition from the 4th to the 3rd century BC, probably during the reign of Pyrrhus, although a slightly earlier date cannot be ruled out.

The luxury of the armature and the type of sword indicate that this must have been the tomb of a high ranking official who was part of the cavalry. A distinguished warrior from Epirus, either Thesprotian or Molossian, the prominent deceased of Prodromi may have been buried where he fell during battle, in accordance with the custom of heroization, rather than being taken home.

### **Iron cuirass with gold attachments**

It is of the muscled cuirass type. Consisting of two parts, the front and rear sections were connected vertically at the sides. Depicted on the front is the conformation of the human body, in particular the thoracic, stomach and abdominal regions, while the nipples are gold-plated. At the end of the epaulettes there are gold discs with relief lion heads. Gold discs with rosettes are attached to the chest and a little lower, and one more is on the back. Cords were fastened on the iron rings hanging from the discs, tying together the two parts of the cuirass as well as the epaulettes onto it. The muscled cuirass of Prodromi is a find of extreme rarity, as no similar one has been found elsewhere in Greece.

### **Silver plated iron helmet**

One of the iron helmets of Prodromi is the only silver plated surviving example. It belongs to the so-called 'composite' type which combines individual elements of different helmets. A crest is formed at the top with slots for attaching another movable crest made of feathers or ponytail hair. The cheek plates for the protection of the temple and the cheeks are movable and fastened with small nails. The outer surface of the helmet is decorated with gold ornaments. A thin gilded copper band encircles its exterior and a gilded flower-shaped ornament is attached at both ends of the crest. The helmet of Prodromi bears a strong resemblance to that depicted in one of the frescoes of the Macedonian tomb of Lyson and Kallikles, at Lefkadia, Imathia.



### Iron helmet

The second iron helmet of the grave also belongs to the “composite” type with an innate crest at the top and a notably protruding visor. A characteristic particularity of the cheek plates is the plastic depiction of ears. On the side spiral endings of the visor there are tubular sockets for fastening feathers.

### Iron sword and sheath

The iron sword with the slightly curved spine is of the *kopis* type, which was also used as a cutting weapon, like *machaira* or *spathe*. The handle is shaped like a bird's head (crane) and on the lower part has a notch for a more secure grip. The shape and relatively long length of the sword confirms that it belonged to a horseman. Xenophon (*On Horsemanship* 12.11) considers this weapon ideal for this type of soldier.

The sheath of the sword (*koleos*) is of iron with traces of leather. It would have been suspended on a leather strap, passing diagonally from the right shoulder and ending on the left side of the warrior's waist. It would cover the blade, leaving the hilt of the sword free to draw.

The objects (inv. no. ΘΕ 4a-4b, ΘΕ 6, ΘΕ 7, ΘΕ 9a-9b) along with the other grave finds are exhibited in Hall 2 – Section III: “Public life – War and weapons – A hero warrior”.



## **Bronze kemos** **from Gitana** **3rd – 2nd c. BC**

This horse's kemos (muzzle) was found in the stoa of the Agora in Gitana and is one of the few surviving bronze examples we know of. It belongs to the perforated type, without a bag in the lower part to receive the horse's muzzle, consisting of metal strips made by the casting technique. The flattened front part that covered the animal's forehead is elaborately decorated with ivy leaves, crescents and spirals. The two vertical side stems end in swan heads, which would have held the rings to tie the harness to the neck of the horse.

The muzzle (*kemos* or *femos*), also mentioned in ancient written sources, was part of the harness and was used to enclose the horse's mouth, preventing it from biting or eating, without restricting its breathing. They were usually made of perishable organic materials, such as leather and reed. Bronze muzzles are rare and were made for wealthy owners.

The large Doric stoa, where the muzzle was found, occupies the northern part of the Agora in Gitana. At its front was a series of pedestals, some inscribed, which would have supported votives and statues erected by the city to honour distinguished individuals who had benefited it. Although the morphological characteristics of the muzzle agree with a utilitarian object, it is also possible that it was part of a bronze horse statue.

The discovery of a large number of bronze objects in the destruction layer of the stoa, including the muzzle, has been interpreted as an attempt at collective hoarding during the turbulent period before the Third Macedonian War (172 – 168/7 BC).

The horse muzzle (inv. no. ΘΕ 4579) is exhibited in Hall 2 – Section III:  
“Public life – War and weapons”.







## **Female statuette from Gitana Hellenistic period**

Female statuette found in the temple of Parthenos in Gitana.

The figure, whose head is not preserved, is dressed in a long-sleeved chiton (type of gown) and oblique himation (mantle), covering both hands. She stands upright and supports the weight of the body on the unbent left leg, while slightly turning towards the right. The forearm of one hand crosses the torso transversely and rests on the abdomen, while the other points towards the head.

On the rectangular base of the statue is a two-line inscription that reveals the name of the dedicator as well as the deity worshipped:

[Παρ]θένης Φιλ[...]-

-[...κ]ατά ὄραμα

That is, it is dedicated by Phila or Philo to Parthenos (a Virgin deity) after a dream she had.

The statuette belongs to the type of Pudicitia, which was widespread during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, with typical characteristics in terms of the position of the hands, the dress and the contrapposto (cross) posture of the body with one leg straight and the other bent at the knee. This type of statue entered the Roman pantheon as the personification of feminine modesty, purity and abstinence, virtues that women had to express through their dress and posture during public appearances. The Roman deity, with whom Parthenos seems to share common characteristics, protected married women and solved problems within the marriage.

The temple of Parthenos, where the statuette was found, belongs to the simple distyle in antis type, with two Doric columns between the walls of the entrance. The statue itself is related to cults associated with rites of passage marking the transition from childhood to the adult world.

The statuette (inv. no. ΘΕ 2944) is exhibited in Hall 2 – Section III:  
“Public life – Shrines and cults”



**Black glazed Attica kylix  
from Mastilitza  
Late 6th – early 5th c. BC**

Black glazed clay kylix (drinking vessel) reassembled from many sherds. The outer surface is covered with high quality glossy black glaze, while the interior is decorated with a depiction of the Gorgon within a medallion (tondo), using the black-figure technique. There are marked differences between the two eyes, a common artistic convention for rendering the terrifying gaze of the Gorgon-Medusa. The gap of the open mouth is indicated by a solid black semicircular surface, while the protruding tongue is indicated by the addition of red colour.

The apotropaic form of Gorgon was often chosen by Archaic painters as a decorative motif for kylikes, which were the main symposium vases of the period.

Made in Attica, the vessel was the only grave good in an adult burial from a cemetery of the late Archaic and early Classical period in the area of Mastilitza, located on the foot a hill in the plain of the lower Kalamas. The few grave goods from the tombs consisted exclusively of vessels from the workshops of Attica, reflecting the penetration of Athenian trade in the area from the beginning of the 5th century BC.

The cemetery does not appear to belong to an indigenous settlement but rather to a Corkyrean one that should be searched out in the area, an assumption based on the existence of an Archaic temple higher up the hill, as well as random surface finds.

The kylix (inv. no. ΘΕ 5388) is exhibited in Hall 4 – Section V:  
“The archaeology of death – Burials of the late Archaic period”.



## Golden band and danakes from Riziani 3rd c. BC

### Inscribed golden band

The band is a thin gold sheet 40 cm in length. In its middle there is a repoussé decoration of a stylised winged thunderbolt, called an *okypteron*, which is an abbreviated representation of an eagle. On either side of the thunderbolt is the inscription ΚΛΕΟΜΑΧΕ ΧΑΙΠΕ (Kleomache farewell). The band probably adorned the garment of the deceased.

The greeting *χαίρε* (farewell) was frequent on the grave stele of Leukas, Corkyra and Apollonia in Illyria, but was less widespread in burial inscriptions of Epirus. It was common during the Hellenistic period and has been associated with the increasing tendency towards heroization of the dead. The *okypteron*, symbol of Dodonian Zeus, was the emblem of the political formation *Apeiros* or Epirote Alliance (331/330 – 232/231 BC) and the Epirote *Koinon* (232/231 – 168 BC). Pyrrhus adopted it and used it extensively to promote his hegemonic role. The depiction of the *okypteron* and the declaration of identity on the gold band indicate the important political or military status of the deceased Kleomachos.

### Gold danakes

Two identical gold danakes (pseudo-coins) depicting Persephone's head wreathed with ears of wheat and the moon on the left. They both copy an actual bronze coin of King Pyrrhus, minted in Syracuse in 278 – 276 BC. Their use as “Charon's obol”, the toll for the entrance to the underworld, is probably related to the chthonic character of the deity, while their presence in a richly decorated tomb demonstrates the high social status of the two individuals buried there.

The objects come from two cist graves inside a Π-shaped burial enclosure in Riziani. Found within a short distance of the fortified settlement of Doliani (ancient Phanote), the enclosure included a total of five richly furnished cist graves and two smaller burial cases (ossuaries). Most of the burials date to the late 4th and 3rd century BC.



The golden items (inv. no. ΘΕ 8009, ΘΕ 8010, ΘΕ 8025)  
are exhibited in Hall 4 – Section V:  
“The archaeology of death – Burials inside an enclosure”.



## Burial stele from Mazarakia 1st – 2nd c. AD

Stone stele in second use from the Roman cemetery of Mazarakia. The worn, two-line inscription on its upper part, decorated with ivy leaves, indicates its original use in an unknown cemetery of the Hellenistic period:

[Ἀπ]ελλᾶς Ῥοδίου                      or                      Ἑλλάς Ῥοδίου  
χαῖρε                                              χαῖρε

“Apellas, son of Rodios/farwell” or “Hellas, daughter (or wife) of Rodios/farewell”.

The main inscription in Latin was engraved during the Roman imperial period (1st – 2nd century AD), when the stele was reused as a *sema* on the tomb of the young Polynicus who died at the age of 25:

Polinicus

armentar(ius)

vixit • ano(s) • XXV.

Heracleo • f(ilio)

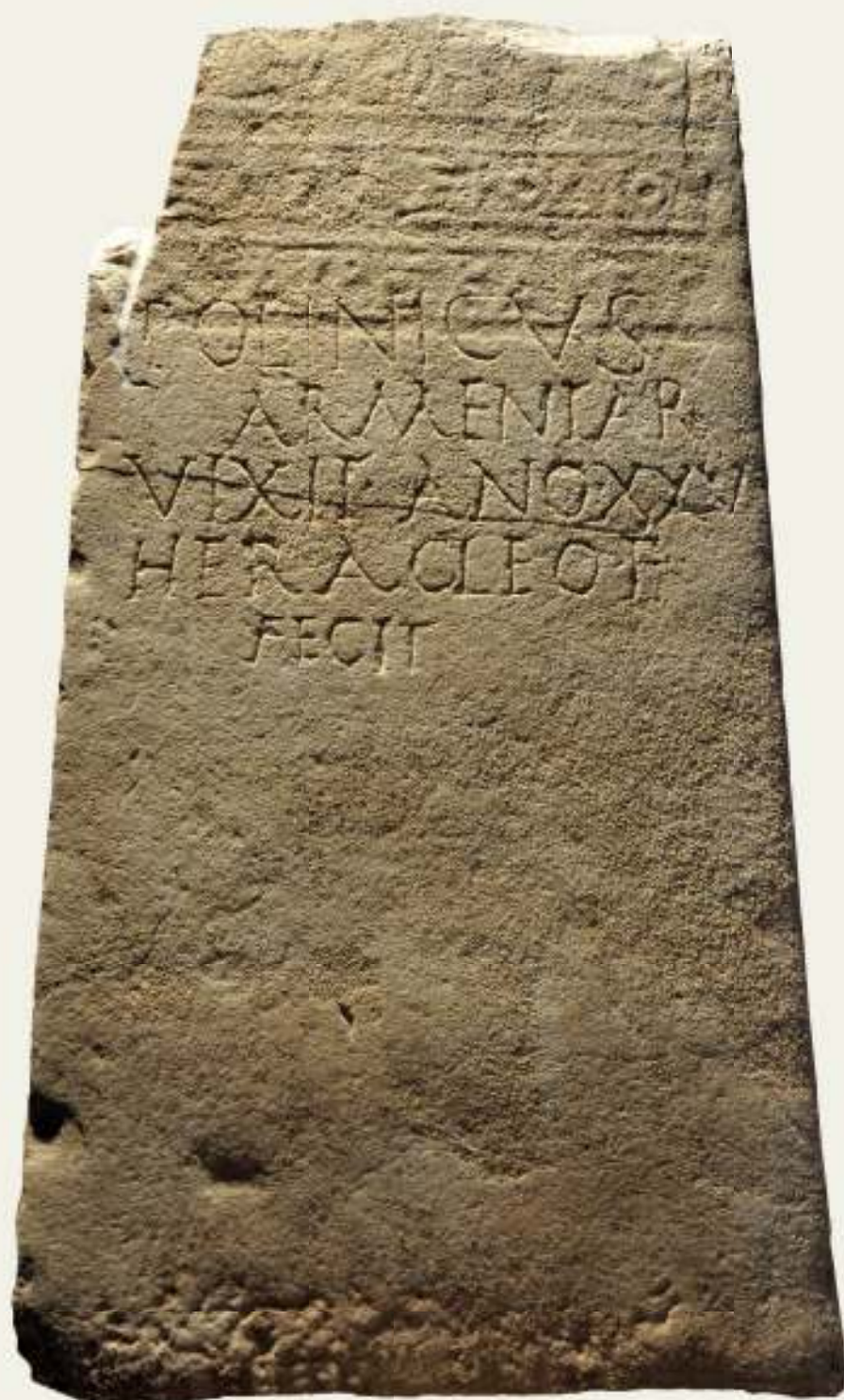
fecit.

From the inscription we learn also that Polynicus was a shepherd (*armentarius*) who supervised the cattle for ploughing. The stele was dedicated by his father Heracleon.

So far, the cemetery of Mazarakia is the earliest and largest of those found in Thesprotia dating to the Roman period, with its use spanning between the 1st century BC and the 3rd century AD. The earliest burials can be linked with the arrival of settlers from the Italian Peninsula in Thesprotia during the 1st century. The burials often include Greek objects together with objects imported from Italy, while the local burial custom of inhumation, along with “Charon’s obol”, coexist with the distinctively Roman practice of cremating the dead directly within the grave (*bustum*), which is not found elsewhere in Epirus. The coexistence of Roman and local Greek traditions may point to the origin of some settlers from the region of Magna Grecia in southern Italy and Sicily. The Greek names of Polynicus and Heracleon on the burial stele, written in Latin, indicate that the deceased and his family were Italians of Greek origin.

The stele (inv. no. ΘΕ 8977) is exhibited in Hall 4 – Section V:  
“The archaeology of death – A roman cemetery”.





DOMINVS  
ARVENIAR  
VIXIT ANNO  
HERACLIOT  
FECIT



## Marble sarcophagus of an Attic workshop from Zavali 2nd c. AD

The body of the sarcophagus is decorated on one of the long sides with relief figures of maenads and satyrs, attendants of the god Dionysus, while on the other, lions are depicted framing a vase for the mixing of wine. The narrow sides are adorned with two cupids fighting over a palm leaf and a satyr with a lion skin. It is not preserved intact and the existing display some damage.

To the same sarcophagus probably belongs the lid with a young male sculpted figure reclining on a couch, the edges of which are decorated with zoomorphic heads and acanthus leaves.

The young man, dressed in a chiton and himation, holds a scroll in his left hand and a garland of flowers in his right. As the farewell epigram in Greek records, this is Antonius, who died at the age of twenty-one.

The sarcophagus was made of Pentelic marble in an Attic workshop in the 2nd century AD. Athens during the 2nd–3rd century was an important centre for the production of luxury sarcophagi. These products were not only intended for local use, but they were in great demand both in Greece and abroad.

The sarcophagus comes from the site of Zavali in Ladochori, where in 1975 a burial chamber (mausoleum) and a Roman rural villa were discovered. Two other sarcophagi were found within the burial monument, including a marble one with scenes from the Homeric epics (The Ransom of Hector), which is on display at the Archaeological Museum of Ioannina.

The coastal settlement on the plain of Ladochori, in the southern cove of the Gulf of Igoumenitsa, was probably the harbour of Photike, the Roman colony founded in the valley of Paramythia during the reign of August (27 BC–14 AD). It was founded at the beginning of the 2nd century AD and flourished during the Early Christian period (4th–6th century AD). Around the port settlement of Ladochori were individual farmhouses and luxurious rural villas, the richest of which was that at Zavali. The wealthy inhabitants of the villa would have been buried in the mausoleum with the marble sarcophagi.

The sarcophagus and the lid (inv. no. ΘΕ 9445, ΘΕ 9447)  
are exhibited in the courtyard of the Museum.





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