**Introduction**

The sanctuary of Dodona, the oldest oracle of ancient Greece is located at the center of Tomaros Valley, near Ioannina, Western Greece. The oracle was also the religious, political, and social center of the local tribes. The site started as a small prehistoric settlement (from second millennium BC), but on Homer’s Epics it is mentioned as a very important oracle. Dedicated to Zeus Naioi, the oracle kept intact the primitive cult of the sacred oak tree (Phegos). From the 4th century, new buildings constructed (the sacred House/Temple of Zeus, Temples of Aphrodite, Dione, Hercules, and Themis). The sanctuary gained prestige and glory during Pyrrhus of Epirus reign. During that time (3rd century BC), the theater and stadium had constructed. The end of the oracle came along with the new Christian religion (4th century).

Through the centuries, many people paid tributes to Dodonaios Zeus and dedicated many bronze offerings of all types (tripods, statuettes, statues, bronze reliefs, jewels, weapons, vessels etc). With these finds, it is easier to identify the corresponding reputation of the oracle and its character through centuries.

**Methodology**

The study used:

- Historical material such as ancient literature sources, excavation reports, catalogues from museums, (Antikensammlung Berlin, British Museum, Archaeological Museum of Ioannina, and National Archeological Museum of Athens) and modern bibliography as well various archaeological guides for Dodona.
- Archaeological material from excavations, for the creation of a catalogue with more than 200 offerings presented with a full description and images or sketches of the finds.
- Photos from the actual site of Dodona; maps of the area and 3D images of the sanctuary were used to reveal the various construction phases.

**Aims**

1. The current study will examine the character of the oracle, its prestige as a well-known sanctuary, as seen through the offerings.
2. The study will also analyze the way that political, social, geographical, or even ritual factors affected the course of the sanctuary through time and
3. Will explore the different types of dedications, the social or political background of the dedicators and the distinctive role of the oracle at the political and religious scene of Epirus.

**References**

- Archaeological Museum of Ioannina (http://www.amio.gr)
- British Museum (http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collectionssonline/home.aspx)
- Dodona, E, S, 1906. Suidaeis; digpeispeuid; todpeu; papeu (Epirus, Greece)

**List of Illustrations**

- Top left: Winged horse from Dodona, an utensil decoration; third quarter of 5th century (Museum of Ioannina)
- Silver statuette of a girl wearing an oak wreath and Dione wearing laureate wreath and veil; 238 BC (British Museum)
- Top right: Beotean statuelet of an eagle; probably a part of a group of a larger bronze statue; 4th century
- Bottom left: Beotean statuelet of Epikos (General) (Department of Sculpture, British Museum)
- Bottom right: Bronze statue of an oak tree; 350-340 BC (Athens)
- Central fig.: Bronze statuelets of an oak tree with embossed veins; 300 BC (Athens)

**Discussion**

The current study will try to find an answer on different questions concerning the oracle and the dedications:

- Which social, political, geographical, or religious factors affected the identity and the character of the oracle and to what extend?
- What kind of dedications the oracle had? What that reveals of the dedicators?
- What was the character of Dodona, in comparison with Delphi and Olympia? (Spatial development & political organization)
- The primitive nature of the cult practices at Dodona, affected the choice of pilgrims to visit the oracle and in what way?
- What was the development of the oracle through centuries, according to literature sources, excavation reports and of course the votive offerings?
- What was the role of excavations and publications? Do they give a clear view of the oracle’s character?