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DEDICATIONS AT ANCIENT DODONA

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Maria Fotiadi

Introduction

Aims and Objectives

The sanctuary of Dodona in Epirus, dedicated to Zeus Dodonaios and his consort Dione, is considered to be one of the oldest oracles in the ancient Hellenic world. The dedications made there were the gifts of visitors to the sanctuary, offered to the patronal deity as a sign of respect and devotion, in expectation of some welcome prophecy. These votive offerings stand as solid proof of this oracle's longstanding presence.

Aims of the present research project are to present the history and the cult of Dodona, as well as a comprehensive survey of the dedications offered to the Epirot Oracle over the centuries. For the first time, an attempt is made to compile a documented corpus of the various finds, more specifically the published offerings, from Dodona and to interpret them as objects of historical and ritualistic significance, which reflect the character of the cult practised and shed light on the identity of the visitors, as well as the very existence of the sanctuary and its network, through time.

The main objective of the project is to create an accessible database for anyone who wishes to study the material from Dodona.

The research questions that I attempt to answer in the thesis are the following:

- 1) What can the various offerings tell us about the course of Dodona through time?

- 2) What was the meaning and the role of the dedications in the sanctuary?
- 3) Was Dodona a sanctuary during the Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age?
- 4) Is there continuity of cult through time?
- 5) What is the character of the cult as highlighted by the finds?
- 6) Who were the visitors to Dodona?

Methodology of Research

This thesis combines historical, literature and archaeological data, which are available in the public arena, in order to set the context for interpreting the meaning and the role that these dedications had in the sanctuary. The archaeological material is extensive and this is mainly presented by category in a quasi-catalogue of more than 600 finds and various offerings, as Appendix II, and 66 illustrations of Dodona (plans, photographs of the archaeological site, etc.), as Appendix I. The illustrations of the offerings give the reader a picture of the variety and the quality of the finds discovered at Dodona. The sources for the published illustrations are cited when these exist. I stress here that the corpus-catalogue attempted in the Appendixes is based on information available in a wide range of publications and exhibition displays. The many shortcomings are due to the fact that many of these finds were not recorded officially and systematically, as well as to the lack of excavation data. As I had no access to the original material at this stage in my research, I hope in the future to be able to present a more coherent study of each category of finds.

For the first time, all the published archaeological finds are combined into a single corpus, classed into different categories, namely: bronze figurines, weapons and armour, fragments of colossal bronze statues, bronze inscribed reliefs, *ex-voto* bronzes, tripods and tripod fragments, other finds (including a separate list with a few examples of inscriptions and lead tablets). At this point I would like to clarify that, unlike, for example, the *ex-voto* bronzes, the inscriptions and the lead tablets are not considered as offerings to the deity, because these do not have a dedicatory character. However, these remain a valid source for our understanding of the cult and the character of the oracle, as well as of the dedicators.

The thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter gives an overview of the history of Epirus and Dodona.

The second chapter presents the various dedications within their historical, political and ritual context. It begins with a discussion of the Bronze Age and Iron Age at Dodona and some of the objects linked with these periods. Early activity of Dodona as a cult centre is a contentious issue, which will be discussed in the third chapter. However, the ancient sources and the archaeological data clearly show that Dodona was a known cult centre from the eighth century BC. This review of the dedications of Dodona continues until the early Roman period, when the life of the cult centre came to an end. The Romans sacked the sanctuary in 167 BC and Dodona never recovered from this act of war; the dedications fell into decline, along with the rest of Epirus. The period after the Romans, known as Late Antiquity, is vague, with only a few excavations linked with Byzantine Dodona (a basilica church was revealed, built on the ruins of the temple

of Herakles). A separate but pivotal issue considered in this thesis is the identity of the various dedicators who visited the oracle and an attempt is made to extract some conclusions about their activity, as deduced from the votive offerings.

In the third and final part of this thesis the information presented in the two main chapters is evaluated. Issues such as how political changes affected Dodona, the continuity (or not) of the cult practised at the sanctuary from the Bronze Age and Iron Age to Archaic and Classical times, the character of the oracle, the networks of Dodona and the offerings are discussed.

Limitations of the research

In the course of my research relating to the “Dedications of Dodona”, I realized that I had to confront many issues in attempting to synthesize the information about the history of the sanctuary, the cultic activity there and the finds. Dodona, after all, remains even today for the most part a *terra incognita* archaeologically. The relative paucity and the slow progress of excavations, in comparison with other Greek regions, the minimum staff at the local Ephorates of Antiquities and the difficult economic circumstances – now more than ever – make the archaeological exploration of Epirus a hard task to achieve. Even for Dodona, which is by far one of the most important archaeological sites of Epirus and Western Greece, the archaeological data to a large extent remain unstudied. Furthermore, the available data are dispersed in a vast number of periodicals, volumes and books. It became clear early on in my work that a basic need was to combine all these into one body and to organize the bibliography in such a way that it could

deliver the best possible information. The assessment of the diverse information in the various publications was a difficult task on its own, since cult, myth and historical facts were mixed together and presented as accurate sources.

The first book on Dodona was by Constantinos Carapanos¹, *Dodona et ses ruines*, 1878, which includes a catalogue of the excavated finds and the dedications. It is still a treasure trove of illustrations for contemporary scholars and a basic source of information about Dodona. However, I realized that even though Carapanos's excavations of Dodona, which began in 1875, were extensive, many finds remained unstudied and the sanctuary was a case study only for its political role and its architectural development. The various moveable finds, a separate but inseparable part of every archaeological site, have not been analysed satisfactorily and have been neglected as a potential source of further information about the oracle. Many of the finds were treated as examples of particular crafts or as artworks, but not as a vital source of information.

Most of these finds are presented in the annual archaeological reports which were published by the main excavators of the site (from 1929 until 2005), Demetrios Evangelidis, Sotiris Dakaris, Amalia Vlachopoulou, Konstantina Gravani and Chrysiida Tzouvara-Souli. Because these reports, along with almost anything else written about Dodona, are in Greek, the material is largely unknown to non-Greek readers. Moreover, access to this material is not easy, as these publications are not available in electronic form or uploaded on

¹ For the early excavations of Dodona and the work of the Ephorate of Ioannina see Soueref 2016: 14-22; Gravani, Tzouvara-Souli Vlachopoulou 2014: 21-42.

the Internet, but are scattered in various libraries in Ioannina and Athens.

Evangelidis and Dakaris, the two main scholars and excavators of the site, wrote a series of papers and reports. Evangelidis, who excavated Dodona in 1935, presented many finds for the first time in his archaeological reports. Dakaris wrote two archaeological guides to Dodona (1995 and 1998), which provided an overview of all the then-known data about the history and archaeology of the site.

Gravani, Tzouvara-Souli and Vlachopoulou, all former students of Dakaris, studied the prytaneion, the bouleuterion and the stoa of Dodona, and in their reports wrote mainly about the political role of Dodona, the history of the excavations and the architectural development of the sanctuary. Among non-Greek scholars was Arthur Bernard Cook, a British classical scholar, known for his work in archaeology and the history of religions. He wrote a series of articles with the title “Zeus, Jupiter and the Oak Tree” (1903-1906), providing us with information about the early cult of Zeus and its development into the Classical Greek worship of the principal deity of the Greek pantheon. Dakaris dealt with cult in Epirus in his PhD thesis the *Genealogy of the Molossians* (1964, in Greek), which informs us about the myths that shaped the local customs in Ancient Epirus. Again with regard to cult, Donald MacGillivray Nicol, after his visit to Ioannina in 1944-1945, wrote his book *The Oracle of Dodona* (1958) and Martin Persson Nilsson followed with his comprehensive work *Greek Folk Religion* (1961), while Herbert William Parke wrote the books *Greek Oracles* (1967) and *Oracles of Zeus* (1967), with a similar topic. Fundamental is the

work *Epirus: the geography, the ancient remains, the history of the topography of Epirus and adjacent areas* (1967) by Nicholas Geoffrey Lemprière Hammond, which remains the basic source of information about the history and archaeology of Epirus.

The problem with the majority of the publications dealing with Dodona and Epirus in general, is that they are now outdated. For example, *Epirus: a study in Greek constitutional development*, by Geoffrey Neale Cross, is the only source of information on the political development of Epirus, yet it dates from 1932. The same problem applies to the papers by Evangelidis and Dakaris, which are from the 1960s and 1980s, respectively. Even the archaeological reports about Dodona stopped in 2005, along with the excavations. Given this state of affairs, the available information should be reconsidered from a new perspective and new methodological approaches should be applied.

First of all, there is a lack of study of the pottery from Dodona. For instance, the miniature clay vessels from the prehistoric levels remain unstudied and, due to their small size, the excavators simply refer to them as dedicatory objects and not utilitarian. Only recently, in the temporary exhibition “Dodona: the oracle of sounds”, held in the Acropolis Museum of Athens, were a few miniature clay vessels presented to the public view for the first time².

² See Appendix II: Other Finds #70g.

The same lack of study applied also to the coinage of Dodona³, with only a few general comments about its iconographic types, since many of them are symbols of the League of Epirots and some include cult symbols⁴. However, with all these iconographic motifs the coins⁵ could serve also as a mean of propaganda. That aspect is neglected as a potential case study, even though there are recorded indications of the existence of a mint at the sanctuary. The coinage of Dodona and its iconography should be studied for its political and economic role, as well as testimony of the unity of the Epirots, under one leader or authority, with common religion, common “national” identity and common symbols of this alliance, recognized by all the tribes of Epirus. Moreover, the presence of the coins in the sanctuary could be another type of dedication, of monetary donations instead of other objects, such as figurines or vessels. However, no such conclusions can be safely drawn, since there is no detailed study of the coinage of Dodona and its possible role either as offerings or as a means of propaganda through its iconography.

Likewise lacking is a comprehensive study of the metalwork and metal craftsmanship at Dodona. In the later years of the

³ Very recently Liampi (Liampi 2016: 178-180, figs 231-242) wrote an article about the coinage of Dodona for the guidebook to the temporary exhibition in the Acropolis Museum: “Dodona: the oracle of sounds” (20/6/2016 to 10/01/2017).

⁴ See as an example Appendix I: fig. 61a (for symbols of the League of Epirots depicted on the coins); 62b (for Molossian images on the coins); 64d (for cultic and mythological subjects represented on the coins).

⁵ The early excavations at Dodona (1876-1877) brought to light 662 coins, 14 of which are of silver. Of these 14 coins, two are issues of the League (Koinon) of Epirots, five come from regions outside Epirus, three are from Macedonia and four date from Roman times. There is a lack of information concerning the stratigraphy and context of the coins (Katsikoudis 2013: 307).

Early Iron Age (until the Early Archaic period - 8th century BC), the dedications are represented mainly by a group of characteristic votive cross-shaped axes (about 30 in total). Again very recently, Christos Kleitsas, who is working currently at the Archaeological Museum of Ioannina, examined for his PhD thesis the weaponry and metalwork of Epirus, and used some comparative examples from Dodona. However, there is no other work concerning the metalwork of Dodona.

In my opinion, for the historical period of the sanctuary of Dodona (after 1000 BC) the information and the image we have about the number of visitors and their dedications can be misleading with regard to the sanctuary's reputation beyond the borders of Epirus.

The various jewellery finds (fragments of bronze and gold pins, fibulae, rings, etc.), today housed in museums in Greece (National Archaeological Museum of Athens, Archaeological Museum of Ioannina) and abroad, as well as in private collections, can reveal vital information about the social status of the owners, their sex, about fashion and attire, as well as about the craft and trade of these objects. Yet again, not a single paper has been published on the jewellery brought to light at Dodona. The only information is gleaned from passing remarks in the various excavation reports.

The same problem applies to both the *ex-voto* bronzes and the bronze reliefs, which are an important source for art and iconography, yielding information about the symbolism of the representations and the depicted figures, as well as about the aesthetic currents of the time of their production and dedication.

The inscriptions and the lead tablets, which are quite numerous, constitute a separate category of finds, which have an individual character. Like pieces of jewellery, which are dedications from individuals of their personal belongings to the oracle, the lead tablets, inscribed with personal questions/requests, are another potential source about the identity of the visitors to the sanctuary. Very recently, the Greek Archaeological Service produced a two-volume publication of the results of intensive research by Vokotopoulou, Dakaris and Christidis concerning the lead tablets. This work began a few decades ago, but was interrupted for many years, due to the death of the principal researchers. The study of the finds was later resumed and continued until 2013, when the results were published. More than 4,000 tablets were examined, transcribed, translated and interpreted, revealing the thoughts and concerns of the ordinary people who visited Dodona. With this unique and fundamental *opus magnum*, we get a glimpse of the life and the issues that led these people to seek the guidance of the gods. However, as we have said already, the lead tablets and the inscriptions should not to be considered as votive offerings, since these do not have a dedicatory character but reveal the everyday concerns of the common people, who seek divine guidance. The lead tablets rather should be used as a tool to highlight the identity of the dedicators at Dodona.

The most challenging issue, however, with regard to studying Dodona, is not so much the lack of almost any basic scholarship relating to the categories of finds, as the theories and interpretations expressed by the initial scholars, Evangelidis and Dakaris, in the 1960s and 1980s respectively. Regardless of the validity of their opinions about the history and cult of

Epirus, modern scholars tend to reiterate these uncritically, without publishing any new material from Dodona and without considering the possibility of different approaches to the issues. For instance, Dakaris's theories about Dodona as a political centre and the activities that took place there were never challenged by Vlachopoulou, Gravani and Tzouvara-Souli, who continued the excavation of the public buildings of Dodona. Moreover, Dakaris focused mainly on the political role of Dodona and far less on the nature of cult activity in the sanctuary, and the scholars who came after him adopted and followed his agenda. Even then, no particularly enlightening new data about the political character and role of Dodona have been presented, and the archaeological finds linked with this aspect of the site have not been studied as a single body⁶.

In all studies relating to Dodona, the authors selectively cite some finds as examples to support their theories and to stress the historical or artistic value of the particular objects. However, a few dozen finds, repeatedly presented in books and papers, are by no means representative of the quantity and the quality of the dedications as a whole. Therefore, the need for detailed study of all the finds in all the categories is imperative, as is the need for a rigorous review of all previous theories about the sanctuary and its remains. Some of these theories⁷ may not stand the test.

⁶ For the political development of Dodona see Gravani 2016: 173-177 and for the architectural development see Vlachopoulou 2016: 27-29.

⁷ Kalligas 1976: 61-67.

Research on events that could shed light on specific characteristics of the cult at Dodona and of worship in Epirus in general is still in its infancy. Moreover the slow progress of archaeological investigations, both in the field and the “library”, deprive us of up-to-date data. At Dodona, a large part of the site remains unexcavated, with an entire citadel and the stadium, although they have been located, still awaiting exploration. However, even without these data, the vast number of finds, which Ch. Kleitsas estimates as a few thousand, in the Ioannina Museum and the National Museum of Athens, remain unstudied and unpublished.

I conclude this Introduction by quoting Philip Kaplan’s⁸ view about Dodona:

“Finally, one more important issue is the lack of more recent primary sources concerning the oracle of Dodona. There are a few accounts, about the mythological background of Dodona, which reflect some sperms of truth behind this mythical storyline. However there are not many and significant historical information about Dodona and Epirus in general. Other sanctuaries such as Delphi and Olympia are recorded by writers such as Herodotus and Pausanias. These writers also describe some of the dedications displayed at these oracles. Of course none of them could have seen all of the material listed, especially the treasures and dedications that were perished. Therefore, some of the information available came from secondary sources or local accounts, apart from direct observation. Dodona is stripped from that privilege in general, since no significant

⁸ Kaplan 2006:139.

primary or secondary sources survived that could inform us about the activity of the oracle especially during the late Archaic and Classical Period and about the dedications on display.”

Therefore, Dodona should be revisited in general from different standpoints and the ruling theories of Evangelidis and Dakaris should be reconsidered, especially through new approaches and in the light of new scientific methods.

Chapter 1: A brief history of Epirus & Dodona

1.1 A Brief History of Epirus

The history of Dodona and the history of Epirus are so closely interwoven that they are considered as one, since the political events and the social organization of the region affected the course and the development of the sanctuary, and vice versa.

That Epirus⁹ was inhabited since prehistoric times is confirmed by the archaeological evidence from various sites¹⁰.

People lived mainly from agriculture and livestock¹¹ and society was organized in small tribal groups (κώμες)¹². This political organization was completely different from that in western and southern Greece, where the *polis* was focus of urban life (city-states). So, the habitation of Epirus by small nomadic or transhumant tribal groups impeded the development of a central political urban organization, which was instituted later, along with the first southern-Greek colonies¹³. The mountainous terrain played an important role, as apart from the very difficult living conditions, communication between the

⁹ Hammond 1967a: 476; Evangelidis 1947: 8-9, 27 & footnote 10; Hansen & Nielsen 2004L 338-350; Strabo 2.7.4; Liampi 2009: 111 Sakellariou 1997: 142; Strabo 7.7.1; Hammond 1967a: 492; Dakaris 1954b: 688; Bequignon 1969: 125-128.

¹⁰ Vokotopoulou 1973: 11.

¹¹ Vasileiou 2008: 43-44; Vlachopoulou-Oikonomou 2003: 283; Dakaris 1954b: 676-683; Sakellariou 1997: 54.

¹² Sakellariou 1997: 54; Hammond 1967a: 518-519; Dakaris 1961: 90-105; Foss 1978: 118-123.

¹³ See current chapter and for the dedications specifically see Chapter 2.3 below.

tribes¹⁴ was not easy. As it improved, new political formations: came into being, the Epirotic *Ethne*¹⁵, which later formed the Leagues (*Koina*)¹⁶.

Even though urban development in inland Epirus was slow over the centuries¹⁷, in the coastal area it was spectacular. The colonies founded there during the seventh century BC, by Elians and Corinthians, became independent city-states, well-organized spatially and institutionally, and grew into politically powerful centres.

More specifically, Ambrakia, which was a Corinthian colony, enjoyed impressive growth from its early years (founded 625 BC), with advanced urban planning on a par with that of the city-states of Southern Greece and Sicily. The city thrived and along with other advanced Epirot cities, such as Kassope, had a sophisticated urban tissue with street network, residential complexes, public buildings, agora, sanitation system, temples, theatre, prytaneion, bouleuterion, and so on. This development also brought economic growth, which in return brought further developments in art and commerce. Well known are the pottery

¹⁴ Vasileiou 2008: 43-44; Vlachopoulou-Oikonomou 2003: 283; Dakaris 1954b: 676-683.

¹⁵ See footnote 12 above.

¹⁶ Hansen & Nielsen 2004: 80-85; Davies 2010: 234-258.

¹⁷ At the end of the 8th century BC and during the 7th, there was a demographic decline in Epirus, due to illness, famine or drought. Conversely, during the 5th and 4th centuries BC, a demographic rise is observed. However, the population decrease of the 8th and 7th centuries BC was a general phenomenon that occurred in Ambrakia and Dodona, and is perhaps the only certain point concerning the population and habitation of ancient Epirus as a whole. (Vokotopoulou 1986: 340-343; Vokotopoulou 1997: 68).

workshops, which exported their products to the Epirot hinterland. Such products (Corinthian-style pottery) have been found at Dodona¹⁸ as well, allowing us slowly but steadily to uncover the complex network of workshops and trading relations between the different parts of Epirus. Clearly the relations between the coastal and the inland areas were established principally for trade and other economic and commercial purposes. The settlements developed influential relations with one another, leading to the exchange of innovative ideas. By the fifth century BC, these coastal colonies were flourishing economically¹⁹, politically, culturally and socially. This trend probably affected the smaller communities of the mainland of Epirus (*κώμες*), as they were exposed for the first time to the political ideas and the lifestyle that formed the identity of the city-states of Southern Greece.

Epirus, during the Persian Wars, remained neutral, since it was not yet an organized state.

From the end of the fifth until the early fourth century BC, during the development of the colonies in the coastal area of Epirus, the strong Molossian tribe²⁰ united with other smaller *ethne* to create a *Koinon*²¹ or League. Together with the

¹⁸ Gravani 2009: 55.

¹⁹ Pliakou 2008b: 72-73; Giannakopoulos 2007: 32-35.

²⁰ Evangelidis 1947: 13-14; Liampi 2009: 11; Vokotopoulou 1973: 12-13; Hammond 1956: 12-13.

²¹ Xenophon, *Lacedaemonian*, 15.7.11; Herodotus 1.67.5; Liampi 2009: 11-12; Hammond 1991: 61, 184; Hammond 1967a: 535-537; Dakaris 1964: 53-55; Dakaris 1984: 50-51.

Thesprotians and the Chaonians²², the Molossians established a powerful state²³, with a king and a military hierarchy of dignitaries (an organized court), which developed close relations with the newly-founded Macedonian State.

King Tharypas²⁴ (423/2-390/85 BC), organized his state according to the political model of the Greek city-states of Southern Greece, with a boule that passed new laws²⁵. He had been sent to Athens at an early age²⁶, to be educated²⁷, and after his return to Epirus he discarded the current political relations and “friendship” with Corinth²⁸ and the other Peloponnesian city-states, siding with Athens²⁹ during the Peloponnesian War. His Athenian education inspired him to introduce political reforms and innovative measures, such as organizing the tribes

²² Thucydides 2.80.6 & 81.4; Strabo 7. 7. 5; Pindar, *Nem.*, 4, 52; Sakellariou 1997: 56, frag. 107; Liampi 1997: 11; Dakaris 1984: 50-51; Davies 2010: 257-258.

²³ Plutarch, *Pyrrhus* 5.2; Hammond 1967a: 535-537, 576-577, 190; Giannakopoulos 2007: 37; Cross 1932: 13-14, 18; Vokotopoulou 1973: 14; Dakaris 1956: 63-68; Cabanes 1997a: 82; Liampi 2009: 13-14; Hammond 1997: 61; Florenzano Borba 1992: 221-223.

²⁴ Plutarch, *Pyrrhus*, 1.3; Pausanias 1.11.1; Justin 17.3.12-13; Dakaris 1956: 54-58; Dakaris 1997: 118-121 (see the figurine of the Philosopher of Delphi).

²⁵ Justin 17.3.12-13; Pausanias 1.11.1.

²⁶ Justin 17.3.11; Plutarch, *Pyrrhus*, 4.1; Dakaris 1956: 55; Dakaris 1964: 51.

²⁷ Justin 17.3.11; Dakaris 1956: 55; Cross 1932: 12.

²⁸ Strabo 10.2.8 & 7.7.6; Many Peloponnesian dedications were found in the sanctuary of Dodona (See Chapter 2.2); Hammond 1967a: 425-427; Vokotopoulou 1997: 64-66, 68; Vokotopoulou 1973: 13-14.

²⁹ Pindar, *Nem.* 4.51 & 7.38; Euripides, *Andromache* 1244; Strabo 7.7.7; Plutarch, *Pyrrhus*, 10; Dakaris 1956: 55; Cross 1932: 12, footnote 2; Hammond 1997: 59; Dakaris 1964: 52; Oost 1975: 2-3.

and creating new fortified settlements³⁰. He also established annual administrative offices or authorities³¹ (*ενιαύσιες αρχές*), introduced the Attic Greek dialect³² in Epirus and was probably the first to issue coinage, which proves the existence of marketplaces (agoras) in the organized cities³³.

Under these circumstances of political development, new genealogical traditions and myths³⁴ took shape. At the same period, the rise of the Aiakides dynasty had a clear Hellenistic character and asserted its origins from Neoptolemos³⁵, son of the Homeric hero Achilles. In the fourth century BC, political developments and spatial organization led to the founding of fortified cities, such as Kassope, Elea, Gitana, and Phoinike. The cradle of the Molossian *ethnos* was the modern area of the Ioannina Basin, including the sanctuary of Dodona, which had a similar spatial development³⁶ to other ancient cities, such as Tekmon (the modern hilltop village of Kastritsa) or the ancient

³⁰ Dakaris 1964: 55 & 60; Dakaris 1956: 55, 56; Vokotopoulou 1973: 15; Liampi 2009: 12.

³¹ Justin 18.3.12-13; Dakaris 1956: 55; Vokotopoulou 1973: 15; Dakaris 1964: 60; Cabanes 1997a: 82-83.

³² Dakaris 1964: 55, 61; Vokotopoulou 1973: 15.

³³ Liampi 2009: 12; Vokotopoulou 1973: 15; Dakaris 1964: 61; Liampi 2008: 50.

³⁴ Plutarch, *Pyrrhus*, 1.2; Pausanias 1.11.2; Justin 17.3.8; Pausanias 1.11.1; Euripides, *Andromache*, 24; Dakaris 1964: 43, 14, footnote 2; Dakaris 1961: 105-107; Cross 1932: 7, 100-101; Leveque 1957: 86-87; Giagas 1954: 56; Vokotopoulou 1973: 16; Dakaris 1967: 14-16; Cross 1932: 102; Davies 2010: 241-242.

³⁵ Pausanias 1.11.1 & 1.11.2; Euripides, *Andromache*, 24; Dakaris 1967: 14-16; Justin, 17.3.8; Cross 1932: 102; Proklos, *Cristomatheia, Nostoi*, 5; Dakaris 1964: 14, footnote 2; Giagas 1954: 56; Vokotopoulou 1973: 16; Cross 1932: 7, 100-101; Leveque 1957: 86-87.

³⁶ Wardle 1977b: 158; For early Dodona see Chapter 2.1.

settlement found underneath the foundation of the Byzantine castle of Ioannina, and Gardiki/Passaron³⁷.

Soon, Alexander I of Molossia (reigned 350-330 BC) entered the stage³⁸. He was the son of Neoptolemos II and brother of Olympias³⁹, wife of Philip II of Macedon and mother of Alexander the Great. When Philip II married Olympias in 358/5 BC, he enthroned the young Alexander of Molossia, who had been exiled by his uncle Arrybas⁴⁰ in 342 BC. In the early years of his reign, Alexander I of Molossia developed an interest in the political scene of western and southern Greece. However, his ambitions also led him to launch an expedition to Italy⁴¹, to defend the Greek city-states from the Italian tribes, in response to the request of the city of Taras for aid. He fought several battles in the field, many of them victorious for the Epirot king, but his thirst for more conquests ended with his death in South Italy, in 331/330 BC.

Alexander I's kingship remained a landmark for the political organization of Epirus, since for the first time the kingdom emerged from its former isolation. Furthermore, before

³⁷ Plutarch, *Pyrrhus*, 5.2; Hammond 1967a: 576-577, 535-536; Giannakopoulos 2007: 37; Cross 1932: 13-13, 18; see also footnote 166); Hammond 1997: 61; Florenzano Borba 1992: 221-223; Vokotopoulou 1973: 14; Dakaris 1956: 63-68; Cabanes 1997a: 82.

³⁸ Justin, 8.6.5; Liampi 2008: 58.

³⁹ Justin 7.6.12.

⁴⁰ Justin 8.6.5; Demosthenes, *Olynthiaka*, 10.13; Pausanias 1.11.3; Liampi 2008: 58; Hammond 1967a: 534; Hammond 1997: 62.

⁴¹ Hammond 1997: 62; Hammond 1967a: 534; Liampi 2009: 12; Vokotopoulou 1973: 16.

or soon after the Italian campaign, Alexander's wife, Cleopatra⁴², daughter of Philip II of Macedon, had established the Alliance of Epirots (*Ἀπειρος* or *Ἀπείρωται*)⁴³.

Neoptolemos II succeeded Alexander I, but was soon ousted from his throne by Kassander of Macedonia, Alexander's general. In 307/6 BC, Pyrrhos⁴⁴ son of Aiakides ascended the throne. He was a great military genius of his time. In 295 BC, he married Lanassa, daughter of Agathokles from Syracuse, who brought as her dowry the island of Corcyra (modern Corfu). Pyrrhos acquired a fleet⁴⁵ and controlled the Ionian Sea. Soon Pyrrhos' ambitions brought him into a conflict with the Romans⁴⁶ and he embarked on a new Italian expedition, similar to that of his ancestor Alexander I of Molossia. Pyrrhos' military talent⁴⁷ became quickly apparent and he succeeded in creating a strong Epirot State. However, the massive cost of the other conflicts

⁴² Liampi 2009: 12-14.

⁴³ Liampi 2009: 12-14; Hammond 1997: 62.

⁴⁴ Leveque 1997a: 74; Katsadima 2008a: 62; Giannakopoulos 2007: 43; Liampi 2009: 14; Vokotopoulou 1973: 16; Garoufalas 1975: 616-625 (genealogy of Pyrrhos).

⁴⁵ Katsadima 2008a: 63; Liampi 2009: 14; Leveque 1997a: 74-75; Giannakopoulos 2007: 44.

⁴⁶ Pausanias 1.12.1; Liampi 2009: 15; Leveque 1997a: 75; Vokotopoulou 1973: 16- 18; Katsadima 2008a: 64; Garoufalas 1975: 520-567.

⁴⁷ A cheek-piece of a bronze helmet found at Dodona, perhaps dedicated to Zeus, highlights the martial spirit of the Aiakides dynasty. It is decorated with a relief scene of a duel between two warriors (4th century BC). According to the Latin poet Ennius, Aiakides "excelled in martial virtue, rather than wisdom" (see Appendix II: Bronze reliefs #6 a, b).

with other Greek forces brought his downfall. He fell inglorious in a street brawl at Argos, in 272 BC⁴⁸.

During the third century BC the Epirots declared Democracy, replacing the Alliance with the new Koinon of Epirots⁴⁹. Epirus remained a considerable force; but the Macedonian wars, with the continuing conflicts between the successors of Alexander the Great and the rising power of Rome, caused a gradual decline in the region. The Epirots' participation in the Third Macedonian War⁵⁰ (172-168 BC), on the Macedonian side, marked the beginning of the end for the state. The Romans, under their commander Aemilius Paulus, marched victoriously through Epirus, burning and looting many Molossian cities, and butchering and enslaving the local population (167 BC)⁵¹. Epirus did not manage to recover from the disaster. In 146 BC, it became a province of the Roman Empire, with the name "Epirus Vetus"⁵².

All these historical events, affected the course of the sanctuary of Dodona. It was looted by the Aetolians⁵³ in 219 BC,

⁴⁸ Katsadima 2008a: 65; Liampi 2009: 15-16; Garoufalas 1975: 700.

⁴⁹ Polybius 20.3.1 & 2.7.11; Liampi 2009: 18-19; Giannakopoulos 2007: 45-46; Hammond 1967a: 648-657; Dakaris 1961: 109-111, 112-113.

⁵⁰ Liampi 2009: 21; Cabanes 1997b: 115; Hammond 1967a: 619-620, 621; For Charops the younger and his policy in Epirus see Plutarch, *Flaminius*, 4; Livy 32.11.1 & 32.14.5; Hammond 1967a: 627 (for Kephalos).

⁵¹ Plutarch, *Aemilius Paulus* 29.4-5 & 29.2; Cabanes 1997b: 116; Hammond 1967a: 634-635; Oost 1975: 84; Faklari 2008b: 127.

⁵² For all the historical events during Roman and Late Roman period in Epirus, see Liampi 2009: 22-23; Vokotopoulou 1973: 18-19; Cabanes 1997b: 117-122; Giannakopoulos 2007: 55-56, 58-63; Faklari 2008b: 127-131.

⁵³ Polybius 4. 67. 3-4; Diodorus Siculus 26.7; Hammond 1967a: 604.

during the Third Macedonian War, which ended with the total defeat of the Epirot State. When the Romans invaded⁵⁴, there was further looting and destruction of the sanctuary. From that point on, the sanctuary fell into decline and gradual desertion. The appearance of the new Christian religion brought the end to the old oracle. The various dedications reflect these periods of crisis for the oracle, indicating that its fortunes went hand in hand with the political changes.

⁵⁴ Meyer 2013: 134-135.

1.2) History of excavations

The Sanctuary of Dodona is located near the south part of Lake Pambotis, about 20 km south of Ioannina, Greece. This ancient oracle captured the imagination of many travellers and authors, some of whom⁵⁵ attempted to locate it. The French diplomat, traveller and historian François Charles Hugues Laurent Pouqueville (1770-1838), the English traveller and antiquary Colonel Edward Leake (1771-1860), and the German scholar and archaeologist Conrad Bursian (1830-1883) are just three of the many who attempted to locate Dodona, but they misplaced or confused it with other archaeological sites, such as the citadel-acropolis in the modern village of Kastritsa.

The Greek scholars Panagiotis Aravantinos (1809 or 1811-1870), Demetrios Semitelos (1828-1880), Chistophoros Perevos (1857) and George Chasiotis (1867), also tried to identify the ruins of Dodona, but failed. Chasiotis, however, was the first to conduct more scientific and academic research, analysing all the former theories about Dodona.

Another important figure was the German archaeologist Ernest Curtius (1814-1896), who was the first excavator of Olympia (1876-1881). He highlighted the religious aspect of Dodona, focusing on the ancient sources. Other significant scholars were Michael Peranthis (1917-1884) and Christos Soulis (1892-1951).

However, it was the English scholar Christopher Wordsworth, later Bishop of Lincoln (1807-1885), who

⁵⁵ Markakis 1964: 65-73; Gravani 2007b: footnote 175; Manopoulos 2012: 371-374; Soueref 2016: 14-20; Manopoulos 2015: 593-597.

successfully located the site of Dodona in 1836. The first excavator of the site was Constantinos Carapanos (1840-1914), a Greek politician, archaeologist and scholar. He worked in collaboration with Zygmunt Mineyko (1840-1925), a Polish aristocrat, military man and scientist. From 1875 to 1879, Carapanos and Mineyko investigated 2,000 m², revealing the buildings that could be easily detected on the surface. However the collaboration stopped in 1877, when Carapanos accused Mineyko of conducting further excavations during his absence. Moreover, many of the finds from Dodona were later sold by Mineyko to private collectors in Europe. Later, in 1878, Carapanos attempted to retrieve many of the finds from Dodona. Due to the lack of excavation data, the provenance of many of the so-called Dodonaian finds should be reconsidered.⁵⁶

The excavations remained in the upper layers of the ground and due to the lack of a good stratigraphical analysis no certain conclusion could be drawn. Soon, the ongoing deposition of soil from Mount Tomaros covered the excavated area of the sanctuary. In 1913, when Epirus became a part of the Greek State, the excavations at Dodona started under the supervision of the Archaeological Service⁵⁷.

The first archaeologists to work at the site under the auspices of the Greek Archaeological Service were George Sotiriades (1912) and Demetrios Evangelidis (1912-1932), but the excavations were interrupted by the political events of 1921. After the Second World War, the excavations were resumed in

⁵⁶ Manopoulos 2015: 606-609. It is seriously questioned whether at least three of the finds cited in Carapanos's book (1878) are from Dodona. These are: vol 2, pl. xlii/5 (vessel), lvi/7 (helmet) and lvii/4 (blade).

⁵⁷ Gravani 2007a: 175-176.

1952, by Demetrios Evangelidis and Sotirios Dakaris, then Curator of Antiquities. The research continued under Dakaris alone after Evangelidis's death in 1959. Since 1981, excavations have been carried out under the auspices of the Archaeological Society of Athens and are co-funded by the University of Ioannina.

The early excavations⁵⁸ of Sotiriades and Evangelidis focused on uncovering the buildings that had been excavated by Carapanos. However, Evangelidis excavated deeper than Carapanos and for the first time there was a more systematic research on the stratigraphy and the first construction phases⁵⁹ of the sanctuary. Evangelidis and Dakaris excavated thoroughly the temple of Zeus and the surrounding buildings. Dakaris⁶⁰ continued the excavations until 1996, again under the auspices of the Archaeological Society at Athens.

Dakaris's research and excavations concentrated mainly on the public buildings of the sanctuary, because these could reveal information about the public and political activities of the Molossians. He excavated the theatre and in 1960 he tried to restore it⁶¹. This was a very difficult task, since it was covered by a huge amount of fill, while many seats were missing, the cavea was on the verge of collapse and there were many fallen rocks. At the same period, Dakaris excavated the orchestra and revealed

⁵⁸ Gravani 2007a: 177.

⁵⁹ Gravani, Souli Vlachopoulou 2003: 1-2; Nicol 1958: 128-129; Dakaris 1998a: 11- 12; Dakaris 1986: 1-2; Evangelidis 1935: 192-193; Tzouvara-Souli, Gravani, Vlachopoulou 2007: 63-67; Gravani 2007a: 175-178; Dakaris 1962b: 4-6; Katsadima 2012: 49-50; Parke 1967c: 20-21; Papaioannou 2007: 445-449; Foss 1978: 125.

⁶⁰ Gravani 2007a: 177-178; Tzouvara-Souli, Gravani, Vlachopoulou 2007: 63-67.

⁶¹ Gravani 200a7: 178 Tzouvara-Souli, Gravani, Vlachopoulou 2007: 65-66.

the four construction phases of the theatre. In 1965-1971, the bouleuterion⁶² was excavated and the four construction phases were revealed in this building too. This was another difficult undertaking, because of the huge quantity of fill in that area of the site and the difference in altitude between the north and the south part of the building.

Since 1996, Chrysiida Souli, Amalia Vlachopoulou and Konstantina Gravani⁶³ have been continuing Dakaris's work. These archaeologists have brought to light the prytaneion, the stoa and the pedestals of the honorific bronze statues of the generals of the League of Epirots. Nowadays, the excavations have stopped and there is an attempt to conserve and restore the theatre, the stoa and the other buildings⁶⁴.

⁶² Gravani 2007a: 179.

⁶³ Gravani 2007a: 179; Tzouvara-Souli, Gravani, Vlachopoulou 2007: 66-67.

⁶⁴ Smiris 2014: 81-87; Katsoudas 2014: 87-93.

1.3) Brief history of the sanctuary of Dodona (based on earlier research)

The sanctuary of Dodona in Epirus lies at the mid-point of Tomaros valley, which for many centuries facilitated communication between the interior of Epirus and the Ambrakian Gulf and Southern Greece. According to the ancient tradition, the oldest Greek oracle was founded at Dodona. It was the most famous until the appearance of the cult of Apollo at Delphi and the founding of an oracle there.

Exactly when the cult at Dodona began is not known with certainty, but was most probably in the Early Bronze Age (*ca* 2600-1900 BC) or shortly afterwards (*ca* 1900-1600 BC). The earliest dated finds from the excavations are clay vessels and bronze weapons⁶⁵ (swords [Appendix II: Weapons and Armour #35 and #48], daggers [Appendix II: Weapons and Armour #6 and #51], spearheads and double axes [Appendix II: Weapons and Armour #22-33 for the spearheads and #1-9 for the axes]) of the Mycenaean period⁶⁶. According to some scholars, the Great

⁶⁵ Vasileiou 2008: 139-141; Evangelidis 1935: 236-244; Tzouvara-Souli 1997: 127-131; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 102-106; Carapanos 1878: 100-101; Hammond 1997: 37; Soueref 2001: 59-61; Dakaris 1998b: 88-89.

⁶⁶ Worship of Zeus dates back at least to Homeric times, as Homer speaks of Achilles at the sanctuary, offering libations (choes) and praying to Zeus. Odysseus too, apart from his visit to the Nekromanteion, also visited Dodona, according to his fictional narration to his swineheard Eumaios. Apollonius Rhodius notes that when the Argonauts built the *Argo* they placed in the ship's bow a timber from the sacred oak tree of Zeus at Dodona, for protection and good luck (Homer, *Iliad*, 16.23-235); Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 47-48; Dimopoulou 1975: 16-17; Dakaris 1998a: 14-15; Karatzeni 2012: 51-52; Tzouvara-Souli 2007a: 83-84; Parke 1967c: 38-39; For the Greek identity of the sanctuary: Strabo 7.7.10; Dakaris 1986: 86-90; Chatzopoulos 1997: 140-145; Homer, *Odyssey* 22.482-485; Homer, *Odyssey* 14.327-330; See also 19.296-299; Gwatkin 1961: 97-102; Katsadima 2012: 51; Dakaris 1998b: 25-27; Haller 2013: 272-274; Homer, *Odyssey* 22.2, 69; Homer, *Iliad* 7.467 & 21.40 & 23.743; Hesiod, *Theogony* 992; Smith 1844: 280-282 (Argonautae & Argo); Dakaris 1998a: 25-26.

Goddess, Gaia⁶⁷ (Earth), the fertility goddess whose cult was widespread in the Eastern Mediterranean, was worshipped at Dodona before Zeus. According to the historian Herodotus⁶⁸, the three priestess-prophetesses called “*peleiades*” (doves⁶⁹) (Promenera, Timarete, and Nikandre) settled in Epirus. The Mother Goddess was succeeded by Zeus⁷⁰, with the epithet Naïos (Dweller), and his wife Dione⁷¹.

The divine couple dwelt beneath the sacred oak tree⁷², like the Great Goddess before them, and worship of them was closely associated with the earth and the sacred tree⁷³. The ancient cult continued at Dodona until the late fourth century AD. When

⁶⁷ The theory of Mother Earth is attested and is under consideration. For more details see Chapters 2.1, 3.1 & 3.2 below of the current thesis; Hesiod, *Theogony* 105-210; Pausanias 10.12.10; Demosthenes, *Against Medeas* 21.53; Nilsson 1955: 457; Burkert 1985: 175, 418; Farnell 1970: 23- 26; Vasileiou 2008: 159; See also footnote 81; Tzouvara-Souli 1976: 66-74; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 51-55; Dakaris 1986: 78-79.

⁶⁸ Strabo 7.7.12 & 7.19.2; Strabo 7. frag. 2 & 7.7.12; Diodorus 15.72.3; Plutarch, *Lysander* 25; Herodotus, 2.55; Pausanias 10.12.10; Hammond 1967b: 40; Parke 1967b: 16,57-65; Dotscher 1966: 121; Dakaris 1964: 110; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 44-45; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 44-45; Tzouvara-Souli 2007a: 85-86; See also footnote 99; Also for “Peliades-Doves” see Evangelidis 1947: 22, 23; March 1898: 226; Parke 1971: 25-27.

⁶⁹ Pausanias 10.12.10; Harrison 1927: 166-167.

⁷⁰ Herodotus 2.56; Strabo 7.7.11; Scully 1962: 132-154; Cook 194: 80-89; Depue Hadzsits 1909: 48-50; Cook 1903c (I): 178; Evans 1901: 118-119, 173-175; Vasileiou 2016a: 41-42; Tzouvara-Souli 2016: 43-45; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 37-40; Dakaris 1972a: 3-7, 83, 86-89; 130-132; Dakaris 1957b: 107-108; Chapinal Heras 2017: 19-20, 22.

⁷¹ See Appendix I, #25; Chapinal Heras 2017: 19-20, 22.

⁷² Hesiod, *Hoiai*, frag.240 was quoted in Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 41 & footnote 6, for the interpretative approach to the world “*Náios*”; *Aeniad*, 8, 314-315; Dakaris, Evangelidis 1964: 142-143; Dakaris 1967: 49, #5 & 50-52, #7; Potscher 1966: 143-144; Dimopoulou 1975: 12-13; Tzouvara-Souli 2007a: 81-82; Foster 1952: 57-58; Foster 1936: 98; Levy 1961: 83-86; Cook 1903a: 273; Foster 1942: 61-62; Quantz 1898: 477-478, 480-481, 462, 449-450; Cook 1903b (II): 270-274; Chadwick 1900: 22-37 (thunder and Zeus of Dodona), 41.

⁷³ Quantz 1898: 468-480; Evans 1901: 106, 469-470.

Christianity was established, the Sacred House⁷⁴ was destroyed, the age-old oak was cut down, the Naia festival⁷⁵ held in honour of Zeus ceased to be celebrated, and an Episcopal See⁷⁶ was established.

Ancient tradition claims that the temple of Zeus originally had no walls and that the sacred oak was enclosed by bronze tripods supporting cauldrons⁷⁷ that were touching each other and created a constant echo. The excavations at Dodona have

⁷⁴ Georgoulas 2016: 46-47; See also Appendix I #7, 8, 9, 10; #22-24.

⁷⁵ Dakaris 1986: 85-86; Katsadimia 2012: 59; Dakaris 1998b: 94-95; Farmakis 2007: 469-484; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 74-80; Nicol 1958: 141-142; Roberts 1881: 120-121; SIG 1915: 603 # 369; Parke 1967c: 122-123; Cook 1903c: 181-182; Dakaris 1986: 85-86; Katsadima 2012: 59; Farmakis 2007: 469-484; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 74-80; Nicol 1958: 141-142; Roberts 1881: 120-121; SIG 1915: 603 # 369; Parke 1967c: 122-123; Katsikoudis 2000: 179, 177-178, footnote 49,48.

⁷⁶ See Appendix I #29, 30.

⁷⁷ See Appendix I #56, 57 and #7, 8, 9 for the evolution of the Sacred House; Until the 5th century BC, the “temple” of Zeus in Dodona was open-air, the *locus sanctus* around the oracular oak tree, dwelling-place of the god. From the 8th century BC, the sacred area was defined by bronze cauldrons, which stood upon tripods and encircled the tree. Striking the cauldrons produced a sound that was both prophetic and apotropaic, having the ability to fend off evil. Since all the cauldrons touched each other, striking just one, caused the sound to transfer to the rest. The continuous sound of the cauldrons gave rise to the expression “Dodonean chatterbox” for people talking incessantly. In the early 4th century BC, the first temple (Sacred House) of Zeus was erected next to the oak tree. A little later, the ring of tripods was replaced by a walled enclosure that surrounded both the temple and the tree. The divination sound of the cauldrons was replaced by the sound of the “whip of the Corcyraeans”, a dedication by the island of Corcyra (pres. Corfu) to Dodona (see Appendix I #56 and 57). Since wind currents are frequent in the valley of Dodona, the sound was continuous, giving rise to the expression “whip of the Corcyraeans” as synonym for people chatting incessantly. Haralambos Charisis, the architect who studied the construction development of Dodona, questions the co-existence of the oak tree and the “Whip of the Corcyraeans” and set some considerations about the construction phases of the Sacred House. Corcyraeans used double whips with ivory handles, which recalls Thucydides’ description (4.47) of men carrying whips. Similar finds have been recovered from the sanctuary of Corinthian Apollo at Logga in Messenia. However, for the “Dodonaian whips” (Δωδωναίον Χάλκειον) and other similar finds, further research is required. As far as the finds from Dodona are concerned, their exact findspot is not specified in the excavation reports (Kalligas 1976: 61-67).

yielded fragments of bronze and iron tripods, confirming the existence of the precinct from the ninth century BC onwards. In the early fourth century BC, Dodona passed under the control of the powerful Epirotic tribe of the Molossians and the first temple of Zeus was built. After the mid-fourth century BC, the precinct of tripods was replaced by a stone wall. At the same time, a temple dedicated to Dione⁷⁸ was erected. During the reign of Pyrrhos, king of the Molossians (297-272 BC), large-scale building activity took place at the site. The area around the temple of Zeus was renovated; the temples of Herakles⁷⁹, Themis⁸⁰ and Aphrodite⁸¹ were constructed, as well as the theatre, the bouleuterion⁸² and the prytaneion⁸³. The most

⁷⁸ Cook 1903c: 178 (Dione & Aphrodite) and 179 (Dione and Demeter); Hadzsits 1909: 39, 46-49; Cook 1906a: 367,370-371; Cook 1903c: 180; Hadzsits 1909: 49; Cook 1906a: 367.

⁷⁹ Tzouvara-Souli Gravani, Vlachopoulou 2003: 7; Dakaris 1986: 45-47; Dakaris 1998a: 53-55; Tzouvara-Souli 2000: 130-133; Tzouvara-Souli 2007b: 159-161; Evangelidis-Dakaris 1964: 97 and footnote 3; Vlachopoulou 2003: 50-51; Cook 1906a: 377-378, 416, 419; Plutarch, *Pyrrhus* 22/6; Diodorus 22.21.4; Dakaris 1964: 120-121; Polybius 21.30.9; Herodotus 5.43; Katsikoudis 1997: 267-271. See also Appendix I #27, 28,29.

⁸⁰ Tzouvara-Souli 1976: 91; Dakaris 1998b: 86, 50-53; Dakaris 1967: 49 and footnote 50 & 7. For the temple, see also pages 53-54; Tzouvara-Souli 2007b: 146-147; Dakaris 1986: 44-45 (for the temple of Themis). Tzouvara-Souli Gravani, Vlachopoulou 2003: 6-7; See Appendix I #26.

⁸¹ Servius, *Commentary on the Aeneid of Vergil*, 3.466; Cook 1906a: 367; Tzouvara-Souli 1976: 50-52; Tzouvara-Souli 2007b: 149-158; Dakaris 1986: 47-49; Dakaris 1998a: 55-56; Vlachopoulou 2003: 51-52; Hadzsits 1909: 39-40. See Appendix I # 31, 32.

⁸² Gravani, Souli, Vlachopoulou 2003: 9; Dakaris 1986: 49-55; Vlachopoulou 2003: 52-53; Dakaris 1965: 58; Dakaris 1966: 71; See Appendix I #35, 36, 37 and #39 for the Stoa.

⁸³ Thucydides 2.15.2; Gravani, Souli, Vlachopoulou 2003: 10-12, 14; Dakaris 1986: 55-57; Dakaris 1998a: 64-67; Vlachopoulou 2003: 53-54, 57; Dakaris, Tzouvara-Souli Vlachopoulou, Gravani 1996: 149-159; Charisis 2010: 244-248 (construction phases and development of the prytaneion); Dakaris 1986: 57; Dakaris 1968a: 51-53;

brilliant period for the sanctuary, however, was that of the League of Epirots (233/32-167 BC). There was extensive destruction in the sanctuary by the Aetolians, who captured and plundered Dodona in 219 BC. In the following years, the temples of Zeus, Themis, Herakles, Aphrodite and the bouleuterion were reconstructed, and the new temple of Dione and the stadium were built.

The bouleuterion was the meeting place for the delegates of the Alliance of Molossians (330-231 BC) and later on of the League of Epirots, where they voted and took decisions, as is evident from the bronze sheets inscribed with decrees, found in the excavations. Also dating from this period are the fragments of bronze honorific statues of generals of the League of Epirots, which were erected in front of the bouleuterion. The Roman invasion in 167 BC resulted in widespread destruction of the sanctuary. The remains of a basilica dating from the fifth-sixth century AD confirm the continuity of the religious character of the site even after the establishment of Christianity.

Responsibility for the functioning of the oracle and the interpretation of the prophecies lay with the priests of Zeus, called Selloi/Helloi⁸⁴. The sacerdotal office was hereditary and

Tzouvara-Souli 1993: 73-74 (common cults in Epirus and Albania); Caspari 1917: 168, 182-183; See Appendix I #37, 38.

⁸⁴ Homer, *Iliad* 16.234-235; Sophocles, *Trachiniae*, 1166-1168; Parke 1967b: 20-33; Dakaris 1967: 42; Demopoulou 1975: 20-21; Tzouvara-Souli 2007a: 87-88; Evangelidis, Dakaris 1964: 29-30, footnote 4; Hammond 1967a: 368, 372-373; Dakaris 1998b: 91-92; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 44-46; Dakaris 1986: 31-33; Nicol 1958: 134-136; Budin 2003: 153-154; Chadwick 1900: 3-6; Cook 1903c: 180; Quantz 1898: 497-498; Karadimitriou 2004: 89-100; Castrucci 2012: 12; Dillon 1997: 96; Giagas 1954: 48. Hammond states: "More important is the connection between Helloi and Hellenes. Hesychius commented 'Ἑλλοί -Ἑλληνες οἱ ἐν Δωδώνῃ καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς'. As the suffix '-anes' is a tribal derivation from Hellas. Other words seem to be related to Helloi and Selloi. One is the name of the river Selleis. This river is mentioned twice in the *Iliad*

the incumbents did not wash their feet and slept on the ground, so as to come into contact with the earth⁸⁵ from which they drew their powers of prophecy⁸⁶. At first, the oracular predictions were made according to the rustling of the leaves of the oak tree, the flight of the doves which nested in its branches and the sound of the cauldrons around the tree, which was transmitted incessantly from one cauldron to the other. After the mid-fourth century BC, a new way of delivering oracles was introduced, which was connected with a Corcyraean votive offering⁸⁷. This consisted of a bronze statue of a boy, set on a column and holding a bronze whip with three chains that swung with the wind and struck against a cauldron placed nearby. The priests made their prophecies according to the sound produced by the cauldron.

The pantheon of Dodona included other deities⁸⁸; alongside the divine couple, Apollo, Artemis, Dionysos and the Nymphs

(2.659 & 15.531), associated in each case with Ephyra; and Ephyra is mentioned twice in the *Odyssey* (9.259-261 and 1.328) in connection with the obtaining of poison" (Hammond 1967a: 372; Chatzopoulos 1997: 141-142; Hammond 1956: 14).

⁸⁵ Nicol 1958: 135; Homer, *Odyssey*, 16.403; Strabo 7.7.11 (Tomouroi); Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 45-46; Parke 1967b: 15-16; Tzouvara-Souli 2007b: 134-139; Marinatos 2004: 32-39; Inwood 1971: 68; Inwood 1973: 155.

⁸⁶ See Vasileiou 2016b: 48-49 about the oracular methods at Dodona; See also Chapinal Heras 2017: 22-25, 28-29 (a discussion on "Peleiades" and "Selloi" and whether they coexisted as priesthood or the female priestesses replaced the initial Selloi priesthood).

⁸⁷ See Appendix I #56, 57; see also footnote 77 above; Chapinal Heras 2017: 25-26, 28.

⁸⁸ Homer, *Iliad*, 21, 185-195; Plutarch, *Pyrrhus*, 1; Hesiod, *Argonautica*, 353; Apollodorus 1.2.7; Homer, *Iliad*, 5.370; Lucretius, *Re Rerum Natura* 6,879-887; Pausanias 3.25.4; Tzouvara-Souli 2007b: 157-159-172, 168-170 and footnote 169; Tzouvara-Souli 1976: 54- 57; Tzouvara-Souli 1988: 89: 51-57; Parke 1967b: 151, 171, 234-235; Hadzsits 1909: 46; Cook 1904b: 86, 88;; Parke 1967b: 151, 171, 234-235; Carapanos 1878: 31, footnote 1; Evangelidis 1935: 198-205; Parke 1967a: 67-68, footnote 35; Tzouvara-Souli 1988/89: 55-56; Cook 1903c: 179, 185; Tzouvara-Souli

and possibly Athena, Zeus' beloved daughter, were also worshipped there.

At the beginning, the questions put to Zeus and Dione by the believers were oral, as were the answers. From the sixth century BC onwards, the questions were scratched on lead sheets and the answers, which were usually oral and more rarely written, were brief, taking the form of "yes" or "no". Many of these lead tablets⁸⁹ were found in the excavations (more than 4,000). They are incised with questions asked by individuals, relating to the family, health, work, and by cities, concerned with their prosperity and matters of war and peace.

The panhellenic reputation of the sanctuary from the end of the eighth century BC to the fourth century AD is revealed by the constantly increasing numbers of bronze artifacts, dedicated by the faithful from all over the Greek world. These include tripods, vases, vessels, jewellery and figurines, products mainly of Corinthian, Laconian and other workshops in colonial cities. A large number of these dedications, along with other excavation finds, are stored or exhibited in the Archaeological Museum of Ioannina and the National Archaeological Museum of Athens.

1988/89: 56; Dakaris 1987: 45, table 32d; Tzouvara-Souli 2007b: 171-172; Garoufalias 1975: 683-684; Dakaris 1964: 14, footnote 1-3; Cross 1932: 7, Farneli 1970: 285-289; Tzouvara-Souli 1988/89: 53-55 (for relations between Epirus and Athens, see the following chapters); Farnell 1970: 285-289; Dakaris 1964: 14; Garoufalias 1975: 683-684; Farnell 1970: 287-288; Farnell 1970: 287-288; Tzouvara-Souli 1988/89: 54-55.

⁸⁹ For the lead tablets, see below, Chapter 2.4 ii.

1.4) The cult of Zeus at Dodona and in Epirus⁹⁰

The main deity of the sanctuary at Dodona was Zeus⁹¹ and his cult was probably established there when the Thesprotians⁹² first appeared, in the early Middle Helladic period (1900 BC)⁹³. The cult of Zeus had a different character in Epirus. The god was believed to have an earthly dwelling-place, the roots of the sacred oak tree (*Φηγός*⁹⁴). An old theory is that at At Dodona, the cult of Zeus and the cult of the oak tree kept a primitive religious character, that of the thunder-god cult and the tree cult of the Minoans and the Mycenaeans⁹⁵. The sanctuary of Dodona is

⁹⁰ This chapter is based on my MA dissertation (University of Birmingham, 2012-2013).

⁹¹ Scully 1962: 132-154; Cook 194: 80-89; Depue Hadzsits 1909: 48-50; Cook 1903c (I): 178; Evans 1901: 118-119, 173-175.

⁹² Herodotus 2.56; Strabo 7.7.11; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 37-40; Dakaris 1972a: 3-7, 83, 86-89; 130-132; Dakaris 1957b: 107-108; Evans 1901: 118-119, 173-175.

⁹³ Strabo 7.7.11; Herodotus 2,56; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 37-40; Dakaris 1972a: 3-7,83,86-89, 130-132; Dakaris 1957b: 107-108; Vlachopoulou 2003: 283; Dakaris 1954b: 676-683.

⁹⁴ Hesiod, *Hoiai*, frag. 240 was quoted in Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 41 & footnote 6, for the interpretative approach to the word "*Náuoç*"; *Aeniad*, 8.314-315; Dakaris, Evangelidis 1964: 142-143; Dakaris 1967: 49, #5 & 50-52, #7; Potscher 1966: 143-144; Dimopoulou 1975: 12-13; Tzouvara-Souli 2007a: 81-82; Foster 1952: 57-58; Foster 1936: 98; Levy 1961: 83-86; Cook 1903b: 273; Foster 1942: 61-62; Quantz 1898: 477-478, 480-481; Cook 1903b (II): 270-274. For trees as spiritual residences of deities see above, Chapter 1.2, footnotes 24, 25; See also as a comparative example from Egyptian cult a male tree deity in Buhl 1947: 88; Quantz 1898: 462, 449-450; Chadwick 1900: 22, 30, 34-37 (thunder and Zeus of Dodona), 41; For Zeus as thunder god see Langdon 1976: 79; Burkert 1985: 273-274; Salavoura 2014: 307-310.

⁹⁵ Chadwick 1900: 22-34; See Kleitsas 2017a: 401-402 and footnote 2.

linked with ancient myths⁹⁶, and the name Zeus Pelasgios⁹⁷, the god of the tribe of the Pelasgians, perhaps refers to the primitive political organization of Epirus, which was based on ancestral ties, agricultural communities and an indigenous tribal system, possibly a reminder of the autonomy and autochthony that the Pelasgians once enjoyed.

Some mythological narrations link Dodona with other regions of the Greek world⁹⁸, such as Boeotia. The *Tripodephoria*⁹⁹ was a ritual act from Boeotia that is clearly linked with “Pelasgian Dodona”. It concerns the relocation of the dedication of the gold tripod by the *Thebageneis* (Theban-born) to the sanctuary of Apollo Ismenios at Thebes¹⁰⁰. However, it is also linked with Dodona in another version of the same myth. When the Thebans consulted the oracle of Pelasgian Zeus of Epirus, with regard to their conflict with the Pelasgians for domination of Pelasgian territories, the oracle implied that the

⁹⁶ See chapter 1.3 and footnotes 67 to 73.

⁹⁷ The Pelasgians were an indigenous tribe and inhabited Thessaly. However, the limits of their territory are not clear. Other ancient sources mention contacts between the Pelasgians and Dodona. This could mean either that Dodona belonged to the Pelasgians as part of their territory or was within the Pelasgians’ sphere of influence. The territory of the Pelasgians is considered to cover an area from the River Strymon (Macedonia) to Epirus (Dodona) (Munro 1934: 112-113; Weber 1991: 325-327; Parke 1971: 25-27).

⁹⁸ For Herodotus’ view of the Thessalians as a branch of the Thesprotian tribe and for the theory of a sanctuary pre-existing that of Dodona, in the Thessalian area of Skotoussa, see Strabo 8.3.5; Strabo 7.7.7 & 7.7.12; Homer, *Iliad*, 18.233 & see also 1.37; Stephanos Byzantios, “Dodona”; Karadimitriou 2004: 37-38; Parke 1971: 28- 32. Curnow 2004: 58- 60; Karadimitriou 2004: 35-37; Parke 1979: 30-31. Hammond 1975: 151, 143; Giagas 1954: 12-13; Hammond 1967a: 411; Evangelidis 1947: 12; Dakaris 1964: 6-8.

⁹⁹ Cook 1903b: 268-271.

¹⁰⁰ Papalexandrou 2008: 266-268.

Thebans should perform an impious act in order to achieve their goal. So, the Thebans killed the priestess of Dodona.

Later, however, the oracular pronouncement was interpreted differently: the Thebans should have stolen the tripod from their local oracle and delivered it to the oracle of Zeus in Epirus. This would indeed have been the impious act. Papalexandrou suggests that this action underlines the Theban desire to rule over Pelasgian territory, within the compass of which was the oracle of Zeus at Dodona in Epirus. This was also a territory desired by the Athenians, who were in conflict with the Thebans. Through this act and the mythological account, the Thebans created a link¹⁰¹ with Dodona and reinforced their claims for domination over this territory:

“At Dodona the Thebans exchanged the material and symbolic value of a tripod for the divinely sanctioned right to expand their dominion over Pelasgian territory. The dedication of a tripod to Dodona by the Thebans was a symbolic actualization of the surrender of Theban authority to the supreme jurisdiction of the Pelasgian Zeus of Dodona. Moreover, given the territorial significance of the tripod, we may also see the tripodophoria to Dodona as a ritual, which expands the limits of Thebes all the way to Pelasgian Dodona and vice versa. The national thread that connected Thebes and Dodona was realized as a pragmatic one in the path of the procession to Dodona...”¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Homer, *Iliad*, 16.233.

¹⁰² Papalexandrou 2008: 268.

However, it seems that at Dodona the cult of Zeus and the oak tree is linked mainly with Minoan and Mycenaean religion. To begin with, the cult of Zeus refers to the tree-cult of the Minoans and the Mycenaeans. Represented on various Mycenaean rings are symbols such as trees and double axes¹⁰³, which are associated with this cult. The ecstatic pose and dance movements of the figures, as well as the shaking of the trees in order to hear the rustle of the leaves, clearly indicate the later cult practices of the dove-priestesses of Dodona, who were singing and praying to propitiate Mother Earth and to achieve a better harvest.

On a ring from the Athenian Acropolis¹⁰⁴, for example, all these cult symbols are depicted: dancing figures, double axes, female figures sitting under a tree, a symbolic representation of the sun and moon and the sky. This Mycenaean ring, probably symbolized the unification between Mother Earth and the sky (the sacred wedding/*Hieros Gamos*). The birds¹⁰⁵ could also symbolize this union, since these are the link between the sky and the earth, and constitute the epiphany of the deity¹⁰⁶: the eagle was the attribute of Zeus and the doves were the sacred birds of Mother Earth and, later on, of Dione and Aphrodite. All

¹⁰³ Nilsson 1918: 218-223; Marinatos 2013: 249-252; Harrison 1927: 169-170; Goodison 2009: 51-57; Birge 1994: 231-245; Evans 1901: 104-107.

¹⁰⁴ Harrison 1927: 158-170; Evans 1901: 107-108; Marinatos 2004: 25-42; Nilsson 1918: 262-280.

¹⁰⁵ Elderkin 1940: 49-52; Harrison 1927: 160-162; Nilsson 1918: 330-340; March 1898: 209-232; Evans 1901: 104, 105, 191-192; Nilsson 1950: 286; Cook 1903d: 403-421; See also Appendix I #60.

¹⁰⁶ Al 1944: 208-222; Nilsson 1918: 330-3340 (birds as epiphanies) and 279-285; Marinatos 2004: 25-42; Evans 1901: 106, 111-112; Dietrich 1969: 262-263; 265, 270; White 1954: 116-117.

these primitive elements were embodied in one cult at Dodona and constituted its religious character.

Another gold ring of the fifteenth century BC, from Mycenae¹⁰⁷, features two representations of worship of a deity seated under a sacred tree in a rural sanctuary, which could apply to this sacred tree cult.

The presence of Zeus at Dodona, as a later deity, maintained the cult connection with this pre-Hellenic divinity, as can be seen from numismatic evidence. On one side of a coin from Dodona there is the depiction of an oak tree, along with three doves; on the other side there is an eagle on the peak of a mountain (probably Tomaros), with the inscription *Απειρωται*¹⁰⁸.

Moreover, the cult of the deity acquired a new interpretive content, within the cultural framework of the worship of Zeus, when Mother Earth became Dione¹⁰⁹, the Dodonaian wife of Zeus. This was a unique element in the Greek religion. The

¹⁰⁷ Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 395-400; Dakaris 1998b: 38-39; Demopoulou 1975: 8-9; Dakaris 1998a: 90-91; Tzouvara-Souli 1976: 68-73; Evangelidis, Dakaris 1964: 130-132; White 1954: 119-123.

¹⁰⁸ Pausanias 10.12.10; Tzouvara-Souli 2007b: 126-127; Parke 1967b: 160 (on Mother Earth and the possible link with Demeter); Hammond 1967a: 510-511; Worship of Demeter is also known in Epirus. A sanctuary of Demeter was brought to light at Dourouti, Ioannina (near the Campus of the University of Ioannina); Hammond 1967a: 510-511 and footnote 9.

¹⁰⁹ *The theory of Mother Earth is attested and is under consideration. For more details see Chapters 2.1, 3.1 & 3.2 bellow of the current thesis*; Cook 1903c: 178 (Dione and Aphrodite) and 179 (Dione and Demeter); Hadzsits 1909: 39, 46-49; Cook 1903(I):178; Cook 1906a: 367,370-371; Cook 1903c: 180; Hesiod, *Theogony* 105-210; Pausanias 10.12.10; Demosthenes, *Against Medeas* 21,53; Press 2012: 13, 4; Nilsson 1955: 457; Burkert 1985: 175, 418; Farnell 1970: 23-26; Vasileiou 2008: 159; Tzouvara-Souli 1976: 66-74; Tzouvara- Souli 2008: 51-55; Dakaris 1986: 78-79; Pliakou 2008a: 142-145; Vlachopoulou, Souli Gravani 2003: 3-4; Katsadima 2012: 56-60; Dakaris 1962b: 32-33; Katsikoudis 1997: 255-277.

earthly presence of the divinities (Zeus and Dione), under the roots of the oak tree, brought this cult closer to the people, since the deities had representatives, the priests of Dodona (Selloi/Helloi¹¹⁰), who were *ανιπόποδες* (barefoot, literally with “unwashed feet”) and *χαμαιεύαι* (sleeping on the ground), due to the constant need for contact with the earth¹¹¹. The presence of both female priestesses and male priests perhaps represents the two cultural layers of this religion and this male-female pair; priest = Zeus, and priestesses= Dione (Mother Earth¹¹²).

The cult of Zeus and Dione was a main element of the culture of Epirus. Epirots worshipped the same deities and observed the same religious practices as the rest of the Greeks. However, this particular Epirotic cult has some specific and unique features, because there were two ritualistic layers in the same context. One layer maintains the primeval element of the worship of Mother Earth, of Zeus and Dione in the case of Dodona; the other layer maintains elements of Homeric or even pre-Homeric cult practices. This layer is affected by the presence of the Corinthians and the Eleans, through the extensive colonization of the coastal area of Epirus, and can be identified

¹¹⁰ Homer, *Iliad*, 16,234-235; Sophocles, *Trachiniae*, 1166-1168; Parke 1967b: 20-33; Dakaris 1967: 42; Demopoulou 1975: 20-21; Tzouvara-Souli 2007a: 87-88; Evangelidis, Dakaris 1964: 29-30, footnote 4; Hammond 1967a: 368, 372-373; Dakaris 1998a: 91-92; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 44-46; Dakaris 1986: 31-33; Nicol 1958: 134-136; Budin 2003: 153-154; Chadwick 1900: 3-6; Cook 1903c: 180; Quantz 1898: 497-498; Karadimitriou 2004: 89-100; Castrucci 2012: 12; Dillon 1997: 96.

¹¹¹ See footnote 109; See Appendix I #58 (a, b, c, d); Strabo 7.7.12 and 7.19, 7.2.Diodorus 15.72.3; Plutarch, *Lysander* 25; Herodotus 2.55; Pausanias 10.12.10; Hammond 1967b: 40; Parke 1967b: 6, 57-65; Potcher 1966: 121; Dakaris 1964: 110; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 44-45.

¹¹² For Dione-Zeus-Σὸνναος see Hadzits 1909: 48; Tzouvara-Souli 1976: 70-73; Tzouvara-Souli 2007b:139-144; Cook 1906a: 370-371; Waites 1923: 34-35.

as a direct influence from the South Greek city-states. Therefore, the cults of Zeus, Dione and other Greek deities developed unique characteristics, such as the cult of Zeus Areios at Passaron-Gardiki.

Passaron¹¹³ was the religious and political centre of the Molossians. An ancient poros temple with pronaos and cella, brought to light there, perhaps dates from the fourth century BC¹¹⁴. A very important find¹¹⁵ from it is a marble fragment of an inscription, with relief representation of Zeus, naked save for a chlamys, in a chariot pulled by two lions, and with the following inscription:

‘Ἄρα/ τῷ Δί/ ος βέλος/δίπτατ[αι]’

The fragment dates from the second half of the fourth century BC and the male figure is Zeus Areios, principal deity of the ancient city of Passaron. As the epithet Areios indicates, this is a military hypostasis of Zeus, whose attribute was the feathered thunderbolt, also an attribute of Zeus of Dodona and the Molossians¹¹⁶. Zeus Areios was also the guardian of oaths¹¹⁷; oaths that the king and the people were mutually exchanging¹¹⁸.

¹¹³ Dakaris 1956: 63-74.

¹¹⁴ Dakaris 1956: 74-75; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 146-147.

¹¹⁵ Dakaris 1956: 67-73; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 144-147; Dakaris 1964: 89-90; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 145-146; Zachos 1993: 265.

¹¹⁶ Dakaris 1956: 32-33; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 145; Liambi 2008: 51.

¹¹⁷ Dakaris 1956: 31-32, 70-73; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 147.

¹¹⁸ See here chapter 2.3; Hammond 1997: 61; Liampi 2009: 13-14; Hammond 1967a: 576-577; Hammond 1997: 61; Florenzano Borba 1992: 221-223; Plutarch, Pyrrhus 5,2 & 5,5; Moretti 1975/76: 130-132; Hammond 1967a: 136 frag. 576-577, 190; Giannakopoulos 2007: 37; Cross 1932: 13-14, 18; Vokotopoulou 1973: 14; Dakaris

Tzouvara-Souli¹¹⁹ suggests that the cult of Zeus Areios was pre-Molossian, just like the cult of Zeus Dodonaios, or alternatively that the Molossians brought it to Epirus, when they settled in the Ioannina Basin¹²⁰.

Another form of the cult of Zeus and Dione¹²¹, was the cult of Zeus Soter (Saviour) and Zeus Prytanis. Numismatic finds from Ambrakia¹²² (modern Arta) reveal the iconography of Zeus, who is depicted with thunderbolt on the silver staters (360-338 BC), while on the bronze coins of the third century BC he is shown with thunderbolt and the inscription *AM/BP* on one side, and the figure of Apollo on the other.

The use of the Zeus figure for the coin iconography perhaps implies the influence of the Molossians over Ambrakia and the influence of the cult of Zeus of Dodona. Perhaps the cult of Zeus Dodonaios and Dione was introduced during Pyrrhos' reign, when Ambrakia was the capital city of Epirus. Zeus had various epithets at Ambrakia (Thesprotos, Kassopaïos, Tymphaïos,

1956: 31-32, 63-68, 70-75; Cabanes 1997a: 82; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 147; Plutarch, *Pyrrhus* 5,5; Cabanes 1997a: 82; Vokotopoulou 1973: 14; Hammond 1967a: 576-577, 190; Zachos 1993: 262-267; Hammond 1907: 577-578; Vlachopoulou-Oikonomou 1994: 21-23; Vlachopoulou 2003: 26-29; Vlachopoulou-Oikonomou, "Passaron" (Archaeological Service official website); Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 140-147; Moretti 1975/76: 130-132; Hammond 1967a: 136 frag 576; For the ancestral cult of Zeus at Passaron, see Euripides, *Phoenician Women* 981, 982.

¹¹⁹ Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 146-147.

¹²⁰ Euripides, *Phoenician Women*, 981, 982; Dakaris 1956: 75.

¹²¹ Tzouvara-Souli 1976: 75.

¹²² Hammond 1967a: 543-544; Tzouvara-Souli 1992: 183-184; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 148-152.

Chaonios, etc.¹²³). Even though the principal deity at Ambrakia was Apollo, Zeus was worshipped mainly as Soter and Prytanis¹²⁴. Zeus Prytanis was linked with the cult of Hestia, as became apparent when the excavations brought to light the prytaneion of the city and some inscriptions, which although relating to certain generals revealed the existence of the cult of Zeus Prytanis, Hestia and Aphrodite¹²⁵ all together.

Zeus was worshipped as Soter¹²⁶ and Kassopaios¹²⁷ at Kassope. At Pandosia¹²⁸, including the areas of Bouchetion (Castle of Rogoi¹²⁹), Elatera and Batia (Rizovouni), all areas around the modern city of Preveza, which were Elean colonies, Zeus¹³⁰ was worshipped as Olympios and Dodonaios, as is

¹²³ Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 153.

¹²⁴ Tzouvara-Souli 2008:153-155); Tzouvara-Souli 1976: 86-87.

¹²⁵ The cult of Aphrodite at Dodona coincides with the rise of the cult at Ambrakia, the capital city of Pyrrhos' kingdom. For the use of Dodona as a stagepost in the implementation of Pyrrhos' policies and the use of the cult of Aphrodite and Hestia see Appendix II # 62: Bronze reliefs; Tzouvara-Souli 1991a: 151-216, fig. 30; Tzouvara-Souli 1976: 86-88; Tzouvara-Souli 1992: 182-183; Lamb 1929: 171-172; Smith 1904: 219-221; For Ambrakia and its cults see Tzouvara-Souli 1992: 15-23; Merkouri 2012: 144-148; Hammond 1967a: 142-144; Liampi 2008: 150 (for the coinage and the coin iconography of Ambrakia).

¹²⁶ Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 157-162, 163-165; Tzouvara-Souli 1976: 76; Dakaris 1971: 86; Merkouri 2012: 127-130; Liampi 2008: 52-53, 54; Hammond 1967a: 650; Dakaris 1971: 86; Merkouri 2012: 130-131; Tzouvara-Souli 1994: 113-117, 119-121); Dakaris 1984: 29; Dakaris 1970b: 33-35; Dakaris 1971: 85.

¹²⁷ Tzouvara-Souli 1994: 116-117; Tzouvara-Souli 1991b: 250-251, 243-259; Hammond 1967a: 394.

¹²⁸ For Pandosia see Dakaris 1970b: 25-27; Dakaris 1971: 135-137, 157-163, 164-170.

¹²⁹ Dakaris 1977: 201-207.

¹³⁰ Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 171-172.

deduced from the coinage¹³¹ of the Pandosian Koinon (168-148 BC), which has the wreathed head of Zeus on the obverse, and the thunderbolt inside an oak wreath on the reverse.

At Gitana, Zeus Dodonaïos and Dione¹³² were worshipped until the third century BC. The deities are represented on one side of a clay sealing, together with the inscription *ΑΙΤΕΙΡΩ/ΤΑ* (*N*), while on the other side is the eagle with the inscription *ΜΟΛΟΣΣΩΝ* inside an oak wreath. Also, a roof tile was found with the inscription *Δ/ΙΩΝΑΣ*, which dates from the second century BC. There was probably a sanctuary of the goddess Dione¹³³, while another temple with pronaos and cella, and a paved court, was discovered at the city centre. The second temple was probably dedicated to Themis Agoraia, guardian of the agora, of justice, law and eunomia.

Later on, there is evidence of worship of Zeus¹³⁴ in the Roman city of Nikopolis, along with other deities (Apollo of Actium, Asklepios, Dionysos, Herakles, Nymphs, Pan, Hermes, Artemis, Athena, Kybele, Hestia as Boule/guardian of political rights, etc). At Athamania¹³⁵, Zeus took on different cultic characteristics, as Akraios, with his own cult centre in the city.

¹³¹ Dakaris 1971: 157; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 171-172; Liampi 2008: 54.

¹³² Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 168-171; Tzouvara-Souli 1976: 77; Lazari 2012: 105-106.

¹³³ Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 170-171; Tzouvara-Souli 1976: 77-78; Lazari 2012: 105; Hammond 1967a: 667, 693; Dakaris 1972a: 172-173, 204-205; Vlachopoulou 2003: 132-142 (for Gitana and its topography).

¹³⁴ Tzouvara-Souli 1987a: 186-187; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 192-193.

¹³⁵ Carapanos 1878: 51, 212; Hammond 1967a: 654; Dakaris 1972a: 171.

Zeus Akraios¹³⁶ is linked with mountains and hilltops¹³⁷, and is mainly depicted holding a sceptre in his right hand and with his left touching the rock on which he sits. In a relief scene he is accompanied by his attributes, such as the thunderbolt.

The cult practised in the sanctuary of Dodona represents almost all the deities that were worshipped in Epirus, which are presented briefly below:

Ioannina Basin/Greek part of Epirus

- Passaron/Gardiki: Zeus Areios, Artemis Hegemonis and probably Herakles.
- Dourouti: Demeter.
- Ambrakia: Artemis (as Hegemonis/Pergaia, Pasikrata, Agrotera¹³⁸), Nike, Satyrs, Herakles, Gorgos, Apollo Agyeus, Apollo Pythios, Aphrodite Aineias or Erykini, Athena as Polias and Pegasos, Themis, Dike, Zeus Soter, Zeus Prytanis, Dione and Zeus Dodonaios (also Zeus as Thesprotos, Zeus Kassopaios, Zeus Tymphaios, Chaonios¹³⁹, etc.), Hestia, Asklepios, Imperial cults (during the Roman period¹⁴⁰).
- Koudounotrypa: Nymphs and Pan, Aphrodite, Hermes, Silenos, Satyrs.

¹³⁶ Tzouvara-Souli 1994: 56-57; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 166-167; Dowden 2006: 70; Tzouvara-Souli 1995: 9-10.

¹³⁷ Livy 38.2.5 (the sanctuary of Zeus); Langdon 1976: 81; Salavoura 2015: 307-310.

¹³⁸ Tzouvara-Souli 1976: 19-26; Tzouvara-Souli 1992: 142, 158-165; Tzouvara-Souli 1991a: 156; Tzouvara-Souli 1991b: 255-256.

¹³⁹ Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 153.

¹⁴⁰ Tzouvara-Souli 1992: 201.

- Kassope, Bouchetion, Pandosia, Ephyra-Nekromanteion (Death Oracle): Zeus Dodonaios and Dione, Zeus Soter, Kassios (Kassopian Zeus), Aphrodite (as Aineias, Erykini), Herakles (as Soter/Saviour), Dionysos, Athena, Apollo; At Pandosia specifically: Themis, Zeus (as Olympios and Dodonaios).

- Gitana: Zeus Dodonaios, Dione, Themis Agoraia.

- Paramythia/Photeki: Zeus, Aphrodite, Artemis, Hekate, Artemis as Tanagra ("TH EN AKPA" or Akraia), Zeus Sarapis, Hermes.

- Nikopolis: Apollo Aktios (of Aktion-Actium), Apollo Leukatis, Apollo Agyeus, Asklepios, Dionysos, Hephaistos, Herakles, Zeus, Aphrodite, Nymphs, Pan, Hermes, Artemis (Kelkata, Lauria, Ephesian), Athena (of Bauron), Kybele, Hestia (Boule).

- **Nekromanteion:** Persephone, Hades, Cerberus, Hades-Poseidon, Herakles.

- **Dodona:** Zeus Dodonaios, Dione/Mother Earth, Themis, Herakles, Aphrodite, Nymphs, Dionysos.

Chaonia (Albanian part of Epirus)

- Apollonia: Zeus (Olympios), Pan, Nymphs, Herakles, Artemis (Agrotera), Athena, Apollo, Asklepios, Poseidon.

- Phoinike: Poseidon, Zeus Chaonios, Athena Polias, Artemis, Dione.

- Bouthroton: Zeus (Kassopaios), Poseidon, Aphrodite Aineias, Pan, Nymphs.

- Epidamnos (Dyrrachion): Nymphs, Pan, Zeus Dodonaios, Poseidon.

- Amandia: Aphrodite (Pandemos), Zeus Bouleus, Artemis, Dione, Nymphs, Pan.
- Vylida: Pan, Nymphs, Zeus Nikaios/Tropaios (victor), Zeus Prytanis, Zeus Teleios.
- Orikon: Apollo Agyeus, Artemis, Hekate.
- **Athamania:** Athena Archegetis (the leader), Dione, Apollo, Zeus Dodonaios, Zeus Akraios (linked with mountains and hilltops¹⁴¹), Poseidon.

¹⁴¹ See footnote 136 above.

Chapter 2: An overview of the dedications

2.1) Dodona and its Bronze Age and Early Iron Age offerings

At Dodona, the cult of the imposing male deity that was later named Zeus seems to have begun at least during the Early Bronze Age (about 2600-1900 BC) or shortly afterwards (about 1900-1600 BC), as some of the finds suggest. The presence of numerous prehistoric bronze tools and weapons at Dodona, could indicate primeval cult activity there before the official establishment of the sanctuary during the eighth century BC, or at least the ceremonial use of the area that later developed as the sanctuary. The clay vessels give very little information about cult activity, with the exception of some vases of “ceremonial” type with more sophisticated decorative motifs than usual, which could imply a certain importance, as well as of a small group of miniature handmade clay vessels with no actual utilitarian use.

In the Early Iron Age (until the 8th century BC), the “dedications” are mainly represented by a group of characteristic cross-shaped axes, with potential ritual identity. The finds from early Dodona are the following:

i. Early pottery

The pottery that was found at Dodona can be divided into two main categories: handmade¹⁴² (pottery with plastic decoration, monochrome painted pottery and matt-painted pottery with elegant vase shapes and decoration that combines

¹⁴² Soueref 2001: 79-81; Papadopoulos 1976: 279-285; Hammond 1978: 132.

both local and Mycenaean motifs); wheel-made¹⁴³ (with the tall-stemmed kylikes of the Late Helladic IIIA-B period, and the alabastra from the bouleuterion of Dodona, LH IIIA-B; the pottery with various decorative motifs (spiraliform or linear) of the Late Helladic IIIB period, etc.).

At Dodona there are five types of prehistoric pottery: 1) coarse local pottery with plastic decoration, 2) matt-painted pottery, 3) coarse pottery from other areas of Greece, 4) orange-red ware, 5) Mycenaean wheel-made pottery and its local imitations (such as the tall-stemmed goblet (kylix). Wardle¹⁴⁴ presented a statistical analysis of the ceramic finds from Dodona: 79% local handmade pottery; 16% local orange-red ware; 4% Mycenaean pottery fragments and 1% handmade matt-painted pottery.

The Mycenaean pottery dates from the Late Helladic III period and is of the kind typically found at any Mycenaean settlement in Epirus. However, what distinguishes Dodona is the amount of this pottery found there, which can only be compared with the respective pottery from the Mycenaean settlement at Ephyra¹⁴⁵. The archaeological excavations at Dodona revealed prehistoric remains¹⁴⁶ under the west side of the Hellenistic stoa

¹⁴³ Soueref 2001: 82-92; Hammond 1978: 132.

¹⁴⁴ Wardle 1993: 120, 129-130; Wardle 1977b: 177 (for the oracle of Dodona); For the pottery see 176-187; Soueref 2001: 79-91; for the kylix type of Dodona see Wardle 1993: 127; Kleitsas 2014: 74-76; For the pottery of Epirus see Papadopoulos-Kontorli 2003: 25-29.

¹⁴⁵ Kleitsas 2014: 74-76; Soueref 2001: 79-91; Mountjoy 1983: 270-271.

¹⁴⁶ Papadopoulos-Kontorli 2003: 10; Kleitsas 2014: 74-75; Kleitsas 2016: 23-24; See Appendix II: Other Finds #71a, 71b.

of the bouleuterion. The building, presumed to be a house, had at least five post holes in two rows. Moreover, in the same area, there were at least five pits (0.90 to 1.15 m in depth) which yielded handmade pottery and stone tools. The prehistoric level at Dodona was only 0.40 to 0.60 m deep and covered a large part of the sanctuary. However, it was disturbed due to ongoing use of the area through the centuries and contained both prehistoric and Archaic and Classical Greek finds.

Wardle¹⁴⁷ rightly points out, as I see it, "...the failure to discover settlements or substantial structures has been attributed to the nature of the prehistoric economy and occupation of Epirus by transhumant pastoralists with no permanent settlements. I would prefer to attribute it to the small scale of exploration and to counter this slender evidence for pastoralism with a single sickle flint with the characteristic silica gloss formed by cutting the stalks of grasses or cereals found in the recent excavations at Dodona. Judgment on the economy of any of north-western Greece during the later prehistoric period should be suspended until there is some positive evidence. Dakaris has discovered Epirus' only Bronze Age structures bellow the Hellenistic Bouleuterion and Stoa designated E2. Below a level of hill-wash containing coarse prehistoric pottery, was a length of rough walling, perhaps from an elliptical or apsidal building, a number of pits, of which one may have been used as a primitive oven and some stone-packed postholes, whose position suggests a building..."

¹⁴⁷ Wardle 1977b: 159.

Dakaris¹⁴⁸ interpreted the prehistoric building remains as the first settlement of the priesthood of Dodona (of the Selloi/Helloi). He also suggested the existence of a local pottery workshop at Dodona, since the excavations brought to light a small kiln; the excavations revealed two circular trenches (depth 1.10 m and length 2.40 m). The kiln was probably covered by a large fragment of a handmade pithos, half-cropped and with the two handles preserved for its easy transfer. From the pithos fragment and two other Early Geometric fragments, the trenches are considered to date to the Early Geometric period¹⁴⁹.

Wardle, who studied the early pottery of Dodona, is more sceptical about the interpretation of these finds and suggests that the evidence as it stands cannot prove anything substantial about the prehistory of Dodona and the cult activities that may have taken place there ¹⁵⁰.

As far as the few examples of drinking vessels are concerned, their possible ceremonial use cannot be proven with certainty, since these types could have equally a utilitarian use during the Middle and, mainly, the Late Bronze Age. The presence of these vessels at the sanctuary does not necessarily

¹⁴⁸ Dakaris 1967: 41-42.

¹⁴⁹ For the trenches and the kiln see Appendix II: Other Finds #71 (a, b) and 72.

¹⁵⁰ Salavoura 2015: 185, 304-310; Romano-Voyatzis 2014: 579, 581, 615, 628; Salavoura 2014: 110-112; Langdon 1976: 81.

imply their ceremonial use (e.g. for libations or ritual community gatherings¹⁵¹).

The only category of pottery from Dodona that could imply the presence of an ancestral cult activity is that of the numerous miniature handmade vessels¹⁵² which, due to their small size, could not have a utilitarian use. According to the archaeological reports, these were discovered alongside bronze tools and weapons, within the same excavation context. The presence of these finds as a group suggests a ritual act. However, because the early archaeological reports give little substantial information about the miniature vessels, any interpretation is purely speculative. Some questions that future research could answer are the following:

- How close were these vessels to the bronze finds? Did they indeed belong to the same excavation context? Could they be ancestral objects buried together so as to be preserved?
- How many were these vessels? (In none of the reports are exact numbers of these finds given.)
- Are there any traces on these vessels that could indicate their use?

¹⁵¹ Moreover, the drinking vessels recovered from Mount Lykaion are linked not with a utilitarian but with a sacrificial use. Once more, that is not the case for Dodona (see footnote 150 above).

¹⁵² Kleitsas 2012: *Ἡπειρος στην Εποχή του Χαλκού*, Β (archaeology online); Evangelidis 1959: 18; Dakaris 1967: 42; Kleitsas 2014: 75; For the 700+ fragments of miniature clay vessels from Mount Lykaion, see Romano-Voyatzis 2014: 612-614; The lack of any further information about the miniature clay vessels and the lack of any chemical residue analysis of the respective finds from Dodona hinder any sound interpretation of the use of these specific vessels; See Appendix II: Other Finds #70g; Kleitsas 2016: 54-55, figs 8-13.

- Could these vessels be linked with the sanctuary and cult activities or with activities at the presumed nearby settlement?
- Could they be considered as miniature ceremonial clay vessels or simply as small-sized vessels¹⁵³ with an unknown use (perhaps a child's toy).
- Could these vessels be linked with children and an unknown cult activity involving or addressed to children¹⁵⁴?

ii. Early Metalwork at Dodona (Bronze Age and Iron Age)

Weapons and armour

¹⁵³ For the terms “miniature” and “utilitarian” in the archaeological jargon see Tournavitou 2009: 213.

¹⁵⁴ For the use of miniature vessels in a religious context and its association with children's cult, see Tournavitou 2009: 229-230; As far as the presence of the children at Dodona is concerned, there are a few bronze figurines of young males (boys): Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #35, #32 (a,b,c), #34, 36; “Many of these boys carry cocks or doves and wear immense and complicated hair dresses. The custom of protecting the sensitive head has been common throughout the ages. It is probable that these bronzes refer to living boys who were according to the long tradition, vowed to the goddess at birth and dedicated until puberty. Both bronzes, the ball player [see Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #36] and the boy with the dove [see Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #33], show boys well below that age –either because the parents removed them at an early time or possibly because the child died in the sanctuary. The unusually sentimental mood of these bronzes, may suggest that the parents dedicated the statue more in sorrow than in pride...” (Thompson Burr 1982: 155-162, 215-219).

The miniature clay vessels date from the prehistoric period and the figurines of these young males date from the Classical period. However, these finds could be linked with a cult or some other activity at the sanctuary associated with children, which cannot be demonstrated on present evidence. See also the example of the miniature tripod cauldrons from Mount Lykaion, Romano-Voyatzis 2014: 618-620; See also Davis 1986: 399-406; Chapin 2007: 229-255 (mainly 235-238 and 249-250).

Outstanding among the prehistoric finds at Dodona are the metal objects, such as spear-points, arrowheads, knives, axes, etc. Scholars consider these artifacts (especially the axes) as dedications, although some of them may have been used also for ritual purposes. Apart from the weaponry, there are also some stone axes of the Early Helladic period (according to Dakaris) or the Bronze Age (according to Hammond¹⁵⁵).

Notable among the bronze finds are the knives¹⁵⁶, which are well preserved (only one was broken into pieces), without any significant damage. These range in length between 0.227 and 0.685 m. In Epirus, there were three knife types: 1) with a straight blade, 2) with a convex blade like the sickle, and 3) T-shaped (cross-shaped knives). At least 15 knives have been recovered at Dodona, which are dated to the Middle and Late Bronze Age.

Knives of the first and the third type have been found at Dodona¹⁵⁷. The four known examples of type 1 have thin, triangular and long blades with sharp points. The handles were equal in width to the blades, with wooden or bone sheath, and were secured with 2-3 bronze rivets in triangular or irregular arrangement on the central axis. These knives date from the Late Helladic period. A knife of T-shaped/cross-

¹⁵⁵ Papadopoulos 1976: 294-296; Hammond 1967a: 317; Dakaris 1998a: 4 (pl. 20,1); Soueref 2001: 92-100, 119-120.

¹⁵⁶ Papadopoulos 1976: 294-296, 303-307; Soueref 2001: 92-100.

¹⁵⁷ Papadopoulos-Kontorli 2003: 10; See also the weapons from two "warrior" graves of the Late Bronze Age, at Kato Konitsa/Plain of Konitsa and Pedini, Kleitsas 2017b: 252-260, 262-263.

shaped type was found broken into pieces. It is not known whether the handle of such knives was held in place by rivets. The specimen from Dodona is dated on the basis of other finds from the same context (a foliate arrowhead) to the LH IIIB period, and could be an imported Creto-Mycenaean object.

Interesting finds among the weaponry include two swords¹⁵⁸ that Dakaris assumed were of Cretan or Thessalian provenance. Hammond¹⁵⁹ argues that some swords (sword AK 82) could be imitations of or even actual Mycenaean works, while he claimed that another specimen was a product of a local Epirot workshop. In the view of Wardle¹⁶⁰, however, these artifacts cannot tell us anything about their origin (whether of Aegean origin or imitations from a local provincial workshop of the Mycenaean world). Possibly they date to LH II-III A.

Other weapons are the arrowheads¹⁶¹, of which three specimens of the LH IIIB period are leaf-shaped.

Another category of metal objects is that of the double axes¹⁶², regular finds from Epirus and Dodona. The axes,

¹⁵⁸ Papadopoulos 1976: 307-310; Soueref 2007: 100-106; The sword, of "Peschiera" type, was an Italian product imported to Epirus. It may have been a weapon either for war or hunting, or an object of display and prestige, or a symbol of a ritual (see Kleitsas 2012: Ἡπειρος Εποχή του Χαλκού Δ', Αρχαιολογία online); See Sandars 1963: 120, 121, 125, 128 and 137, 138; Catling 1968: 95-96, 98-104, 107 (Catling also discusses the spearheads).

¹⁵⁹ Hammond 1971: 239.

¹⁶⁰ Bouzek 1994: 221.

¹⁶¹ Papadopoulos 1976: 311-317.

which had an everyday use, were mainly cast bronze objects, with one or two edges, secured to a wooden or bone haft. Axes were quite widely used as weapons or as tools (for felling trees), and even as ritual objects (*Bouphonia* rituals/bull sacrifices¹⁶³).

Double Axes

The double axe existed in the Minoan religion¹⁶⁴ as a weapon of the thunder god. It is thought to have symbolized the deity's presence and as the thunderbolt that strikes the earth it was linked with Mother-Earth. Therefore, the sky-god (later Zeus) was the one who fertilized the earth. However, these are mere theories that cannot be proven, due to the unknown aspects of the Minoan religion. Even so, with regard to the symbolic background of the axes, there are a few clear details on their correspondence to deities. The Minoan Mother Nature is linked with the Great Deity/Potnia of Asia Minor and included within her cult is the male deity with the double axe and the thunderbolt: Zeus Stratios of Karia, Sandan of Tarsos, the Hurrian god Teshub.

Moreover, the double axe was called *λάβρυξ*¹⁶⁵, which was an attribute of Zeus (Zeus Lambrandeus), but also connects with the Greek word for a maze, "labyrinth". This

¹⁶² Kleitsas 2013: 84-120; Papadopoulos 1976: 297-303; Soueref 2001: 106-110; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 103-105.

¹⁶³ Hesychius, "δρουμιος"; Cook 1903c: 181; Cook 1964: 85; Evans 1901: 107.

¹⁶⁴ Nilsson 1950: 220-222.

¹⁶⁵ Kleitsas 2013: 80; Nilsson 1950: 223-224; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 105; Evans 1901: 108-112; Vokotopoulou 1973: 73, pl. 32a; Rousse 1901: 268-270.

word is known from the Linear B tablets and has been interpreted as the house of the *labrys* (axe) and of the Minoan Bull-God. On the Athenian Acropolis, there is clear evidence of a ritual bull sacrifice¹⁶⁶ with an axe in Classical times, near the altar and statue of Zeus Polieus (guardian of the city-*polis*), perhaps as remembrance of a prehistoric ritual. Pausanias gives us the story of Earth (Gaia) as a suppliant, entreating Zeus to bring rain. Perhaps in the context of this supplication there was a ritual bull sacrifice in honour of Zeus Hyetios, in order to give back fertility (*euphoria*) to the earth. Possibly, young women carried the water, the sacrificial knife and the axe. The water purified the sacrificial tools and cleansed the blood. The water could also symbolize the forthcoming rain, as the outcome of this ritual death.

Axes of different types have been brought to light in the excavations at Dodona¹⁶⁷:

1) Single-edged axes¹⁶⁸: five specimens. A known type found often in the Balkan region (maybe of the LH IIIB-C period). Most of these axes have common origins, except one in which there are some different construction details.

¹⁶⁶ Harrison 1912: 172-173; Nilsson 1950: 220-221; Burkert 1983:137-138.

¹⁶⁷ Soueref 2001: 106-110; Papadopoulos 1976: 297-303; Roes 1970: 206; Seven bronze cast axes were found at Dodona: four of them (Late Bronze Age) come from the Greek or Minoan-Mycenaean world, two are of the Hermones-Kierio type and one is of the Kalindia type. There are excavation data for only three of the seven axes, which were found near the Sacred House.

¹⁶⁸ Soueref 2001: 106-107; Kleitsas 2013: 108-115.

2) Cross-shaped, single-edged axes¹⁶⁹: six specimens. Three were found by Carapanos, one in Evangelidis's excavations and two by Dakaris. According to Hammond, similar finds of the Late Bronze Age and even the Early Bronze Age are known from southwest Asia, Asia Minor, Sicily, Sardinia, Campania, Latium and Etruria in Italy, as well as the Danube region (iron axes). He considers that the small cross-shaped axes come from Troy and Asia Minor. In the view of Dakaris and Papadopoulos¹⁷⁰, the axes were a logging tool and were dedicated in the sanctuary by their owners. Dakaris dates this custom¹⁷¹ to the Protogeometric period, Hammond to the Early Iron Age and Papadopoulos to the Late Helladic III period.

3) Double axes¹⁷². The type found at Dodona (type III of Buchholz's classification) is widespread in the Greek Mainland, the Aegean and Cyprus during the LH III period. However, the Dodona axe dates from the Archaic period and is reminiscent of other axes of the LH III period. The specimens

¹⁶⁹ Dakaris 1967(a): 46; Dakaris 1974: 77; Papadopoulos 1976: 272, 302-303, 330-331; Soueref 2001: 107-108, 59-60, 225, 256; Kleitsas 2013: 115-120; Hammond 1967a: 407-409, 414; Evangelidis 1956: 155; Evangelidis 1958: 104, 106; Dakaris 1966: 78-79; These axes spread from the Caucasus region to Anatolia and the Italian and the Iberian Peninsula. From the typology of the blade and the handle, they could be used equally as single-edged axes or for various agricultural tasks (mid-3rd to 1st millennium BC). The cross-shaped axes of Dodona are unique, since these have no utilitarian use because there are made of a very thin sheet of metal.

¹⁷⁰ Dakaris 1967: 46; Papadopoulos 1976: 302-303; Soueref 2001: 107.

¹⁷¹ Hammond 1967a: 407; Soueref 2001: 107.

¹⁷² Soueref 2001: 108-110; Kleitsas 2013: 105-107.

from Dodona bear traces of use¹⁷³, perhaps as carpentry tools.

A cast double axe with an oval stem hole¹⁷⁴ (an exhibit at the Benaki Museum, Athens) was also found in the sanctuary. It carries a dedicatory inscription, which dates to 400 BC, and seems to have been preserved as a relic linked with the cult of Zeus.

In general, the number of bronze “exotica”¹⁷⁵ at Dodona is small. It includes: a double-edged knife of Peschiera type¹⁷⁶, a single-edged axe with a cylindrical stem hole (of European *Nackenscheibenaxet* type) and a double-edged axe of Kalindria type from Central Macedonia. These exotic objects (dated to LH III B-C¹⁷⁷) reflect the influence and the prestige of the sanctuary in the early centuries. People from abroad chose to visit Dodona and bring their gifts.

¹⁷³ For the utilitarian use of the double axe see Hodge 1985: 307-308.

¹⁷⁴ Kleitsas 2013: 95, footnotes 346, 347; Soueref 2001: 61.

¹⁷⁵ Kleitsas 2013: 102-104, 106-107, 115; Hammond 1967a: 333-334; Soueref 2001: 60-61; Kleitsas 2012: Ἡπειρος, Εποχή του Χαλκού Β & Δ (footnote 13 of part Β), Αρχαιολογία Online.

¹⁷⁶ Papadopoulos 1998: 29-30, pl.22, 27; Kleitsas 2014: 78, footnote 27.

¹⁷⁷ Kleitsas 2015: 78

2.2) Dodona and its offerings in Archaic times

As noted in Chapter 1, thanks to the colonies founded by Southern Greek city-states in the coastal zone of Epirus and the relationship established between the coastal and the inland area, as well as the trade network, many significant works of art and other valuables reached the Dodona sanctuary, as dedications, in the Archaic period. These were mostly creations from Peloponnesian –predominantly Corinthian– workshops. The main dedications, which dominated the oracles of the ancient Hellenic world, were the tripods, the cauldrons that were placed on them, and the griffin protomes that decorated these, along with other motifs.

The earliest cauldrons date from the second millennium BC (before the collapse of the Mycenaean centres) and were used extensively for many purposes, including cooking food. Homer¹⁷⁸ speaks of the use of cauldrons to heat up water by many Homeric heroes, such Achilles, Hector and Odysseus. Another reference from the *Iliad*¹⁷⁹ is to the award of these vessels as prizes to victors in wrestling contests (e.g. between Ajax and Idomeneus). These vessels were also used in association with

¹⁷⁸ Homer, *Iliad*, 22.443 (for Hector) & 23.40 (for Achilles); Homer, *Odyssey*, 8.434 & 7.10.359-361 (for Odysseus); Jones 2002: 374-375; Coldstream 1997: 442; Benton 1934/1935a: 47-56.

¹⁷⁹ Homer, *Iliad*, 23.702; Jones 2002: 374-375.

funerary rites; Achilles washed Patroclus' body with warm water from a cauldron.¹⁸⁰

Mark Wilson Jones¹⁸¹ writes of the tripods:

“...Already in the Bronze Age, a proportion of tripods began to transcend utilitarian roles, coming to be produced for ceremonial or ritual functions and fabricated out of expensive materials, chiefly bronze...”.

During the Geometric period, tripods were associated with sacrificial meals, festivals, and athletic games. Their extensive use suggests the affluence of their owners, as the value of copper (bronze) was high. Perhaps in this pre-monetary Greek society, tripods made of copper or bronze or iron, were considered a valuable gift or a prestigious dedication. Furthermore, they were used as trade goods or as political means of establishing new bonds between allies. Tripods could be given as gifts between members of the aristocratic classes, as symbols of friendship and political alliances¹⁸².

Tripods were also a prize for victors in chariot-races at games or in theatrical and musical festivals, as well as poetry competitions¹⁸³. Due to their high cost of manufacture, tripods

¹⁸⁰ Homer, *Iliad*, 18.344-348; Jones 2002: 374-375; See also the example of the cauldron and the miniature cauldron vessels found in the sanctuary of Zeus on Mount Lykaion (Romano-Voyatzis 2014: 618-620).

¹⁸¹ Jones 2002: 374-375.

¹⁸² Homer, *Iliad*, 9.122; Pausanias 4.32 & 1.4; Papalexandrou 2008: 254; Jones 2002: 374-375.

¹⁸³ Homer, *Iliad*, 9.407 & 11.100 & 23.259-264 & 23.485 & 23.513 & 23.702-718; Benton 1935: 114; Jones 2002: 376.

were considered a “*par excellence*” gift or the “ultimate” dedication¹⁸⁴ by the elite class, which wished to display its wealth and status. Nevertheless, beyond the personal offering by an aristocrat, these vessels could be a dedication of an entire community (city-state) or a king or tyrant and other exceptional political figures. In addition, tripods were dedicated to commemorate significant events¹⁸⁵. Such an event was the Battle of Himera (480 BC), after which the victors, the Sicilian tyrants Hieron and Gelon, dedicated a gold tripod at the Delphic sanctuary¹⁸⁶. Similar dedications were made by the Greeks after the Battle of Plataia¹⁸⁷ (479 BC), during the Persian Wars.

Tripods were also used as a decorative motif, along with others, on objects such as bronze figurines¹⁸⁸ of horses, other animals (bulls) and warriors, as well as on axes. These are symbolic elements of a militaristic society that wished to display its identity through noble chariot races¹⁸⁹ and dedications of

¹⁸⁴ Suhr 1971: 216-217; Jones 2002: 376; Pedley 2005: chapter 7; Mattusch 1990: 549-560 (especially 558-559); Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 80-83; Evans 1901: 117-118 (tripods: another form of baetylic pillar cult?); Benton 1934/1935a: 51, 56; Waterhouse 1996: 309-313, 317; Heurtley 1939/40: 6-10.

¹⁸⁵ Papalexandrou 2008: 254-266, 271.

¹⁸⁶ Athenaeus, *Deip.* 6.232. a-b; Diodorus 11.26.7; Bacchylides, *Pythian* 3.17-22; Jones 2002: 376.

¹⁸⁷ Herodotus, 9.80-81; Pausanias 10.13.3; Thucydides 1.132.2; Suhr 1971: 219-220; Jones 2002: 376; See also Appendix II: Tripod fragments #52.

¹⁸⁸ Coldstream 1997: 441-442; Lamb 1929: 32-43; Benton 1935: 82, 83-85; Carter 1972: 31-33 & 28-31; Casson 1922: 208-219.

¹⁸⁹ Voyatzis 1992: 268); Langdon 1989: 198; For decorative tripods on fragments of zoomorphic figurines (such as the bulls, horses etc) see Appendix II: see Appendix II: Tripod fragments #46, 48, 49 (a, b), 47 (a, b) and Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #56, 59 (a, b, c), 60, 61 (a, b, c), 62 (a, b, c, d), 63 (a, b), 64 (a, b) and 65; See also Tripod fragments #24 (a, b, c, d) and 25.

such artifacts. Another popular motif, usually depicted on reliefs from Dodona, is the conflict between Herakles and Apollo for possession of the Delphic Tripod¹⁹⁰. Moreover, the tripods became a functional and integral part of the urban area of the sanctuary, as an element of the architectural complexes and the temples. At Dodona, tripods and cauldrons were equated with the presence of the divinity and the cult rituals or the oracular responses¹⁹¹. Cauldrons encircled the sacred oak tree, their constant echo being an apotropaic tool of Dodonaian cult and an oracular tool of divination¹⁹².

In terms of workmanship or manufacture¹⁹³, five general categories of tripods can be distinguished¹⁹⁴:

¹⁹⁰ Pindar, *Ol.* 9.43; Bleecker Luce 1930: 313-317, 318; Jones 2002: 358-371 (tripod iconography in general) and 374-375; Suhr 1971: 21; Reeder Williams 1976: 60-61, pl. 9, 16; Neer 2001: 295-296; For the clash between Herakles and Apollo over the tripod see Appendix II: Bronze reliefs #58 and #68 (#1) and Appendix I #59. This subject is represented on the east pediment of the Siphnian Treasury at Delphi (*ca* 525 BC).

¹⁹¹ Jones 2002: 377.

¹⁹² Stephanos Byzantios, 3, v «*Δωδώνη*»; Thucydides 4.47; Cook 1902: 13,27-28; Parke 1967b: 86-91; Suhr 1971: 225; Dakaris 1986: 29-31; Dakaris 1998a: 37-39; Tzouvara-Souli 2007a: 90-91; Nicol 1958: 140; Kalligas 1976: 61-67; For the Delphic tripods see Neer 2001: 295-297; For the bronze whips found at the sanctuary of Dodona see Appendix I #56 (a, b); For the Gong of Dodona (also known as the Corcyraean votive offering) see Appendix I #57; For the depiction of tripods on coins see Appendix I # 61b, 66f.

¹⁹³ For the method of manufacture employed, see Casson 1922: 208; See also Benton's classification (Benton 1934/35: 56-57).

¹⁹⁴ For the chronology of the tripods in general see: Carter 1972: 30-31; Benton 1935: 79-82, 89-94, 85-86; See an example of a bronze figurine at the side of the handles of a hammered tripod: it is the Dodona thrower: "...He stood along the rim, his chest facing inwards; held the handle with his left hand; through which passes a big rivet and flog the spear, or it may be a thunderbolt from the small hall in his right hand, along the inside of the cauldron...". See also a similar figurine from Ithaca (Benton 1935:85-86); Lamb 1929: 44-72; Coldstream 1997: 442-451.

- Small tripod cauldrons used perhaps as cooking vessels. These have cast legs and solid polygonal body, with ring-shaped handles of triangular cross-section and parallel grooves. They are decorated with rope-pattern, which is repeated on the upper part of the legs. Such cauldrons probably date from *ca* 800 BC (8th century BC).
- Larger tripod cauldrons of more monumental and sophisticated aspect. These have flat handles with one or two concentric grooves, and are decorated with small zoomorphic figurines (bulls, horses¹⁹⁵), as well as rectilinear or curvilinear (spiral) motifs on the legs. Cauldrons of this type perhaps date from the early eighth century BC. They are also found at Olympia, as prestigious objects or items of display of the upper class. It is less probable that they were used as cooking vessels, but were rather the dedications of victorious athletes. Fragments of these cauldrons indicate that some of them were over 1 m high. New decorative motifs appear, according to the artistic trends of the local workshops.
- The third group includes “Π-shaped” or “double T-shaped” tripod cauldrons without cast legs. The outside is decorated with linear motifs and semicircles. The handles are decorated with pierced-work motifs as well as with figurines of horses and horsemen.
- The fourth group has fewer specimens. The tripod cauldrons have shallow grooves on the body and wider handles, as well as double T-shaped legs. The decoration is dominated by

¹⁹⁵ See as comparative examples of these ornaments/figurines Appendix II: Tripods #1 to 29, 56 to 60; see also Chase 1950: 33-37 (three more examples of griffin heads; for griffins see below).

figurines of horses and warriors. Such cauldrons are known examples of Corinthian artwork, with limited presence of similar vessels at Delphi, Olympia and Ithaka¹⁹⁶. Represented on one example from Olympia is the aforesaid motif of the conflict¹⁹⁷ between Herakles and Apollo for the Delphic tripod (late 8th century BC).

- The tripod cauldrons of the last category have no cast parts, since the vessels are made entirely in hammered technique – the body, the handles and the legs are of beaten sheet metal formed upon a wooden core. The handles are flat and the legs consist of three sheets which unite and create a double T in cross-section. The decoration of the outside of the body is engraved. The new hammered technique enabled the production of larger vessels (1.50 to 2 m high).

I wish to point out here that due to the fact that I did not have access to the actual archaeological material from Dodona, it is not possible to attempt here a classification of tripods from the site. This would be particularly risky, given the fragmentary nature of the finds and the author's lack of specialized knowledge on the subject.

The decoration of the tripod cauldrons also includes the human hand motif, spindly anthropomorphic figurines and sophisticated little horses. Only a few examples of these tripod cauldrons are known from Dodona and Delphi, whereas they are more numerous from Delos and the Athenian Acropolis. Perhaps

¹⁹⁶ Benton 1934/1935a: 51, 51; Mattusch 1990: 549-560; See Appendix II: Tripods #39; 40a,b; 44a,b; 53; 54; 55.

¹⁹⁷ Appendix I # 59.

the main workshops that are represented by these vessels on the Athenian Acropolis were not the only ones. The tripod cauldrons of Dodona, date from the third quarter of the eighth century until the early seventh century BC.

From 700 BC onwards there was a constant influx of precious dedications from the East into the Greek world. The new prestigious items influenced the Greek craftsmen: new subjects were added to the repertoire of decorative motifs, such as the griffin and the sphinx, along with other elements of Oriental provenance. Even Dodona was affected by this new artistic trend, examples of which have been found *in situ* at the sanctuary.

From the Geometric period and mainly from the Archaic period (Orientalizing period), new motifs are introduced into Greek art, such as the lotus pattern and friezes of animals. The duration of this trend is not quite clear but the *terminus post quem* is around 700 BC and the *terminus ante quem* is the sixth century BC¹⁹⁸.

Among the few examples of the Orientalizing style found at Dodona is the leg of a tripod, which ends in a lion paw¹⁹⁹. It was probably the product of a Corinthian or Laconian workshop, which was imported to Dodona in the first half of the sixth century BC. Moreover, from other finds from Dodona (especially the bronze vessels) there are decorative motifs of female figurines, winged and wingless, which perhaps had an

¹⁹⁸ Lamb 1929: 53; Coldstream 1997: 475-480; Goldman 1960: 319-320.

¹⁹⁹ Mertens 2002: 27-29; See also Appendix II: Tripods #36 (a, b).

apotropaic function. Normally, the legs of these tripods end in lion paws combined with the gorgon motif (gorgoneion), another apotropaic symbol, as seen from other archaeological parallels from Olympia or elsewhere²⁰⁰.

This type of art perhaps reached the Hellenic world through the trade network²⁰¹ between the Greeks and the East (Mesopotamia, Egypt) or through the Phoenician merchants who travelled via Cyprus and distributed products to Greek territory. A third theory proposes the entry of these new artistic trends through the Greek colonies in the East and the West: Charles Theodore Seltman²⁰² refers to a different network between Dodona, the East and Delos, based mainly on a mythical account about the Hyperboreans and their gifts: “...Sacred offerings wrapped in straw are sent to us by the Hyperboreans, who hand them to the Scythians. The offerings pass west from tribe to tribe to the Adriatic, thence south to Dodona, Malea, through Euboea to Carystos, Tenos to Delos...”

This account outlines a relationship or a sacred pathway linking distant regions, such as Central Europe, with Dodona and Delos, and although not proven by modern archaeological methodology, it may infer the existence of a very early trade network (including cult relations) in which products and ideas were exchanged.

²⁰⁰ See Appendix II: Tripods #33, 31, 32, 34, 35 (a, b), 36, 37, 38 and 40 (a, b).

²⁰¹ Lamb 1929: 53-54; Coldstream 1997: 475-480.

²⁰² Seltman 1928: 156; Sale 1961: 77.

The constant changes in the ancient world, with the new trade routes and the promising colonial lands, affected artistically the cauldron types. On the new Geometric types²⁰³, which replaced the old ones, the legs are fixed to the cauldron (the Oriental tripods had moveable legs). These vessels are divided into two categories:

- Tripods with zoomorphic legs.
- Hollow conical tripods decorated with lotus-flower pattern and compressed figures. The tripods proper have a lower centre of gravity and are ornamented with attached figures of sirens, bulls, lions, and griffins (from two to twelve figurines). The human head and the arms of a sphinx are rendered in high relief, while the wings and the tail of the beast are engraved on the surface of the figure attached to the ring-shaped handle on the body of the cauldron. Griffin or lion figurines are larger and used mainly for decoration, but also as apotropaic symbols²⁰⁴: “...The idea of placing a griffin on a cauldron would then be a Greek invention and hence foreign to the orient, but the griffin motif itself would have come to Greece from a North Syrian source...”²⁰⁵

The type of the Syrian griffin (with horse ears, a horn on the forehead and a wide-open mouth) underwent some modification in the seventh century BC, at the hands of Greek metalworkers, and quickly became the dominant decorative

²⁰³ Muscarella 1962: 318-319; Coldstream 1997: 480-484; Dietrich 1990: 14-15.

²⁰⁴ See Appendix II: Tripods: #43, 44a,b and 45 from Dodona, #39a,b and #40a,b from Olympia; See also as comparanda #41 from Dourouti and #42 a griffin from Rhodes.

²⁰⁵ Muscarella 1962: 320-321.

device on tripod cauldrons²⁰⁶. Very few specimens²⁰⁷ (three published in total) of this modified Syrian griffin have been found in the sanctuary of Dodona. In 1982, during the excavation of the prytaneion (trench O1), a bronze griffin was uncovered (height 0.21 m), which was perhaps a fragment of a lost tripod cauldron. This is a cast work of the Orientalizing period, found almost intact, except for the big inlaid eyes. The griffin has the face of an eagle, with curved beak, open mouth and protruding tongue, and the neck and ears of a horse.

The neck is covered completely in relief scales, while preserved at the lower end of the protome are the holes and rivets for attaching it to the vessel. Some characteristics, such as the compact proportions, the sharp definition of the details, the complex depiction of the eyeballs with the three corneas, the loops on the forehead and the daemonic expression, as well as the unified artistic style of the composition, date this work to the middle years of the seventh century BC (*ca* 670 BC²⁰⁸).

A similar griffin found at Olympia²⁰⁹ (now in the National Archaeological Museum of Athens) is dated *ca* 680-670 BC and is the product of a Peloponnesian workshop (of Argos or the area of Corinth-Sikyon). Products of Corinthian workshops, such as figurines (see below), were also found in large number at the

²⁰⁶ Dakaris 1982: 87; Vlachopoulou 1994a: 47-51; Dakaris 1995a: 108; for the role of the griffin in general and its connection with the sacred tree, see Goldman 1960: 327-328.

²⁰⁷ See Appendix II: Tripods: #43, 44a,b and 45 from Dodona.

²⁰⁸ See Appendix II: Tripods #44b.

²⁰⁹ See Appendix II: Tripods #40a, b .

Dodona sanctuary. This is not surprising, since many Corinthian colonies were established in the coastal zone of Epirus²¹⁰. A great number of finds from Dodona were imported through these colonies. The typological similarity of the finds from Dodona to those from Olympia could suggest direct or indirect contacts between these sanctuaries since the Geometric period²¹¹. What is certain is that during both the Geometric and, mainly, the Archaic period, the tripods with griffins and other motifs were a very valuable but very common category of offerings in all the sanctuaries across the Greek world. Dodona was no exception, suggesting the equal respect that people had for this remote sanctuary. Even so, fewer griffins²¹² have been recovered from Dodona than from, for example, the Heraion of Samos, which is closer to Eastern lands, and the sanctuary of Olympia, in which a great number of griffin figures has survived. Dodona remained a remote sanctuary and these specimens could equally represent the respect of the visitors who travelled as far as Epirus to pay tribute to Zeus or the few surviving remains of a greater number of griffin protomes that no longer exist.

An interesting find from the early excavations in the Ioannina Basin is a bronze relief with a depiction of two griffins moving in opposite directions. It was discovered in the area of

²¹⁰ Giannakopoulos 2007: 32-35; Pliakou 2008b: 72-73; Tzouvara-Souli 1995-1998: 115; Evangelidis, Dakaris 1952: 126; Hammond 1954: 26-36; Dakaris 1964: 10-13; Hammond 1967a: 425; Dakaris 1977: 201-209; Dakaris 1971: 134; Gravani 1988/89: 91; Vlachopoulou 1994a: 52.

²¹¹ Evangelidis, Dakaris 1952: 126, footnote 6.

²¹² See Appendix II: "Fragments of Tripods", #43, 44 (a, b), 45.

Dourouti²¹³ (near the University of Ioannina, not far from Dodona), where the sanctuary of Demeter was located. Found too was a cast griffin head, almost intact and very well preserved, with cast ears; other fragments of other griffins were also collected (dated to the late 7th century BC). These finds indicate that both Dodona and the smaller sanctuary of Demeter at Dourouti received wealthy visitors, who paid their respects to the deities with valuable dedications. The griffins from Dodona could be a decorative fragment of a tripod vessel that once stood in the circle that surrounded the sacred oak tree and delivered, with its incessant echo, the will of Zeus²¹⁴.

Other dedications, which were in many cases fragments of tripods or of ornaments from other vessels²¹⁵, are the small figurines of horses, other animals, hoplites, athletes, and so on, which date from the Geometric and mainly the Archaic period. Some of these came from Corinthian or Spartan and other Peloponnesian workshops.

Notable among the zoomorphic figurines, which were a common decoration of various vessels, is one of a sedent goat²¹⁶.

²¹³ Andreou 1976: 209; Andreou 1978: 182; Andreou 2009: 123; Andreou 2004: 557-559; Zachos 2008b: 102-103; Andreou 2000: 23-24; Andreou, Gravani 1997: 581-584.

²¹⁴ Hesiod, *Hoiae*, 134.5; Herodotus, 4.152; Dakaris 1995a: 108; Vlachopoulou 1994a: 53- 54; See also Appendix I: #7; the temple of Zeus during the second half of the 4th century BC, as depicted with the circle of tripods surrounding the Phegos tree (Dakaris 1986).

²¹⁵ Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 85; Carapanos 1878: 32, #11, pl. 13,1; 32, #10, pl. 12,2; Vokotopoulou 1975: 145, 146-147, 143-144.

²¹⁶ Lamb 1929: 105; "The goat started as a decoration motif from the Protogeometric Cretan painters" (Carter 1972: 33); Evans 1901: 181-183 (tree cult associated with goat depiction (*agrimi*) on Mycenaean rings); See Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #25, 27 and 28.

It is a typical Archaic work of art, similar to finds from Olympia and the Balkan region. Bronze figurines of lions (two are presented in Appendix II: Bronze Figurines²¹⁷), were also found at Dodona. One represents a peaceful sedent lion, while the other a rampant one with fierce expression. These minor masterpieces are probably products of a Laconian workshop of the second half of the sixth century BC²¹⁸ (575-565 BC).

Another category of bronze figurines found at Dodona is that representing warriors. A good example is of a bearded male²¹⁹ wearing a helmet with crest, cheek-pieces and nose-guard, and a breastplate. The two legs and feet are bare. In the now empty right hand the figure probably held a spear, while with the left he holds his shield, bearing the inscription: “NIKIASMANEΘEIKEN” (dedicated by Nikias), which is written boustrophedon (height 1.02 m). The head is represented in a more primitive or early Archaic style, with markedly curved eyes, while the muscular legs are shown in wide stride. This figurine is perhaps the product of a local workshop (third quarter of 6th century BC). A similar find from Olympia is of a different style and was perhaps the product of an Aegean workshop.

Another category of bronze figurines found at Dodona is that representing deities and heroes, among them Apollo, Herakles and, mainly, Zeus Keraunios (holding his thunderbolt).

²¹⁷ See Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #17 and 18.

²¹⁸ Dakaris 1967: 38; Dakaris 1974: 77, 49-50; Dakaris 1995a: 110-111; Vokotopoulou 1973: 77; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 88-89.

²¹⁹ Gardner 1910: 230-231, #3 (pl. 12, 2); See also Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #59, 60, 62, 63, 64 and 65 (from Dodona); also #61 (a, b, c) as comparanda from other sites.

The little figurine of Herakles²²⁰ (0.105 x 0.107 m) found at Dodona comes most probably from a local workshop. It depicts a male figure standing, with his leg flexed slightly at the knee, his right arm raised and bent and the left outstretched to the fore. The lion-skin covers his head, shoulders and the upper part of the torso. The hair is shown by horizontal parallel lines and vertical lines indicate the lion's spine. This particular object is difficult to date, since it was found outside the excavation area. However, stylistically it brings to mind two works of the mid-sixth century BC: the figurine of Apollo (Louvre Museum) and the girl-runner of Dodona. Perhaps it dates to the early fifth century BC.

The Louvre figurine of Apollo²²¹ holding a bow was a dedication of Etymokledas, whose name is inscribed on the base. The inscription was added later and not by the workshop (perhaps Corinthian) in which the figurine was made. Apollo has rounded cheeks and prominent muscles on his robust body. “..The alphabet employed (in the inscription) is a variant of the Corinthian alphabet and is known to have been used in Epirus and Acarnania (north-east Greece).” From the inscription, we can detect that Acarnania had links with Dodona and that people coming from this region visited the sanctuary. This information allows us to recreate slowly the network of Dodona²²².

²²⁰ Mylonas 1930: 219-225; See Appendix II: Bronze Figurines # 56.

²²¹ Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 87-88; Lamb 1929: 88; Vokotopoulou 1975: 142, 155, 156, 158, 162, 163, 164; See Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #47.

²²² For the visitors to and the network of Dodona, see Chapter 3.3 below.

Another important category of figurines found at Dodona is of Zeus Keraunios (the thunder-holder²²³). The presence of these figurines at Dodona was a very important clue to identifying the sanctuary as the oracle of Zeus. The type of Zeus holding the thunderbolt was elaborated at the end of the sixth century BC and is known from many Greek sanctuaries²²⁴. Zeus holds the thunderbolt in one hand, poised to hurl it with all his strength, while an eagle, the god's sacred bird, is usually perched on the other hand. This type of Zeus dates back to Late Archaic times²²⁵ (*ca* 530 BC). One example is the Zeus figurine in Munich²²⁶, the robust physique and heavy proportions of which bear no relation to the skinny and supple Corinthian representations of the god. With his left hand he holds the stylized thunderbolt and with the right an unidentified object (perhaps a lightning flash). The face has a divine and placid aspect.

In the corresponding figurine (of Zeus)²²⁷ in the National Archaeological Museum of Athens, the god's gesture expresses his divine will (the hand may have held an eagle, now lost). The god has a severe countenance, suggesting a punitive deity who

²²³ See Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 12 of the.

²²⁴ Mylonas 1946: 203-207; See figurine of Dodonaian Zeus at Nivica, near Amandia and a bronze figurine of Zeus from Apollonia (460 BC). Also, Zeus is depicted on bronze coins of the 3rd/2nd century BC, of Byllis, Epidamnos and Olympia (Tzouvara-Souli 1995-1998: 115-116); See also Zeus Keraunios and Zeus Lykaios (Eldertin 1940: 225-233; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 112-120); See also Appendix I #65f (a coin), 66b, 66a ("Zeus Keraunios Type" of coinage); See footnote 38 above.

²²⁵ Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 112; Lamb 1929: 97-98; Vokotopoulou 1975: 162.

²²⁶ Vokotopoulou 1975: 158.

²²⁷ Dakaris 1980b: 29; Carapanos 1878: # 165461 Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 112; See Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #2.

dictates by force his divine laws to the mortals. The “Berlin god”²²⁸, which dates from 470 to 460 BC, has a similar facial expression. Zeus here holds the thunderbolt with his raised and perfectly balanced right hand, while the left hand is outstretched. The deity exudes confidence, since he is the father of gods and men. In a comparable figurine from Dodona, nowadays in the Louvre Museum²²⁹, Zeus stands quite steady, the latent movement in his pose underlined by an S-shaped curvature of his torso. He is not the typical Zeus Keraunios.

However, the oldest find from Dodona depicting Zeus throwing the thunderbolt is a bronze relief²³⁰ of the eighth century BC, which was perhaps a fragment of a decoration from a cauldron. The god is naked, with his right hand raised and holding the thunderbolt, while in the left hand is a bird (probably his eagle). The same motif is depicted on a silver relief²³¹ from the sanctuary of Dodona, dated to the fifth century BC. A Roman copy of a bronze figurine depicts Zeus wearing an oak wreath and holding two feathered thunderbolts²³². The thunderbolt and the eagle²³³ are the two integral attributes of Zeus and symbols of his cult.

²²⁸ Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 115; See Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #3.

²²⁹ See Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #13; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 115-116.

²³⁰ See Appendix II: Bronze reliefs #49; Carapanos 1878: 32, #12 185, pl. 13 #4; Casson 1922: 211-212; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 116.

²³¹ Evangelidis 1952: 286-287; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 116-117.

²³² Dakaris 1980b: 30, pl. 4 #3; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 117.

²³³ For the feathered thunderbolt and the eagle, see Chapter 2.3 below.

Many bronze figurines reveal information about the social life of the visitors to the sanctuary, the activities taking place at the oracle, and give us a glimpse of everyday life at Dodona. Figurines of athletes, for example, both male and female, reveal information respectively about the identity of a category of visitors and the games that were held in the sanctuary.

The girl runner²³⁴ from Dodona depicts a female athlete wearing a short chiton, sleeveless and girdled at the waist. Similar finds are known from Albania and Serbia (Prizren²³⁵). All these figurines originate from a Laconian-Peloponnesian workshop and were dedications of victors at various athletic games. Such games took place at Olympia, where similar dedications were also found, as well as at Dodona (the Naia Games). Maybe the find from Dodona depicts a winner in an event of the Naia Games or some other local games held in Epirus.

At Dodona, archaeologists have located the ancient stadium, which “lies at the southwest end of the sanctuary, adjacent to the theatre. It was built after the sanctuary was destroyed for the first time by the Aetolians in 219 BC and is immediately related to the second building phase of the theatre, since the retaining walls of the stadium seats join the propylon (porch) of the theatre, which was built in the same period. Every four years the stadium hosted the Naia Games, an athletic competition honouring Zeus; in the early second century BC

²³⁴ Lamb 1929: 98-99; Casson 1922: 137-139, 143; See Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #42.

²³⁵ See Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #39.

they became *stephanites* games (the victors were crowned with olive-branch wreaths)²³⁶.” Unfortunately, the stadium remains unexcavated and so we have no certain information about it.

Contests of every kind²³⁷, as we know from epigraphic evidence and from some bronze figurines, seem to have taken place in the stadium and the theatre of Dodona. Finds such as the figurines of male boxers attest the variety of sports hosted by the sanctuary. A well-preserved figurine of a boxer²³⁸ (height 0.072 m), in the Archaic style and dated to 550-525 BC, was brought to light during Evangelidis’s excavation in 1952. It is a well-crafted cast work from an Ambrakian workshop, clearly influenced by Corinthian art. The sturdy athlete is naked, with arms raised and clenched fists, and has one leg to the fore, supporting the weight of his body. The contour of the figure and its symmetry are clearly shown, and details, such as of the torso and the hair, are engraved. This small figurine may well have decorated a tripod vessel (8th century BC).

A common activity in the social life of the ancient Greeks was participating in symposia of various kinds. At Dodona, the bronze figurine of a banqueter²³⁹ bears witness to this conviviality. The male figure is represented reclining on a couch,

²³⁶ For the stadium of Dodona, see the brief information page of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture (official website: <http://odysseus.culture.gr>).

²³⁷ For the theatre, see Chapter 2.3 below; Pliakou, Smiris 2012: 100 and footnote 9; See Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #37, 42, 49, 50, 53, 67, 72.

²³⁸ See Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #50 for this male boxer, and #71 for a later example of a male boxer found at Dodona; Faklari 2013: find of the month: 1943-1953, Archaeological Museum of Ioannina Website; Pliakou 2008a: 142-159; Evangelidis 1952: 283-286.

²³⁹ Haynes 1955: 36-37; See Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #43, 44, 45.

holding a wine cup in his left hand and touching his drawn-up knee with his right. The legs are not depicted, due to the garment that covers his body, leaving uncovered only one foot. The moustache and beard are engraved, while the cheeks are formed with parallel lines, giving an idea of an expression. On his head he wears a *pilos* (hat) or a wreath. Such types of banqueter representations (symposiasts) are familiar in the Archaic Greek world and similar finds are known from Olympia, Samos, Trebenishte, Lokroi, and Runo²⁴⁰. Perhaps these small figurines are fragments of tripods or the decoration of vessels.

The Dodona figurine is most probably a realistic depiction of an actual banqueter, rather than of a deity. The craftsmanship of this high-quality piece points to a Peloponnesian workshop (Spartan or Corinthian). It was cast solid from a wax model (*cire-perdue* technique) and is perhaps unique in terms of style and artistic value. Similar figurines in terms of subject have been found also in Italy (North of Etruria)²⁴¹.

Other figurines, dated to the Classical and Hellenistic periods, represent deities other than Zeus (Aphrodite, Apollo, Athena, Herakles²⁴²), as well as men, children and, more rarely, women, the presence of which may reveal information about the identity of the dedicators and perhaps the purpose of their visit to the sanctuary. The bronze figurines of boys²⁴³ could imply

²⁴⁰ Freyer-Schauenburg 1974: pl.52; Bencze 2010: 25-38.

²⁴¹ Bencze 2010: 25-38.

²⁴² The various figurines representing other deities highlight the diversity of cult activity and of deities worshipped at Dodona. For examples see Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #30, 47, 51, 54 and 56.

²⁴³ See Appendix II: Bronze Figurines # 32, 35, 36, 37 and 38.

that some cult activities involved libations and offerings from children and adolescents. In some cases the miniature clay vessels and the figurines of children have been linked²⁴⁴. However the best possible way to highlight the identity of the visitors is through the large number of lead tablets and the inscriptions²⁴⁵.

Another important category of dedications of this period are the bronze vessels and mainly the Corinthian jugs²⁴⁶. These are decorated mainly with figurines of women with decorative rosettes, of satyrs and of sleeping boys, as well as with geometric and other motifs. The shape of the beak-spouted jugs remained largely unchanged from prehistoric times, with only a few variations. This type of vessel dominated in Epirus, which it entered through the Corinthian colonies. The few dedicatory vessels of this kind at Dodona date from the Geometric and Archaic periods. Of most of these the handles are preserved because these were cast solid and thus not vulnerable to corrosion. The rest of the vessel was made of thinner sheet metal, which decays easily.

The high-quality aesthetic design of bronze beak-spouted jugs can be gauged from a handle dated to the late sixth or early fifth century BC (500-480 BC). This was the only surviving part of the vessel and is now lost too, due to the chaos of the Second

²⁴⁴ For the possible ritual link between boys and miniature clay vessels, see Chapter 2.1.

²⁴⁵ See chapters 2.4 ii and 3.3 below.

²⁴⁶ Vokotopoulou 1975: 65; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 89-90.

World War²⁴⁷. On the back of the handle was the inscription “*Δι Ναιωι*” (to Zeus Naios), indicating that this was a dedication. It is considered a work from Kyme (Italy), even though Vokotopoulou suggests it is of Italian manufacture but designed by a Corinthian craftsman²⁴⁸. On the upper part of the handle was a naked satyr holding a rhyton, and on the lower part the figure of a sleeping child. Another jug²⁴⁹, dated to the second quarter of the fifth century BC, also has an inscription (incomplete) on the handle: “*ΙΣ ΔΙΑ*”. This vessel is considered a Corinthian work. Equally interesting are the bronze jugs of the third century BC²⁵⁰, with dedicatory inscription to both Zeus and Dione, and the name of the *agonothetes* (the official responsible for the Naia festival): “*Επι αγωνοθέτα Μαχάτα Παθαίου Δι Ναιοι και Διώναι*”.

The sanctuary flourished during the Geometric and Archaic periods. The dedications were numerous and of high quality. From the fifth century BC onwards, even though there are still some high-quality dedications, Dodona falls into decline.

²⁴⁷ See Appendix II; Bronze Vessels and Handles #11; for various examples of these jugs see Appendix II: Bronze Vessels and Handles; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 89.

²⁴⁸ Vokotopoulou 1975: 133-134; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 89-90.

²⁴⁹ Carapanos 1878: 48 #22, pl. 26 #4-46; Vokotopoulou 1975: 48-49 # 46, fig. 20a, pls 292-296; For this find and other similar finds, see Vokotopoulou 1975: 49, 159; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 90.

²⁵⁰ Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 90-91; Carapanos 1878: 45-46 #16, pl. 15 #2 and 46#17, pl. 25#2; Dakaris 1968a: 47-51; Cook 1903c: 182 (a theory suggests that these jugs were filled with olive oil and were presented as a prize to the winners of the Games).

2.3) Dodona and its offerings in Classical & Hellenistic Times

The category of finds that best reflects the political changes in Epirus during Classical and Hellenistic times, as discussed in Chapter I, are the *ex-voto* bronzes. These artifacts, the majority of which dates from the Classical period, are a very important source of information not only about the individuals who visited the oracle, but also about the city-states that offered their tribute to the sanctuary. Certainly they can shed light on part of the complex network of Dodona.

One example of an offering of public character is the inscribed relief (perhaps a fragment of a bronze statue) of the fourth or the early third century BC, which was dedicated by the people of the small city of 'Pallis' on the island of Cephalonia and bore the inscription to Zeus: *Πολεις Διι Νάω*²⁵¹. Another inscribed dedication is the fragment of a bronze tripod (only two legs survive) with the dedication from the city of Lechos and the inscriptions: *Διι εωρον ανέθηκε πόλις* and *Λεχωιδών* incised on each leg respectively²⁵².

However, the vast majority of the *ex-voto* dedications were not public but personal, made mainly by wealthy individuals who consulted the oracle and wished to find the answer to their questions. For example, the dedicatory inscription of the third

²⁵¹ Carapanos 1878:L 41-42, pl. 24#6 & 6bis; Tzouvara-Souli 1991: 267, footnote 23; for Cephalonia see Pausanias 6.15.7; Strabo 10.2.15; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 91-93; See Appendix II: Bronze Ex-votos #42.

²⁵² Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 93-94; Carapanos 1878: 41 #4, pl. 23 #3,4; See Appendix II: Bronze Ex-votos #36.

century BC, on a fragment of a bronze vessel²⁵³, declares that Philokleadaos son of Damophilos from Leukas dedicates to Zeus Naios of Dodona: *Φιλοκλέδαο (ς) Δαμοφίλου Λευκάδιος Διί Νάιος*. A man by the name of Panaitios from Pharsala also dedicated a bronze kylix²⁵⁴, which preserves at the sides of the rim a dedicatory inscription of the fourth century BC (330-300 BC): *Πανίτιος Φαρσάλιος Διί Ναιίω/ ανέθηκε*. One more dedication is a box with the inscription *Διί Ναιίω Φιλίνος Αθήναιος* (from Philinos the Athenian to Zeus Naios), of the fifth-fourth century BC²⁵⁵.

The ethos of martial valour that was cultivated during the reign of Pyrrhos (297-272 BC) is evidenced by finds from Dodona too, such as the bronze cheek-piece of a helmet²⁵⁶, with a relief scene of a duel between two warriors (4th century BC). This captures the militant spirit of the Aiakides dynasty, which excelled in war rather than wisdom, according to the Latin poet Ennius²⁵⁷.

Pyrrhos dedicated to Zeus Naios²⁵⁸ Roman shields²⁵⁹ and other spoils of war, after his victory at Heracleium, during his

²⁵³ Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 94-95; Carapanos 1878: 40, pl.23 #1 & 1bis; Tzouvara-Souli 1991b: 246 and footnote 21; See Appendix II: Bronze Ex-votos #38.

²⁵⁴ Evangelidis 1935: 229 #7 fig 6; Tzouvara-Souli 2008:95.

²⁵⁵ Carapanos 1878: 43 #11, pl.24 #3, 4; Tzouvara-Souli 2008:95; See Appendix II: Bronze Ex-votos #41.

²⁵⁶ Carapanos 1878: 33 & pl. 15; see Appendix II: Bronze reliefs #5 a, b.

²⁵⁷ Ennius, *Liber* 6.173-209.

²⁵⁸ Dakaris 1966: 77-78, pl. 80a; Dakaris 1968a: 59.

²⁵⁹ Pausanias 1.13.3; Dakaris 1968a: 58-59; Hammond 1996: 366; Adam-Veleni 1993: 19-20, 22-25; Meyer 2013: 46,62 & pl. 2; Evangelidis, Dakaris 1959: 91; Dakaris

campaign for the protection of the Greek cities in Italy (280 BC). Dedicatory inscriptions were incised on the Roman shields. In 1966, Dakaris brought to light a fragment of a bronze shield (0.087 x 0.076 m) with a hammered relief depiction of an eagle (only a small part of it preserved) and a fragmentary inscription: ...Πύρρου η [αρά...η] γήτορ [ος...ιωτ.... It is deduced from the inscription that this dedication probably dates from the early third century BC and could be associated with other dedications made by Pyrrhos in the bouleuterion, where this shield fragment was found too²⁶⁰.

Similar dedicatory shields have been found in the sanctuary of Zeus at Dion in Macedonia and in the temple of Zeus at Olympia, as well as a fragment of a shield found at Vegora (near Florina in Macedonia). The shields from Dion²⁶¹ came to light during the excavations of 1999. After conservation, visible on the bronze fragments was the motif of a shield with embossed decoration of stars and circles, as well as the inscription (which has been restituted): ΒΑΣΙΛΕ [ΩΣ ΔΗΜΗΤΡ] ΙΟΥ (of King Demetrios). Even though it was found in the same context as dedications and royal inscriptions, it is not certain whether this was indeed a royal dedication by King Demetrios of Macedonia or a dedication by another warrior or general. The estimated diameter of the shield was 0.74 m. One more case of a dedicatory shield is known from Vegora of Florina²⁶². The outer

1964: 135-136; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 106-107; Garoufalias 1975: 501; Dakaris 1975: 93-95.

²⁶⁰ See Appendix II: Weapons and Armour #47.

²⁶¹ Vokotopoulou 2000: 18-22.

²⁶² Adam-Veleni 1993: 17-24; Hammond 1996: 365-367.

surface is decorated with circles, semicircles and relief stars, while the preserved inscription reads *ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩ [Σ...] Υ* (of king ...), which could refer to King Antigonos or Demetrios of Macedonia. This shield probably belonged to Antigonos or was made during his reign, since he was the first monarch who issued coins with a representation of the Macedonian shield²⁶³. However, it remains a mystery whether the Vegora shield is a dedication of Antigonos himself or of a member of his elite royal guard (the phalanx).

Dodona became, during Pyrrhos' reign, the political and religious centre of Epirus, and the oracle clearly was used as a power tool for the king's interest. The same policy was followed by the *Koinon* of Epirots during the third century BC, when Democracy prevailed in Epirus. The sanctuary was plundered by the Aetolians in 219 BC²⁶⁴ but soon reopened, after the reconstruction of the damaged buildings. It also became a political centre for the Epirots, during the time of the League (234/3-167 BC²⁶⁵), thus acquiring a new role, not only as a cult centre but also as an influential place for the exercise of political power.

The importance of this role imposed the erection of monumental statues in honour of leading figures in the Epirot

²⁶³ See the following coins: Appendix I #63c, 64 a, b, e and the respective coin with the Epirot shield with thunderbolt as central motif: #65.

²⁶⁴ Evangelidis, Dakaris 1959: 64, 86, 90-91, 97 & footnote 3, 134, 156; Dakaris 1965: 57; Gravani 1997: 329-335; Dakaris 1967: 39; Dakaris 1969: 30; Dakaris 1971: 129; Tzouvara-Souli, Vlachopoulou, Gravani 2000: 149; Hammond 1967a: 626-635; Cabanes 1976: 291-310; Ziolkowski 1986: 69-80; Varro, *Res Rusticae*, 1.17.5; Katsikoudis 2005: 21-22.

²⁶⁵ Katsikoudis 2005: 129.

League. Visitors to the sanctuary entered through the southwest gate and made their way up to the north terrace, which had an amphitheatrical arrangement, with the imposing cult buildings and the dedications on display. The stoa flanked the south side of the enclosure wall and was probably quite an impressive sight, due to the presence of so many statues, as borne out by the pedestals still *in situ*²⁶⁶.

The pedestals are of two main types:

- Those of the first type are more complex, with a narrow front, and had statues of men on horseback.
 - Those of the second type are square in plan and probably had statues of standing figures.²⁶⁷

The equestrian statues apparently stood in the south part of the sanctuary, which was wider.

It seems that from the late third century BC, statues were erected not only to honour political figures, but also other influential persons. The honoured individuals had earned the respect and the recognition of the people, and their statues reflected their political influence. According to some inscriptions, these honours were due to the *εὐνοια και την αρετήν* (goodwill and virtue) that these men showed. The general Krison²⁶⁸, of the

²⁶⁶ Dakaris 1986: 57; Evangelidis 1935: 234-236; Gravani, Tzouvara-Souli, Vlachopoulou, "Ἱερό της Δωδώνης", 14, (Hellenic Archaeological Service Official website); Gravani, Tzouvara-Souli Vlachopoulou 1999: 155-163; Dakaris, Evangelidis 1964: 73-78; Vlachopoulou 2003: 57-59; Katsikoudis 2005: 129.

²⁶⁷ Katsikoudis 2005: 130, 26-29.

²⁶⁸ Katsikoudis 2005: 27-29; Cabanes 1997b: 114; Giannakopoulos 2007: 46-66; Hammond 1967a: 595; Cabanes 1976: 208; Polybius 2.7.11; Liampi 2009: 19.

Billiates League, the generals Milon²⁶⁹ and Menelaos²⁷⁰ of the Epirot League were honoured with statues, none of which has survived. However, Krison's pedestal dates from a little earlier than 219 BC, while Milon's and Menelaos' pedestals date from after the Aetolian Invasion. During the same period, other pedestals were set up near them, as well as on the southeast side of the Ionic stoa of the prytaneion, which is not easy to date accurately. The same applies to the pedestals in front of the east stoa, at the south of the outer enclosure wall.²⁷¹

Very important finds, which help us to reconstruct some of these statues²⁷², are the numerous bronze fragments. These provide us with information about the iconography and typology of the sculptures. Most of the fragments are from the armour of the figures and recall the equestrian figures wearing breastplate, chlamys, other garments, and so on, as known from the Macedonian iconography²⁷³. Some idea of what these monumental statues looked like is gained from the little figurine of the Epirot general Kineas²⁷⁴, who was honoured in full military attire.

²⁶⁹ Katsikoudis 2005: 71-75, 130-131; Dakaris 1965: 58,62; Cabanes 1976: 365; Hammond 1967a: 649; Franke 1961: 145.

²⁷⁰ Polybius 4.62 & 67, 5.96; Diodorus 26.7; Hammond 1967a: 606.

²⁷¹ Katsikoudis 2005: 130-131.

²⁷² See Appendix II: Bronze Statues #70, 71, 82 and 35.

²⁷³ Katsikoudis 2005: 130-131.

²⁷⁴ National Archaeological Museum of Athens, Carapanos Collection, and inv. no. 16727: bronze figurine of a general from Dodona (300 BC); See Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #52 and at Bronze Statues Category #81; Katsikoudis 2005: 131.

The first group of statues stood in front of the Sacred House and dates from the time of the Aetolian Invasion (219 BC). The second group stood in front of the façade of the later temple of Dione, near the temple of Themis, and dates from the second half of the third century BC. The third group of statues, which was located east of the gate of the Sacred House and in front of the temple of Herakles, dates from after 219 BC²⁷⁵.

Apart from a political centre, Dodona also became an artistic centre. Many sculptors were invited to work at the sanctuary, such as Athenogenis from Argos²⁷⁶, who worked also in Epidauros (2nd century BC). He probably made the statues of the Molossians, Krison, and Menelaos. From the typology and style of the fragments, these works are dated in the Hellenistic period (3rd century BC or first half of 2nd century BC). Another eponymous sculptor was the Corcyraean Melissos²⁷⁷, even though his artistic characteristics are not known to us yet. From the little information we have, we can surmise that the sanctuary was a pole of attraction for new craftsmen from different Greek areas, as well as local craftsmen from Epirus. In that way, Dodona played its part in the short-lived heyday for the region.

However, Dodona was not immune to political events. From the time of the First and Second Macedonian Wars, significant

²⁷⁵ Katsikoudis 2005: 131-132.

²⁷⁶ Katsikoudis 2005: 65-68; Dakaris 1965: 61, 63; Evangelidis 1966: 156.

²⁷⁷ Katsikoudis 2005: 75-99, footnote 181.

political figures, such as Charops the Elder²⁷⁸, *princeps Epirotarum*, were struggling for the renewal and strengthening of the Epirot army. Charops also attempted to keep Epirus neutral during the wars and to make peace. Since the beginning of the Allies War (220 BC), the Chaonians and the Thesprotians were in favour of a peace treaty, while the Molossians were in a difficult position, due to their strong bonds with the Macedonians and the pressure that the Romans exercised upon them. Nevertheless, the two sides negotiated and during the spring of 205 BC, Philip V and the Romans became allies. Therefore, due to the fragile political state, statues were set up at Dodona to honour the makers of this balanced foreign policy, which kept Epirus intact and led to cease-fire²⁷⁹.

These statues featured the emblems of the Molossian tribe, the feathered thunderbolt and the eagle. The feathered thunderbolt (ὠκύπτρα²⁸⁰) was initially a propagandistic symbol used mainly by Pyrrhos of Epirus, who due to his valour as a warrior was called “Eagle”. Therefore, he created a mixed symbol with the thunderbolt and the two outstretched wings of the eagle²⁸¹. Similar symbols can be found as decorative motifs upon the slings, fibulae and the sword hilts of the bronze statues. Represented on two characteristic sword hilts found at Dodona,

²⁷⁸ Polybius 32.6; Livy 32.10.2; Diodorus 31.31; Katsikoudis 2005: 33-34; Franke 1961: 27, #3; Dakaris 1960: 12, footnote 21; Hammond 1967a: 650-651; Liampi 2009: 18- 19; Cabanes 1997a: 89; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 109-111; Evangelidis 1935: 14; Evangelidis 1956: 156-157, 68; Evangelidis, Dakaris 1964: 76.

²⁷⁹ Katsikoudis 2005: 130-132.

²⁸⁰ Homer, *Iliad*, 10.247; Aeschylus, *Prometheus*, 358; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 117-118.

²⁸¹ Plutarch, *Pyrrhus*, 10.1; Dakaris 1980b: 28.

are the head of a panther and the head of an eagle²⁸² respectively, while engraved on the base of the hilt of both is a feathered thunderbolt²⁸³. A similar representation of Zeus and the feathered thunderbolt appears on a quite badly-damaged relief of an inscription of the late fifth or the fourth century BC, found at Passaron²⁸⁴, in which the god rides in a chariot drawn by two lions.

The feathered thunderbolt also occurs as a motif on the coinage of Epirus²⁸⁵, along with the figures of Zeus and his wife Dione, both wearing an oak wreath and accompanied by the sacred bird, the eagle²⁸⁶.

Figurines of eagles²⁸⁷ are also frequently found at Dodona²⁸⁸. The best example –an artistic masterpiece– is the eagle in the Ioannina Archaeological Museum²⁸⁹, which was

²⁸² See Appendix II: Bronze Statues #79 and 80 and a comparative example from Aetolia (#78).

²⁸³ Dakaris 1980b: 28-29; Dakaris 1965: 57-58; Dakaris 1971: 58-59; Vokotopoulou 1973: 77-72; Carapanos 1878: pls 60,3 & 59,2; Vlachopoulou 1990: 314.

²⁸⁴ Dakaris 1956: 67-73; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 144-147; Dakaris 1904: 89-90; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 145-146; Zachos 1993: 265; Liampi 2008: 51.

²⁸⁵ See Appendix I #61a, 62a,b,d, 63a,b,d,e,f, 64c,f, 65a,e,f.

²⁸⁶ Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 120-125 (coins engraved with Zeus, the eagle and the feathered thunderbolt); Dakaris 1980a: 21-26.

²⁸⁷ Carapanos 1878: 38 #10-11, pl. 21, #4,5; Vlachopoulou-Oikonomou 1990: 309, 306 and footnote 7.

²⁸⁸ See Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #15, 14; See also footnote 286 for the depictions of the eagle on the coins; For the depiction of the “feathered thunderbolt”, see Appendix II: Bronze Statues #13a, b, 14a, b, 15, 16, 17, 31 and 80.

²⁸⁹ Dakaris 1967: 30, 38, pls 26, 27a; Vokotopoulou 1973: 55, pl. 19a; Dakaris 1998b: 107, pl. 34; Vlachopoulou 1990: 305-320; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 118-120.

found during the excavations of 1967. This high-quality and very well-preserved object was probably a fragment of a sceptre of a monumental statue of enthroned Zeus. The austere pose and the realistic depiction of the plumage remind us of works in the mature Archaic or the Early Classical Severe Style. In all likelihood, this work dates from the Late Archaic period and is much earlier than the monumental statues of the generals, which date to the second half of the third century and the second century BC.

This brief interval of prosperity for the sanctuary ended in 167 BC, when the Romans burned, looted and destroyed Dodona, as they did the rest of Epirus, which was razed to the ground and the people were put to death or taken into slavery²⁹⁰.

Blocks from the ruined pedestals found their use as construction material for the new buildings that were erected after the Romans, during the early Christian centuries²⁹¹. From the reign of Augustus, there are only a few fragments that could be linked with a statue of him (as Octavian) which was set up in the sanctuary, as a sign of submission and a symbol of the new ruling class. Evidence of Octavian's presence at Dodona includes a fragmentary inscription in honour of his wife Livia, and a fragment of the pedestal of an unidentified Roman monument²⁹².

²⁹⁰ Plutarch, *Aemilius Paulus*, 29.1-3; Cabanes 1997b: 116; Hammond 1967a: 634-635; Oost 1975: 84; Faklari 2008b: 127; Dakaris 1987: 13-14.

²⁹¹ Katsikoudis 2005: 65-66, 130-132; Evangelidis 1956: 156.

²⁹² Katsikoudis 2005: 132; Piccini 2013: 177, 182-192.

2.4) Other types of offerings: Precious dedications

The last and least-examined category of dedications at Dodona is that of the precious dedications. As we have seen, the bronze dedications in the sanctuary are supernumerary. Nevertheless, Dodona, as a great ancient oracle, was honoured also with opulent gifts made of gold and silver. These were dedications from wealthy and important personages²⁹³. According to ancient literary accounts²⁹⁴, the Lydian king Croesus²⁹⁵ dedicated to the sanctuary of Dodona, a gold lion-shaped plaque²⁹⁶. On its back there were small hoops for the affixing it to a metal surface of some kind: it perhaps adorned a frieze with figures of lions and griffins. Probably the grooves on the surface of the lion fragment were inlaid with another precious material, which refers to Oriental art (Persian or Lydian) of the sixth and fifth centuries BC.

²⁹³ Besides the gold sceptre in the British Museum and the dedications from Croesus and Ptolemy, archaeologists have found many pieces of jewellery: fibulae with geometric motifs (or without any decoration), pins of silver, gold or iron, earrings, rings, bracelets, tweezers, etc., are some of the valuable objects found at the sanctuary over the decades. These are accessories of dress or cosmetics of people who either lived at Dodona or visited the oracle and left these precious possessions as a token to Zeus. Some of these objects are presented in Appendix II: Other Finds. See also Evangelidis 1935: 240-243; Evangelidis 1929: 117; Evangelidis 1931: 87; Carapanos 1878: pl. 60, 6,13,15,16; Evangelidis 1932a: 51; "...It has been suggested by several scholars that dedications of Non-Greek origin found in Greek sanctuaries represent gift-exchanges between foreign potentates and Greek divinities..." (Kaplan 2006: 140).

²⁹⁴ Herodotus, 1.46 & 1.51 & 1.54.

²⁹⁵ Evangelidis, Dakaris 1964: 44; Dakaris 1998a: 109; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 109.

²⁹⁶ Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 109; Evangelidis 1955: 169-170; Parke 1967c: 277 #9.

According to Herodotus²⁹⁷, Croesus consulted both the oracle of Dodona²⁹⁸ and the oracle of Delphi, for advice on how to stem the rising power of the Persian Empire and protect his kingdom: The respective dedication of Croesus at Delphi consisted of a podium of gold briquettes and a gold lion, emblem of the Lydian kingdom. Perhaps the prestige of the Delphic oracle led Croesus to offer there more monumental dedications than the ones that he offered at the oracle of Dodona²⁹⁹.

Whatever the case, the fact that Croesus chose these two oracles implies that both of them enjoyed fame and respect even beyond the borders of the Greek world. After all, Croesus was not the only king who made votive offerings at Dodona. Athenaeus relates that King Ptolemy I Soter and his queen Berenike of Egypt³⁰⁰ were honoured in the sanctuary of Dodona with gold statues of riders in gold chariots, set up within a dedicatory enclosure, which has yet to be identified by the excavators. This honour was very likely accorded at the

²⁹⁷ Herodotus 1.46 to 1.50; Evangelidis, Dakaris 1964: 44; Dakaris 1998b: 109; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 109.

²⁹⁸ Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 108-109; Herodotus 1.50 & 46; Dillon 1997: 94-95; "...The Persians also sought to use the sanctuaries of Greece as a source of intelligence..." (Kaplan 2006: 145); See also the case of Delphi during the Persian Wars and the rich offering of the Greeks after the battle of Plataia (Herodotus 8.122, 9.80-81; Pausanias 10.13.3; Thucydides 1.132, 2; Suhr 1971: 219-220; Jones 2002: 376; Haywood 1952: 110-112; Walsh 2003: 64-66); See also Appendix II: Bronze Tripods #52.

²⁹⁹ "Such as the gold lion relief decorated with inlaid stones, which was found at Dodona and dates at the first quarter of the 5th century BC. It is considered to be a Persian work" (see Evangelidis 1955: fig. 57a); see also Appendix II: Other Finds #25a, b.

³⁰⁰ Garoufalias 1975: 68 #9; Franke 1961: 260, footnote 76; Athenaeus 203 A, Chapter 5; Cook 1903c: 182.

prompting of Pyrrhos, who was related to Ptolemy as his son-in-law and as an ally; Ptolemy helped Pyrrhos to recover the throne of Epirus. However, it is possible that they were made after Ptolemy's victory at the Naia Games³⁰¹. Besides, it was common during the Hellenistic period and after, for cities and sanctuaries to erect honorific statues of important people³⁰², and Dodona was no exception.

Even though very few traces of the precious dedications have been recovered by the excavators, it remains a fact that Dodona enjoyed the respect of the elite class. It should borne in mind that bronze and especially gold and silver are valuable materials that were looted, melted, reused³⁰³. The few surviving finds from Dodona remain unpublished and there is very little information on this special category of dedications.

³⁰¹ Cook 1903c: 182; Carapanos 1878: 1, 91, ii & pl. XLIX, 8 (the oak wreaths were probably a dedication from a victor of the Naia Games or a victor's prize).

³⁰² See Chapter 2.3 above and Appendix II: Bronze Statues.

³⁰³ Such is the example with the gifts of Croesus at Delphi: "Diodorus gives an account of the material melted down by Phayllos in the course of the Third Sacred War (16.56.6): he says that of Croesus' offering, Phayllos melted down 120 gold ingots...and 360 phialai (vessels)...and the gold statues of a lion and a woman...the total amount of gold and silver melted down (including material other than dedicated by Croesus) was ten thousand silver talents..." (Kaplan 2006: 133, 134); Delphi shared the same fate as other oracles, like Dodona. The valuable dedications made of silver, gold and ivory would be the first to be melted or stolen. However, in the case of Dodona in particular, it remains a mystery how so many bronze finds remained intact. Perhaps the answer lies in the peaceful cohabitation of the Epirot people, the neutral position adopted by the kings of Epirus generally during these centuries and the natural position of Epirus as a distant region on the periphery of the Greek world.

2.5) Other types of finds: Epigraphic Evidence

Dodona was, without doubt, the most important cult centre of Epirus and has yielded a great quantity of finds and votive offerings. A special category amongst these finds is that of the oracular tablets and inscriptions.

The lead tablets were discovered for the first time by Carapanos in 1876 and he published some of them in 1878 (along with P. Foucart's drawings). As noted in Chapter 1, the Polish aristocrat and engineer Zygmunt Mineyko (1840-1925) initially collaborated with Carapanos, but due to some disagreements with him, he kept a part of the finds from Dodona and sold items, including lead tablets, to museums and collections abroad (Louvre, Antikensammlung Museum of Berlin, the Prussian collector Count Potockr, The British Museum, etc.). Many scholars studied these tablets: H.R. Pomtow in 1883, Hildebrand Gurlitt and Meike Hoffmann in 1890, Wilhelm Dittenberger in 1920 and Charles Michel the same year.

The excavations of the Greek Archaeological Service, under the supervision first of Evangelidis and later of Dakaris, brought to light new finds. Vokotopoulou, Christidis and Dakaris, amongst others, attempted to record and study these tablets. They wrote some articles individually but they also collaborated on compiling the corpus of them. Unfortunately, their death interrupted this colossal task. However, their work was continued and completed by new scholars, resulting in the monograph presenting more than 4,000 tablets and inscriptions, published by the Archaeological Society at Athens in 2013.

These tablets are one of the very few textual sources concerning the cult, the practices and the organization of the Epirot tribes.

E.S. Roberts³⁰⁴ classes the epigraphic evidence from Dodona in the following categories:

- *Ex-voto* inscriptions on bronze
- Inscriptions on bronze or copper (the first two categories comprise):
 - i. Decrees of citizenship
 - ii. Deeds of manumission
 - iii. Deeds of *proxenia*
 - iv. Deeds concerning right of intermarriage;
 - v. Donation of property
 - vi. Purchase of a slave
- An inscription on an iron strigil
- Inscriptions on terracotta
- A proxenia decree, the most complete in the collection, on a limestone tablet.

Cross³⁰⁵ gives his own three categories of inscriptions that deal with political issues of the Molossian Koinon:

- Class I: Those mentioning a king, a *prostates* of the Molossians and a secretary, and recording decisions of the 'Koinon' or 'Ekklesia' of the Molossians.

³⁰⁴ Roberts 1880: 228-241; Roberts 1881: 102-121; Foss 1978: 131-132.

³⁰⁵ Cross 1932: 109-114.

- Class II: Those mentioning a *prostates* without reference to a king or a secretary and recording decisions of “the Molossians”.
- Class III: One inscription, which mentions a king and *prostates*, but no secretary, and is a decision of the “*Symmachoi* [Allies] of the Epirots”.

Such inscriptions were discovered during Evangelidis’s excavations in 1953. Some of these inscriptions record Epirots’ decisions regarding their king Neoptolemos II (302-297 BC), such as the granting of *politeia* (political rights) to Philista, Antimachos’ wife, and to her descendants, as well as to Phindo and her descendants too. In these inscriptions, there are references to the names of some officials or secretariats (such as Aphikarios and other *prostatai*); all these remain an important source of information about the different tribes, personal names and the prosopography of Epirus, etc. From the inscriptions we are informed about the political framework (*proxeneia* with *enteleia* or *ateleia*³⁰⁶, inscriptions about kings and *prostatai*³⁰⁷, decisions³⁰⁸, deeds of manumission³⁰⁹, slave purchase³¹⁰, honorific³¹¹ and votive inscriptions³¹², and iron strigil

³⁰⁶ Evangelidis 1935: 245-247; Moretti 1976/75: 123-126; Hammond 1967a: 564-566.

³⁰⁷ Moretti 1975/76: 121-122; Cross 1932: 109-110; Roberts 1881: 109-110; Carapanos 1878: 49, frag.199.

³⁰⁸ Roberts 1880: 228-241; Roberts 1881: 102-121; Foss 1978: 131-132.

³⁰⁹ Roberts 1881: 115, 116-120.

³¹⁰ Roberts 1881: 120.

³¹¹ Moretti 1975/76: 126-129); Roberts 1881: 113; Carapanos 1881: 114; Hammond 1967a: 649.

inscriptions³¹³). However, the most important of these inscriptions, which relate directly to the cult and the character of Dodona, are the lead oracular tablets.

Without doubt, the lead tablets give a range of information about the religious framework of Dodona, while also clarifying the relationship between the sanctuary and the visitors, who refer mainly to Zeus Dodonaios and Dione³¹⁴.

Myth, as recounted by Sophocles in his play *Trachiniae*³¹⁵, has it that Herakles received an oracle written upon lead tablets but also had to follow some instructions delivered orally by the oracle. This is not surprising, since oracular pronouncements were given by many Greek oracles.

The inscribed lead tablets are very small and were probably placed inside jars³¹⁶. The questions to the deity were incised with a sharp object, while it was rare to write an answer on the back of the tablet³¹⁷. In addition, there were some distinctive features

³¹² *SIG* 1915: 627, #392.

³¹³ Roberts 1881: 107-108.

³¹⁴ Evangelidis 1935: 252, 258); Roberts 1880: 230-231; In general about the lead tablets see Faraone, Obbink 1991: 17-21; Nilsson 1981: 125-126.

³¹⁵ Bowman 1999: 335-350.

³¹⁶ Parke 1967b: 92, 101, 102, 109 and footnote 26; Tzouvara-Souli 2007a: 97-98 and footnotes 88, 89.

³¹⁷ Dakaris 1986: 94; Tzouvara-Souli 2007a: 96; Parke 1967b: 91-92; Parke 1987: 100-101, 263 footnote 1, 266 footnote 11, 267 footnote 13, 268 footnote 17 and 272 footnote 21.

on the tablets, such as symbols or initials of names. Many tablets were reused (palimpsests)³¹⁸.

Herbert William Parke suggests that the oracular responses at Dodona were given by *kleromanteia* (lot oracle)³¹⁹, as indicated by some archaeological and historical evidence³²⁰. This method was similar to that at Delphi. According to Parke³²¹, it might have been used in the late sixth century BC, when the priest probably replaced the old oak tree with a new one. Maybe this method replaced temporally the oracular oak tree, until the new tree grew bigger.

The responses were mainly oral. The tablets date from the mid-sixth to the second century BC and the variety of the Greek language indicates the dialects and perhaps the social status of the pilgrims, who were coming from different parts of Epirus, Corcyra, Epidamnos, Sicily, Italy, Boeotia, Thessaly³²² and elsewhere. In addition to tablets addressed to Zeus and Dione, invocations were made also to Fortune (Tyche), to both Fortune and Zeus/Dione³²³, and to other deities.

³¹⁸ Parke 1967b: 92, 100, footnote 18 and 265 footnote 8; Dakaris 1986: 92; Tzouvara-Souli 2007a: 96-97; Christidis, Dakaris, Vokotopoulou 1997: 105-106.

³¹⁹ Parke 1967b: 92, 101, 102, 109 and footnote 20; Tzouvara-Souli 2007a: 97-98, footnote 88, 89.

³²⁰ Tzouvara-Souli 2007a: 97, 98; Parke 1967b: 115 and footnote 16, 137, 111-112.

³²¹ Parke 1967b: 31, 92-93, 101-103, 111-112; Tzouvara-Souli 2007a: 98-100.

³²² Parke 1967b: 92, 259-261; Tzouvara-Souli 2007a: 100; Vokotopoulou, Christidis, Dakaris 1997: 105-106.

³²³ Roberts 1880: 230; Vokotopoulou, Christidis, Dakaris 2013: lead tablet 80A, concerning an enquiry to the oracle (to Zeus/Dione and Tyche/Fortune, on cutting

A few of the inscriptions relate to public issues. These date from the fifth century BC. A wide variety of questions was asked; enquiries about sacrificial rituals and deities³²⁴, about peace treaties between city-states (Corcyra³²⁵), about the prosperity of a city (Taras³²⁶), about the relocation of a temple³²⁷, about monetary offerings to the Dodonaian prytaneion³²⁸, about miasma³²⁹, about a heavy winter and about health problems³³⁰. According to the ancient sources³³¹, the oracle of Dodona even defined the course and decisions of entire city-states, due to its good relations with many Greek cities, which it maintained within the fragile political and social framework. The influence of

down a sacred tree); For similar enquiries see also tablets #1108A, 2432B, 2951A, 3795B, 3838A, 4177A and 2432: a tablet with the answer to a private consultation concerning an olive tree, and prescribing rites; For the protection of sacred trees see Pausanias 8.24.7 and 3.4.6; Burkert 1985: 203-208; Vokotopoulou, Christidis, Dakaris 2013: 35-36 (vol. 1).

³²⁴ Parke 1967b: 261; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 66.

³²⁵ Carapanos 1878: pls 34,5; 34,4 and 39,7; Parke 1967b: 260; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 64.

³²⁶ Parke 1967b: 259; Carapanos 1878: pls 34,1 and 35,4; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 65.

³²⁷ Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 66; Parke 1967b: 261; Evangelidis 1955:99-103.

³²⁸ Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 66; Parke 1967b: 262 # 9).

³²⁹ Parke 1967b: 261-262 and footnote 7; Dakaris 1986: 93; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 65-66.

³³⁰ Carapanos 1878: 76, #13, table 36 #5; Parke 1967b: 105 # 4; 267 # 12; 267-268; Tzouvara-Souli 1967: 69.

³³¹ Parke 1967b: 129 (chapter 7); Hyperides, *In Defence of Euxenippus*, 24-25; Parke 1967b: 18, 116-117, 115, 142; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 102-104; Nilsson 1961: 126-139.

the oracle was such that two Epirot kings consulted it (Alexander I of Molossia and Pyrrhos³³²).

However, the majority of the inscriptions concern private matters of citizens, relating to the family³³³ and childbirth, lost property³³⁴, migration, trade and occupation³³⁵, etc. Very few tablets bear women's names, most of them along with the husbands' names, which suggests the inferior status of females³³⁶ in ancient Epirus. The holders of the tablets were from various social backgrounds, as is indicated by some mis-spelt inscriptions.³³⁷

Can we characterize the lead tablets as another special category of dedications? The answer, in my opinion, is negative. It is clear also from the study by Vokotopoulou, Dakaris and Christidis that the lead tablets are not dedications and should

³³² For Alexander of Molossia: Livy 8.24.1; Strabo 6.1.5; Justin 12.2.3; Parke 1967b: 113-114; For Pyrrhus see Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 105.

³³³ Carapanos 1878: 81 # 24, table 38, #4; 75 # 11, table 36,2; SIG 1915: 308, #1163; Parke 1967b: 265 # 7, 266 #11; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 68, 69, footnote 79.

³³⁴ Carapanos 1878: 75, #10, table 36 #1; Parke 1967b: 272 and footnote 27; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 70.

³³⁵ Carapanos 1878:17, table 35 # 2; Parke 1967b: 268 # 16; 269 footnote 18; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 71, 72.

³³⁶ Parke 1967b: 263, footnote 1, 268 footnote 15, 113; Tzouvara-Souli 2007a: 106-107, footnotes 145.

³³⁷ "(17) *Ερωται Κλεῖται τον Δία και τον Διώνιν, αι ἔστι αυτοι προβατεῶντι ὄναιον και ωφέλιμον*" (The enquirer was not accustomed to writing for ὄναιον' (f.Hsch. ὁ ναιον ἄρειον]; SIG 1915: 308, #1165); '(18) Enquirer, Phainylos: 'Θεός, τυχαι αγαθαι Φαινύλωι θεμιστεῖει ο θεός ταμ πατρωιαν τέχναν εργάζεσθαι, αλιεῦσθαι και λώιον και ἄμεινον πράξειν;' (This might be taken grammatically as a statement and therefore interpreted as an oracular response. Nevertheless, the initial invocation makes it more likely to be an oddly-framed enquiry)' (Parke 1967c: 268-269, footnotes 7, 18); Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 72-73.

not be considered as offerings. The lead tablets of Dodona did not play the same role as the dedications, which were offered by people to honour the deity and to receive his goodwill in return. There is no lead tablet with a dedicative character. Some of these lead tablets refer to more unusual private matters, such as casting a spell or a curse (magic)³³⁸, concern about safety, the household, health and questions on divine signs³³⁹. Only a few tablets refer to dedications³⁴⁰ that could be offered by enquirers, in order to please the deity and achieve their goals. The lead tablets are a vital source of information about the nature of the sanctuary and the cult practised, about the visitors and about the course of the sanctuary through the centuries. They also generate many questions about the kind of visitors³⁴¹ to Dodona, their concerns and enquiries, and what they dedicated in return.

The sanctuary continued to function as a cult and oracular centre until the first century BC, as the archaeological finds indicate (iron strigil³⁴²). However, the sanctuary³⁴³ came to its end

³³⁸ Christidis, Vokotopoulou, Dakaris 2013: lead tablets # 192A, 167A, 272A.

³³⁹ Christidis, Vokotopoulou, Dakaris 2013: lead tablets # 219B, 1093A (household issues and safety of family respectively), 268A (public question concerning a sign); 2525A and 3009A (health issues).

³⁴⁰ Christidis, Vokotopoulou, Dakaris 2013: lead tablets # 274B, 350A, 1134A, 1576B, 1753B (see also 1749A and 20A), 3800B, 80A, 3673B, 4115A, 4119B, 124A (this is a rather problematic tablet concerning either the man who offers sacrifices or gifts in the hope of having offspring or a “priest of a *θιασος*”); See also tablets #3749B, 1724B, 2814A, 3918B on the term “*ἐθετο*”.

³⁴¹ See Chapter 3.3 below on the network of Dodona and the identity of the visitors as revealed by the inscribed evidence.

³⁴² Roberts 1881: 107-108; Tzouvara-Souli 2007a: 107-108.

³⁴³ See chapter 1.2 above and Papadopoulou 2014: 61-70 and Kalogianni 2016: 34-35 for the oracle during the Byzantine Age.

in the fourth century AD, when the new religion appeared, as attested by the surviving traces of a Christian church (basilica). Probably in these last centuries of Late Antiquity, when the oracle was still functioning, the oracular methods changed. Instead of lead tablets, pilgrims may have used clay or wooden tablets, which are difficult to remain intact through the centuries³⁴⁴. However, that remains a mystery which only future excavations and research can solve.

³⁴⁴ Katsadima 2008b: 163.

Chapter 3: Rethinking Dodona

3.1) Discussion of Dodona and its dedications across time

i. Early Dodona

Dedications are the gifts of the visitors to the oracle. Joseph William Hewitt³⁴⁵, in the early 1920s, expressed the view that the offering of dedications is another manifestation of worship, the highest and purest act of sacrifice to the deity. These dedications were made within the frame of the “personal relationship” established between mortals and gods. People wished to propitiate the gods and therefore offered to them various objects, some of them quite precious. This act allowed them to establish a “give and take” relationship with the deity, who would listen to their requests benevolently and would possibly make their wishes come true. This was a pact of reciprocity, cemented by the votive offerings³⁴⁶.

During prehistoric times, the dedications were probably humble and expressed purer religious beliefs. On the Great Goddess ring from Mycenae³⁴⁷ (LH II period), for example, a seated female figure is represented holding flowers and accompanied by two standing female figures. Cult symbols, such as the bronze double axe and the sacred tree, highlight the ritual

³⁴⁵ Hewitt 1914: 77.

³⁴⁶ “...From the 7th century BC it was a common practice throughout Greece to erect in sanctuaries representations of persons in the act of making an offering and very often, of a god receiving that offering. Votive reliefs that is, typically represent successful prayers: prayers and offerings that have been acknowledged and received and that have succeeded in involving a god in a circle of give and take...” (Depew 1997: 231).

³⁴⁷ Palmer 2014 (PhD thesis): 151-156 and fig. 12.

character of this scene. The flowers could be a symbolic gift offered to the deity or deities of Nature.



Fig 1: The Great Goddess Ring (source: Palmer 2014 (PhD): fig.12)

At Dodona, cultic activity is considered to date back to Homeric times; its origins, however, might well date to the Early Bronze Age (2600-1900 BC). The theory of a pre-existing deity, the Mother-Goddess³⁴⁸, at Dodona, remains strong, even though it is not backed up by valid archaeological data³⁴⁹. If the offerings in the Early Bronze Age were mainly fruits, flowers, seeds and other products of the native land, then we would not expect to find such evidence in the archaeological record, especially if

³⁴⁸ See Chapter 1.2 above.

³⁴⁹ The cult of Dione is considered to be a remembrance (αναμνηση) of an ancestral cult of a female deity, as is deduced from an ancient prayer of the priestesses of Dodona: “Ζεὺς ἦν, Ζεὺς ἐστίν, Ζεὺς ἔσεται· ὦ μεγάλε Ζεῦ/ Γᾶ καρπούς ἀνίει, διὸ κληῖζετε Μᾶτέρα Γαῖαν” (Pausanias 10.12.10); In my opinion, this view should be reconsidered, since there is not enough archaeological evidence to support it; See also Dakaris 1986: 86-92.

Dodona was simply a rural cult place and not an organized sanctuary³⁵⁰.

It is a fact that until the fourth century BC Dodona remained undeveloped and primitive, with only a sacred enclosure of bronze tripods surrounding the oak tree³⁵¹, the focal point of the cult. No wall or other buildings were constructed in the sanctuary and if the dedications were as rudimentary as the oracle, then little wonder they have not survived. Only clay and metal objects would be preserved.

The early pottery of Dodona, along with the bronze and iron objects³⁵², such as the knives, spears, swords and axes, could have had any use at the site. They may have been dedications, but they could just as well be utilitarian objects, particularly in the case of cooking vessels or drinking vessels, which could be used equally for domestic food preparation and consumption, and for libations and other sacrificial rituals³⁵³.

Once again, the archaeological data merely raise questions in the case of Dodona rather than give convincing answers. There are no direct traces of sacrificial meals at Dodona, which is not the case for the other respective sanctuary on Mount Lykaion in Arcadia³⁵⁴. However, ritual meals could have taken

³⁵⁰ See Chapter 3.2 below.

³⁵¹ See Chapter 1.2 above for the history of the cult and Chapter 2.2 for the tripod vessels.

³⁵² See Chapter 2.1. i and ii above.

³⁵³ Osborne 2004: 2.

³⁵⁴ See Chapter 3.2 below.

place with participants using domestic pottery, such as that found at Dodona. From Kato Syme on Crete, for example, cultic feasts were held in the Middle and the Late Minoan period, using simple undecorated domestic ware.

If there were ritual meals at Dodona, these could have been linked with tree cult or nature cult, later interpreted as the cult of Mother Earth. However, once again, this is a matter for speculation, as there are no secure archaeological data for this practice. As noted above, in Epirus the tribal system was maintained until the fifth century BC³⁵⁵ and this archaic political organization was probably linked with arcane forms of cult, which would seem to justify the slow development of Dodona as an organized sanctuary. The character of the cult, which focused on the worship of Nature, goes hand in hand with the nomadic or transhumant lifestyle of these tribes.

Possibly they gathered at a certain time of year at cult places, such as Dodona, and celebrated the vegetation cycle and the first fruits with the communal consumption of symbolic ritual meals. Offerings such as timber, wool, textiles, hides, meat, furs, fruits, garments and, later on, utilitarian objects such as knives, spears and axes, could have been the gifts to the deities. Since there was no central political authority in Epirus, the members of the tribes were equal. The presence of the bronze objects and the exotic items³⁵⁶ found at Dodona, bears witness to a change in this egalitarian structure of Epirot society³⁵⁷. The

³⁵⁵ See Chapter 2.2 above.

³⁵⁶ See Chapter 2.1.ii above.

³⁵⁷ The Early and the Middle Helladic period in Epirus remain obscure. From the Early Helladic period, only 8 sites have been excavated (Aetos, Dodona, Ephyra,

isolated tribes came into contact with the Mycenaean civilization that had a clear political hierarchy and an established elite class.

At Dodona, as noted already, the layer of the LH III period (the era of the Mycenaean presence) yielded fragments of pottery³⁵⁸ from local workshops, of Mycenaean pottery and of local imitations of Mycenaean-style pottery. However, because this prehistoric layer was disturbed and the Mycenaean pottery could be considered representative of a Mycenaean settlement, once again Dodona cannot be confidently characterized as a cult centre at this time. The only finds that stand out are the items of metalwork, which are considered to be dedications.

Some of these artifacts do not seem to have had a utilitarian function. An example is the cross-shaped axe³⁵⁹, which probably dates from the Bronze Age. Evangelidis³⁶⁰ describes this axe as a relief object of triangular shape and with two flanges. Other exotic artifacts found at Dodona, such as the bronze one-edged axe, the Kalindria-type bronze double-edged

Kastritsa, Koutselio, Goritsa, Philiates and Krya), yielding only a few sherds of handmade vases, while only one handmade jug is known from Dodona. At the end of the EH III period, a few matt-painted sherds imply the presence of the first Southern Greeks in Epirus. The Middle Helladic period is represented by a few burials at Arta and in the Preveza area. At Dodona, the Middle Helladic period is represented by eight bronze knives and a few MH III potsherds. According to Papadopoulou-Kontorli, the transition from the Early and Middle Helladic period to the Late Bronze Age was peaceful and is dated *ca* 2100/1900-1600 BC (Papadopoulou-Kontorli 2003: 10-12).

³⁵⁸ For the pottery of Dodona see Chapter 2.1.i above.

³⁵⁹ See Appendix II: Weapons and Armour # 3; For Hesychius' "*δρομίους*" and the ceremonial/ritual of tree-worship see Cook 1903c: 181; For the sacrifice of oxen with double axes (*βοσφόνια*) and the link between the oak-cult and the double axe see Cook 1904b: 81; For the axe "left on the spot" in the case of Dodona see Cook 1904b: 85; Evans 1901: 107.

³⁶⁰ Evangelidis 1956: pl. 59, fig. b.

axe and the Peschiera-type of double-blade knife³⁶¹, have been considered to be votive offerings and to imply ritual activities there. However, they could just as easily have been elaborate gifts to the local chieftains. In particular, the knife of the Peschiera type is considered to be an “*insigne dignitatis*”, an item that affords prestige to the owner. In my opinion, the presence of these items at Dodona does not necessarily imply any cult activity, because since a prehistoric settlement existed at the site these could be prestige objects of the elite class of the local society or goods used in exchange transactions between Epirot tribes and other tribal communities in the Balkan region or Central Europe, or even from areas of Mycenaean Greece to the south³⁶².

The Mycenaean presence in Epirus is known from three settlements only: Dodona, Ephyra near Preveza and, probably, Neochoropoulo in the Ioannina basin, where the finds suggest Mycenaean influence on the local inhabitants³⁶³. The only settlement in Epirus that can be characterized confidently as Mycenaean is the citadel of Ephyra, since Mycenaean pottery was found there in large quantity³⁶⁴.

At Dodona, it is the large number of bronze objects that make this site unique in inland Epirus. Metal objects, of bronze or iron, have been retrieved in small number from burials at Liatovouni near Konitsa where a Mycenaean cemetery was

³⁶¹ See Appendix II: Weapons and Armour #15 and #49.

³⁶² Fotiadis, Kotsakis, Andreou 1996: 595-596.

³⁶³ Dakaris 1967: 8, 400; Stamatelopoulou 2003: 696.

³⁶⁴ Soueref 1994: 227.

excavated, from Mazaraki near Ioannina, in two hoards from Preveza (Stephani) and from Katamachi, Ioannina. Kleitsas³⁶⁵ asserts that the bronzes at Dodona are not linked with the prehistoric settlement but come from another part of the sanctuary, which has not been discovered or has not been interpreted correctly. He also insists that the finds are linked with a primitive cult of a male deity, which later developed into the Greek cult of Zeus Dodonaios.

I do not agree with Kleitsas on several points. The prehistoric finds from Dodona come from an extensive but badly disturbed prehistoric level and for many of them the exact findspot is not known. This is due in part to shortcomings of the old archaeological excavations, in which many of these objects came to light. Again this hampers us in proceeding to interpretation of their use (ceremonial, domestic, etc.) and of their association with the alleged prehistoric settlement or possibly with an early sanctuary – if this supposition is verified by clear archaeological evidence.

In my opinion, on present evidence, it is not possible to confirm or to exclude any cult activity, especially when we are not certain about the very existence of an organized settlement at Dodona. A few post holes imply the presence of only a small number of people who were living here at some time. We have already mentioned that the nomadic or transhumant way of life was the norm in ancient Epirus. The so-called settlement at Dodona could be simply a temporary camp site of a group of nomads. If a permanent settlement existed, there should be the

³⁶⁵ Kleitsas 2013: 80.

cemetery nearby. However, so far no traces of a cemetery have come to light at Dodona. The only known cemeteries in Epirus are at Kalpaki, Elaphotopos, Acheron-Nekromanteion (Death Oracle) and a few burials at Kastritsa, Ioannina. These sites yielded a large number of bronze weapons of Mycenaean type and only a small quantity of pottery³⁶⁶.

A few more burials at Mazaraki (two cist graves) and at Arta, and a pit grave at Paramythia (Thesprotia), could simply point to the existence of trading activity of the local population with the Mycenaean world. The only exception is the tholos tomb at Kiperi of Parga³⁶⁷, which is linked with the nearby citadel that some scholars³⁶⁸ claim could be a Mycenaean fort or trading post. Soueref³⁶⁹ argues that there was a Mycenaean colony there from the fourteenth or thirteenth century BC. Stamatelopoulou³⁷⁰ comments that the large number of weapons found in Epirus suggests the military character of the Mycenaean colonists, but does not necessarily imply a violent conquest by them of the region. Wardle³⁷¹ highlights the Mycenaean influence in the coastal area and comments that "...the quantity and variety of bronze tools and weapons indicates much wider contacts than before, as well as the

³⁶⁶ See the archaeology reports by Dakaris of 1952, 1955, 1959, 1965, 1966, 1966a.

³⁶⁷ Dakaris 1966:110, 125.

³⁶⁸ Fotiadis, Katsakis, Andreou 1996: 595.

³⁶⁹ Soueref 1994: 227.

³⁷⁰ Stamatelopoulou 2003: 698.

³⁷¹ Wardle 1977b: 199.

probability of local bronze manufacture...”. He notes³⁷² also that by the beginning of the Iron Age (1050 BC), Epirus and the area north of the Ambrakian Gulf were influenced by developments in what is now Albania. Some tumulus burials in Albania prompted Hammond to suggest the introduction of new trends into areas of Southern Greece (including Epirus), which affected even the rulers of Mycenae. He speaks of the so called “Kurgan” people³⁷³, whose tumulus burial practices were similar to the burial practices of the rulers of Mycenae, in Grave Circle B.

Hammond also says that the use of the horse by the “Kurgan” people was introduced to other areas and that the stele with horse representation, in Grave Circle A of Mycenae, is another sign of this interaction between Greece and Albania³⁷⁴. For him, this interaction is clear from the relationship between the Albanian tumuli of the Middle Helladic period and the Grave Circles of Mycenae, especially Grave Circle B, four graves in which (graves T, Φ, Λ² and Σ) “...have the outstanding new features of the Grave Circle burials, namely that the mortuary chamber is constructed as a miniature representation of a house...”³⁷⁵.

Although the further analysis of these data goes beyond the scope of this thesis, Hammond³⁷⁶ makes an interesting comment

³⁷² Wardle 1977b: 199.

³⁷³ Hammond 1967b: 96.

³⁷⁴ Hammond 1967b: 96.

³⁷⁵ Hammond 1967b: 87.

³⁷⁶ Hammond 1967b: 85, footnote 3.

that should be considered in the case of Dodona: “The Middle Helladic shaft graves, which are still being excavated at Kephalovryso near Pylos, have the same design, being cut in soft rock and roofed with stones resting on wooden beams. Two snouted knives of the kind found at Dodona and in the Mati Tumuli, were found in one of the shaft graves (PAE 1964, 82F)”. Some finds from Dodona offer an insight into possible relations between various Albanian tribes and Mycenaean Civilization. Epirus, due to its proximity to Albania, was apparently influenced by and interacted with both the Illyrian tribes and the Mycenaean world, forming a unique culture³⁷⁷.

In all probability, this local Epirot culture kept alive the ancestral totemic cult of the oak tree until historical times. The peaceful coexistence of the local culture with the Mycenaean civilization facilitated the introduction of the advanced technology of the Mycenaean into Epirus. Macroscopic and metallographic examination, conducted by Mangou and Ioannou³⁷⁸ and the Department of Chemistry of the University of Patras, of two LBA (1550-1050 BC) bronze axes from Dodona has shown that Mycenaean craftsmanship was known there too. The Mycenaean were able to make complicated artifacts of any size for any use, and passed this knowledge on to other regions.

The principal theory about cult at Dodona, namely that the Mother Goddess cult and the tree cult are also linked with the Mycenaean, should be reconsidered. This is especially the case when this cult takes a new form as the cult of Zeus and his

³⁷⁷ Hammond 1967b: 104.

³⁷⁸ Mangou, Ioannou 1999: 81, 82, 83, 90, 98.

consort Dione, who has been considered as the ancestral Mother Goddess. However, the idea of worship of the Mother Goddess in the early phase of the sanctuary has been challenged.³⁷⁹

At Dodona there are no traces of any cultic activity in prehistoric times that can be linked with a female deity either. The early bronze offerings are all weapons, which suggest, once more, a patriarchal, warrior society. Of the finds listed in Appendix II (Weapons and Armour), 36% are axes, which I think could be linked with the cult of a male deity (Zeus or the ancestral sky god).³⁸⁰ Spear-points and arrowheads (approximately 14 items) represent 24% of the finds in Appendix II. Swords represent 10%, and knives and blades 8%. Helmets and mainly the cheek-pieces are numerous (12 examples), accounting for 20% of the weapons-armour presented in Appendix II. However, these, along with the shield fragments (only one example from Dodona- 2% of the total of finds in Appendix II) are excluded, because they date from the Classical and Hellenistic periods.

Even in the myths relating to cult at Dodona, the male deity is present as Zeus Dodonaios, whereas the only female presence is the priestess³⁸¹. The principal female deity in the sanctuary, Dione, is qualified as “*Σύναος*”, which means “sharing the same temple”, in other words, as a deity equal to Zeus. However, this is a cult element that dates from the Archaic

³⁷⁹ Meskell 1995: 74-86.

³⁸⁰ Chadwick 1900: 22, 30, 34-37, 41; Quantz 1898: 462, 449-450; For Zeus as thunder god, see Langdon 1976: 79; Burkert 1985: 273-274; Salavoura 2014: 307-310.

³⁸¹ See Chapter 1.2 above.

period, not prehistoric times. So, the cult of Dione does not necessarily prove the earlier presence of a female ancestral deity.

At the respective sanctuary of Zeus on Mount Lykaion in Arcadia, the identity of Zeus as sky god or rain god has been challenged. According to Salavoura³⁸², there is little evidence of the cult of Zeus as sky god there, apart from a figurine of the god holding a thunderbolt, which dates from the seventh or sixth century BC. Salavoura suggests that Mount Lykaion could be a peak sanctuary of mainland Greece and should be considered as a rural sanctuary where the people from the surrounding areas gathered and social cohesion was reinforced.

Mutatis mutandis, this idea could be applied in the case of Dodona, which may have been a gathering place for the Epirot tribes Epirus and Arcadia have much in common, since both are mountaneous areas that were home to transhumant stock-raisers, which may very well have established meeting points. Dodona could be one (if not the only/main) meeting point for these tribes, such as Mt Lykaion for the Arcadians. If, in course of Dodona's role as a gathering place, some kind of cult activity developed – not attested by available data – then it seems to me reasonable to assume that any offerings made would be initially humble and very likely linked with worship of Nature and the sacred tree. In this early period, there was not necessarily worship of a deity, male or female. Indeed, in my opinion, due to the later Mycenaean influence, more than one deity may have been worshipped. The Mycenaean influence organized the cult practices and placed them within a strict frame, with a male

³⁸² Salavoura 2015: 308-309; See also Chapinal Heras 2017: 30 (who suggests that Dodona could be a seasonal shrine visited by shepherds); Piccinini 2012: 71.

deity ruling over the ancestral cult and reflecting the ethos of this male-dominated heroic warrior society.

The exotic items and precious weapons found at Dodona, could be associated with complex cult practices that were established in the Late Bronze Age and with the responsibilities of individuals towards the deity or deities. Therefore, if the ceremonial/ritual use of the space is at some time demonstrated by excavation evidence, it is possible that we could witness through these finds the construction of the identity of a social group, of which the members participated initially as equals and in which subsequently social identities, hierarchies and roles emerged³⁸³. The new identities and roles can be measured in terms of economic and social influence, and can be compared with those of other individuals. In the various rituals (rites of passage, funerary rituals, etc.), only some aspects of the society are emphasized, through the constructed roles that its members play and through a shared symbolic language³⁸⁴.

So Dodona, could be initially a reference point, a place for the society to congregate, in the same way as Passaron became later a ceremonial place for the Molossians³⁸⁵. The mythological narrations may echo the actions of the ancestors, but the

³⁸³ This view is influenced by the 'processual archaeology' that emerged during the 1960s and 1970s, which promoted a conception of material culture as a means of adaptation, located in the systematic relationships between human populations and their environments. (Thomas 2000: 654).

³⁸⁴ Morris 1993: 21-27, 10-12; Bowie 2000: 36-37; Shanks-Tilley 1982: 134-135.

³⁸⁵ Passaron, was the military centre of the Molossian tribe. Here the kings of Epirus were enthroned, exchanging the oath of allegiance with their people. These oaths reflected the notion of equality between the members of Epirot society and that the king would be a ruler *primus inter pares*.

archaeological data do not allow us to recreate the past. We can only speculate as to what Dodona really was before its establishment as a Greek oracle during the Archaic period.

To sum up, as far as early cult activity at Dodona is concerned, in my view there are sufficient religious practices from historical times which resonate earlier cults to justify the contention that there was continuity of worship. However, we do not have sound data on the religious function of the site from before the Archaic period. Nonetheless, I venture to suggest that it may have been a place of worship at the time when Epirus came under Mycenaean influence.

I do not rule out the possibility that Dodona was initially a gathering place for the transhumant pastoralist tribes of Epirus and that it developed into a more stable centre of some kind of cult, perhaps associated with worship of Nature. Mycenaean influence may well have given this rudimentary cult a clear framework. The presence later of precious votive offerings (axes) may bear witness to this more organized cult.

However, this theory is insecure. Epirus as a whole was a region in which tribal organization persisted until the fourth century BC. It remained outside the main land routes associated with the cities of Northern Greece and was therefore outside the mainstream of political developments. These different tribes, the social structures of which are not known, could have elaborated many different patterns of worship and customs, which may well have incorporated religious elements from the wider region of the Balkans and what is now Albania (anc. Illyria), within which these tribes moved.

Scholars tend to look at Bronze Age Epirus in articulation with the Mycenaeans, without taking into account the possibility of influences from other peoples of the prehistoric Balkans. The presence of exotic items at Dodona is an indication of communication/contact between the inhabitants of the Haimos Peninsula, which may well have gone beyond the barter-trade of goods, to the exchange of ideas. Thus, early cultic activity at Dodona should be examined at many levels and the theory of the Mother Goddess should be reconsidered. Perhaps there was a blend of religious practices, which combined elements from Mycenaean worship and totemic/nature cults such as those known from other Indo-European tribes. Maybe early Dodona could be viewed as the key to a unique syncretism, the memory of which lived on in historical times and developed gradually into the cult known to us today.

Dodona in historical times

Despite its secluded location, in historical times Dodona welcomed visitors from all over the Greek world³⁸⁶. These were people from all social strata, who brought gifts for the gods in order to thank them or to ask for their help. Most of the gifts were vessels, jewels and bronze figurines, representing Zeus or other deities, as well as warriors, athletes, adolescents and children. A small proportion of these finds, mainly terracotta figurines, some portraying female heads, perhaps of goddesses³⁸⁷, were dedications made by the poorer classes. Many of the bronze figurines discovered were not free-standing works

³⁸⁶ See Chapter 3.3 below.

³⁸⁷ See Appendix II: Other Finds #51, 54, 55, 56.

but rather were the decoration on vessels or other objects. Most were positioned on the rim or the handles of bronze vessels, primarily tripod cauldrons. Other figurines, such as protomes of korai, sphinxes and sirens, were attached to mirrors, or to the handles and base of vessels³⁸⁸.

Tripods were an essential part of the cult activity at Dodona, with both an apotropaic and a prophetic role. The constant sound from the striking of these vessels was believed to fend off evil. Of the various categories of dedications, 10% come from the tripod vessels. The handles were decorated with figurines of griffins, gods, warriors or horses, symbolizing virtue and valour. The figurines and the legs of the tripods were cast, which is why they have survived. Approximately 11 figurines of Zeus and 6 figurines of other deities (Aphrodite, Apollo, Herakles and Athena) have been identified. Figurines of animals (approximately 11) and other representations from the animal kingdom (around 20 objects) have been recovered, while figurines of females, warriors, youths, athletes, generals, etc., give us a glimpse of the social classes that perhaps visited Dodona. However, despite the numerous visitors, Dodona never managed to become a panhellenic sanctuary, such as Delphi or Olympia.

i. *Panhellenism, oracles, games and dedications*

Sanctuaries were panhellenic not only because all Greeks could visit and dedicate offerings in them, but also because there were recognized as neutral grounds and symbols of the unity of

³⁸⁸ See many of these examples in Appendix II: “Bronze Figurines”, “Bronze Vessels” and “Other Finds”; See also chapters 2.1 and 2.2 above for further examination of these categories, with respective examples.

the Greeks, since Archaic and Classical times. After the Persian Wars, Delphi, due to its important role as an oracle, was established quite soon as the *par excellence* panhellenic sanctuary. Delos, on the other hand, even though a significant and special island sanctuary, was not panhellenic but Ionian, and was, at various times, under the direct control of other Greek powers, such as the Karians, the Naxians and even the Athenians. Olympia was essentially a Dorian sanctuary, under the control of the Peloponnesian League, but enjoyed panhellenic status because of the Olympic Games. What about Dodona?

Dodona was clearly a Molossian sanctuary, which, later on, was perhaps a pan-Epirot oracle. However, neither Dodona nor Epirus were in the mainstream of developments in Greece, and the oracle never aroused the envy or the interest of other sanctuaries and other Greek city-states. Indeed, in terms of fame and influence, Dodona was inferior to other Greek sanctuaries from the Classical period. Political circumstances in the Greek world during the Hellenistic period further diminished the influence of Dodona.

To quote Richard Neer, “Pan-Hellenic shrines played an important role in the consolidation of both civic and aristocratic ideologies in Archaic and Classical Greece. As Morgan put it, ‘From the eighth century, the history of inter-state sanctuaries...was the history of the establishment of a state framework for...pilgrimage, a fundamental part of the process of defining the role of the individual with the emerging state’. Delphi and Olympia were ... gathering places for the elite. These were places in which well-born Greeks asserted special relationships with the gods by means of costly dedications and

special relationships with one another through ritualized athletic display”³⁸⁹.

Athletic displays were a usual practice of the elite class, to enhance its martial valour and to recall honourable ancestral acts of bravery. Religious festivities were likewise an integral part of activities in the ancient sanctuaries and Dodona was no exception. At Dodona, the Naia Games, dedicated to Zeus, included athletic, musical and theatrical contests. These started out as local festivities, but later, during the Hellenistic period, they took on a panhellenic character. The popularity of the Naia Games is captured in the famous Antikythera Mechanism³⁹⁰, where the Naia are mentioned together with the Olympic, the Pythian, the Isthmian and the Nemean games, as the most important competitions of the ancient world.

The Naia festival was held every four years, at the beginning of the month Apellaios, the equivalent of October today. That was the time of year when the herds returned to Dodona for winter and was just before the onset of major rainfalls in Epirus. Initially, the prizes awarded to the victors in the games were monetary, but later on they were replaced by wreaths of oak. Two of the most important structures in Dodona, the theatre and the stadium, were erected specifically to host the Naia Games.

³⁸⁹ Neer 2004: 64-65 and footnotes 4, 85; Neer 2001: 282-283; Scott 2010: 221; Barringer 2005: 228-229; Tomlinson 1976: 62-63; Cook 1904a: 403-405, 412-413; Chapinal Heras 2017:32-34 .

³⁹⁰ Skalisti 2016: 117-118; Katsikoudis 2016: 119-129.

In the panhellenic sanctuaries, the presence of the elite class was not restricted to participation in the Games or individual dedications. This class was instrumental in getting its city-state to offer entire building complexes as dedications in these sanctuaries - the treasuries³⁹¹. Again, examples of these can be found at Delphi: the Siphnian Treasury³⁹² and the Athenian Treasury.³⁹³ Moreover, depicted on the pediment of the Siphnian Treasury is the quarrel between Apollo and Herakles over the Delphic tripod, an iconographic motif identified on Dodonaian bronze reliefs³⁹⁴.

The Athenian Treasury was built to honour the establishment of the Athenian Democracy, as the culmination of Athenian power and propaganda, epitomized in the subjects of its relief decoration. The treasuries served both propagandistic aims and needs of housing the numerous votive offerings and essentially to “nationalize”³⁹⁵ these. For a powerful city-state such as Athens, such a dedication symbolized a living piece of the city inside the sacred space of a panhellenic sanctuary; a living piece visible to all Greeks and non-Greeks, who visited the Delphic oracle. Essentially, the treasuries, along with the Delphic oracle’s active policy of display, expressed the political ambitions of Athens and, later on, the political identity of

³⁹¹ Neer 2001: 273-275.

³⁹² Neer 2001: 274-344; Colonia 1998: 119-120; Andronikos 2000: 21-231; Poulsen 1920: 101-142.

³⁹³ Neer 2004: 63-93; Andronikos 2000: 23-25; Colonia 1996: 120-1221; Poulsen 1920: 158-191.

³⁹⁴ See Appendix II: Bronze Reliefs #58 and 68.

³⁹⁵ Neer 2004: 65.

monarchs (such as Philip II of Macedon), who ruled over other city-states.

In the case of Dodona, Dakaris's views on the sacred buildings of the sanctuary have been challenged recently by Jessica Piccinini³⁹⁶. She suggests that the so-called temples of Aphrodite, Themis, Dione and Herakles were not actually temples, due to the lack of convincing archaeological data and finds, but treasuries for housing the numerous offerings. To support her view, she focuses on the small size of the buildings and provides comparative architectural details from other sanctuaries (Olympia, Delphi and the Sanctuary of the Great Gods of Samothrace).

In my view, she is right to point out the lack of excavation evidence to support Dakaris's interpretation. Dakaris's arguments are by no means watertight and his theories should be reconsidered on a new basis, since his data are of poor quality and for the most part unstudied. However, the small size and the lack of monumentality of the buildings at Dodona are hardly proof that these buildings were not temples but treasuries. After all, Dodona lacked any monumental construction programme until Pyrrhos' reign. Therefore, the building remains uncovered could be of temples or of treasuries or have served other practical needs³⁹⁷ of the people who lived in or visited Dodona, which now elude us.

³⁹⁶ Piccinini 2016: 152-169.

³⁹⁷ See Chapter 3.4 below, on the survey that took place at Dodona and revealed the existence of other unearthed buildings.

The apparent absence of treasuries or any other monumental buildings at Dodona could be due to various factors:

a) The sanctuary of Dodona, as an isolated site, was never a crossroad of visitors, such as Delphi with its central position in the Greek Mainland. Therefore a city-state did not make a large outlay to dedicate something at Dodona, since expensive dedications probably served propagandistic aims of the city-states.

b) The lack of suitable construction material³⁹⁸ (marble) in Epirus could be another reason. If the natural Epirot limestone was considered unsuitable for such edifices, then building materials would have to be brought from a distance, which could be a time-consuming and costly process.

c) The sanctuary was under the direct control of the Molossians, therefore they would not allow any foreign city-state, such as Athens, to use their local oracle as a stage for propagandistic aims.

d) These types of dedications (treasuries and monumental dedications), because they served needs of display, would be more suitable for adorning a panhellenic

³⁹⁸ Large marble statues, such as those in other sanctuaries, are absent from Dodona, perhaps because they were cumbersome to transport. Certain dedications were brought by worshippers from their place of origin, while others may have been supplied by merchants operating in the sanctuary's vicinity. On the west slope of Agios Nikolaos hill, 2 km northwest of the sanctuary of Dodona, there seem to be traces of a quarry. The same applies to the locality "Marmara", with a quarry of local limestone that could serve the construction needs of the theatre of Dodona. There is no information on any other quarry in Epirus, excepting these specific references by Dakaris (Dakaris 1963B: 156, 151); Kokkorou-Alevra, Poupaki, Eustathopoulos, Chatzikonstantinou 2014: 74.

sanctuary, such as Delphi and Olympia, in order to promote the dedicators and be visible to the whole world.

Dodona was never a panhellenic sanctuary, even though it enjoyed panhellenic fame and was highly respected by the Greeks, due to its long history and tradition. The fact that the protagonists of the Greek political scene were the Athenians and the Spartans, and not the Molossians (Epirots), undoubtedly affected the status of the oracle. In general, Athens had close relations with Delphi and Sparta with Olympia. It is no coincidence that Dodona was the Athenians' first choice when relations with Delphi deteriorated, just as it is no coincidence that the Athenians avoided the sanctuary of Olympia, because it was under the control or influence of the Peloponnesian League.

The sanctuary of Dodona was at once a religious, political, administrative and cultural centre. At the end of the fifth century BC, Dodona became the principal administrative centre of the Molossian League. After the mid-fourth century BC, Dodona was the capital of a single political entity, Apeirus (Epirus) or the Epirot Coalition, and a new coinage was issued with the legend ΑΠΕΙΡΩΤΑΝ, their ethnic name.³⁹⁹ Half a century later, the Molossian dynasty regained control of the sanctuary and used it to promote its own kings, especially Pyrrhos, the most renowned ruler amongst them. After the deposing of royalty in 233/231 BC, Dodona became the

³⁹⁹ See Appendix I #62b, 62c, 64c; See also Chapinal Heras 2017:31-32 on the political role of Dodona.

nucleus of a new political formation, a federal state known as the Epirot League⁴⁰⁰.

Dodona's political character can be discerned primarily through the building programme, which included the prytaneion and the bouleuterion⁴⁰¹. Representatives of the Epirot tribes convened in the bouleuterion to legislate and vote, while the prytaneion housed administrative functions and possibly the officials who managed the sanctuary and the festival⁴⁰². Eminent members of the Epirot elite class were honoured in the sanctuary. Tall bronze statues portraying and honouring important people were set on pedestals placed at prominent points of the sanctuary by the Epirot League or the other political structures. These statues are usually of generals, standing or on horseback, in rich military gear redolent with symbolism. Spears with intricately decorated finials were placed in their hands⁴⁰³, or they carried swords with pommel hilt or ornamented with symbols of power and authority, such as the eagle or the panther head⁴⁰⁴.

Fragments of the "Bronze Honorific Statues" are numerous from the site, many of them fragments of the garments, the fingers and the feet of the figures, as well as of their weaponry. The bronze statues represent almost 12% of

⁴⁰⁰ See Appendix I #64c.

⁴⁰¹ For the prytaneion see Appendix I #37, 38-39; For the bouleuterion see Appendix I #33, 34, 35, 36.

⁴⁰² Gravani 2016: 173-177; See also Appendix II: Other Finds #110.

⁴⁰³ See Appendix II: Bronze Statues #70, 82, 38.

⁴⁰⁴ See Appendix II: Bronze Statues #80, 79, 78.

the overall dedications and are the third largest category of finds discussed in this thesis.

The first largest category of finds, representing 18% of the overall dedications, includes the lead tablets, the bronze inscriptions and the *ex-voto* bronzes⁴⁰⁵. With the exception of the *ex-voto* bronzes, these objects are not dedications at the sanctuary. Nonetheless, they reveal a great deal of information about the visitors to the oracle.

Ancient man's everyday anxieties and concerns, regarding health, marriage, children, work, debts, trade, migration, and so on, have survived to this day, inscribed on small lead tablets. These preserve questions addressed to the oracle of Dodona by thousands of visitors, men and women, rich and poor, slaves and kings. Initially, the visitors submitted their requests orally and received the answers in the same way. Later on, they wrote them on thin lead tablets, folded or rolled them up carefully and carved a characteristic sign on the outer surface. They then handed the questions to the priests, who in turn would answer them by pulling some sort of lot that represented the positive or negative answer of the gods.

After the divination, the tablets remained in the sanctuary. Assistants would often unfold them, scrub out the inscription and hand them to future visitors. That is why on a great number of tablets there are traces of previous questions, sometimes inscribed on both of its sides.

⁴⁰⁵ See Chapter 3.3 below.

The lead tablets raise questions about the ritual practices and the deities worshipped at Dodona. The main deity was Zeus, however many questions were addressed to other deities, such as Apollo, Poseidon, Artemis, Hera, Aphrodite, Demeter and probably Athena (early 5th century BC). From the fourth century BC, deities such as Themis, Hestia, Tyche, Sybil, Isis, Rhea, Asklepios, Dionysos, the Nymphs or the hero Herakles are also petitioned⁴⁰⁶.

From the fifth century BC, some lead tablets were addressed to anonymous heroes, gods and goddesses, along with sacrificial offerings⁴⁰⁷, while other lead tablets refer to acts of dark magic and curses⁴⁰⁸. Last, some lead tablets refer to other oracular methods, such as the lot oracle, along with the oracles given by the priests and the priestesses⁴⁰⁹. So, the lead tablets are proof that Dodona has still much information to reveal, while the study of the excavated material proceeds.

Along with the lead tablets, there are also bronze and stone public inscriptions⁴¹⁰. A sanctuary that received many

⁴⁰⁶ See Appendix II: Ex-Votos #31b: xi, xlvii, lxi; See also Gartsiou-Tatti 2016: 77, figs 86, 77, 120, 105; Piccinini 2013a: 63-76; Parker 2015: 100-112; Carbon 2015: 73-87; Dakaris, Vokotopoulou, Christidis 2013: 96 (reg. number 227A), 163 (reg. number 541B), 254 (reg. number 984A), 40-41 (reg. number 2393A).

⁴⁰⁷ Gartsiou-Tatti 2016: 77, figs 83, 119.

⁴⁰⁸ See #31b (xl, xxxv); Gartsiou-Tatti 2016: 77, figs 86, 87.

⁴⁰⁹ See #31b (xli and xlvii); Gartsiou-Tatti 2016: 77, figs 103, 120; Tomlinson 1976: 64-67; Chappell 2006: 347-348.

⁴¹⁰ See Appendix II: Inscriptions #48 (129); The early decrees date between 350 and 250 BC and are inscribed on bronze sheets (repoussé or pointillé technique): see Appendix II: Inscriptions #48 (126-130), 49; Katsadima 2016b: 78-79, figs 126-130, 131; More information about slaves can be extracted from the lead tablets (see Appendix II: Lead Tablets #31b, xii, xliii, xlv, xlvi, xlviii; Gartsiou-Tatti 2016: 77.

visitors, such as Dodona, was considered an appropriate place to put up public notifications of administrative decrees, which were thus validated by the gods themselves. The liberation of slaves is among the acts recorded in these decrees. Most are written on bronze tablets provided with suspension holes, which were probably hung on the walls of the Sacred House.

These manumission inscriptions state the name and gender of the slave who is about to be freed, the name of his master and the names of witnesses to the act. The king of the Molossians and other officials are mentioned in earlier decrees and are replaced later by the general of the Epirot League or sometimes the *agonothetai*, the officials in charge of the Naia Games. Slaves are mentioned as “bodies”, “possessions” or “children” and their names often refer to their occupation, for example, the name “*Ποιμένας*”, meaning shepherd. The conditions of the decree defined the time of its implementation, its duration and its basic characteristics. In some cases, it is in the form of public testament declaring that the slave will be set free on his master’s death.

3.2) Cult practice and continuity: from Prehistory to Historical Times

The early exotic knives, swords, axes, along with the other local finds, imply the existence of cult at Dodona in early times, especially if it is borne in mind that people travelled there from the Balkan region, to pay tribute to Zeus or to the deity before him (Gaia-Mother Earth). However, the large number of early offerings and the Archaic and Classical bronze dedications made later cannot prove without doubt the continuity of cult through the centuries, from the Bronze Age until Late Antiquity.

Unfortunately, Dodona lacks a clear stratigraphical sequence, the area was disturbed by local fortifications, the finds from the early investigations lack any excavation context and the archaeological reports and publications of the results of research about the oracle are generally poor and out of date. In comparison with the recently-discovered sanctuary of Apollo at Abai, which has a unique stratigraphy spanning the Geometric and Archaic periods, Dodona is far from establishing itself as a known cult centre of the Bronze Age world.

On the other hand, the oracle of Apollo at Abai⁴¹¹, near the modern village of Kalapodi, is the main site that seems to prove that there was indeed continuity of cult practices beyond the “Dark Ages”. Excavations conducted at Kalapodi since 2004, by Wolf-Dietrich Niemeyer, former Director of the German

⁴¹¹ All the information provided here for the Oracle of Abai comes from the official website of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut. Other sites where cult continuity is suspected since the Bronze Age include Olympia, Amyklai, Isthmia, Artemis Mounichia, Mt Hymettos, Kalapodi, Mt Lykaion, and others. At Kalapodi the cult continuity is proven by archaeological data.

Archaeological Institute at Athens, confirmed the existence of two new temples, which provide information – for the first time – about continuous activity on the site since the Mycenaean period.

For Dodona, Olympia and Delphi, there are many mythological accounts about the ancestral cult that continued to exist under a new form during the Archaic and Classical periods. However, the excavations at these sites were made over a century ago, with now out-of-date methods and without rigorous discipline, while the finds (especially those from Dodona) have not been analysed fully⁴¹², while a large number of them remains unstudied. This is not the case for the sanctuary of Abai, where the excavations are still in progress, applying the latest technology and methodology of research. Preliminary reports refer to the presence of earlier structures dating back to the Bronze Age (before 1200 BC), all underneath the Classical level of the temple of Apollo.

In the Late Geometric temple of Abai (*ca* 800 BC), archaeologists uncovered fragments of a wall-painting depicting hoplites. The technique brings to mind that of the murals in the Mycenaean palaces. The excavations have also brought to light numerous votive offerings, metalwork, jewellery and ceramics, along with a late bronze Hittite bowl from Northern Syria, decorated with relief pattern, which indicates the international status of the sanctuary and its wide network (8th century BC). The bowl contained food residues and ash, implying the

⁴¹² For the continuity of cult at Delphi see Press 2012: 5-6.

consumption of sacrificial meals in the temple⁴¹³. Within the layers of the Geometric temple, archaeologists discovered twelve iron swords, three lances, a bronze shield boss, a bow, a robe of nobility and *in-situ* chariot wheels.

The archaeological reports from the sanctuary on Mount Lykaion also corroborate the theory about the continuity of cult. Archaeologists have excavated an ash altar with many broken and burnt sherds and animal bones, which proves for the first time the continuity of a cult practice since the Mycenaean period, if not earlier. The altar was used from the LH IIIB period (1440-1390 BC) until the Late Classical period and it seems that Lykaion was a peak sanctuary that served the cult needs of more than one community and could be linked also with the transhumant pastoral social groups which did not share a permanent settlement. The members of these groups worshipped Zeus, who was the god of hilltops and mountains, and was linked with the rains and weather conditions.

It should be remembered that at Athamania, Zeus was worshipped as Akraios⁴¹⁴ (not as Dodonaios) and was depicted seated on a rock with a sceptre and accompanied by religious symbols, and attributes such as the thunderbolt (see above Chapter 1.3). In the Oros sanctuary of Aegina, there is evidence of ancestral worship of Zeus, consisting of a LH IIIA2-B figurine,

⁴¹³ At the sanctuary of Zeus at Mount Lykaion, archaeobotanical analysis was carried out on samples taken from the upper and lower parts of the sanctuary. From trench Z (the ash altar), the analysis shows evidence of grain offerings and barley grains dating to the Mycenaean period. Moreover, cereals found at the altar, were deformed by the high firing temperatures (Romano-Voyatzis 2014: 642-643 (Appendix 4: Archaeobotanical data by E. Margaritis); Salavoura 2015: 306-307.

⁴¹⁴ Livy, 38.2.5 (sanctuary of Zeus); Tzouvara-Souli 1994: 56-57; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 166-167; Dowden 2006: 70; Tzouvara-Souli 1995: 9-10.

a number of Middle Helladic pottery sherds (which were found in the foothills of Mount Oros and could imply the presence of a Mycenaean settlement) and, mainly, some traces of a LH IIIC building. At both sites (Mount Lykaion and Aegina) the finds strongly suggest the continuity of the ancestral worship of Zeus, which survived through the centuries. At Dodona, on the other hand, such a theory cannot be proven by present archaeological evidence, but is only implied by some mythological accounts⁴¹⁵. However, even at the case of Mt. Lykaion, the data come from the ash altar, while the rest of the sanctuary remains unexcavated, whereas in the case of Kalapodi, the excavations prove for the first time the continuity of cult, through the various construction phases.

However, the question about Dodona remains open: Why has no type of continuity been identified in any part of the site? Apart from the haphazard nature and lack of method of the early excavations, which destroyed much evidence, in my opinion the spatial development of Dodona could be a key factor in obscuring indications of continuity.

In my view, the spatial development of the sanctuary is linked with the ancestral ideology of Dodona. The location plays a major role in determining the sanctity of a space and even in the subsequent urban development of the early sanctuaries. The location should inspire the visitor and create a sense of religious emotion, as well as express the character of each cult and the nature of the deity worshipped at the site. Dodona began as an

⁴¹⁵ Homer, *Iliad*, 16.23-235; 7, 467 & 21, 40 & 23, 743; Homer, *Odyssey*, 14, 327-330; 22,2,69; Hesiod, *Theogony*, 992; Hesiod, *Hoia*, frag.240 (as quoted in Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 41 and footnote 6: for the interpretative approach to the word 'Ναϊος'); Pausanias, 10,12,10.

open-air sanctuary, which, in accordance with the demands of the cult, kept its natural character⁴¹⁶. Thus, Nature dominated over the architecture of the sanctuary and affected its constructional development. The role of Nature in the cult impacted in different ways⁴¹⁷ on the spatial arrangement of the sanctuary.

Initially, the entrance to the sanctuary⁴¹⁸ was on the northeast side, where there was a sacred pathway leading to the foothills of Mount Tomaros. The narrow valley giving access allowed visitors to discover the sanctuary gradually. However, during the Early Archaic period, the entrance to the sanctuary was in its south part. The imposing form of Mount Tomaros influenced visitors, drawing them into a mysterious landscape, with heavy and frequent rain storms and thunderbolts striking the sacred ground of Dodona. The visitors' experience had to do mainly with the impressive natural landscape. The buildings in the sanctuary were constructed from the local dark limestone and blended in perfectly with the landscape, creating an aesthetic balance. The main temple of Zeus (on the southeast side of the entrance to the sanctuary), along with the rest of the

⁴¹⁶ See the various construction phases of the Sacred House of Dodona and the other buildings: see Appendix I #21 to #38 and #46, #50 (construction phases of the theatre) and #7 to #10 (the reconstruction of the Sacred House from the second half of the 4th till the end of the 3rd century BC). In the case of the Sacred House, we can see the slow development towards the monumentality of the Classical period (see Appendix I); See also Chapter 1.2 above.

⁴¹⁷ Scully 1962: 1-8; Morgan 1990: 135-139.

⁴¹⁸ Scully 1962: 136-138; Morgan 1990: 135-139.

temples, constituted an architectural jewel, while also serving functional needs⁴¹⁹.

The buildings were arrayed in a semicircle. These complexes expressed both the old religion, through the wild landscape and Nature, and the patriarchal character of the main male deity (Zeus), whose cult emphasized spiritual contact between man and the divine. This spiritual character of Dodona went hand with hand with the natural Epirot landscape⁴²⁰. Geographically⁴²¹, Epirus was isolated and inaccessible to the majority of the people, and the contacts were made through the coastal area. Therefore, the minimalistic architecture of Dodona is in harmony with the isolation of Epirus.

Delphi, on the other hand, as a comparative example, was built in a more favourable geographical position, at a focal and central point of the Greek Mainland, which could be reached by land or sea⁴²². Since the eighth century BC the oracle gave advice and prophecies to many Greek cities of the Peloponnese (Corinth, Sparta, Achaea), Euboea, Attica. Delphi also maintained contacts with the islands of Rhodes, Paros, Thera, while it played a major role in the Greek Colonization, acquiring new contacts with Sicily and Southern Italy. Therefore, the

⁴¹⁹ See Appendix I #23 (and the information about the Sacred House). The Sacred House was used as a treasury to house the dedications, the figurines and the statues of the deities; See also Horster 2010: 435-458 for the landscape and the sacred ground.

⁴²⁰ "The nature of the God did not determine the place of his sanctuary, but conversely the features of the sanctuary had an important share in determining the development of ideas as to the functions of the God..." (White 1954: 114).

⁴²¹ Evangelidis 1947: 8-9; Liampi 2009: 11; Sakellariou 1997: 142.

⁴²² Lloyd-Jones 1976: 62-63.

constant inflow of goods and dedications from various parts of the Hellenic world was certain. The natural landscape played its part in this sanctuary too. The sanctuary was built on a steep hillside at the foot of Mount Parnassos, within a rugged landscape formed between the Phaidriades rocks.

This rough natural topography was a constraint on the architectural development of the sanctuary, which was built upon terraces, demanding that all construction works were well planned. It is quite clear that at Delphi there is a significant concentration of buildings, due to the lack of space. The buildings are smaller than the respective ones at Olympia. In addition, the visitors moved within a more limited area, where the dedications stood on display, creating a glorious sight. Furthermore, at Delphi earlier dedications were rarely removed and deposited (with the exception of a depository pit of the 6th century BC at the temple of Apollo). Thus, new dedications were added continuously to the throng, projecting the sanctuary's wealth and long history. This practice of displaying the dedications made them vulnerable to the ravages of time and easy to sack.

Olympia, in terms of its topography, was exactly the opposite of Delphi and closer to the spatial standards of Dodona. The sanctuary developed and extended on the south, north and east sides of the valley of Olympia, while there was ongoing reconstruction in the locus sanctus until the 4th century BC. The vast area of the sanctuary allowed the organization of different activities, with the various temples as focal points. Therefore, the monumental sizes of the temples allowed the visitors to see, even from a distance and from all sides, the

temples and the dedications that were on display, standing in the surrounding area. This religious setting, along with the athletic festivals, attracted to Olympia many visitors, of different political and social background. The wide free space of Olympia allowed the visitors to enter the sanctuary more freely and with flexibility, while there was enough space to exploit whenever it was necessary.

As far as the dedications are concerned, at Olympia these were placed inside the Treasuries or kept safe in deposition pits (that is not the case for Delphi), a precaution against looting in the many attacks. Because most dedications were not on conspicuous display and there was little projection of wealth at Olympia, the sanctuary did not attract rich visitors, who wished to display their valuable dedications and promote themselves through them. Moreover, due to its geographical distance from other centres of the Greek Mainland and its relative isolation, the sanctuary was an easy target to sack and suitable combat field⁴²³.

The various dedications prove to some extent the historical continuity of the sanctuary, but not necessarily the continuity of cult. As mentioned already with respect to Dodona – which is true also of Delphi and Olympia – the data given in the archaeological reports only imply this cult continuity. However, the myths may well conceal historical facts that, at this point at least, are not possible to prove with solid archaeological data.

⁴²³ On the Spatial development of Delphi and Olympia, see Scott 2010: 223-226.

The sanctuaries constitute the backbone of religion, within the ideological limits of the city-states⁴²⁴. The city-states and the organized societies expressed through the sanctuaries their political ideologies⁴²⁵ and religious concerns. The urban development and organization at these sanctuaries presupposed a certain degree of political administration, which was determined not necessarily by the religious needs but by political ones. There is little information on the hierarchical organization of Dodona, mainly mythological narrations that promote as the main religious figure the priestess and later the priests (Selloi/Helloi). In the early period of the sanctuary there was no apparent political activity. Epirus remained undeveloped with an ancestral tribal structure and was organized politically into fortified city-states quite late in its history (during the 5th century BC in the reign of Tharypas).

Therefore Dodona remained essentially autonomous and was not controlled by any central power. Even though Dodona was under Molossian influence later, it never acquired a major role in the historical process, although it was used as a stage for propagandistic or political games or for projecting the power of the ruling class, just like Delphi and Olympia. Only when Pyrrhos became a king did the role of the sanctuary change and the oracle was then used for the projection of the ruler. This can be seen in the archaeological record, in the embellishment of the buildings and the construction activity (see Chapter 2.2 above).

⁴²⁴ Herman Hansen, Heine Nielsen 2004: 130-133.

⁴²⁵ Dakaris 1997: 118-121; Scott 2010: 30-34, 35-40, 238-239; Keramopoulos 1917:8-9.

During the reign of Pyrrhos, the oracle of Dodona adopted a similar approach to the respective oracle of Delphi during the reign of Philip II of Macedonia. Philip took control of the Delphic Amphictyony Council and therefore took control of the political influence of the Delphic oracle. However, Dodona and Epirus never participated prominently in the Greek political scene, and during the Classical and Hellenistic periods in particular the oracle acquired a more local and less influential character.

Different was the identity of the sanctuary of Olympia: The oracle of Olympia gained its position as a true panhellenic, inter-state oracle, which was not initially affected or controlled by any individual city-state. Soon it became venue of the Olympic Games. However, Olympia was indirectly in the sphere of influence of some strong Peloponnesian city-state (the Peloponnesian League and mainly Sparta). Therefore Olympia operated as an extra-urban sanctuary of the city state. These cities affected the development of Olympia's network, since traditional enemies of the Peloponnesian League deliberately offered their dedications at other sanctuaries (such as Delphi, Dodona, etc.) and avoided Olympia.

Delphi on the other hand had a different organization. "The institution of Amphictyonies, which is linked with the sanctuary, it was a religious bond between the city-states, which quickly developed political influence too." Therefore, it is quite difficult to determine who had the control of the oracle of Delphi, since a number of cities vied for this privilege. Therefore, the Delphic oracle probably developed a more complex management system in comparison with the other oracles and gave this diversity to its institution.

This can be also seen ideologically, with the founding myths, and pragmatically, through the founding of the sanctuary with a distinct architecture configuration, which manifests the ideas and trends that the society and the oracle wished to demonstrate. What is actually the distinguishing factor in all the sanctuaries is the rise of the ideology of the city-state (*polis*), combined with the simultaneous founding of new oracles and temples, and the organizing of games and religious festivals⁴²⁶.

Initially, the decision to found an oracle was of crucial importance and based on the founding myths. Therefore, in the case of Dodona, the complex mythological accounts of the oracle, which is considered to date back to Homeric times (Bronze Age), affected its course. The primitive prehistoric religious substrate and its continuity are much-debated issues in scholarship and remain a problematic aspect of research for all the sanctuaries discovered so far. These pre-existing cult myths are a common aspect of every cult centre. The founding myths of Delphi⁴²⁷, possibly the most important sanctuary of Ancient Greece, also indicate the existence of a prehistoric layer, since Delphi was originally ruled by the primitive deity Mother-Earth, who had a huge snake, Python,⁴²⁸ as guardian of the oracle.

⁴²⁶ "Artemis was 'frequently' worshiped by young women at the physical margins of the *polis*, close to territorial frontiers, and sanctuaries of Artemis were often located some distance from inhabited settlements, at the extremities of a city's territory. Sacred space in a border defined the limits of a city's territory. It protected the transitional area which divided one community from another..." (Horster 2010: 436, footnote 2); Davis 1986: 403.

⁴²⁷ O'Bryhim 2001: 68-69; Evans 1901: 127 (baetyl and Mycenaean religion).

⁴²⁸ On the identity of Mother Earth and Gaia: "...All human societies pass through a set of three evolutionary stages: the first two are characterized by matriarchy as well as the associated worship of a pre-eminent goddess, replaced by

Apollo decided to conquer the oracle and impose his cult. This “battle” between Apollo and Python-Gaia maybe suggests the new religious order of the new rising society. In primitive societies, with no specific urban organization, the existence of deities such as Gaia (Mother Earth⁴²⁹) mainly reflected the elements of Nature or the cult of Nature itself, such as tree cult⁴³⁰ (oak at Dodona, laurel at Delphi).

The comparison of the oak tree of Dodona with the laurel (bay) tree at Delphi is clear and suggests a latent competition between the oracles⁴³¹, which due to their seniority were widely respected. Continuing the founding myth of Delphi, at a first stage we can identify another similarity with Dodona, the Cretan presence⁴³². A clear reference to the Minoan religion is apparent in the respective presence of the dove-priestesses of Dodona (πελειάδες) and the priestess of the Egyptian oracle of Ammon-Zeus, who had religious bonds with the oracle at Dodona⁴³³.

god or gods in patriarchal societies in the final stage...” (Press 2012: 13, 4 and for further reading 1-25).

⁴²⁹ In the case of Delphi, the issue of the cult of Gaia/Mother Earth and her presence as a primal goddess at Delphi is contentious. Press states that “ the evidence for Mycenaean cult at Delphi is actually less certain than Sourvinou-Inwood claims...the traditional view of settlement at Delphi sees a gap in the Sub-Mycenaean and/or Protogeometric periods (late 11th- early 10th century BC) to 9th century BC...In any case it is generally agreed that any possible evidence for cult activity at Delphi is lacking between the end of Late Helladic IIIC (*circa* 1050 BC) and the late 9th or early 8th century BC...” (Press 2012: 4-6, 7); See also Sourvinou-Inwood 1987: 221, 218 and 215-241; Lloyd-Jones 1976: 61-62; Dowden 1992: 96.

⁴³⁰ Chapell 2006: 342-344; Quantz 1898: 474-475.

⁴³¹ See also the connection of Dodona and Delphi in Greek tragedy (Castrucci 2012: 21-23).

⁴³² O’Byrhim 2001: 68-69; Chapell 2006: 337-339.

⁴³³ “That, then, I heard from the Theban priests; and what follows, the prophetesses of Dodona say: that two black doves had come flying from Thebes in

Moreover, at Delphi, initially the oracular responses were given from the laurel tree. This is another connection with Dodona⁴³⁴. However, the change in the oracular responses from a tree oracle to a human oracle (anthropomorphic character of Delphi), changed the identity of the sanctuary. This change⁴³⁵ could be due to practical reasons, such as the ongoing influx of visitors seeking more and more oracular responses on a daily basis.

The high demand would dictate quicker and more efficient oracular practices⁴³⁶. In terms of ideology though, this change could reflect the superiority of *logos* (reasoned discourse) over the primitive elements of Nature, as a mean of renouncing this prehistoric background and adopting new, more expressive modes that reflect the identity of the (Archaic) organized urban centre (the *polis*). These changes occurred much later at Dodona, as we have said, and the primitive cult practices were kept intact for longer. The Delphic oracle operated by essentially using

Egypt, one to Libya and one to Dodona; the latter settled on an oak tree, and there uttered human speech, declaring that a place of divination from Zeus must be made there; the people of Dodona understood that the message was divine, and therefore established the oracular shrine. The dove which came to Libya told the Libyans (they say) to make an oracle of Ammon; this also is sacred to Zeus. Such was the story told by the Dodonaean priestesses, the eldest of whom was Promeneia and the next Timarete and the youngest Nicandra; and the rest of the servants of the temple at Dodona similarly held it true..." (Herodotus, 2.55) ; Parke 1979: 134; Parke 1971: 26-30; Strabo 7,7,12 & 7,19,2; Diodorus 15,72,3; Plutarch, Lysander 25; Pausanias 10,12,10; Hammond 1967b: 40; Parke 1967c: 16,57-65; Dotscher 1966: 121; Dakaris 1964: 110; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 44-45.

⁴³⁴ Inwood 1979: 242; Chapell 2006: 347-348; Cook 1904a: 409-410 (Daphnephoria or Laurel-bearing & Pelasgians), 418-419.

⁴³⁵ Chapell 2006: 347-348.

⁴³⁶ There is debate about the co-existence of the oak tree and the Corcyraean Dedication, and the construction phases of the Sacred House (see Charisis 2010: 61-67).

Apollo⁴³⁷ as a mediator between Zeus and mortals. Could this mean that Dodona initially was a more important oracle than Delphi, since the ruling deity was Zeus himself, who communicated with people directly, without any mediator?

The fact that Dodona, as the mythological accounts inform us, kept intact the primitive cult practices, without any violent changes, when at Delphi Apollo took over the rulership of the oracle by force (as the myth narrates), clearly shows that Dodona had the greatest ancestral cult background that was maintained almost intact (or at least experienced fewer changes) over the centuries. At Dodona, the mythological co-existence of Gaia, through Dione the wife of Zeus Dodonaios, is an excellent example of a peaceful cohabitation and religious syncretism of the older cult element with the new one⁴³⁸, without the chaotic changes that probably took place at some point at Delphi.

Delphi on the other hand had an anthropomorphic and less chthonic and mysterious cult character, where the cult and the oracle passed through the stage of Nature-worship (Gaia), to the stage of the deity (Zeus and the myth with the two eagles and the omphalos of the earth), to the heroic stage of the Archaic period with Apollo and, finally, to the anthropomorphic stage with the Pythia⁴³⁹. This transition may be reflected in the architecture of the first temples built at Delphi, as Sourvinou-Inwood⁴⁴⁰ claims.

⁴³⁷ Dietrich 1990: 10.

⁴³⁸ Dietrich 1990: 17-18.

⁴³⁹ For the role of Pythia and the poetic oracle that she delivered see Huffman 2007: 457-458 with comparative examples from the Near East.

⁴⁴⁰ Inwood 1979: 249.

The myths relating to the sanctuary of Olympia present parallels with those of Dodona. At Olympia too, Zeus was worshipped as a sky-god. A pillar was the first and most ancient residence of Oinomaos, who was struck by a thunderbolt of Zeus⁴⁴¹. The sanctuary included also a temple of Zeus Keraunios and Zeus Kataibates, the god of thunder and rain. The altar was surrounded by an enclosure wall, which delimited the space when thunder and lightning were striking the earth. Probably at Olympia, there was an older chthonic cult of the earth, which was replaced by the newer cult of Zeus⁴⁴². Furthermore, the existence of the cult of Gaia and of Themis at Olympia has been proven.

Important is the ritualistic element of the tree at all three main sanctuaries (Dodona, Delphi, Olympia). At Dodona, there is the oak tree, at Delphi the laurel tree and at Olympia the olive tree and the white poplar that Herakles brought from the land of the Hyperboreans⁴⁴³. It is interesting, moreover, that on Mount

⁴⁴¹ Tomlinson 1976: 56-64; Smith 1924: 153-168; Barringer 2005: 228-229.

⁴⁴² See Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #4 a, b (figurine of Zeus Lykaios).

⁴⁴³ One more cult at Ephyra and the Necromanteion was that of Herakles. The cult of the hero is connected with the colonization of Thesprotia by the Eleans in the Late Helladic period. Therefore, the literary sources describe to some extent the historical circumstances that led to the habitation of Epirus by the Elean colonists, who brought their cults, which they maintained and developed over time (Hammond 1967a: 476, 377, 372-373, 379-380; Dakaris 1972a: 75, 55, 60-63, 66, 81, 755 (for the various theories on the Thesprotian origins of Ephyra; Pausanias 5.14.2); Tzouvara-Souli 2000: 123-126; Dakaris 1970b: 24-25; Tzouvara-Souli 1976: 196 & footnote #665; Homer, *Iliad*, 2.653; Tzouvara-Souli 2000: 124; Diodorus Siculus, 4.36.1; Dakaris 1971: 33; Pausanias 5.13.1-3 & 5.14.3; Dakaris 1971: 16; Tzouvara-Souli 1976: 113-114; Plutarch, *Theseus*, 35,1. For the cult of 'Φερσεφόνης': Tzouvara-Souli 1976: 108, 113; Dakaris 1972a: 25-26, 81, 179-181, 210; Dakaris 1962c: 85-93; Ogden 2001: 52; Hammond 1967a: 41-42, 368, 476, 478; Dakaris 1971: 16, 30-31, 46, 177-178; Hammond 1997: 38; (Burkett 1985: 208-209); Farnell 1970: 98-99; Pausanias 6.25.2 (The cult of Hades, which can be found in the Western Peloponnese and is connected with Persephone and the Necromanteion); Dakaris 1964: 6; Tzouvara-Souli 1976: 107-108;

Lykaion, moreover, a priest prayed because of the drought it suffered, dipping an oak branch in the Hagno fountain, an act that alludes to Dodonaian rituals⁴⁴⁴.

At this point it should be noted that at the Acheron Necromanteion (the death oracle of Acheron, Epirus), the white poplar tree dominated the area around the oracle and a mythical narration links Herakles and the oracle and the tree⁴⁴⁵. In addition to this link of Olympia with Epirus, what actually links these areas and these sanctuaries is Oinomaos' sacrifice to Zeus Areios, before his chariot race with Pelops.

Zeus Areios remained a main deity of Epirus, with his cult centre located at Passaron (modern Rodotopi, Ioannina region). All these mythological connections⁴⁴⁶ between the sanctuaries are consolidated by the archaeological evidence. There were indisputable contacts between Western Greece and the Peloponnese⁴⁴⁷, since populations moved from Northern Greece,

Tzouvara-Souli 2000: 124; Homer, *Odyssey*, 1.259 & 2.328; Tzouvara-Souli 1997: 26-36; Dakaris 1977: 201-229; Dakaris 1984: 13; There are votive offerings at Dodona which are similar to respective votive offerings at Olympia, due to the presence of Eleans (Dakaris 1971: 7-8, 91).

⁴⁴⁴ Stephanos Byzantios 8,38,3.

⁴⁴⁵ Dakaris 1970b: 24-25; Dakaris 1972a: 55, 25-26, 60-63, 81, 66, 755, 179-181; Dakaris 1971: 16, 33, 46; Hammond 1967a: 377, 372-373, 379-380, 41-42, 368, 476, 478; Tzouvara-Souli 1976: 196 and footnote 665, 113-114, 108; Homer, *Iliad* 2.653; Diodorus Siculus 4.36.1; Pausanias 5.14.2 & 5.13.1-3 & 5,14,3; Plutarch, *Theseus*, 35.1; Tzouvara-Souli 2000: 124-125; Dakaris 1962b: 85-93; Ogden 2001: 52; Hammond 1997: 38; Tzouvara-Souli 2000: 126; Burkert 1985: 208-209; Farnell 1970: 98-99.

⁴⁴⁶ Hammond 1967a: 576-577, 190; Vokotopoulou 1973: 14; Dakaris 1956: 63-68; Cabanes 1997a: 82.

⁴⁴⁷ Gardner 1925: 48-51.

from Illyria, from Thessaly and Central Greece⁴⁴⁸ to the Peloponnese. As mentioned already, in some of the dedications at Dodona – the tripods, the griffins, the bronze figurines, etc. – the Peloponnesian artistic element is clear. This connection extended and matured through the colonies of the coastal area of Epirus from the Archaic period.

It might not be an exaggeration to claim that one main ideological and religious pathway runs from the Baltic to the Adriatic, through Dodona, Pindos and Thessaly to its final destination, the island of Delos and the sanctuary of Delian Apollo. This pathway is charted through the mythological account of the Hyperboreans' gifts⁴⁴⁹. Perhaps in this way the cult of Apollo spread, with the god taking different epithets in different regions (Apollo Agieus, Apollo Paphrios, and so on). Perhaps the same applies to the worship of Zeus, which spread and reached Olympia⁴⁵⁰. This religious ideology of the sanctuaries, which seems to rise from the myths, received a certain status due to the suitable choice of the location where each of the sanctuaries was built. This is the sacred landscape that Morgan suggest played a major role in the identity of any sanctuary⁴⁵¹.

⁴⁴⁸ Homer, *Iliad* 16.233; Cook 1983: 268-271; Papalexandrou 2008: 266-268.

⁴⁴⁹ Seltman 1928: 156; Sale 1961: 77.

⁴⁵⁰ Gardner 1925: 47.

⁴⁵¹ See Morgan 1994:105-142

3.3) The visitors and the network of Dodona

It is a fact that the classical literary sources are reticent regarding Dodona, which is not the case for Delphi and Olympia. The urban development at the various sanctuaries presupposes a certain political organization, which was determined by both religious and political needs. There is very little information on the hierarchical organization of Dodona. Most probably the protagonists of the cult were the priestess who gave the oracles and the priests (Selloi/Helloi) who interpreted them.

The existence of a (female) prophet was not something rare. “In Greek’s experience the wandering manteis or seers were almost all foreigners. Interstate cults such as Delphi, Dodona, and Olympia all stood beyond the bounds of the polis and many functioned under the aegis of powerful women. Even today in Greece, prophecy is the office of women, who in communities such as Inner Mani, are responsible for reading death omens and then interpreting death itself on the behalf of the community through ritual laments”⁴⁵². However, at the sanctuary of Dodona the priests (Selloi/Helloi) functioned as interpreters of the divine will and not as intermediaries. There were two types of divination: the natural or inartistic, in which the god “possessed” the spirit of the prophet and delivered the oracular messages through him/her⁴⁵³, and the inductive or artistic, “where the

⁴⁵² Walsh 2003: 67; Euripides, *Melanippe*, 494, 12-17.

⁴⁵³ Huffman 2007: 452-453.

oracular messages delivered directly from the deity and the priests interpreted the oracle”⁴⁵⁴.

Through the “sound”⁴⁵⁵ or “voice” and through the “movement” came the art of divination⁴⁵⁶. At Dodona, as discussed in Chapter I, the sound came through the rustle of the tree leaves, through the ring of the bronze vessels encircling the sacred oak tree and through the Corcyraean Dedication, which may have replaced the oak tree at some point. The existence of the oak tree refers to the ancestral, totemic symbols, the autochthonous lifestyle and the tree cult, which can be found in the cult of Minoans and Mycenaeans⁴⁵⁷.

All this magic and all this oracular art had to become more persuasive for the people, through more tangible examples of divination. Therefore, the visitors should have participated more actively in the cult and communicated with a more “human” god.

⁴⁵⁴ Leondakis 1986: 20-22; Darby Nock 1942: 475-476.

⁴⁵⁵ See Appendix II: Tripods #61: these bronze objects could be used as a tool of divination to create sound.

⁴⁵⁶ Tzouvara-Souli 1998: 27-34; Leondakis 1996: 19-20.

⁴⁵⁷ “...Hence, in the earliest conceptions, trees were spirits and the form of the spirit was that of the tree alone. This is a state of animism and not polytheism. Later, when a clearer distinction of a spirit and matter comes, the tree is only the habitation of a spirit, which has a more or less human shape and the symbolic representation of such spirits employs a dress of leaves or flowers or branch carried in the hand...” (Quantz 1898: 468-480; Evans 1901: 106, 469-470); See Appendix I #58 (a, b, c, d) the depiction of sacred trees; of rural sanctuaries and scenes of divination in Minoan and Mycenaean art; See also Appenix I: #62c the art of divination with the sacred doves of Dodona; For the various theories of the matriarchal character of primitive societies and the role of Mother Earth, see Press 2012: 13-16; See also the connection between the Minoan Mother Earth / Great Nature Goddess and the peak cults (Dietrich 1969: 270-274).

At Dodona, this expectation was implemented through the oracular lead tablets⁴⁵⁸.

How did the use of these tablets start? Possibly the answer will not come through the excavations only, but through the natural characteristics of the oak leaves. Williams⁴⁵⁹ described a chemical experiment which could be the initiation point for the oracular technique of the lead tablets:

“Messages were divined by soaking oak leaves in the holy spring. Oak leaves have veins rich in tannins and I find that by soaking such leaves in dilute iron sulphate solutions hieroglyphics are produced on the dry leaves, which could easily pass for distorted Greek characters.”

Therefore, the sacred spring⁴⁶⁰ and the oak leaves are closely related, especially as the water in the environs of Dodona demonstrably has a high iron content. Without doubt, the lead tablets give a range of information about the religious framework of Dodona, while attesting the direct and clear relationship between the sanctuary and the visitors. Many of these tablets were found by the first excavator, C. Carapanos, in 1876 and

⁴⁵⁸ See chapter 2.4 ii above.

⁴⁵⁹ Watson Williams 1959: 204; Dakaris 1975: 91-92.

⁴⁶⁰ Another cult at Dodona, linked with the sacred spring but without any architectural traces to prove its existence, was that of the Nymphs (Homer, *Iliad*, 21. 185-195; Hesiod, *Argonautica*, 353; Apollodorus 1.2.7; Plutarch, *Pyrrhus*, 1; Lucretius, *Re Rerum Natura* 6.879-887; Pausanias 3.25.4; Tzouvara-Souli 2007b: 157-172 and footnote 169; Tzouvara-Souli 1988/89: 50-57; Parke 1967c: 151, 171, 234-235, 67-68, footnote 35; Hadzsits 1909: 46; Cook 1904b: 86, 88; Carapanos 1878: 31, footnote 1; Evangelidis 1935: 198-205; Cook 1903c: 179, 185; Tzouvara-Souli 1976: 21-46; Dakaris 1987: 45, table 32d; Garoufalias 1975: 683-684; Dakaris 1964: 14, footnote 1-3; Cross 1932: 7, Farneli 1970: 285-289; Farnell 1970: 285-289; Dakaris 1964: 14; Garoufalias 1975: 683-684 (for relations between Epirus and Athens, see Chapter 3.1 above).

most of them make explicit reference to Zeus Dodonaios and his wife Dione⁴⁶¹. According to myth and as recounted by Sophocles in his play *Trachiniae*⁴⁶², the hero Herakles received an oracle written upon such tablets and had to follow some instructions delivered orally by the oracle too. This is not surprising, since oracular utterances were given by many Greek oracles.

Numerous oracular tablets have come to light at Dodona since the beginning of excavations at the site. These allow us to identify a vast number of regional names and identify the social background of the visitors to Dodona, along with the matters⁴⁶³ that concerned them. Jaime Curbera⁴⁶⁴ remarks on the “personal names” on these tablets:

“The new tablets (4200) from Dodona contain some 1200 personal names of mothers, fathers, peasants, artisans, soldiers, slaves and other forgotten individuals from the 5th to the 3rd century BC. Apart from their poor conservation, there are two main reasons why not all the tablets have names. The first had to do with how the oracle worked, for no name was needed for the enquiries to recognize the god’s answer as theirs (a simple mark or abbreviation on the outside part of the folded tablets made identification possible). The second is that questions were addressed to the god himself, as in a prayer, the god knew

⁴⁶¹ Evangelidis 1935: 252, 258; Roberts 1880: 230-231; for lead tablets in general see: Faranone and Obbink 1991: 17-21; Nilsson 1981: 125-126.

⁴⁶² Bowman 1999: 335-350.

⁴⁶³ See Chapter 2.4 ii above (the classification of the lead tablets by Robert and Cross).

⁴⁶⁴ Curbera 2013: 419-420 (Appendix).

exactly who the enquirers were and that was sufficient. This explains also why patronymics and ethnics are seldom used (as in the very formal tablets 35A of Παρινος Κυμαιοσ ευ άνδρον). As a result the names very often have little or no context... .”

In some inscriptions, Doric female names – together with the name of the husband – can be identified: Θευδότη (tablet 3400A: τι κα Ποιώσα); Βοίσκη (tablet 1017A: τίνι και θεώι ευχόμεθα); Ελένη (tablet 1787: επερωτήι) and Λήτων (tablet 959A: Λόκα). This is a very important and rare phenomenon⁴⁶⁵. Probably the request were written on behalf of these women by the sanctuary officials⁴⁶⁶. In ancient Greece, women were excluded from public life, which was a male domain. Mentioning a woman directly was a taboo, since men were the heads of the household and the legal representatives of females; the father, brother or any other male family member and the husband in the case of a married woman. Moreover, all the literary texts from antiquity were written predominantly for a male readership, therefore the female presence is almost absent⁴⁶⁷. It is interesting that some female names appear on the oracular

⁴⁶⁵ An inscription from Dodona (dimensions: 0.255 x 0.155 & 0.084 x 0.076 m, size of letters: 0.035 x 0.010 m) is a list of names of citizens from various areas of Epirus who had offered money as dedications for the reconstruction of the temples and buildings of the sanctuary. No female name is mentioned, which is a sign of the undervalued position of women in Epirus. This inscription was probably posted on a public building, as is assumed from the little hole in its upper right edge (Antoniou 1991: 27-31); Tzouvara-Souli 2007a: 106-107 and footnote 145; Parke 1967c: 263, footnote 1; 268 footnote 15, 113; Kapparis 2003: 9; Gould 1980: 43; Mack 2014: 155-158.

⁴⁶⁶ Curbera 2013: 420.

⁴⁶⁷ Gould 1980: 43, 50; Kapparis 2003: 9.

tablets written by slaves or masters who ask the oracle about matters of manumission and freedom⁴⁶⁸.

Among the dedications at Dodona, the excavations brought to light numerous pieces of jewellery⁴⁶⁹, which could reveal information about the identity and the social class of the female or male owners of these, and therefore of visitors to the sanctuary. However, this category of finds remains unpublished.

To return to the lead tablets, these are also a source of many regional names, which give us clues to the extent of the network of Dodona. The names mentioned in the lead tablets are Dorian, with the majority of them from Northwest Greece, Boeotia and Thessaly; with the last region in particular, Dodona's ties were strong from Homeric times⁴⁷⁰. Ionian names belong mainly to visitors from Euboea and Athens; the latter⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁸ See slave names in Curbera 2013: 420-421.

⁴⁶⁹ Jewels constituted a more personal gift and were easily carried, which made them a common dedication. They could be fibulae, bracelets and rings decorated with engraved motifs inspired by the animal kingdom, as well as by the mortal or the mythological world. A few examples of this category of dedications are presented in Appendix II: Other Finds.

⁴⁷⁰ Strabo 7.7.7 & 7.7.12; 8.3.15; Curnow 2004:58-60; Homer, *Iliad*, 18.233 & see also 1.37; Stephanos Byzantios, "Dodona"; Herodotus 7.176; Parke 1979: 30-31; Karadimitriou 2004: 37-38; Parke 1971: 28-32; Hammond 1975: 151, 143; Giagas 1954: 12-13; Hammond 1967a: 411; Dakaris 1964: 6-8; Evangelidis 1947: 12.

⁴⁷¹ The Athenians also consulted Dodonaian Zeus, while their sacred envoys (*thearodokoi*) offered a bronze table as a dedication. Another question of the Athenians to the oracle concerned the day of celebration of Dionysos' cult and the dedication of gifts to Apollo and Zeus. There were a few more questions of Athenians to the oracle of Dodona during the ensuing centuries. This friendly attitude of the Athenians to the oracle of Zeus was motivated by their need to find new allies and, additionally, a sacred ally that could legitimize indirectly their actions through the divine responses. The rise of Philip II of Macedon and his later control over the oracle of Delphi compromised the objectivity of its pronouncements, since the Pythia and the oracle seem to take Philip's side (*ἡ Πυθία Φιλιππίζει*). In 332 BC, Athens lost all its rights to consult the oracle of Delphi, because Athenians

consulted Dodona several times. A few enquirers came from South Italy and Sicily. The non-Greek names are probably of enquirers from Central Greece.

According to Curbera, out of approximately 1,200 names, only three are Thracian and ten Illyrian or names usually known from the region of Illyria. Many names are of slaves who were named usually after their place of origin, such as the example of Σινδος, who was Scythian. However, Curbera points out that the “use of ethnics as names is common in Greek, so that nothing can be said about the status of Ἀπτικά, Βοιωτός, Δούλιος, Θηβαίος or Πήγινος’. As is known, no Greek name can be said to be exclusive to slaves – like Classical art, onomastics show little or no difference between slaves and the free”⁴⁷².

A problematical find with respect to persons who visited Dodona is a bronze inscription⁴⁷³ of the fourth or the early third century BC, which came to light in the early excavations of the sanctuary. A Zakynthian by the name of Agathon indicates a

questioned the exclusion of one Athenian athlete from the Olympic Games. During the period 330-332 BC (Philip II’s successor, Alexander, was by now in Asia), the oracle of Dodona asked the Athenians to decorate the statue of Dione and honour the goddess. The Athenians did what the oracle asked, by conducting a very costly ritual sacrifice. This event prompted Olympias, the mother of Alexander the Great and princess of the Molossian royal house, to send an angry letter to the Athenians, in which she cautioned them to stay away from the Epirot oracle, since it was a part of her territory and they had no right to engage with it. Olympias perhaps considered that the Athenian action aimed at her propitiation, in order to gain influence over Northwest Greece (Thompson Burr 1982: 161-162; for the oracle of Dodona, see Karadimitriou 2004: 111-132; Eleutheratou 2016: 191-193; See also Appendix II: Other Finds #139 (the Marble fragments from the Athenian Acropolis); Piccinini 2016: 168-169; Kittela 2013: 42-44.

⁴⁷² Curbera 2013: 419-421; Chapinal Heras 2017: 27-28.

⁴⁷³ Fraser 2003: 26-40 (IG IX, 12, 4, 1750); Carapanos 1878: 39-40 & Pl. 22, 1; See Appendix II: Tablets and Inscriptions #35 a, b.

bond of *proxenia* between his family and the mythical seeress, Cassandra of Troy⁴⁷⁴. Due to the specific content of this text, it is not easy to classify it in the category of dedicatory inscriptions, even though it is noted as a dedication (“*Ἀνέθηκε*” or “*ανάθημα Ἀγάθωνος*”, etc.)⁴⁷⁵. The presence of male genitalia in the lower part of the inscription raises further questions, since this could be an apotropaic or a fertility symbol, alluding to the continuity of Agathon’s blood line. It could also equally refer to the mythical rape of Cassandra by Ajax⁴⁷⁶.

An interesting find is an inscription⁴⁷⁷ referring to the right of “*politeia*” and other honours conferred by the Molossian League. It was discovered by Evangelidis and its fragmentary state made it difficult to read. Nonetheless, it seems that no names of individuals or cities are recorded.

Another special epigraphic find is an inscribed grave stele uncovered in the 1968 excavations on the west side of the bouleuterion⁴⁷⁸. It is a unique find in the sanctuary of Dodona and one of the very few finds of this kind at any oracle. Its proximity to the bouleuterion adds to its significance. Very few burials have been revealed in the sanctuary and no trace of a cemetery yet. Inside the sanctuary limits, there were some

⁴⁷⁴ Sophocles, *Trach.* 1171; Pseudo-Apollodorus 3,6-7; Hesiod, *Ioiae*, fragm 240,5; Dionysius of Halicarnassus 1.51.1; Virgil, *Aeneiad*, 374; Fraser 2003: 36-38; Dakaris 1964: 125.

⁴⁷⁵ Fraser 2003: 38, 36; Fraser 1954: 56-58.

⁴⁷⁶ Fraser 2003: 39-40.

⁴⁷⁷ Evangelidis 1957c: 247-255.

⁴⁷⁸ Katsikoudis 1994: 411-421; Dakaris 1968a: 52, 53.

burials near but outside the acropolis of Dodona. Evangelidis revealed a looted cist grave of the Roman period, while two more cist graves of the same period were found, one near the bouleuterion and the other one on the acropolis⁴⁷⁹.

The stele from the bouleuterion is made of local limestone, a material widely used for the buildings of Dodona; it was difficult for the architects to obtain other materials, such as marble, which is quite rare in Epirus and not of good quality. The inscription is dated to the second or first century BC, but this is quite vague as it is based on the type of the letters⁴⁸⁰ rather than the form of the architectural elements and the iconographic motifs used. These motifs refer to other stelai found elsewhere in Western Greece (especially those conforming to the typology shaped during the 3rd century BC and kept in the 2nd century BC). Other elements, such as the floral decoration (inscribed or relief), with oak tree and leaves, olive trees⁴⁸¹, laurel trees, ivy, etc., are all associated with the “Herakles knot”⁴⁸² motif and its cult symbolism.

It seems that the oak tree was not only a symbol of the Molossians and the cult of Zeus Dodonaios, but also was linked with death rituals and chthonic cult, as can be seen from some relevant motifs on grave stelai from Northwest Greece. Oak

⁴⁷⁹ Dakaris 1972a: 94; Dakaris 1973: 88,92; Dakaris 1986: 80; Katsikoudis 1994: 412.

⁴⁸⁰ Dakaris 1968a: 53; Katsikoudis 1994: 416-417.

⁴⁸¹ See Appendix II: Inscriptions and lead tablets #34 as a comparative example.

⁴⁸² Andreou 1981: 122; Katsikoudis 1994: 417.

branches or oak wreaths, which often accompanied the dead, due to the ritualistic character of the tree and its connection with the primitive-ancestral chthonic cult, sanctified both the burials and the deceased⁴⁸³. The use of this motif is linked with Ambrakia, the capital city of Pyrrhos' kingdom, which is, in turn, linked with Dodona⁴⁸⁴. The oak tree can be found as a decorative motif on Epirot roof tiles and coins⁴⁸⁵, mainly inside the limits of Epirus and rarely outside the region. In addition, the oak wreath was the prize awarded to victors of the Naia Games⁴⁸⁶.

The monument was probably a funerary stele of a father and a son, and it is strange that it was found in a public building space. Perhaps it had tumbled down from the overlying slope, along with other finds, and the grave was outside the citadel's walls. From the excavation data, there is no indication that the stele was placed there after the Roman invasion of the

⁴⁸³ For the link between the Royal House of Macedonia and the Royal House of Epirus, see Kottaridi 2013: 145, 153, 316; Katsikoudis 1994: 417-418; Evangelidis-Dakaris 1964: 12, footnotes 1, 2, 13, 121, 130, 152; Dakaris 1960: 35, footnotes 7 and 76 respectively; Also oak wreaths found elsewhere in Epirus, at Michalitsi, Preveza (Dakaris 1961/62: 190) and at Ambrakia (Tsirivakos 1965: 357); Katsikoudis 1994: 418, footnote 36.

⁴⁸⁴ Katsikoudis 1994: 418-419, footnote 38; Franke 1967: pl. 54, 1-5, 7 & pls 9-11; Leveque 1957: 228; Dakaris 1964: 121-124; Gravani 1988/89: 97 and footnote 42; Fotiadi 2013: 42-54.

⁴⁸⁵ Dakaris 1980b: 30; Katsikoudis 1994: 419; Tzouvara-Souli 2007b: 159-161; Tzouvara-Souli 2000: 130-133.

⁴⁸⁶ Franke 1961: 152, footnotes 53, 60, 299, 322 and footnote 49; Katsikoudis 1994: 419; Dakaris 1960: 30, 34; Dakaris 1989: 178, 179; Dakaris 1989: 64-65, 181; Franke 1955: 45, footnote 198; Evangelidis, Dakaris 1959: 148; Dakaris 1972a: 86 §251; Cabanes 1976: 551 #26.

sanctuary. Future research will perhaps yield more evidence of this stele and its role⁴⁸⁷.

Information about the provenance of visitors to Dodona is also drawn from the ex-voto bronzes. Enquirers and donors came to Dodona from various places, such as Leukas⁴⁸⁸, Macedonia (Pharsala)⁴⁸⁹ and Athens.⁴⁹⁰ Significant ex-voto bronzes highlight the respect that worshippers had for Dodonaian Zeus. The dedication of Aischon from the Akarnanian city of Stratos is an emblematic offering that attests his profound reverence for the god. It depicts a coiled snake with raised head⁴⁹¹ and bears the name of the donor: “*Αίσχων Δι Ναιῶι δωρου εσπρατον ανέθηκεν*”. The inscription dates this votive offering *ca* 300 BC or earlier. This find has some resemblance to another inscribed bronze relief from the sanctuary of Dodona (4th century BC⁴⁹²): Circular and framed by two relief circles on the inner and

⁴⁸⁷ Katsikoudis 1994: 420-421; Dakaris 1968a: 51,52; Dakaris 1986: 76, 78; Dakaris 1989: 181-184.

⁴⁸⁸ Philokleadaos son of Damophilos, from Leukas, dedicated a bronze vessels to Zeus Naios of Dodona: “*Φιλοκλέδαο (ς) Δαμοφίλου Λευκάδιος Δι Νάιος*”. Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 94-95; Carapanos 1878: 40, pl. 23 #1 & 1bis; Tzouvara-Souli 1991b: 246 and footnote 21; See also Appendix II: Ex-voto Bronzes #38.

⁴⁸⁹ Panaitios from Pharsala, also dedicated a bronze kylix, which preserves at the sides of the rim a dedicatory inscription of the 4th century BC (330-300 BC): “*Πανίτιος Φαρσάλιος Δι Ναιῶι/ ανέθηκε*” (Evangelidis 1935: 229 #7, image 6; Tzouvara-Souli 2008:95).

⁴⁹⁰ From Philinos the Athenian (5th-4th century BC), who dedicated a box with the inscription “*Δι Ναιῶ Φιλίνος Αθήναιος*” (Carapanos 1878: 43 #11, pl.24 #3, 4; Tzouvara-Souli 2008:95); See Appendix II: Ex-voto Bronzes #41.

⁴⁹¹ Fraser 1954: 56-58; Parke 1967b: 278; Dakaris 1995a: 108; Dakaris 1967: 94; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 95-97.

⁴⁹² Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 97-98; Dakaris 1973: 66, 74; Cross 1932: 8; Hammond 1967a: 588-589.

the outer side, it bears the inscription “ΒΑΣΙ (...) ΡΟΥ”, which can be completed as “ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ”. Due to some small rivet holes on the circumference of this relief, it is considered to be a cover or a fragment from a shield. In this case, it could be a dedication from none other than Pyrrhos, king of Epirus, who dedicated weapons and shields at the sanctuary as a memoir of his victories⁴⁹³.

Another interesting *ex-voto* is the dedication from the Illyrian Gangrios⁴⁹⁴. It is a bronze greave with bores and a dedicatory inscription of the fifth century BC on inserted silver strips: “Μ. Γάγγριος Αριδαί [ος ἀνέθηκε Διὶ Ναίωι”. Under this inscription, there is an insertion hole or a hole from a spear. Perhaps Aridaios was the king of the Aridaians, an Illyrian tribal group which dominated the area of the Lower Drinos, north of Epidamnos.

A find bearing only the dedicator’s name is a bronze mirror⁴⁹⁵, a gift from a woman named Polyxene to Zeus Dodonaios: “Πολυξένα/τα γενὰ νιθη/ τι τοι Δι/ και χρήματα” (5th century BC). In the fourth century BC, a certain Dorobios dedicated to Zeus Naios a bronze flask⁴⁹⁶ with the inscription: “Δωρόβιος Διὶ Ναοί ἀνέθηκε ἃ Διοπέθης εὐξάντο” inscribed inside

⁴⁹³ For Pyrrhos and his era, see Chapter 2.3 above.

⁴⁹⁴ Strabo 7.5.1 & 7.5.3; Appian, *Illyrica* 3; Stephanos Byzantios, “Ardea”; Dio Cassius, frag. 49.2; Dakaris 1966: 76-77, pl.78a; Vokotopoulou 1973: 57; Hammond 1967a: 614; Hammond 1967a: 586, 591, 595; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 98-99.

⁴⁹⁵ Carapanos 1878: 41, 45 #15, pl. 25 #1; Tzouvara-Souli 2008:99; See Appendix II: Lead tablets #44.1; For female names on the lead tablets, see above in the current chapter.

⁴⁹⁶ Carapanos 1878: 41-42, pl. 23#6; Parke 1967b: 277 #11; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 100; See Appendix II: Ex-voto bronzes #39.6.

the rim. A kylix was dedicated by two members of the same family, as noted in the inscription (4th century BC: 330-300 BC): “Ανταγαθίδας Δι Ναιω/ Αυτοκράτιδας Δι Νάω”⁴⁹⁷.

Large bronze vessels are also a common dedication to Zeus, such as the oenochoe⁴⁹⁸ of the fourth century BC, offered by a man name Bemaïos: “Βημαιος Φυλεός Δι Ναιίωι δωρον”. Here too, the inscription is written inside the rim. A similar inscription appears on a vessel fragment: “Σωταιρος ανέθηκε Δι Ναιω” of the fourth or third century BC.⁴⁹⁹ Other vessel fragments with dedicatory inscriptions are the skyphoi⁵⁰⁰ with conical body, inverted rim and small base. On one of them is a fragmentary inscription: “Ε [...] Π[...] ΑΝ[Ε] Θ [ΗΚΕ] Δ [ΙΙΝ] ΑΙΩ Δ] ΩΡΟΝ”, while on its base is another inscription: “ΕΥΠΙΟ”, of the fourth century (330-300 BC). Noteworthy among the latest votive offerings at Dodona are a lantern⁵⁰¹ with an inscription of the third century BC on its base: “Γλαύκων Δι Ναιω Διώνη”, and an iron strigil of the first century BC with a dedicatory inscription from an athlete by the name of Zeniketis⁵⁰².

⁴⁹⁷ Carapanos 1878: 44 # 12, pl.24# 4; See Appendix II: Ex-voto Bronzes #41.4.

⁴⁹⁸ Carapanos 1878: 44 #13, pl. 24 #5; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 101; See Appendix II: Ex-voto Bronzes #41.5.

⁴⁹⁹ Carapanos 1878: 44 #12, Pl. 23#5; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 101; See Appendix II: Ex-voto Bronzes #39.5.

⁵⁰⁰ Gravani 1988/89: 94-97; Carapanos 1878: pl. 61, 3, 5; Evangelidis 1935: 195-212 (for the Hellenistic pottery of Epirus); Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 101-102; See Appendix II: Ex-voto Bronzes #39.8.

⁵⁰¹ Carapanos 1878: 43 #7, pl. 23 #7 & 86 #6, pl. 42 #5; See Appendix II: Ex-voto Bronzes #44.3.

⁵⁰² Carapanos 1878: 47 #18, Pl.25 #3, 3bis; Roberts 1881: 107; Tzouvara-Souli 2008: 102; See Appendix II: Ex-voto Bronzes #42.8.

The athletes who participated in the Naia Games dedicated to Zeus Naios were a special category of visitors to Dodona. Participation in athletic games and other contests (music or poetry competitions) was a usual practice of the elite class, to display its martial valour and bravery, and to assert a special relationship with the deity by making costly dedications and organizing cult spectacles⁵⁰³. The new ruling class revived through the Games the glorious past of the mythical heroes⁵⁰⁴. Originally, the chariot races and other contests were taking place as funerary rituals to honour the dead, as in the case of the chariot race of Patrokles and of Pelops.

However, it is surprising that at Dodona there is little evidence of dedications made by athletes. The honorific statues set up in the sanctuary are of political figures and the excavations have not uncovered any statue of a victor in the Naia Games. That is not the case for Olympia, with its statues of victors in the Olympic Games, who had a panhellenic reputation. The only finds from Dodona linked with the Naia Games are a few tripod fragments, some dedicatory vessels, a figurine of an actor, a figurine of a girl-runner and two bronze figurines of male boxers⁵⁰⁵, which remind us of other similar finds from Olympia. The fact that a large part of the sanctuary of Dodona remains unexcavated (including the stadium), deprives us of vital

⁵⁰³ Neer 2004: 64-65 and footnotes 4, 85; Neer 2001: 282-283.

⁵⁰⁴ Scott 2010: 221; Barringer 2005: 228-229; Tomlinson 1976: 62-63; Cook 1904a: 403-405, 412-413.

⁵⁰⁵ For the tripod fragments see Appendix II: Ex- voto Bronzes #36 and 37; For dedicatory vessels see Appendix II: Ex-voto Bronzes #44; For the figurine of the actor see Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #66 (a, b, c); For the girl-runner and the two male boxers see Appendix II: Bronze Figurines #39, and #50 and #71 respectively.

information about the Games and the importance that these festivals⁵⁰⁶ had for the participants. At Dodona, the various theatrical or music competitions were held in the theatre built by Pyrrhos.

Some of the finds from early Dodona, such as the “Peschiera type” knives or the single-edged axes, are exotic items originating from the Balkan region and Central Europe, while some others, such as the double axes, are encountered at many sites in the Aegean or the Mediterranean region⁵⁰⁷. It is generally accepted that Dodona had an international reputation during its early –prehistoric– phase, but this view is based only on inference from mythological narratives. It cannot be proved by the archaeological data and nor can the continuity of cult from these times.

During the Archaic period, the network of Dodona evidently extended to Southern Greece, as attested by a large number of Peloponnesian votive offerings of high quality⁵⁰⁸, which reflects the oracle’s fame. Historical events inevitably brought the Peloponnesians to Epirus and to Dodona. Later, during the fifth and fourth centuries BC, the Peloponnesian presence declined, as the Athenians evidently paid homage to Zeus, after the establishment of new political ties with the young Epirot

⁵⁰⁶ Barringer 2005: 228-229; Woodbuen Hyde 1912: 203-229; For the Games and the victors as evidence for the identity of a *polis*, see: Hansen, Nielsen 2004: 107-110.

⁵⁰⁷ See Chapter 2.4 ii above.

⁵⁰⁸ See Chapter 2.2 above for Archaic Dodona and see Appendix II: Bronze Tripods and Appendix II: Bronze Vessels, for the various Peloponnesian votive offerings presented.

kingdom of Tharypas⁵⁰⁹. From 300 BC, the reign of Pyrrhos took Epirus out of its former isolation. However, it did not establish Dodona as a panhellenic sanctuary. In this period the dedications come mainly from the Epirot region and the surrounding areas⁵¹⁰. Only the Naia Games could be the reason for other visitors to travel all the way to Dodona, from other parts of the Greek world⁵¹¹, such as Illyria⁵¹² and Northwest Greece.

Given the geographical isolation and remoteness of Dodona⁵¹³, and the difficulty of reaching the sanctuary, it is surmised that the visitors were mainly wealthy people, who could afford the expenses of such a journey. This would seem to be corroborated by the kind of dedications, pre-eminently bronzes, so many of which have been preserved, despite the invasions and plunder of the site over the centuries. However, the archaeological data suggest that visitors to Dodona belonged to all social classes: athletes, artisans, peasants, soldiers and generals, slaves, aristocrats, kings⁵¹⁴, children with their

⁵⁰⁹ See Chapter 2.2 above.

⁵¹⁰ Parke 1967b: 278.

⁵¹¹ "It could not safely be assumed that all dedications came from enquirers. But as Dodona was such an out of the way centre and many of these gifts were manufactured at some considerable distance, it is more likely that they were brought or sent by grateful enquirers that they can be otherwise accounted for" (Parke 1967b: 279).

⁵¹² As comparanda, see the Paramythia bronzes, Chapter 1.3 above; Hammond 1967a: 580-581); Tzouvara- Souli 2000: 127-128.

⁵¹³ Chappell 2006: 345; Sourvinou-Inwood 1979: 233.

⁵¹⁴ See Chapter 2.4 above; See also Chapter 2.3 for the royal dedications of King Pyrrhos.

mothers and fathers, and other individuals from Epirus, Thessaly, Illyria, the Peloponnese, Athens/Attica, Northwest Greece and, most probably, from the Haimos Peninsula, Italy and Asia Minor.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹⁵ Some of the coins found at Dodona may have been used in economic transactions or may have been dedications. Coins of Corcyra, Aegina, Dyrrachion, Damastion, Thyrraeion, the Thessalian League (Larisa), Boeotia, Chalkis, Corinth, Sikyon, Achaia, Macedonia could highlight the identity or origin of the visitors too. However, due to the lack of information, it would be unsafe to extract any further conclusions on the use of these coins as dedications (Katsikoudis 2013: 314-321).

3.4 Final Conclusion and Future Research

Religious worship in ancient Epirus displays unique characteristics. The Epirots adopted the Greek-Olympian deities, especially Zeus, whose cult was practised in many places in the region: Dodona as Naios, Chaonia as Keraunios, Bouthroton and Kassope as Soter, Athamania as Akraios and Passaron as Areios. In Epirus, the cult of Dione also had a different and significant character, as Zeus' wife. However, cult retained a rather primitive character, as apparent in the case of the Oracle of Dodona.

At this sanctuary a few cult practices that seem to be linked with the ancestral cult of the Homeric period lived on. This mixture of old and new elements⁵¹⁶ in the religion composes a religious pattern unique to Epirus. The isolation of Epirus perhaps favoured the survival of older cult practices, which were later incorporated into the new religion, such as worship of Dione, who is believed by some scholars to have replaced the matriarchal cult of Mother-Earth, a theory now challenged by the evidence. Mythological narrations⁵¹⁷ imply the existence of a lost or forgotten prehistoric cult layer, which is difficult for us to identify, with the existed archaeological data. Religion played such an important role for the Epirot tribes that it became part of the political institutions and defined the credibility of the ruling class, as in the case of the oath sworn by the king and the other lords at Passaron.

⁵¹⁶ Walsh 2003: 64-68; Leondakis 1996: 24-25.

⁵¹⁷ See Chapter 3.2 above, concerning the mythological background of Dodona, Delphi and Olympia respectively, which imply the existence of an early cult.

The isolation of Epirus came to an end during the Hellenistic period and the political situation was redefined. During those years, religion primarily served the political aims of Pyrrhos, who used propaganda to consolidate his status as monarch of the Kingdom of Epirus and to create a powerful state that could affect the course of history and the status quo of the Hellenic world. The oracle of Dodona became the paradigm of Pyrrhos' propagandistic manipulation of religion. Nonetheless, this situation helped Epirus to assert its position and to put Dodona in the spotlight of religious interest, at least by the time of the Roman Invasion.

Under the Romans, cult continued to exist in rather limited context. Nevertheless, Dodona remained important. The various offerings are valuable witnesses that can reveal information about the cult, the visitors and the administration of the oracle. However, no category of dedications is able to reveal anything special or unique about the nature of cult activity at Dodona. Tripods, vessels, jewellery, terracottas, bronze reliefs, weapons and armour, statues and figurines, along with inscriptions and even lead tablets are common finds in almost every Greek sanctuary. The number and the provenance of the finds point to the historical changes that took place at Dodona and affected the course of the sanctuary through time.

As we have mentioned already, during the eighth and the seventh century BC Dodona received offerings mainly from Corinth and other Peloponnesian city-states, while from the sixth century BC there is a gradual decline in the various offerings.

Obviously, there is much to be reconsidered regarding early Dodona and the possible cult activity there. However, the lack of any systematic study of the early finds hinders this possibility. Not only is the pace of excavations and studies of the finds slow, Dodona remains unexcavated to a great extent, with an entire citadel unrevealed, along with its stadium and possibly other buildings.

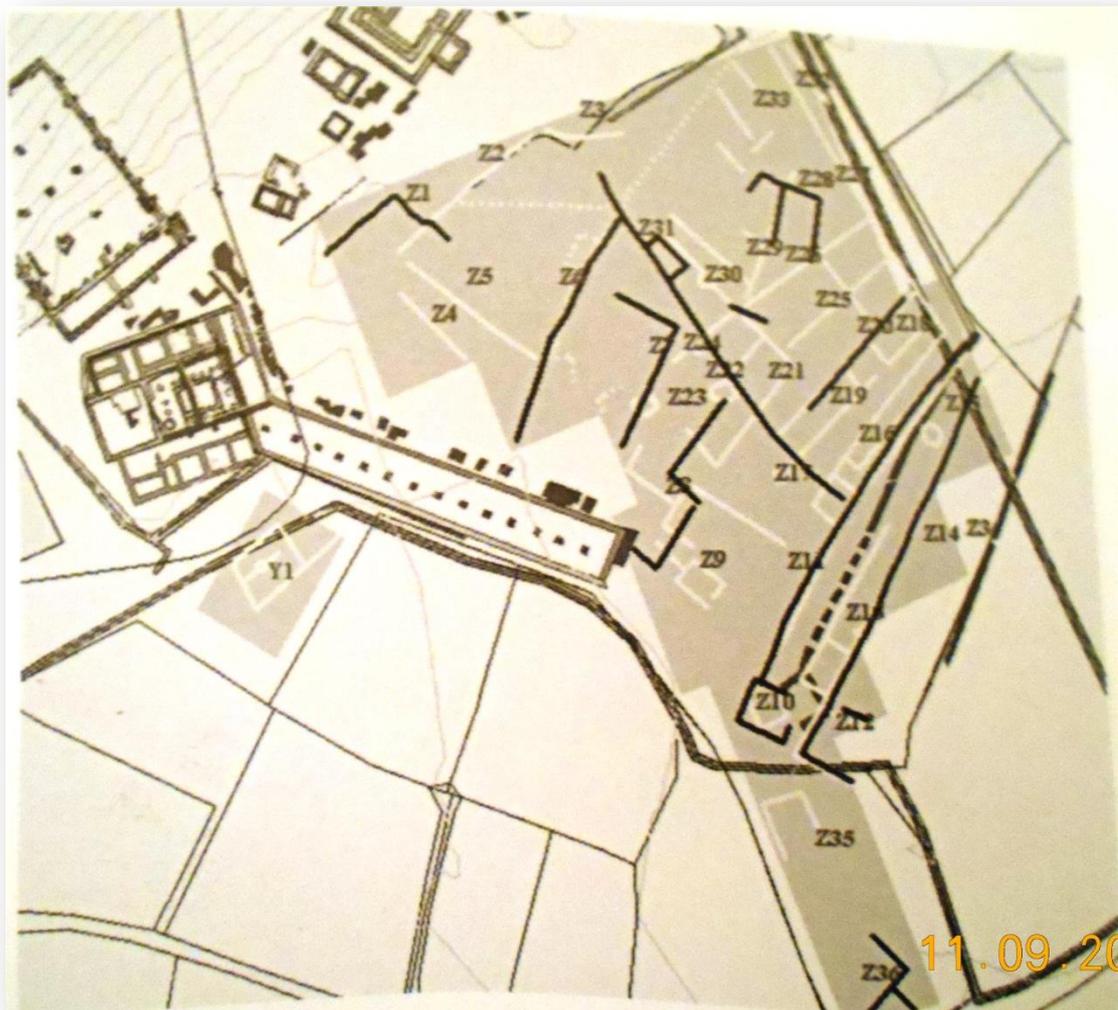


Fig 2: Aerial cartography of patterns of unexcavated buildings in the south part of the sanctuary (source: Vlachopoulou, Gravani, Tzouvara-Souli 2014: 21-42, fig. 51)

Moreover, the excavated material, such as the pottery, the coins and various categories of finds, remains for the most part unstudied and unpublished. The finds presented here in the 'catalogue' of the various offerings, come only from publications and from public museums and exhibitions. However, these are only a small sample of the actual number of dedications, which run into thousands, dispersed, as we have said, in the various collections of the National Archaeological Museum of Athens, the Archaeological Museum of Ioannina and some private collections, as pointed out to me by the archaeologist Dr Christos Kleitsas, curator of the Archaeological Museum of Ioannina. My intention, when I was conducting the research and writing the present thesis, was to present for the first time an overview of the published dedications and to try to give some idea of the character of Dodona through the finds.

In my view, Dodona was a sanctuary loved by the common people, respected by kings and the elite class, and influenced by the historical, political, social and even religious factors prevailing in each period. I have touched on the issues of the network of Dodona and the identity of the visitors, which offer scope for more detailed study and analysis. The same applies to the dedications, since each category should be studied separately in all aspects. The purpose of this research was to present all the published dedications and information, so as to provide a basic guide for anyone wishing to delve deeper into the archaeology and history of Dodona.

To sum up, the oracle of Dodona expressed in the best possible way the ancestral cult, which remained essentially pure, with the presence of Zeus at the roots of the oracular oak tree,

as symbol of the primitive totemic and nature cult of the earlier tribal societies. However, this ancestral character that Dodona kept intact through the centuries, perhaps shaped the relations the sanctuary forged with the people and formed its cult identity in Classical and Hellenistic times. Dodona remained in popular consciousness as the oracle connected with “*oikos*” and family, as seen in the few references to it in works by the Greek tragic poets⁵¹⁸. Perhaps this is the element instrumental in the formation of its unique identity. An identity, that it is linked with the people and their pastoral lifestyle. Dodona is a perfect example of an oracle which has yielded numerous finds of all categories, yet still its cult, its administration and its essential religious character remain a mystery, 139 years since its rediscovery by C. Carapanos in 1878. Epirus and Dodona remain a *terra incognita*, to a large extent, due to the slow progress of excavation research, the lack of up-to-date data and the dearth of properly published material (especially from Dodona). Research so far at Dodona has only scratched the surface and has delivered almost nothing new to scholarship as regards the better understanding of Greek cult in isolated areas of Hellenism.

Further research on all the finds from Dodona should be conducted and the old theories should then be reconsidered. I am confident that further research and excavations will bring to light clear archaeological data that could shed light to the early history of Dodona. Maybe we shall someday have clear evidence of cult continuity from the Bronze Age to the Classical period. Perhaps then Dodona will cease to be a mystery and become, like the corresponding sanctuaries of Apollo at Abai/Kalapodi

⁵¹⁸ Castrucci 2012: 14-15.

and of Zeus on Mount Lykaion, another splendid example of continuous habitation and practice of cult from prehistoric into historical times.

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