

Editorial:
Innovation and ancient world...

Don't these words look contradictory? Not really.

While I was in Paros, some weeks ago, I came across a poster advertising an exhibition called "The High-Tech inventions of the ancient Greeks". I went there of course, and was quite astounded.



Though I have some knowledge of ancient Greek culture, and even if I had already touched on the ancient Greek technology before (maybe not enough), what a surprise!

An astonishing collection, gathering numerous fascinating machines and instruments, which departs completely from what you usually see in museums.

I then had the opportunity to meet its creator, a real enthusiast, and furthermore completely disinterested financially (no profit, free admission, cost price books).

That's why and how we decided to cooperate. We began with translating into French the museum's documentation and its remarkable website. You can already access it in English, Greek and French.

Next step: the Hellenic Cultural Centre in Paris is considering a tour of this exhibition in France, maybe in other countries.

We'll do our best to make this happen, and perhaps someday you will be able to experience this amazement when you stand before the infinite inventiveness of these often little known engineers, inventors, creators, who are called Hero of Alexandria, Philo of Byzantium, Ctesibius, Hipparchus, Archimedes of course, and so many others...

René Kauffmann

Special Issue "Technologies and engineers of ancient Greece"

When ancient Greece is mentioned, people immediately think of its sculptures and temples, and - almost two inseparable words - Greek art. They will then mention the great philosophers and Athenian democracy, probably the Greek theater, and poetry perhaps.

We also know that Greece shone in science. In mathematics, we still have memories of the theorems of Pythagoras or Thales, of Euclid's geometry, of the "Sieve of Eratosthenes" in arithmetics. And then of course in physics, Archimedes' principle. In astronomy, thinking of the names of the planets is enough to remind us of greek culture.



More than a thousand years ahead, the Greeks discovered that the Earth was round, had calculated its diameter and the distance from the Earth to the Moon. But what do we know about the technology of the ancient Greeks, the machines, the appliances, the instruments they used? Huge surprises are to be expected in this field. Ancient Greece was also swarmed with engineers and inventors, some were as creative as Leonardo da Vinci, except that their achievements actually worked and sometimes still work today.

You may be surprised to learn that Plato and Aristotle had alarm clocks, that Hero of Alexandria created not only the first steam turbine, but also automata and animated shows, that Philo was served wine by a robot maid, that Archytas was flying a jet dove, the door of a temple could be equipped with an alarm system, its opening could be automatic, there could be inside an automatic holy water vending machine, some musicians played the organ etc.

It seems obvious nowadays that scientific progress is based on technological tools, and conversely, technology is based on the progress of science. Of course, it was already so at that time. The Greeks used screws, nuts, hydraulic cylinders, pumps, machine tools, gears, they had repeating arms, they knew static electricity, some bases of computer science: the letters of messages could be coded in two bits, and the Antikythera mechanism, which was discovered in 1901, deserves the name of the first analog computer in history.



And we may begin to dream: what would be the world today if by the fall of the Greek world and of the Roman Empire, all this knowledge and skill had not been forgotten for almost a millennium? Where would we be at today? A man has been working for over twenty years to revive this. Kostas Kotsanas, a teacher in a small town close to ancient Olympia, has studied these machines for decades and rebuilt several hundreds of them. When will we see this exhibition in our country? This is being discussed. Any ideas? We are open to every suggestion.

Two museums like no other

The *Museum of Ancient Greek Technology* and the *Museum of Ancient Greek Musical Instruments and Toys & Games* are located at Katakolon, on the west coast of the Peloponnese, Greece. They gather more than 300 reconstructions of machines, instruments and antique appliances, most of which can be presented in operation... because these machines are really functioning! They are also made with meticulous care, based on careful researches in Greek Latin and Arabic literature, the iconography found on antique vases and some archaeological finds.

Let us mention the main topics: clocks and sun dials, astronomical instruments, tools, hydraulic equipment, lifting and construction equipment, automata and robots, telecommunications, siege and defense weapons, shipbuilding, geometrical instruments, measurement devices, textile and agricultural equipment, medical appliances, sports, music, games and toys...

The creator, Kostas Kotsanas has made two copies of many of these reconstructions: a travelling exhibition could thus be set up, and can be seen all around Greece as in other countries.

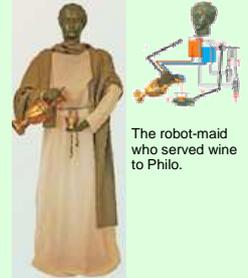
Until it comes to you, you can visit it virtually on the web (in english):

Click on the museum's logo:


New this month!


On the same theme, we added on our website a report "The inventions and technologies of the ancient Greeks"

approaching the subject in a slightly different manner, in the context of the time.

Download the file


The robot-maid who served wine to Philo.

Did you notice on our website?

Quiz (in French only):
[26 citations and sentences from Rome](#)
 ... or not!

A rather recreational quiz.


And as usual...

Add comments on our editorials and articles on

Le Blog de l'AnticoPédie

and subscribe to our "ancient worlds diary".

Clicking on this icon on our website, you'll get permanently informed on new exhibitions, conferences and events in France on the field of ancient mediterranean civilisations. For further information:

click here

See you soon on our pages!

Any comment and suggestion are welcome!



Write us!!