Sonya Nevin, "Entry on: Knucklebones and Marbles [Αστράγαλοι και βώλοι (Astragáloi kai vṓloi)] by Thetis Authentics Ltd. ", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/769. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

Thetis Authentics Ltd.

Knucklebones and Marbles [Αστράγαλοι και βώλοι (Astragáloi kai vṓloi)]

Greece (2012)

TAGS: Greek Art Greek History





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Knucklebones and Marbles [Αστράγαλοι και βώλοι (Astragáloi kai vṓloi)]
Studio/Production Company	Thetis Authentics Ltd.
Country of the First Edition	Greece
Country/countries of popularity	Greece, English-speaking countries
Original Language	Greek, English
First Edition Date	2012
First Edition Details	*Knucklebones and Marbles* [αστράγαλοι και βώλοι]. Thetis Authentics Ltd., 2012.
Official Website	thetis.gr (accessed: May 30, 2019)
Genre	Knucklebones*, Marbles*, Reconstructed ancient toys*
Target Audience	Crossover (children 5+, young adults, adults)
Author of the Entry	Sonya Nevin, University of Roehampton, sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk
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Creators



Thetis Authentics Ltd. (Company)

Thetis Authentics was founded by Dr Eleni Aloupi-Siotis in 1999, replacing the 1994-founded Thetis Hellas archaeological consulting company based in Athens, Greece. Thetis Authentics uses non-invasive techniques to date artefacts and art, mostly for museums and private collections. The company expanded to include the creation of ceramic replicas of ancient artefacts. Dr Aloupi-Siotis holds a PhD in Analytical Chemistry based on research on archaeological ceramics at the Institute of Materials Science (NCSR Demokritos, Athens/University of Ioannina). She taught Archaeometry at the University of Thessaly before going on to work as a forensic expert at the Greek Ministry of Justice's Court of Appeals, and, then, to found Thetis Hellas.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: October 30, 2018);

Eleni Aloupi's profile at independent.academia.edu (accessed: October 30, 2018).

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Additional information

Summary

The Thetis Authentics range of puzzles and games are reproductions of sections of ancient vases, recreated on flat ceramic plaques, and, as in this instance, reproductions of ancient games. The Thetis website describes the puzzles as “archaeologically inspired” and as “museum quality ancient ceramic replicas”. In this instance, the set consists of two sets of play things: a set of six ceramic knuckle-bones decorated with a “K”, and a set of six ceramic spheres, decorated with individual swirls or stripes.

The gaming pieces are accompanied by a bilingual information sheet. The sheet gives information on three basic games that can be played with the toys: variations of *Astagalismos*, in which points are awarded for thrown knucklebones landing on different sides; *Artiasmos* ("even-odds") a game traditionally played by boys in which opponents challenge each other to guess whether the amount of play pieces concealed in the hand are odd or even; and *Pentelitha/pentovola*, a game traditionally played by girls in which players toss five pieces into the air and aim to catch as many as possible on the backs of their hands. The information sheet directs people to “see YouTube, Wikipedia” for the full rules of the games and their variants.

Analysis

This set of games is well-produced with playing pieces that feel nice to handle. There is also something very pleasing about the idea of items for play being directly drawn from the play of children in antiquity, offering haptic connection to the ancient past and reinforcing the concept of a "lived experience" of the ancient past. There is also the potential for connection with other historical periods, as these games persisted in many places and in many ages. So enduring have these games been that children may already know the games or may have parents or grandparents who played them, providing a connection between antiquity and contemporary lived experience or living memory. Thetis prides itself on capturing the essence of past through physical artefacts.

The small font size of the information sheet provided suggests that it is written for adults rather than children. It provides limited information about the games themselves; for example, the guidance on how to play is limited and has no diagrams, and there is no

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	exploration of why some of the games were for girls and others for boys, or of whether that should make any difference to modern players. The invitation to look up the full rules online leaves the onus on the child (or their guardian) to locate suitable or relevant information.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Greek Art Greek History
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Boys Child, children Childhood Child's view Gender expectations/construction Girls Learning Peers Play*
Further Reading	Avedon, Morton Elliott and Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Study of Games*, New York: J. Wiley & Sons, 1971. Behling, Claudia-Maria, "Games Involving Nuts as a 'topos' for Childhood in Late Antiquity and Early Christian Time", in Th. Depaulis, ed., *Of Boards and Men. Board Games Investigated. Proceedings of the XIIIth Board Game Studies Colloquium, Paris 14–17 Avril 2010*, Paris, 2012, 29–36 [CD]. [online at academia.edu (accessed: May 30, 2019)]. Carè, Barbara, "Knucklebones from the Greek Necropolis of Locri Epizefiri, Southern Italy (VIth-IIIth century BC). Typological and Functional Analysis", in F. Lang, ed., *The Sound of Bones, ARCHAEOPlus. Schriften zur Archäologie und Archäometrie an der Paris Lodron-Universität Salzburg* 5, Salzburg, 2013, 87–99. [online at academia.edu (accessed: May 30, 2019)]. Carè, Barbara, "Le symbolisme des astragales", in V. Dasen, U. Schädler, eds., *Archéothéma: Jeux et jouets gréco-romains*, 2013, 31–56.

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Gaskins, Suzanne, Wendy Haight, and David F. Lancy, "The Cultural Construction of Play", in S. Gaskins, A. Gobet Fernand Gönçü, eds., *Play and Development: Evolutionary, Sociocultural, and Functional Perspectives*, New York: Psychology Press, 2007 [online at researchgate.net (accessed: May 30, 2019)].

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Pellegrini, Anthony D., *The Oxford Handbook of the Development of Play*, New York: OUP, 2011.

For more examples, see notion.so (accessed: May 30, 2019).

Addenda

Project websites for Locus Ludi: The Cultural Fabric of Play and Games in Classical Antiquity:
Blog (accessed: May 30, 2019).

notion.so (accessed: May 30, 2019).

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