



Fig. 1. Girl drawing an ancient Greek sculpture. Image by DIADRASIS.

## DISCOVERING LOCAL CULTURAL HERITAGE THROUGH AN EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY

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*‘Tanagra Express’ is an educational activity created by the Diadrasis team and implemented in the municipality of Tanagra in Greece. Its aim was to engage and familiarize the young people of this area with their local historical and archaeological past.*

*This article aims to outline the phases of designing and implementing “Tanagra Express”, an educational programme focused on children aged between 10 and 12 and based on the idea of a train travelling through different periods of the history of Tanagra and exploring the heritage treasures of the municipality.*

### Keywords:

Educational programme – Tanagra – heritage – local community – unrevealed heritage – ERASMUS+ programme

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The municipality of Tanagra lies in eastern Boeotia, 60km north of Athens, Greece (Fig. 2). It is composed by the municipal units of Schimatari, Inofyta, Dervenohoria, Tanagra and Dilesi, with a total of 19.432 citizens. It is home to one of the largest industrial zones in Greece. Its cultural heritage, dating from prehistoric times until the recent past, is yet another evidence of the importance of Tanagra (Charami 2012, Georganas 2012 and Tzeledopoulos 2012). Despite the rich cultural past of the area, its movable, immovable and intangible cultural heritage is not well known to the public.

As Diadrasis focuses on the protection and conservation of “unrevealed” heritage, the municipality of Tanagra invited Diadrasis’ research team to design and implement an educational program for young people so as to familiarize them with their local history and cultural landmarks.

This idea was initiated when Diadrasis’ team met Gogo Kampiotou, a delegate from the Cultural Department of Tanagra Municipality during their participation in DEN-CuPID (Digital Educational Network for Cultural Projects’ Implementation and Direction). DEN-CuPID is an ERASMUS+ program which aims to foster collaboration between municipalities and civil society actors interested in cultural management by bringing them together, coaching them and providing them

with innovative tools and training on cultural heritage values and effective methodologies.

“Tanagra Express” took place in May 2018 and was addressed to schoolchildren 10-12 years of age. The main aim of Tanagra Express was to familiarize them with the historical and archaeological past of the area. Therefore, the program’s activities focused not only on tangible heritage and prominent local archaeological sites and monuments but also on intangible and “unknown” elements of heritage.

The preparation and creation of the educational program involved three phases. The first was a field research in the area of Tanagra, mapping archaeological and historical landmarks in the area (see section 2). This phase also included a search in the literature for references about these places. The second part was the designing of the educational activity using the data gathered at the first phase; the last phase was the implementation.

### 2. DESK STUDY AND SURVEY

As mentioned in the introduction, before engaging with the field research, Diadrasis’ team took a brief look into the literature on Tanagra’s history and tried to link this information to the particular landmarks in the area. The results of the brief bibliography research were the guide for visits to the villages and for





Fig. 2. Map of central Greece, Tanagra is indicated in red. Image by Wikipedia, 2007, September 8.



Fig. 3. During the fieldwork research (digital photography and GIS mapping). Image by DIADRASIS.

locating places of interest for the project. During the field research the team collaborated closely with the local community. More specifically, every spot within the Tanagra Municipality was visited along a local citizen as a guide, in order to find as many landmarks as possible. The visit included the mountainous part of the Municipality as well as the seaside area, the archaeological museum of Schimatari and the Folklore museum of Inofyta. The aim of the survey was to detect and record the archaeological and historical landmarks of every village in the Tanagra municipality, using documentation tools such as digital photography and GIS mapping (Fig. 3). Over 5 days, 14 villages were visited and 42 landmarks detected.

After the identification and the documentation of the landmarks, research for collecting further information

about the historical landmarks and elements in Tanagra restarted. In order to conform to the timetable of the project, this process was relatively short and lasted about 20 days. Nevertheless, plenty of references about the majority of landmarks were found. The selected elements were more than enough for the team to proceed with designing the educational program.

### 3. DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF TANAGRA EXPRESS EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Once the team noted the 42 landmarks and completed the bibliography research a decision had to be made as to the material for the educational activity. As all the sites could not be included into the educational

#### Types of cultural assets

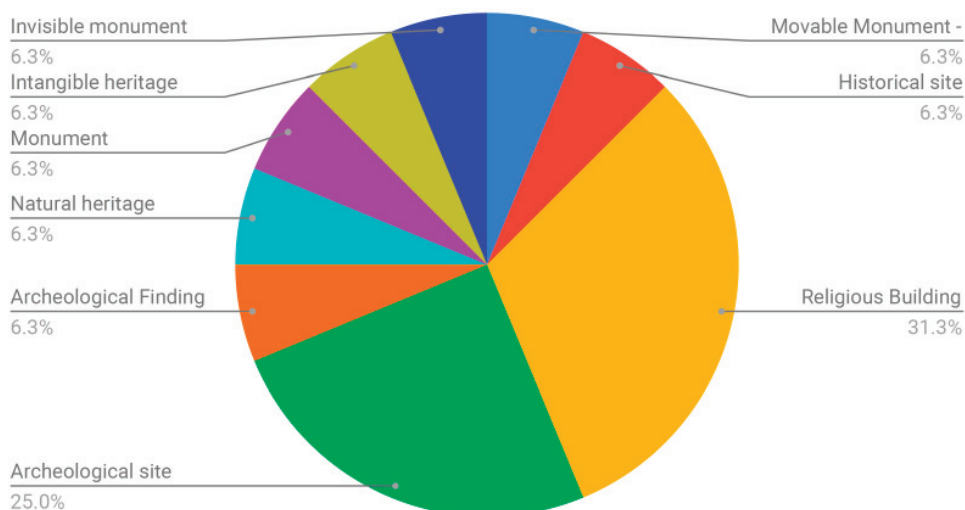


Fig. 4. Types of cultural assets. Image by DIADRASIS.

## Chronological Periods

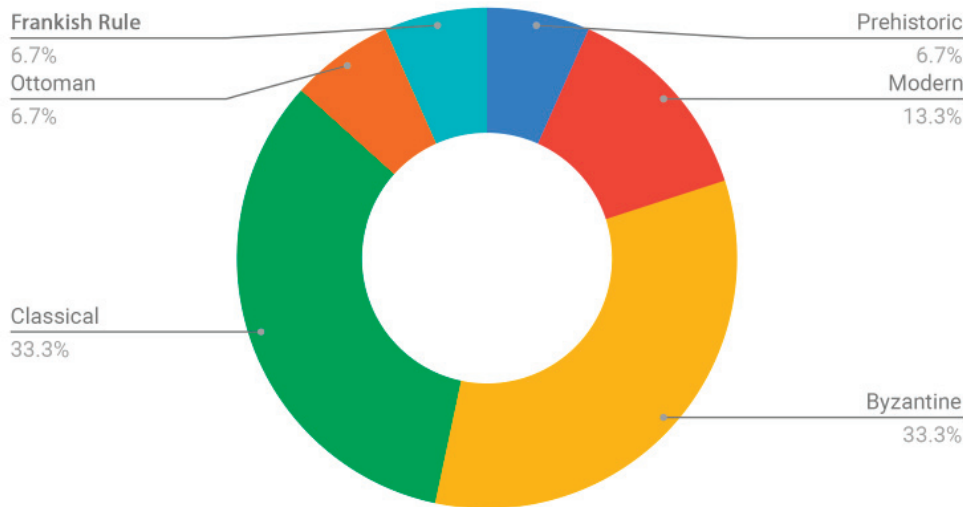


Fig. 5. Chronological periods. Image by DIADRASIS.

program, 16 out of the 42 were selected. The selection process was based on maintaining a balance between the types of the elements that would be presented. The goal was to present as many types of cultural assets as possible, including tangible and intangible heritage. Natural heritage was also presented all through the educational activity.

The types of the selected cultural assets were: Movable monuments exhibited today as Museum objects, locations linked to historical events and figures - historical sites, religious buildings (including churches, monasteries etc.), archeological sites, archeological finds, monuments, natural and intangible heritage and invisible monuments<sup>1</sup> (Fig. 4).

The criteria for the selection was:

- belonging to different chronological periods. (Fig. 5)
- equal geographical distribution
- availability of information and references on the assets

The name and the category of each selected landmark are included in the Table 1.

Once the information and the final assets had been collected an educational activity for public awareness, targeted on children between 10 and 12 years old, needed to be established.

Diadrasis, believes in the power of non-formal education and in the impact of educational activities on the behaviour of youngsters (Czikszenmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1999). According to experts, one of the best ways for children to gain and absorb knowledge is through playing (Diamond, 1999).

The main goal was to design an activity following the principles of non-formal education by enhancing knowledge through playing (Diamond, 1999) promoting teamwork, interaction and participation (Tuckey, 1992).

In this spirit, the educational program included the following six activities.

1. Role play between the heritage interpreter<sup>2</sup> and youngsters
2. Circle game, in order to get to know names, ages and level of existing knowledge

<sup>1</sup> The Medieval tower at Inofyta is no longer visible, as it was destroyed during a World War II German attack. The only evidence of its existence is a well-preserved photo of the tower exhibited in the Folklore Museum in Inofyta.

<sup>2</sup> According to Guy Tilkin (2013), "Heritage interpretation is a non-formal educational approach for many age groups. Is the art to create a relation between the elements of a heritage site or collection on the one hand and the meaning making and value frame of the visitors on the other. Cognitive and emotional links are created between the visitors and what they can discover. It reveals deeper meanings, relationships and insights from first-hand experience and by means of illustrative media, rather than by simple communication of factual information. Heritage interpretation also contains a structural element of learning".

Sarcophagus	Movable Monument - Museum Object <sup>3</sup>
Memorial structure of the battle at Pyli	Historical site
Zoodochos Pigi Monastery	Religious Building
Tsatsari Church	Religious Building
Ancient city of Tanagra	Archeological site
Agios Thomas	Religious Building
Ancient city of Eleon	Archeological site
Terracotta Figurine (Tanagra)	Archeological Finding
Asopos River	Natural heritage
Skourtaniotis statue <sup>4</sup>	Monument
Ancient Delion	Archeological site
Ancient city of Panaktos	Archeological site
St. Georgios	Religious Building
Arvanites heritage <sup>5</sup>	Intangible heritage
St. Polykarpos	Religious Building
Medieval tower of Inofyta	Invisible monument

Table 1. Name and category of each selected landmark.

3. Mobility games – energizers, such as a relay race

4. Main activities: gaining knowledge on the selected cultural assets through riddles, crosswords et. al.

5. Open dialogue and synthesis of the subject; the heritage interpreter, as a storyteller, repeats the information gained throughout the main activities



Fig. 6. Map with missing parts. Image by DIADRASIS.



Fig. 7. Use of the map during the educational activity. Image by DIADRASIS.

<sup>3</sup> According to Greek law 3028/2002 on the Protection of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage in General «Immovable monuments are the monuments which have been attached to and remain on the ground or the seabed or on the bed of lakes or rivers, as well as monuments which are found on the ground or the seabed or on the bed of lakes or rivers and which cannot be removed without damage to their value as testimonies. Immovable monuments also include installations, constructions and decorative and other elements, which form an integral part of the monuments, as well as their immediate surroundings. On the other hand, movable monuments are the monuments that are not deemed as immovable.

<sup>4</sup> Skourtaniotis Athanasios was a local hero known for his achievements during the Greek Independence War.

<sup>5</sup> Inspired by an exhibit at the Tanagra Municipal Folklore Museum, namely a traditional Arvanites costume, Diadrasis team decided to involve Arvanites heritage in the educational activity as it was considered an equally significant cultural asset of the region.





Fig. 8. Use of the train during the educational activity. Image by DIADRASIS.

#### 6. Artistic expression using data from the educational activity

The above six individual activities were based on two main educational tools: a local map (Fig. 6 and 7) and the train diagram (Fig. 8 and 9) in order to link spatial visualization of the selected elements to their time periods and the relevant historical events.

Analytically, the map was the most important interpretative tool, having protagonists and energetic, participatory roles. Some of its parts were missing and were to be filled in during the educational activity (Fig.6). The goal was for children to be able to visualize the borders and the size of their municipality and to easily locate the assets and absorb their spatial placement.

On the other hand, the train played a “passive” role throughout the activity. It was a reference tool for the children to understand the chronological periods. Each of the train cars, painted in different colours, represented one of the main periods of Greek history, from Prehistoric times until nowadays. The train was used as a tool to convey to the children the idea that even though each train car/time period is a sole entity, it is also inextricably connected to the others. The train was the children’s guide to the educational activity,

helping them understand how time passes and how it affects and alters culture and history.

#### 4. DETAILED PRESENTATION OF THE SIX INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES

The program opened with an invented story – a role play (Fig. 10) between the heritage interpreter and the youngsters. The heritage interpreters, in the role of archaeologists, were about to miss the train to Tanagra because their research team never showed up. As a result, they asked the children for help since they are from the region which he/she wishes to study. With their positive answer, the historic journey of the Tanagra Express began.

This introductory part was very important, in that youngsters were immediately involved in the educational process. Right after, a circle was formed (Fig. 11) and the children were asked to say their names and the first word that came to their minds when hearing the words “archaeology” and “history”. This was meant for us to learn their names and to bring out any prior knowledge they had.

The next activity was a mobility game (Fig. 12), designed so as to engage them more and stimulate their interest. A relay race was run after the introduction,



Fig. 9. The train with the differently coloured train boxes. Image by DIADRASIS.



Fig. 10. Activity 1: Role play. Image by DIADRASIS.

outside the venue. Five teams were challenged to collect first the correct coloured pieces of a broken puzzle. One after the other, each member of a team had to run, collect the right colour piece and bring it back to the team. Once they collected them all the relay race was over. The coloured frame of the puzzle represented a particular time period and illustrated well-known monuments, such as the Acropolis, as well as events and artefacts from the history of Greece. The children's task was to retrace their memories and bring out their own knowledge about Greek history and to try and place the puzzle pieces in the right order. This activity was designed to help them realize what was happening in Greece more broadly, at different time points.

During the main activity, by solving riddles and crossword puzzles (Fig.13) they gained knowledge and absorbed historical facts about the cultural background of the municipality of Tanagra. Upon solving a riddle or puzzle, they were rewarded with a



Fig. 12. Activity 3: Mobility game. Image by DIADRASIS.



Fig. 11. Activity 2: Circle game. Image by DIADRASIS.

miniature replica of the cultural asset to be used for filling a missing part of the map. Having gathered all of the pieces, they formed a circle in order to place them on the map and share what they learned with the other teams.

Having integrated different time periods and the different assets of the region, an open dialogue (Fig. 14) began between one member of our team, performing as an archaeologist, and the children, following the Socratic Method (Nikonanou, 2015). The archaeologist turned into a storyteller and started a comprehensive narrative of how time goes by and how it alters everyday life and culture. The archeologist, using the interpretative map, asked questions to stimulate the children's interest and observation. Our main goal was for children to express themselves on the topic and share their knowledge with their peers. The final part of the educational program was artistic (Fig. 15); children were asked to draw, paint or design



Fig. 13. Activity 4: Main activities, solving riddles, crosswords etc. Image by DIADRASIS.





Fig. 14. Activity 5: Open dialogue and synthesis of the subject. Image by DIADRASIS.

the cultural element they liked the most during the educational activity.

The educational program was run six times, in six different villages located at considerable distances from one another. The selection of the villages was made according to their population. We chose the most populated ones in order to engage and attract more children. The total number of participants amounted to 212. On the whole, the feedback from both children and parents regarding their experience was very good, which indicates the success of the educational activity. Most of the children stated they enjoyed the combination of learning while playing, especially the mobility game, while parents requested a repetition of the educational activity.

## 5. ENGAGING LOCAL COMMUNITY IN LOCAL HISTORY

In recent years, the interest of experts working in heritage and archaeology has turned toward the public and on how the community can be involved in heritage and cultural projects. Nowadays, collaboration, sharing and dialogue between local communities and experts are a crucial part of cultural projects (Atalay 2012, 1-3; Moshenska & Dhanjal 2012, 1-5; Tripp 2012, 28-34).

Engagement with locals is a high priority in Diadrasis' projects. In this spirit, the 'Tanagra Express' educational activity was an effort to familiarize young people of the area of Tanagra with their local history and heritage.

Educational programs focused on culture and heritage help young people understand the past through enjoyable informal learning experiences. Through these programs we have the opportunity to listen



Fig. 15. Activity 6: Artistic expression. Image by DIADRASIS.

to the voices of children, to motivate them express their thoughts and their questions and to explore the local heritage and culture (Galanidou and Dommasnes 2012).

At the same time, the 'Tanagra express' program not only gave the local children an opportunity to engage with their heritage, it also raised awareness among the locals of the area in general.

To be more specific, during the first phase, fieldwork research, Diadrasis team focused on initiating contact with the people of the area and working with them closely in order to learn about Tanagra's cultural and historical heritage. They shared their memories, opinions and thoughts while the research team pointed out the importance of respecting, protecting and promoting their own heritage from a scientific point of view. Moreover, working along with the local authorities all through the programme created fruitful intrapersonal relationships with the locals. It disseminated local history to the people of Tanagra through face to face meetings with the representatives of the cultural sector, by interviews, open discussions etc. Diadrasis team was strongly activated by the spirit of cooperation and engagement both with local people and the authorities.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Tanagra Express was designed and implemented as an interactive educational activity aiming to engage and familiarize young people from this area with their local historical and archaeological past. Children came into contact with plenty of information about their area, from prehistoric times until the recent past, through playing and experiencing non-formal educational activities.



Every step of the project had its own difficulties and challenges. However, we were given great support by the local community and authorities, as they soon realized how important it is to pass on local history to the new generation.

Diadrasis hopes this educational activity will be a starting point for something new and innovative, focusing on “unrevealed” heritage.

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