

Municipality of Soufli

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Cover: Prehistoric carved totemic mushroom • Back cover: Rock graffiti in Goniko



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HISTORY AND MONUMENTS

at the municipality of Soufli

GREECE

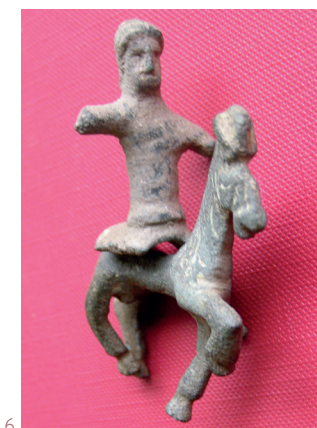
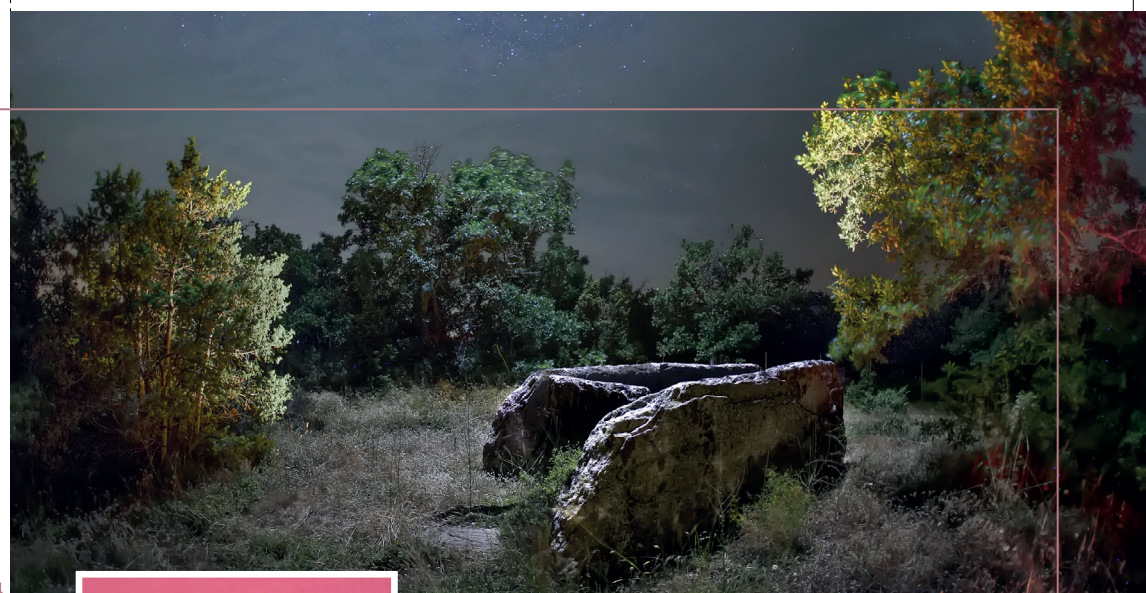


Soufli, Greece
Officially recognized as a Best Tourism Village by UNWTO in 2021



The contribution of the Thracians to the formation of the religion, music, poetry and mysteries of the ancient Greeks is a well accepted fact, while their contribution to the formation of the Greek nation through the early colonization of Central Greece and the Aegean islands during the second millennium B.C. is slowly emerging. The area of Soufli can boast of the **paternity of Orpheus**, the hero-king-god who was a religious reformer, the founder of music and poetry and the greatest rhapsodist in antiquity. Here, next to the waters of the Evros, this god-hero was dismembered by the Maenads and his head was thrown into the river, while tradition preserves the legend of him founding the oldest temple in the world, the "first church", at Protokklisi, to honor the god Pluto. This land can also be considered **the birthplace of Dionysus**, god of viticulture and wine, but also of the wild goddess Vendis-Artemis, whose sanctuary, according to archaeologists, can be traced at Amori-on, close to the bank of the Evros river.

The area is characterized by the **Megalithic Culture** that is lost in Prehistory, the Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age, and even earlier. Mainly in the mountainous regions of the Municipality of Soufli the dolmen tombs, the huge, carved totemic mushrooms-sculptures, the rock paintings with the rich engraved representations depicting dancers, worshippers, lizards, swallows, the weighing of the soul on scales, symbols of progeniture and others, such as cromlechs, menhir-tombstones, but also the open-air sanctuaries with carved niches, stairs, "thrones", "linoi", altars, sacrificial pits and fortified settlements with traces of walls and houses, all trace an unknown yet fascinating past.



During the late 6th century B.C. the country is occupied by the Persians, while immediately after that, when the Odrysian kingdom prospers, the Greeks penetrate towards the mainland, developing trade and cultural relations with the natives. The **hellenization** of the area is intensified during the time of Philipp II of Macedon and it is concluded during the Roman era. In the mean time, during the 3rd c. B.C., the Celts/Gauls establish their kingdom in Thrace. During the **Middle Ages**, the region became the center of developments, as its proximity to the capital of the Byzantine Empire, Constantinople made it a bastion, granary, but also the capital's cultural little "sibling".

The turbulent history of the area is illustrated through the monuments of historical times. **Zeirinia**, probably an autonomous 'polis' south of Kornofolia, was an important port that connected the Greeks with the local Thracians. The partially preserved early "Macedonian" tomb of Lagyna would have been the most impressive of its kind in Thrace, if it had been preserved intact. Next to Soufli, the early Christian fortification of **Palaiokastros** may be identified with Agios Theodoros, mentioned by the historian Prokopios. The early Christian castle of Agiasma, above Kissarios and the extensive fortified settlement of **Gymbraina**, near Dadia, are some other sites of particular interest.

1. Ancient quarry in Gybraina, Dadia.
2. Macedonian type tomb in Lagyna.
3. The prehistoric fortification of Sejtan Kale. 4. Dolmen (megalithic tomb) in Rousa. 5. Surface finding (spur) from Palaiokastros in Soufli. 6. Thracian rider from Ai-las, Kornofolia