

Documentation and digitalization of the Museum of Criminology of the University of Athens

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Abstract

The Museum of Criminology is located within the premises of the Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology of the Medical School of Athens University. This museum provides a concise picture of the criminal actions committed during the late 19th and the early 20th century in Greece. Its collections consist of items that testify specific violent activities that took place in the provinces of Athens, in the countryside of Greece, as well as in various prisons and often determine the perpetrators' personality, as well.

The aim of the museum is to extract information and knowledge from its collection items through documentation for educational and research purposes. Towards this direction, a number of graduate theses have been completed as well as a large project entitled "Collection, documentation and digitalization of the material of the Museum of Criminology of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens" has recently been granted and completed.

The Museum of Criminology

The Museum of Criminology was founded in 1932, although the gathering of its collections had began years ago. The museum is located within the premises of the laboratory of forensic medicine and toxicology in Medical School of the University of Athens and constitutes the first university museum in Greece dedicated to criminology and to forensic sciences in general.

Mission and purpose

The museum's *mission* has been not only the complete registration of almost all kind of crimes that took place during the last century in Greece, but also, the preservation and the study of all related evidentiary items sent to the museum. This process includes the collection, classification, annotation and exposition of criminal evidence used in inflicting violent cases that have occurred at different times.



Fig. 1 - Revolver, of Lefauchaux 1860–1870 type, 7 mm caliber. The largest part of the metallic surface is engraved with elaborate nature motifs. Photo: Zoi Sakki © Museum of Criminology, Medical School, University of Athens

The museum's *purpose* is to contribute to the education at undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate levels, as well as to support scientific research in related fields. Towards this direction, a number of graduate theses have been completed as well as a large project entitled *Collection, documentation and digitalization of the material of the Museum of Criminology of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens* has recently been granted by the EU and completed.

The study of crime history, in addition to the study of related 'unique' and rare items contributes not only to criminology, forensic medicine and toxicology, but also to sciences such as forensic anthropology, sociology and other related fields of social science. In

order for the museum to meet its goals, a website www.criminology-museum.uoa.gr was also created through the above project.

The collections

The collections of the Museum of Criminology are in their major part very old, rare and unique. The main categories exhibited are the following:

- Weaponry of historic value (fig. 1)
- The only one guillotine ever used in Greece (fig. 2)
- Ritual artifacts collection
- Counterfeit banknotes collection
- A large collection of drugs of abuse
- Poisoning evidentiary items collection
- Chemicals and pharmaceuticals collection
- Collection of human remains (fig. 3 – 4)
- Wax models of wounds and injuries concerning violent death cases
- Loops collection used in hanging
- Collection of objects of general forensic medicine interest



Fig. 2 - Wooden guillotine. The guillotine history in Greece is indissolubly bound with the constitution and the modern history of the Greek Republic. The choice of the guillotine as a means of execution for convicted criminals was made by Ludwig I of Bavaria, Otto's father, and was not by chance. Ludwig's goal was to turn this "killing instrument" into the ultimate terror for the Greeks, so that they would not even consider of challenging Otto's power. Photo: Zoi Sakki © Museum of Criminology, Medical School, University of Athens



Fig. 3 - Section of left upper limb, consisting of forearm and arm, which holds a bedside lamp (case of electrocution). Photo: Zoi Sakki © Museum of Criminology, Medical School, University of Athens



Fig. 4 - Mummified fetus. Photo: Zoi Sakki © Museum of Criminology, Medical School, University of Athens

University museum collections in research and teaching

The Museum of Criminology has completed a project entitled *Collection, documentation & digitalization of the material of the Museum of Criminology of the University of Athens*. The project was integrated into the operational program called *Information society* (Meter 2.4, Invitation 91) that was financed at 80% from European Union resources and at 20% from national resources.

This project was crucial for the Museum of Criminology, since the museum belongs to an institute of education and consequently all people should have open access to its collections. In addition, the museum intended to obtain more complete information and knowledge for its collection items through documentation.

The project's purpose was to complete the database of the museum's items that concern specific violent acts, through documentation, digitalization and presentation on the internet (www.criminology-museum.uoa.gr). This way, the digitalization process promotes the preservation of all existing items as well as all the related information. It also facilitates the study of the exhibits. Moreover, a future thorough investigation of the department's archives will upgrade the already existing documentation of items.

The project outcomes

- Documentation of almost 900 museum's items.
- Digitalization of almost 900 museum's items: more than 1.600 2D photos and 18 3D pictures are created.
- New electronic data-base is created and is now available for scientists.
- Museum's web site was created and new benefits are available for the internet users (www.criminology-museum.uoa.gr).

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