

An Etruscan medicine of over 2000 years :

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http://www.archeomatica.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=841:identificata-la-composizione-chimica-di-un-antico-medicinale&catid=8:ultime&Itemid=38)

A medicine of over 2000 years, an eyewash, has been recovered intact inside a container of pond recovered in the "Wreckage of the Pozzino", the rests of a ship which has been shipwrecked in the II sec. B.C. in the waters of the Gulf of Pozzino (site of the ancient and florid city etrusca Pupluna, Populonia - Livorno) and brought to the light in the years '90 from the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archaeologici (under the direction of Antonella Romualdi). Only it deals not with the first analytical job that has allowed to individualize the composition of ancient pharmaceutical tablets, that probably had the function of eyewash (preceded only by a case analogous to Lione) but the extraordinary event to be able to recover an intact medicine, in his original container, has furnished the possibility to investigate the medicinal principle with a vast range of analysis from which important data have sprung. That substance, that Plinio the Old and Dioscorides described as curative for the eyes and for the illnesses of the skin, finds about now a precise comparison in the composition of the circular tablets and of grey color that made part of the baggage of a doctor that traveled on board of the etruscan ship. To complete the 'handbag' of the antic doctor, has also been recovered numerous other pissidi in pond, 136 small wood bottles of boxwood, a mortar, a probe in iron and a bell in bronze, this last probably to use for the suckers. Already from the first studies ducts after the recovery of the wreckage had emerged as among the "various treasures" there were with all probability of the medicines. The analyses conducted on the tablets from the Laboratory of analysis of the Tuscan Superintendence underlined that the active principle of the tablets was constituted by two different mixtures of zinc (smithsonite and idrozincite, respectively carbonate and idrossicarbonato of zinc), as in the medicines of use dermatologic and ophthalmic. Today, all this finds confirmation with the implementation of the analyses through a search multidisciplinare that has brought, altogether, to the chemical characterization, mineralogical and botany of the tablets.

In the medicine the part of inorganic nature constitutes the 80% of the mass; in this the 75% is given by zinc, present as carbonate and idrossicarbonato. Together with these they appear, as coformulanti, lipid substances (fat) of animal and vegetable origin: wax of bees, probably oil of olive, resin of pine (which could serve as preserving, seen his antiseptic ownerships) and starch. The archaeological finds of the wreckage of the Pozzino are exposed in the Archaeological Civic Museum of the Territory of Populonia, to Lead (Livorno).