

Physical, Iconographic and Symbolic Features of the Plectrum Some Reflections on Sound Production in Ancient Greek String Instruments

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Abstract : In this paper some of the relevant features of the πλῆκτρον within GrecoLatin tradition will be analyzed. Starting from the formal aspects (shape, materials, technical properties) and the archaeological evidence, some of its symbolic implications that emerge in the light of literary and iconographic analysis will be discussed. I shall expose that, in addition to fulfilling a purely physical function within the process of sound production, the πλῆκτρον was the object of a rich imaginery that provided it with an allegorical, metaphorical-poetic and even metaphysical dimension.

Keywords : musicology, ethnomusicology, ancient greek music, plectrum, stringed instruments

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