

**Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:**

## **"Cyclopean" wall and "megalithic" remains on Crete** **Orb-weaver spider (*Argiope lobata*)**

A common characteristic of “cyclopean” and “megalithic” buildings on Crete are massive, from large, roughly by right hewn stone blocks existing wall remainders of (apparently) isolated ruins, which are today usually found in remote areas. They engaged attention of individual representatives of the scientific study of Crete as far back as in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Already A. EVANS described (before he’s excavations in Knossos) a number of “cyclopean” buildings and walls as remnants of expanded bronze-temporal fortification systems. Since this time many further ruins of “cyclopean” buildings and other remainders of “megalithic” architecture on Crete become known. Despite later re-designing, partial or complete abandonment and large destruction they never completely derelict and disappeared in the ground; at least parts of the “cyclopean” <sup>1)</sup> walls were (and are) still visible in the landscape, even if apart from all kinds from surface erosion with antique and modern „stone robbery“ interferences took place into the built volumes, which make a reconstruction of the original appearance (with interpretation of its function) more difficult. A detailed documentation for this can be found in the “Magazine for classical archaeology”, 14/III/2000 with the title: “Considerations for interpretation of so-called cyclopean or megalithic buildings in east Crete by the example of Epano Limnia/Paralaki Mantra, Aspro Nero/Paletsy and Dasonari in South-east Siti”.

<sup>1)</sup> The Cyclopes in the Greek mythology are believed as the building masters of the several meters thick walls in Mycenaean time (“cyclopean walls”) (HOMERS Odyssey; Book 9).



The pictures show (from left to right): “cyclopean” wall remainders (with new built-on Mitato) in Epano Limnia, Aspro Nero and Dasonari in east Crete from the years 1996/1998 (Pictures: N. SCHLAGER (2) / W. REITER (1), Vienna). Unfortunately today they are not to be seen in the shown form anymore; they probably fall victim to agricultural amelioration efforts. Furthermore Dasonari threatens to disappear under building debris. Regarding topography and layout design they arouse the appearance from “bastions” (to the protection of settlements), which lay directly as “stations” tied up to “traffic routes” along cross-country routes usually in the open area.



The picture left shows “cyclopean” wall remainders, which belong to a “megalithic” <sup>2)</sup> seeming ruin, which is located at a mountain slope towards the open area about 1 mile northeast the antique city Falássarna; therefore see also the info leaflet No. 104-05/E of the Crete environmental info. Since this isolates and apart lying range was not archaeologically examined yet, statements about the function and meaning of this plant would be only speculative at present. Picture right shows a “cyclopean” wall in the area around Skinias, north of Agio Nikolaos. It probably protected antique buildings; their remainder are seen left in the picture.

<sup>2)</sup> The term “megalithic” (Greek “mega” = largely and “lithos” = stone) describes in the archaeological linguistic usage in generally monumental buildings, which consist of large (often only little hewn) stone blocks.

**Pictures:** (4859/21.07.2005) Karl Eckl / (0944/07.08.2004) H. Eikamp

## Orb-weaver or cross spider (*Argiope lobata*)



The photos show *Argiope lobata* at the net (ventral side) and “fleeing” over rock; taken up in the ruins of Hamezi / East Crete.

The habitats of these spiders are drought, dry places and their geographic range is particularly in the Mediterranean area. The bodies of the females become over 20 mm largely <sup>1)</sup>; the males 4 - 6 mm. The hind part of the body is flattened clearly and the sides in each case are in remarkable, tap-like juts extracted. The densley, silvery-white coat covers not only the front body, but also the almost entire top side of the abdomen. The pale-yellow basic-coloration is visible in parts. The underbelly is (like the legs) yellowish and dark-brown piebald. Their maturing time is from August to Octobers. The spider builds a very large web, which can reach a diameter of more than a meter. The spider always sits under the hub and puts thereby their legs in pairs in each case closely together, so that its appearance corresponds to a diagonally standing cross. Despite its size it is difficult to recognize within the web, because their camouflage coloured ventral side (which points upwards) is hardly in contrast against the underground. The web is particularly tear-resistant; it keeps also strong grasshoppers or large butterflies surely firm.

<sup>1)</sup> The entire spider (including legs) reaches a size of up to 6 cm.

**Pictures:** (5587, 5593/28.07.2005) U. Kluge