



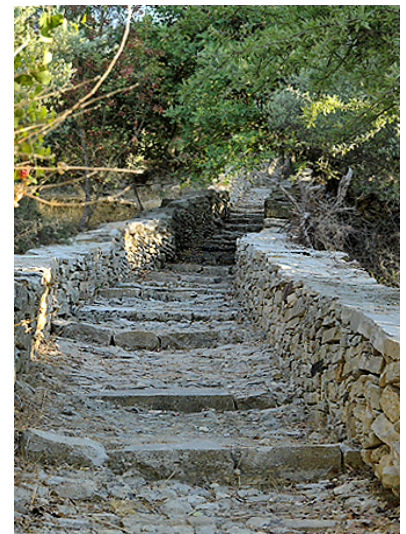
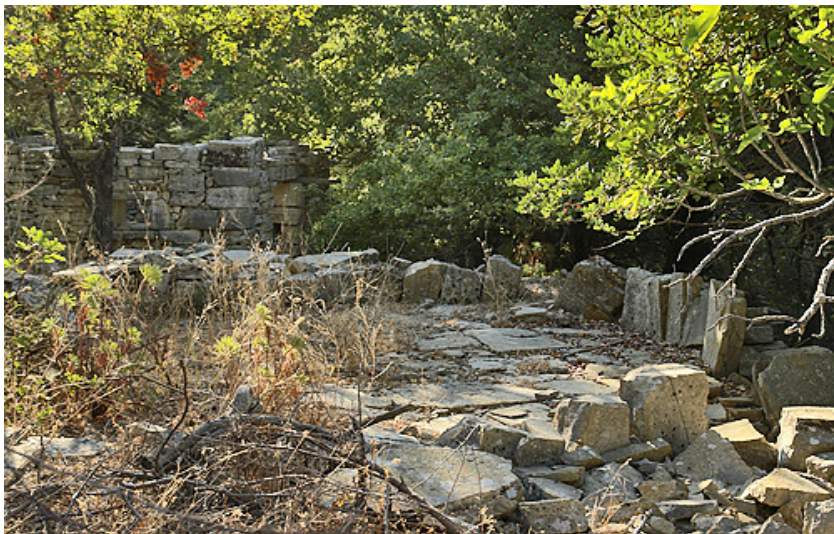
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Village Vafés – Sights from the early Christian and modern periods **Cave Krioneridas – Notoriety of the revolt against the Turks**

An article from our member *Maria Eleftheria*, Agios Nektarios / South Crete

You get to **Vafés** from **Vrisses**, when taking the branch towards south into the mountains in the middle of the village at the supermarket “Inka”. Short before the village **Vafés** is a larger parking area with a good visible sign of the “Greek Ministry of Education and Culture” pointing to the Chapel of *Agioi Asomatoi*.

A cart road with stairs (picture right) leads down into the Valley to the place of worship. Building remains at the wayside and an old threshing place (picture left) point to, that this place was a popular place of settlement for centuries and - how active construction completely suggests – is still today.



The small, single-nave chapel Agioi Asomatoi (picture left) shows the typical architecture of the Venetian period (1211-1669) and was dated by archaeologists in the 15th Century.

Compared to other chapels of that time it reveals a special feature. Instead of the usual pictures from the life of Christ and depictions of Saints, the Church walls in the entire interior are painted with geometric patterns in a colour which evokes associations of dried blood (see picture right on 1st page).

Excavations revealed that the chapel was build on an older, larger church from the 6th – 7th Century. A nave with narthex (anteroom open to the interior hall of early Christian churches), parts of the walls, the floor and the base of the altar were uncovered (picture left from the report of the Greek Ministry of Education and Culture). North of the building are remains of a second nave in the ground. Tombs were discovered East and West of the Church, some with burial objects from this time. North-East of the Church the remains of a building with three rooms were uncovered which is dated at same time.

An info sheet of the Greek Cultural Ministry names a group of vessels as findings of this excavation (picture below, right), a bronze belt buckle in shape of a cross and a small twin column with inscription that refers to Bishop Epiphaneios.



Then continue your way to **Vafés** and turn left at the monument. Downhill, before the entry of the small Gorge is a place with a goat fold yard, where you can comfortably park your car. Here begins the well-laid, signposted hiking trail (figure below) to the **Cave of Krioneridas** (pictures below). I recommend, as always on Cretan ways, sturdy shoes.





The cave **Krioneridas** acquired sad famous in 1821 during the revolt against the Turks. Inhabitants of the village had fled to protect in the cavern, but were detected. The Turks kindled a fire and everyone in the crawl space under the Earth choked. The mortal remains of the victims are located in a shrine at the entrance of the cave and a Memorial commemorates the cruel fact (fig. below left).

Exploring the cave is very difficult because it is only crawling "accessible", as shown in the picture below, photographed lying on the back towards exit. The room is a cleft that extends more to the back. The dark smoke traces of fire on the cliffs are still today readily identifiable. An exploration of the cave by NLUK members is planned for 2010; this we will be reported with a separate info leaflet (and new images).



Back in the friendly daylight, follow on your way back, just before the climb to the cavern, the sign towards left to the simple but well-kept **Cave Chapel of Agios Jannis** (picture right). It goes over the creek and an impressive, natural portal (picture below left), which is formed by a huge down fallen rock.





Back in **Vafés**, it is worth a journey through the idyllic village which has to offer so many uninhabited and maturity attention buildings with interesting details in addition to its beautifully restored traditional houses. On my tour, I discovered an old cistern (fig. left); Houses that use the rock wall as a wall (fig. below right); interior walls that are braided from reed and plastered with mud; and the village church (fig. below left), were pretty much everything was renewed upon the inscription of 1896.

