



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

**Funeral on Crete (“Kidia”):  
 Burial happens within 24 hours!**



Sarcophagus of Otto’s I. of Greece; Crypt of Theatiner Church Munich



The rituals of a Cretan funeral are affected by the Greek-orthodox church and also by local-cultural traditions. The Greek-orthodox church e.g. forbade the cremation; however since 2006 it is permitted, if an affidavit is present as “last will“ of the decedent. Until 2011 there were still no crematoria in Greece; on Crete not yet until today. Also cooling houses for dead storage are missing. A funeral on Crete takes place therefore as „earth funeral“, usually within 24 hours after death

The body of the deceased is tightened and set up in the open coffin in the house. The coffin cover is placed in front of the house; here also the funeral wreaths are put down. Sympathizers coming in the house usually bring along small bundles of flowers, which are put into the open coffin; they say good-bye to the dead ones, by kissing the head of the deceased and express the members their condolence. The solemn vigil takes until the funeral takes place.

“News“ spread fast in Cretan municipalities (and usually are promulgate; see fig.). Relatives and friends come and go, participate in the solemn vigil, likewise in the funeral, even without separate invitation.



The funeral procession leaves the house at the stipulated time and the open coffin is set up at the front of the church. The funeral on the cemetery happens after the service.

The coffin is placed into a “concrete bordering“ (at some places only the body is inserted) and locked and sealed with concrete plates. Later the relatives decorate the grave with marble and a gravestone (see fig.). After the funeral service “Kallyva“ is being offered to the funeral guests (see fig.: sweet from cooked wheat). The word “koliva“ originates from the old-Greek “kollyvo“ and stands for grain; it symbolizes the connection between death and life. The funeral



guests then gather in butteries or in the house of the deceased, to think of the deceased with Raki, coffee and peanuts.

In many municipalities on Crete exists a lack of graves (question of cost) and most are “rented” for 3 - 5 years. After this time the grave must be opened and the remains have to be removed by the family of the deceased. The remains are “washed” and put into a “box“ (see fig. right: made of pasteboard, wood or metal) and can be “buried” thereafter in a kind of “urn wall“ if available (see fig.). If this is not possible from cost reasons, the “box” with the mortal remains goes into a “osteofilakio “(charnel house; see fig.) for final keeping.



The mourning dress of the close relatives is black, from head to foot, and is worn at least for 40 days. Many widows and mothers, who e.g. lost a child, wore „black “for the rest of their life.

A set of commemoration ceremonies takes place after death. In the first year the 1<sup>st</sup> commemoration (“Mnimosimo “, see fig.) takes place after 40 days; further funeral services after 3, 6 and 9 months, afterwards annually.



In the Cretan Minoan culture, since prepalatial, it was usual to bury the deceased in sarcophagi [from Greek σαρκοφάγος, “meat consumptive“] first from wood and later from Terracotta; the dead were interred in “folded” pose (see fig.: opened Cretan Minoan sarcophagus from Crete).

In regards to solemn vigil and cultural traditions see also our leaflet “Memorial on Crete” at: [ [http://www.kretumweltforum.de/Merkblaetter\\_en/147-06E.pdf](http://www.kretumweltforum.de/Merkblaetter_en/147-06E.pdf) ].