

CHAPTER 10
RETIMO TO AGHIA GALINI (ARKADI MONASTERY AND
AMARI VALLEY)



A. Schwan del.

L. H. G. sculp.

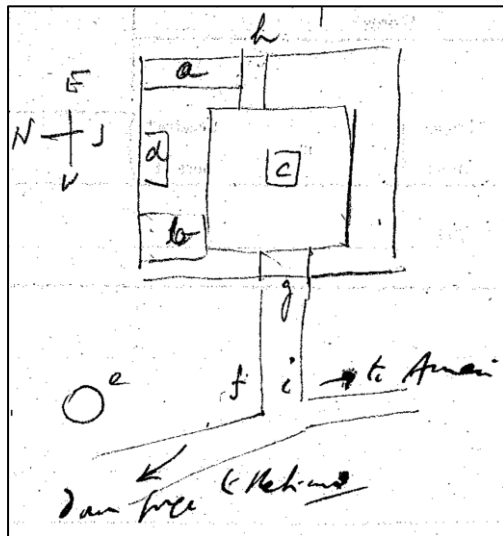
MONASTERY OF ARKADHI

Arkadi Monastery before its destruction in 1866 (Pashley I 308-9)



Arkadi Monastery since its reconstruction (Internet)

ARKADI. April 4th 1917¹



Rough plan made at first visit

- A. The place where the explosion was
- B. New guest-house
- C. Church
- D. Refectory where there was a massacre
- E. Heroon
- F. Outbuilding with Venetian steps
- G. Main entrance
- H. Back entrance
- I. Place of cannons

Ten kilometres east of Retimo the road to Arkadi branches off inland and in 2 hours one gets to the monastery (note: I came the reverse way on this first visit). At this point there is a high rolling plateau 500 metres above the sea and quite near the north edge of this is the monastery. A new church ten minutes north of the monastery is nearly on the edge of this plateau. At a later visit I came to Arkadi from, I think, Anogia and lost the way a good deal and arrived in the evening by recognising this new church and making for it, as it is conspicuous a long way off whilst the monastery itself is hidden from the north and east by the rising ground upon which this church stands. It can be seen from the sea, but the monastery itself cannot.

A gorge wooded with scrub cuts into this plateau and almost at the top of this gorge at its east side is Arkadi. From the gorge one sees only the Heroon and the tops of a few trees by the *moni*. After crossing the watershed one descends in to the Amari valley. The monastery just sees a V of sea through the gorge and sees the top of Ida rising over the nearer land, with its north slope facing Candia and its south Phaistos. The view is bare and flatly wild. Just to the north is a fine group of stone-pines.

Vines grow round the monastery but it is too high for olives. The square monastery is plain outside, mostly two stories and with flat roofs like a very much larger Toplou, only as it is so much larger it has not the tower-like aspect of Toplou. The entrance is on the west side, and the west side of the court has an arcade on each of the two stories. In the middle of the court is the church with fine Venetian front, much marked with Turkish bullets. As the church was burned out in 1866 the *templon* [iconostasis] is quite new and made of deal and not at all good, with eikons of the horrible Europeanised school, the impulse towards which is, I believe, Russian. The new *xenon* is where the old abbots' quarters were which, being of wood, were burned in 1866. It is a 2-storey building with a red tiled roof which rises above the rest of the monastic buildings and very much detracts from its look of age, making a very jarring note. But it is the only blot on Arkadi. A very comfortable blot with good beds. In the court there are a few rather blighted trees.

D in the plan above is the present refectory where, in 1866, 36 Christians were killed. The Turks approached the monastery on November 8th (or 9th) and planted

cannons at I in plan opposite the main gate which they broke down.² They then rushed in. Many Christians from the neighbourhood had taken refuge in the monastery. There was some slaughter and then a man cried out: "Those who do not wish to fall into the hands of the Turks, follow me." They went to the back entrance, H in the plan. To the north of this entrance was the powder store, A in the plan. The people stood at the entrance of this store, which was onto the passage to the gate, and got on the roof of it (it was of one storey), and the man who had called upon them to follow him fired his pistol into the powder magazine. The place then blew up. The present back door is new. It is built in a good imitation Venetian style and much better than the Greeks every build nowadays, and so is all the building at this corner except the foundation and the threshold upon which the man stood and fired his pistol. The store has been partly rebuilt with a barrel vault which is only completed at the north end. But this uncompleted vault and the present walls all belong to an unfinished beginning of rebuilding the ruins of 1866. Nothing of the building as it was then is left except the lowest part of the walls. So the vault now seen is not broken but incomplete. To think it broken by the explosion is wrong. It also ends regularly with one course, like a building left off and not like what would be left after an explosion.

This is all of some interest because it shows that the common picture of the explosion, of which there is a version in oils in the guesthouse at Arkadi, is quite fantastic. The present abbot who gave me these details told me that the picture does not represent the facts at all. The picture, reproductions of which are very common in cafés all over Greece, represents a vaulted hall and an opening in the floor towards which a venerable monk advances holding the cross in one hand and a taper in the other to fire the powder in the magazine below, whilst all round the people are awaiting death in heroic attitudes.

After the explosion 120 persons surrendered to the Turks and 36 shut themselves up in the present refectory (D in the plan). The Turks parleyed and after shooting at the door they were let in and killed all the 36. The old door with bullet holes in it is preserved as a relic nailed up against the SE wall of the room. The door of the refectory is in the south wall opening, not onto the great court, but onto a little side court in the body of the buildings. This little court has on its west side the now walled up door that led to the old abbot's quarters, which were where the present guesthouse is.

Over the door of the refectory is the inscription:

+ΠΙΑΜΜΕΓΑ ΜΟΧΘΟΝ ΔΕΞΑΙΟ ΒΛΑΣΤΟΥ ΗΓΕΜΟΝΟΙΟ
ΔΕΣΠΟΙΝΑ Ω ΜΑΡΙΑ ΦΙΑΤΡΟΝ ΑΠΕΙΡΕΣΙΟΝ ΑΧΟ³

[Accept the immense labour of abbot Vlastos, o Lady Mary, boundless source of love.

1670]



The Heroon (Monument to the Heroes), then and now (photos from the internet)

The Heroon is a six-sided two-storey building with a dome. It was built since the end of the Turkish government. Before this the bones were kept in a building “like a windmill” and probably much less conspicuous.⁴

The lower story contains the bones of the victims of the 1866 massacre and the upper is a room with relics, to which access is gained by a flight of steps. In the middle of the floor is a square hole through which the bones below are visible. In the room is a glass-fronted case containing a display of skulls with bullet wounds and sword cuts, on either side on the wall wreaths of artificial flowers. On a table is a visitors’ book.

There are now about 20 monks at Arkadi. They are very hospitable.

All these details of the massacre I got from the abbot and record them as the local tradition, which differs a good deal from the version in the common picture.

At a later visit to Arkadi I was shown their very rich treasure, which contains very fine church embroidery, the finest certainly in Crete.

A little later, Lawson told me that the nomarch [provincial governor] of Retimo told him that the explosion was caused by a peasant called Diamantakis firing his pistol into the powder store.⁵ This confirms the abbot’s story as told to me.

Tozer visited Arkadi (pp. 52-55) in 1874 and thus only 8 years after the massacre. He found the monastery in ruins with only two survivors, a monk and a boy, living in the ruins, and no more than two or three rooms habitable. He gives a good account of the massacre, but remarks that the fury of the Turks was perhaps inspired by recollections of an earlier occasion when the Christians had killed a number of Turks in this same monastery. Of this earlier and less well known slaughter an account is given by Pashley (I, pp. 310-313). His story is that in the winter after the great revolution began, and so in 1821-1822, parties of Sphakiotes came to Amari, and the Moslem leader Iatimeles came from Retimo with 80 men to preserve order and established himself at Arkadi. The Christians, 400 in number, gathered at Thronos, a village to the south near [Moni] Asomaton, on the evening or perhaps the eve of the feast of Saint Antonios, and came in the early hours of the morning to the monastery. The monks admitted them by a postern, which can hardly be other than the back door by the

powder magazine where the Christians blew up the powder magazine in 1866, and a surprise attack was made before daybreak. Some [Turks] were killed before and some after a surrender, and of the whole 80 only 8 or 10 escaped. Of the Christians only 7 were killed. The Turks' revenge came in 1866, but on the wrong people. The earlier affair was only one more instance of the lawless violence of the Sphakiotes; the victims of 1866 were peasants from the neighbouring villages. Pashley's guide, a Sphakiote, gave as an excuse for the slaughter after the surrender that the Christians could not restrain themselves when they saw the murderers of their kinsmen, but then let out the fact that it was a deliberate piece of treachery to prevent these picked Turks escaping out of their hands: "Den itoni diaforetikon na girisosin opiso eis to Rithimnos."⁶ Arkadi has had no reason to love the Sphakiotes and the abbot said to Pashley that the visits of the Sphakiotes to collect money nominally for the war had been more disastrous to them than any treatment from the Turks.

Αρκάδι, 25 May 1917

Inscription on west façade of church:

ΑΦ. ΚΛΜΧΤΖ. ΠΖ.

explained as 15. Κλήμης Χορτάτζης. 87 [i.e. 1587], Clemens Chortatzis being an abbot.⁷

Story about Arkadi⁸

At Rodakino the mason who was building the tomb for the drowned officer told me that when Arkadi was sacked in 1866 it rained everywhere else and by a miracle was fine only at Arkadi because God wished that it should be destroyed. "Perhaps there was a sinner there." At first, as the Turks entered, each one was killed by the defenders and then they broke down the door with cannon. The abbot killed himself with a bullet below the chin and also fired the power. This inconsistency the man did not observe. According to the story as told at Arkadi, neither is true.

ARKADI⁹

Three images that Dawkins may have had in mind when writing this section



Giuseppe Lorenzo Gatteri, *Olocausto di Arcadi* (before 1884)



A popular lithograph



Theodoros Vryzakis, *Arkadi* (c. 1867)

Everyone who travelled in Crete in the early years of this century must be familiar with a picture which was hung everywhere in village cafés: a coloured print of the blowing up of the powder magazine at the monastery of Arkadi near Retimo; and it is hardly likely that a picture so popular is not still to be seen. The scene depicted is a large stone room. In the middle of the floor is a round hole and advancing towards this is a venerable figure: a monk in long robes with a fine beard. In one hand he has the cross, in the other he holds a lighted taper which he is at the point of throwing down the hole to explode the store of gunpowder in the room below. Behind the monk is a terrified crowd of people, men, women and children, tearfully resigned to an heroic death. The Turks are at the point of breaking in. For the Christians who have taken refuge behind the sacred walls it is a choice of death or slavery. Heroically they have chosen death and in a moment the powder magazine will blow and all will be over.

That there was an explosion of gunpowder at Arkadi in 1866, when there was a great insurrection against the Turks – the last serious insurrection before the successful moment in the nineties, is true enough, and this picture, of which there is a version in oils hanging in the guestroom at the monastery, embodies the popular idea of how it took place. Yet in fact it seems to have happened quite differently and I write this to give the account of the tragic story as it was told me by the abbot in 1917, he knowing the story as the monks of the monastery have handed it down. In what form it reached England, when Swinburne wrote his *Songs before Sunrise* and makes mention, in “Ode on the Insurrection in Candia”, of “rent Arcadion” I do not know.

Before coming to the abbot’s story a few words may be said on the earlier history of the monastery which will present the main characters in the drama: the monks of Arkadi and the Christians of the surrounding villages; the Turkish forces, whose centre was a few hours off at the port of Retimo; and lastly the warlike

Christians of Sphakia, the mountainous villages to the west on the slopes of the White Mountains – the mountainous mass of the western part of the island lying between Suda Bay and the sea to the south. These hardy mountaineers, always the centre of opposition to the Turks, had been almost as formidable to the less warlike Christians of the low-lying villages, and their part in the story of Arkadi is not unimportant.

Of Arkadi just before the 1866 insurrection we learn a good deal from Robert Pashley's *Travels in Crete* published in 1837. Pashley was a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and was travelling in Crete in 1834. In volume I, pages 310-13 he writes of Arkadi. He narrates that, at the time of the Greek War of Independence, the Sphakiotes spread over the province of Amari and both there and at Retimo fought against the Turks. A Turkish leader, Iatimeles, came with 80 men from Retimo and seized Arkadi. Christians from Sphakia were admitted to the monastery by the monks and there was fighting. The Christians fired the monastery and the Turks surrendered, but in spite of this they were slaughtered. Very few Christians were killed. Very few Turks escaped: their bodies were thrown in the well. Pashley's companion and guide was a certain Captain Mania [Maniás] from Askypou in Sphakia.¹⁰ He said that when the Christians had driven the Turks out of the abbot's lodging where they had taken refuge and saw many Greeks lying dead, one finding his brother, another his cousin, and another his companion, they were overcome with fury and killed the Turks. [Captain Manias added that] There was also another cause of the massacre: the Christians saw that these Turks were the first and the finest fellows in Retimo and there seemed nothing to be gained by letting them return to Retimo. Forty-five years later the Turks at Arkadi cannot have forgotten this event, and of forgiveness there could be no question. So things were ripe for the 1866 disaster.

In 1874, only eight years after the disaster, Tozer was at Arkadi. Once regarded, he says, as the largest and richest monastery in Crete, it was then a mass of ruins. Of the disaster there were only two survivors; the other monks had come in from the outside. One of these survivors guided him round the ruins of the monastery. The Turks opened the siege from the front of the monastery and from a postern at the back. They broke in, the powder magazine was fired and many perished. A further 36 were killed in the refectory, about 60 others elsewhere, and the monastery was fired. This was the narrative of an eye witness of an event then quite recent. Tozer remarks that, savage as this was, the Turks had the earlier slaughter of their own people to avenge.

It will be noted that Tozer's account makes no mention of the heroic abbot [Gabriel Marinakis] who is the central figure of the tradition picture. He merely says that the Christians set fire to the powder.

In 1917 I was in the entirely rebuilt Arkadi and the abbot gave me the full account of the massacre as it is remembered in the monastery. The traditional picture, of which there is a version in oils in the guestroom, is, he said, really quite inaccurate in most points.

On November 8th – or 9th – the Turks came and planted a cannon opposite the main gate of the monastery. They broke this down and rushed in in a body. Many Christians from the near villages had taken refuge in the monastery and there was some slaughter. Then a man cried out: "Those who do not wish to fall into the hands of the Turks, follow me." By a tradition of which J. C. Lawson informed me he was told by the Mayor of Retimo that this man was a peasant called Diamantakis. He led the people to the postern gate at the back wall of the monastery and near it was the powder magazine. He did not lead them out of the building, but blew up the powder. Nothing of the [original] building is now left except the threshold on which

Diamantakis stood. The roof was blown right off, but [the building] has been partially rebuilt.

After the explosion 120 persons surrendered. What happened to them all the abbot did not make plain, but 36 shut themselves up in the room now used as a refectory and it is interesting that this is exactly the number given by Tozer. The Turks parleyed after shooting at the door. They were let in and then killed all thirty-six. This door with the bullet holes in it is preserved as a relic nailed up against the SE wall of the room.

It will be seen that, in this recent account and the account given by Tozer, there is nothing inconsistent and they may be taken as very close to the truth. Much of the trouble seems to have been due to the turbulence of the local heroes from Sphakia. It was they who had killed the Turks at the first encounter. The victims of 1866 paid for this, but they were more local peasants than Sphakiotes. The abbot gave Pashley his views on the question. The visits of the Sphakiotes, nominally to collect money for the war, had been more disastrous for them than any treatment from the Turks.

Although the monastery lies high up, quite near indeed to the central watershed of Crete, it is yet in a hollow which makes it from some directions not easy to find. I came to it from the east over a very rough, stony ground which in Crete is called *khalepa* and which was cut by ravines so that the monastery only came into sight when we were quite close to it. This hidden position may have something to do with a version I was told of the destruction of 1866. When the Turks were approaching it was a very misty day and nothing could be seen except that over the monastery there was a patch of sunshine which made it conspicuous. The patch was taken as a miracle and a sign that the destruction of the place was God's will: it may be that there was some sinner in it. This story I was told on the beach below Rodakino on the south coast of Sphakia. The beach is now known as the place from which the German general [Kreipe] kidnapped by Patrick Leigh Fermor was packed off for Africa.

That places have been protected by a miraculous mist is a not uncommon idea. Thus, the monastery of Koutloumousi¹¹ was saved from an attack of Turks who could not find it and turned their weapons against one another. Nearer home, the Celtic god would cast a mist over the Isle of Man when danger threatened. But this Cretan story is the only example I know of the miracle reversed by a miraculous illumination instead of a miraculous mist.

Rodakino, with the not far off large village of Kantanos, was destroyed by the Germans when they invaded Crete.¹²

Moni ton Agion Asomaton near Amari, 3 April 1917¹³

On this first occasion I visited for an hour at midday on my way from Agia Galini to Arkadi, where I spent the night, it being my first visit there.

A courtyard with a church in the middle, like Arkadi but smaller and poorer (I wrote this account after seeing Arkadi, where I went in the evening). Church has no *templon*. From the Abbot's room, which is in the east range, a wonderful view of the fertile valley and beyond it the steep cliffs like buttresses, and above them the snowy wedge of Ida. In the court a very fine bay tree.

I note that in 1011 [sic] they changed abbot, and my then host Gabriel has retired and is succeeded by the ex-soldier Agathangelos,¹⁴ who has a cell quite like a house, which he has built himself in the north range. Another nice monk there is an

old man who does carpentering in the two-storey *kelli* in the west range. He treated us to a very fine wine. The cellar of the *moni* is in the north range, and I have several times been taken there for drinks by the cellarer.

[*Ms. note:*] Visited by Tozer in 1874 (p. 56), who says that “from a beam on one side of the court are suspended three Venetian bells”, two dated 1633 and 1639, concealed and discovered in 1873, with relief figures. Xanthoudidis tells me that many of the bells were hidden and have been discovered: it was to find a bell in connection with a dream that [the peasants dug?] at Plati.¹⁵

Monastery των Ασωμάτων, Amari, 27 March 1918

The road from Dibaki by Asomato to Retimo [as opposed to the road from Ag. Galini] goes by Klima and Apodoulou, not Monastiraki.¹⁶ A very bad road and not very interesting but with fine views of the mountain Kentron [Kentros]. Reached Asomato with Major Anstey late after losing our way in the dark.

Over the gate of the monastery are parts of an inscription that presumably belonged to the earlier gate. They include the date 1612 [= 1692],¹⁷ very likely the date of the foundation of the monastery [unlikely]. The blocks form part of the lintel:

ΘΕΙΑ ΘΕΟΥ ΔΥΝΑΜΕΙ Θ...
[ΑΝΗ]ΓΕΡΘΗ ... [ΜΕ]ΛΧΙΣΕΔΕΚ
ΠΡΟΣΤΑ[ΤΟΥ] ΑΧΙΒ¹⁸

[By the divine might of God [...] was erected [by] the *prostatis* [leader and suppliant] Melchisedek 1612]

[*Ms addition:*] The 4B is less likely as 1692 just after the conquest is not a likely date.¹⁹

The blocks are clearly out of order. The gate has been rebuilt and the date of the rebuild is given on a block above these older fragments; it is 1847 (ΑΩΜΖ).

25 May 1917

I read inscription Η ΘΕΙΑ ΘΕΟΥ ΔΥΝΑΜΕΙ [etc.] and record an inscription above it running:

ΑΩ ανιγέρθη η πύλη αύτη και πάντα τα εν αυτή φυλλατόμενα διά επιστασίας Ιωσήφ καθηγουμένου πιστού προστάτου και νέου κτήτορος της αγίας μονής ταύτης ΜΖ.²⁰ [“18 This gate and all that is guarded within it was erected under the supervision of Joseph faithful *prostatis* and new founder of this holy monastery 47.] Presumably τα εν αυτή φυλλατόμενα are the fragments on the older gate.

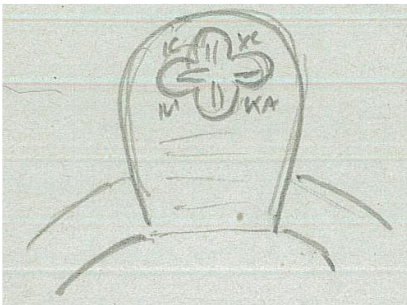
In the space over the door of the church there is an inscribed block not built in, which is perhaps a part of the old inscription over the gate. I did not measure the letters to see if they are of the same height. It runs:

ΕΙΑΤΑΞΙΑΡΧΩ
ΤΟΥΚΑΙΤΑΥΤΑΙΑΝ²¹

Moni ton Asomaton, Amari, 8th [?] April 1918

On the south side of the church outside it is a flat built tomb with the inscription

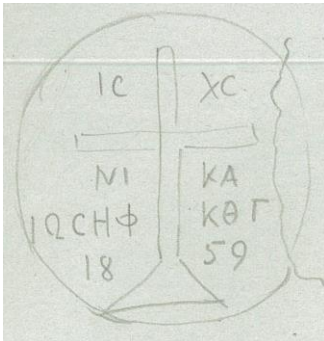
ΜΝΗΣΘΗΤΙ ΚΥΡΙΕ
 ΤΟΥ ΔΟΥΛΟΥ ΣΟΥ
 ΜΑΝΑΣΣΗ
 ΑΡΧΙΕΡΕΩΣ ΚΑΙ ΚΤΙ
 ΤΟΡΟΣ Α.Ψ.Ο.Ε²² i.e. 1775



This is the same Manassis who is recorded in the inscription over the door of the stable which is among the outbuildings on the north side of the court. Over the arched door is a keystone, as in the sketch, and below the cross on it is the inscription:

ΜΟΧΘΟΣ ΔΟΥΛΟΥ Μ
 ΑΝΑΣΗ ΙΕΡΟ
 ΜΟΝΑΧΟΥ Κ. ΚΑ
 ΘΙΓΟΥ ΜΕΝΟΥΤΗΣ
 ΜΟΝΗΣ ΑΨΕΗ²³

i.e. 1768, seven years before his death.



On the outer wall of the monastery, on the north side of the gate, between the gate and the plane tree on the left as one enters, is this inscription of 1859 of the abbot Joseph, done in small pebbles set in the plaster. There are a lot of inscriptions in this style at Preveli.²⁴

I noted that the old part of the *moni* is the range of buildings on the south side of the court which look Venetian of the Bali style in parts. The rest is newish, much dating from the time of the abbot Joseph, see inscription above.

Moni ton Asomaton, Amari. 3 April 1917

I was shown the treasures of the monastery. In the church is a silver covered eikon of the three archangels with the date ΑΨΝΕ = 1755 and on another eikon – but here my note is not clear – the date ΑΧΙΟ, that is 1610.

In the south-east corner of the court, the last room on the east side next to the abbot's cell is a room lately fitted up as a library and treasure room with some fine church embroideries in glass cases.²⁵ I noted:

- a stole worked in gold and colours on red satin dated ΑΨΞΕ (1765)
- ditto on yellow satin dated ΑΧΟΗ (1678) and inscribed *Αθανασίου ιερομονάχου Καφάτου ΑΧΟΗ*
- ditto on red satin dated ΑΧΠΘ (1689)
- an *epigonatidion* on red satin dated ΑΨΝΕ (1755)
- one leaf of a minuscule gospel with ι for β

The most interesting book is a folio copy of the works of St Cyril of Jerusalem, Paris, 1720, which has the inscription *Conventus Burdigalensis ordinis*

Rae Mariae de Mercede catalogo inscriptus Dono Dominae de Fayet 1722. A later inscription in the book is ‘*Δημος ΓΧ Στεφαν [sic] 1858 γρ.186 (= γρόσια)*’ Below this is the inscription: ‘*νῦν δὲ ὑπάρχει τοῦ Δωροθέου Σταυρίδη Κρητὸς καὶ αὐριον τίς ἤδεν*’ [Now it belongs to Dorotheos Stavridis the Cretan, but tomorrow who knows].

These latter inscriptions show that by 1858 it had got into the Levant, and by 1864 was in the possession of the Cretan Dorotheos Stavridis, whose name Dorotheos shows that he was a monk. The abbot told me that this Dorotheos was an archimandrite at Constantinople and gave the book to the monastery, but how it got to Constantinople is unknown. Nor is it known why Dorotheos gave it, but it may be guessed that he was or had been a monk there or was from the neighbourhood and had some home link with Asomato.

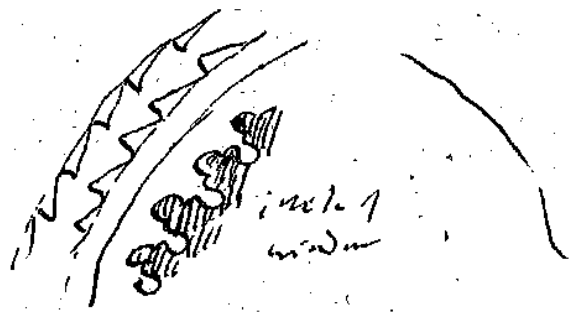
These things are all carefully looked after. The Moni has suffered from the Turks and they say they have lost a lot of MSS. Such a show of church embroidery is rare. As in Pontus, where I saw dated [?] at St George Peristerona, it seems all to date from about 1700 more or less, so this was a good period for this work. Their books were mostly given by the present bishop, but monks don't read.

Amari, 8 April 1918

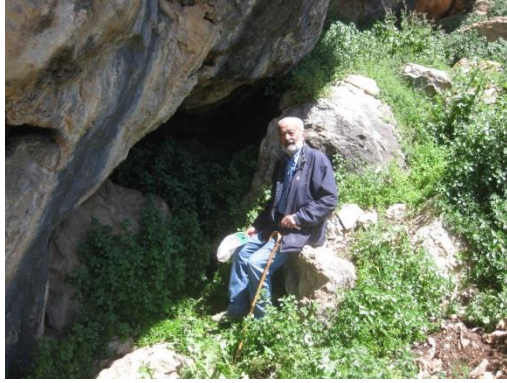
In the village of Nefs Amari the tall belfry of the church is built on a highish rock quite separate from the church. This village with the odd name serves as the capital of the Amari valley.²⁶

Meronas, 9 April 1918

Just before reaching the village from Asomato, on left old double church with rude dome and good north door with 2 rows of dogtooth between roll mouldings. Traces of frescoes. Remains of good south window – Panagia. Sketch of fretted edge of (S) window:



In Meronas village treble church of Panagia with remains of frescoes; later door [the easternmost of the two south doors] is inscribed above *μνήσθητι Κύριε των καλλιεργούντων Χριστιανών 1835 [1838] Μα 25 [Remember o Lord the Christians who did good works 25 May 1838]*. Two other doors, N and S, are Venetian with arms on S door and on window in N wall. Belfry later.²⁷ Three apses with external arcades, but pillars gone from central and N apse. This is rare in Crete.



IMG_8097 Yannis Neonakis outside Mygiospilios cave



IMG_8099

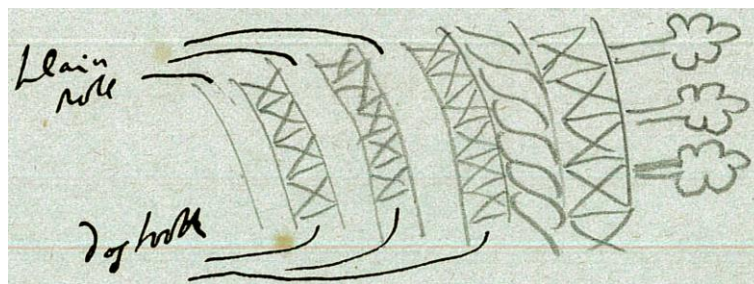
Twenty minutes above the village of Meronas is the *Μυγιόσπηλιος*.¹ The opening of the cave is a gash in the hillside used as a *mandra*. The entrance to the cave proper is very narrow and I did not go into it. By a cleft in the rock (probably the *trypa* [hole] of Vlastos) one climbs out on to the hillside above and presently reaches the *sella tou Digeni*, which is a saddle-shaped rock upon which one can sit. It is high in front and behind just like a saddle. The *vraski tou Digeni* is some way off towards Gerakari,²⁸ but I could not quite make it out although it was pointed out to me. Skaphidia is a little way off and I did not go there. The *sella* is the well-known thing locally, that and the *vraski*. For all this, see Vlastos' paper on Digenis sites in Crete in *Kritikos Laos*.²⁹

At Meronas there is a legend that the Ten Saints persecuted by the Venetian government took refuge in the *Μυγιόσπηλιος*, but were smoked out (in the familiar Turkish way) and escaped and went to Gortyna – Agioi Dekka. Here they were martyred.

I went to a wedding feast at Meronas where the groom, Antonis, was 18 and the bride, whom he had carried off without the will of her father, still younger.

Thronos, Church of Panagia, 9th April 1918

The village lies on a hill about ¾ hour walk from Asomato and I walked out there on a fine morning. In the village is the old church of Panagia. The West door is elaborate and has rich mouldings all round the arch. On the door-posts the same, but with the two outer members omitted.



¹ I was told of this cave and *sella* earlier in March 1918 by a man at Asomato.



IMG_8094 West door of Panagia, Thronos



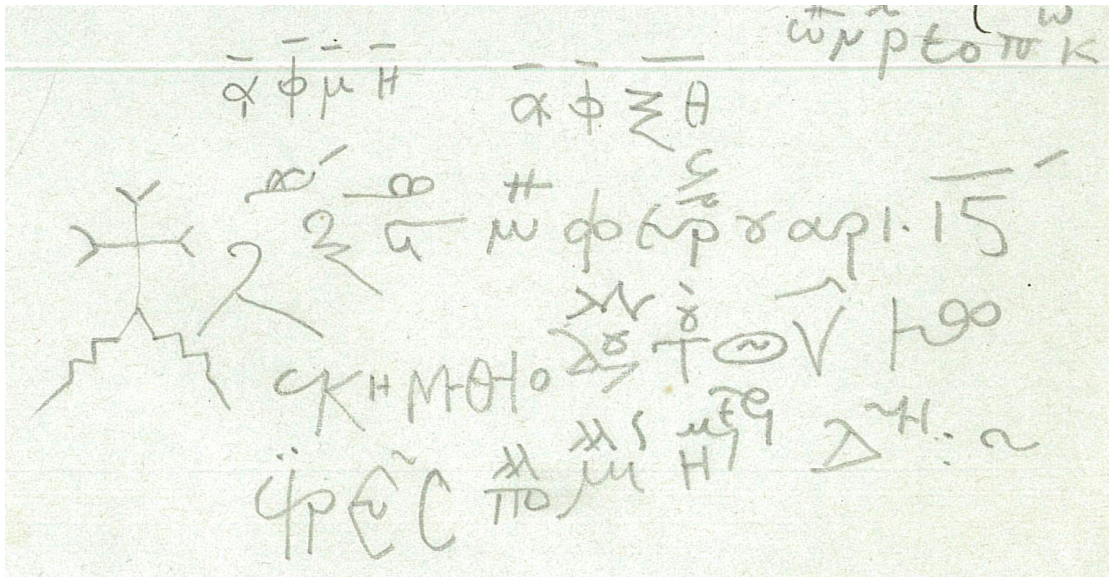
IMG_8078 Moulding on W door

On the lintel are two coats of arms sketched and a cross between them a good deal worn.

The interior is all frescoed and has a mosaic floor. On the north wall is this graffito, but the top words, the dates 1548 and 1568 [= 1569] and the obscure

ω μ ρ ε ο τ ο κ

[maybe θεοτόκ] do not belong to the main inscription, which records the death of John the Priest on February 15th [= 16th] 1558 (7066-5508 = 1558):



The abbreviations after *ιερέως* I give up.³⁰

Agia Paraskevi near Asomaton in Amari, 9 April 1918

Twenty minutes' walk from the Moni ton Asomaton on the way to Thronos is a cruciform church with a high dome which, to judge from the eikons inside, is dedicated to Agia Paraskevi. The south door looks old. The interior is blue washed, but over the altar tomb which fills up the north transept is a painting of a donor. He is on the left and is inscribed in capitals in two lines thus:



δέησις τον δούλων του Θεού Γεωργίου τ[ου] Χορτάτζη και της συμβίου αυτού
[prayer of the servants of God George Chortatsis and his wife]

In the second line the plaster is broken, but there is no doubt that the name is *Χορτάτζη*.³¹

On the right [= in the middle] of the picture is a holder of a book, probably Christ, and on the book I read: [inscription (from Matt. XI.28-9) not reproduced here]

Gerola II 405

Outside on the south-east angle is a plaque with [diagram not reproduced here] and below it this inscription in capitals:³²

ηγουμενεία Ιεροθέου η τε βρύσις ωκοδομήτο και ο ναός ανεκαινίσθη 1888
Ιουλίω³³

[during the abbotship of Ierotheos the spring was built and the church renovated in July 1888]

The church stands by itself in the bottom of the wide valley to the south of the hill on which Thronos lies.³⁴



IMG_8083 Agia Paraskevi, 30 April 2015

Monastiraki, Amari valley, 11 April 1918

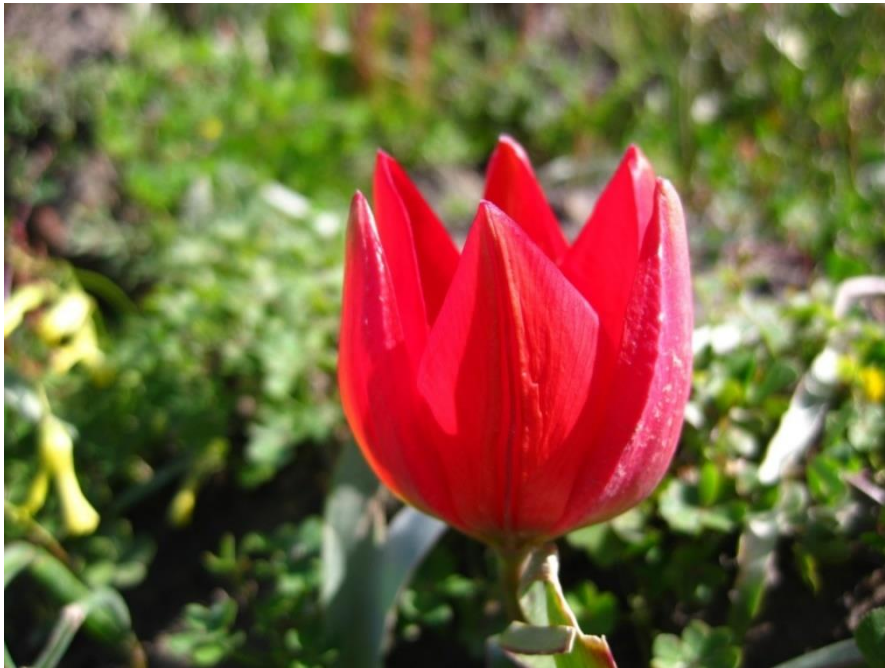
At Monastiraki the church of Ai-Stratigos has a good door (west) with pillars one on each side. There are blind arcades on the outside of the north and south walls. See Gerola.



West door, Monastiraki church (Gerola II 277) IMG_8087, 30 April 2015

April 9th 1918. In the fields south of the monastery of Asomato in Amari I saw a quantity of the red tulip. It has a shortish thick stalk with one flower of a fine flesh colour. Also a great quantity of this tulip in a field to the left of the road just below the village of Monastiraki, as I was on the way from Asomato to Agia Galini. I saw this flower also in April 1917 near the village of Amari, my first visit, going Agia Galini – Amari – Asomato – Arkadi. I have never seen it anywhere in Crete but in this neighbourhood.³⁵

By Asomato I also saw *Ornithogalum cernuum*, which is not rare in Crete.



IMG_5584 Cretan tulip at Yous Kambos, 24 April 2013

27 March 1918. The road from Asomato to Retimo ascends from the Amari valley and leaves Arkadi on the right, but one sees it [Arkadi is on the left of the modern road]. The road then goes by Mesi and Adela [=Adele] [i.e. to the west of the modern road via Amnato] and reaches the main road by the sea 5 kilometres east of Retimo. The country by Mesi and Adela is very pretty, with olive trees on the slopes. In general these slopes behind Retimo are one of the prettiest parts of Crete.

Peter Mackridge's notes

¹ The story of 1866 is very badly told in this first section. He doesn't explain the background to the events, i.e. that Ottoman forces attacked Arkadi monastery because Greek revolutionaries had gathered there. Many civilians had also gathered there for safety.

² The Turkish forces approached on 7 November; the battle took place on the 8th and 9th.

³ Greek inscription dated 1670 and referring to abbot Gerasimos Vlastos; Dawkins' transcription, with emendations according to Psilakis II 18.

⁴ The Heroon containing the bones of those killed in 1866 is in fact an octagonal building situated 80 metres NW of the monastery. According to one website, "before 1910 the ossuary opposite the gate had been a windmill"; according to another, the monastery's windmill used to stand on the spot where the Heroon was erected. Perhaps Dawkins misunderstood the story.

⁵ According to various sources the name of the man was either Kostandis Yaboudakis or Emmanouil Skoulas.

⁶ The full version of what Pashley reports Captain Maniás having told him is: "They were the bravest men in Rethymno, and it wasn't desirable that they should return there." Arkadi monastery was recaptured from Yetim Ali by Christians on 17 January 1822 (St Antony's day), but it was set on fire shortly afterwards by Muslims as a reprisal.

⁷ This inscription is copied in Gerola IV 479.

⁸ Typed on a separate sheet with a different typewriter.

⁹ A note at the beginning of this section reads "Last draft (after 1941)", It seems to be a draft for a separate article, no doubt inspired by the German occupation of Crete (1941-44) and the heroic resistance of the Cretan people against it; but the text seems not to have been completed. The reference to Fermor's abduction of General Kreipe (if not the rest of this section) must have been written in or after 1944.

¹⁰ For Captain Maniás (including a portrait of him) see Pashley I 75ff.

¹¹ Dawkins adds "Khilandari?" Both of these monasteries are on Mount Athos; the latter is Serbian.

¹² The text trails off here.

¹³ Psilakis II 347ff. There is a photo of the church and the courtyard in Gerola II 368.

¹⁴ Gabriel Pangalos was succeeded as abbot in 1918 by Agathangelos Lagouvardos, who had fought against the Turks in Epirus in 1912-13. He later became abbot of Preveli Monastery, where he helped allied soldiers escape from the German invasion in 1941: see end of ch. 11.

¹⁵ Tozer makes it clear that bells at Asomato monastery had been buried to save them from the Turks. The story of how the remains of a Minoan house were discovered at

Plati on the Lasithi plateau is mentioned in ch. 8: a woman had dreamed of that a bell would be discovered if people dug in a certain place. See endnote to ch. 24 for the full reference.

¹⁶ Dibaki is more usually spelled Tymbaki. Dawkins often calls the Moni Asomaton “Asomato” for short.

¹⁷ The date 1692 is Gerola’s reading, according to Psilakis II 350.

¹⁸ Perhaps the beginnings of the two lines of a heroic couplet? See also Psilakis II 350. This inscription was no longer there when we visited the monastery on 19/4/95, by which time it had been replaced by a concrete lintel. According to Psilakis, the abbot’s name was Melchisedek Saounatsos.

¹⁹ Gerola apparently read 4B (i.e. 92).

²⁰ In Psilakis II 356, emended by PM. This inscription was still over the gate of the monastery in 2009.

²¹ It would indeed be interesting if this were more of the now missing inscription over the gate, as Dawkins surmised (Θ continued in EIA, ΠΡΟΣΤΑ continued in ΤΟΥ). This inscription is not given by Psilakis. It was replaced by the following, which I recorded in 1995: “Ο πάνσεπτος ούτος ναός παμμεγίστων Ταξιαρχών επί ηγουμενίας Αγαθαγγέλου Λαγουβάρδου εν έτει 1925 ανεκαινίσθη” [This most sacred church of the magnificent Archangels was renovated during the abbotship of Agathangelos Lagouvardos in the year 1925]. This latter inscription was no longer there in 2009, after the church had been renovated once again.

²² Μανασσή & ΑΨΟΕ according to Dawkins, Μανασή & ΑΨΟΘ [1779] according to Emm. G. Generalis (“Η Ιερά Μονή των Ασωμάτων της Επαρχίας Αμαρίου Κρήτης”, *Επετηρίς Εταιρείας Κρητικών Σπουδών* 4 (1941), p. 12) and Psilakis; it was still there on 19/4/95, but no longer there in 2009.

²³ This inscription is also recorded, in slightly different form, by Generalis, “Η Ιερά Μονή των Ασωμάτων”, p. 13. It is not mentioned by Psilakis, nor is it visible today. However, there is a curious inscription over the eastern of the two doors on the south side of the church, which is difficult to read because it appears to have been deliberately defaced with a metal tool. Below a cross inscribed IB in the top arm, with the letters IC XC N K in the four corners made by the four arms of the cross, the inscription reads:

Μόχθως δε Ιω/σήφ καθηγουμέ//νου κε του [?ανεγερτού?] του ναού / μνήσθητι Κύριε κε // δούλου σ Μανουήλ [...] / C.K.T. † ΑΩΙΒ [The labour of Joseph the abbot and re-builder of the church. Remember o Lord thy servant Manouel 1812].

²⁴ The 1859 inscription isn’t in Psilakis, nor was it visible in 2009. On the south wall of a ruined building to the north of the church is the inscription: ΟΙΚΟΣ ΜΘΔ ΙΕΡΜ Κ ΑΓΑΘ ΛΑΓΟΥΒΑΡΔΩΝ ΑΝΑΚΑΙΝΙΣΘΗ ΔΙ’ ΕΞΟΔΩΝ [ΤΟΥ?] ΤΗ 10 ΜΑΡ 1857 [The house of the hieromonk Methodios and of Agathangelos Lagouvardos was renovated at [his] expense on 10 March 1857] (the second name appears to replace a previous one). Above this: ΑΝΕΚΑΙΝΗΣΘΗ ΕΚ ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟΥ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΟ ΕΤΟΣ 1911 [Renovated for a second time in the year 1911]. Over the window to the right of this is an inscription recording a restoration in ΑΩΞΑ [1861]. Methodios was abbot till 1869, when he was exiled to Toplou for baptizing a Muslim woman from Thronos, whose brother had already been baptized (Generalis, “Η Ιερά Μονή των Ασωμάτων”, p. 15). See Psilakis II 357 (photo) and 359-60 (transcription). Psilakis suggests the name Agathangelos Lagouvardos was incised in 1911.

²⁵ Some or all of these objects were moved to the Historical Museum of Crete in Herakleion after the Moni Asomaton was dissolved and turned into an agricultural

school in 1930: cf. St. Alexiou, *A Guide to the Historical Museum of Crete* (Candia 1954), 19.

²⁶ The village of Nefs Amari is so called to distinguish it from the district of Amari of which it is the chief settlement. Turkish *nefis* means ‘soul, life, self, essence’; thus Nefs Amari is Turkish for ‘Amari proper’.

²⁷ Date 1829 over easternmost of N windows. Inscription on belfry hard to read (S wall).

²⁸ Βρασκή: a kind of large earthenware pot.

²⁹ *Ο Κρητικός λαός*, year 1, issue 1 (May 1909), 12-16. See also Dawkins’ “Folk-memory in Crete”, p. 23-24.

³⁰ Dawkins seems to read: φευρουαρι 15 εκοιμήθη ο δούλος του Θεού ιερέυς [...] [15 February the servant of the Lord priest [...] fell asleep]. In fact the figure after “February” is ις’, i.e. 16. All this is incised on the fresco of the second figure from the left (St George or Demetrius: he has a little boy behind him on a horse) inside the north wall.

³¹ The fresco has deteriorated considerably since Dawkins’ day, though in recent years work has been done to stabilize it. The inscription is above George’s head. Dawkins doesn’t mention the fresco painted on the wall of the tomb itself (which Greek scholars call ποδιά), which is beneath the fresco he describes. Unusually, the fresco on the tomb wall depicts a secular scene of two horsemen, one of whom appears to be collecting a bulging purse from a man standing on the ground – perhaps Chortatsis collecting tithes from one of his serfs.

³² Dawkins does not record the fact that this diagram represents the Cross with the lance (on the left) and the reed and sponge (on the right) appearing to sprout from its base.

³³ Ierotheos Troullinos was abbot of the Moni Asomaton from 1879 to 1892 (Generalis, “Η Ιερά Μονή των Ασωμάτων”, p. 15).

³⁴ The chapel of Agia Paraskevi and its setting are among the most beautiful that can be imagined. The date of construction is uncertain, but it may go back to the 13th century. Jackie and I walk there every time we stay at our dear friend Lambros Papoutsakis’ taverna in the nearby village of Thronos – almost every year. For me the frescos are particularly important because George Chortatsis, who had the church built, bears the same name as the foremost playwright of the Cretan Renaissance, who was an exact contemporary of Shakespeare. The George Chortatsis and his wife who are depicted here – and whose bones are visible inside their (now) glass-lidded tomb – are probably the playwright’s direct ancestors.

³⁵ Jackie and I had our first sight of these Cretan tulips at exactly the same spot where Dawkins recorded them, and on the anniversary of his sighting (9 April 1994), while driving with David and Katy Ricks.