

WORSHIPPING THE DUST OF CRAZY PASSION

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Early morning waves of silver, glint off the blue waters of Paliopoli (pre-Christian port of Skandeia) as I and others trek up to, the until now unattainable church of Agios Kosmas at Paliokastro, the original ancient capital of Kythera.

Agios Kosmas sits on the magnificent peak of Paliokastro between Mitata, Fratsia and Paliopoli and was the site of a recent archaeological dig under the leadership of the island's archaeologist Aris Tsaravopoulos supported by Australian-Kytherian John Fardoulis and a merry band of volunteers.

Now overgrown with myrtle and thorns, the surrounding area of the ancient capital is used as rural farming land and today is guarded by jersey cows and a randy bull. Forgotten for close to 100 years, an early morning mass was held in the tiny but exquisite Agios Kosmas. A recently cleared path to this wondrous church allowed access to Archbishop Seraphim along with Avlemonas' priest Father Georgios to re-animate this sacred space, which can easily be traced to pre-Christian times.

In the centre of the church are four Doric columns, from the remnants of an ancient sanctuary. The floor is uneven and in parts rocks jut-out of the soil. If you look closely at the walls of the Christian church you will see ancient roof-tiles used to fill the gaps of the walls. The Gregorian chants of the priests resonate through the space and bounce off the Doric columns settling the soul, as the circles of history ancient, Byzantine and present melt into each other.

History was retraced as more than forty people made the climb up to the temple/church of Agios Kosmas. Some sat outside jabbering about irrelevant issues, inside the more religious listened attentively to every word of the mass, while others followed the flickering shadows of the bees-wax candles as their shadows danced off the Doric columns.

A mobile phone rang-out in one the most reverent points of the service, reminding us that we were now in the techno-age and each breath was mixed with the earth of the church. All who were present were touched and enthralled by the historical moment we were witnessing and sharing. We could have been wearing togas; with our dreadlocked hair wound high. We were walking in the parallel dimension that was of a different vibration. Will any of us be the same again?



