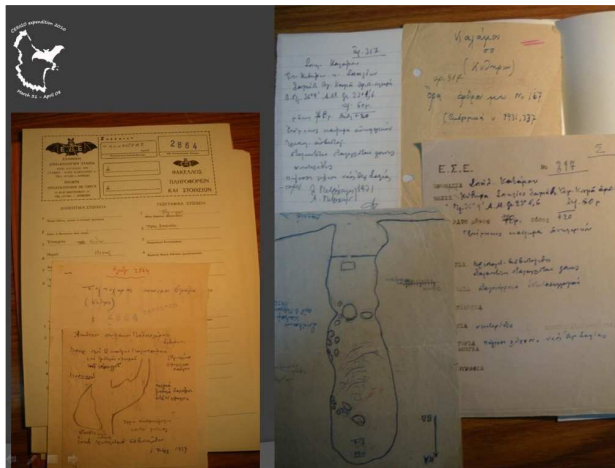
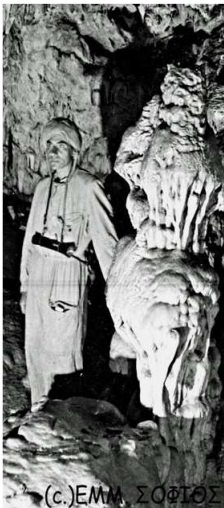


The Cerigo Speleological Project: 3 years of cave research in Aphrodite 's island

The speleological program in the island of Kythera began in 2009 under the aegis of the Hellenic Speleological Society (HSS), Department of Northern Greece. The aim of this project was the localisation, the recording, the exploration and the interdisciplinary study of the caves and any other cave-form of Kythera island.

According to the historical records, Kythera had been searched speleologically, initially by Ioannis Petrohilos himself, the founder of the H.S.S. from the early '30s to 1950.

The next expedition was conducted by the Department of Crete of the H.S.S. in 2002. The H.S.S. Department of Northern Greece continued the research in the island from a new base. It organised the Cerigo Speleological Project, in which acclaimed scientists and speleologists from the Hellenic Speleological Society, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the University of Crete participated.



Maps and records of the research into Kythera's caves

Ioannis Petrohilos

In order to achieve the goals of the project, three exploratory expeditions were organised on the island during November 2009, April 2010 and April 2011, involving 34 scientists.

The expedition of 2009 (Cerigo 2009) has an identifier character. In the first part, we had in mind to control and verify the old cave recording from the decades of '30, '50 and '60. Apart from these, we had to settle all the abeyances from the expedition of the Department of Crete. Finally the expedition visited 11 caves and mapped the 7. From the 11, the 3 were new recordings and the 8 were recordings of I. Petrocheilos. The 3 caves were mapped by the department of Crete and the 1 from Anna Petrocheilos. This expedition showed the uniqueness of the Kythera's speleological wealth and it was decided that a repeat expedition with the attendance of more speleologists take place during the Easter of 2010. It was the first time, in the Cerigo 2010 expedition, that not only marine and submarine caves were explored, but also the recording of the island's potholes (vertical caves). The expedition lasted 7 days and visited 25 caves, of which 14 were mapped. Finally 21 of 25 caves were new recordings. In the Cerigo 2011 expedition, 15 new caves were recorded and explored, while simultaneously the abeyances from the previous expeditions were also completed. Up to now results are related to geology, biology, archaeology and medieval history. The most significant example are the 14 cave-churches, that have been recorded by the program and henceforth A. Semoglou, assistant professor of Byzantine archaeology and Art, study on them. In addition to this, another part of the research focused on the caves which had been used during the Late Bronze-age (Minoan-Mycenaean period).

Moreover, during the July of 2011 the Eforeia of Paleoanthropology and Speleology of South Greece with the collaboration of some members of the Cerigo Speleological Project excavated the Katafygadi cave, a Bronze age settlement at the Mermigari mountain. The results of these first researches were published as a preliminary report in a special publication of the Department of Northern Greece. On one hand, the future goals are the construction of a web page which will have exclusively to do with the Speleological Project of Kythera, and on the other we plan to continue the recording, the exploration and the study of the cave form, as well as the promotion of thematic publications on research aspects in the island of Kythera.

The Cerigo Speleological Project is supported by the Hellenic Speleological Society department of northern Greece, the Nicholas Anthony Aroney Trust, the municipality of Kythera, the *Eksoraistikos Syllogos Potamou* and the *Syllogos Pelargon kai Mirmidonon Kytheron*.

We warmly thank them.

Konstantinos Trimmis (archaeologist/speleologist) and **Pelly Filippatou** (speleologist)

Project Co-ordinators

Postscript: The cave at Katafygadi

The Katafygadi cave, which is situated on the western side of the island, and which had previously not been entirely explored, consists of two chambers, A and B (see map below). In chamber A (measuring around 18 x 20), pottery had been found and dated around the Middle Minoan and Late Period. In chamber B pottery of the same age was also found, part of which had been covered by stalagmite material.



Whilst on Kythera in July 2011, young George Simos from Sydney was invited by the speleologists to descend into the Katafygadi cave. Making his way through the vertical shaft, George entered this underground labyrinth and observed first hand the world of speleology, as the photos below attest.



The members of the Cerigo Speleological Project are to be congratulated for their time and efforts on Kythera. It is important to remember that the Hellenic Speleological Society was founded by the late John Petrohilos, widely regarded as the father of Greek speleology, who was born in Smyrna of Kytherian parents. He and his wife, Anna Petrohilos, were trail-blazers in the field and it is fitting to have the Society they founded return to Kythera to continue its investigations.