



**Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:**  
Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:



**The ancient graves at “Lappa” (Argiroupoli)**  
Church of the “five virgins”



You reach the destination when you turn off from the National road (E75 / 90) Rethymno – Chania towards South in direction Episkopi and follow the street over Archontiki towards Argiroupoli. Short before the village Argiroupoli turn left towards Kato Poros.



After the first right turn its only a few metres until a signed path leads uphill to the church and necropolis (which belongs to the ancient city “Lappa” and is located about 1 mile away of Agriroupoli). Because this path should not be used, it is advisable to park dense on the road-side; to the destination then is something about 300 metres walkway.

The chamber tombs (necropolis) are all left the way in the hill side. A small amount is represent before the church, the most are behind the church. Unfortunately the chambers before the Church are no longer in good (well cared) condition; classified as "unspectacular" they were no longer rid of the vegetation growth and therefore in some places hardly to be identified as flat chamber tombs (overgrown). The many behind the Church located chambers are obviously also not maintained, but are still in respectable condition. Spacious rock tombs with several burial chambers lie here close together in the mountain (see pictures).



Upper picture series (from left to right): Burial chambers before the church and the ascent to the church of the “five virgins” (fig. right)

Below picture series (from left to right): Burial chambers from the area behind the church which are larger and better preserved



According to the statement of leaders, 5 sarcophagi have been found within the small and simple church (see fig.), which was, based on references, arranged in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BC until the 7<sup>th</sup> Century AD and where five “virgins” have been buried. That it really have been “**virgins**” is scientifically probably untenable (they were probably five **young** women). Many signs point to the fact that the church was build later in front of the burial chamber and a “window-like” wall opening allows the “today’s view” into the burial chamber.



The left picture shows the hill-sided internal wall of the church with the "opening to the burial chamber" (yellow arrow). The wooden door stands left of it on a bench. The other two photos show the inner chamber where perhaps the sarcophagus's stood.

To sum up the ancient tombs at "Lappa" are certainly worth a visit even if some questions remain, in particular to the handling with cultural assets and its presentation with accompanying documentation "on site".

The ancient grave sites (necropolis) belong in all likelihood to the ancient city "Lappa", which is located, according to Greek archaeologist's guesses, "below" the present location Argiroupoli. So far only anchoring places have been found during excavations. It is therefore assumed that the former city was connected to the 8 miles remote sea in the North over courses of rivers. According to the mythology "Lappa" was founded by Agamemnon <sup>1)</sup>. After a first destruction in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century BC it however blossomed again under Roman rule, came in the following under the influence of Byzantium and was razed by the Saracens <sup>2)</sup> in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century BC. Many architectural details in Argiroupoli show the Venetian rule. Who goes with open eye through the community finds many witnesses to the past; e.g. a floor mosaic from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century AD. The outside of the former ancient city "Lappa" located necropolis is not unique on Crete. This kind of "Cemeteries" is known from other places of Crete (since the Minoan times until today, where the cemeteries of villages also lie outside the settlements), e.g. the necropolis <sup>3)</sup> of Armeni (therefore see leaflet No. 049-04/E); also here the “graveyard” has been found, but every hint of the corresponding settlement is missing.

<sup>1)</sup> Based on Greek mythology Agamemnon was the king of Mycenae. As Commander-in-Chief of the Greeks, he led the Greek Princes against Troy

<sup>2)</sup> Originally nomadic desert tribes were known as Saracens who lived in the area of today's Syria and Saudi Arabia. These desert nomads occurred in 7. Century in appearance and created a vast Empire for one and a half century. The term Saracens however is not clear; the Latin *saracenus* is borrowed from the Greek *sarakenos*, whose origin .is also unclear.

<sup>3)</sup> Necropolis designates a larger funeral and blessing site of antiquity and prehistory and early history

#### Pictures:

(5695, 5719, 5727, 5728/31.07.2005) U. Kluge / (5455, 5456, 5463, 5474, 5482, 5485, 5487, 5488/31.07.2005) H. Eikamp