



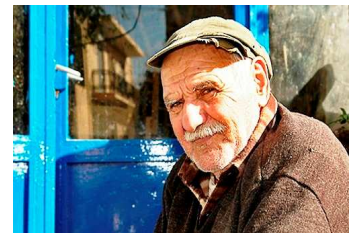
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Vassilis in Vrisses - from shepherd and hobby carver to chair maker

An article from our member *Maria Eleftheria*, Agios Nektarios / Crete

When I moved to Crete over ten years ago, an elderly man came regular through the villages and offered with a loud voice its services - he braided new seating surfaces from reed on otherwise good chairs. I haven't seen the grey-haired now for longer. And the rustic, handmade chairs are now rare. Of course you can still buy traditional furniture, but they are made by machine (therefore see our info-leaflet No. 143-06/E [http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/Merkblaetter_en/143-06E.pdf]), but they be as alike as two peas in a pod.



Originally the sturdy woods of Cypress were used for chairs. The strains for the legs have been carefully selected; lastly a Chair had to bear a lot over the decades. The seating furniture often became individual carvings as embellishment. There are very few artisans dedicated to this traditional art of furniture production. Meanwhile there



are only a very few craftsman dedicated to this traditional art of furniture production. One of them is *Vassilis*. His small shop is located in **Vrisses** (about 4 miles west of **Georgioupoli**), when coming from Rethymno on the Old Road towards Chania, on the right site of the main street. The blue door is highly visible and all the small woods which are necessary to stabilize a Chair are store in the front.

When the sun is shining, *Vassilis*, which is now 84 years young, likes to sit in front of his workshop. He renewed lumpy seats with skilled hands and likes to chat with friends and neighbours. His workshop is worth to see. All kinds of hand-carved experimental pieces are hanging on the walls; the previous tools for wood processing are draped in the rear and right of the entrance stack chairs, waiting for new owners.



In February 2008, when I look once again in the workshop, it's too cold outside to sit. But I hear already busy knocking behind the door. *Vassilis* is about to decorate the back of a bench. "I thought you're doing chairs only!" I said astonished. "No, I also do bed bases and benches on order. For each piece I come up with an own carving pattern, none equals another", he says proud. And when I want to know how long he already operates this craft, he says with a smile: "Only a few years. I have self-induced everything. You know, I was a shepherd earlier. At that time I've carved to pass the time. Now I'm old and since my feet are not so good, I'm doing just this work." When I ask him for the price of these unique pieces, *Vassilis* says: "Oh, there is a lack of money today and I rarely sell these unique pieces. It is a lot of work for fewer wages. But what should I do, activity gives me pleasure and so I'm into something good."

Translated by Michael Bloechinger-Daeumling

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