

Nisyros



According to the Mythology, the god Neptune, helping Zeus while he was combating the Titans, he was pursuing the terrible giant Polyvotis on the beachside and in the seas. Arriving in front of the island of Kos he detached with his trident a part of the island, he launched it against Polyvotis and he buried him underneath. The island of Nisyros is created by this fragmentary part of the island of Kos. The volcano was created in the place where the mouth of Polyvotis is whereas the periodical earth vibrations are also due to the continuous laboured breathing of the buried Titan's chest. Since Neptune was the creator of the island he remained its protector and this justifies the existence of Neptune's temple in the island and of several coins of Nisyros which represented the head of the god of the sea. The myth expresses the relations between the islands of Nisyros and Kos starting from the mythical years up to this day, political, moral, social and economical bonds. Based on several inscriptions, a large number of the people of Kos used to live in Nisyros as in the island of Kos some people of Nisyros had organised a colony under the name "Íisyreiadai". Both islands were ruled in common by the same king, they were campaigning in common, they had the same type of political regime and they were participating in the same public affairs. The island's name probably belongs to the pre- hellenic place- names of the Aegean Sea. In Homer we find references to the participation of the inhabitants of Nisyros, along with other island inhabitants, in the Trojan expedition. Names of the people of Nisyros can also be found in the fiscal lists of the Athenian alliance. They worshiped Apollon the Delphinios, like the pelagic Apollon. A temple dedicated to him is located in the village that today is called Palloi where old thermal springs of the island can also be found. Remaining votive steles witness the exceptional position held by the Milichios Zeus, the goddess of Chance, Hermes etc. in the worship of the ancient inhabitants. The historical destiny of Nisyros is common with the one of the Southern- Eastern Aegean Sea islands. The 5th and 4th cent. before J-C. constitute the period of the island's great prosperity. Nisyros is taken by the Persians, is freed by the Athenians, participates to the Athenian alliance, passes to the Macedonian occupation to be finally part of the Roman Empire. After the Roman and Byzantine peace, thanks to which the islands experienced times of prosperity, as they united the West to the East, follow centuries of misery, horror and insecurity that were established by the Arabs. The seas no longer offer security and the people are leaving the beachside. The ancient Nikaia which was abandoned and of which the inhabitants have built a residential complex in a mountainous fortress called Nikeia, constitutes a characteristic example in the island of Nisyros. After this moment the information is fragmentary. The pirates pillaged the region. The island of Nisyros passes to the Knights of Rhodes in 1312. The Knights marked their presence by building five fortresses

in the strategic points of the island. The castle of Mandraki in which is located the monastery of Panaghia Spiliani (Holy Virgin of the Caves) dating back from circa 1600, presents a particular interest. In 1522 the Turks invaded the island of Rhodes which was passed to the preferential regime of the "mactoux" particular form. In 1912 the Italians follow the Turks and by the end of the II World War the island of Nisyros is integrated in Greece along with the other islands of the Dodecanese. The paleo- christianic basilicas and the chapels which are dispersed in the island containing famous frescos with a particular archaeological and tourist interest, mark its strong Byzantine presence. The approach of the chapels is made through picturesque paved paths. The cultural environment of Nisyros, as it is expressed by the monuments of the pre-historical, the classical, the Byzantine and the more recent period, presents particular interest given that it is related in a direct way with the tourist activity of the island and that the cultural elements constitute factors of tourist attraction. The most ancient monuments belong to the Neolithic period. Dating back from the classical antiquity, the acropolis of the ancient town, Palaiokastro, is maintained in a perfect condition. It's about one of the most splendid works of the antiquity mainly thanks to its superior construction quality. The overall length of the fortress is very large. The western and northern part of the hill ends into an abrupt rocky coast constituting a natural fortress of the hill towards the sea. The wall and the cliff set the border of a surface of circa 130.000 m² in total with an overall perimeter of circa 2 kilometres. The superior quality of the wall's structural technology, the resistance of the structural material and the volume of the Lithoplintho (the weight of several stones can reach the 3,5 tons) constitute the elements that characterise the luxury of the work playing an important role to the monument's longevity.

