

"A Dream"! The chronicle of the whole effort...

Mesotopos, meeting-informing about the "Mill".photo caption pg218

"In 2001, the 'Mallianta' association, which was newly established in Mesotopos, sets as its goal the restoration of a watermill. And the following year, the General Assembly of the 'Anagennisi' Association does the same. In 2003, Artemis Katachanas donates the Mill and the plot to the two Associations, and Michalis Goulis does the same for the adjacent field. A proposal is prepared for submission to the European Leader program, which is rejected in January 2004 due to immaturity. Immediately after, the effort to find study participants becomes even more systematic, and 2005 is a year of intense activity with meetings in the village and in Athens, and taking initiatives."

Informative meeting:

On Friday, August 26, 2005, an informative meeting was held in the Cultural Events Hall. As part of the effort to inform and develop a broader dialogue about the restoration and operation of the "Katachanas" watermill in Mallionta. Many villagers attended, including the Deputy Mayor of Eresos-Antisas, Gavriil Pipinis, the President of the Local Council, Nikos Trigonis, and municipal and local councilors: Manolis Konstantinidellis, Nikos Papoutsis, Michalis Goulis, and Charalampos Konstantinidellis. The presidents of the two Associations, "Anagennisi" and "Mallionta", Panagiota Plomaritou and Michalis Goulis, respectively,

*This chronicle was delivered by the same person in the hall of the Mesotopos Association "Anagennisi" at the event: "Water - source of life. Ancient watermills and the history of water in Mesotopos" 13 April 2019

informed the attendees, and the study participant, Michel Rosier, presented the basic elements of the study. A fruitful dialogue followed, and creative proposals were submitted. The conclusion of all those who participated in the discussion was that this project will be beneficial for the area, that it can be realized, and can become a pole of attraction for visitors, highlighting the area's identity.

(Panagiota Plomaritou, "Mesotopitika Nea", issue 171)

Stratis Vasilas with his wife Magdalene and their son Giorgos. (photo caption)pg219

The water in the mill stream...

"In the beginning, there was Mallionta, this blessed corner of Lesbian land. Gifted by nature with a mild climate, scarce but fertile soil, and above all, with its water. Then came the people. Mallionta became the hospitable cradle of generations and generations throughout the centuries, who inhabited it, watered it with their sweat, organized it... They gave it their inventive and creative spirit, their hard and honest work, and above all, their love."

This is how Giorgos Efstr. Vasilas begins his article, informing, through the Association's newspaper, about "the big dream", the difficult effort to complete the study and find funding, so that the watermill of Giannis Katachanas in Mallionta can be restored and operated!

For Giorgos, Mallionta is the place of his childhood!

This is where his experiences, beloved people, difficulties, and struggles for survival, and efforts for a better life, are. He makes a brief historical review of the valley, which ends with the watermills half-ruined, the mill streams, and paths overgrown and threatened with extinction..

. And then he begins to describe the "big dream". How the idea started, how the two Associations, "Anagennisi" and "Mallionta", joined forces, how donations were made, how the first difficulties were overcome, and how, with everyone's help, the next ones will be overcome.

It ends with a multitude of questions about his beloved Mallionta and the secrets it holds, hoping that in the near future, an effort will be made to research and record, so that through sources and the memories of the elderly, answers can be given to some of these secrets! (newspaper "Mesotopitika Nea", issue 172)

As soon as I read it in the newspaper, I said: "I'll build a mill too!!!"

(Kallithea. Konstantinos Pl. Sarantidis with his "mill".) photo captionpg220

When I read in "Mesotopitika Nea" that the idea of restoring a watermill in Mallionta had been proposed, I said to myself, "Why don't you build one?"! Because I loved Mallionta! My life was mills! When I was a child, 10-12 years old, wherever you looked for me, you'd find me in Mallionta! My mother, Marianthi, would say: "Don't

look for him, he's probably in Mallionta again"! I'd wander around the mills! I'd start from the top, from aunt-Dafnoula's, and go down to Kamtsi's... It was a different world! Aunt-Vasiliki, what a kind woman, would pamper me, give me a tomato or two! I remember her son, the late Christos, was around my age, and I'd sit and play with him...

I wanted to build a mill, in miniature! My cousin, the late Vasilis Dim. Gougis, brought me the stones. I had ordered them, and he went to Agios Lia, in the village, to get them and brought them to me! I started working on the stones, turning them with tools to make them round, and drilling holes... The wooden paddle wheel is made of beech wood, roasted. The first paddle wheel, which created the radial torque, I made small, and then I added to it, to increase the radius. The hub, the square part that was hollowed out, and the wedge-shaped slots that were inserted into the blades, I made it in a machine shop of a friend, Mr Giorgos, in Piraeus. We learned all this in engineering school. The water hits the blades, which can be of many types: concave, curved, rhomboid.

I worked on it for 4-5 months on my balcony at 38 Metamorphoseos st, in Kallithea, 1st floor! Children would pass by, on their way to and from school, and sit below and watch! In fact, on one or two occasions, I opened the door, and they came with their mothers, saw the mill, and we talked about it in person. Well, after a while, we were moving to Ilioupoli, and I called Mrs. Grypari, whom I knew from the "Mill Association", and she took it. It was February 2018. Now the mill is part of the exhibits of the Museum of the Institute of Greek Mills, in Asomaton-Kerameikos. Visitors, especially children, go and see it... (Konstantinos Pl. Sarantidis)

In 2005, Panagiota Plomaritou, president of "Anagennisi", Michel Roussie and George Efstr.Vasilas visit Artemis Katahanas' house in Kantza Attiki and talk with him...

Talking about the "Ioannis Katachanas" mill

Artemis Katachanas is the youngest child of the Ioannis Katachanas family, who was the owner of the 12th mill in Mallionta.

We had the pleasure of talking to him and unraveling the thread of memories about his childhood and adolescence, about a time that is now lost forever. (...)

Emotional, Mr. Artemis took us on a tour of every corner of the mill, through photographs and drawings, remembering details about its operation and decisively helping to clarify the space, so that it could be rendered as faithfully as possible.

(Interior of the Katachanas mill. Thymios Skomboulis, Panagiotis Sarantidis, Michalis Kardaras (2014)._ PHOTO CAPTION pg221

He also remembered how much the life of his family was tied to the rhythm of the paddle wheel, which turned continuously for 24 hours...

-When did the mill belong to your family?

-The old man, Giannis Katachanas.)PHOTO CAPTIONpg221

-The mill came to my father in 1922, when the Turks left the village. It was given to him by the Turkish owner, who was a friend of my father's. His wife said to my mother: "Evdoxia, now that we're leaving, we'll give you the mill." That's how it came to us. Our whole family grew up with it.

My father was a large family man, like most people back then. My older brother, Michalis, was born in 1909, and I, the youngest, was born in 1932. My other siblings were Dimitris, Kostas, Irene (Zoumpounelli), Theano (Valtzi), and Chrysa (Vidali). The whole family grew up in the mill!

My older siblings and I, to a lesser extent, worked there. I had made the paddle wheel with my own hands. All the materials for the tools were wooden. Plane trees were abundant, and their wood is soft and easy to work with. We would carve the millstones ourselves with "frapines" so that they would cut well.

-How many hours did you work?

The mill operated 24 hours a day. It served grinding needs from the village, which we, the children, would transport with a donkey, as well as grinding needs from Eresos Agra, Antissa, and Chidira, which our customers would bring. The sacks where we put the flour were made of cotton, woven, and could hold 20-30 okades. We would sleep next to the mill in a space separated from it by a wooden partition. When the wheat ran out, we had devised a kind of "alarm". Some pedals hung on a rope above the millstone would hit, and we would wake up.

Payment was made in kind. For every 20 okades, they would give us one oka of flour.

Each miller had the obligation to repair the mill stream every year up to the previous mill. The water that flowed from the springs would go from the first mill to ours and would turn all of them without being lost. And this was because the mill stream(milavlaki) was well-maintained. The mills gave bread to the people.

-What was the significance of the mills during the Occupation?

A handful of flour would save the life of a child! Many people would come down from the village to Mallionta to get a little flour or some fruit for their children.

-When did the mill stop working?

Our mill stopped in 1946. An order was given by the authorities to dismantle the mills, because if you didn't dismantle it yourself, they would burn it! We dismantled it... The same year, on the day of the Cross 14th september, I left the village and came to Athens. I wasn't even 15 years old... I first worked in a shoemaker's shop and then in construction. Until 1950, I lived in Kypseli, like most Mesotopites. Then, for 10 years, I lived in Ilioupoli. And from 1960, we came here to Kantza, Attica. I built this house you see for 40 years...

(Panagiota Plomaritou, newspaper "Mesotopitika Nea", issue 170)

Artemis Katachanas with his wife Cleopatra. PHOTO CAPTIONpg222

Christina Zoumbouneli- the niece- talks about her uncle Artemi Katahana

Grandfather, Ioannis, and grandmother, Evdoxia, were millers at the mill in Mallionta. They had nine children! Some children left Mesotopos as they grew up and came to Athens, while others got married and stayed in the village. Artemis left for Athens at a young age, but as a child, he would help his mother with the grinding and would also go with his siblings and mother to the "Niantika", where they would plant tobacco. When Artemis arrived in Athens, he went to live with his sister, Eirini Katachanas-Zoumpounelli, who had a café in the morning and a taverna in the evening, and he would help her. At some point, his brother-in-law took him to work in construction, and they worked together.

His mother, Evdoxia, came from the village and worked as a housekeeper in homes. They rented a house and lived together with his mother.

The construction work was going well, and he became a contractor, taking on his own projects. It was on one of these projects that he met his future wife, Cleopatra. They got married in Athens and built a house in Glyka Nera, Paiania. They had two daughters, Gianna and Maria, whom they married off, and they all lived close together. He was a very kind person, good-natured and always laughing. He loved his children, sons-in-law, grandchildren, and took care of his wife, just as she did him. We, his nieces and nephews, loved him very much. He passed away at the age of 83, surrounded by his loved ones.

The effort continues...

" 2006 was a very difficult year, during which an issue of ownership of the "donated" mill arose (!). A working group (Giorgos Efstr. Vasilas, Panagiota Plomaritou, Giorgos Vaklatzis) was formed, which successfully managed the issue with delicate handling and painstaking effort, and contracts were signed. The efforts of the Committee were supported by Loukas P. Kontellis, with his professional capacity, and Panagiota Vaklatzis, as an employee of the notary's office, where the final deeds were signed,

transferring ownership of the mill and the farm, where it is located, to the Associations. Warm thanks to all."

Then, in 2009, a building permit was issued, and the mill was designated as "preserved", while in 2010, the document from the Forestry Department was added, stating that it was "non-forest", and the file was submitted to the Town Planning Department. A detailed discussion took place at the General Assembly of "Anagennisi", and it was unanimously decided to continue the effort, seeking funding.

Professor Panos Valavanis spoke at the General Assembly of Mesotopians.
(photo: Babis Kardaras) PHOTO CAPTION pg223

At the General Assembly of 2011, while the effort to find funding was not bearing fruit, a proposal was made by G. Vasilas to continue efforts with the issuance of a building permit and implementation, even with voluntary work!

Professor Panos Valavanis referred to our obligation to preserve monuments as bearers of memory. G. Vasilas' proposal was approved by the General Assembly. In 2012, the problem that had arisen with the application of KENAK in the case of the mill was overcome, and the building permit was issued.

In 2013, at the General Assembly, Michel Rosier referred to the vision, informed, and inspired. A statutory General Assembly was held, changing the statutes on issues related to the mill, and a four-member working group was formed (P. Plomaritou, G. Vasilas, N. Vakalys, F. Vasiloglou). In collaboration with the Institute of Greek Mills, a two-day scientific conference was held on the topic: "The Water Mills of Mallionta". The book "Ὡς τρέχει τοῦ νιπό" (As the water flows) by F. Vasiloglou was presented concerning Mallionta and the Water Mills. In 2014, the effort to find sponsors continues. Members of the Boards of Directors of the two Associations "Mallionta" and "Anagennisi" meet in Mallionta.

We had planned jointly that the two Boards of Directors would meet in Mallionta to see the "Ioannis Katachanas" mill on site, discuss, and plan the next steps. On Monday, August 18, 2014, after completing the visit to the mill, we gathered at the welcoming "dam" (old cottage house) of Mr. Michalis Goulis, president of "Mallionta", to conclude the beautiful gathering with raki and impromptu appetizers, wishing success to our common goal!

In "Mesotopitika Nea", for the information of members and friends, a large part of M. Rosier's study is published in installments. In 2014, in the summer issue of the TIMS E NEWS magazine of the International Society concerning Mills, our dear friend Mr. Giorgos Speis publishes a relevant article in English about the watermills of Mallionta.

**(Gathering around the common table. From the gathering of members of the Boards of Directors of "Mallionta" and "Anagennisi"..!) PHOTO
CAPTIONpg224**

In 2016, the effort for funding continues. Visits by G. Vasilas to the Municipality, Region, and ETAL. In 2017, an assignment was made to update, develop, and enrich the Study with trails, cultural activities, local products, etc., with the sponsorship of a donor. In the summer, a joint event of the "Anagennisi" and "Mallionta" associations was organized, titled "Folklore Night" in Mesotopos, and a walking tour in Mallionta. The goal was to strengthen the effort and inform everyone.

"Once upon a time, there was Mallionta..."

As time goes by, the village of Mallionta may have been merged into Mesotopos and grown, but folkloric elements have remained and been preserved to this day: fairy tales, songs, anecdotes, proverbs, or expressions that have or may have their roots in the beautiful valley with the water mills...

"On August 17, 2017, an exceptional event took place in our village, Mesotopos, with the above title and theme of folk tales that our grandmothers and grandfathers would tell us on winter nights. This event took place in Mesotopos, a folklore night dedicated to Mallionta (2017). at the little theater of our picturesque village, instead of Mallionta, with the old water mills, as was the initial intention.

The event started with a greeting from the President of the Community, Mr. Gabriel Pipinis, followed by a welcome speech from the President of the "Anagennisi" association, Fotis Vasiloglou, who organized the event, and then presented the program for the evening. Immediately after, architect Ioanna Vallina took the floor and explained the purpose of all these activities related to the water mills of Mallionta, including the walking tour that was organized, so that people could get to know it better. More about the walking tours, local experience, and trail marking in Lesvos was shared by Andreas Pitsas, President of the "Mallionta" association, and environmentalist Maria Eleftheriadou.

The purpose of the entire project is none other than to implement the ambitious goal of rebuilding and utilizing the old "Katachanas" water mill and the expectation of reviving the area of Mallionta with its water mills, giving it new life and meaning. (...). (Myrsini M. Vasilas, "Mesotopitika Nea", issue 243)

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