

THE MALLIONTAS RIVER

The Malliontas river is a deep gash in the volcanic rocks of the western island, a name that conceals its origin, a large river between the mountain of Mesotopos and Agra, approximately 5.5km long. Down at its mouth on the Aegean, it formed a beautiful plain, Chrousos, with the stones and soil it carries. However, all its power and history began above the large bridge that the road crosses after the winding descents, once we pass Mesotopos. That's exactly where its two main branches meet, the northern and eastern Malliontas.

The northern Malliontas, the river that was part of Mesotopos, is lush with plain trees, willows and poplars, and it has been described countless times by many. The springs of Ag. Konstantinos that maintained a unique "parallel hydro-mill system" of 14 beautiful watermills, the small village of 1548 with the same name, and the ancient fortifications on the surrounding slopes, constitute an entire volume of history.

The eastern Malliontas (Vourkos) comes from the direction of Agra. It's more bare, surrounded by a wild, imposing beauty, and that's what makes it "so Mesotopos style" (up to the "Doors", about 4km) and "Agritiko style" (initial section 1.25km). This river is surrounded from the south by the height of Mesotopos mt. Eximnos and the culmination of the Agritiko Chalandrakastrou. From the north, the kakovouno, with its unique rock formations, continues with the Vigla height, which dominates the upper river. These are "primordial" areas, shaped by volcanoes and marked by human hands. A human who is one with the stone, the pear tree and the almond tree that blooms and illuminates the brown surroundings! A human who, as we will see, inhabited this place for millennia, built villages, dams, sheepfolds, threshing floors, fortifications, churches, wells, divided the land with unique dry stone walls kilometers long, set up beehives and cultivated vines and grains, and made cheese from the milk of thousand of sheep that can be seen everywhere, black and white, moving like brushstrokes in the rugged surroundings.

The long whistle-like cry of the goshawk and the muffled call of the raven (mavria) have been heard for centuries here, unchanged since the time when people drank water from Roman jugs or pulled wooden plows through fields plowed with stone-tipped wooden plows, the same as prehistoric axes. The slopes that climb up the southern bank of the river are lush with oak trees, in contrast to the bare, opposite kakovouno. After Tsentria, on the opposite side, in the area of Mesotopos, we find a slope with ruined houses above the road. among those that still stand!

Small, divided gardens without crops or vines, the road between walls with "ampasies" in the gardens, beehives around, and those empty of grain, almond trees, fig trees and the river below. Everything a settlement needs, a small village with abundant post-Byzantine ceramics everywhere. At its highest point, the small, whitewashed church of Panagia Livada. Some column drums, a marble member similar to the one in Agia Paraskevi in Xera Xyla, in the same place within the small church and, and the foundations of the old one, shows the parish church of the village, (Panagia Livada, the village of 1548, Livada with 41 family hearths, a tax of 1,751 aspra, with the most significance production, being wheat and grape must). There, next to the church, the old-built source sends water to the large built cistern, now covered with brambles. Animals are now the only source of livelihood for the surrounding mountains! Thus the small houses became sheepfolds. Gone are the wheat,

grapes and acorns. What remains is the unparalleled beauty of the rock and the oak tree, the sound of water and the birds the bells and the wildflowers. All these and many more blend in different doses and grant the uniqueness of the landscapes.(...)

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(The research was conducted with Makis and Mikaela Pavleli and:ApostolosMakaratzis-Stratis Vogiatzis(in Ano Potami). Landscape in Livada. In the middle, the small church of Panagia. (PHOTO BY Yiannis F. Zoumpounelis).