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Tavern “LEMONIA” at Chiliomoudou, Prefecture Chania **Leonidas Rethemiodakais – a life for art and culture**

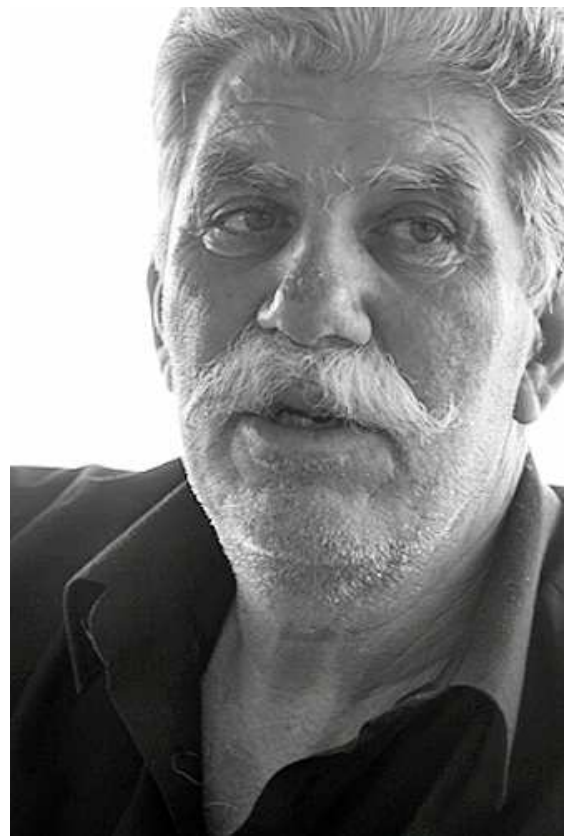
An article from our NLUK members *Diana P. Bailey* & *Maria Eleftheria*, Agios Nektarios (South Crete)

Today I would like to introduce a very special place, created by a remarkable man and his family in the course of many years.

On the northern slopes of the White Mountains, high above the villages *Stylos* and *Pemonia*, is the little mountain village *Chiliomoudou*, with the tavern "*Lemonia*" - the life's work of the Cretan *Leonidas Rethemiodakis*.

Many taverns advertise with the magic word "traditional" which too often proves misnomer. *Leonidas* Tavern, which is much more than a snuggery tavern with excellent food and a wide view over the countryside of *Apokoronou* till the sea, apply to this statement in every respect. It's created with lots of love and work, which reflects and preserves the village life from the past. Almost everything prepared and offered comes from the own organic production.

Leonidas took over a good working stone mill from his father. Thus today every year the olives of family *Rethemiodakis* are grind and pressed powered by a donkey. On the property behind the tavern animals which serve mainly the meat supply, have enough spouts to lead a short but happy life. The goats descended, as is easy to see, from the original KriKri.



The self-built mill provides the flour for the delicious bread, baked by Misses *Rethemiodaki* in the spacious wood oven. What earlier troublesome had to be done by hand makes the mill almost easy. The moment wind arise the wheel comes into motion, the power is transmitted from the axles and wheels to the mill-stone, and the wheaten grains turn into fine flour.



According to the season it is possible to see different activities. During my visit pristine-white linen lay on the tables in the hall, which is used as guest room during the winter, and aromatic oregano was spread out for drying. All these delicious things such as herbs, olive oil, honey, wine and raki can be bought also on-site in convenient sizes (**fig. left**). Of course, *Leonidas Rethemiodakis* press his own wine and then afterwards burns from the marc raki (**fig. right: raki kiln**)



And as if all this not impressive enough, is the tavern operator in his second profession, even one of the few experts who understand the production of the Cretan musical instruments like the lyre and the Laouta until today.

In his workshop (see **fig.** next page) the instrument maker showed me what steps this work proceeds. Art begins with finding a suitable piece of wood which is the basis. It must be hard without a crack and spot. The rough shape is carved out of it, and then in days of careful works the cavity; cover and bridge are made to measure. When all items are managed they are put together, polished and the strings are strung.

When I expressed *Leonidas* my admiration for his work, he led me further into his private spheres and showed me his extensive collection of traditional instruments: Lyre, violin, lute, mandolin, various flute instruments, the *Daoulaki* (a small drum), and the “sack-flute”, called *Askomantoura*, which is reminiscent of a bagpipe, but in Crete, to the regret of my host played more rare. At the end *Leonidas* gave a little private concert where he could convince me of his art to play and the fine sound of his self-built instruments. (see **fig.** Page 4)



Afterwards *Leonidas* invited me to a coffee, in regards to the winding home drive I had to reject the surely delicious Raki. During the interesting conversation *Leonidas* thoughtful spoke: “You know, in these times it is important to keep what works across generations. Sure, we have enough work and effort here and it is not to earn fast money. But I always know where what I take to me, comes from. What my guests will eat and drink I even.”

In the summer months *Leonidas* organizes every Monday atmospheric evenings with Cretan music in his tavern. On the spacious veranda is space for up to 300 visitors.

Should I have awakened your interest - it is a scenic tour of around 18 miles through small and sedate villages. The route leads from *Kalyves* to *Armeni*, further to *Neo Chorio* on a narrow, winding asphalt road towards *Stylos*, passing *Macheri* via *Kiriakoselia*. Now you will pass the worth seeing Church of *Agios Nikolaos*, which is open every day during high season, apart from Friday, between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. The next village is *Chiliomoudou* (see **fig.** next page), where a sign, which indicates the tavern “Lemonia” show the junction from the main road. You can take the asphalt road up to the building. There is possibility for convenient parking. After your visit you get back through the villages *Samonas* and *Provarma*, until you turn right towards *Neo Chorio* and from there back to *Kalives*.

