

# Beekeeping on the Island of Andros

An ethnographic approach

'Beekeeping on the island of Andros' is a marvelous presentation of the Greek beekeeping heritage shown through the numerous and different findings on Andros island, probably one of the richest islands in terms of beekeeping tradition. The book is a revised edition of the Greek version published in 2003. The buildings, crafts, and hives of Andros, scattered in a picturesque landscape characteristic of the Cyclades islands inspired the author, George Speis, to write about them, first in Greek and now in English.

It is well known that beekeeping has a long tradition in Greece since the ancient times; and it always has been a traditional occupation. As any tradition it shows the roots of today's practice and Andros seems to hold several linguistic and cultural identified differences which also have been seen in beekeeping. It is amazing the richness of the findings in such a small island. But maybe not surprising considering that there are also about 80 different types of pottery with an even greater number of names!

The author, George Speis, has searched deeply in this tradition and he brought up and together legends, myths, practices, habits. The congregation of bee hives in rows (in walls separating the different land levels. the characteristic terraces of the islands) or even in walls defining the property of the people called 'bee gardens' is fascinating considering that no space or construction was left unused.

However, it is apparent of the numerous sites depicted on the map at the beginning of the book, that people prefer to keep their hives close to their homes, in the so called 'cupboards'. Not just several, but 15 sites with different cupboards are described in the book, covering all areas of the island, showing also the different use of the respected buildings (houses, warehouses, stables, mills) as well as the differences in the construction.

Accordingly, the diversity of the hive or bole type is great: cylinder and bell type hives made from clay, conical skeps made from straw, rectangular, triangular or even pentagonal boles. A treasure in every garden! Nevertheless for the beekeeping occupation to be thriving, means that the beekeeping flora of Andros island was also rich and prosperous.

Undoubtedly, the English translation of the book, will guide the non native reader through the beekeeping world, one of the oldest professions in Greece and attract people to visit the island for an alternative type of tourism 'the apitourism'.

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