Megali Panagia (Revenikia)

Its distance from Thessaloniki (through Arnea and Paleohori) is 90 km and from Polygiros 49 km. Megali Panagia (or Revenikia) is one of the oldest villages in Halkidiki. It is mentioned frequently on Byzantine documents of Mount Athos, in which the oldest report is in 942. During the Turkish influence it was one of the jost important fortune telling villages. In 1821 it was destroyed by the Turks. The village started becoming well known after 1860, when the pilgrimage for the Virgin Mary was organized. According to tradition, a godly Revenikiotisa, after seeing a dream, dug and found the miracle icon of the Virgin Mary. In 1863 a church was built on that spot in honor of the Virgin Mary. From then, every year from the 1-15th of August, pilgrims gather from all of Halkidiki, they set up rough camping around the area of the pilgrimage and stay there until the large festival ends on the 15th of August.

Around 1870, the Russian consulate in Thessaloniki seeing the importance of the pilgrimage as the center of propaganda, tried to buy it and make it part of the Monastery of Panteleimonos of Mount Athos, then controlled by the Russian monks. Due to the excellent stand taken by the Revenikiotes and the help of the Greek consulate in Thessaloniki, all danger of the pilgrimage turning into an area of political propaganda was averted. After the liberation the village obtained the name Megali Panagia. In 1979 strangers broke in the church and stole the icon of the Virgin Mary.

PLACES WORTH SEEING:

- The pilgrimage for the Virgin Mary: the church is built on a very green slope, with plenty water and a beautiful view towards the fields of Megali Panagia. Very interesting is the woodcut icon screen in the church. It must have been constructed around 1870. According to tradition it is work of two Bulgarians, which were kept busy seven years to construct it. The cost was seven hundred Turkish liras. The same technicians must have constructed the despotic throne in the church.

- Traditional architecture in the village, nice samples of houses of the 19th century.