

## Kassie Culture: Dilution or Demise

by John Mangos, Sydney



Earlier this year I was honoured to have been invited to Perth to speak at the West Australian Kastellorizian Association's Centenary Celebrations. I was asked to speak in my capacity as the 2008 Kastellorizian of the Year, an award more difficult to get than a Brownlow Medal (Australian Rules Football Most Valued Player Award) and quite possibly more prestigious.

I called my paper Kassie Culture: Dilution or Demise quite deliberately. There was no question mark after it, because it is not an alternative. It is an absolute. I genuinely believe that we either embrace dilution or face the demise of our culture. It was a challenging topic and precipitated some passionate discussion. I was even challenged, why dilution and not evolution. Because dilution is evolution.

I was never going to travel all the way to Perth to deliver a self congratulatory paper on what a good job we have done to preserve our culture over the generations.

I began with a half serious joke that I used to tell.

*When I turned 20 my mother wanted me to marry a Kassie girl,  
 By the time I was 30 she wanted me to marry a Greek girl,  
 And by the time I was 40 she was happy if I just married a girl!*

It is funny, but it highlights a point I was trying to make. Now that we are third and fourth generation Australian we have to accept dilution as a positive and not a negative, because the alternative is demise.

Haven't we all been through the angst of a member of our family bringing home the Anglo-Australian love interest for the first time? We have reached the point, much to the lament of our grandparents and in some cases parents, where we have to work with this trend and not against it.

And how often have we heard it said: "My daughter married an Australian, but, he's a good boy".

Further, it is a natural progression in the changing complexion of Australian society that each of our generations is becoming more Eurasian. One day soon, if it hasn't happened already, you will see a gorgeous Eurasian child and ask, "Where is your family from?"

*"Mum's Chinese and Dad's Greek", may well be the reply.  
 Really, what part of Greece? (Why do we always ask that question?)  
 "Oh, a small island you wouldn't have heard of called Kastellorizo".*

Our challenge is to ensure that the Eurasian child embraces their Kassie culture as much as their Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, Thai or whatever Asian nation their parent is descendant from. How we do that is the hard part.

Thirty years ago when I was a Federal Political correspondent with the Nine Television Network I travelled to Hong Kong with the then Foreign Minister of Australia, Bill Hayden. He had met with the Governor to discuss the handover of Hong Kong to the Chinese, which was still a few years away. He was concerned about the impact it may have on Australia.

In a news conference afterwards, he declared Australia had to accept the fact it was an Asian country and the complexion of Australia would unquestionably begin to become Asian in appearance..

This was front page news here in Australia the next day. White Australia was horrified at the thought. The shock jocks on talkback radio went ballistic. It precipitated a huge political discussion about Australia's immigration policy. Ultimately, however, his prophecy is becoming a reality.

But along that thirty year journey look how much respect and knowledge we have gained about our first Australians, how much



## Kassie Culture: Dilution or Demise (Cont.)

more we all now know about Aboriginal culture and tradition.

It is this parallel development that I believe we must follow. But we must be honest in our approach.

We take great pride in saying our forefathers came to Australia early last century and did the jobs the locals did not want to do. That they assimilated and added value to the fabric of Australian society. And they did.



So why is it some of us are uncomfortable with Albanians on Kastellorizo doing the jobs the locals do not want to do? Are they not equally adding to the fabric of that society? It is hypocritical, self righteous and disingenuous to suggest otherwise.

They too, like our people, have come to a new country from hardship to build a new life for themselves and their families and the first thing they do is learn the language. And when one is speaking of culture and customs the first place to start is the language. Language is the key, the gateway to all cultures.

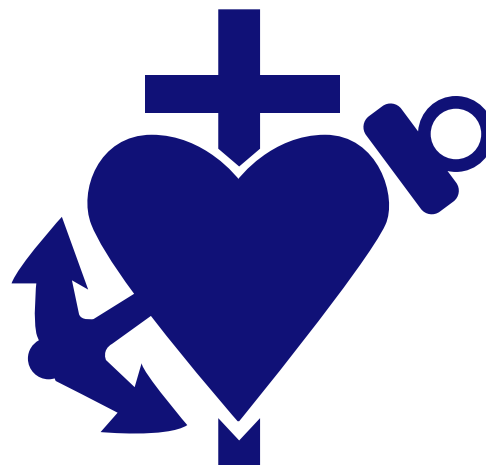
Of course, we have a sub-text here, because we have the Greek language and our Kastellorizian dialect. In my talk, I gave examples of how language has been shown to shape many other domains of thought.

I would have loved to have given my talk in Greek, but like so many of us, victims of our forefathers' anxiety to assimilate quickly, my Greek language skills do not extend to public speaking. So in many ways, the dilution began upon arrival to this country, so it should not be wrongly blamed on those whom we choose to marry and breed with outside our Greek or Kassie culture.

I touched on preservation of some of our wonderful cultural idiosyncrasies like the classic "Savvatovratho", the bride's "trapezi", the songs and proverbs, and the imperative that to achieve such preservation of language is essential.

I suggested we need to speak the language of the new generations by creating apps, that the Australian States need to get behind Allan Cresswell and support his wonderful work on the genealogy site (<http://www.castellorizo.org/>), that we need to pick our yia-yia's brains (they are walking encyclopaedias and besides who else can

teach you to make katoumari), and that if the current tattoo trend continues instead of an ancient zen symbol for peace, love and harmony, replace it with the heart, cross and anchor.



I was proud to highlight the brilliant work of Australian Friends of Kastellorizo (AFK). I believe what AFK has achieved is remarkable, mainly because the motivation of those who started it was purely philanthropic. I love what the organisation is doing to foster improving and ongoing relations. I believe the Student Exchange program is a brilliant initiative, a centrepiece of the organisation's work, which is working superlatively. We must support and grow this program to encourage the youth from both places to swap places (even if a recipient like the dux of the school in Kastellorizo is Albanian).

I thought it relevant to address contemporaneous issues, like the fragility of the Greek economy and currency, and the impact a collapse may have on our culture.

Collapse is still possible. The currency is still vulnerable. Exit from the Euro zone is still a possibility. This would be catastrophic. It would catapult the country into a chaotic abyss. Life savings would be wiped out, with the motherland reverting to a currency no one wants to trade. It would lead to a mass exodus.







Already we are seeing brilliant young graduates coming out of university with despair, because they have no jobs to go to. Graduates like engineers, architects, mechanics, doctors, teachers and bankers are desperate and will do anything for work. Last year 2500 Greek citizens relocated to Australia. Forty thousand have since expressed interest in initiating the arduous process of applying for a visa to Australia.

The parlous current situation in Greece would indeed impact on our culture and how we address it in the future. I strongly urged we lobby the Australian Federal Government to relax visa criteria for Greece to enable hope for our family and friends. Given the good relationship between our two countries, the contribution Greeks have made to Australian society and the number of Greeks already here, it needs to happen and I understand our Government has begun listening.

But we must be mindful they would not be leaving the Hellenic Republic because of a fear of the enemy, or being occupied by a foreign power, rather they would be fleeing because their own successive governments let them down with their own economic ineptitude.

Imagine the resentment they would bring to this environment where we are constantly romanticising the old country to our next generations.

Fortunately there is hope that many of us are still not aware of. It's called the The Hellenic Initiative. It was the brainchild of the global head of the chemical company Dow. The Chairman and CEO of Dow is an Australian Kastellorizian from the Northern Territory, Andrew Liveris.



I recently had the honour of meeting him in Sydney. He has the ear of Barack Obama, the Clintons, Prime Minister Samaras and many other world politicians and business people.

Together with other prominent American Greeks, Andrew has created a global, non profit, non-governmental secular institution, whose vision, through the generosity of the Greek diaspora and Philhellene community, is to develop sustainable economic and business improvement programs to empower the Greek people toward long term prosperity. He calls it "Oli Mazi- All Together".

I am delighted to inform you that he is passionate that Australia comes to the table in this initiative, and is currently taking steps to include us. We must get on board. We must put some of our regional differences aside and help. I urge you to visit the website ([www.thehellenicinitiative.org](http://www.thehellenicinitiative.org)).

If we are bold enough to make the effort individually and collectively we will cultivate a genuine respect for our culture, and a desire to embrace and nurture our culture, and more importantly guarantee the future of our culture... Not unlike those who remember and believe, quite rightly, that we withstood occupations in the First and Second World Wars and remained proudly Hellenic.

I concluded my talk by quoting my first cousin Komninos Zervos who was once a performance poet and is now a cyber poet. His poem, *If I Were The Son Of An Englishman*, really struck a cord with people in the room. In its own simple way this poem really encapsulates the cultural challenge of our assimilation.

If I was the son of an Englishman,  
I'd really be an aussie,  
I could be a high court judge,  
Or an actor on the telly,  
I could be a union boss,  
Or a co-star with skippy,  
I could even be prime minister,  
Or comment on the footy.

If I was the son of an Englishman,  
I'd really be an aussie.

But my father eats salami,  
And my mother she wears black,  
My last name's Papadopoulos,  
And my first name's just plain Jack.

If I was the son of an Englishman,  
I'd really be true blue,  
I could drink myself to delirium,  
And glorify the spew,  
I could desecrate the countryside,  
And destroy the kangaroo,  
I could joke about the irish,  
The greeks, the abos and the jews.  
If I was the son of an Englishman  
I'd really be true blue.

But my father he drinks ouzo,  
And my mother she wears black,  
My last name's Papadopoulos,  
And my first name's just plain Jack.

If I was the son of an Englishman,  
I'd really be fair-dinkum,  
I'd be seen and not heard,  
I'd be quiet on the tram,  
I'd be rowdy at the footy,  
And cold to my fellow man,  
I'd build four walls around me,  
And I wouldn't give a damn,  
If I was the son of an Englishman,  
I'd really be fair dinkum.

But my father eats salami,  
And my mother she wears black,  
My last name's Papadopoulos,  
And my first name's really Komninos.

[The verbatim paper delivered to the Perth Centenary in May will soon be posted on John's website [www.johnmangos.com](http://www.johnmangos.com)].  
You can also follow John on Twitter, @johnmangos



## Winter is Wonderful in Greece

by Elspeth Geronomis, Athens



### Isn't it too cold in winter?

Everyone thinks winter is cold and damp. True in Northern Europe, but Greece rarely has consecutive days of rain. In fact, the mythological Halcyon<sup>1</sup> days occur in January bringing brilliant sunshine despite the colder temperatures - excellent hiking or sightseeing weather. The sky is bright blue, colours are brilliant and the smell of spit roasted lamb after a brisk sunny walk is as close to heaven as you can get. Here are the daytime averages:

November 19 C December 15 C January 13 C February 13

### Don't the islands close down?

A lot do. You won't have those warm summer nights to eat out in jolly tavernas. More likely you'll be listening to live music around a log fire eating rich lamb and chickpea casseroles and watching snow falling outside, if you go into the mountains. Or you will be wandering around peaceful sites and museums in crisp sunny weather and discovering the pleasures of Athens. Some islands can still be visited, but they often look a little sad in winter.

### Islands to avoid

The big name tourist islands like Mykonos, Santorini, Ios, Paros and Naxos are large enough to still have something to see, but they lack the magic of the summer. They are best kept for a summer vacation. The smaller islands anywhere in Greece often close down altogether.

<sup>1</sup>Zeus was angry with Alcyone for calling her husband Ceyx "Zeus". He sent a storm to drown Ceyx at sea, and turned Alcyone into a Kingfisher, whose eggs would only lay in winter so that the cold sea would kill them. Alcyone was filled with grief and Zeus took pity on her, and granted sunshine in the winter to save her baby birds.

### Islands to visit

Crete, Rhodes and the West Coast Ionian Islands have the sunniest winter temperatures and the large islands have a life outside tourism. Rhodes and Crete in winter are mercifully free of the large cruise ships which can unload up to 5000 people at a time. And both these islands are rich in places to see, natural and archaeological. So if you planned to visit Rhodes or Crete, leave it to the months of October through to May, better weather, fewer people, cheaper prices.

Islands close to Athens are brilliant for day trips. All the fun of wandering around, hiking, sightseeing, but you can still come home to a warm bed and the seriously good restaurant around the corner. Visit Aegina, Kea, Hydra, Poros or Spetzes for the day.

### What about Athens in winter?

The very best time to visit Athens is in the winter. The city streets heat up in the summer. August in Athens can be dusty. The best restaurants have closed down (the good chefs work in their island shops in the summer) and there are always too many tour coaches and people around the Acropolis. But by October, the weather is sublime, the good bars and clubs open again, the air around the Acropolis is clear and everything is so much easier and more accessible. Even the price in the archaeological museums is lower. And best of all there are events, musical, theatrical and art, that tour Europe, but Athens prices are the lowest in Europe. If you want to see a Madonna concert or the Royal Philharmonic, come to Athens.

### Prices?

Expect hotel rooms to be 30% lower than in August. If you come for a longer stay, most places will negotiate. We have apartments in \*Athens Studios where guests from Australia spend up to 3 months in winter. They tell me the price of food in the markets and eating out is so low, that the cost of getting to Greece and staying here is equivalent of what they would have spent just living in Australia

Aegean and Olympic Airlines do brilliant winter return deals to cities like Rome, Berlin, Milan (the winter sales there shouldn't be missed). Last year I went to Milan for \$100 return Athens and bought up Jil Sander at 85% reduction. It was just like winning the lotto!

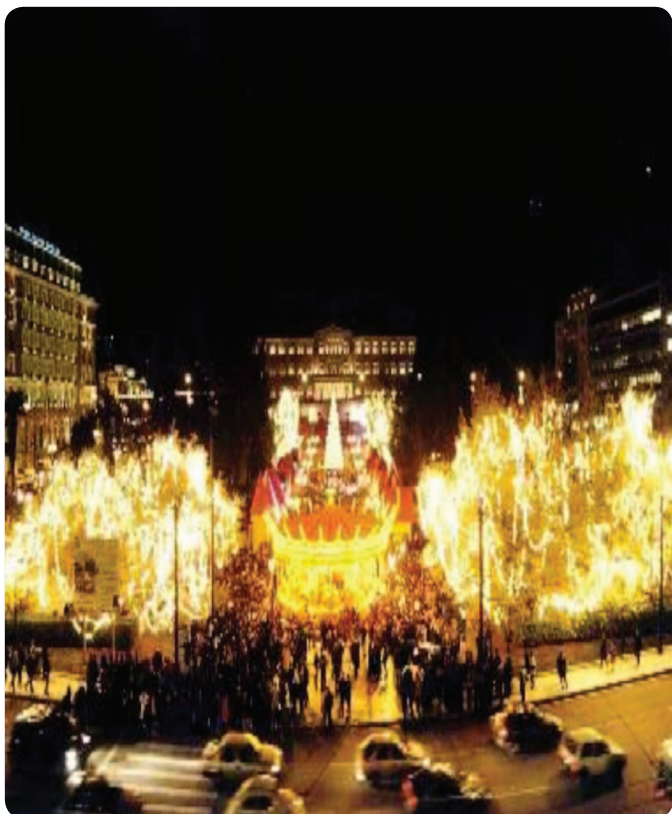
There are also the Winter Christmas markets in Germany, Poland, Hungary, Austria, Romania and Bulgaria all worth visiting. While you are in Athens, ask for Aegean Airlines to keep you aware of offers on the city you want, and be prepared to grab a taxi for Berlin with a few hours notice. It is cheaper not to pre-book winter breaks. And the hotels in all the cities of Europe are doing cheap winter weekends. Just arrive at your city, and choose a place you like the look of - then negotiate!

\*[www.athensstudios.gr](http://www.athensstudios.gr) email and ask for monthly rates for an apartment all inclusive





## Winter is Wonderful in Greece (Cont.)



### Why is winter in Athens so special?

#### Christmas and Winter Solstice

By comparison with most European countries, Christmas in Greece is solemn and moving, a time for thinking about the miracle of Jesus' birth. There are still all the usual commercial trappings, no one loves decorating and fancy lighting more than a Greek, but the point of Christmas is not just about parties or presents. The Christmas service itself is wonderful - our local church, Aghios Ioannis drops rose petals at midnight on the whole congregation as the bells peal.

In Athens, Syntagma Square is usually transformed into a winter wonderland with a miniature village for children to play, an enormous tree and lots of children's activities.

In Florina, December 23rd and 24th witnesses a traditional holiday Bonfire Festival held at Aghios Panteleimonas, near Amynteo ahead.

On New Year's Eve, look for a free city-sponsored concert and fireworks. Check the official Breathtaking Athens Christmas website for additional detail.

Many businesses, sites, and museums will close irregularly through the holiday season. Officially, the actual dates of December 25th-26th and January 1st are the only ones.

### The city in winter

Athens has changed a great deal since the Olympics. It is now a conspicuously richer and more sophisticated city than even ten years ago when we first moved here. The centre has been gentrified; there are art and leisure precincts in Psirri, Gazi, Kolonaki, Makrigianni as well as in the outer suburbs. It is the oldest and safest city in Europe, with the most stunning pedestrian promenade circling the huge central archaeological park that is the magnificent Acropolis. Stylish new shops, restaurants and hotels have sprung up everywhere. It has a vibrant street life, relaxed lifestyle and a heady mix of grunge and old world charm that is intoxicating.

### Strikes and Riots?

I have lived in Athens since the worst of the recent demonstrations. I live right beside the new Acropolis Museum, and I have never at any time been inconvenienced by the national pastime of marching through Syntagma demanding an end to something or other. Anarchists frequently take over towards the end of a reasonable demonstration, as young men well prepared with petrol bombs and marble cutting tools pull up at the steps of the Grand Bretagne yet again. The police are actually quite tolerant; the kids throw their rocks, light a few bins and go home in time for the late night clubs.

### Trips, Walking, Skiing, driving around aimlessly...

If you haven't rented a car and driven all around the Peloponnese, then you haven't visited Greece properly. There are incredible sights and places from the Venetian city of Nafplio, Greece's first capital, to Olympia where you will find ruins to rival the Elgin marbles to the exquisite landscapes of Arcadia, every direction you point your car will take you somewhere wonderful. Lonely Planet is very good on what to see and visit. It also lists the amazing walking trails. If you are lucky enough to be in Kalavrita when it snows, take the funicular up to the ski slopes and rent skis. There is also kayaking, mountain bike riding, white water rafting, mountain climbing and horse riding.

These activities are available also in many other regions. Some of my favourites are between Florina and Kastoria, Mount Grammos and the areas around Lake Prespas. The greatest areas of forestry in Europe are in northern Greece, heartbreakingly beautiful landscapes, with more wild flowers and birds than you knew existed.

The popularity of the Greek islands has drawn attention away from the fact that Greece has the cheapest and most accessible skiing in Europe. Mid-week day passes of 6 Euros in serious ski fields like Pelion and Epirus. Google search whatever sport you enjoy and there are new places and operators every year worth investigating. Skiing is open between December and March.

Read more: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/greece/athens#ixzz27qWgjPIL>









**Name: Vangelis Mavros**

**Café : Athena Restaurant**

**Address: Kordoni, Kastellorizo, Dodekanisos,  
Greece, 85111**

**When did you first come to Kastellorizo?**

I was born in Kastellorizo on July 23rd 1956.

**What is the best place you have ever lived in?**

Kastellorizo.

**What was your first girlfriend's name and how old were you?**

I was about 14 years old...I teach her how to dance Zorba the Greek and we go drinking retsina...she was 'Francaise'...I don't remember her name, it was long ago.

**What were you like as a boy?**

I liked sport. I was happy...except the time I went to the school in Rhodes, I was unhappy. My parents were not there and I had to continue going to the school and there was no help.

**What is your main interest or hobby in life?**

Walking, swimming and I like the stock market. I like to see what's going on in the whole world and it helps me to see what's going to happen.

**What do you predict the Greek Stock Exchange Index to be by the end of the year?**

The index will all depend on whether we go to the Drachma maybe we will lose another 20% no more...but if we jump we will jump around 200%.

**What has been your best achievement in life?**

Being in the Greek Army...because from the time we grow up here in Kastellorizo we see our parents with the guns to look if the Turks come... and from children we would love to go into the army.

**What is your greatest fear in life?**

Not very much. I've even stopped going to the doctor because the person who checks themselves too much...you can die everyday.

**What is your state of mind?**

Only my work...how it's going today...because for me today is tomorrow. If I have money today it's okay tomorrow.

**What advice would you give your teenage self?**

I would stay at the school I used to go. I was a good student even though the teacher didn't know anything. I was teaching the teacher. I would still say to stay at school.

**What advice would you give your 16 year old daughter Athina?**

To not live in Kastellorizo...here it is a very different life. In Greece, okay...but only a few months in Kastellorizo.

**When were you happiest in your life?**

Maybe the time when I lie down next to my daughter Athina, when she was a baby, when she was very, very little.

**How many children do you have?**

Three. 30, 28, 16 years.

**What is your favourite sport?**

I used to play football and squash. I used to be very good at squash. I was young and fast. Now not very much. My work is my sport.

**What was your best sporting achievement?**

I was in Mildura, Australia picking grapes and playing cards at night. I was 17. People came and say the Greek team needs some footballers. The manager sees me kick the ball and tells me I must be in the team. I tell them I'm going to do nothing and they still put me in the team. Then someone says "F\*\*\* you Greek". We beat the Italians 5-0. I was quite fast. I had a temper you know. I played back, centre and all over.

**Who was a great influence in your life?**

My grand father (paternal) but I didn't see him very much. He said to me you have to be a student all your life and don't say you know everything and you're going to go well.

**Why do you stay on Kastellorizo?**

I stay because I make a programme here and I see the future is going to grow. On the other hand my mother and father need some help and I stay.

**Who is the smartest person in Greece?**

That's easy, the one that's not speaking. The ones that are speaking, say rubbish.

**Are you a calm person?**

I can be calm. I think I am calm. In the winter I'm very calm.

**When you look out over the Limani what do you see?**

I see Kastellorizo's Plakes and wonder why they can't cut it, so my eyes can go through more.

**How many languages do you speak?**

Israeli, French, German, English, Italian... a little of each for the restaurant.

**What is your best trait?**

The best is my brain...it's always thinking.

**What is your worst trait?**

At the time I was younger I had a temper.

**What is your favourite meal?**

A baby T- bone steak.

**What is your favourite film?**

Mediterraneo.

**What is your favourite book?**

From when I was a very little boy... a cowboy book from America every week. There was a Greek hero inside. It was called 'Jim Adams'

**What is the most beautiful thing in your life?**

My children.



## Proverbs by Dr Paul Boyatzis, Perth

### Proverbs

An dhen astrapsi dhen vronda

(Without lightning there can be no thunder)

As lightning always precedes thunder, so in life nothing happens out of sequence. (I would translate it to mean 'There is an order to the ways of the world'.

Nero stin riza sou

(Water on your roots)

A term used to convey a good wish... implying fortification or strength to your base / foundation. 'May your endeavour be fruitful'.

### Kastellorizian Lexicon

The Kastellorizian word is in bold lettering with the demotic word in brackets.

Tretsa	( Figge apotin mesi )	Move on
Halandron	( Eripion )	A ruinous or incomplete building/dwelling
Fella	( Fetta )	Slice ( of bread )
Palaoura	( Anoisia )	Wrong doing
Koleroun	( Iparhoun polla )	Plenty of (something )
Lapsi	( Karoto )	Carrot
Patsavoura	( Kourelli )	Rag
Lythi	( Agouro Siko )	Unripen fig
Mpolka	( Horistra )	Parting of hair
Moundero	( Epititheme )	To attack
Pano – Lina	( Ena pano sto allo )	On top of one another
Pandouza	( Gineka tou dromou )	Ratbag

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