



MERCHANTS & TRADERS: by Nicholas Pappas, Sydney

COMMERCIAL LIFE ON KASTELLORIZO 1835-1943

When recounting the prosperous years in Kastellorizo's history, we inevitably hear stories of maritime endeavour. Tales of two and three-masted ships plying the Mediterranean, transporting charcoal ('black gold') and sponges to ready markets in Egypt or Italy, justifiably dominate discussion. And this is not surprising; the scale of the island's 19th century sailing fleet was a by-product of Kastellorizo's suitability as a maritime hub, given its proximity to Anatolia, its deep and accommodating harbour, and its ideal location on trade routes between east and west.

By the early 1840s, Kastellorizo had metamorphosed into a major shipbuilding facility (in the *Mandraki*, the island's shallow secondary harbour) and, at the same time, into a charcoal & sponge export depot, with these activities squarely dependent on continuing access to the lush forests of Lycia and, in the case of sponges, uninhibited maritime movement. Soon, settlements were established across the water, primarily to facilitate large-scale timber production and export, but also to sustain a growing population on the island which benefited from the tax-free status for those based there.

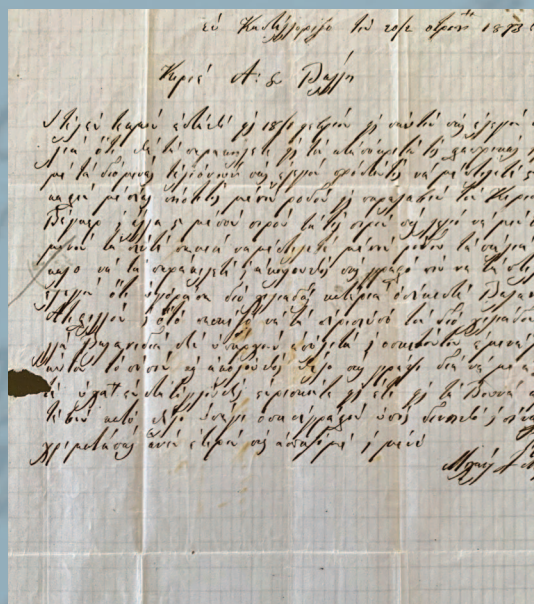
Thus, while always dependent on keels, by 1850 the island had become an urbanised market town, a bustling entrepot, where ships returned with imported goods that were bought and sold in the island's trading houses and busy harbourside cafes. But who were these merchants who fed off these brigs and barks as they joyfully docked at the end of each season (typically by the end of October each year), laden with the fabrics, finery, produce and spices of the Near East, north Africa and even Italy?

One small but intimate window into the islanders' mercantile activity is the postal stationery used by these establishments in the last decades of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century. These range from beautifully hand-written envelopes that enclosed shipping documents, letters of credit or bills of lading, to pre-printed commercial covers used for the despatch of orders, the entering into of financial arrangements or just routine correspondence between buyer and seller.

This article will look at some examples from the author's collection that help to paint for us a more vivid picture of the firms and families at the forefront of commercial activity on Kastellorizo during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire and, later, during the years of French and Italian occupation.

1. Mihail Minglis, 1873

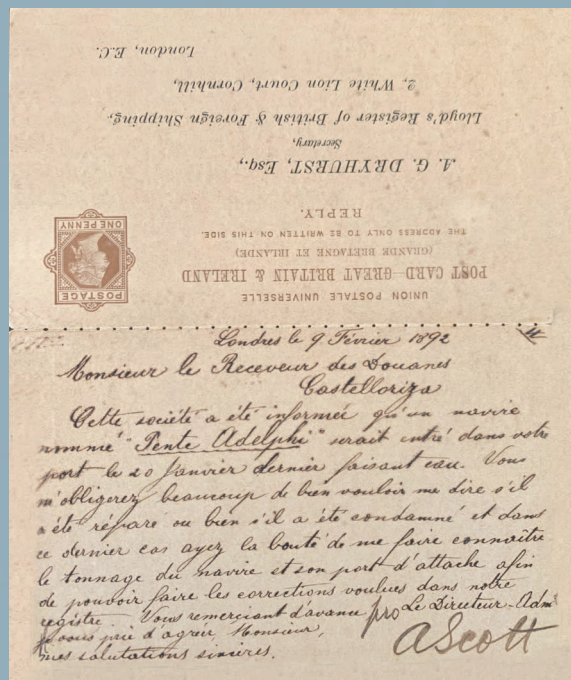
This letter dates from 1873 and is typical of commercial correspondence of the period. It is from one of the island's foremost traders of the late 19th century, Mihail Minglis, who hailed from Simi but had settled on Kastellorizo from an early age. In 1881, he founded the private Minglis School in the *Horafia* and was accorded the rank of first Great Benefactor. In this letter, Minglis places an order for coffee with the Rallis enterprise in Trieste, one of the leading Greek trading houses of Europe. Minglis also reports to Rallis that he has acquired a substantial oak shipment from Antifilo and seeks Rallis' assistance to insure the shipment.



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2. Lloyd's of London, 1892

This is a letter to the island's customs house from Lloyd's Register of British & Foreign Shipping in London. The letter, written in French, seeks information about a vessel named *Pente Adhelfi* ('Five Brothers') which was reported to have visited the island while taking on water. The reply of the island's authorities is not known, but the document is revealing of the island's maritime standing at that time.



3. Yeorgios Vasiliou Xanthis, 1913

On 14 March 1913, the Kastellorizians, aided by some Cretan mercenaries, revolted against their Ottoman overlords and unilaterally declared a provisional Greek administration. Greece was slow to embrace the island and, in the interim, local merchants saw a commercial opportunity in using their personalised stationery for the despatch of unauthorised mail using Ottoman stamps crudely over-stamped with the letters 'Ε.Δ.' (Ελληνική Διοίκηση – Greek Administration). Prominent among these merchants was Yeorgios Vasiliou Xanthis who sent this envelope to Dimitrios Zerlentis, a well-known stamp dealer in Rhodes.



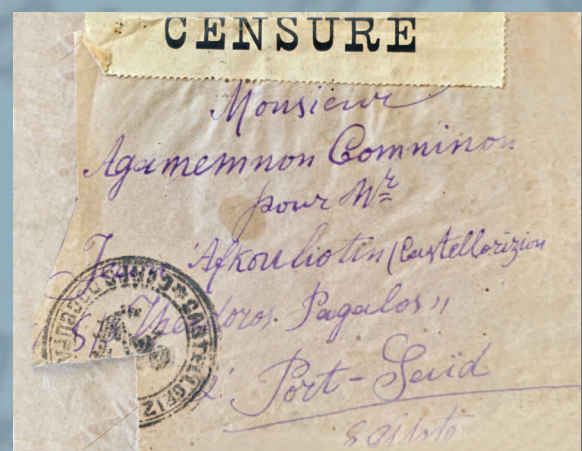
4. N. Stamatiou Frères, 1916

There is little doubt that the most prominent enterprise on Kastellorizo in terms of both wealth & trade in the last decades of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century was the family of Nikolaos Stamatiou (or Stamatoglou). This is a rare example of the family's stationery from the island's years of French occupation (1915-1921). Notable is their use of French (the international language of trade at this time) and the reference to 'Antifellos', modern Kas, where the extended Stamatiou family owned substantial landholdings. The addressee is Agamemnon Comninos, a Kastellorizian trader based in Port Said whose 'Criterion Bar' was a popular meeting place for Greeks.



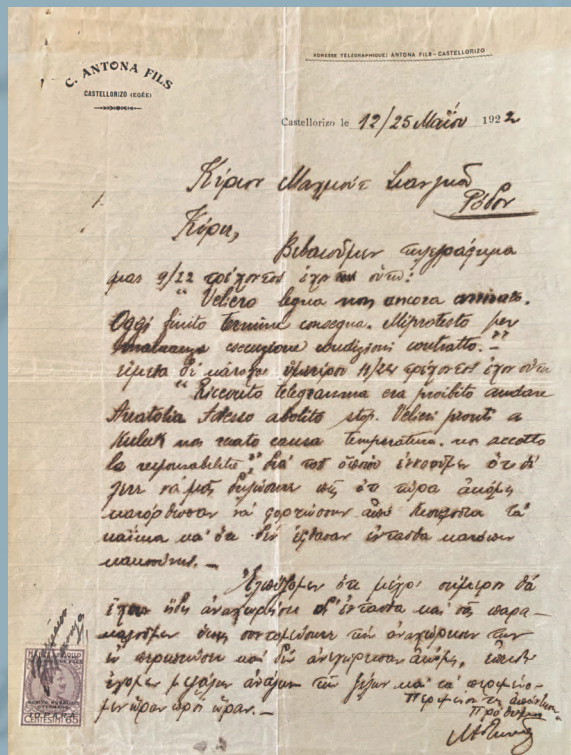
5. Agamemnon Comninos, 1917

Another letter from the island to Agamemnon Comninos in Port Said, but this time in his capacity as de facto *poste restante* for recipients. The addressee is 'Jean Afkoulitotis', a Kastellorizian who, with many others, had travelled to Egypt in 1911 after the introduction of compulsory conscription in the Ottoman army.



6. C. Antonas Fils, 1922

This letter from the firm of C. Antonas Fils ('Sons of Konstandinos Antonas') is typical of the early 1920s. Note especially the reference in the letterhead to a telegraph address. The addressee is a Turk based in Rhodes to whom the writer complains about a delayed shipment which they await on the island 'hour by hour'.



8. Nicolas M. Stamatiou, 1927

Nikolaos Stamatiou (Stamatoglou – see no. 4 above) died in 1905 and his business interests were divided between five sons and two daughters (in the latter case by way of dowry) from his two marriages. By the late 1920s, his grandson Nikolaos, the son of second son Mihail, had established his own retail and wholesale mixed business on the island (where 'Billy's restaurant is now housed).



9. Dr Christodoulos Constantinou, 1929

The years of French occupation had forged some commercial links between the island and France. These links would be reinforced by some emigration to French cities like Nantes & Marseilles, but also by Air France choosing the island as a stopover on its Near, Middle & Far East routes. Reflective of this is this order for samples of a pharmaceutical known as Menatol (prescribed for the relief from the symptoms of menopause) by one of the island's medical practitioners, Christodoulos Constantinou.



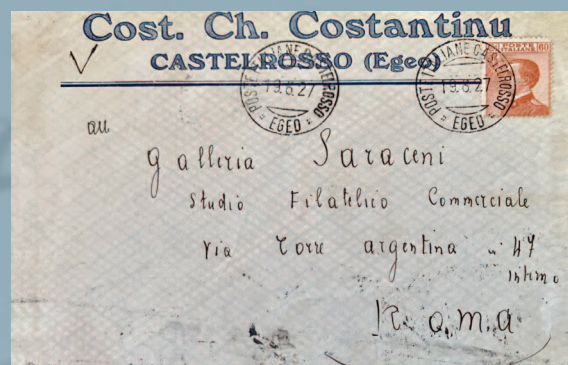
7. Pantazis Em. Pantazides, 1927

Many Kastellorizians had strong commercial and familial links with the nearby towns on the opposite coast. A large number of those based there naturally found refuge on the island after the exchange of populations between 1923-24. Nevertheless, during the 1920s & 1930s, many hoped for a return to their 'lost lands'. In some cases, the merchants among them persisted in their use of their pre-expulsion stationery. In this case, Pantazis Emanuel Pantazides, who hailed from Kalamaki (modern Kalkan) writes to a relative in Kastoria, Greece.



10. Cost. Ch. Costantinu, 1927

Konstandinos Christodoulou Konstandinou was the eldest son of Christodoulos Konstandinou and he owned and operated a clothing store on the harbourfront. The store stocked the latest male fashion from Italy. Noteworthy is the Italianised version of his name and place of origin on the envelope.



11. Apostolos A. Boyatzis, 1932

Apostolos Antoniou Boyiatzis was a successful entrepreneur and merchant who was part of the large Penglis family. His bi-lingual envelope is characteristic of the interwar period, as is his use of the letter 'C' in the island's name.



14. Anastasios Tzambazis, 1934

This envelope was despatched by Anastasios Tzambazis in 1934 to a philatelic agency in Rome. Tzambazis, like his father before him, was a merchant and retail shop-owner on the island, with his waterfront mixed business located across the lane from the shop of the family of Mihail Stamatiou (now part of Billy's restaurant).



12. J. Magrablis & F. Shenouda, 1933

Iakovos Andreou Magriplis (mis-spelt 'Magrablis' here) had departed the island in early 1912 and settled in Mallawi in Egypt (not to be confused with the landlocked country of Malawi in southern Africa). There, he went into partnership with a local in a trading house, as this envelope attests. The reason for his correspondence to the then mayor of the island, Ioannis Lakerdis, is unknown.



15. Georges Carayannis, 1936

The Karayiannis family, which hailed from Livisi, settled on the island in 1914. The patriarch of the family was Yeorgios ('Georges' in characteristic French) and, as a favoured family of the occupying Italians, he and his sons were awarded the agency for Air France when it commenced seaplane stopovers in 1929. Through the status the agency afforded, sons Vasilios & Panagiotis developed close relations with a number of French enterprises, as is revealed by this piece addressed to a velvet manufacturer in Lyon, France.



13. Impresa Elettrica Castelrossina, 1933

In addition to their clothing emporium and other business interests, the Konstantinou brothers ('Fratelli Costantinu') were awarded the concession for the supply of electricity to the island. The *Impresa Elettrica Castelrossina* was built in Pera Meria between 1931-32 and electrical power distributed throughout the town's laneways. This letter to Milan was addressed to the firm Luigi Sassone, a prominent philatelic auction house.



A BREAST FULL OF MILK

by Dame Benita Refson, London

We share with you a story that confirms the humanity of our local village on Kastellorizo. The unsung humanity. It is a story from a few years ago, during the immigration surge from Syria and it was written by a foreign homeowner, Dame Benita Refson. Beni founded place2be in London, a haven for children also in need of the human touch. (Visit place2be.org.uk). Her poignant impressions are a gentle reminder of unsung kindnesses.

We are often told to question why we write fiction when we have reality staring us in the face. I think it is perhaps because reality is often too painful to accept as part of the world we live in and perhaps, because we think we cannot change reality.

These last two weeks have certainly opened my mind to yet another view of life, not one that we see on the television or hear on the news, but one that was there in front of my eyes.

Everything that makes up the world we live in is here on this island, but in our daily lives we can and do so often look the other way. Here it is in full view, even if you don't wish to see it but then you wouldn't choose to be here if you didn't want to experience all that life gives us; one could choose a different island with many artificial distractions.

This island is life under a magnifying glass - it has taught me about extreme loneliness and a sense of isolation. Importantly it has taught me that what I might appear to have, that often gives me confidence means nothing here. All I can bring to this island and the local friends we have made is the 'me' that is present not the 'me' that is left behind in a different city in a different role with different ticks against my name.

The island has a very small permanent population: they fight, disagree, challenge, play cards, drink, gossip, laugh and spend time together almost every day of the year. They do all this along the water front, down the narrow alleys, with cats and a few dogs, within four square mountainous miles. It has survived earthquakes, fires, Second World War invasions, no food, no water and the rest of life's givens. However, what they have is a community, the very essence of what our so called 'Big Society' was meant to elicit, but failed to do so. When a crisis happens, this tiny community comes together in the most extraordinary, surprising and heart-warming ways. Men who appear to be weather worn by the rough seas and long windy, winter days and women hard at work cleaning, carrying, cooking and caring.

We spent time with a young doctor, recently qualified, who chose to come to this island as part of his training thinking that an island so far away from the hassle and bustle of life in Athens would give him some stress free medical experiences.....this was not to be the case.

With his mobile phone on the table waiting for yet another call for help, he was willing and eager to talk about his experiences. We needed to hear and learn. His timing on the island gave him quite a different experience to the one that he had expected. The massive influx of refugees over the many months, mostly arriving at night, wet, desperate and in many cases traumatised. He told us the groups represented life, some vulnerable, some sick, some none of that; his youthful wisdom made me realise that we cannot generalise or make assumptions or judgements, as we are so often quick to do.

There was one story, however that will never leave me. It is the best of what we can do for each other, but the consequence of the worst that we do to each other.

A young woman was rescued from the sea with her dead baby strapped to her breast, she couldn't bare to let him go. The young male doctor didn't know how to help this woman whose breasts were hurting because they were so full of milk her baby would have sucked. This is where the magic of the island community came to life. Two female islanders came to her rescue in the middle of the night. They took her aside, they wrapped her breasts with warm towels, they did what they could to soothe her grief and her painful breasts. This tiny island held out its arms to swaddle the distraught with the touch of human kindness. We must not forget the story of the breast full of milk and that act of human kindness. Many of the children who knock at the door of Place2Be have been offered a country to live in, but will they experience the act of human kindness from the communities where they live?

STUDENT EXCHANGE

REFLECTION by Marie-Claire Phillips



This year marks six years since I had the privilege of travelling to Kastellorizo to learn about my ancestry and to experience the island in a unique and enriching way.

For me, this trip was more than just a holiday to Greece. It was about discovering who I was, understanding these familial traditions, walking in the footsteps of my ancestors and most importantly, for significant personal development.

Fifteen is such a young age to travel to the other side of the world by yourself, but I truly believe that it is the biggest event responsible for shaping me into the woman I am today. I gained a significant amount of independence and maturity. Besides the obvious travel tips of spatial awareness, time management and communication to name a few, I learnt to open my eyes to the world outside of the 'bubble' you live in. There is so much more going on in the world around you, and if you are busy focusing on the insignificant things, you will miss what is right in front of your eyes. I learnt to pause, put the phone down and take it all in – this is something I have found myself doing a lot recently and can trace it back to this exchange.

This awareness and selflessness is crucial in the development of a young adult, especially in an era filled with so much distraction such as social media, especially with Instagram. For me, at an age where social media was only just starting to become 'relevant', by experiencing the 'bigger picture', it made me realise that social media doesn't matter and I have never really cared for it in the same way others who have been trapped by it do.

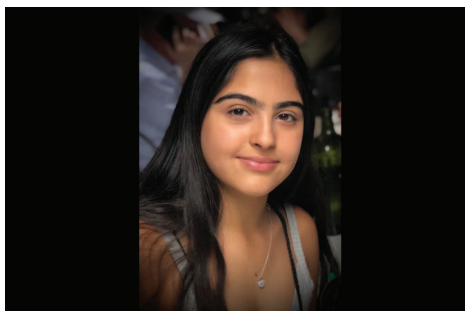
Experiencing such a rich culture was a highlight for me. Taking Greek lessons, learning to make Greek sweets (especially Katoumari) and going to the school were great ways to understand my culture within the short timeframe we had. A favourite memory is walking up the mountain and seeing all the hidden spots of history that I never would have known about otherwise.

Finally, it left me with a lust for travel. This exchange showed me what could be; meaning the world is your oyster. There is so much more outside of Australia, so many countries filled with such rich history and this was just the tip of the iceberg. As soon as possible, in 2017 at the age of 19, I travelled to over eight countries in Europe that I had never been to before, taking the knowledge learnt from this exchange to enrich that experience. I couldn't stay away from Kastellorizo, during that same trip I journeyed back to visit and had such an amazing time. While I was there I found myself reminiscing on all the things Marilyn showed us and couldn't help, but smile at the memories. I also caught up with friends I made from exchange and it felt like no time had passed at all.

I turned 21 in February, since 2013 I may have travelled far, graduated High School and almost finished a University degree, but I still hold the memories from this exchange close to my heart and they do mean the most to me. It was my jump start to the real world.

It is not lost on me how lucky I am to have experienced what I did as I know this opportunity isn't possible for many. I would like to thank all those involved with Friends of Kastellorizo for making this trip possible for me and all those that come after. It truly does make a difference; it did for me.

STUDENT EXCHANGE



Mia Gelavis

Mia's paternal grandparents are Leffie and Maria Gelavis, her great grandparents were John Gelavis and Stavroula Sarinas, Michael Gunellas and Katerina Dondas. Mia's maternal grandparents are Nick and Mary Nicholas, her great grandparents were Con Nicholas (Hatziyiannakis) and Despa Papalazarous, Paul Sertis and Despina Tsolakis.

I have applied for this exchange to learn more about the culture and the history of Kastellorizo, after being inspired by stories told by my parents and grandparents. I look forward to making new friends and experiencing what it's like to live on a small isolated island. To visit the place where my great grandparents were born will be a great privilege.

I've seen many photos of the clear turquoise waters and an abundance of small colourful houses around the 'limani'. Since I was little, I was interested in Greek mythology and as I grew older I was intrigued by Kastellorizo, because my mother told me a little of its history and I look forward to learning more. I hope to taste traditional food and learn some of the language so I can converse with my grandparents when I return home.

I am grateful to be accepted into the program and hope to gain a deeper knowledge of Kastellorizo by experiencing it first hand and share the memories with my family and friends.



Kirralee Pitsikas

My connection to the Kastellorizan Greek community goes back many generations. My Yiayia and Papou (Nina and Jack Pitsikas) originate from 'Kazzie' families. My Yiayia, Nina Pitsikas (nee Hatziyannakis), was the daughter of Polixeni (nee Moursellas) and Yianni Yiannakis. My Papou is the son of Panagiota (nee Zampazoglu) and Eleftherios Pitsikas. My great, great grandparents were also born on Kastellorizo; my Papou was the grandson of Lucas and Ekaterina Pitsikas (nee Sarinas) and Kyriakou and Maria Zampazi, (nee Hatzisavatrinas) My Yiayia was the granddaughter of Andrea and Maria Malaxos (nee Amonis) and Basil and Zafira Moursellas (nee Yanardassis).

I am so excited about this once in a lifetime opportunity. I have never been to Greece before, let alone Kastellorizo. I can't wait to learn more about the Greek culture and most importantly experience life on Kastellorizo.

I will open up to a new lifestyle with some resemblance to mine now. Another country, another language, different food, a different school, new friends, and a new culture, but somehow still so closely linked to me. I want to find out more about why my ancestors left their homeland. I want to see where they lived and develop a deeper understanding of what life was like for them all those years ago.

I can't wait to become an active participant in the Greek community and experience the full mosaic of Greek culture. I look forward to travelling to fascinating places of interest that will give a meaningful context to all that I have learned about Greece. Most of all I want to create a long term relationship with Kazzie people where we both develop a deeper mutual understanding of each other's culture and past generations of family.



Ella Venoutsos

Ella Venoutsos has Kastellorizan links from her paternal side of the family. Her late great grandmother is Katina Venoutsos (nee Tsapazi), who was the daughter of Sava Tsapazi and Irini Tsapazi (nee Lukas). Ella's grandparents are James Venoutsos who was born on Rhodes and the late Anastasia Venoutsos (nee Antonakis) who is from Kastoria.

My name is Ella Venoutsos and I have chosen to apply for the exchange program, because I love learning about different cultures and am proud to say that I am Greek. I understand through my upbringing how important it is to embrace and practise traditions linked to my heritage.

I love spending time with my family and love to ask questions about when they lived in Greece. I enjoy listening to their stories of how different life is compared to Australia.

I visited Greece with my family (including my Papou). We visited Kastellorizo and I absolutely loved it! We only spent a few nights on Kastellorizo, but it was my favourite place to visit and knowing my great grandmother came from there made it really special.

Ever since visiting Greece, I've wanted to return. It is a dream of mine to visit for a few months, after graduating school or university.

My dream has been realised a lot earlier than I expected and I know I am very lucky to have been given this opportunity. I am looking forward to spending more time on Kastellorizo to learn more about the culture and lifestyle. This exchange program will give me the chance to look at how the Kastellorizians live, interacting with students at the school, what they eat and learn a lot about the history of the island itself.

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