



'Kastellorizo from Antiphellus, 1842' by Rev Edward Thomas Daniell. This is one of the earliest representations of Antifilo. Its modest size is evident, as are its limited harbour facilities (courtesy British Museum).

ANTIFILO: KASTELLORIZO'S WINDOW TO ANATOLIA

by Nicholas G Pappas, Sydney

'Kastellorizo and Antifilo, they were like mother and daughter!'

So recalled the ageing **Despina Sidheri** when asked in February 1965 about the symbiotic relationship between Kastellorizo and the small town across the narrow stretch of water between the island and the Anatolian mainland.¹

This is the first in a series of short pieces that will focus on the towns along the southern Asia Minor littoral that enjoyed a special relationship with Kastellorizo in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The article will consider Antifilo (modern 'Kas'), the ancient *Antiphellos*, the settlement with perhaps the strongest ties to the island by virtue of its position as the island's nearest contact point to the mainland from where much of its wealth was derived.²

Representations and photographic images from the 19th and early 20th centuries confirm that Antifilo was never a settlement of significant size. Its geographical proximity and its relatively easy nautical access to Kastellorizo were two reasons for the town's modest growth during the years of the island's commercial prosperity (1845-1880), but there were also other reasons. One's domicile was

paramount in the days when Kastellorizo's tax & conscription-free status made the island a haven of sorts. So, while the island's population surged to around 9,000 during this period, Antifilo evolved instead into a vital contact point, a place of receipt and despatch, a transit town where mercantile interests, predominantly in timber, sponges and grain, dominated commercial and social intercourse.

Ottoman census statistics and other population records confirm this to be the case. In 1891, there were 50 Christian families recorded as residing in Antifilo, all of them with close familial connections to the island.³ In 1905, well before the impact of the Young Turks' policies, Antifilo recorded a permanent population of 400 Greek Orthodox Christians, with only a handful of Muslims residing there, most of them in official Ottoman positions.⁴

The surge in commercial activity between Kastellorizo and the mainland in the early to mid-19th century not only encouraged immigration to the island both from other islands of the Aegean and from Anatolian towns. Eager to profit both financially and diplomatically from such activity, the British Foreign Office was quick



Antifilo, 1915 This photograph is revealing of the rate of growth of Antifilo in the second half of the 19th century. The modern town is clustered around the small port, with most of the visible buildings adopting a style reminiscent of Kastellorizo's vernacular architecture. The Evangelistria church dominates the landscape, particularly its dome and beautiful bell tower which was to be later demolished (author's collection).



Exchange of populations, Antifilo 1924 An extremely rare photograph of one of the last groups of Kastellorizians departing Antifilo in early 1924. With their possessions in trunks wrapped in oriental carpets, the group, which includes women in traditional dress, awaits the arrival of a British ship to ferry them across to Kastellorizo which is just visible in the distant background (courtesy Mukerrem Arisan & family).



Port scene, 1931 This photograph was taken soon after the exchange of populations by a visiting Norwegian family in one of Antifilo's harbourside cafés (courtesy Nedland family).

ANTIFILO: KASTELLORIZO'S WINDOW TO ANATOLIA (Cont.)

to appoint commercial representatives to the region. In 1831, in order to foment and harness the rise in trading opportunities along Anatolia's southern coast, the Foreign Office appointed **Fortunato Biliotti**, a Levantine Italian from Rhodes, as Britain's first vice-consul to Kastellorizo and Antifilo, under the watchful oversight of the British consul based in Antalya.⁵

Biliotti was to play a dynamic role on the island and in Antifilo, in addition to his diplomatic function, by serving as an impresario of sorts for the island's sponge divers eager for work. From as early as 1835, Biliotti would advance the divers money in the quiet winter months, but subject to them first agreeing in writing to the sale, exclusively to him, and at a pre-determined price, of all the sponges they fished off the Syrian coast during the succeeding summers. Biliotti would then on-sell them at a huge mark-up to trading houses in Marseilles and London where demand for quality sponges had reached enormous proportions by the 19th century.⁶

In 1856, Greece followed Britain's example by its appointment of **Loukas Sakellarides** as vice-consul to Kastellorizo and there are references to the fact that France also despatched a consular representative to the island in that same decade. And by at least 1877, Antifilo itself enjoyed the presence of a dedicated consular agent in the service of the Greek Kingdom, one **Yeorgios Katzouris**, who was frequently called upon to adjudicate in disputes between Greek traders and, from time to time, between these same merchants and representatives of the Ottoman administration.⁷

Despite its small size, Antifilo gradually developed its own infrastructure as more Kastellorizians established business interests and secondary residences there. A handsome church dedicated to *Panaghia Evangelistria* was erected in 1866 in the outskirts of the modern town (amidst the ruins of the ancient town) in a vaulted style typical of the eastern Dodecanese.⁸ Principal donors were the **Stamatoglou & Hatzistatoglou** families from Kastellorizo. Closer to the port, a smaller chapel dedicated to St George (since destroyed) stood near a small primary school which catered for years 1-3 with a total of 50 students. And in the main square, at the foot of the modern town's only major thoroughfare, were three cafes, all owned and operated by Kastellorizian families.

In terms of property ownership in Antifilo, rich sources of information are the vast files of the Italian regime on Kastellorizo which assumed responsibility for receiving and collating compensation claims made by those displaced by the exchange of populations. In Antifilo's case, out of a total of 558 claims made by Kastellorizians, 76 related to Antifilo and its surrounds (14%). In financial terms, this represented a total amount of 20,218,292 Italian lire, or just over 19% of all claims made.

Among these, the sons of **Nikolaos Stamatoglou**, principally eldest son **Evangelos**, accounted for a massive 36% of the value of all Antifilo claims. Other significant landowners revealed by these records are **Triantafylia Nikolaou Kalafata** (1.29m lire), **Agapitos Zafiriou Xanthis** (1.1m lire), **Yiakomis Nikolaou** (aka 'Geronikolas' - 1m lire), sisters **Katerinia & Evangelia Vasiliou** (.92m lire) and youngest of the Stamatoglou sons, **Antonios** (.8m lire).⁹

Much has been written about the exchange of populations in the aftermath of Greece's humiliating defeat in the war with Turkey between 1921-22. Like so many towns along the Anatolian coastline, Antifilo was compulsorily abandoned by its Greek Christian population, such that, by the end of 1924, the small town was entirely Muslim as empty homes were occupied by Turks who had descended from nearby mountain villages. Indeed, gradual emigration had commenced from as early as 1914 with the outbreak of a war in which the Ottoman Empire had aligned itself with Germany.

In a touch of irony, once it was divided from the island by a delicate international border, Antifilo, or 'Antifili' as it had been known to the Turks, gradually became a bustling harbour town known instead as 'Kaş' ('eyebrow'). And as the town outgrew its island 'mother', Kastellorizo languished across the water, a remote and largely forgotten outpost of Italy, and then of Greece, at least until the island's more recent touristic - and geopolitical - resurgence.

¹ Extracted by the author on 24 November 1998 from the collections of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies, Athens.

² In Antiquity, Antiphellos served as the port settlement for the then larger town of Phellos, the remnants of which are located on the slopes overlooking modern Antifilo.

³ Diamantaras, A.S., 'Perigrafi tis Lykiakis poleos Antifellou', Parnassos 13, 1890, p. 580. The typical household during this period comprised an estimated 7-8 persons.

⁴ 'Eparhia Pisidias' Xenophanes 2, October 1905.

⁵ **Fortunato Biliotti** was the younger brother of **Charles Biliotti**, the British consular agent based in Rhodes, and uncle of noted diplomat and archaeologist **Alfred Biliotti** (1833-1915).

⁶ Issawi, C., *The Fertile Crescent, 1800-1915*, pp. 296-298.

⁷ A good example of the latter is the lawsuit between one of the leading Kastellorizian traders of this period, **Mihail Minglis**, and **Omer Agha**, the Ottoman customs officer in Antifilo, for blocking a shipment of oak bound for Trieste. The Greek consular agent based on Kastellorizo during this period was **Ioulios Borekas**.

⁸ Priests **Stefanos Diamantides & Simeon Alexiou**, both from Kastellorizo, served as visiting parish priests here until the enforced departure of the Christian population in 1923-24. The church remained empty until 1963 when it was converted to a mosque, the so-called 'Merkez Yeni Çami' ('new mosque'). As part of its conversion, its elegant bell tower was demolished and a minaret erected in its place. The Greek inscription recording the church's consecration is still in situ over one of its former doorways. However, the year of construction has since been erased.

⁹ I am grateful to Irini Toliou from the General State Archives in Rhodes for permitting me access to these documents and to Fotini Chalvantzis for assisting me with the research.

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PROTOPRESVITEROS THEODOSIOS KYRIAKOY SIMONIDES (1858 – 1933)

Maria Voyage, Sydney

During my first visit to Castellorizo in 1978, an elderly woman dressed in remnants of the traditional island clothing, stopped me from proceeding past the alleyway outside her house. 'Pia eise' she asked, gruffly. I told her my name and where I was from. I could tell from her lack of reaction that it meant nothing to her. I tried to engage her in further conversation and give her the answers that I thought she wanted, but she remained steadfast and would not let me pass. I tried again. 'Eime apo tou Papa Theodosi'. Instantly her face softened and her shoulders relaxed. Her eyes glazed over as if her thoughts were recalling another time, long ago. 'Ah, Papa Theodosi... perase moro mou... sto kalo'.

That small reaction by this old woman, immediately galvanised in me the stories that I had heard in my childhood about the depth of love and esteem in which my great grandfather had been held by the people of Castellorizo.

Affectionately known as 'Papa Theodosi', Protopresviteros Theodosios Kyriakou Simonides was a scholar, an orator, the keeper of island's ecclesiastical records, staunchly pro Greece and the head priest of Castellorizo.

Born on Castellorizo in 1858, to parents Kyriakos Simonides and Evangelia Pengli, Papa Theodosi was schooled there before going to the island of Syros to complete his studies. He stayed in Syros for just over ten years then returned to Castellorizo where, as a teacher, he offered education to the young people of the island.

Metropolitan (Archbishop) Gerasimos of Pissideia was one of the first to realise that Simonides was a good scholar and a talented

teacher. In 1893 the Metropolitan ordained Simonides as a priest and also appointed him as president of the School Council.

In the ensuing years, Metropolitan Gerasimos received good references from the Megisti Clergy Council and School Council regarding Simonides' extensive education, patriotism, hard work and good deeds and so he was appointed as 'protopresviteros' (head priest). It was the highest honour that could be bestowed as Simonides was married and had children, so he could not become a bishop. He was also later appointed Archieratikos Epitropos (Hierarchical Representative), that is the Metropolitan's designated representative on the island.

Simonides played an important part in the island's politics. He figured prominently in local affairs and the unsuccessful attempts to unite the island with Greece. Papa Theodosi was an outspoken critic of the island's occupation by the French and the Italians. He clashed frequently with those islanders who wanted to embrace foreign rule, notably with Ioannis Lacherdis (brother of my paternal grandmother, Maria Lacherdis Boyiatzis, who holds his own significant role in the history of the island, including being appointed Mayor of Castellorizo between 1922 – 34 during the time of the Italian rule).

Although loved by his parishioners and his students, Papa Theodosi antagonised those in power over the island with his position and straightforward attitude which had allowed the island's clerics to influence the political affairs on the island.

During the final years of Ottoman rule over Castellorizo, the rest of the Dodecanese islands were occupied by Italy. As the chief cleric, Simonides was dispatched to Rhodes by the islanders to plead with the Italian Commander, General Giovanni Ameglio for Italian intervention against the Turkish occupation but the Italians believed that the island was not a strategically feasible option as it was too far away. Simonides did, however, successfully gain written permission that the Italian navy would allow Castellorizian merchant sea vessels to freely continue their trading activities.

Simonides played a central role in the islanders' 1913 uprising against the Turks. He was appointed president of the Peoples' Delegation which was granted full administrative control of the island with its prime function being to procure the formal union of the island with Greece.

France, in its quest to expand in the Mediterranean, formally occupied the island in December 1915. Throughout this period, Simonides continued to be a strong political force. He agitated against the French governor of the time, Raymond Terme, who was attempting to reform the administrative affairs of the island, including a new Schools Commission. Due to his dissension, Simonides was reported as having 'a record of unsatisfactory conduct'¹ and was pressured to resign as head priest when it became clear that he was unable to work alongside the French chief of police. He was replaced by an aged priest who was submissive to the French and their demands.



PROTOPRESVITEROS THEODOSIOS KYRIAKOY SIMONIDES (1858 – 1933) (Cont.)

None the less, the French did appoint Papa Theodosi as vice president of the new Schools Board *'in an attempt to soothe his discontent at his recent demotion as head cleric of the island'*¹ and it is recorded that the French did comment that Simonides was the only priest on the island who was *'truly intelligent and capable'*³. Simonides remained vice president of the Schools Commission until the end of the French occupation but during that time, the French would not allow him to leave the island, fearing that he might create insurgence from abroad.

As time passed and as a consequence of his actions against the island's successive occupiers and their supporters, the influence of Simonides and the clergy over secular life and politics on the island waned.

In the later years of his life, together with his wife, Simonides travelled to Egypt in 1929 for medical treatment. At an elderly age, they returned to their island home.

During his lifetime, Papa Theodosi remained steadfastly patriotic and endangered his life and his beliefs to defend his homeland. He was relentless in his efforts to unify Castellorizo with Greece.

Papa Theodosi died on 5 October 1933. His grave and that of his wife, Evdokia, still stand, in original condition, including photo portraits, in a separate, fenced off area in the north east corner of the island's cemetery on the Mikros Niftis promontory.

As a clergyman, Papa Theodosi was loved by the community and can be prominently seen in the old photos of most of the Castellorizian weddings, funerals and community gatherings on the island.

Papa Theodosi married Evdokia Merzanis (1856-1938) and they had many children, of which eight survived.

The eldest child of the living eight was a daughter, followed by a son, five daughters and the youngest, another son, my grandfather,

John (Ioannis) Gabriel Simonides. All the siblings except Kyriakos, the eldest son, came to Australia. From all the siblings' offspring, there were at least thirty two grandchildren. At this time, there are four known grandchildren of Papa Theodosi still living, being my mother, Betty (Simonides) Voyage, her siblings, Eva (Simonides) Tsolakakis and Theo Simonides and cousin Eva Papacotis.

Great grandchildren and great, great grandchildren of Papa Theodosi and Presvitera Evdokia are now too numerous to state a definitive number – but all are forever linked to the island of Castellorizo through the legacy left by their forefather, Protopresviteros Theodosios Simonides.

References:

Family history and archives

1; 2; 3 Publications by Nicholas G. Pappas

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A PORTRAIT OF KASTELLORIZO



When George Atzemis had the opportunity to acknowledge his heritage when developing the 27 storey Adnate Hotel, he jumped at the chance by commissioning world renowned large format street artist Adnate to paint the largest mural in the southern hemisphere and the second in the world. One third of this mural is dedicated to the acknowledgement of the contribution that the Kastellorizian community has given to its sister city, Perth.

Working closely with Adnate and the Perth City Council, George was able to pay tribute to the traditional owners of the land, the Noongar Whadiuk people, as well as the generations of migrants who continue to come to Western Australia.

Each portrait created and painted by Adnate represents a tie to this location. The first being a first nation Noongar Whadjuk man who is performing a smoking ceremony; the second is a young Indian girl who represents the modern migrant who calls Western Australia home and the third portrait is of a Kastellorizian woman dressed in traditional costume.

When researching the portraits that would best represent the area in which the Adnate Hotel sits it was clear that the Kastellorizian community was and is well embedded in the Perth landscape holding significant titles including Lord Mayor Mick Michael (1982-1988), Governor Ken Michael (2006-2011), national media personality Basil Zempilas and the numerous business people who set the foundations of the Perth CBD such as George P Kailis who started Kailis on Barrack Street and the first fish markets on Wellington Street a stone throw away from the landmark Adnate Hotel.

With a strong appreciation of art, George felt the best way to recognise the hard work and contributions of this island's people in Western Australia was to create a piece of art that would become a talking point and landmark on the Perth City landscape which he has certainly achieved. To make it even more personal, the portrait of the Kazy girl, Gemma Atzemis is George's granddaughter and the great, great granddaughter of George P Kailis.

