



The upper town of Finika in the early 1930s after what was left of the Christian population had departed in the compulsory exchanges of population. Courtesy Barati Aracan archive.

FINIKA – A 19TH CENTURY ANATOLIAN MARKET TOWN

by Nicholas G Pappas, Sydney

This is the fourth, and penultimate, article in a series that focuses on the principal towns of the southern coast of Anatolia which maintained strong mercantile and social links to Kastellorizo in the 19th and early 20th centuries. This piece looks at Finika (today's 'Finike'), which was, until the population exchanges in 1922-23, a religiously-mixed town nestled on a lush elevated plain between two abundant rivers.

Finika's name derives from its Phoenician origins (it was originally named 'Φοίνιξ' by Greeks of the 5th century BC), and that legacy has persisted until today. With just over 11,000 people, Finika is a restful harbourside town, its two original settlements having coalesced into an expanded township that straddles an upper centre (known originally to the Greeks as 'Skála') and a lower port ('Koulé').

As late as the turn of the 20th century, Finika was a town where Greeks, Turks and Jews co-existed, primarily through commerce, but also through areas of cultural and social overlap. It was predominantly Greeks who had settled in the town during the Tanzimat reforms (1839-1876), with most coming from Antalya, Cyprus and Kastellorizo. They numbered as many as 800 in 1905, but were always a visible minority amidst 2,000 Turkish and Kurdish Muslims, even supplemented by approximately 150 Sephardic Jews who had settled in the region from as early as the 16th century.

With two rivers, the *Almirós* and the *Glykys*, crossing its elevated plain, Finika's moist soil was especially fertile. Coupled with a humid climate, wheat, grain, barley and citrus fruits were harvested and shipped annually in plentiful supply. Sesame seeds, chickpeas and a variety of nuts were also exported, while the salted meats of Finika were another favourite, particularly on Kastellorizo, where they were reserved for special occasions.¹

In the religious sphere, Finika fell within the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Metropolitan of Pissideia who was based in Antalya. There was only one church, *Ayios Yeorgios* (1893), unsurprisingly dedicated to the Christian saint who was venerated not only by Christians, but also by some Muslims, for whom the warrior saint was associated with *Hidirellez*, a popular 'saint' in the Ottoman world.

An Ottoman *kaymakám* (district governor) based in *Skála* administered the town, but as was the case in many localities across the Hellenised Ottoman world, civil authority was also wielded by a locally elected *demogerontía* comprising four prominent male citizens and an *ephoría*, also of four male citizens, which oversaw the conduct of elections and the upkeep of the church.²



Antonios Nikolaou Stamatou ('Stamatoglou') (b. 20 July 1884) was the fifth and youngest of the sons of Kastellorizo's great benefactor, Nikolaos Stamatou. With his siblings, he owned considerable landholdings in Anatolia and was the agent of Rees & Company of Smyrna which operated a steamer service between Makri and Antalya. He also served as sub-agent of shipping insurer Lloyds of London on Kastellorizo. Courtesy General State Archives, Rhodes.



Mihail Ioannou Stamatou was also from the broader Stamatou/Stamatoglou clan (he was the nephew of great benefactor Nikolaos). Known as 'Parmaxizis' because of his severed thumb (basparmaksiz means 'without thumb' in Turkish), he was another who left behind a substantial fortune in Finika with the enforced exchange of populations. Author's collection.

Finika's communication with its Ottoman hinterland was greatly enhanced by the construction in 1881 of a new road linking the town with the bustling commercial centre Elmalı (literally 'apple town'), some 70 kilometres away. This enabled Finika's fresh produce to find new inland markets in places like Akçay and Yuva. But Finika's main mercantile point of axis in the second half of the 19th century was undoubtedly Kastellorizo, where quayside activity was unrivalled in this part of the late Ottoman world.

Before the outbreak of WWI, maritime connections between Finika and Kastellorizo and the other coastal settlements were conducted by the noted shipping line Rees & Company of Smyrna via an agency owned and operated by **Antonios Nikolaou Stamatoglou**, one of the five sons of Kastellorizo's well-known benefactor. Rees steamers made the round trip, starting from Makri, with stops at Kastellorizo, Finika and Antalya, before returning. There was also the short-lived steamship service of **Stavros Kontouzoglou** which ran a round trip between Kalamaki and Finika each week.³

With the outbreak of war in 1914, Finika's harbour location made it a convenient base for German and Turkish positions. The town paid heavily for this, with French gunboats and British aircraft bombarding the town in May 1916. There were to be more such instances before the War's end, and many more Christians who had not already departed for good by the Armistice, were to do so under considerable duress from the Kemalist-dominated civil authorities between 1920-1921 as war raged between Greece and Turkey.

Tensions were particularly high across the region in the second half of 1920 as Greek forces ventured into Anatolia. In Finika, the *kaymakam* summoned all the Greek residents of the town to the main square and read to them a telegram from Kemal Ataturk directing all Greeks who were not originally from Finika to return immediately to their domiciles. Even those who hailed from Finika had to demonstrate that they had not fled across the water to Kastellorizo during the War years.

The noose was tightening. In late October 1920, the same *kaymakam* inspected the town's church and nearby Christian cemetery and noticed that a number of graves had been adorned in shades of blue. Taking this as evidence of mischievous treachery, he ordered the graves' immediate destruction, with the families of the departed being met with a hefty fine. And in ensuing days, a prohibition was placed on any travellers from Kastellorizo entering the town without prior authority.⁴

It is striking, if unsurprising, that Greek loyalties and connections to Finika persisted against such a background. In March 1921, soon after the Italians had taken Kastellorizo, but well before the population exchange, the island's new Italian governor, **Franco Quentin**⁵, issued a formal request to his Turkish counterpart in Finika for two Kastellorizian brides to be permitted entry to be married (by arrangement) to two Greeks who had stayed behind to manage their family enterprises. In an ominous forewarning of what lay ahead, the *kaymakam* wrote that he was happy to accede to the request but could not guarantee that the brides would return to their island safely.⁶



While social and familial connections were being severely tested during this chaotic period, mercantile interests proved to be more resilient. In mid-1920, as the Greek army was pushing deeper into Anatolia in its quest to reach Ankara to the east and Bursa to the north, Kastellorizian sea captain **Yeorgios Antoniou Boyiatzis** was still shipping the goods of Finika-based wholesaling firm **Savvas Ioannides & Mehmet Thessalou** from Finika to Kastellorizo via Cyprus.⁷

Another Kastellorizian trader, **Mihail Efthimiou**, continued to ship his produce out of Finika in these uncertain months, but only after paying a significant 'inducement' to the local gendarmerie. When he refused to do so in respect of a large shipment in September 1920, he was threatened with jail for a concocted offence. Similarly, **Mihail Paspalis**, a Finika resident with close ties to Kastellorizo, was imprisoned for 3 years (after refusing to pay a bribe) for allegedly carrying on his person counterfeit Turkish currency. Examples like this are many, and they reveal the enduring nature of the islanders' mercantile spirit, even in the face of open hostility and danger.

With the brutal re-taking of Smyrna by Turkish forces in August 1922, and the frantic evacuations of Greek Christians that followed, the mood on both sides swung towards extremism and this was to manifest itself in and around Finika, at least until the compulsory exchange of populations

between 1923 and 1924. With little choice left to them, most of the remaining 300 or so Greek Christian residents of Finika hastily relocated to Kastellorizo or, further afield, to Rhodes. A lesser number, who could trace their origins to Cyprus, moved there. In just a few short months, over two millennia of Greek settlement along the Asia Minor littoral had all but disappeared.

All that remained was the built environment and vacant fields they had left behind. 129 compensation claims were made to the Italian authorities on Kastellorizo for abandoned properties in Finika. These claims totalled over 27 million Italian lire, almost 27% of all Kastellorizian claims. Some of the larger claimants from Finika were **Olga Kotzasoglou** (5.2m lire), **Mihail Efthimiou** & his siblings (4.6m lire), **Marianthe Nikita Barboutti** (1.8m lire), **Andreas Kontouzoglou** (1m lire), **Ioannis Bakaloglou** (.75m lire) and **Mihail Ioannou Stamatiou** (.75m lire).

As we have seen in Antifilo, Kalamaki and Myra, Finika's Hellenic imprint was to fade gradually as new Turkish arrivals occupied abandoned homes and tended vacant fields. And for those who did depart, the demands of a speedy adaptation to new lands, whether on Kastellorizo or in distant Australia and America, left little time for sentimentality or nostalgia. While trade with Finika was to recommence by the early 1930s, albeit on a far smaller scale, painful memories were to be quickly suppressed as new lives were forged abroad.

¹ See the charming memoir of **Evangelos Daniel Spartalīs** (1900-1989), *Τότες... στο Καστελλόριζο* (Athens, 1978).

² For example, in the elections held in June 1911, the elected *demogérontes* were **Nikolaos Vasiliou**, **Savvas Ioannides**, **Kyriakos Daioglou** and **Konstantinos Grigoriou**. Elected ephors were **Mihail Malaxos**, **Evangelos Pandelides**, **Yeorgios Kontouzoglou** and **Grigorios Petrides**. All except Daioglou had close familial links to Kastellorizo.

³ See Filia, August 1912, p.161.

⁴ These and other events cited in this article are drawn from the reports of Kastellorizo's police chief, **Emanuel Foundas**, to the French governor of the island which are to be found at the *Service Historique de la Marine* at Vincennes, France. For a more detailed analysis of this fraught period, see the author's study, *Near Eastern Dreams: The French Occupation of Kastellorizo, 1915-1921* (Halstead Press, 2002 & 2010).

⁵ **Franco Quentin** served as *delegato* to Kastellorizo between 1 March and 3 November 1921.

⁶ The intended brides were **Anastasia Markou Papalazarou** and **Evangelia Petridou**. Their intended grooms were, respectively, **Ioannis Kyriakou Bakaloglou** and **Antonios Kontouzoglou**.

⁷ It is noteworthy that, while the shipments were effected between May and June 1920, Boyiatzis' invoice is dated 5 June 1923, an indication perhaps that the flow of money between traders had stalled during the Anatolian hostilities.

FR CHRISTOS & PRESVITERA AIKATERINI SIMEONIDES

St George of the Well ('tou Pigadhiou') church on Kastellorizo has a very special place not only with the local community, but also with the diaspora in Australia. Many of their parents or grandparents were married in the church, and it stands proudly in what is known as Australia Square.

Because of neglect, the church had fallen into sad disrepair, and just recently, in 2020, it was completely restored by a specialist team from Athens. The restoration was mostly funded by Australian Kastellorizians.

In anticipation of the restoration, Metropolitan Chrysostomos announced the confirmation of a new priest for the island, to be assigned especially to St George of the Well.

Father Christos Simeonides has been on Kastellorizo for many months and on the eve of his first service in the church he and his wife Presvitera Aikaterini, spoke with Margarita Kannis on Kastellorizo.

Father Christos

Childhood: I was born in Thessaloniki, the oldest of four children, three boys and a girl, the youngest. My family had very deep ties with Mt Athos. My father, my brothers and I spent at least every summer there, from the time I was about five years old. For me it was a very spiritual place, with lifestyle hardships such as no electricity. I remember the gas lamps being lit every evening, and the smoke mist that was emitted, added to the feeling we had been transported to Byzantine times. The monks there obviously had a strong impact on me; their conversations about spirituality, their simple lifestyle and just watching them truly live Christian lives made a big impression on me.

The monk who had the biggest impact on my life choices was Father Paisios. He was born near Cappadocia and lived most of his life in Souroti and on Mount Athos. He was a very well-known healer, and when he was once asked what he wanted to do, he claimed he wished he could cut out his heart into many pieces and give a piece to everyone. An ascetic, he was a gentle man, and gave me advice, direction and showed me the best outcomes of spirituality. His words of counsel are still being published. Father Paisios was canonised in 2015.

School: I liked school and I was a good student. My favourite subjects included Philosophy, History, Greek Literature and Ancient Greek. I liked learning and still do like learning about how cultures think about religion, about life, death and the afterlife. I went to Aristotle University in Thessaloniki. Studies were not my only interest. I played basketball and football and school teams. Since coming to Kastellorizo I have played a little football with the boys here and the soldiers.

I play these sports, but actually my favourite spectator sport is volleyball, because although it is a team sport there is no contact and no one position is static; everyone moves around their side of the net and changes responsibilities. Yet they play as a team.



Employment: I never consciously thought about being a priest. I took religion for granted and as a part of my life.

I taught Philosophy and Greek Literature and I taught in primary schools and after school private lessons. In the autumn, I hope to be able to restart those lessons after school for children needing assistance and support to improve their school results.

I like Philosophy very much and I am a fan of Socrates because he spoke of the unknown god and he believed in justice. He tried always to speak the truth. He is famously known for saying "I am not a wise man" and yet he was proclaimed "the wise man" by the Oracle of Delphi.

I can speak six languages at various levels of fluency: Greek, English, Italian, French, Turkish and Russian. I believe learning more than one language opens the door to new worlds and customs. For example, here on Kastellorizo I can speak with tourists and home owners and hopefully we can learn and share many experiences.

Priesthood: Actually, this was never a career path I considered. St Paisios was once asked by a boy if he should become a priest. St Paisios answered, do not be anxious for this title. It is more important you become a Christian. And this is how I have always believed is the priority for me. But serendipitously Metropolitan Chrysostomos had heard of me through colleagues and he asked me if I would train as a priest, especially to take on this new role on Kastellorizo! So I am comparatively new to my new "job".

Kastellorizo: I am hoping we can achieve many things together, with my wife and the community. I would very much like to see children directed to less techno interests,



FR CHRISTOS & PRESVITERA AIKATERINI SIMEONIDES

and we will be pursuing activities that are interactive with nature, cinema, storytelling, and it will hopefully include the diaspora children so they can all appreciate their connections with each other.

I also will be teaching Byzantine music (psaltiki) if anyone is interested. I have one student so far.

My Wife: I was attending the name day celebrations of my cousin, Elpida, about five years ago. It was the smile and the natural warmth of Katerina that drew me to her company. So I approached her. Her conversation was interesting; she laughed a lot; she was clever. One thing led to another.

As Presvitera, Katerina has been fully embraced by the community. She tutors students (Chemistry, Physics and some Greek), she sings in the church as a chanter, and when there is no lockdown, Katerina has been holding Sunday School classes after church, and to date the classes have been full.

Another victim of the lockdown has been movie nights on Friday. Like everywhere else in the world progress has been put on hold, but we know our future is bright when our children are being supported so lovingly.

Presvitera Aikaterini

Childhood: I was born and grew up in the Athens suburb of Vyronas. I have one sister, who is married with three sons. I grew up under the strong influence of my paternal grandmother. It was she who gave me my interest in spirituality. She took me to church every Sunday. Another person who had a strong impact on me was Father Efraim, who I met while visiting a monastery. In my early teenage years I went through the common emotional rollercoaster of many teenagers and Father Efraim helped me find solace and calm. He was the reason I wanted to become a nun.

School: I loved school and I was a very good student. I won many scholarship awards. But I chose to stay and study in Greece. I wanted to be a doctor (after wanting to be a nun!) but my grades were not quite enough. The next option in the medical field available for me was Pharmacology, working with Pharmaceuticals and so I studied Chemical Engineering. My specialty is researching new drugs for diseases, and I have especially been involved in the study of diabetes Type 2.

I speak five languages at different levels of fluency, Greek, English, Italian, French and Turkish.

Father Christos: You already know where we met. What you do not know is that I had already seen him. On Facebook! He was in a group photo and I tagged his picture. Believe in it or not, I made a Fanouris Cake. I did not know he would be at the Name Day party. In fact I had declined the invitation, but I was bored that day, so I decided to go anyway. I was drawn to his amazing energy, humour and knowledge. He was a teacher then, not a priest although his friends always told me he is like a priest in his everyday life. We have known each other five years and we have been married for two and a half years.

Kastellorizo: I would like to learn the traditional song. I am hoping to teach traditional dancing from around Greece. I am part of the storytelling group that is happening every week for the children and when school starts, I will be taking Sunday school classes.

Like my husband, I will be offering my skills to help children after school with their maths, physics, chemistry and biology.

I am hoping to work with the women of the community to form a group to make and sell local products.

There are so many opportunities on Kastellorizo. We are excited to become part of this close knit community.

FOLLOWING FAMILY

THE MIGRATION STORY OF PARASKO GEORGIS

by Moira and Renée Doropoulos, Perth

The Connections gallery at the newly refurbished WA Museum Boola Bardip features individual Western Australian migration stories. These stories present the personal perspectives of people who have emigrated to WA from all over the world, from the 19th century to the present day - some seeking refuge, some as new migrants and others to be reunited with their families.

One of these stories is about Paraskevas (Parasko/Peter) Georgis, who arrived in Fremantle in 1947 to be reunited with his family.

Parasko's father George and mother Marou (Tsolakis) first emigrated to Australia for a new life in the 1920's. His older sister Rosa (1925) and Parasko (1926) were born in Newcastle NSW, but the family left Australia to return to Kastellorizo, Greece when he was a few months old. He recounted taking his first steps at sea on the journey back to Kastellorizo.

Parasko spent an idyllic childhood in Kastellorizo, growing up amongst his friends and family, which grew larger with the birth of his brother Malaxos (1928) and sister Marianthi (1932). When German bombings inundated the island in World War II, Parasko and his family were amongst 1,000 Kastellorizians evacuated to refugee camps in Cyprus and Palestine. They went without his father George who had already migrated to Western Australia in the 1930's before the outbreak of WW II.

At the young age of around 17 Parasko, keen to escape camp life, signed up to serve in the Greek navy. Parasko would never see his brother again, as while he was in the navy, Malaxos tragically passed away in Palestine. At the end of the war after a couple of years of naval service, which often saw him seasick but where he learnt some basic cooking skills, Parasko returned to a devastated Kastellorizo. He, along with others awaited the repatriation of their families from Palestine, and had to bear the intolerable news that the boat on which his family were returning (The Empire Patrol) had caught fire and sunk. Fortunately his mother and sisters survived the tragedy, however rebuilding a life on Kastellorizo was fraught and Parasko left the island to join his father George in Western Australia to help build a new life for the family.

The Georgis family were finally reunited, when Marou along with her daughters Rosa and Marianthi arrived in Fremantle on Christmas day 1947.

Parasko settled and built a successful and happy life with his family in Western Australia. His migration story follows a long history of Kastellorizian migration and, like his forebears, he contributed to and helped shape the rich and diverse cultural identity of Western Australia.

Text and images courtesy of Moira and Renée Doropoulos, daughter and granddaughter of Parasko Georgis.

The Western Australian Museum Boola Bardip opened on 21 November 2020. The Museum is opened daily and entry is free. For more information go to: <https://visit.museum.wa.gov.au/boolabardip/>







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