



Livísi today at dusk.

LIVÍSI AND MÁKRI – TWIN TOWNS, CONTRASTING HISTORIES

by Nicholas G Pappas, Sydney

This is the fifth and final article in this series that looks at the Asia Minor towns that maintained special links to Kastellorizo during the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century.

If one was seeking an emblematic example of the contrasting tragedies of the modern Hellenic experience in Asia Minor (today's Turkey), then one need look no further than the proximate towns of Livísi (formally Λειβήσιον, today's Kayaköy, literally 'village of stone') and its 'twin', Mákri (Μάκρη, today's Fethiye).

In Livísi's case, a thriving hillside town of over 6,500 predominantly Greek residents in the first decade of the 20th century would be reduced within just over two decades to a deserted and ghostly shell. And so it remains to this day. By comparison, Mákri, by virtue of its seaside location, would be transformed from a 19th century multicultural and mercantile hub into a de-Hellenised, late 20th and early 21st century yachters' and holiday-makers' magnetic destination. Human history can be cruel.

Unlike the other Anatolian towns we have considered in this series (Antifilo, Kalamaki, Myra and Finika), neither Livísi nor Mákri can be said to have fallen within Kastellorizo's direct sphere of influence. To the contrary, both towns had developed their own distinct Hellenic identities by the turn of the 19th century and these were to endure until the 'encouraged', later enforced, departure of their Christian populations between 1914-1923.

Mákri, the ancient Telmessós, boasted a protected harbour and easy access to a wooded and fertile hinterland. Warm sea winds made it a favoured location in the winter months, but summer was often unbearably hot, and cooler respite was usually sought in Livísi and other elevated settlements to the north. In the fertile fields that encircled Mákri, grain and sesame were annually harvested, while

the town's proximity to Rhodes (36 nautical miles to the south-west) reinforced its status as an entrepot that serviced ships plying the seas between that island and Antalya to the east, and beyond.

Mákri's attractive location was reflected in its early multicultural character. As a commercial epicentre from as early as 1840, the town attracted a mixed population. 3,000 Turks, a number of them Turkish Cretans, and 2,500 Greeks enjoyed a relatively peaceful co-existence in the second half of the 19th century. In this, they were aided by a small, but dynamic, Jewish community, that hardly exceeded 250 persons, but which nevertheless acted as a sort of mercantile 'lubricant' between the two more dominant communities.

Administratively, Mákri (together with Livísi) was designated a *kazá*, that is the seat of a *kaimakám* (a sub-governor), who reported to a *mutessarríf* based in Müğla (who was, in turn, answerable to a *vali* in Smyrne). Internal affairs (births, marriages, deaths, property dealings, schools, church matters etc), were overseen by a Christian *múhtar*, a local male appointed by the Ottoman authorities, and councils of *demogérontes* (elders) and *éphori* (ephors), both elected every three years. Spiritually, both towns fell under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Metropolitan of Pisideia who was based in Isparta (in summer) and Antalya (in winter).

The 19th century brought more than its fair share of natural calamities to Mákri. An earthquake in 1856 caused some localised damage, but it was a massive fire in 1875 that destroyed most of the old town and compelled a redesign of its central precincts. The restorative measures necessitated by these natural disasters prompted a large rebuilding program, starting first with the harbour's *prokymaia* (quay). For the first time, this enabled stern-to-quay docking of large two and three-masted sailing vessels and even larger steamers.



Mákri at the turn of the 20th century.

This commercial activity brought to prominence Mákri's greatest benefactors, **H'Nikolaos Louizídes** and his wife **Kalliope**. A small primary school catering for years 1-3 had existed in Mákri from at least 1848, but Louizídes identified the importance of higher education to both towns' retention of their young males. His good friend in Cairo, **Loukas Santrapés** had similar plans for his island home, Kastellorizo, and the two apparently corresponded about their proposed 'gifts' to their home communities.¹

Louizídes had already funded the construction of modest boys' and girls' schools in Livísi (see later), but the Mákri school was intended to be his crowning achievement. After considerable bureaucratic delay, H'Nikolaos and Kalliope opened their new school in Mákri (suitably named the '*Louizideiou Astiki Scholi*') on 7 January 1907, a little over three years after Loukas and his wife Anastasia had done the same on Kastellorizo.

The surviving account of the events that day attests to a spirit of inter-communal solidarity. Speakers that chilly winter morning included the local *kaimakám*, **Osman Nouri Bey**, the principal of Livísi's boys' school, **Kyriakos Tsakiris**, the principal of Mákri's Turkish school and the sole teacher from the town's Jewish community, **Elias Turgel**, who addressed the assembled audience in French. So moved were Louizídes and Kalliope by Turgel's gracious words that Louizídes enthusiastically rose from his seat and pledged 50 *eikosáfranga* towards Mákri's small synagogue which was then under construction.²

Reading their words today, it is hard to believe that, within just over a year, everything was to change. An empire that had tolerated, to varying degrees, the faith, civil status and traditions of its minority communities, was from 1908 to be subject to the whims of a nationalist movement that was determined to unwind the liberal reforms of the 19th century (the so-called 'Tanzimat' reforms). Nothing was ever to be the same.

Of course, if the impact of these changes was to be cruel for Mákri, they were utterly devastating for **Livísi**, some 8 kilometres to the north. But what we see today in Livísi tells us only half the story, given the town's skeletal appearance. A town of 6,500 people, 6,000 of them Greek Christians, had existed in peaceful co-operation with their Turkish neighbours from at least the early decades of the 19th century. As was common across Anatolia, the Turks tended and harvested the lush fields of the Kaya valley that lay beneath the town, while the Greeks bought and sold their produce. Each community fed off the other.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Livísi is known today more for the fact that it resembles an untouched ghost town, rather than for what once

existed here. Some 1,100 simply designed two-storey homes, huddled on a hillside location, were centred around a main square known as **Stoúmbos**. The *plateía's* location was determined by the town's two main thoroughfares which met here. On the eastern side stood the church of *Taxiárchis* (more correctly, *Archángelos Mihail*, the so-called 'upper church'), one of two churches that dominated the town.

As the accompanying sketch drawn in 1959 by a former Livísi resident shows, Stoúmbos square was dominated by cafes on its southern, western and northern sides. Bearing the names of their proprietors, we find family names like *Petrá*, *Hanioú*, *Stefanakioú*, *Tavoulíou*, *Balndíri* and *Bámbakou*. Nestled between these establishments, or in the narrow lanes that ran off the square, were a pharmacy, two tailors, three bakeries, a butchery, two general stores and three fruit and vegetable establishments. Nearby was the town's boys' school, the *Arenagogeíon*, another of Louizídes' significant benefactions to the twin towns.³

From *Stoúmbos*, one of the thoroughfares led to the church known as '*Kato Panaghia*', the other major church of the town (more correctly dedicated to '*Ta Eisódhia tis Theotókou*', but colloquially also known as '*Panaghia Pyrgiotissa*'). Like the *Taxiárchis* church, it was built in the neo-Gothic style in favour across the Dodecanese in the 19th century, with a characteristic cross-vaulted single nave and votsalotó (pebble-stone) floor decorations. Between the two major churches sat the church of *Aghia Anna*, Livísi's oldest church, which was locally also known as '*Mési Panaghiá*', possibly in reference to an earlier dedication. Here was also to be found the town's *Parthenagogeíon*, or girls' school.

Well before the Young Turks, a number of Livísi's residents had already sensed that their town's future was becoming perilous and that safer refuge was required. This coincided with the toponymic '*Livissianos*' or '*Livissianis*' appearing more regularly in birth, marriage and death records on Kastellorizo. Similarly, we observe the island's surviving register of dowry contracts, which date from as early as 1896, recording '*Livísi*' as the place of origin of an increasing number of grooms marrying into Kastellorizian families. Family names like **Gavrieloglou**, **Kolioú**, **Kávouras**, **Karayiánnis**, **Fóundas**, **Ayiorítou** and others attest to the increasing penetration of these '*Livissianí*' into the social fabric of the island community.

But most chose to remain, hoping that, with the Young Turks' promises regarding the protection of minorities, the days of relative peace would return. But 1914 brought an end to such dreams, with the world plunging into its first global war and, worst of all, Turkey allying itself to Germany. At the bat of an eyelid, Greek Christians

YIORGOS KAVOURAS – KASTELLORIZO'S REBETIKO LEGEND (1907-1943) by Nicholas G Pappas, Sydney



Kavouras, centre with santouri, in Dhrapetsóna, c. 1926.

If Kastellorizo is famed as much for its 20th century tragedies as it is for its 19th century prosperity, then the story of **Yiorgos Kavouras**, one of the island's lesser-known heroes, fits neatly within that historical paradox. Undoubtedly one of modern Greece's more renowned vocalists, Kavouras' short life has scarcely been examined by chroniclers of the island's more recent history. And yet, he remains at the forefront of Greece's rich musical legacy, despite his limited recorded output during a tragically short career.

The feature article on Makri and Livisi was the prompt to traverse Kavouras' all too brief life in an accompanying piece. Because while Kavouras was born on Kastellorizo in early 1907, his father, **Stamatis** (1887-1965), had hailed from Makri.¹ And Kavouras' mother, **Garyfaliá Vasiliou Beiyiórgi** (1892-1960), was also not from Kastellorizo, but from nearby Kalamaki, a satellite community with predominantly Kastellorizian origins.

As we have seen in recent *Filia* editions, worsening conditions encouraged the movement of ethnic Greeks across the water to nearby islands like Kastellorizo from at least the turn of the 20th century. Among them were the extended Kavouras family from Makri and the Beiyiórgis family from Kalamaki. In Kavouras' case, his father had worked as a bootmaker in both Makri and Livisi, but he chose better opportunities on Kastellorizo from at least early 1906. There, he became acquainted with the family of **Vasilios Beiyiórgis** from Kalamaki and their 15 year old daughter, Garyfaliá was quickly betrothed to him. They were to marry on Kastellorizo in early 1906.

Yiorgos was born to the couple in early 1907. As a child, he observed his father working on his evening hobby; crafting musical instruments like the outi, mandola and guitar and playing them at social gatherings on the island. Before long, Yiorgos had joined his father's part-time troupe and he could be found sitting by his father's side mimicking his father's guitar chords on a toy guitar. Musically adept at an early age, Kavouras was soon learning the violin and the santouri, two instruments that initiated him into the vast musical traditions of the Greek-speaking communities of Anatolia.

Kavouras was almost 9 and a student at the *Santrapeia Astiki Scholi* when French cruisers sailed into Kastellorizo's harbour in late December 1915. Two more children had been born to the couple, another son **Vasilis** in 1914, and **Marianthe** in early 1917.² But with work opportunities diminishing as war raged, Stamatis was compelled to take up the offer of the French governor to travel to Marseilles for work in armaments factories. He was there between late 1916 and late 1918, but his remittances were infrequent and Garyfaliá was compelled to make do by selling her jewellery as she and her young children endured Turkish bombardments and the deprivations of war.

Stamatis returned to Kastellorizo in late 1918 and made the fateful decision to leave the island with his family and settle in Piraeus where some compatriots had found steady work. There, he continued his trade as a musician and luthier. By 1924, Stamatis was performing with a new troupe, which now included an 17 year-old Yiorgos and an older cousin, Lazaros, and they played in *kafeneia* patronised by newly-arrived Anatolian refugees in Dhrapetsóna and Kokkiniá. The earliest known photo of Kavouras is from this period. Kavouras, not yet 20, sits, santouri resting on his knees, in the middle of a large paréa in Dhrapetsóna, the heart of Greece's displaced refugee community.



Kavouras' father, Stamatis (right foreground, with violin), at a musical festival in Athens' Panathenaic Stadium in 1935 accompanying women performing the sousta in traditional Kastellorizian dress.

YIORGOS KAVOURAS – KASTELLORIZO'S REBETIKO LEGEND (1907-1943) by Nicholas G Pappas, Sydney

Two trips to Samos (in 1925 and 1928) further expanded the troupe's popularity, but it was the voice of the youngest Kavouras that had begun to enchant their audiences most. Possessed of a plaintive yet textured voice, Yiorgos was quickly the star of the show. His impossibly good looks brought female audiences as well, and they waited patiently for his glances from the makeshift stages they played on. One photo from a performance in Samos shows a debonair Kavouras with his violin, the band a traditional Anatolian ensemble with santouri, guitar and twin-necked second guitar which doubled as bass.



Kavouras, left with violin, pictured while on tour in Samos, c. 1928.

All of this coincided, of course, with the first recordings in Greece of local musicians by the Gramophone Company of London (later HMV). It was not long before the young musical virtuoso with the enchanting voice was noticed by the scout appointed by the record company to scour the neighbourhoods of Piraeus for talent. By this time, Kavouras had joined another ensemble which included the noted **Yiannis 'Hatzis' Argyropoulos** (b. Smyrna, 1904) and **Stellakis Perpinidhes** (b. Tinos, 1899), and featured appearances by renowned Smyrniot vocalist **Kostas Nouros** (b. Smyrna, 1892). Even among such company, the young Kavouras stood out the minute he sang his first note.



A delighted Kavouras after the release of his first recordings, 1935.

Between 1935-1942, Kavouras recorded some 70 sides in Columbia's recording studios in Rizóúpolis. His earlier recordings are considered his finest, as they are infused with the Anatolian influences that he was brought up in on Kastellorizo. By contrast, his later output was more in the 'Piraeotic' style dominated by the bouzouki, an instrument largely unknown to Anatolian refugees and first brought to

prominence by **Markos Vamvakáris** (b. Syros, 1905) in his pioneering recordings from 1933. In this, Kavouras came under the influence of composer **Kostas Skarvélis** (b. Constantinople, 1880) who became the go-to man for the latest bouzouki-based songs ripe for recording.

While Kavouras' career prospered, his personal life was in torment. In 1930, he had married **Irene Konstandara** (1910-1963), an attractive young woman from a refugee family from Smyrna. Three children were born to the couple between 1931 and 1936 (Stamatis, Garyfaliá and Anastasis or 'Anéstis'), but the marriage was troubled from the outset. With Axis forces in Athens from 1941, Kavouras fell into financial strife and depression, while Irene was said to be regularly fraternising with Italian soldiery. In an unfortunate incident in early 1943, Kavouras confronted his wife in a compromising situation and was beaten badly by her Italian paramour. Racked by headaches for days thereafter, he collapsed while with friends in Haidari and was rushed to hospital where he died on 20 February 1943, aged just 36.

Irene ended up migrating to Melbourne with her three children in 1956, but tragedy was never far away. In July 1963, she was shot and killed by an enraged lover in her Carlton apartment. The killer, Robert West, was sentenced to death for the crime, but his sentence was ultimately commuted to 15 years imprisonment. And in a further curious postscript to this story, Kavouras' youngest son, Anéstis, followed his grandfather's and his father's musical example, but not in the Greek idiom. Instead, he chose to be an Elvis impersonator in and around Melbourne under the stage name 'Tassie Crab'.



The murder of Irene Kavoura as reported in The Canberra Times, 4 July 1963.

It is fitting to end this piece with the words of Vamvakáris himself who composed and recorded a moving tribute to Kavouras in 1959, some 16 years after his death, such was Kavouras' lasting influence (author's translation):

*Come and sing for us, poor Kavouras,
And sing your beautiful songs to make us happy.*

*Piraeus and Kokkiniá, Kalývia and Elefsína,
All wept when they learned that you had passed.*

*We don't forget you, Kavouras, whenever we are together,
We play your songs and always cherish your life.*

¹One of Stamatis' siblings was Konstandinos who gained fame for his intrepid swim from the Anatolian coast to Kastellorizo in December 1916 to warn the island's French garrison of an impending assault by Turkish forces.

²Some of what follows is based on the reminiscences of Marianthe before her death in 2002. They are to be found in Μαγκες Αληστου Εποχης by Elias Voliotis-Kapetanakis (Athens, 2005).



VALE THEODORE VOUDOURIS (1935-2020)

Theo Voudouris was born in Egypt, yet his ancestral links are connected to Kastellorizo where his father was born. He was instrumental in the development of the Australian Hellenic War Memorial in Canberra which commemorates the contribution of Australian soldiers in the Battle of Crete during World War 2. The memorial proudly stands opposite Australia's National War Memorial on ANZAC Parade in Canberra and showcases Greek heritage and culture with the inclusion of an amphitheatre, olive and cypress trees and a Doric column with a Byzantine cross which symbolises the birth of civilisation. The Doric column is embossed with the cross of the Greek Orthodox Church, representing a soldier's grave. The column stands on a mosaic pavement depicting a map of Greece which represents the rugged coastline and terrain of the battlefields. It is at this site that Theo Voudouris ensured that Kastellorizo was symbolically represented.

To acknowledge the contribution of the many generous Kastellorizian Australian benefactors, Theo ensured that our

island of Kastellorizo was clearly identified in the memorial's mosaic of Greek islands.

Theo Voudouris was a man who had foresight and one of his most notable and proudest achievements was serving on the National Committee for the establishment of the Australian Hellenic War Memorial. This, as well as being at the helm of the Hellenic Club of Canberra to develop a vision and strategic plan to encourage the next generation to be leaders within the wider Canberra community, forms part of his legacy to his family heritage.

Theo was a long time member and supporter of Friends of Kastellorizo and as reported in Filia magazine in 2010, the Voudouris family generously sponsored the third year of the Student Exchange Program.

Theo Voudouris is pictured here on Kastellorizo in 1970 with Greek national heroine, Despina Achladioti, the Lady of Ro.



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