



An oil painting from the Museo Correr showing the Venetian blockade of Castellorizo in 1659.

## DEMOLITION MAN AND THE CAT WHO WENT TO WAR

by Robert Willes, Perth

*Outside of Venice, Francesco Morosini is most likely to be remembered for his role in the destruction of the Parthenon in 1687. At home, however, he is considered one of Venice's greatest heroes, known for his military campaigns in Greece against the Turks and especially his victories in the Peloponnese peninsula, for which he was called Il Peloponnesiaco. He was Doge of Venice from 1688 until his death in 1694. He also left his enduring mark on Castellorizo – but we'll come to that later...*

The Morosini family had come to prominence in the ninth century, possibly having been one of the founding families of the city who fled from Attila the Hun in the fifth century. The Blessed Giovanni Morosini (d. 1012), Benedictine founder of San Giorgio Maggiore, and doges and patriarchs were in Francesco's ancestry, as well as several dogaresse (wives of doges) and queens of Balkan and eastern European countries. Possibly the most infamous of his ancestors was Domenico Morosini, commander-in-chief of the galley which brought the four looted bronze horses to Venice from the Hippodrome in 1204 after the sack of Constantinople, and which were placed on the façade of St Mark's some fifty years later. He clearly had a lot to live up to.

Young Francesco went to sea under the command of his second cousin, Pietro Badoer, who later became the admiral of the fleet at Candia (modern Heraklion). He progressed to being twice appointed Captain-General of the Venetian forces in the city, which had been under siege by Ottoman forces since 1648.

The Ottomans were retaliating after the Knights of Saint John attacked and plundered one of their convoys on its way from Alexandria to Constantinople in 1644, landing at Candia with their booty, which included high-ranking officials from Egypt on the pilgrimage to Mecca. By May 1648 Ottoman forces had occupied the rest of Crete and began the epic twenty one year siege of Candia, cutting off the water supply. Their navy, however, was unable to prevent supplies and reinforcements getting through to the defenders in the city, leading to years of stalemate. Eventually in July 1669 a joint Venetian and French attempt to raise the siege with an assault by both land and sea ended in disaster, causing the French to pull out and leaving Morosini in an impossible position, with only 3,600 men and no prospect of supplies, from which he negotiated a surrender.



The explosion of the Parthenon in a 1707 print by Francesco Fanelli (left) and a contemporary engraving showing the Venetian blockade of Castellorizo in 1659 (right).

Whilst Venice was allowed to keep three forts on the north coast of Crete and there was no massacre of Christians, because he had agreed terms without the permission of the Council Morosini was tried for treason on his return. Surrendering Venetian territory was considered poor form to put it mildly so, although acquitted, this experience may have helped shape him into the highly aggressive and successful military commander he subsequently became.

With the formation of the Holy (anti-Turk) League of Poland, Austria and Venice, and no doubt seeking revenge for Crete, Venice declared war in 1684 and so began the Sixth Ottoman–Venetian War (the Morean War). The Ottoman–Venetian wars were a series of conflicts between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Venice that started in 1396 and lasted until 1718.

Morosini was made commander-in-chief of a force including mercenaries from all over Europe (as well as the Knights of Saint John) which assembled at Corfu. Over the next three years, he captured the whole of the Peloponnese (the Morea), and finally Athens.

Athens had been under the control of the Ottoman Turks since 1458, who stored gunpowder in the Parthenon and the Propylaea on top of the Acropolis. In 1640, a lightning bolt struck and destroyed the Propylaea, which should have been a warning that storing gunpowder in sacred structures displeases the gods. On September 26th 1687, when Morosini and his troops besieged the Acropolis, a mortar shot hit the Parthenon causing the gunpowder within to explode, extensively damaging the temple that had survived intact since ancient times.

It is reported that when the Parthenon blew up, General Otto Wilhelm Königsmarck, a Swedish soldier on the Venetian side, was dismayed at the destruction; the more pragmatic Morosini took the view that it was a fortunate shot because it destroyed the Turkish armament store. After the capture of Athens early in 1688, he is believed to have been the first westerner to have attempted to remove sculptures from the Parthenon, but the ones he tried to lower (horses from the west pediment) smashed to the ground. He did, however, get away with the ancient c. 360BC lion from Piraeus, which now sits along with earlier plundered lions outside the Arsenal in Venice.

During the siege, Morosini was elected Doge, but being in the field was unable to take up the role immediately. He then unsuccessfully besieged Negroponte (Khalkis) on Euboea (Evia), which he was forced to abandon because of an outbreak of plague among his troops. Sadly the more culturally sensitive Königsmarck was among its victims.

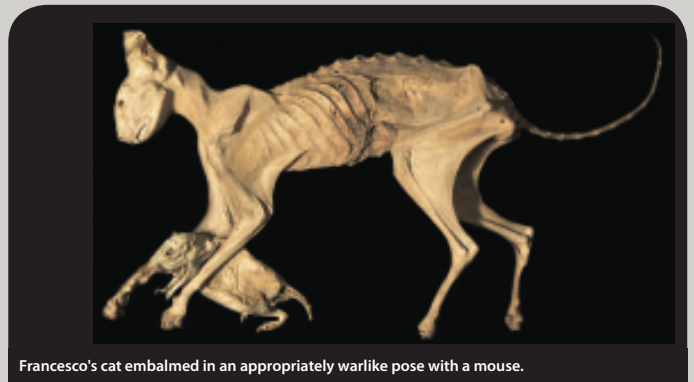
So, interesting as all this is, what is our (anti)hero's relevance to Castellorizo you may ask?

It is perhaps less well known that some 28 years before these sad events in Athens, while based in Crete during the Fifth Ottoman–Venetian War, Morosini also made his "contribution" to Castellorizo's long and storied history.

Morosini and French ally Jacques de Grémonville besieged the castle during operations against the Turks in the Aegean, arriving on

September 19th 1659. After the abortive use of explosives, some judicious tunnelling and a good deal of musket fire, the Turkish garrison surrendered. The following day the Venetians, under Morosini's direction, destroyed the castle using four huge kegs of powder, following which the island was looted, with 115 Turkish and 31 Greek prisoners entering into the service of the Venetian fleet. The remainder of the Greek population were permitted to remain subject to payment of an annual tribute to the Venetian Republic.

Francesco never married and his closest associate seems to have been his beloved cat, who regularly accompanied him into battle. On her death she was embalmed in an appropriately warlike pose with a mouse and you can still see her at Venice's Museum of Natural History. One wonders how many of Francesco's pyrotechnics she may have witnessed.....



Francesco's cat embalmed in an appropriately warlike pose with a mouse.

#### *Post Script;*

Morosini was perhaps better suited to soldiering and blowing things up than navigating the currents of Venetian politics – as a doge he was not terribly popular and was described as arrogant and vain. In 1693 he returned to the battlefield, making a second unsuccessful attempt to capture Negroponte, and retreating to Nafplion where he died on 16th January 1694. The gains Morosini made in the Peloponnese – which gained him the title 'Peloponnesiaco' – were all lost again by 1715, but his reputation as the last great Venetian commander has been maintained, and is celebrated in an exhibition at the Correr Museum in Venice to mark his 400th anniversary. The exhibition "*Francesco Morosini: the last Serenissima's hero between history and myth*" has been extended until November 2021. The collection includes memorabilia, documents and works of art that reveal particular aspects of Morosini's life and his historical significance. Personal objects, books, portolans, globes and relics of classical Greek art record his character and interests. Military documents, model ships and fortresses, trophies and weapons seized from the Ottomans all depict the man of war and his exploits, especially the conquest of the Peloponnese (1683-1688). Portraits, coins, medals and commendatory publications evoke the mythical aura that even while he was still alive surrounded the admiral-doge, the last Venetian hero.

#### *Acknowledgements;*

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Castellorizo : an illustrated history of the island and its conquerors / Nicholas G. Pappas.



# KASTELLORIZO – AN EARLY WELFARE STATE?

by Nicholas G Pappas, Sydney



Kastellorizo's young and much-admired pharmacist, Anastasios Filalithis, pictured on the island in c.1910.

*The eagerly awaited, and long overdue, re-opening of Kastellorizo's pharmacy gives us cause to reflect on the history of medical & pharmaceutical care on the island from the middle of the 19th century until the remaining islanders' rushed evacuation in October 1943.*

This article has as its focus Kastellorizo's relatively advanced (for its time) system of publicly funded health care. It is at least arguable that this may be characterised as an early manifestation of a welfare state model, where, with some exceptions, a prosperous municipality assumed financial responsibility for the health and well-being of its citizens.

While a number of medical practitioners had practised on the island from as early as the middle years of the 19th century, the first record of the establishment of a pharmacy on the island dates from circa 1889. This was at a time when the island's municipality provided free medical care as part of a system whereby it was permitted to raise its own taxes (duties on imports and exports, harbour dues, church sacraments etc) and thereby fund a range of public initiatives, subject only to a relatively modest annual tax payable to the Ottoman regime.

Kastellorizo's municipal wealth in this period attests to an island in its ascendancy. In particular, the second half of the 19th century had seen municipal coffers accumulate significant cash reserves through the public auctioning of council-appropriated allotments. This was the product of a town that had expanded its footprint around its only suitable harbour at a speedy rate. To accommodate this growth, the municipality would declare previously unused (and unclaimed) plots of land on the town's (then) outskirts as properties for sale. With the approval of the Ottoman authorities in Rhodes, public auctions were conducted at least annually, usually in the *avlogyro* of Sts Constantine and Helen. Interested bidders competed energetically to secure a vacant lot in *Pera Meria*, or in the foothills above the *Mandraki*, for a daughter's future dowry. In the process, the council became wealthier with every lot sold.

The first recorded chemist who worked in the municipal pharmacy on Kastellorizo was a certain **Stavros Goulides** about whom we know little other than he hailed from Myra and served as municipal pharmacist in the late 19th century. We also know

that a certain **Mihail Diamantis** assumed the role between 1901-1903, but the details are again scarce. Thankfully, we know more about his successor, **Anastasios Evgeniou Filalithis**<sup>1</sup> (1882-1939), a pharmacist from beyond the island's shores. Filalithis was born in Avdimion (Αυδίμιον) in eastern Thrace, in close travelling distance to Constantinople (now Istanbul). When he arrived on Kastellorizo on 15 December 1904, Filalithis was only 22 years old and a fresh graduate from Constantinople's highly regarded school of pharmacy.

It is possible that the young Filalithis was drawn to the island by the then sanitation inspector (υγειονόμος), **Theodoros Nikolaou Economides**, whose family also hailed from the 'City', but we will never know for certain. What we do know is that Filalithis was greatly admired by the local population during his 16-year tenure, particularly during the war years (1914-1918), when he was known to attend personally upon injured civilians during the bombardments, and later during the influenza pandemic, often at great personal risk.

In this, he was assisted by locally born pharmacist, **Anastasios Antoniou Passaris** (1880-1919), and the two formed a dedicated and devoted team in those frantic years. So close was their bond that Filalithis chose Passaris to be his *koumbáro* when, on 12 October 1908, he married **Anastasia Panagiotou H'Mihalaki**, the grand-daughter of the island's master boat builder from Syros, **Nikolettos Karalis**. Their bridal photograph, taken on the steps of the newly-built *Santrapeia* school, exudes a sense of occasion, with Filalithis proudly standing between his new bride (who opted for a modern gown instead of the island's traditional bridal costume), and his best man, closest friend and professional colleague.



The marriage of pharmacist Anastasios Filalithis to **Anastasia Panagiotou H'Mihalaki** on 12 October 1908. At the groom's immediate right stands assistant pharmacist and *koumbáro*, **Anastasios Passaris**.

Sadly, Passaris was to fall victim to the virus on 14 February 1919, aged a mere 39 years. The sudden loss of his dearest friend and work colleague would have impacted Filalithis heavily. In early 1921, as the French forces were preparing for their handover of the island to Italy, Filalithis made the decision to move to Rhodes, where he remained with his family until his own death on 27 March 1939, aged just 57. Before he departed, however, Kastellorizo's last French governor, Capt. **Raymond Terme**, awarded him a civil commendation for his exemplary service during the hostilities.

From at least 1894, Kastellorizo's pharmacy was located in the neighbourhood known as '*Mantzavínou*' (or, more colloquially, '*Mantzainou*'), on the ground floor of the then municipal chambers. This was an elegant three-storey waterfront building that combined eastern and neo-classical features. The top floor, with its Ottoman-influenced enclosed upper balcony, had housed the offices of the *demogerontía*, the local council of five under Ottoman rule, until the island's revolt in March 1913.<sup>2</sup>



A photograph from 1937 showing the stretch of waterfront buildings that comprised the small neighbourhood known as 'Mantzainou'. The pharmacy was housed in the ground floor of the large free-standing building at centre-left, complete with Ottoman-influenced *kióski*, or enclosed timber balcony. The building was home to the local council from c.1894 until the erection of the *municipio* in 1932. Just visible on the first floor is a sign reading *Ala Littoria*, Italy's then national carrier.

With the onset of French (1915), and then Italian (1921) occupation, the building became home to the newly-constituted municipal council, but only until the structure's partial collapse in the devastating earthquake on 18 March 1926. Restored to a similar design, the building remained occupied by the municipality until late 1932, when **Rodolfo Petracco's** handsome *municipio* in Kavos was inaugurated. Later, the building housed the island's court of first instance, and the offices of the Italian airline, *Ala Littoria*, which hoped to join its competitors, Imperial Airways and Air France, in air routes to the Near and Far East. Impending war was to bring such aspirations swiftly to an end.

A surviving municipal budget from 1905, when the island's population was still around 8,000, reveals that the pharmacy actually produced a modest surplus for the municipality in the years before the island's economic decline. Income from non-prescription items (which generally were not free) was budgeted at 31,500 *grosia*, while expenditure, which comprised the wages of the two pharmacists and the cost price of pharmaceuticals, totalled 24,000 *grosia* for the year.<sup>3</sup> In sharp contrast, by the time of the Italian occupation (1921-1943), a 1937 budget reveals a sharp annual deficit of 7,000 Italian lire.

Despite the efforts of the Italian regime to attract pharmacists to assume the conduct of the pharmacy, qualified chemists were difficult to find for what was increasingly seen as a backwater posting. Instead, it was agreed that Kastellorizo's two senior doctors at the time (**Christodoulos Konstandinou** and **Nikitas Dimitriou Halkitis**)<sup>4</sup> would alternate in the role of pharmacist,

assisted by a young local trainee, **Agapitos Theoharis**. This arrangement continued until the October 1943 evacuations, and it resumed again on the islanders' return when Theoharis stepped up to the role until his departure from the island in 1947.

The story of Kastellorizo's pharmacy through the decades is instructive for all who are connected to the island. Equally, and perhaps more to the point, it should especially resonate with those who reside on the island today. While pockets are being lined with the fruits of (sometimes doubtful) land transactions in the island's inflated property market, it is timely to reflect on the wisdom of those before us who recognised that the accumulation of private wealth is only one indicator of a community's broader prosperity.

Let us all hope that Kastellorizo's new pharmacy is an enduring success.

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Filalithis' grandson, Dr Taso Philalithis from Thessaloniki, for sharing with me documents and photographs from his grandfather's collection.

<sup>2</sup> It is worthy of mention that the land upon which the municipal chambers stood had been donated for public use by **Katerina H'Yeorgiou Varsámina** on 29 March 1894. Today, the site is vacant, the stretch of waterfront buildings here having borne the brunt of German bombardment in 1943 and the fire of July 1944.

<sup>3</sup> A *grosi* (Turkish: 'kuruş') was the standard sub-unit of the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>4</sup> The island's other medical practitioner during the 1930s was former teacher **Ioannis Vasiliou H'Yiannakis** who was tasked with overseeing the sanitation of the port and the schools.



# STORY TELLING WITH NICK FOUNDAS

by Helene Pappas, Sydney



Nick Foundas

*Nick Foundas, was born on Kastellorizo in 1940, to Andonis Nikolaou Foundas and Elizabeth Panigyri. His parents were originally from Livissi. With the exception of a brief period spent in Port Said, he lived on Kastellorizo until the age of 13, leaving the island in 1954 for the long journey to Australia.*

*Nick Foundas was interviewed on 24 October 2015 at his home in Torrensville, Adelaide, South Australia.*

## A STORY OF KASTELLORIZIAN INGENUITY: FILIGREE FORKS & SPOONS AND YENNITOURIA

"My father was a talented silversmith who was especially known for filigree work on forks and spoons made out of silver (ασημί). The ornamental work of fine silver wire woven into delicate tracery on the handles was very popular and sought after at that time.

My father fell into this line of work due to an injury which resulted in a leg amputation when he was 12 and made him prone to sitting down for work. He was shot in the leg at a time when he and his brothers, mother and father and uncles were travelling by boat to Kastellorizo from Turkey in 1914. The boat was mistaken to be that belonging to pirates who had recently looted a Turkish village nearby. As a result, Turkish gendarmes fired shots and my father was injured."

It was a time when the Ottomans had declared that Greek nationals were subject to compulsory conscription and Nick's father and relatives decided to leave Livissi in a bid to avoid military service.

Andonis Foundas' shop was a little way up past the Agora.

"The silver was bought in Rhodes. A small amount of silver would yield a lot of filigree work as it would be spun into very thin spaghetti like rods. They were effectively made into long threads of silver. They were aligned and twisted together by mouth & hand. A small amount of silver would make 10 metres of silver thread.

My father was especially busy in the lead up to the exodus from the island of Kastellorizians bound for Australia as many wanted to take these special keepsake utensils with them. All of the families that left Kastellorizo from 1947 onwards bought these spoons & forks. He would make 24 forks and spoons each week for these orders. My father made a lot of money from that. My father had presented King Paul & Queen Frederika of Greece with 12 forks and spoons, upon their visit to the island which greatly impressed the King."

The visit to Kastellorizo by the Royal family was to commemorate the unification of the island with Greece in 1948 and at that time the keys to the island were handed to the King.

It is traditional to offer a gift to visitors for a new-born baby, known as Yennitouria (Γεννιτούρια). They are like little 'goody bags' filled with nuts, dried fruits and specially made sugar pieces (in the shape of horns). The meaning behind this gift references the sweet and fruitful life wished for the newborn.

Nick recalls a time when produce and money was scarce but Kastellorizian pride and ingenuity worked to save the day - the need to keep important traditions for celebrating a baby's arrival into the world.

"It was during the time my mother was about to give birth to my sister (Chrisoula Perides). The custom was to make Yennitouria, but my parents did not have all of the ingredients needed to make them.

It so happened that on the days leading up to the birth a situation developed.

A large sailing boat came into the harbour, unusually under sail, 3 sails, from Egypt carrying sultanias (from Cyprus). The captain was a Kastellorizian. He had a problem, his ship's engine was cracked and the motor was not working.

The captain of the ship was desperate and unable to find anyone on the island that could help him repair the engine. There was no-one on the island at that time that had the skill and knowledge to pull apart the engine to see what was wrong and to then proceed to fix it with spare parts.

The captain was referred to my father. My father was told that the head of the motor had cracked. My father advised he had no idea about motors or boats but realised that the boat was laden with food stuffs including sultanias. He thought this might be a way to secure the sultanias needed to make the Yennitouria.

My father removed the head of the motor and saw that the sea water was getting into it and mixing in with the oil through a large crack. He told the captain he could try to fix the crack in the motor using some of his silver. The captain asked "how much will you charge to fix the motor?"

My father did not want money but opted for some of the sultanias. The captain was reluctant to do this as the boxes of sultanias were sealed and accounted for. My father spent a night mending the crack with the silver he had. He sealed the cracked area which got the engine going again.

The captain was very grateful and he was eventually persuaded to part with 7 x 10kg boxes of sultanias once the engine was fixed!

Two problems solved ... we got to have our Yennitouria in time for the birth and the captain was able to leave port and continue his journey to Italy.

I did not know this story until many years later when I met the late Agapitos Venitis on one of my trips to Kastellorizo.

It just so happened that Venitis, who was 19 years of age at the time, was called upon to help and he was the person who referred the captain to my father and helped my father with the repair.

I never understood how my father did the repair but Venitis explained, "Your father filled the crack with silver!"

Many would know Agapitos as Jack Venitis who ran a restaurant on the harbour front. This restaurant is now known as Κάτι απ'τα παλιά - Old Times Restaurant and run by Komianos Moustakas and Venitis' daughter, Lola.

*Note: Yennitouria - is derived from the Greek word for birth - yenna*



Photo of filigree forks and spoons in filigree container

## A TRAGIC STORY – DEATH IN THE AFTERMATH OF WAR

This is a story about a boy, Andonis Atherinos ('Kalimeris') who was a very good diver and would regularly dive into the harbour to retrieve metal sitting at the bottom of the harbour in order to sell it. There was so much of it in the harbour after the war. It was quite lucrative selling these pieces of metal and all manner of goods found on the sea floor after the war.

**Nick recalls:** "There was a boat tied outside Andonis' father's shop. He used to dive from it into the harbour. He would bring up bullets, plates, glasses, all sorts of things.

A lot of spent cartridges were in the harbour. Andonis would bring up empty cartridges and sell the copper. Savvas Kakas would collect a lot of the metal and fill up boat loads of it and take it to Italy.

On one occasion, I passed by him on the way to do an errand on the harbour front and I greeted him "yiasou Andoni". He was busy making numerous dives into the sea.

When I returned to go back home I passed the boat where Andonis was diving from and I looked for him. He was out of the water and I saw him banging a metal object which had something like a propeller behind it and he was hitting it hard onto the ground to get the metal out of it.

As I was going home through the stenaki and before I reached my house I heard a large explosion. I rushed back down to the harbour and saw Andoni's body all over his father's shop doors. His father had a shop, close to where the bank is today. It so happened that Andoni had detonated an undischarged torpedo. It was 15 May 1947. He was just 19 years old.

They collected whatever they could of his body and left it in the church of St George tou Horaifiou for a day before they buried him.

I was very spooked by this event and I never wanted to visit that church after that."



Andonis Atherinos

## A STORY ABOUT THE DIFFICULTIES AFTER THE WAR – UNUSUAL BARTERS

It is well known that life on Kastellorizo in the years after the end of the war were especially difficult.

The tiles of Kastellorizo were particularly sought after as they were excellent in quality having been made in Marseille, France and in Milan, Italy. There were so many of them as the island had so many houses which unfortunately after the war were no longer standing.

If you take a trip to the mountaintops you will see many broken tiles with the imprints:

Arnaud Etienne, Marseille / Fratelli Allitini, Salonika/ Antoine Sacoman, Marseille

Nick shares his sad memory of seeing desperate people gathering the unbroken tiles and selling them for food.

"I recall so many Kastellorizians would gather the terracotta roof tiles from destroyed homes and fill boat loads with them and send them to Turkey in exchange for goats."



Tile with the imprint Arnaud Etienne, Marseille

## THE REASON FOR THE SLOW UPTAKE OF MOTORS BY SHIP OWNERS.

Kastellorizo was one of the wealthiest islands whilst under Ottoman rule up to 1913. The wealth came from having 112 merchant sailing boats in the harbour. Because Kastellorizo was in such a location its ships helped transport goods around the eastern Mediterranean. Kastellorizo had a lot of privileges under the Turkish flag. The ship owners had the right to go to all of the islands of the Empire and pick up charcoal and transport it to Egypt and other places. In return we would get Egyptian goods. Petrol was still not popular.

The reason that petrol did not take over in Kastellorizo was due to the Kastellorizian women.

All of the women wanted to be "Kapetanises!" If three men got together and merged to buy one big boat under engine who was going to be the Kapetanisa? In those days women ruled the island and that's how the boats were left to be under sail."

*Note: "Kapetanises" refers to being the wife of the Captain of a ship.*



## SEEKING AUTHENTIC KASTELLORIZIAN COSTUMES

The Anthony E. Comninos Foundation is a private charitable foundation established in 2015 aiming to support projects in Greece in the fields of education, health and culture.

The Foundation has been funding several cultural events including two major exhibitions of its philhellenic art collection on Syros island and at the Benaki Museum in Athens. For its upcoming project, the Foundation, in collaboration with

the Annex of the Lyceum Club of Greek Women of Kastellorizo, represented by Constantina Agapitou Crowley, is seeking traditional Kastellorizian costumes. A price can be negotiated for the items of clothing.

The costumes will be donated to the Kastellorizian community and be on permanent display at one of the public cultural spaces offered by the Municipality of Kastellorizo.

Please contact the Foundation for more information & communication

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