

## ΠΡΟΣΚΛΗΣΙΣ ΓΑΜΟΥ.

Ο Κύριος Παπαγιώτης Παπαγιώτης γαμ-  
 βάσει την τιμήν να αναγγέλην ὡς τὸ ἑξῆς  
 ὅτι μὲν Κοινὸν Καστελλορίζου τοὺς γάμους  
 τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ Κασσοτοῦ, τεγουμενοῦ  
 ἀγρίου Κυριακῆς (21<sup>ης</sup> Νοεμβρίου), περὶ τὴν  
 10<sup>ην</sup> ὥραν π.μ. ἐν τῷ Μοναστηρικῷ μας  
 Ναῷ τῶν Ἁγίων Κωνσταντίνου καὶ Ἑλέ-  
 νης, μετὰ τῆς διαποιρέσεως:

Ἀναστασίας Ἐμ. Σταματίου

καὶ παρακαλοῦσα πάντας τοὺς συγγενεῖς, φίλους καὶ γνωστοὺς, ὅπως ἐναριστοῦμενα παρευρεθῶσι καὶ τιμή-  
 σωσιν αὐτοὺς διὰ τῆς ἐντίμου παρουσίας τῶν.

Ἡ παρούσα θεωρηθῆτω καὶ ὡς ἰδιαίτερα πρόσκλησις.

Ο πατήρ  
 Παπαγιώτης Παπαγιώτης

Ἐν Καστελλορίζῳ 21<sup>ης</sup> Νοεμβρίου 1937.



Ο πατήρ  
 Ἐμμανουὴλ Ν. Σταματίου

One of only a few surviving handwritten invitations to a pre-war wedding on Kastellorizo. Following a centuries old practice, invitations like this were posted in the town's main square and extended to all the inhabitants. This beautiful invitation is for the marriage of Apostolos Panagiotou Panegyres and Anastasia Emanuel Stamatiou (or Stamatoglou) which took place on Sunday, 21 November 1937. [Thanks to Elizabeth Backhouse (nee Panegyres) of Perth for making it available to the author.]

## CUSTOMS OF MARRIAGE ON KASTELLORIZO – AN EARLY ACCOUNT, 1878

by Nicholas G Pappas, Sydney

**Achilleas Spyridou Diamantaras** (1856-1930) was undoubtedly Kastellorizo's pre-eminent historian, chronicler and educator. His massive output is unrivalled, both as to its volume and scholarly quality.

Presented here is a translation of what is believed to be among Diamantaras' earliest published writings, a short but compelling account of the rituals of marriage at a time when such customs still reflected the island's as yet unhindered prosperity. Among other things, readers will note that some of the rituals and customs have since evolved, or have been abandoned altogether.

Diamantaras' essay was first published in the Athenian journal **Παρνασσός** in 1878 (at pages 882-886) under the title 'Ἐθιμα του Γάμου εν Μεγίστη (Καστελλορίζω).



*NP: Diamantaras begins his essay by limiting his focus to those customs that are peculiar to the island.*

In describing the wedding rituals of the Kastellorizians, I will omit those customs that are similar to those of various other places, focussing instead on the essential and peculiar customs of the Kastellorizians, but nothing concerning the pre-nuptial betrothal.

*NP: Next, Diamantaras addresses the timing of the wedding event. Eager to find similarities with ancient ritual, he refers to the Γαμήλιον, the seventh month of the Athenian calendar, when most marriages were celebrated in Antiquity.*

The time of year when weddings are celebrated on Kastellorizo is fixed; it is considered an unbreakable tradition that weddings be celebrated in the winter, predominantly in January, just like the ancient Greeks did in the *Gamélion*. The service is always conducted in the church of St Constantine and never at home, except in the case of a second marriage, and always on a Sunday.

*NP: A central feature of the pre-wedding ritual was the agreement between the respective families regarding the dowry to be given and the customary collection of the vótana.*

From the preceding Friday, the visits of relatives and friends take place, when the dowries of the groom and bride are displayed for the guests to see. On Saturday, in the early hours, young boys ascend the mountains and gather pungent

vótana, some of which are used in the washing of the groom and the bride, while others are scattered around the house late in the evening as they 'smoke' the clothes of the groom and the bride with various scented palms to ward off the evil eye. Afterwards, they set a table at which over 30 people are seated and they eat and drink until dawn, at which time the groom is dressed by his friends.

*NP: A description of the bride and groom's procession to the church follows. The custom was that the two families would meet at a pre-determined location on their respective routes. It is noteworthy that gunfire was used to notify the town that the procession (and other key moments of the day) had begun, a custom still to be encountered in parts of Greece and the Near and Middle East.*

Once the groom is dressed and the time has come for the procession to the church, the groom sends his closest relatives to the bride's house, accompanied by a violinist, for the dressing of the bride, while he commences his slow walk to the church. The departure of the groom from his home is announced by considerable rifle fire.

*NP: Mihail Komninos has observed (Tragoúdhia tis Harás, Arravónas kai Gámos sto Kastellórizo, Athens, 1970) that the melody traditionally played by the violinist when accompanying the bride on her walk to church was Giuseppe Verdi's pre-republic national anthem of Egypt which he composed for the opening of the Suez Canal. This may have been a custom imported to the island by those who had worked on the Canal between 1859-1869.*

Estimated to have been taken no later than 1890, this is the earliest known photograph of a wedding on Kastellorizo. Sadly, the names of those pictured have been lost over time, but what is of special interest is the fact that the image pre-dates the Santrapeia School (which was erected between 1902-1903) in front of which nearly all wedding portraits were thereafter taken. Instead, the bridal party and their relatives are gathered outside the former school building (the Astiki Scholi) which can just be seen in the background. Readers will also note that those pictured are using the decorative votsala to assist with their positioning for the photograph. [With appreciation to Evan S Kakulas of Perth for making this historic photograph available to the author.]







This image was taken in 1930 by Sigbjorn Nedland, a Norwegian engineer who lived on the island with his family while overseeing the installation of the new electrical plant and ice works in Pera Meria. The image shows a group of women arriving for a wedding. Noteworthy is the man in the background carrying a cello. [Nedland collection]

Once the relatives of the groom arrive at the bride's house, after well-wishes and hospitality, the dancing commences, each side singing a couplet by way of question and answer on behalf of the bride's family and the groom's family as follows:

NP: In the verses that follow, the blue sections were sung by the groom's side, while the red text was by way of reply from the bride's family.

*The time is blessed, árchontes, if it is your wish,  
For us to take your daughter from your mansion.*

*Welcome to our symbmethéri at this beautiful moment,  
Just like Holy Easter, as good as Hristós Anésti.*

*The blessed time has come, the blessed moment,  
For a golden crown to be placed upon our daughter.*

*Our daughter, our kanelloú, who is well brought-up,  
Look after her well, just as she was raised.*

NP: Of all the spices, cinnamon (kanélla) was the most treasured in the 19th century, hence the wording above.

*The daughter we give you isn't from the streets,  
She is of good stock, from the upper classes.*

NP: I have translated 'kousouláta' here as 'upper classes', though that doesn't perfectly capture the underlying meaning. The word literally means 'consulates', in other words from the lofty world of diplomats.

*The daughter you give to us who is from the upper classes,  
We will place her in our principate.*

*The bride is as perfect as a large round mushroom,  
Oh, bless the eyes of the groom for choosing such a bride!*

*In these tall houses, from where one can see the kástro,  
We are receiving a groom who resembles Tramountána's star.*

NP: The above reference to Kastellorizo's crusader castle, which was not visible from many sections of the dense town, is reflective of the fact that it was considered a sign of good fortune (and prosperity) if one could see the castle from one's home. The Tramountána (from the Italian 'tramontana'- literally 'between the mountains') is the northerly wind in the Mediterranean. The 'star of Tramountána' is the north polar star which was a reference point for navigators.

*Open the churches and light the candles,  
Because our bride is ascending [ie to the church] with her  
two golden koumbáres.*

Many more songs are sung after the dancing ends, and while the bride is dressed, they stand in a circle around her, holding hands and singing the following:

*Let the blessing of your mother and your father be given,  
And those of your great grandfather and your godfather!*

*The trees were in blossom when you were born,  
And all the birds in the sky they too were singing sweetly.*

*What was your mother eating when she carried you?  
Because she gave birth to the sun and the moon!*

*Who was the mother who bore you, and from which family  
is your father?*

*And who was the godparent who baptised you and gave  
you such grace?*



Once the bride is dressed in her unusual and unique outfit, they bring her forward to dance, whereupon they sing the following song:

*My golden archontopóula,  
Time to stop living your life alone.*

*But how do I stop living alone?  
When my mother has such a price on me,  
And my father even more,  
And because of my worth,  
They have made for me a golden cage,  
And they have sent me to Venice.*

NP: In a later article from 1904, Diamantaras adds the following lines to this song: '...to learn to read and write, but I learned nothing once love came my way.'

Afterwards, as they lead her to the church, the young men sing loudly the following song:

*[Bride:] Move out of my way, pallikári,  
From the path that I will take,  
And off you go to seek out,  
A wealthy daughter for yourself.*

*[All:] I will prepare for you,  
Your own wedding,  
Now that I have found the time.*

*[Young men:] I go back and I gaze at her,  
I go to her side and I speak to her,  
And I say to her stand up,  
Don't let me, the 'xéno', die,  
Your pitiful slave,  
My fate sealed,  
By your boundless beauty*

NP: Diamantaras next deals with one of the more unusual customs. Common throughout the Near East, the custom of the bride's head and torso being completely concealed appears to have persisted on Kastellorizo until at least the 1830s. Writing in 1836, the French traveller Henri Cornille described a Kastellorizian bride in the following terms: 'The bride was concealed under a broad cloth. Two women escorted her as though they were leading a blind person.' (Souvenirs d'Orient, Paris 1836).

Just a few years ago, the custom was to escort the bride to the church covered from head to toe in a gold-threaded cloth, but this custom has been replaced by dull new trends. The arrival and departure of the bridal couple from the church is greeted by more rifle fire.

NP: In the next section, Diamantaras refers to the bride's 'kantoúni'. The kantoúni (cognate with the English word 'canton') was a small, enclosed corner of the sala (formal lounge room) reserved for the bride to receive her first guests.

After the service, the groom leads his bride to his home together with his relatives and friends, but before she enters they close the doors exclaiming to her 'táxe', and she replies 'tázei', by which she 'promises' various sweets or other food. Having entered, they escort her to a corner of the house (known as the kantoúni from which we have the saying 'shy like a bride in her kantoúni') from where she distributes cubes of sugar.

The bride's parents and friends do not come with her to the groom's house, but return first to their family home where they dance while singing the following couplets:

*They have taken our daughter and our hearts are scorched,  
And the boiling pot remains on its trivet.*

*They have taken away our sun and our moon,  
And our house has become like a conquered land.*

A member of the French naval contingent took this unusual photograph in 1918. It captures the moment a new bride is being escorted to church accompanied by her two koumbares and other female family members. [collection of Jacques Fichou]





and many other songs by which they express their sadness that their daughter has left them. Later, at the groom's home, they dance while singing as follows:

*Come, let us dance in the marital home,  
From where we will see the Morning and Evening Stars.*

whereupon the bride and groom also dance:

*How beautiful you look together as one,  
Like cypress seeds in a garden.*

*May this couple, which has become one at St Constantine,  
Be blessed by Christ and Panaghia of Tinos!*

And, as an unmarried male then leads the dance, they sing:

*He who leads the dance, to his good health and happiness,  
May this marriage be strong and may he also find a good match.*

and many others which I will publish at another time with a selection of other popular songs. The dancing and songs continue until the evening when they say the following:

*Hey, it's time for us to leave because the groom is getting sleepy,  
And the bride in her kantoúni cries and sighs.*

*NP: The above couplet, with its bawdy undertone, would traditionally elicit considerable laughter.*

And they depart, leaving behind the tiring groom and the sighing bride, as the couplet goes.

*NP: Diamantaras next deals with the delicate issue of the bride's chastity.*

Many years ago, the groom proclaimed the chastity of his bride by gunfire, but this custom has ceased in favour of the well-known custom that exists in many other parts of Greece by which the virginity of the bride is confirmed.

On the following day, Monday, the relatives and friends of the couple visit the couple and 'throw' gifts at the bride. These are always in the form of gold coins of many types, which they drop into a large cup from which the bride serves them refreshments. These gifts are written down because the groom is obliged to reciprocate in equal measure when the guest marries, should he be single, or at the wedding of his children.

On the Wednesday, they bring the bride's dowry to the groom's home and the celebrations often continue until the following Sunday.

❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖

A remarkable image, taken by a visiting American journalist, showing a bride being escorted to church on Sunday, 29 October 1939. The two priests are, from left, Vartholomeos Pissas and Konstandinos Papastefanou. Behind them walks the bride, Aikaterini Dimitriou Stavrianou (or 'Ble') accompanied by her brother at left, and her mother, Anna (nee Spyridou), at right. The bride's father, Dimitrios, is concealed by one of the priests. The bride was married to Ioannis Stefanou Kotzias from Brazil later that day and the couple swiftly migrated to Florianopolis where they lived out the rest of their lives. [Author's collection].





# The Natural History of Kastellorizo: Summer

## The Snakes of Kastellorizo

Kastellorizo Natural History Group

Robert Moorhead is a keen amateur naturalist and has been coming to Kastellorizo for over 20 years. He has spent the last 2 years on the island working remotely due to Covid and has had the privilege of seeing the environment through the seasons. Together with his wife Michele, who has a keen interest in flora and insects, he started the Kastellorizo Natural History Group (KNHG) to fill the gap in available environmental information.

The aim of the KNHG is to highlight and document the unique flora, fauna, and environment of Kastellorizo with many observations available on the KNHG Facebook and Instagram pages. A scientific catalogue of the flora & fauna of Kastellorizo is also being compiled on the citizen science database iNaturalist.com, which he hopes to publish as a field guide.

Robert and his family are very keen to make Kastellorizo more sustainable and to preserve its unique and fragile environment. Everyone is invited to join the KNHG and contribute photos and observations, with many locals and residents currently sharing unusual sightings.

KNHG has been invited to contribute a series of short articles to Filia, highlighting an aspect of Kastellorizo Natural History and the season. It's Summer, so let's talk about snakes.

### Summer & Snakes on Kastellorizo

Kastellorizo has hot and dry summers with a karst (eroded) limestone geography and typical Mediterranean Phrygana (Greek Φρύγανα – low scrubland with annual summer drought) that is perfect for reptiles. According to Kalaentzis et al, Herpetofauna of Kastellorizo, 2018, there are 7 species of snake and 9 species of lizard found on the Island. They are commonly encountered around the village and across the island and are important to the local ecology.

I am often asked whether dangerous snakes inhabit the island. The answer, that may surprise our Australian audience, is that there are no confirmed dangerous snakes. We do have two confirmed species of venomous snake; however, they pose no threat to humans.

The unconfirmed species is the Ottoman Viper (*Montivipera xanthina*) which grows up to 1.3m and is venomous, with mild to severe local effects including shock & coagulopathy, up to 1.3m. Its presence on Kastellorizo is in doubt, and Kalaentzis 2018 did not include it in his verified list of species. It is, however, a common species found throughout the Mediterranean including Greece and the Aegean islands, though often confused with the Asian Racer. Personally, I have not seen one and suspect our forebears may have hunted them to extinction.

Below is a summary of the confirmed species on the island:

- Eurasian Blind Snake (*Xerotyphlops vermicularis*) – harmless, not poisonous, tiny snake
- Large Whip Snake (*Dolichophis jugularis*) – harmless, not poisonous, up to 3m length. Note can be aggressive if threatened. Very useful for rodent control.
- Ring-headed Dwarf Snake (*Eirenis modestus*) – harmless, not poisonous, up to 60 cm.

- Asian Racer (Coin-marked) Snake (*Hemorrhois nummifer*) – harmless, not poisonous, up to 1.5m
- Dahl's Whip Snake (*Platyceps najadun*) – harmless, not poisonous up to 1.0m
- European Cat Snake (*Telescopus fallax*) – no threat, mildly venomous, rarely injects venom in defensive biting, minor pain & swelling, up to 1.2m.
- Eastern Montpellier Snake (*Malpolon insignitus*) – no threat, mildly venomous, rarely injects venom in defensive biting, up to 2.0m.

Unfortunately, it is common for the locals to kill snakes upon sight. Many of my observations have been of dead snakes. They are particularly susceptible to roadkill. As some farms on Kastellorizo are now working, snakes are prized for their fantastic rodent control abilities, though there have been some incidents of egg and chick theft!

As with all wild animals, I encourage everyone to treat all snakes as potentially dangerous and to keep your distance! If you have any photos of any flora and fauna please share with KNHG.

Photo credits: Robert Moorhead & Stergos Tholeonos

For more information on the natural history of Kastellorizo, please follow KNHG on Facebook: Kastellorizo Natural History Group | Facebook and Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/kazinhg/> and iNaturalist: Observations · iNaturalist. Share your photos and natural history observations and contribute to the documentation and preservation of our unique environment.

ISLAND  
MARKET

CANTEEN

PREPARED BY  
*Kailis*  
FISH MARKET CAFE  
HARBOURSIDE FREMANTLE  
"We sell the freshest fish in the sea."  
SINCE 1920

SHORE  
HOUSE

khg.

kailis hospitality group.

[kailis.com](http://kailis.com)

Proudly sponsored by the Victor George Kailis Family

