



A section of the historic document from 1637 that records the construction and dedication of the church that preceded the current church of St George. As can be seen here, at the top of the document are small representations of, from left to right, Saints Nicholas, George and Marina (General National Archives, Athens).

AYIOS YEÓRGIOS TOU HORAFIOÚ & ITS RETURN TO SPLENDOUR

By Nick Pappas, Sydney

The restoration and highly anticipated re-opening on Kastellorizo of the church of *Ayios Yeórgios tou Horaíou* (also known, among other names, as *tou Louká* in honour of one of its founding benefactors, **Loukás Santrapés**) provides us with cause to reflect upon the interesting history of this ambitious edifice. Inspired by the generosity of **Athanasios & Marina Martinos**, two modern benefactors who have funded the church's extensive restoration, this article looks at what preceded it, the circumstances of its construction in the first decade of the 20th century, and its gradual abandonment and decay, that is until the timely intervention of the Martinos family.

The earliest records of a church on this spot in the *Horáfi* (literally 'fields' because they were outside the town proper, at least until the 18th century) are contemporaneous with the prior church's foundation. A surviving inscription to be found in the island's archaeological museum and an extant document held in Greece's national archives, both of which date from 1637, tell us that a church was built in that year to replace an even older basilica from the early Christian centuries, the details of which are scanty.

We do know, however, that the 17th century church was built on the initiative of a local priest by the name **Kyriakos Malaxós** who was assisted by locals **Hatzis Haritos Reizis** and **Pavlis Reizis**.¹

At this time, this church was known as *Ayios Yeórgios tou Malaxoú* in honour of its founding priest. Another name for it was *Ayios Yeórgios tou Psifioú*, possibly a reference to the Christian cemetery which was then adjacent to it. This had functioned here for many centuries until its gradual removal to *Mikró Nifti* in the first decade of the 20th century. Indeed, the new church's construction appears to have hastened the already overcrowded cemetery's relocation. All that remains of the old cemetery today is its adjacent *ostothýke* (or *ostofylákeio* – bone repository) which houses the remains of the exhumed.²

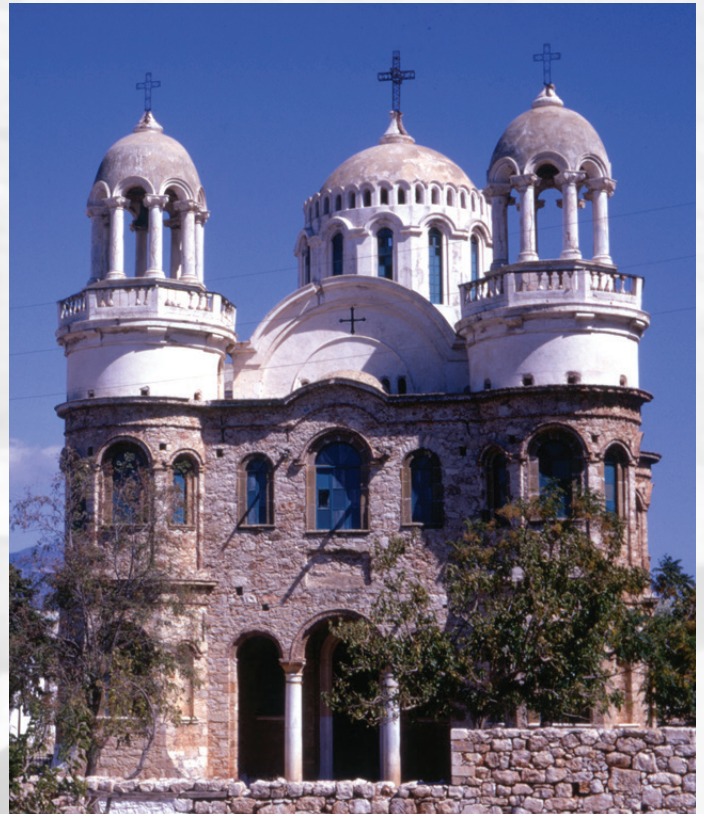
It is interesting to note at this point that the 17th century church was consecrated as a *stavropégion*, that is a church under the direct ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople, modern Istanbul. This gave the church an elevated status within the Orthodox world. The island's great chronicler, **Achilleas Diamantáras**, also tells us that among the former church's relics was a venerated and highly valuable gold plate from the Crusader period which had at its centre a representation of St George with accompanying Latin characters.³

Diamantáras' writings confirm that, by the first decade of the 20th century, the church built almost 300 years earlier had fallen into considerable disrepair. This is corroborated by evidence we have of

AYIOS YEÓRGIOS TOU HORAFIOÚ (CONT.)



One of the few surviving photographs of Loukás Santrapés from c. 1903 (from N. Nikitaridhes, *To Ellinikó Káiro*, Athens 2022)



The church photographed in 1968 by which time it had fallen into serious disrepair (courtesy Angelo Hatsaturis).

applications made in May 1906 to the Ottoman Sultan for the issue of a licence for its complete demolition and for the erection of a new, grander church to be funded by **Loukas & Anastasia Santrapés** of Cairo. The design for the new church was entrusted to a noted Samian architect, **Panos Diakostamátis**, whose vision was possibly informed by a desire to build an imposing church as a counterpoint to the vaulted design of the cathedral of Saints Constantine & Helene just across the square.

Santrapés had already won favour at the Sublime Porte with a pledge of 50 Ottoman pounds towards the construction of a school for the 50 or so Turkish children living on the island. It is therefore hardly surprising that the licence for the erection of the new church was swiftly issued in July 1906 and construction started soon thereafter under the direction of Diakostamátis himself. The foundation stone was laid on 28 September 1906 and, by February 1909, the island's newsletter, *Filia*, was reporting that the works were nearing completion, a rapid achievement given the scale of the building and the limitations of the time.

It had not assisted that the works were suspended in late October 1908 with the untimely passing of Diakostamátis himself, brought on by a serious bout of consumption. Anastasia Santrapé was so moved that she relocated to the island from Cairo for the last months of construction and took on the supervisory role herself, with the aim of consecrating the church by Easter 1909, a feat she was able to achieve.

The consecration service was held amidst considerable fanfare. Loukas & Anastasia were present for the event, as were the Metropolitan from Antalya, Konstandinos, the island's Ottoman dignitaries and representatives of the Greek communities of Antifilo, Kalamaki, Finika & Myra. All marvelled at the scale of the new church, its imposing dome with an icon of Christ at its centre,

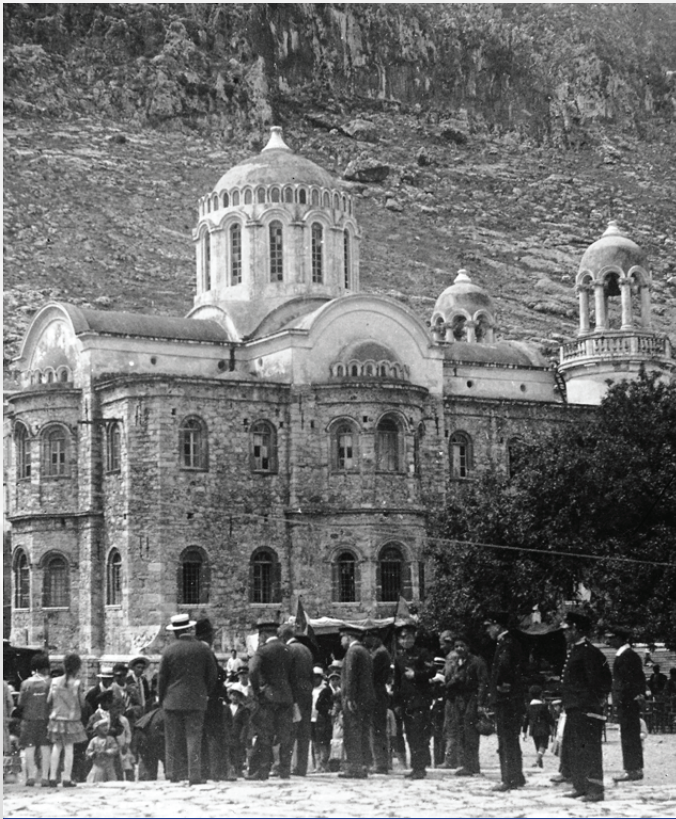
and the exquisite marble craftsmanship of the bishop's throne, the pulpit (*ámvon*) and the *iconostásis* (the screen dividing the sanctuary from the congregation) which, unusually, incorporated a second pulpit directly above the holy gate (*ierá píli* - the priest's entrance to the sanctuary).

With the consecration complete, weekly religious services began in mid 1909, just as tensions on the island were on the rise. The previous year, the Young Turks had overthrown the established order within the Ottoman Empire on the promise of protection of the privileges enjoyed for centuries by the Empire's various ethnic minorities, particularly in those islands lying along the Anatolian littoral. But in October 1909, word reached Kastellorizo that the privileges (the most important of which were exemptions from taxation and conscription) were to be abolished and this produced considerable unease, particularly among young males, many of whom left the island for good at precisely this time.

The construction of the church of *Ayios Yeórgios tou Horafioú* was to be among the last of the major infrastructure projects on the island until the Italian period. Kastellorizo's other major benefactor, **Nikolaos Stamatiou**, had died in 1905, while Santrapés himself was to pass away a mere two years after the church's opening.³ Between them, they had funded most of the projects on the island. Stamatiou had funded the construction of the abattoirs, the infants' school in *Pigádhia* and the *ostothýke* (ossuary), while Santrapés' major projects had included the boys' school, the Turkish school and now the new church in the *Horáfia*. These were benefactors who would prove impossible to replace.

When word of Santrapés sudden death reached Kastellorizo, a moving memorial service was held in the new church for the repose of his soul and it was resolved to seek the return of the deceased's bones so that they may be interred in a special place outside the

AYIOS YEÓRGIOS TOU HORAFIOÚ (CONT.)



This Italian photograph from Easter 1925 shows the unrendered state of the main body of the church as designed by architect Panos Diakostámis (author's collection).



Photos of the completed exterior and interior of the church following its recent restoration (courtesy Chrissie Verevis).

church he had built.⁵ Only a mere two months later, Metropolitan Konstandinos, while visiting the island, also died suddenly (on 18 January 1912) in what was seen by many as an omen of hard times to come. In a short space of time the islanders had lost their two greatest benefactors, and now their local hierarch had died while visiting the island. Against a background of rising tensions, many attributed these calamities to a *katára* (curse) that had befallen their island.

The Metropolitan was to lie in state in Santrapés' new church for two days as the entire population filed passed in hushed silence. In a break from the island's strict moral code, even the island's pubescent females were permitted to emerge from their homes in the darkness of night to pay their respects to the deceased hierarch. *Filia* noted that all present agreed that this was undoubtedly the largest outpouring of communal grief ever seen on the island. And in an unusual gesture, the Metropolitan was laid to rest within the new church in a grave towards the rear of the nave. It is still there today, covered by an unadorned concrete slab.⁶

While never completed, the church was in regular use for the next three decades. To this day (and one hopes it has been securely preserved), graffiti left by altar boys in the 1920s and 1930s is still to be found on the rear of the moveable screen that closed the view of the sanctuary from the nave. And contemporaneous church records held by a private collector in Rhodes reveal the details of the daily functioning of the church. But in the years that followed the Second World War, the ambitious church fell into serious decay as community priorities lay elsewhere, a far cry from what Loukas & Anastasia could have ever imagined. Thanks to new benefactors Athanasios and Marina Martinou, the church's story at last has its happy ending.⁷



¹ Interestingly, the header of this document bears three small representations of Saints Nikolaos, Yeórgios and Marina. This may be a reference to the fact that churches dedicated to these saints were, at that time, the three places of Christian worship on the island. The 16th century church of Ayios Nikólaos is located in Kávos below the castle and, while no trace of this Ayia Marina exists, the document indicates that a church dedicated to Ayia Marina was located nearby in the Horáfia. The latter is not to be confused with the chapel dedicated to Ayia Marina on the shoulder of the Paleócastro which is of 19th century construction.

² Traces of the former cemetery were visible in the area in front of the main entrance of the new church well into the 20th century. Indeed, during the harsh bombardments of the First World War, a number of burials took

place here given the exposed position of the new cemetery when viewed from the opposite coastline.

³ It is well-attested that some Ottoman Turks venerated St George and equated him with their own 'saint', Hidirillez. For this reason, it has been suggested that the Ottoman authorities may have adopted a more tolerant view towards churches dedicated to St George. In Kastellorizo alone there are two large churches, two smaller chapels and one monastery all dedicated to St George.

⁴ Loukás Santrapés died in Athens on 14 November 1911 aged 59. The sense of loss felt within the island community on his passing is palpable from surviving records.

⁵ This memorial was erected some years later outside the northern face of the church and bears a dedication from Anastasia to her departed husband. The memorial has been restored to its original design as part of the recent works.

⁶ The Metropolitan's unadorned grave is not the only such memorial within the church. In the altar, one will also find at least four gravestones that were transferred from the adjoining cemetery. These are the gravestones of **Evangelia Vasiliou Savva** (d. 1883), **Nikolaos Economides** (d. 1882), **Maria H'Yeorgiou Atherinou** (d. 1886) and the priest **Dimitrios Yeorgiou Economou** (d. 1856).

⁷ The author is grateful to architect and restorer Fotini Halvantzí for reviewing an earlier draft of this article.



Escape to Porta Rossa

by Vasiliki Nihass-Bogiatzis OAM, Canberra

Vasiliki hails from the Tourkomanoli (Margaritis) family of Kastellorizo. She has always loved the Arts, having been engaged at both a government policy and practical level. Most recently she completed a decade, with 8 years as Chair of M16 Artspace, a prominent community arts space in Canberra boasting 30 artist studios and 3 exhibition galleries. She currently enjoys being a guide at the National Gallery of Art in Canberra. Vasiliki has been honoured with an OAM for her contribution to the Arts and Cultural Heritage.

Once upon a time there was a feature film called *Mediterraneo* with its dedication, in part, 'to those seeking to escape'. The film was set on the tiny island of Kastellorizo, a dot of a rock in the Eastern Mediterranean. The island's heartbreaking beauty cast a spell over visiting mortals, offering them an infinite capacity for transformation and reinvention.

Kastellorizo has continued for many to be a place of the imagination, a place where all things are possible, a place over which a net of creativity can be thrown. It opens up spaces for inspiration, exploration, and playful collaboration.

It is unsurprising then, that its beauty and potential for creativity seduced Silvia Fiorucci. Silvia is an art collector extraordinaire, arts producer and arts philanthropist, born in Rome and now living between Monaco, Rome and Kastellorizo. Having grown up surrounded by Old Masters, she took an alternative route to finding

her expressive self - engaging deeply with contemporary art. This driving passion has meant living life in close proximity with artists. She engages deeply in an artistic life dedicated to multiple arts platforms, artist communities and she generously facilitates artistic collaborations.

Silvia conceived of, and produced 4Rooms, Porta Rossa as an arts project to transform a traditional 4 roomed, 3 storey island house in the heart of Greece's remote Kastellorizo. The house was previously lived in by generations of sponge diving merchants. Silvia first undertook basic renovation to ensure the integrity of the house, preserving its original structure and architectural characteristics, thus creating a ready canvas for the successful designers.

Porta Rossa is one of 3 residences owned by Silvia Fiorucci's Società delle Api, an independent, not for profit organisation, modelled on the industrious and collaborative nature of the beehive. The Società supports a continuous program of art residencies throughout the year. Geographically it covers Grasse, Rome and Kastellorizo. Each residence is as unique in its physical, cultural and emotional context as in its potential for art making.

The commissioning body of the Società then invited a select group of 12 international designers to bid for renovating Porta Rossa's 4 spaces. They were asked to honour the architectural, social and historic integrity of the house and its narrative while entering into



Benefactor Sylvia Fiorucci at back door

dialogue with contemporary, sustainably based international design practice. Designers were encouraged to invite dialogue and collaboration with other colleagues and local artisans, exchanging expertise in the context of Mediterranean culture, such as the use of eco-responsible materials and techniques, and traditional crafts practices.

That commissioning body included the project's two curators. Cristiano Raimondi was the overarching curator and is responsible for Silvia's private art collection and related initiatives as well as being Vice President of Società Delle Api. He worked closely with Annalisa Rosso, an acclaimed international design expert who co-founded her own Milan based agency, Mr Lawrence, and whose past collaborations included Vogue Living Australia, Elle Decor and AD. Annalisa had specific curatorial responsibility for the 4Rooms, Porta Rossa project.

And so it was that artful design, responsible building practice and chromatic genius came together to create the eminently desirable, liveable spaces of Porta Rossa. The awarded artists were, Studio Brynjar & Veronika, Phanos Kyriacou, UND.studio and Julie Richoz. The project to design the common areas, located on the ground floor of the "Porta Rossa", was entrusted to the previously awarded Superpoly.

Porta Rossa opened its double red doors in late September 2022, allowing the local community a glimpse inside the imaginarium of a traditional island house. It offered a portal into a rare design fantasy and was available publicly for only a brief instant in time.

The red doors opened onto many wonders. There was the dining table which doubled as a paddle board, with a glossy turquoise under panel; its paddle doubling as a mirror. Purple, indigo, yellow and emerald lobster pots doubled as lights while a black and white polka dot bathroom came complete with a pull down cord to capture international radio signals. As if not enough, the balcony was a Calder like sculpture gallery while a sculpted brushed steel staircase culminated in a mezzanine with double bed. My personal favourite was the moulded kitchen, resplendent with images of swimming fishies as if on their way to dinner.

However, the bathroom with its yellow toilet, moulded purple and emerald spotted shower, its ceramic fantasy toilet brush and swinging yellow toilet holders is exactly what I'd like my next bathroom to look like. Shame then that to put all the bespoke pieces in place, the entire rear balcony at the back of the house had to be taken apart and then reassembled after all the fixtures had gone up three storeys on a rope pulley system!

On second thoughts, maybe I fell most in love with the dinky coffee table, with bookshelf below, looking for all the world like a perfectly crafted, polished timber miniature boat. It had been built to

specifications by master boat builders in Rhodes and is able to be floated on the harbour. Meanwhile, the ultimate backdrop to a creative life had to have been the walls representing a becalmed sea. Layer upon layer, upon layer of paint achieved the exact same turquoise and indigo as the nearby Mediterranean view.

Porta Rossa is a testament to the collaborative industry and achievement of the beehive. We were fortunate that both participating artists and interested locals were able to share the only publicly lived moments that the house will experience. As the doors closed on this brief exhibition, the life of the house became once again private. It will open again in the future but only to host a series of artist residencies across multiple arts disciplines yet to be determined.

As the red doors closed behind me, the house closed in on its secret world. What red doors? Perhaps I had just dreamed the house. Perhaps this tiny far flung rock in the eastern Mediterranean is a figment of our own making and a conspiratorial outcome of our collective imaginations. Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps. All things are possible when "the supernatural is very natural." (Studio Brynjar & Veronika).

Nature and art are a formidable partnership. Porta Rossa offers a warm, welcoming, quirky space and those fortunate enough to secure a residency there will undoubtedly find their Muses. The afternoon I visited, the house brought together the old and the new to engage in respectful Socratic dialogue. I'm glad to have dreamed it awhile.

Privileged to have escaped to Kastellorizo.



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The Natural History of Kastellorizo

by Robert Moorhead

A Wildflower Calendar

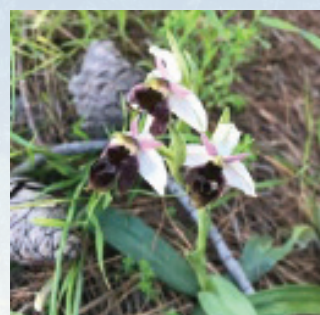
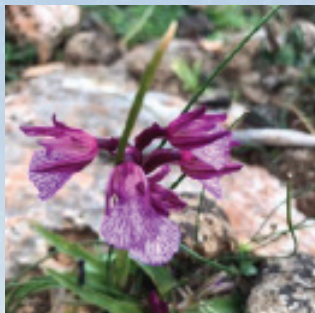
The last two years has given us the opportunity to see the island's flora across the seasons. In this issue we will discover some of the flowers, both rare and common, that you can find throughout the year on the island. These flowers are native unless otherwise noted.

January



Branched Asphodel (*Asphodelus ramosus*) is found in open fields and is thought to be Homer's asphodel of the underworld.

February



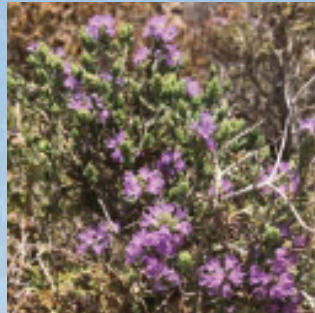
Orchids are found across the island in shaded, moist and protected places. Here we have the Pink-butterfly Orchid (*Anacamptis papilionacea*) and an endangered Rhodian Horseshoe Orchid (*Orphys argolica lucis*)

March



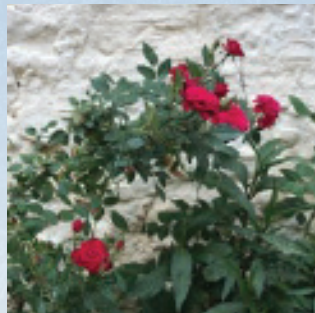
Common poppies (*Papaver rhoeas*) start to bloom on the road verges and are stunning around the Paleocastro.

April



In warm years, the Oregano (*Thymbra capitata*) flowers early adding its lovely purple hue to the mountain.

May



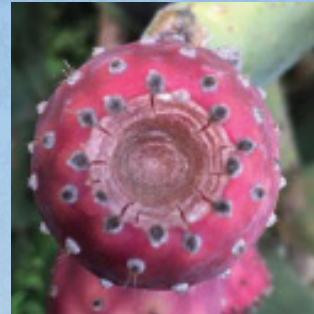
Kazi is ideal for roses with the ancient Gallica varieties traditionally grown. They will flower again in Autumn if the weather and rain permits.

June



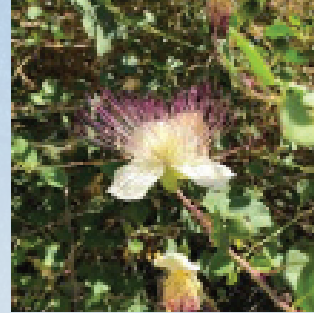
You can also see fields of Garland Daisy (*Glebionis coronaria*) in protected areas like Pitsonis Ambelli.

July



The Prickly Pear (*Opuntia ssp*) grows readily on the island with its fruit a local delicacy. The plant was introduced from the Americas.

August



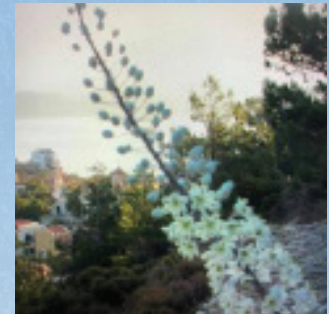
The Capers bush flower (*Capparis spinosa*) is found around the village, near the sea. The leaves are picked and pickled – delicious on a green salad.

September



After the first rains, we are rewarded with the Large-leaved Autumn Crocus (*Colchicum macrophyllum*). You see them readily beside the St George steps.

October



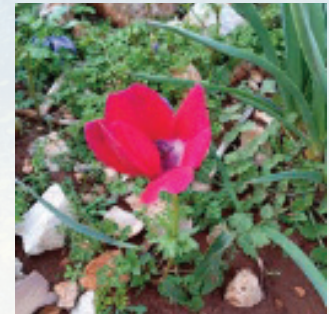
With the rain, next comes the beautiful Sea Squills (*Drimia aphylla*) on the rocky slopes.

November



In the protected areas we now get the spectacular Bunch-flowered Daffodil (*Narcissus tazetta*) – they are best on the Matsos Ambelli (no goats!).

December



The displays of the Poppy Anemone (*Anemone coronaria*) are lovely in protected places.

This is just a small selection of the wildflowers found on Kastellorizo. Unfortunately, the overgrazing on the mountain means that you have to hunt amongst the rocks or visit the protected farms to get the best experience. I dream of a future where half of Kastellorizo's land and waters are conservation areas and the wildflowers can bloom in peace.

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