



Male and female school students and teaching staff pose on the steps of the Santrapeia in 1914.

Education on Kastellorizo by Nicholas Pappas, Sydney From the 19th century until WWII - Part 1

1. Introduction

Greek communities, from the islands of the Ionian Sea to the landlocked towns of eastern Anatolia and the coastal settlements of the Black Sea and the Near East, traditionally placed considerable emphasis on the value of education. Often driven by so-called *morfoméni* in each community - those who had ventured afar for further education to places like Smyrna, Constantinople, Genova or even Paris - childhood education as a means to adult prosperity and self-fulfilment was a well-developed ideal in these communities from well before the Greek revolution. This yearning knew no territorial bounds and penetrated the furthest reaches of Hellenism across the Ottoman Empire and beyond.

Indeed, the more remote a centre of Hellenism was, the greater the desire for Greek education usually became, often

assisted by a local or expatriate benefactor whose name would be commemorated in a school's name or town square. To support the education of the young, to make them proud of their Hellenic past, was the greatest gift a budding donor could make to his or her community. To be educated meant not only to be enriched and fortified for life's challenges, but also brought with it a tangible connection to Greece's rich past through *katharévousa*, the older form of Greek which was the language of instruction. As **Adamantios Korais** (1748-1833), the champion of the purity of the Greek form, wrote, 'the character of an entire nation is known by its language'. Thus, education, and with it literacy, was not only seen as a passport to knowledge, but also as a reaffirmation of one's Hellenism. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that education was especially valued by the Greeks living in the urbanised outposts of the Ottoman Empire.

2. The Ottoman years

Education on Kastellorizo after the Greek revolution followed the general trajectory of educational instruction across the Greek-speaking world. Admittedly, it was overlaid by the imprint of the Ottomans, which was largely non-invasive due to the liberality of the Empire in matters of religion and education. And despite continual foreign occupation until World War Two, it was not until the closing years of Italian fascist rule in the between 1937-1943 that this changed to any material degree. By and large, education on Kastellorizo, despite a continuous foreign occupier's presence and influence, remained essentially a Hellenic affair.

If Korai's had a local parallel, it was **Emanuel Ioannou Papaioakeim 'Kisthinios'** (1810-1882), a pioneer of education not only on his native Kastellorizo, but also in the nascent Greek administration of **Ioannis Capodistrias**, Greece's first post-revolutionary governor. Kisthinios was taught on Kastellorizo in the second decade of the 19th century. We know this from **Achilleas Diamantaras**, the island's later headmaster and chronicler who wrote that Kisthinios received his education before the Greek revolution from Symian teacher **Yeorgios Angelides** at Kastellorizo's then school which stood somewhere at the base of the island's main harbour. Unfortunately, we know little more about the island's first recorded school, or indeed about Angelides himself.

We do know more, though, about Kisthinios. His surname was certainly not 'Kisthinios', a nickname given to him (or possibly given to himself) at a time when it was believed that Kastellorizo's ancient appellation was 'Kisthene' in reliance on the ancient geographer Strabo. Strabo was wrong, but the name stuck and the name has existed ever since among his descendants. Together with his compatriots, Kisthinios was compelled to evacuate the island after revolution broke out in 1821 and he settled first in Karpathos, but then moved to Amorgos, Syros and finally Kythera where he completed his education in 1826. He then obtained work in Sternitsa in the Peloponnese where he remained until Governor Capodistrias transferred him to Tripoli in March 1829 as the first teacher appointed by the new government in the liberated territory. The school building he served in was a rudimentary structure, but Capodistrias was sufficiently moved when he visited with revolutionary hero **Theodoros Kolokotronis** that he honoured Kisthinios with the highest award of the young nation.

Evidence of education on Kastellorizo in the 19th century is scant until the arrival in 1869 of **Petros Ioannou Zografos** whose records of his educational instruction at the island's male primary school (*Elliniki Scholí* –renamed *Astiki Scholí* from 1893) have miraculously survived. Zografos taught on the island between 1869-71 and again between 1875-79, before settling on Andros for the rest of his teaching career. His handwritten journal of enrolments (*mathitológion*) for the years 1876-77 lists 235 male students aged between 5 and 13 ranked by four parishes (*Ayios Konstandinos, Ayios Yeorgios tou Pigadhiou, Ayios Nikolaos, Ayios Merkourios*) with broad subjects ranging from reading, writing, arithmetic and grammar.

The first recorded benefactor of education on Kastellorizo was a wealthy merchant from Symi named **Mihail Dimitriou Minglis** who had settled on the island in the 1860s and, in 1881, funded the construction of a small private school.



The inscription that records the founding of a school in the *Horáfiá* by Mihail Minglis in 1881 and its reconstruction in 1902 by benefactors Malaxos & Chryse Spyrides as a residence for the Metropolitan.

(All photographs are from the author's collection unless otherwise indicated.)

Minglis was a noted trader and his ambitious mercantile activity, predominantly in Anatolian timber with commercial centres as distant as Trieste and Marseilles, is well-documented. Minglis' school was located in the *Horáfiá*, in a small building that stood at the northern end of today's *Parthenagogeíon*. An inscription still exists recording Minglis' generosity, and he was honoured with the rank of 'first great benefactor of the schools' on a commemorative board that survives to this day. Minglis' private school operated until at least 1893 when the Ottoman regime officially registered the municipal *Astiki Scholí*, the island's public school, as the only authorised educational institution for males on Kastellorizo.

But there appear to have been other private schools that operated in this period. From at least 1885, the small school of '**Papadimitri**' operated in a hitherto unknown location in the *Pera Meriá* precinct. This was probably established by priest **Dimitrios Economou** and was more akin to a place of private tutorship for children of parents who sought more intimate instruction. There are also other private 'schools' referenced in various archival documents including '**Artémaina's**' and '**Scholí Spýrou**'; the first was a small infants and primary school run by teacher **Aikaterini Artemiou** until sometime prior to her death in 1907, while the second was a private 'college' headed by teacher **Spyros Diamantaras**, a nephew of Achilleas. There was also the obscure '**Vaíttena's**', which was operated by a family from Hydra. By 1905, these smaller, private schools had vanished following an Ottoman ban in 1902 against private instruction (a move supported by the local municipality) and the gradual expansion of the island's educational facilities, as we will now examine.

As early as 1893, **Achilleas Diamantaras** had publicly bemoaned the state of Kastellorizo's small and rundown boys' and girls' schools. Like its male counterpart, the then *Parthenagogeíon* was a much smaller building than today's structure, situated directly opposite the *Astiki Scholí*. In an oration published in Alexandria in December, Diamantaras was scathing about the general lack of care of, and concern for, educational facilities on the island. His intention, without doubt, was to encourage wealthy expatriates based in Egypt to give back to their island in the Hellenic tradition of philanthropy. He did not mince his words:

But do we actually have schools, dear compatriots? You could call these buildings anything but schools! Imagine 250 or more male students crammed into their one and only school comprising just two classrooms! Imagine 160 or more female students huddled in the one and only Parthenagogeíon and think about the moral and intellectual damage, let alone the health dangers of having so many students squashed together.

Our island, dear compatriots, is headed towards a cliff. Our island has become the embarrassment of nearby islands and towns. And it is even worse; for we are the cause of this pity because we are overflowing with wild passions and grievances and we are indifferent to the state of our island because, like the blind, we cannot distinguish virtue and ability from evil and incompetence.

Diamantaras was especially critical about the disregard for the educational needs of young females on the island which he saw as an issue of paramount priority. Admittedly, his views were reflective of contemporary societal attitudes on the differing educational 'needs' of the genders, but there can be no doubt that, within those confines, Diamantaras was projecting a view that was challenging prevailing norms which regarded female education as a lesser priority when compared to marriage and a woman's childbearing potential:

The education and upbringing of our girls has a higher purpose than the education of our boys. The first teacher of a child is its mother, its first school is the home. How can a mother develop the spirit of a child if she herself is uneducated and untrained... Dear compatriots, the sole cause of our misfortune today lies in the poor education of the female gender...

Diamantaras' words must have resonated across the island and its wealthy diaspora in Egypt. For, with the final stone laid in the ambitious enlargement of the church of *Ayios Yeórgios tou Pigadhioú* on 5 November 1900, prosperous

timber merchant **Nikolaos Stamatiou** and his wife **Eleni** were inspired to build the island's first pre-school nursery in the church's rear *avlí*. This was the so-called '**Scholi Stamatiou**' which catered for up to 250 children up to the age of six under the leadership of Thracian headmistress **Despina Verekétoglou**. The Stamatiou school remained in use for the next three decades, but the years before World War Two saw it converted by the Italian regime into a small theatre. More recently, it served an entirely different purpose – as a storage depot for emergency supplies for refugees fleeing oppression in the Middle East, that is until a mysterious fire, believed to have been deliberately lit, left it a sad ruin. Plans for the school to be faithfully rebuilt with funds donated by a prominent Hellenic charitable foundation were then scuppered when the ruinous site was caught in a dispute between church and municipality. The sorry result was that nothing happened and Stamatiou's school remains a forlorn, burnt-out shell some ten years later (see the author's article 'The Stamatiou Infants School – A Story Worth Telling', *Filia* 2016).

In what became a race between budding benefactors, Cairo-based **Loukas Santrapés** raised the stakes with a series of enormous donations towards education on the island. Santrapés' response was all the greater because it was not confined to the island's Greek population. For most of the 19th century, approximately 250 Turks had lived peacefully on Kastellorizo (out of a resident population of between 9-10,000) comprising mainly civil servants and their families. Most of these could trace their origins to the island over a number of generations, and the regime regularly appointed local Turks to fill positions in the local bureaucracy. To cater for them, the first recorded Islamic school on Kastellorizo opened as early as 1875 as part of a complex of buildings erected by industrious local governor (*kaimakám*) **Yusuf Zia** on the *Kávos* extremity in the surrounds of the 18th century mosque. The school functioned here for almost thirty years until it was relocated between 1903-04 to the *Mýlous* precinct where an elegant neoclassical building was erected with the funds donated by **Santrapés**. In a gesture very much of its time, Santrapés gift to the Turkish children of his island community was as astute as it was generous, but it was to be overshadowed by perhaps his greatest project on the island, the construction of the school that bears his name to this day – the *Santrapeía Astikí Scholí*.

This impressive neoclassical school, which started as a boys' primary and secondary facility, is now the island's main

Nikolaos Stamatiou (Stamatoglou) pictured in his Ottoman best in c.1895 displaying the award that was bestowed upon him by Sultan Abdul Hamid for his philanthropic and civic donations to his island.



Headmaster Ahmed Kemal Habibzade, standing with his students on the steps of Kastellorizo's Islamic school in 1909, which was built in the Mýlous precinct with funds donated by Loukas and Anastasia Santrapés.





Loukas and Anastasia Santrapés stand on either side of Metropolitan Gerasimos of Pissideia at one of the official events after the Santrapeia's opening. One Anastasia's right stands her elder brother, Stamatios Nikolios, who oversaw construction on the couple's behalf.

co-educational building, and has been the subject of an earlier article by the author ('The Origins and Construction of the Santrapeia School of Kastellorizo', *Filia*, 2012). As we have seen, the building was preceded by the *Astiki Scholí*, of which only one (partial) photograph survives. This had been a far more modest building, but Santrapés and his energetic wife **Anastasia (nee Nikoliou)** were determined to erect a school that would be a symbol of Hellenic education in its neoclassical stateliness and thereby serve the island's educational needs for decades to come. Today, they would be delighted to see that their gift to their island community is still in service, though they may be more than a little disenchanted by its current state of repair. The same could be said for the couple's less ambitious *Parthenagogeíon* (to which **Theodosios Penglis** contributed two classrooms), erected as a counterpoint to the *Santrapeía* across the forecourt of the island's cathedral, which replaced the earlier school for girls.

This rapid expansion of the island's educational amenities had also been encouraged by concerns regarding hygiene standards, particularly in the few remaining private schools, following serious outbreaks of whooping-cough and chicken pox. Such was the concern that the regime called in an Ottoman health inspector, **Avraam Galante** (1873-1961), to report on the schools. Galante later wrote of his experiences when he visited Kastellorizo in 1901 and was compelled to close three of these smaller schools due to the health risks they presented. Galante, a Jew in the service of the Empire, but born among Greeks in Bodrum opposite Kos, was sympathetic but firm. Accompanied by headmaster Diamantaras on his walk around the town, he recorded that he was shown where Kastellorizo's small but vibrant Jewish community had lived until they were forcibly removed in the mid-19th century. With a sense of irony, Galante noted that a Jew in the service of the Sultan was now closing schools in a locality from where Jews had long since departed. Galante's precautions had the desired effect, though a serious outbreak of measles between June – October 1904 was to cause 15 infant deaths. The response of the regime was to introduce an immunisation program, some eight years before measles became a notifiable disease in the west, that proved both effective and efficient.

The improvements in educational infrastructure on Kastellorizo, and the increasing demand for a broader range of subjects, meant that teachers had to be sought from across the Greek-speaking world. From around 1870, this responsibility had fallen to a special committee elected

annually, the *Ephoría ton lerón Naón kai Scholeíon*. Surviving records reveal the lengths to which the committee went to attract teachers to the island, even in the days of the island's relative affluence. Assisted by the *Sýllogos ton Mikrasiátōn* based in Athens, aspiring teachers from the island were educated in highly regarded institutions in the Greek capital and despatched back to the island to take up teaching positions. With locally born teachers never in adequate supply to fill all required positions, a cross-section of candidates was sourced from Smyrna to Constantinople and the Asia Minor interior, from Athens itself to many of the larger urban centres of the Greek mainland.

Resources for Kastellorizo's schools were also provided through the *Sýllogos ton Mikrasiátōn* in Athens. Books, maps, charts and teaching aides were ordered and despatched annually to the island from Athens. With little interference from their Ottoman overlords, the school administrators were free to seek out the best in Greek education from across the Hellenic world. But as economic conditions on the island noticeably worsened after the first decade of the 20th century, these calls for assistance become a little more frantic, with urgent requests for teaching staff or for financial assistance for aspiring students seeking to leave the island for their education becoming more common.

Subjects offered in the boys' school were nevertheless surprisingly wide-ranging and varied. In 1902, for example, the following subjects were offered: Greek language, religious studies, arithmetic, history, geography, physics, natural history, Turkish, French, music, geometry, gymnastics and calligraphy. Unsurprisingly, the hours of instruction devoted to Greek exceeded any other subject. This is borne out by a surviving teaching manual and class roll (*mathitológion*) of headmaster Diamantaras for the years 1899-1904, a period that straddles the move from the *Astiki Scholí* to the larger *Santrapeía*. This is a large volume, 400 pages in length, written in the headmaster's careful and elegant hand. It records the syllabus for every subject in each year and the names and corresponding marks of the enrolled students. Glued to its inside cover are the words of the ode sung by students at the beginning of each day in honour of then **Sultan Abdul Hamid** – they are written in Greek, but the words are Turkish. Notwithstanding the general leniency of the Ottomans towards the education provided by their minority communities, a daily expression of subservience to the Sultan was a mandatory public expression of fidelity to his Empire.

Headmaster Achilleas Diamantaras pictured with some of his students at the Santrapeía in 1914. Prompted by the arrival of French naval forces in late 1915, Diamantaras left Kastellorizo for good, so disenchanted was he over Kastellorizo's failure to secure union with Greece. He taught at the school on the island of Aegina for a number of years but continued to write prolifically about Kastellorizo until his death in 1929.





An extremely rare photograph of female students dressed for Apókries, the pre-Lenten festival, taken inside the former Parthenagogeion in the last decade of the 19th century. (Nick Lucas, Sydney)

The Santrapeía as it stands today.



Education on Kastellorizo – Part 1 cont.

Diamantaras' *mathitólógion* tells us that in the years it covers (1899-1904) there were the following numbers of male students enrolled at the boys' school:

School year	1899-1900	1900-1901	1901-1902	1902-1903	1903-1904
Total number of students	213	244	248	250	298

The sharp increase in enrolments in the 1903-1904 year can be attributed to the greater capacity of the *Santrapeía* which opened in December 1903. Such was the sense of civic pride the building elicited, that education came to be seen by many as a safe and respectable alternative to the perils of a maritime life, hitherto the dominant pursuit for young males. Exhorted by Diamantaras and his circle of *morfoméni* to provide a more fulfilling life for their sons, parents sent their young boys to school in increasing numbers, as can be seen below:

Grade	1899-1900	1900-1901	1901-1902	1902-1903	1903-1904
First	25	56	31	42	106
Second	47	52	52	65	70
Third	51	44	67	63	67
Fourth	31	30	22	43	45
Fifth	23	17	27	19	26
Sixth	19	9	10	15	16
Seventh	7	7	8	6	11
Totals	203	215	217	253	341

By 1909, the total number of enrolled males had risen to 401 out of a cumulative total of 801 students attending the three schools (*Santrapeía*, *Parthenagogeíon* and *Stamatiou*). Not only had male enrolments doubled in a decade, but female enrolments had also increased markedly. It was a triumph for Diamantaras and the *Ephoría* who were exalted in *Filia* for delivering 'world-class' education and record enrolments to Kastellorizo. And to reinforce the point, Diamantaras composed, and made compulsory for students to recite by heart, a poem that described just how central to the island's ethos education and literacy had become:

Είμαι από την Μεγίστην
Και με προθυμίαν πλείστην
Μελετώ οσόν' μπορώ
Γράμματα εάν δεν μάθω
Τι πολλά κακά θα πάθω
Θ'άμαι κούτσουρο ξηρό!

Αλλ' εάν καλως σπουδάσω
Τ'όνομα μου θα δοξάσω
Το λοιπόν θα μελετώ
Τους γονείς μου να ωφελήσω
Την πατρίδα να τιμήσω
Και το έθνος μου αυτό!

I hail from Megiste
And with much enthusiasm
I study as hard as I can
Because if I don't learn to read and write
Many bad things will come my way
And I will become a blockhead!

But if I study hard
I will glorify my name
So I will study
To benefit my parents
And honour my island
And my nation too!

Nevertheless, closer examination of the distribution of students across the seven years of instruction reveals that enrolments continued to fall once students reached their fourth year of study. While significantly more children were commencing formal education by 1909 compared to a decade earlier, the relative churn in enrolment numbers by the fifth grade was in fact higher as the lure of the sea in uncertain times persisted for most young males. The periodical *Filia*, which was very much the organ of the island's *morfoméni*, commented wryly in an editorial in 1910 on the need for swift action:

Filia trusts that the Demogerontía will take heed of the views of the learned men of our island who know more on such topics than merchants and ship captains.

Despite such protestations, the island actually faced far more serious challenges as it saw its tax and conscription privileges eroded and ultimately abolished after 1908, a veritable catastrophe that precipitated mass male emigration. As if this wasn't bad enough, an ill-conceived and hasty revolt against Ottoman administration in March 1913 failed to achieve the desired union with Greece. Chaotic self-administration for six months ensued, followed by *de facto* Greek administration for the next two years. After all the efforts of the previous decades to lift educational standards on the island, mere survival, or at least the need to explore options for settlement elsewhere, became the priority for many locals. It was to take the arrival of an ally in France to bring some respite, but Kastellorizo's first European occupier since the Venetians also brought with it the horrors of modern warfare as the island became a staging post against German and Turkish positions across the water. A proximate mainland that had been a source of prosperity for the Kastellorizians for centuries was now enemy territory.

Part 2 of Nicholas Pappas' engaging article 'Education on Kastellorizo: The French and Italian Years: 1921-1943', to follow in Edition 60

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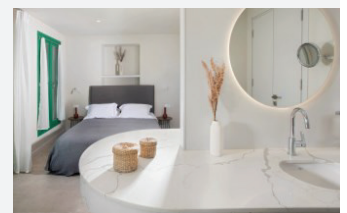
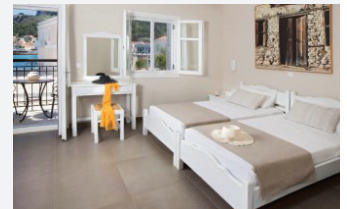


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