

Islands in the Sun
From
Cyprus to Skiathos



John Vlachopoulos

But suddenly the earth and
seashores shook, farms
swayed, and the whole island,
trembling like a mist, rose
high and vanished like a cloud
dispersed by the sun's stroke

Nikos Kazantzakis

The Odyssey

A Modern Sequel, Book I, 736-738

Islands in the Sun: From Cyprus to Skiathos

Prologue

Cyprus and the islands in the Aegean Sea boast a long history dating back at least 5,000 years to the dawn of the Bronze Age. Mythology traces its origins to a prehistorical era. Cyprus is the birthplace of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Crete is the birthplace of Zeus, the supreme god on Mount Olympus. Delos is the birthplace of Apollo, the god of the sun. The myths and the legends about gods and heroes seamlessly blend with the sun-drenched sandy beaches and whitewashed homes that adorn the landscape. Between mythology and modernity lies a rich history, encompassing the arrival of Greek settlers, the emergence of city-states, the birth of democracy, the rise of the Roman Empire, the Byzantine era, the crusades, the Ottoman Empire, Greece's war of independence, Cyprus' armed campaign against British colonial rule and much more.

This travelogue is a compilation, with some editing, of my Facebook posts of the last 30 weeks or so. I am “visiting” Cyprus and several of the 227 inhabited islands in the Aegean. I have not included the Ionian Islands, as I have previously written about them in another travelogue titled "In the Footsteps of Lafcadio Hearn aka Koizumi Yakumo," which can be downloaded from McMaster University's MacSphere: <http://hdl.handle.net/11375/27486>.

In my narrative, I have tried to distill and condense whatever I have read over the years and the insights I have gained from numerous YouTube videos about the islands. Indeed, the internet offers a plethora of videos, created by scholars, history researchers, travel writers, TV reporters, and YouTubers alike. Blending intriguing mythology, rich history, vibrant modernity and my personal observations and impressions was a very challenging endeavour.

As with my other three travelogues (In the Footsteps of.....Lafcadio, Pytheas, Explorers and conquistadors), I have tried to present an informative, engaging, and hopefully entertaining narrative.

John Vlachopoulos

Burlington, Ontario, Canada

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APHRODITE'S ROCK and SALAMIS, CYPRUS



Aphrodite's Rock, near Paphos

Salamis, CYPRUS



What do Aphrodite Venus, stoic philosophy, Richard the Lionheart, Knights Templar and Shakespeare's Othello have in common? One word: **Cyprus**. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, desire and beauty, was born there. Her name means 'risen-from-seafoam' in Greek, at the location of Aphrodite's rock, near Paphos. In Homer's two epic poems Aphrodite is the goddess whose ploy led to the Trojan war. Paris, the Prince of Troy, was asked by the gods to give the golden apple of discord to "the fairest" among three goddesses. She promised him the most beautiful woman in the world, if he would give the golden apple to her and he did. With Aphrodite's help Paris eloped with Helen, the queen of Sparta, and the Greeks waged war against Troy that lasted ten years.

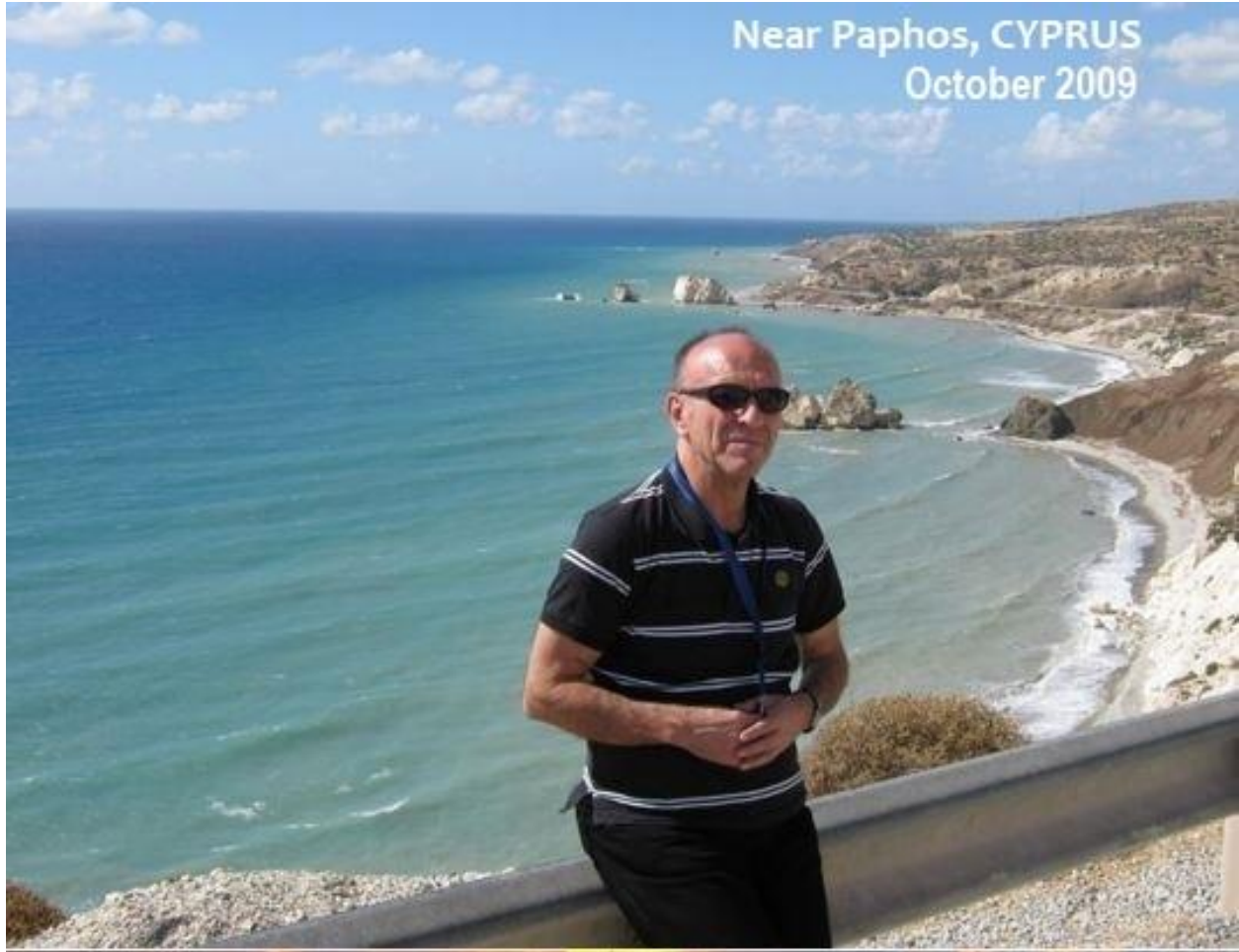
After the **Trojan war** (which probably took place around 1180-1190 BC), many Mycenaean Greeks arrived in Cyprus. Teucus (Τεύκρος) is the legendary founder of Salamis, which is located just north of Famagusta. He was the son of Telamon, king of the island of Salamis near Athens and fought in the Trojan war alongside his half-brother Ajax.

Stoic (στωικός in Greek) is a person who can endure pain or hardship without showing their feelings or complaining. **Zenon**, born in Citium (Κίτιον) near Larnaka, circa 334 BC, is the founder of the school of stoic philosophy in Athens. Historians argue whether Zenon was Greek or Phoenician, because there were also Phoenicians living in Citium and he was described as a dark-skinned person. However, he had a Greek name and received Greek education.

"Barbed wire in Aphrodite's Garden" (downloadable from <http://hdl.handle.net/11375/28184>) is a novel written by my colleague John Bandler, distinguished professor of electrical engineering, who lived in Cyprus as a teenager. It is set in 1955-1957 when 30,000 British troops were trying to subdue a couple of thousand Greek-Cypriot guerillas fighting for union with Greece. There are even more barbed wires 65 years later, with the island having been divided in four segments: About 58% Greek, 36% Turkish, 3% is the demilitarized zone (green line) controlled by the UN forces and 3% occupied by two British bases. Cyprus, as they put it in a BBC documentary, from ancient times is "blessed by geography and cursed by location" at the easternmost part of the Mediterranean Sea, where Europe, Asia and Africa converge.

Cyprus is not only where goddess Aphrodite had risen from the sea, but also the birthplace of her irresistible mortal lover, Adonis. So, in John Bandler's novel, during a chance encounter, a young Cypriot has no hesitation in asking out a good-looking Turkish girl known as a local musical prodigy: ".....My name is Irakles Naxiotis. I'm Greek. I study in England. I'll be down at the junction with the Kyrenia road tomorrow morning at nine o'clock.... Don't worry. If you're there, fine. If not, that's okay too. Bring your bathing suit, or come prepared to explain the difference between a polonaise and a nocturne".

PAPHOS AND BERENGARIA, CYPRUS



There is historical evidence that Phoenicians and Greeks were living in Cyprus, in the 8th century BC, ruled the Assyrians and by the kings of Persia from 545 BC. When **Alexander the Great** conquered Asia Minor and marched south towards present-day Lebanon (333 BC), the kings of Cyprus (8 Greek, 2 Phoenician) pledged allegiance and offered help.

The Phoenician cities on the Asian mainland surrendered without a fight to the 30,000 strong Macedonians, except for the city of Tyre. **Tyre** was on a small island about 700 meters from the old city on the mainland. The island was very well fortified, with 30-meter-high and 6-meter-wide walls. Alexander had no ships, so the Tyrians thought they were safe. Alexander sent envoys to negotiate, but the Tyrians killed them and threw their bodies into the water from the top of the wall, in plain view of the Greek troops. Fatal mistake.

Alexander drafted thousands of locals and started building a causeway. As the length of the causeway was increasing, Tyrian ships were attacking the laborers with arrows and catapults, killing hundreds of them. They even dispatched a fireship, laden with burning flammable materials, to collide with the causeway. Alexander asked Phoenicians and Greeks for ships to protect those working on the construction project. 200 ships arrived, 120 of them from Cyprus, manned by very experienced sailors. It took 7 months of construction and brutal fighting to surmount the walls. When the Macedonian troops got inside, they were so outraged, that they slaughtered 8,000 soldiers and sold as slaves some 15,000, mostly women and children. In modern-day Tyre, the causeway is buried under roads, homes and buildings.

After Alexander died, Cyprus was ruled by the Greco-Egyptian Ptolemies and became fully Hellenized. Roman and Byzantine rule followed, interrupted by several Arab invasions from about 650 AD. Full Byzantine rule was restored in 965. In 1185 Isaac Komnenos (grandnephew of an emperor) hired mercenaries, took control of the island and declared independence. When **Richard the Lionheart** was on his way to the Holy Lands (Third Crusade), several ships were shipwrecked on Cyprus with his sister Joanna and his fiancé Berengaria, in one of them. Komnenos took them captive and was not cooperative in negotiations. Richard conquered the island, imprisoned Komnenos and got married to Berengaria on May 12, 1191 in the Chapel of St. George at Limassol.

The Berengaria hotel opened its doors in 1931 and had the reputation as the resort of kings and celebrities, including king Farouk of Egypt. This is how John Bandler describes it, in his novel "Barbed Wire in Aphrodite's garden" (<http://hdl.handle.net/11375/28184>), through the eyes of an EOKA guerilla fighter: "To his right, just beyond the crossroads, the Berengaria Hotel poked its stone façade through the giant pines. He and the hotel shared a view over the tinder-dry Paphos forest of scrub oak and pine, over mountains veined in blue. He'd gazed at that glamorous red-roofed resort from Kykko Monastery, his own recent sanctuary, miles away along switchback roads". The hotel closed in 1984 and it was dilapidated when I visited in 2009. It was purchased in 2020 by a group of developers, for a reported 2.2 million Euro, and it is expected to be restored.

NICOSIA and FAMAGUSTA, CYPRUS



Venetian Walls, Nicosia



Famagusta before 1974

Pinterest

The conquest of Cyprus was easy for Richard the Lionheart in 1191, because the people of Cyprus were hoping that he would be a better ruler than Isaac Komnenos. Their hopes were quickly dashed when they realized that they had to pay a very heavy tax levy and they rebelled. Richard decided to sell the island to the Knights Templar.

The **Templars** were warrior-monks, self-described as the “poor comrades of Christ”, but they were very wealthy. Richer than the king of France Philip IV, who borrowed money from them to fight a war. He did not have money to pay back, so he accused them of heresy and idolatry and burned 69 of them alive at stake in 1314. Knights Templar was a Catholic order which emerged during the crusades. There are also legends that they had discovered King Solomon’s treasures under the Temple Mount and they that were also in possession of the Holy Grail.

The Templars tried to apply a very repressive rule on the Cypriots and there was a rebellion. Many rebels were killed, as the knights were trying to escape from Nicosia. They returned the troublesome island to Richard the Lionheart and he gave it quickly to Guy de Lusignan in 1192. He was French, King of Jerusalem, but he had lost his crown. Guy died in 1194, but the House of Lusignan ruled, what became the Kingdom of Cyprus, for nearly three hundred years. It was a feudal monarchy with a Latin Catholic minority ruling over a Greek Orthodox majority. The last monarch, Catherine Cornaro, sold Cyprus to Venice in 1489.

The French **Lusignan** aristocracy was dominating the economic and social life under the **Venetians**. The Venetian Walls were built in Nicosia for protection against a possible Ottoman invasion. Shakespeare’s **Othello** tragedy is set in Cyprus. He is a Moorish general serving in the Venetian army. The Ottomans laid siege to Nicosia (Λευκωσία) with an estimated 60,000-100,000 troops in June 1570, which lasted for about 7 weeks. More than 20,000 were massacred.

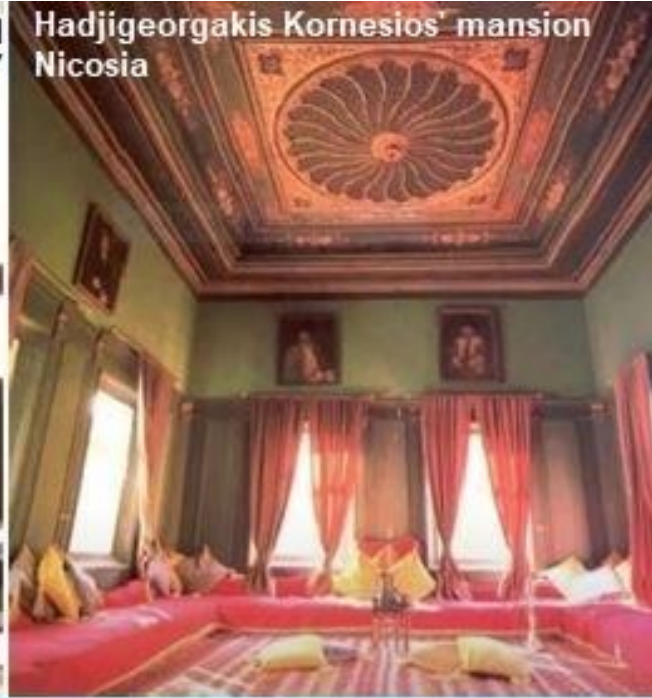
A week after the fall of Nicosia the **Ottoman** troops laid siege to Famagusta (Αμμόχωστος) which was defended by 1800 well trained Venetians and about 6000 Greeks, under the able leadership of Marco Antonio Bragadin. Although the Turkish troop strength reached 200,000 or more, the siege lasted almost a year. According to Venetian chroniclers 50,000 Turks were killed, including the son of the Ottoman leader Lala Mustafa, before the negotiations for surrender started. Mustafa was born to the Christian family Sokolovic in Bosnia. Bragadin was flayed (skinned alive) and numerous Christians were slaughtered (August of 1571).

Famagusta expanded south to the **Varosha** suburb. This is how John Bandler describes it in his novel, set during 1955-1957, “Barbed Wire in Aphrodite’s Garden” <http://hdl.handle.net/11375/28184> .”The town of Famagusta spread beyond the jam of whitewashed hotels, and the awning and trellis-sheltered restaurants that battled for business along the beachfront. To stride out of a private home onto—surely—the Middle East’s friendliest sandy crescent, one had to be rich”. Unfortunately, Famagusta is now an abandoned mess of dilapidated homes and hotels, since the 1974 Turkish invasion and occupation of 36% of the island.

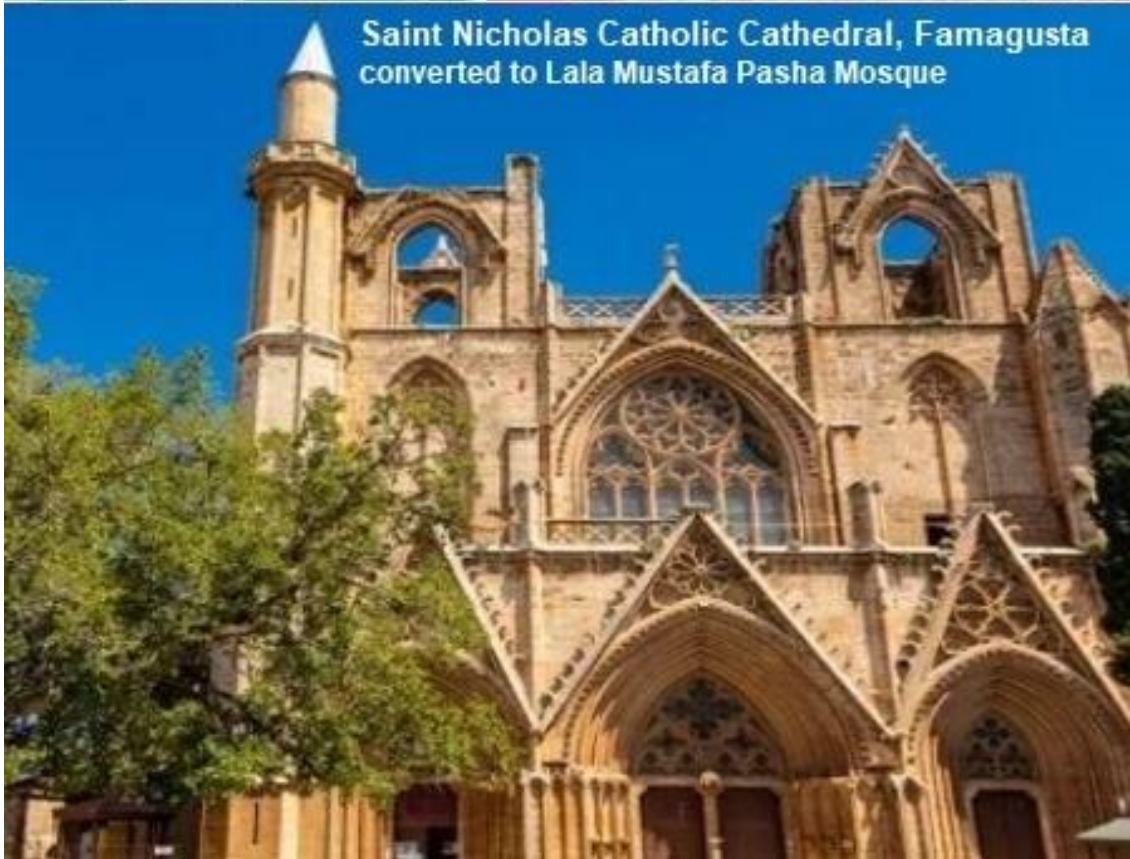
LIMASSOL and FAMAGUSTA, CYPRUS



Limassol
July 2017



Hadjigeorgakis Kornesios' mansion
Nicosia



Saint Nicholas Catholic Cathedral, Famagusta
converted to Lala Mustafa Pasha Mosque

To fully appreciate the significance of the **Fall of Famagusta** (August 1571), one has to view it in the light of the geopolitical situation in the Mediterranean in the 1500s. The Ottoman Empire had reached its apogee during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent. However, the Ottomans failed to capture Malta after a siege which lasted 5 months (1565), with a loss of 10,000 fighters.

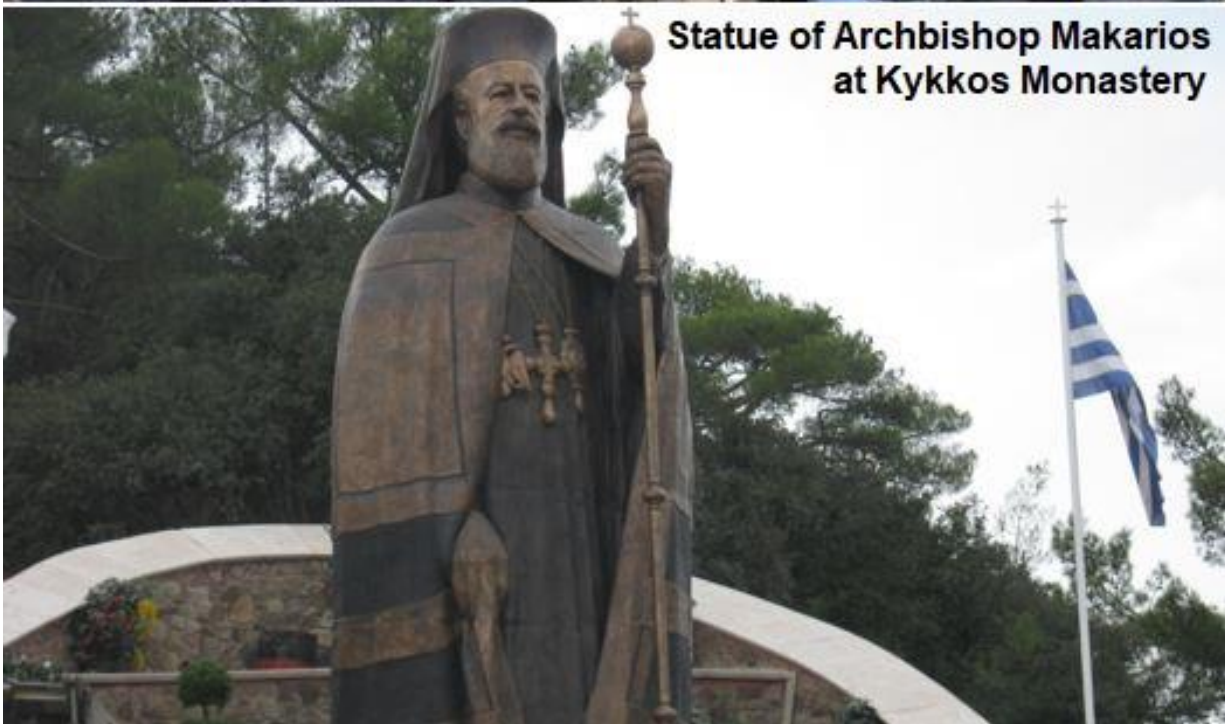
Suleiman died in 1566 and he was succeeded by Selim II (son with, Ruthenian born, Roxelana). Selim ordered the invasion of Cyprus, despite advice to the contrary by his experienced Grand Vizier (head of government) Mehmet Sokolovic, a Bosnian Serb who had been forcibly recruited as a child (janissary). Mehmet was a cousin of Lala Mustafa Sokolovic, the conqueror of Cyprus. The loss of 50,000 Turkish troops during the siege of Famagusta, weakened the Ottoman forces significantly. They were defeated in the **Battle of Lepanto** (Ναύπακτος), October 7, 1571, with about 25,000 dead, 150 ships captured and 50 ships destroyed or sunk. This naval battle put an end to the Ottoman expansion in the Mediterranean.

During the Lusignan and Venetian rule, the Greek Orthodox Church was persecuted in Cyprus, by the Catholics. Bishops were exiled to remote locations. As Professor Emilios A. Solomou (U. Nicosia) put it in a lecture, the Ottomans saw “a useful ally” in the Orthodox Church. The power of the bishops was reinstated, and church properties were exempt from taxation. The archbishop became ethnarch (chief of the nation), mediator between the Greeks and the Ottoman authorities. The demographics changed as many of the Turkish soldiers, who took part in the invasion, settled in the island and other Muslims arrived from nearby territories. However, the Muslim population never was higher than 30-40% of the total, which was about 100,000 in 1831.

During the Turkish rule, the vast majority of the population (Greeks and Turks) were poor illiterate peasants. The merchants and professionals were living in the cities (Nicosia, Famagusta, Limassol, Kyrenia, Larnaca and Paphos). One of them was Hadjigeorgakis Kornosios, who served as Dragoman (interpreter) between 1779 and 1809, dealing mostly with taxation and administration. He had amassed a huge fortune. He was accused of corruption by his Greek assistant and a Turkish official. He was beheaded in Istanbul, just before the arrival of a release order issued by the Sultan. His mansion houses the Ethnological Museum.

Life did not change much, for hundreds of years. This is how John Bandler describes **Ledra Street** in the 1950s, in his novel “Barbed Wire in Aphrodite’s Garden” <http://hdl.handle.net/11375/28184> “The main drag was a rickety spoke connecting the encircling moat to the hub, where streams of smelly trucks and beast-drawn carts scraped, stained, and gouged the buildings. Where Byzantine and Levantine geezers huddled in coffee-shop archways smoking water-filtered tobacco from floor-standing hookahs. Where sun-warmed dung, oriental spices and Turkish coffee commingled in a potent nasal cocktail. A seedy labyrinth where Europe, Africa, and Asia coalesced, Christians and Muslims bargained for the best price.”

DIGHENIS' HIDEOUT and KYKKOS, CYPRUS



When the Greek war of independence broke out in 1821, many Greek Cypriots went to fight for Greece. The Ottoman authorities reacted with savagery, by arresting and executing 480 prominent Greek Cypriots, including Archbishop Kyprianos. He was the founder of the prestigious Pancyprrian Gymnasium in 1812, whose list of notable alumni includes Archbishop Makarios and Nobel Prize-winning economist Christopher Pissarides. Famous novelist and travel writer Lawrence Durrell was a teacher (1953-1956).

The Ottomans handed over the administration of the island to the **British** in 1878. The Greek Cypriots welcomed their arrival, hoping that Cyprus will eventually unite with Greece, just like the Ionian islands in 1863. Life and culture improved under British rule. During World War I, the Ottoman Empire was on the side of Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria). Cyprus was formally annexed (1914) by the British Empire. In 1915 it was offered to Greece, on condition of joining the Entente Powers, but King Constantine I refused. He had a lot of connections with Germany and his wife was the sister of Kaiser Wilhelm II.

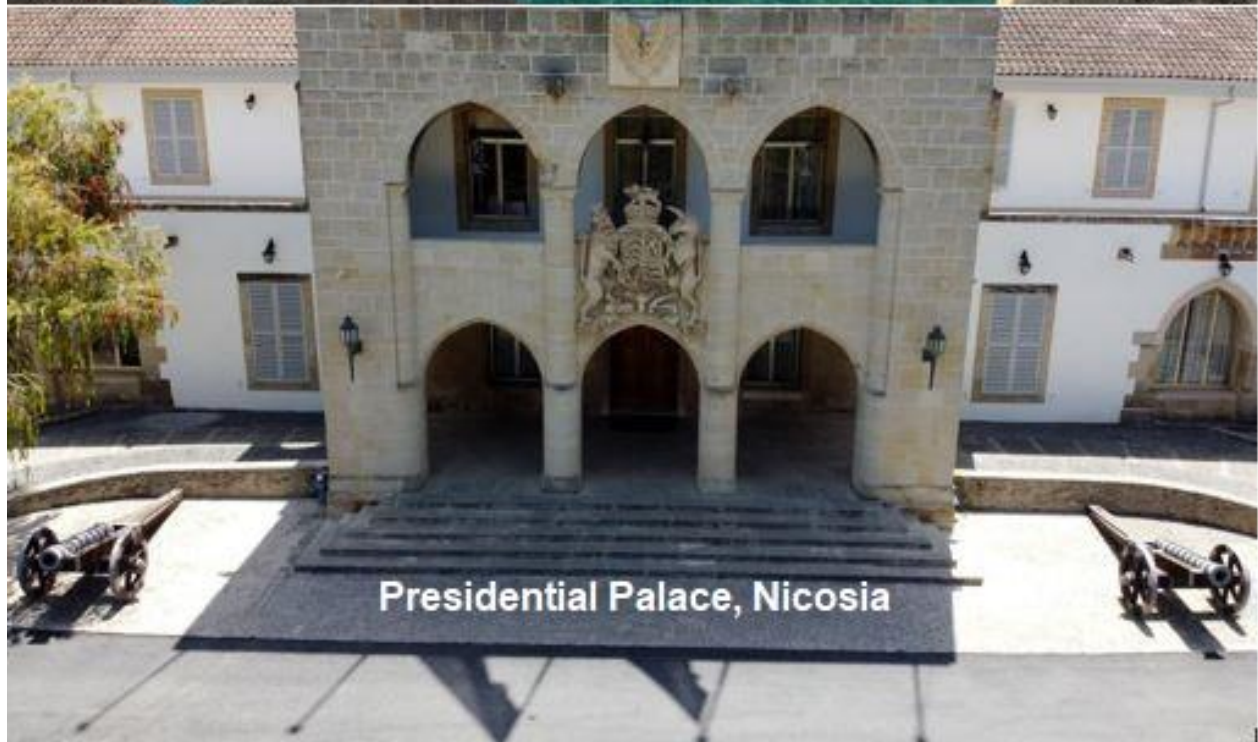
The idea of '**Enosis**' (union) with Greece was a movement supported by the vast majority of Greek Cypriots, which was transformed to a political force by the newly elected (1950) Archbishop Makarios. A guerilla organization called EOKA (National Organization of Cypriot Fighters) was formed, with help from the Greek Government. The leader was Georgios Grivas, a retired colonel of the Greek army, born in Cyprus. His Dighenis nom-de-guerre came from a Byzantine epic poem about the exploits of a hero named for his 'two-blood' ancestry (Greek mother, Arab father).

The guerilla war started in April 1955, with sabotage, shootings and bombings against the British forces of occupation. Lawrence Durrell in his 'Bitter Lemons' writes: "I realized for the first time that the appeal of EOKA was not to wrongdoers, congenital felons, but precisely to the most spirited and idealistic element among the youth". In the words of a Cypriot businessman in John Bandler's novel 'Barbed Wire in Aphrodite's Garden' <http://hdl.handle.net/11375/28184> "The cold war paranoia feeds Cypriot right-wingers. Anticommunism draws Church support, which in turn inspires our Greeks to push for union with Greece. Indeed, it's a paradox, Britain fueling the blaze it seeks to extinguish."

Nearly 40,000 troops were unable to subdue a couple of thousand EOKA fighters. My picture with John Bandler, in front of Dighenis' tiny hideout, was taken by Beth Bandler. The British applied the "divide and rule" doctrine. Inter-communal hatred was rekindled and violence erupted in Cyprus. In Istanbul, the pogrom of September 6-7, 1955, resulted in two dozen dead and the exodus of at least 50,000 Greeks. The British reported 417 dead (soldiers and civilians) between 1955 and 1959 in Cyprus. EOKA lost 90 fighters and many Greek and Turkish civilians were killed. Nine Greek Cypriots were executed by hanging, the last one being 18-year-old Evagoras Pallikarides on March 14, 1957.

Makarios reluctantly realized that **Enosis** was not a feasible goal. Cyprus was declared an independent sovereign republic on August 16, 1960 after the Zürich-London Agreements between Britain, Greece and Turkey. Grivas returned to a hero's welcome in Greece.

AGIA NAPA and the PRESIDENTIAL PALACE, CYPRUS



I borrowed three words “**Cold war paranoia**” from John Bandler’s novel “Barbed Wire in Aphrodite’s Garden” <http://hdl.handle.net/11375/28184>. I would add that the “Cyprus problem” was also fueled by the fervor for Enosis (union) by Greek ultranationalists and for Taksim (partition) by Turkish ultranationalists. After the London Agreement, Archbishop Makarios was elected president and a Turkish Cypriot vice-president. The power-sharing formula, entrenched in the constitution, resulted in a dysfunctional government and administration. Intercommunal violence erupted in 1964 and Turkish Cypriots moved to enclaves.

On April 21, 1967, a right-wing military junta overthrew the government in Greece. The popularity of Makarios, in both Cyprus and Greece, was perceived as a threat to the junta. Grivas returned to Cyprus and organized EOKA B, a group aimed at eliminating Makarios and his supporters. Several attempts were made against the archbishop. In the most spectacular one, his helicopter was fired at as it was taking off from the Presidential Palace. The pilot managed to land safely, even though he was seriously injured. In Athens, Papadopoulos and his gang of colonels was overthrown in 1973 by another right-wing gang, of self-appointed saviours of the Greek motherland, headed by Ioannidis.

Henry Kissinger and the CIA were fearing that an independent Cyprus could fall under Soviet influence. Makarios was referred to, as the “red priest” or “Castro of the Mediterranean.” Ioannidis and the Athens junta were apparently convinced by the CIA that the best course of action would be to eliminate Makarios, allow Turkey to occupy a part of the island, reportedly between 8% and 20% of the area, and the bigger part to unite with Greece.

In Cyprus, some 600 Greek officers were in command of 12,000 troops of the National Guard. Makarios had created a special police force called “Eferdiko” to counteract the threat of the junta-controlled National Guard and EOKA B. By May 1974 there were indications that officers of the National Guard were planning a coup. The coup was accelerated after Makarios wrote a letter to the junta in Athens, asking for removal of the Greek officers. The National Guard was under surveillance by “Efedriko” during nighttime, believing that military coups only happen in the wee hours of the morning.

On Monday, July 15, 1974, at 8.15 in the morning, tanks and commandos moved and fired their heavy guns against the Presidential Palace. Makarios was hosting a group of schoolchildren visiting from Alexandria Egypt. The presidential guard was well armed and fired back at the attackers, killing 23. Makarios escaped through a back door and went to Paphos from where he spoke on a independent radio station saying “People of Cyprus, my voice is recognizable, I am Makarios, I am not dead, I am alive.....”. From Paphos Makarios left on a British plane to Malta and then to London. The National Guard eventually overwhelmed all resistance and took control. The total death toll during 4 days of fighting was estimated from 100 to 450. The island of the goddess of love was transformed into a cesspool of hatred and deadly violence, by Greeks fighting against Greeks.

KYRENIA, CYPRUS

Across from Pente Mili beach, just west of Kyrenia, CYPRUS



Five-Mile (Pente Mili) beach is where young lovers had their rendezvous, in John Bandler's novel "Barbed Wire in Aphrodite's Garden" <http://hdl.handle.net/11375/28184>. However, on July 20, 1974, it is where Turkey invaded the island by landing 6000 heavily armed troops. They faced absolutely no resistance. According to retired army colonel Alexander Simaioforidis, chief of the Hellenic Intelligence Service at Kyrenia in 1974, the Greek forces on Cyprus had received strict orders not to fire against the Turkish troops, because the operation was supposed to be part of NATO maneuvers. Fighting started after bombing of military bases by Turkish aircraft.

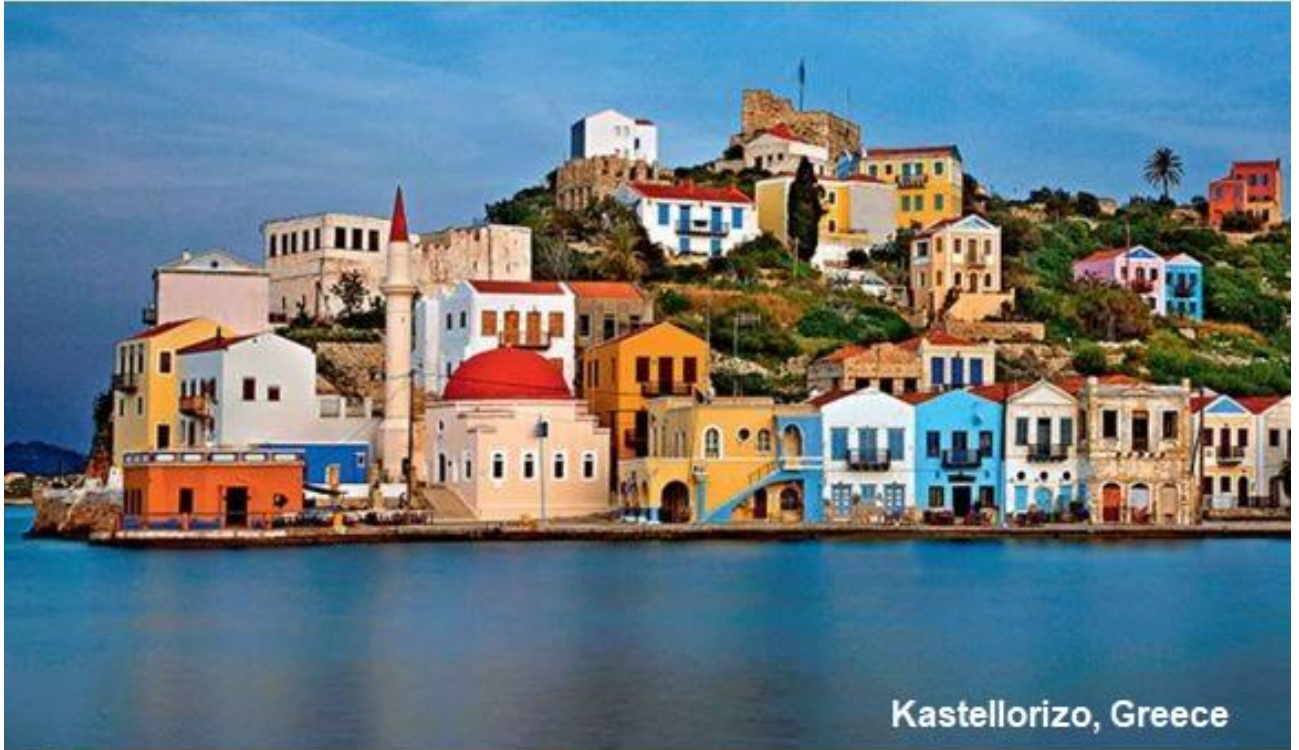
From investigations by the editor of Kathimerini newspaper, Alexis Papachelas, it appears that there was an agreement between Greece and Turkey with the Americans as the go-betweens. Papachelas' book "A Dark Room 1967-1974" includes audio (in QR code) of conversations between Ioannidis and his top generals.

On July 21, Turkey's prime minister Ecevit informed Henry Kissinger that a flotilla of three Greek ships, was heading to Cyprus in violation of the agreement. Through the CIA, Ioannidis replied that he had given no such orders and the Turks had the right to sink them. 48 Turkish jets bombarded the three ships, which were in fact Turkish. Destroyer Kocatepe was sunk with the loss of 54 Turkish seamen and the other two ships were badly damaged.

Greece's only response was to send a squadron of a dozen transport aircraft with about 300 special forces troops to Cyprus. They left from Crete at night (July 21/22) flying at very low altitude to avoid radar detection. The Greek armed forces were in disarray, under the dictatorship of the colonels, and they failed to inform the Greek Cypriot defenders at Nicosia airport of the impending arrival of the squadron. The aircraft were fired at and one of them crashed with the death of 27 troops and 4 airmen. Also, two soldiers were hit and died in another aircraft.

The **Turkish invasion** took place in two waves: July 20-22 (Attila I) and August 14-16 (Attila II, with 40,000 troops). Invasion casualties included 2850 dead and 1619 missing, soldiers and civilians. Cyprus is a divided island, with 58% of the area being the Republic of Cyprus, 36% controlled by Turkey in the North, 3% the UN buffer zone and 3% British military bases. 180,000 Greek Cypriots became refugees in the south and 50,000 Turkish Cypriots refugees in the north. At the time of the invasion the population was about 600,000 (78% Greek, 18% Turkish and 4% other). Currently the Republic of Cyprus (south) has a population of about 950,000, it is a member of EU and uses the euro as its currency. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is recognized only by Turkey and has a population of about 350,000, more than half are settlers from Turkey. About 100,000 Turkish Cypriots, have been issued EU passports of the Republic of Cyprus. Despite the devastation caused by the Turkish invasion, Cyprus has now a healthy economy. Per capita GDP (2021): Republic of Cyprus \$ 30k, Greece \$20k, TRNC 15k and Turkey 10k.

KASTELLORIZO



Katellorizo is a small rocky island 280 kilometers northwest of Cyprus, 550 km southeast of Athens and just 2 km from present-day Turkey's coast. It has a recorded history of more than 3,000 years. Kastellorizo lay on important east-west sea routes. The **Uluburun shipwreck** of the 14th BC was discovered in 1982 on the Turkish coast, less than 10 km away (across from the Greek island of **Stroggyli**). A ship travelling from present day Lebanon or Israel or Cyprus was transporting a lot of cargo probably to Mycenae or to somewhere else in the Aegean Sea. It included 10 tons of copper and 1 ton of tin, obviously for alloying with copper for making of bronze. At least 150 Canaanite jars were discovered, Cypriot pottery, Egyptian jewelry and numerous other artifacts (now exhibited at the Bodrum, Turkey, Museum of Underwater Archaeology).

Kastellorizo and the other **Dodecanese** (it means 12) islands were conquered by the Ottomans in 1523. They fought during the Greek revolution of 1821, but remained under Ottoman rule. Sultan Mahmud II granted self-governance and significant tax relief. Kastellorizo became a shipping and commercial center which led to a period of great prosperity in the 1800s. The privileges were revoked after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and the Kastellorizians started emigrating. There were about 5,000 Greeks and 300 Muslims living on the island in the late 1800s, but only 500 today, however, there are about 50,000 of Kastellorizian heritage living in Australia. One of the most notable is Andrew N. Liveris, born in Darwin, Australia, who has been the longest serving CEO of the USA based Dow Chemical Company (of about 40,000 employees)

The official Greek name, since ancient times, is **Megisti** (which means “the greatest” or “the largest”, in Greek). It is a small island, but the largest in the immediate vicinity. **Ro** is a small deserted island just west of Kastellorizo. Ro gained fame due to the unwavering determination of a woman named Despoina Achladiotou. She arrived on the island in 1927 with her husband and sustained themselves by raising a few goats, chickens, and maintaining a vegetable garden. Sadly, her husband passed away in 1940, but she continued to live alone on the island. Every morning and evening, regardless of the weather conditions, she would raise and lower the Greek flag for 40 years until her death in 1982, at the age of 92. She was buried beneath the flagpole and is referred to in Greek as "**Η ΚΥΡΑ ΤΗΣ ΡΟ**" (**Lady of Ro**). She has been honored by the Academy of Athens and the Greek Navy, and her life story has been featured in at least one theater play.

RHODES I



Rhodes is the largest of the Dodecanese (12 islands). According to Homer, Rhodes participated in the Trojan war (around 1200 BC). The Acropolis of Lindos dates from the 4th century BC. It is located on a hilltop, which could easily be protected from invading enemies. That is why it was fortified first by the ancient Greeks and over the centuries by the Romans, the Byzantines, the Knights of St Jean and the Ottomans.

Lindos is the birthplace of poet Cleobulus, one of the Seven Sages of ancient Greece. Ialysos, close to the city of Rhodes is the birthplace of Diagoras. He won in the Olympic Games twice, in boxing, in the 5th century BC. Three of his sons were also Olympic champions. One of his daughters, named either Kallipateira or Ferenike, is the first woman to have watched the Olympic Games of ancient Greece. Women were not allowed to watch because the athletes performed in the nude. Diagoras' daughter sneaked in dressed as a man. She was caught and brought in front of the judges, facing severe penalties for sacrilege. She was acquitted when she proclaimed that her father, three of her brothers, her son and a nephew were Olympic champions.

Rhodes was mentioned by Aesop in one of his fables, "The boasting traveller." Here is a translation by George Fyler Townsend "A Man who had travelled in foreign lands, boasted very much, on returning to his own country, of the many wonderful and heroic things he had done in the different places he had visited. Among other things, he said that when he was at Rhodes, he had leaped to such a distance that no man of his day could leap anywhere near him—and as to that, there were in Rhodes many persons who saw him do it, and whom he could call as witnesses. One of the bystanders interrupting him, said, "Now, my good man, if this be all true there is no need of witnesses. Suppose this to be Rhodes; and now for your leap."

The original Greek was "Ἀὐτοῦ γὰρ καὶ Ρόδος καὶ πήδημα." But with the passage of time, it is usually expressed as "Ἰδοῦ ἢ Ρόδος, ἰδοῦ καὶ το πήδημα." In Latin, it was translated as "**Hic Rhodus, hic salta**". In this form it has been used by several authors, including Karl Marx.

Anthony Quinn, after the filming of *The Guns of Navarone* on Rhodes, bought part of the area shown in the picture and he was planning to create an international centre for artists and filmmakers. Some part of the beach was given to him as a gift and the question of ownership has not been settled yet.

RHODES II

Castle of the Knights of Rhodes



7 May 1948

March 7, 1948. Union with Greece

The **Colossus of Rhodos** (one of the seven wonders of the ancient world) was built between 292 BC and 280 BC and collapsed in 226 BC due to an earthquake. It was about 33 meters in height on a 15 meters high pedestal. For comparison the Statue of liberty in New York is 46 m tall on a 47- meter pedestal. It was constructed to celebrate the successful defence of Rhodes city against an attack by Demetrius I, the Besieger.

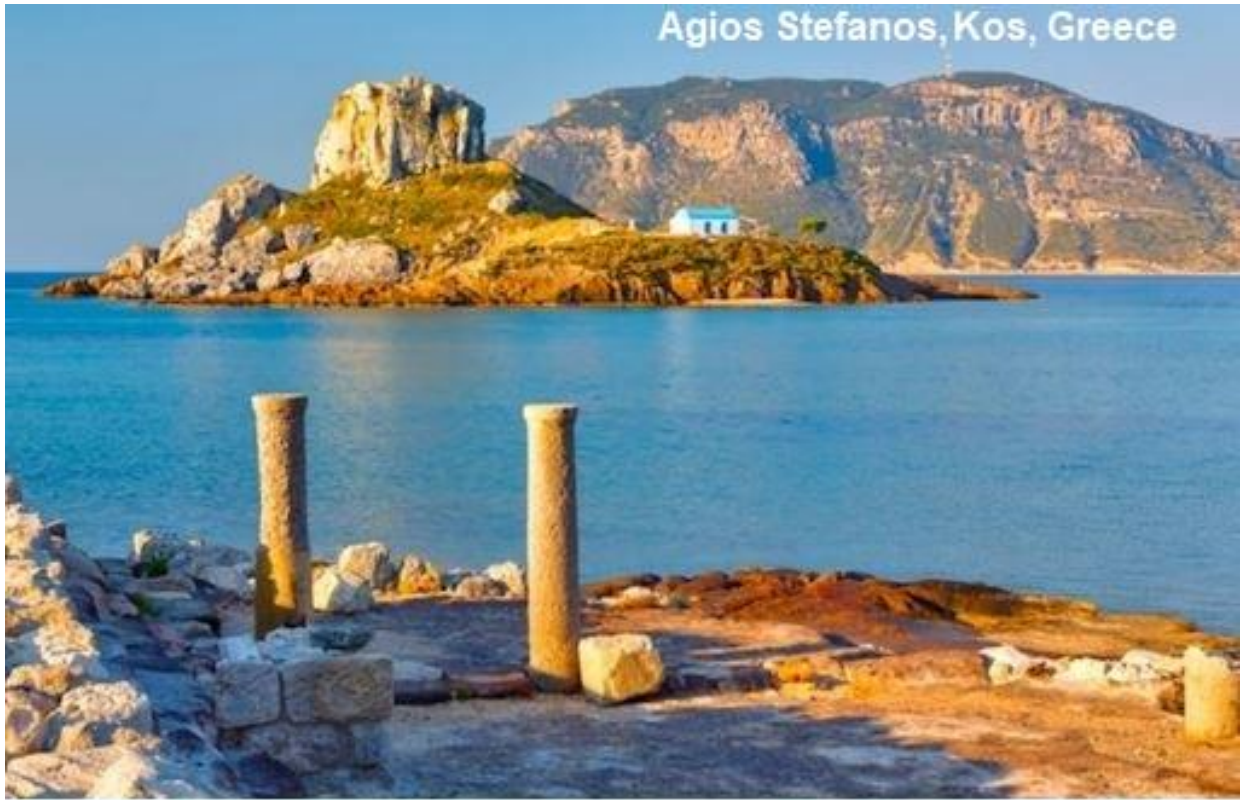
The picture shows the entrance to the Palace of the Grand Master of the **Knights of Rhodes** (usually known as Hospitallers or the knights of St. Jean). Their monastic Catholic order was formed after the First Crusade in the Holy Land, circa 1080. After the fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1291 they sought refuge in Cyprus. In 1310 they conquered Rhodes and the surrounding islands from the Byzantines. In 1480 they withstood an attack of the Ottomans. In 1522, they resisted a siege of six months by Suleiman the Magnificent, but they eventually negotiated their surrender and were allowed to leave for Sicily. In 1530 they settled in Malta. They successfully defended Malta against the Ottomans in 1565. Their power started to decline after Napoleon's troops captured Malta in 1799.

Rhodes and the other Dodecanese (12) islands were part of the Ottoman Empire for nearly four centuries. In the early 1900s the Ottoman Empire was crumbling and Italy invaded and captured Dodecanese in 1912 except for Kastellorizo, which was occupied by the French till 1921. Rhodes remained under Italian occupation till 1943. After the Armistice with Italy of September 8, 1943, German troops invaded and captured Rhodes and the nearby islands. More than 30,000 Italian troops surrendered to the Germans and a few hundred joined the German cause to fight on against the Allies. From the Italian prisoners of war about 6,000 died in the sinking of the ships carrying them to German occupied Greece.

The British, assisted by a few hundred special forces Greek troops of the **Sacred Regiment (Ιερός Λόχος)** made attacks against the German occupation forces in Rhodes, which was defended by about 8000 Germans and 600 Italians. The Sacred Regiment was formed in the Middle East during World War II. It was composed of battle-hardened Greek officers. They were trained by British SAS officers for special operations, under the leadership of the legendary Colonel (later General) Christodoulos Tsigantes. They took part in several battles in North Africa against the Germans and they were instrumental in solidifying the Greek claim for union of the Dodecanese with Greece.

Christodoulos Tsigantes was born in Romania, to Greek parents from Kefalonia. He had taken part in the Venizelist (anti-monarchist) coup of 1935, condemned to life imprisonment, released from jail, served in the French Foreign Legion at the start of World War II, before taking the leadership of the Sacred Regiment in 1942.

KOS



Kos is the third largest island of the Dodecanese, after Rhodes and Karpathos. It is located 4 km from the nearest Turkish coast, across the water from ancient Halicarnassus, present day Bodrum. It is a beautiful island and the birthplace of **Hippocrates** (c.460-c.370 BC), the father of medicine. The Hippocratic Oath is still taken by medical students upon graduation in many universities, in Canada, USA and other parts of the world. Of course, it is not the original but updated versions of promise to uphold ethical standards. The Asclepion was a healing center, built in the third century BC, after Hippocrates died (into his 90s), for the purpose of propagating his preventative treatments and holistic approach. During my visit in July 2008, it was a very hot day in Kos town. However, at Asclepion temperature and humidity were at comfortable levels.

There is some evidence, from the Roman historian Pliny the Elder, that Hippocrates recommended the use of willow bark to relieve the pain of childbirth. The application was external. Willow bark contains salicin, which is the main ingredient of aspirin. Scientists at Bayer company in Germany, used salicin for the synthesis of aspirin in 1899.

Kos and the other Dodecanese islands were occupied by Italy, 1912-1943. After the Italian armistice of September 1943, they were occupied by German troops. The population was over 90% Greek, but it was not clear whether they would be allowed to unite with Greece after the end of World War II. They were deliberations, discussions and political machinations involving the British, the Soviets and to a lesser extent the French.

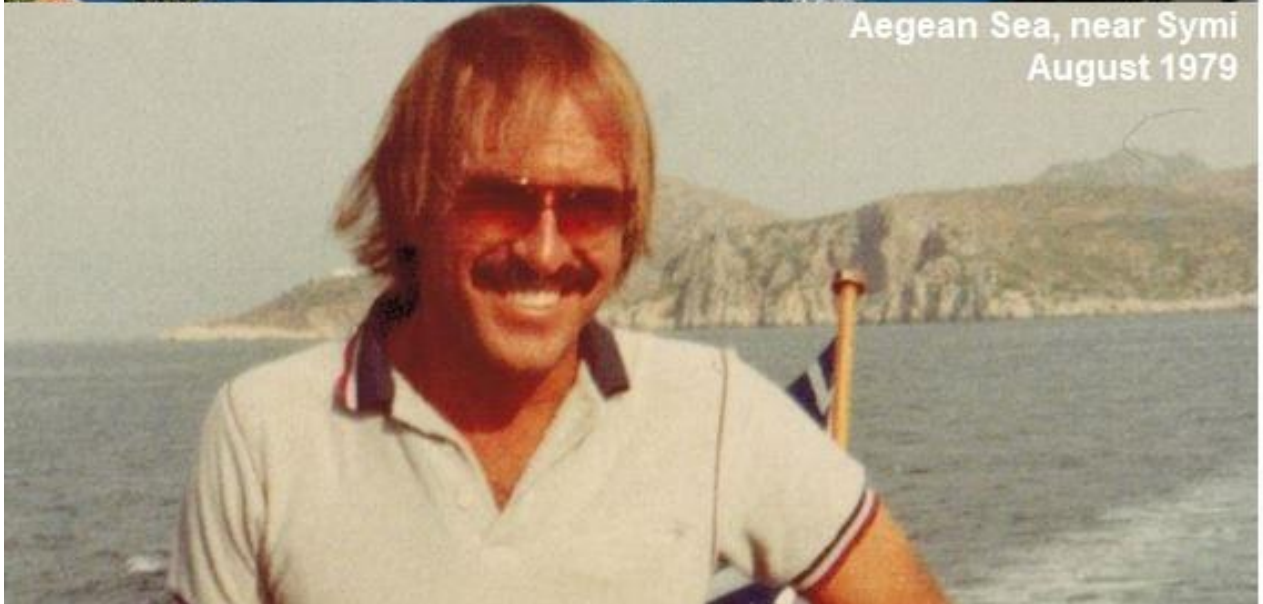
Greece was victorious against the Italian invaders from Albania. It was conquered by the Germans, who invaded from Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Greek resistance fighters were fighting against the occupation troops from the start of the occupation (April 1941) till the end of the war. The armed resistance was very effective and forced the Germans to have 300,000 troops stationed in Greece. Turkey maintained its neutrality. The British and the Soviets tried to entice Turkey to join the Allies against the Axis powers of Germany and Italy, by proposing to offer the Dodecanese after the war. However, the Turkish government was not interested in abandoning the comfort of neutrality. The Greek Government in exile in the Middle East was incensed by the discussions on the future of the Dodecanese, without its knowledge.

After the German surrender of May 7, 1945, the Dodecanese remained under British control till the union with Greece, on March 7, 1948.

SYMI



Symi, Greece



Aegean Sea, near Symi
August 1979

Symi is one of the Dodecanese islands, some 40 kilometers north of Rhodes and 5 kilometers from the closest Turkish coast. It is a mountainous island of rugged cliffs and isolated coves surrounded by crystal clear blue sea. Symi has a very long history and participated in the Trojan war according to Homer. It was conquered by the knights of St. Jean (Hospitallers) together with the rest of the Dodecanese, in 1310. It surrendered to the Ottoman Turks in 1522. Shipbuilding and sponge diving provided considerable wealth during the Hospitaller and the Ottoman eras. It was occupied by Italy, together with the other Dodecanese islands from 1912 till 1943 and then by Germany till 1945.

The **German surrender** of the Dodecanese was signed on Symi, by General Otto Wagener on May 8, 1945. General Wagener upon arrival gave the Nazi salute and after signing, he left his service pistol on the table. Brig. Moffat (commander of the British forces) gave the pistol to Col. Christodoulos Tsigantes "to keep it as a souvenir of the occasion." Christodoulos' son Philippe Gigantes was a Greek-Canadian journalist, author of 15 books and senator, appointed by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. He had served in the Royal Navy, was taken prisoner in Korea, and spent 33 months in a North Korean prison camp. I met with him in 1973 in Toronto, at the home of Nikos Skoulas (later Greek minister of tourism). Gigantes arrived at Skoulas' residence for a meeting with Andreas Papandreou (later Prime Minister of Greece), then in exile in Toronto, during the military junta dictatorship (1967-1974). If I knew then what I know now, I would have asked Gigantes whether Wagener's pistol was still in possession of his family.



LEFT: General Otto Wagener
RIGHT: Brig. Moffat, Col. Baird, Col. Tsigantes

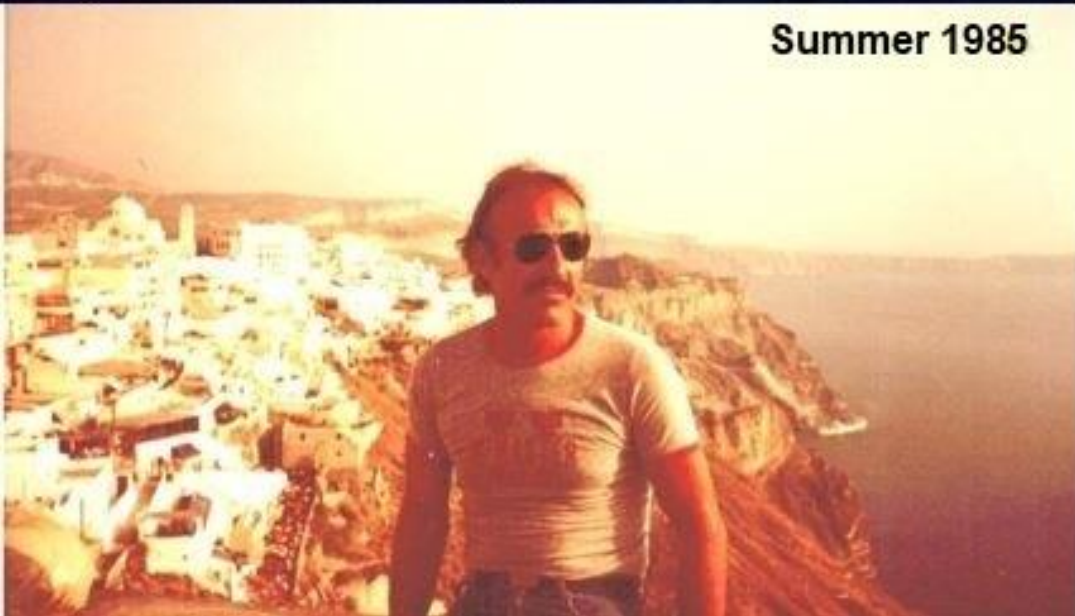
From the early 1900s sponge divers from Symi, Kalymnos and Halki were recruited and immigrated to Tarpon Springs, Florida. In fact, Tarpon Springs is the "Greekest" place in the USA. The 1953 movie "Beneath the 12-Mile Reef" is about competition and violence involving the Petrakis family of sponge divers and the Rhys family of fishermen. Things get complicated when the son of Petrakis (portrayed by Robert Wagner) falls in love with the daughter of Rhys. The movie was a big hit in both USA and Greece (Υφαλος 12 μιλίων).

During my visit in Symi, I had a feeling that I was visiting the most isolated and quaint Greek island. The simple pleasures of life in Symi, have attracted a considerable number of expats. About 10% of the 3,000 year-round residents are from various European countries.

SANTORINI I



Summer 1985



Santorini is centrally located in the Aegean Sea, 220 km southeast of Athens and 110 km north of Crete. The original name was Thera (Θήρα). The current popular name was given by the Venetians (from the Santa Irene Basilica at Perissa). **Volcanic eruptions** have been occurring for about 1.5 million years. It is where the African tectonic plate collides with the Eurasian one. The eruptions and subsequent collapses of the volcano resulted in the sea-water filled circular caldera, with Nea Kameni volcano in the center. My picture was taken at Fira and part of the caldera can be seen behind me.

It was the site of one the world's most powerful eruptions in historic times, which occurred during the Bronze age, 3600 years ago, at the height of the Minoan civilization in Crete. It was thought to be as powerful as the Krakatoa eruption of 1883, in Indonesia, which killed 36,000 people. Most recent estimates indicate that it was perhaps 5 to 10 times more powerful than Krakatoa. The magnitude of volcanic eruptions is estimated from the amount of ash and pumice that is deposited in the surrounding area. Pumice is a frothy rock (ελαφρόπετρα). The Thera eruption released about 100 cubic kilometers of ash and volcanic materials. For comparison, the Vesuvius (Pompei) eruption of 79 AD released about 1 cubic kilometer.

The exact date of the eruption is a topic of debate. Based on carbon 14 dating studies, most probably it occurred between 1614 BC and 1620 BC. It is surprising that no mention of such a catastrophe was made by Egyptian chroniclers. An historian suggested that this was due to sociopolitical instability in Egypt at that time. The Chinese Bamboo Annals reported unusual yellow skies in 1618 BC.

Vases and archaeological artifacts were found in the 1800s, but serious excavations were undertaken after 1967. Professor **Spyridon Marinatos** (of the University of Athens) arrived in Santorini for the purpose of seeking proof for his theory, that the Thera eruption and the accompanying **tsunami** resulted in the destruction of the Minoan civilization, in Crete. He was told by the locals that, at Akrotiri, walls of ancient ruins could be seen after major rainstorms. Marinatos' excavations uncovered multistory homes and frescoes (wall paintings). He was killed on location, when a wall collapsed on him in September 1974. The excavations continued under professor Christos Doumas. When funding dwindled during the Greek economic crisis, Russian billionaire Eugene Kaspersky (known for his antivirus computer software by the same name) came to the rescue.

The archeological findings reveal an affluent and very sophisticated society. The young ladies depicted in the **frescoes** appear to wear exquisite embroidered garments and artistic jewellery. No skeletons were found. Probably prior to the major eruption there were precursor earthquakes and other volcanic phenomena, which gave ample warning of the impending catastrophe. Everybody left, leaving behind things which could not carry in their ships. Large clay vessels were found full of grain remains and pieces of furniture outside of homes.

SANTORINI II

Oia, Santorini, Greece



Santorini owes its existence as an island to the volcano. **Nea Kameni** (which means 'newly burned') is a dormant but active volcano in the center of the caldera. There have been eruptions in 197 BC, 46-47 AD, 726, 1570-1573, 1707-1711, 1866-1870, 1931-1941 and 1950. Nea Kameni appeared in 1707. A Jesuit priest witnessed the appearance and wrote "...on 23rd of May 1707.....some seamen discovered this island early in the morning, but not being able to distinguish what it was, they imagined it to be some vessel that had suffered shipwreck"

During one of my visits to Santorini, I took a boat tour. We first stopped at Nea Kameni, which is roughly 2 km in diameter. When we walked around the crater, we could see venting of smoke and smell sulphur. After that the boat took us to a cove at another nearby tiny island that had natural hot springs. The sand was reddish and the water temperature was about 10-12 Celcius degrees higher than in other beaches.

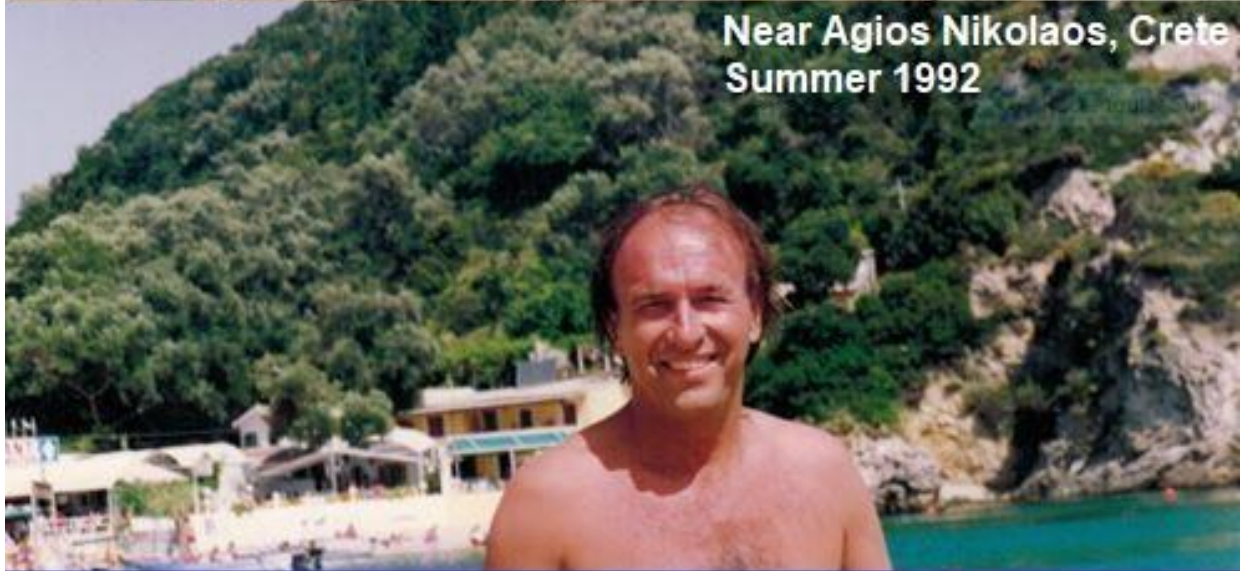
From the **volcanic eruptions** after 1620 BC, the most notable one was that of 726 AD. My friend Chris Angeletakis commented on my previous FB post, saying "Leo the 3rd the Isaurian was implementing his iconoclastic policies at the time in full swing, and the whole area was unstable and in revolt to begin with. Then the eruption happened, causing much destruction of the island, and led to ash constantly falling from the sky for several months. An even wider area around the island was with a yellow sky. This did not help the implementation of the regime's new laws ordering the lifting of icons above eye level to prevent venerating them. The eruption's fury was thought of by the common people as God's wrath for the lifting of icons in the churches."

Prior to the volcanic eruption of 1620 BC, the inhabitants of Thera (Santorini) were using the Linear A script, which has not been deciphered. We do not know what their language and culture were. From the numerous frescoes at Akrotiri, it appears that they had many cultural connections with the Minoans of Crete, the Egyptians and the Mesopotamians.

Santorini was a naval base of Ptolemaic Egypt during Hellenistic times and saw the arrival of conquerors and settlers, including, Romans, Byzantines, Crusaders, Venetians, and Ottomans, before becoming part of modern Greece in 1832. It has always been an affluent island with economy based on sea trade. Tourism became the main economic pillar, especially after the 1982 movie "Summer Lovers" was filmed on location, starring Darryl Hannah. It is an abundant proof of the power of an entertaining film plot accompanied by enjoyable music score.

Santorini is frequently mentioned as the inspiration of the **Atlantis legend**, even though it is much smaller than the description in Plato's story and not outside the Pillars of Hercules (Gibraltar).

KNOSSOS, CRETE



The volcanic eruption in Santorini (Thera) in 1620 BC released huge quantities of ash and pumice into the atmosphere, which reached Crete, 110 kilometers south. The caldera collapse generated a powerful tsunami that hit the eastern parts of Crete with enormous force. It is most likely that the hill behind me in the picture was one of the areas seriously impacted. There have been reports of people finding fossilized seashells on the hills near Agios Nikolaos and Sitia in recent years.

The legend of **King Minos** was well known to the Greeks of the mainland even before Homer (8th century BC) mentioned it in his *Odyssey*. Every nine years, Athens was required (as part of a war settlement) to send seven young men and seven young women to be devoured by the Minotaur, a monster with the body of a man and the head of a bull. King Minos kept the Minotaur in the labyrinth beneath his palace. The prince of Athens, Theseus, volunteered and went as one of the youths to Crete. King Minos's daughter Ariadne fell madly in love with him and helped him slay the **Minotaur**.

The first person to carry out serious excavations on the Kephala Hill (Knossos) for the purpose of learning about the prehistory of Crete was Minos Kalokairinos, a Cretan businessman, in 1878. Heinrich Schliemann (1822-1890), renowned for the excavations of Troy and Mycenae, attempted to purchase the land around Knossos without success. In 1883, Sir Arthur Evans visited Schliemann at his mansion in Athens, which now houses the Numismatic Museum, on Panepistimiou street.

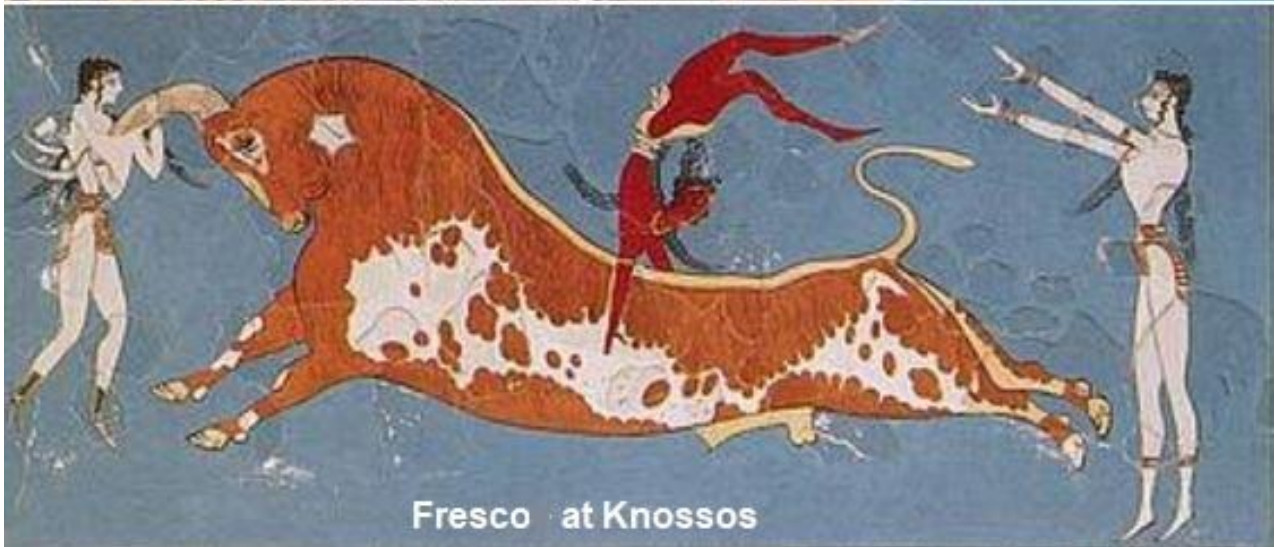
Arthur Evans (1851-1941) was a wealthy Englishman who had studied at Oxford and had travelled extensively in Europe. He became obsessed with the prehistory of Knossos and purchased one fourth of the Knossos site with his own funds when the administration of the island passed from the Ottomans to Greece in 1898. Evans eventually purchased the remaining property and hired three dozen diggers. The discoveries astonished the world. They unearthed a courtyard surrounded by more than a thousand interconnecting rooms. Numerous Bronze Age artifacts were found and carefully catalogued. The large clay jars (pithoi) were presumably used for storage of olive oil.

The frescoes revealed a very affluent society. Frescoes are wall paintings done when the plaster is wet, so that the watercolors penetrate it. Young men are depicted bare-chested, wearing some kind of wraparounds. Young women are depicted bare-breasted, wearing embroidered dresses and jewelry. Men and women participate in the sport of bull-leaping. Bull-leaping is practiced today in Spain, called in Spanish "concurso de recortes."

Three kinds of scripts were discovered, named by Evans: pictographs (hieroglyphics), Linear A, and Linear B. Evans made significant efforts to decipher them without success. Linear B was deciphered in the 1950s and proved to be a form of archaic Mycenaean Greek. Linear A remains undeciphered and it is not known whether it belongs to Indo-European, Semitic, or other group of languages.

MOCHLOS and KNOSSOS, CRETE

Mochlos Island, Crete, Greece



Fresco at Knossos

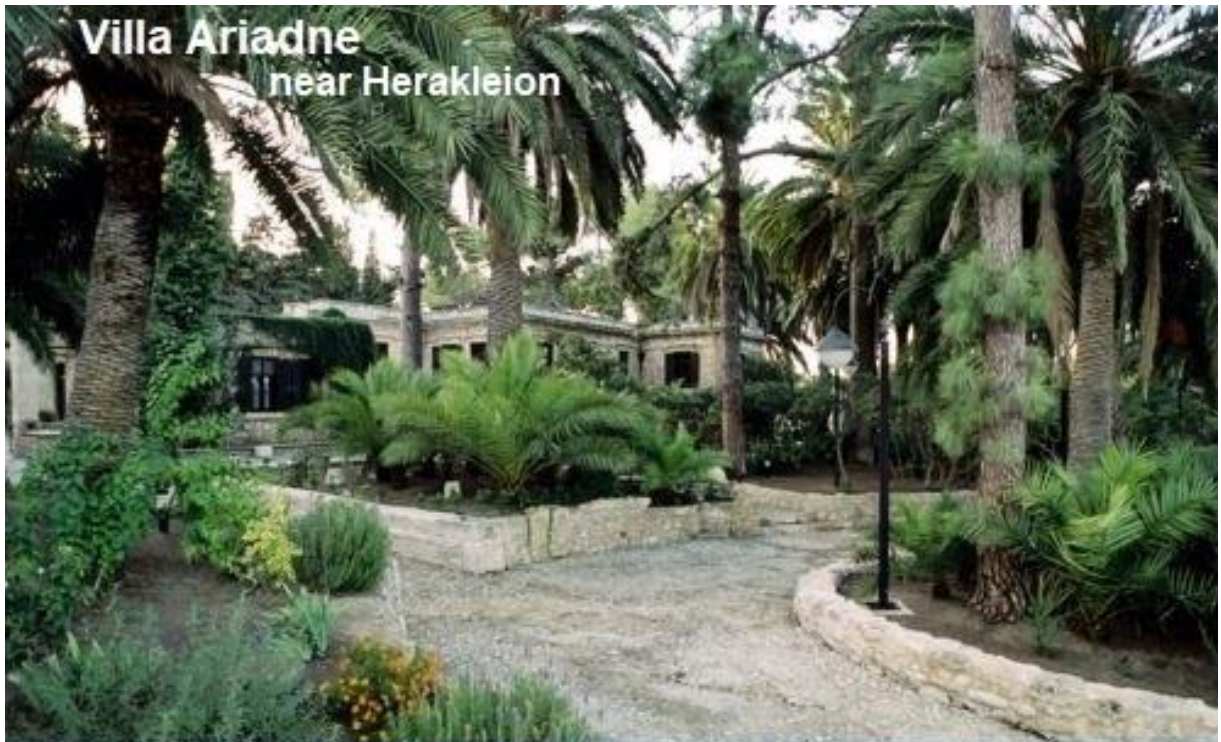
The first settlers in Crete arrived probably around 7,000 BC from Asia Minor (present day Turkey), but archaeological evidence is very limited. At Mochlos, excavations have uncovered remains dating from 3100 BC. Mochlos is a small island 10 km east of Agios Nikolaos and just 150 meters from the coastline. It was attached to the mainland of Crete at Minoan times. The term Minoan was assigned by Arthur Evans to the civilization in Crete, based on the mythological King Minos and the Minotaur. There is no historical or archaeological evidence that Knossos was ever ruled by a king by such a name. In fact, there is no evidence of a male ruler and it appears that the most revered person was a priestess.

The throne that Evans found at **Knossos palace** was not for a king but for a priestess. The Cretans were worshipping a female deity, perhaps Demeter, goddess of harvest and agriculture. It has been proposed that her name originates from Ge(a) Meter (Mother Earth). Evans wanted to reconstruct Knossos and create an open-air museum to be accessible to the general public. He succeeded in that, but he has been criticized by archaeologists for too much reconstruction, which may not correspond to the historical truth, but to personal bias assisted by overenthusiastic restorers. Evans had hired Swiss artist Émile Gilliéron, and his son as archaeological illustrators. Both were very skillful artists. The restorations are artistic masterpieces and replicas have been sold all around the world. In Minoan frescos, including the bull-leaping one, men are painted dark and women pale white.

There was one thing that Evans left undone when he died in 1941 (aged 90): He was unable to decipher any of the two Minoan scripts that he had discovered and named (Linear A and Linear B). **Michael Ventris**, was a 14-year-old schoolboy when he attended one of Evans's lectures in London, in 1936. Ventris's father was from a prominent English family of army officers. His mother had Jewish and Polish roots. He grew up in Switzerland and learned quickly German and French, he was speaking Polish with his mother and he acquired fluency in several other languages. He became obsessed with the Linear B script. After considerable efforts he proved that **Linear B** was an archaic form of Mycenaean Greek, and announced it on BBC in 1952. Unfortunately, Ventris died as a result of a car accident in 1956, aged 34.

Linear A was used prior to the arrival and occupation of Crete by the Myceneans, circa 1450 BC. It appears that the Thera volcanic eruption, circa 1600, had a serious impact on social economic and political life in Crete. The tsunami most likely killed considerable number of people in the coastal areas and the volcanic ash and pumice devastated the agriculture sector. That was the start of decline of the Minoan civilization. The Minoans did not have fortifications and they were easy prey to the warlike Myceneans. The conquerors started using the Linear script to write their own language: Greek. Linear A remains undeciphered to this day.

HERAKLION, CRETE



Villa Ariadne was built in 1906 by Arthur Evans as his residence and place of work related to the excavations at Knossos. It is connected not only with the ancient history of Crete, but also with World War II. It was the residence of the commander of the German occupation forces. General Kreipe was kidnapped on his way to the Villa, by Englishman **Patrick Leigh Fermor** and his group of Greek resistance fighters (αντάρτες).

Fermor was born in London in 1915, studied classics and was inspired by Lord Byron. He travelled through Germany, Hungary, and the Balkans. Between 1935 and 1939 he lived mostly in Greece and Romania. During the war he lived on the mountains of Crete among resistance fighters and was involved in several operations against the forces of occupation. He meticulously planned the kidnapping of General Friedrich-Wilhelm Müller who was responsible for the massacre of thousands, of innocent civilians. However, before the plan could be executed, Müller was replaced by General Kreipe, who came to Crete from the Russian front. Fermor decided to proceed with the kidnapping.

In the evening of April 26, 1944 as Kreipe was driven from his Herakleion headquarters to Villa Ariadne, his car was stopped on the road by Major Leigh Fermor and Captain W. Stanley Moss, dressed in German uniforms. As Fermor was asking for “Papiere”, half a dozen Cretan fighters jumped out from behind the bushes and overpowered the general and his driver. With Moss driving and Fermor wearing the general’s hat, they drove through 22 German check points with Kreipe in captivity. Greek born British soldier and businessman Dennis Ciclitira (Διονύσης Τσικλητήρας) organized the transportation of General Kreipe from a port in south Crete to Egypt. From there, Kreipe was taken to a prisoner-of-war camp in Canada and then to Wales. He was released in 1947.

At the invitation of TV talk show host Nikos Mastorakis, the Cretan resistance fighters, Fermor and Kreipe met again in 1972 on live TV (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSUya-FPQWQ>). Only Moss was missing. He had died prematurely in 1965. Kreipe’s kidnapping was made into a movie “Ill Met by Moonlight” based on Moss’s book by the same title, with Fermor portrayed by Dirk Bogarde. Fermor built a house and lived with his wife at Kardamyli, Peloponnese, where he wrote several award-winning books, in his chiselled writing style. He died in 2011 (aged 96) having bequeathed his house to the Benaki Museum.

In March 1945, Dennis Ciclitira negotiated a prisoner exchange between the Germans and the resistance fighters. Among the Greeks released was Konstantinos Mitsotakis, who later became prime minister of Greece and father of the current Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis. Ciclitira also arranged for the signing of the unconditional **surrender of the Germans, at Villa Ariadne, on May 10, 1945**. In fact, this was the last act of World War II in Europe (elsewhere, the surrender was on "Victory in Europe Day" of May 8)

PHAISTOS and MATALA, CRETE



Ancient Phaistos was the second-largest city of Minoan Crete, located about 55 km southwest of Heraklion, near the south coast. It was excavated by Italian archaeologist Luigi Pernier in the early 1900s, around the same time as Knossos. During the Mycenaean invasion circa 1450 BC, the palace was destroyed and never used again. The excavations resulted in less spectacular finds than those at Knossos.

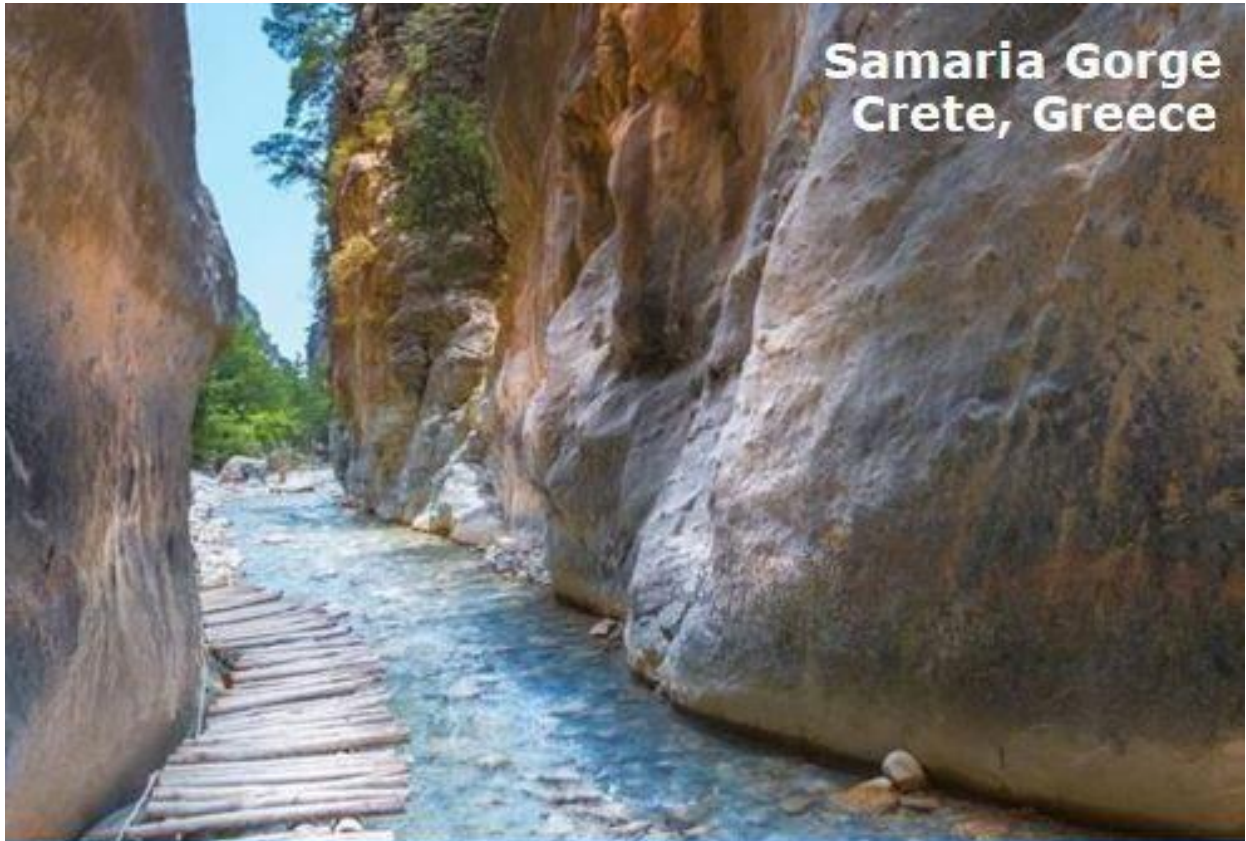
The destruction must be viewed in the context of the major historical events of the Late Bronze Age and the **collapse of civilization** in the eastern Mediterranean. The decline started with the Thera (Santorini) eruption circa 1620 BC. The Mycenaeans invaded around 1450 BC. The exodus of the Israelites from Egypt took place around 1250 BC and the Trojan War probably 1194-1184 BC. The collapse of civilized society occurred in the year 1177 BC, according to Professor Eric H. Cline of George Washington University. The collapse is frequently attributed to the hypothetical "sea peoples," migrants who arrived in large numbers from other parts of Europe. Some historians believe that they were from Sardinia, while others think they were Dorian Greeks. The catastrophic process took place over many years, during which cities and towns were abandoned in favor of remote mountain villages. The Dark Ages ensued until the beginning of the Archaic Age around 750 BC.

Among the most important finds at **Phaistos** was a 16-centimeter diameter clay **disc** stamped on both sides with hieroglyphic symbols. The symbols were not incised but impressed by "seals" on soft clay in a spiral from the outside towards the center. The disc was subsequently fired and hardened. Scholars and amateurs have been attempting to decipher it without success. Some authors claim to have deciphered it, aspiring to glory and fame, like Michael Ventris who deciphered Linear B.

Most scholars consider the Phaistos disc authentic, but some believe that the disc is a forgery. Questions about authenticity were raised due to the exceptionally pristine condition of the disc when Luigi Pernier discovered it. The discovery was in a room of the palace that was heavily damaged by an earthquake around 1700 BC, but the fragile disc was intact. Pernier did not have the skills to produce such a counterfeit artifact, but Arthur Evans's team of Gilliéron father and son were truly skillful artists and brilliant restorers. A definitive answer on authenticity could be obtained if the Heraklion Museum allowed the disc to be subjected to thermoluminescence dating.

Matala was the port of Phaistos in Minoan times. It is famous for its large caves in the cliff. According to Greek mythology, Zeus abducted and brought the Phoenician princess **Europa** (Εὐρώπη) to Matala beach before seducing her at nearby Gortyna and fathering King Minos. "Europe" in Greek means "wide-gazing." In the 1960s, the Matala caves were popular with hippies who lived there year-round.

SAMARIA GORGE, CRETE



In late June 1990, I attended a scientific conference near Heraklion. Along with the other delegates, we took a bus to an elevation of 1230 m to begin the 16 km descent of the Samaria Gorge. The starting point, Xyloskalo, is south of Chania, and the endpoint is Agia Roumeli at the Libyan Sea. Professor Gerald Fuller from Stanford University and I decided to walk ahead of the others. He was fit from long-distance bicycling, and I was fit from long-distance jogging. The gorge is 150 m wide at its widest point and 3 m wide at its narrowest. There is a steep 600 m descent at the beginning, followed by downhill hiking on rocky ground. It took us 3 hours and 15 minutes, including a 20-minute rest, to reach the bright blue water at Agia Roumeli. It remains my most memorable arrival at a beach.

Among the delegates taken to the Samaria Gorge, there were a few older professors who didn't seem fit for a long hike. As expected, some had to be transported on mule-back and returned to the conference the next day. Most people needed 6-7 hours to reach Agia Roumeli. From there, we took a boat to Sfakia and then a bus back to the conference hotel.

Samaria is Europe's longest gorge. Optical illusions called **mirages**, caused by atmospheric conditions, have been known since ancient times. There are stories of seeing soldiers marching in the Libyan desert, about 250 km away. Locals report seeing men dressed in black (called Drosoulites) walking and marching on the beach at Frangokastelo (near Sfakia). According to folktales, these figures are believed to be the spirits of a few hundred dead soldiers who were defeated by an army of several thousand Turks in 1828. The appearance of these figures can be vivid at times, and there are accounts of Turks firing at them in 1890 and a German patrol doing the same during World War II.

In late October 1940, Italian troops invaded Greece but were pushed back into Albanian territory by the Greek armed forces. Hitler, preparing to invade Russia, aimed to secure his southern flank to protect the oil fields in Romania from Allied bombers based in Greek airfields. German troops invaded Greece through Bulgaria on April 6, 1941, and reached Athens on April 27.

The Germans decided to invade Crete (May 20) using paratroopers and troops in gliders. The operation, codenamed "Unternehmen Merkur" in German, was led by General Kurt Student. Crete was defended by approximately 16,000 Britons, 8,000 New Zealanders, 6,500 Australians, and 10,000 Greeks. General Bernard Freyberg, a New Zealander with partial Austrian-German ancestry, commanded the Allied Forces.

CHANIA, CRETE



Chania is located at the northwest of Crete. The tranquility of Maleme Beach does not reveal the bloody history of the nearby Maleme Airfield during World War II. Crete was of great strategic importance for the British, and the Germans decided to capture it at any cost after they had completed the occupation of Greece in April 1941.

The Allies had made use of intelligence decrypted from the Enigma machine for the first time. The Germans were misinformed, probably intentionally by the Chief of the Abwehr, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris. The admiral wanted the world to believe that he was related to the hero of the Greek War of Independence, Konstantinos Kanaris, but there is no documented evidence for that. The Germans were informed that the Cretans would welcome them due to their anti-monarchist feelings. Additionally, the troop strength of the Allies was substantially underestimated.

In the morning of May 20, 1941, General Kurt Student ordered the **air invasion**. He had at his disposal 500 Junker JU 52 aircraft, each capable of carrying 12 paratroopers, and 100 gliders with a capacity for 8 fully armed fighters. The paratrooper drop was preceded by extensive bombing from hundreds of aircraft. Parachuting was a new development, and the parachutists were suspended from a single harness without being able to control anything. Many of them were shot and killed in the air by the Allied defenders, aided also by Cretan civilians. The first objective was the capture of Maleme Airfield.

The German death toll was horrendous. For three days, no information about the **Battle of Crete** was allowed in German newspapers or on the radio. Eventually, Maleme was captured, and the Germans were able to land transport planes with a considerable number of troops. The commander of the Allied forces, New Zealander Bernard Freyberg, was blamed for the fall of Maleme. Apparently, he had not made good use of intelligence about the airborne invasion because he believed in a seaborne landing of troops.

The Germans had air superiority and inflicted significant losses on the British ships, including at least a dozen sunk and more than 20 damaged. Approximately 2,000 British sailors and about 4,000 Allied ground troops were killed. The Germans' losses were about 4,000 dead and nearly 300 aircraft during the ten days of fighting. Most of the Germans killed are buried at a cemetery near Maleme. Hitler decided not to use paratroopers in the future for any major operations. The resistance by the civilian population outraged the Germans, and more than 500 Greeks were massacred.

When I was traveling by train to Germany for a summer job facilitated by I.A.E.S.T.E. at the BASF Chemical plant in 1964, I met a young woman from Crete. She told me that in May 1941, an 18-year-old German paratrooper landed on her family's property with a broken leg and other serious injuries. Her parents took care of him. After the war, their families became the best of friends, exchanging children for the summer months.

IOS



Ios Island is located north of Crete, between Santorini and Paros, in the Aegean. It was under the influence of the Minoans during the Bronze Age and subsequently the Mycenaeans, Phoenicians, Athenians, Ptolemies, Romans, Byzantines, Venetians, and Ottomans. It became part of Greece after the War of Independence of 1821. The permanent residents number about 2,000, but the population increases enormously during the summer months.

The island has strong connections with **Homer**. According to legend, he died and was buried here. Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are two of the greatest works of literature of all time. They are timeless literary masterpieces that have captivated the imagination of readers for more than 2,500 years. Of course, Homer was writing poetry, and the question has been raised as to what extent his stories relate to historical events. Was there a **Trojan War**?

The excavations of **Heinrich Schliemann** proved the existence of Troy in the northwest of Asia Minor (near modern Turkey's Hissarlik) and Mycenae in the Peloponnese. Schliemann's critics asserted that the Troy ruins were of a rather insignificant city, which would not be worth a protracted ten-year war described by Homer. Professor Manfred Korfmann of the University of Tuebingen, Germany, was given special permission by the Turkish government and carried out excavations from 1988 to 2004. He employed hundreds of people and came up with the conclusion that "The most recent excavations have determined that Troy, which now covers about seventy-five acres [300,000 square meters], is about fifteen times larger than previously thought" (JSTOR, Vol. 57, pp 36-41 (2004)).

Homer refers to Ilios, which appears to be a Greek rendering of what Hittite rulers called Wilusa. The name of King Alaskandu appears in Hittite tablets, which is obviously related to Alexandros, the alternate name of Paris, prince of Troy, son of Priam. There is plenty of archaeological evidence that Troy was destroyed and reconstructed several times. The destruction between Troy VI and Troy VII appears to be due to a huge fire, and this happened around 1180 BC. However, there are some discrepancies. King Alaksandu lived about 90 years earlier than the destruction of 1180 BC. It is likely that Homer combined the oral traditions of perhaps 100 years of armed conflict into the ten years of the Trojan War. He immortalized the memories of actual events in his masterpieces of epic poetry.

PAROS



Paros, Grece



Paros is one of the Cyclades Islands in the central Aegean Sea, located about 150 kilometers from Piraeus, the port city of Athens. The island was known for its fine white Parian marble, which was highly admired in ancient Greece. However, during the two invasions of Greece by the Persians, Paros sided with the invaders. After defeating the Persians at Marathon, Miltiades attacked Paros with a fleet of seventy ships. He suffered a leg wound during the battle, which eventually led to his death. Paros also supported the Persians during the second Greco-Persian War (Thermopylae, Artemisium, Salamis) and had to pay a heavy fine to Athens after the Persians were defeated.

In the Middle Ages, Paros was part of the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium) until the **Fourth Crusade**. After the death of Saladin in 1193, the Franks and the Pope decided to organize another crusade to liberate the Holy Land from the Muslims. The Venetians were commissioned to build enough ships to transport 35,000 knights and foot soldiers, and in return, they were promised a compensation of 90,000 silver marks for their services. However, only 12,000 crusaders showed up and they were only able to pay about 50,000 marks.

The **Venetians** proposed to the crusaders that they would accept help in looting Zara in Croatia, as a substitute for the missing payment. Around 20,000 crusaders and Venetians sacked Zara in November of 1202. During this time, a Byzantine prince (later known as Alexios IV Angelos) was living in exile with his brother-in-law in Swabia (southwestern Germany). He asked the crusaders to go to Constantinople and restore him to his father's throne. In return, he promised to pay 200,000 silver marks and bring the Greek Orthodox Church under the authority of the Pope (Innocent III). Constantinople, with a population of more than 400,000, was the largest and wealthiest city in Europe at the time. The Venetians and the crusaders laid siege to the city in 1203 and forced the crowning of Emperor Alexios IV. However, after a few months, he was overthrown and killed by Alexios Doukas. Venetian Doge Enrico Dandolo decided not to negotiate with the new ruler for the promised payment but instead chose to capture and loot the city. The walls were breached on April 12, 1204. The destruction began with a massive fire, followed by rape, killings, and ransacking.

This event marked the greatest loss of art in the history of the world. Even the precious objects in the sarcophagi of buried emperors like Constantine, Justinian, and several others were taken. The golden altar in Hagia Sophia was cut into pieces and transported on mules. Numerous giant bronze statues were destroyed, and thrown into smelters to produce cheap coins. The quadriga of four life-size horses was transported to Venice and placed on top of St. Mark's Church.

The Latins controlled Constantinople until 1261 when it came under Greek control once again. However, Paros and the other islands in the Cyclades Archipelago were ruled by Venice until they were annexed by the Ottoman Empire in 1579. Paros and the nearby smaller and even more picturesque island of **Antiparos** attract a lot of tourists during the summer months.

MYKONOS



Mykonos is Greece's most **cosmopolitan island** and one of the most expensive vacation spots in the world. It all started in the late 1950s when Mykonos was just another fishing island. At that time, the world's number one celebrity was Soraya, the Empress of Iran. Soon after Soraya's divorce (1958), she was invited by her Greek friend Vanda Nikoloudi to go and spend some time together in Mykonos. Paparazzi and journalists went to Mykonos but could not find the two women, so they reported about the bright white homes, sandy beaches, windmills, and crystal-clear blue water. Soraya visited Mykonos and the other Aegean islands on several other occasions. In the 1960s, the expression "to do the islands" was coined by guests on yachts owned by Greek shipping magnates like Onassis and Niarchos.

Soraya's marital problems were much more than gossip in the pink press. It was also the supply of Iranian oil that depended on the stability of the monarchy. The Soviets were interested in the British-controlled oil wells. Italy's Enrico Mattei, founder of the ENI petroleum conglomerate, had close contacts with the Shah. Mattei was killed when a bomb exploded in his plane in 1962. ENI's current annual revenues amount to about \$150 billion.

Mykonos has been inhabited since prehistoric times. After the Persian wars, it was under the influence of Athens. The nearby island of **Delos** was the official meeting place of an association of Greek city-states known as the Delian League. After the fall of Constantinople to the Crusaders in 1204, it came under Venetian control. During the Greek revolution (1821) against the Ottoman Empire, Mykonos played a very important role due to Manto Mavrogenous.

Manto Mavrogenous was born in Trieste (then part of the Habsburg Empire) to a very wealthy aristocratic Greek family with roots in Mykonos and connections with Wallachia (Romania). At one point, her family owned 3/4 of Mykonos. At the age of 18, she went to the Vienna Congress (1814-1815) to argue for the Greek cause for independence. Her intelligence, ability to speak four languages, and her good looks enabled her to have an audience with several important personalities, including Ioannis Kapodistrias, later the first head of the modern Greek state.

In Greece, she spent her immense wealth on the Greek War of Independence against the wishes of her family. She bought several ships and paid for equipment, weapons, crew, and fighting men, who fought in many battles against the Ottoman Turks. She got engaged to Demetrios Ypsilantis (after whom the city of Ypsilanti, Michigan, is named). However, her engagement was dissolved due to political interference. By the time Greece became an independent kingdom in the 1830s, Mavrogenous was a woman of limited financial resources. When she applied to King Othon for a pension, the royal commission replied that they were not authorized to give pensions to female revolutionary fighters, but they could give her a pension as a widow. She refused, saying that she was never married. She moved to Paros to live with relatives and died impoverished in 1848.

HYDRA and SPETSES



Hydra and Spetses are located near the coast of Peloponnese. On both islands, private cars are not allowed. The only automobiles found on Hydra are fire and garbage trucks. Spetses has a more.... liberal policy and permits private motorcycles, horse-drawn carriages, as well as a few taxis and buses. Public transportation on Hydra relies on horses, mules, and donkeys.

Hydra has been a popular destination for writers and artists since the 1950s. The island became widely known after the filming of the 1957 hit movie "Boy on a Dolphin" with Sophia Loren. Canadian singer and songwriter **Leonard Cohen** resided there full-time in the 1960s and met his muse, Marianne Ihlen, who was the wife of Norwegian writer Axel Jensen. Currently, a TV movie titled "So long Marianne" is being filmed on Hydra, Oslo and Montreal. Cohen purchased a house on Hydra, which is still owned by the Cohen family. There is even a street on the island named after him. Spetses began attracting European royalty and high society following the construction of the Poseidonion luxury hotel in the early 1900s.

Both islands hold significant historical importance in modern Greece. The inhabitants are Arvanites, who migrated to southern Greece from Albania during the 1300s and 1400s and later settled on Hydra and Spetses to escape persecution by the Venetians or Ottomans. They became prosperous naval merchants in the late 1700s, known for breaking the blockade to supply wheat to the French during the Napoleonic Wars.

Andreas Miaoulis, who spoke Arvanitika (an Albanian dialect) like the rest of the residents on Hydra, is considered Greece's greatest naval hero during the revolution of 1821. Other notable families on the island include the Kountouriotis and Kriezis families. Members from these three families have served as prime ministers of Greece. It is remarkable that despite its small population of 2,000, Wikipedia lists 39 "notable people" from Hydra.

Laskarina Bouboulina was born in Constantinople (Istanbul) while her pregnant mother was visiting her father, who was from Hydra and had been imprisoned for participating in the Orlov Revolt of 1770. After her father's death, her mother remarried, and they moved to Spetses when Laskarina was very young. She married at the age of 17 and had three children before her husband was killed in a battle against Algerian pirates. Later, she remarried a wealthy shipowner named Bouboulis, took his name, and had three more children. After her second husband was also killed while fighting pirates, Bouboulina herself took command and expanded the family's wealth.

She actively participated in several battles against the Ottoman Turks in Peloponnese, commanding her own ships and providing weapons, ammunition, and money to the fighters. During the Greek civil war of 1824-1825, she was forced to return to Spetses. One of her sons eloped with the daughter of a prominent family. When the girl's family came to Bouboulina's house to demand her return, Bouboulina appeared at a window and adamantly refused. Someone fired a gun, and Bouboulina was tragically killed by a single bullet to her head at the age of 54.

SAMOS



Samos is located near the coast of Turkey, with the closest distance being 1.6 km. It is a relatively large island with a permanent population of over 30,000. Samos has been renowned since ancient times for its high-quality wines. Mathematician Pythagoras, philosopher Epicurus, and astronomer Aristarchus, who was the first to propose that the Earth rotates around the Sun, were born in Samos.

In the 6th century BC, a tunnel serving as an aqueduct was dug on the island. This tunnel, named after the engineer **Eupalinos**, is 1036 meters long and approximately 180 cm high and wide. It is remarkable that the tunnel was dug from both sides, and the two sides met with very little error, considering the lack of accurate instruments at the time.

Pythagoras is best known for his theorem, which states that in a right-angled triangle, the sum of the squares of the two sides equals the square of the hypotenuse. Several other mathematical discoveries are attributed to him. Before settling in Croton, southern Italy (Magna Grecia), Pythagoras traveled extensively in Egypt and the East. He established a brotherhood of about three hundred members dedicated to moral and philosophical inquiries and teachings. However, due to their secrecy, the brotherhood became very unpopular, and their headquarters were attacked and burned down by a local mob. While many escaped with their lives, the fate of Pythagoras remains unknown.

Epicurus' philosophy aimed at the attainment of a happy life of tranquility called "ataraxia," which can be interpreted as a kind of meditative bliss free from fear. Epicurus emphasized the avoidance of suffering and freedom from disturbance. In modern English usage, an "epicurean" refers to a person with refined tastes, particularly in food and drink.

Aesop was born in Phrygia, Asia Minor (Anatolia), and lived in Samos as a slave before gaining his freedom. He lived from c. 620 to c. 564 BC. Aesop is credited with hundreds of fables that have been translated into Western languages. Many everyday English quotes are due to Aesop, such as "Much ado about nothing," which I thought was Shakespeare's, but actually originated from Aesop. Other well-known quotes include "Birds of a feather flock together," "Do not count your chickens before they are hatched," "Sour grapes," and "Don't cry over spilt milk," to name a few.

During my visit to Samos in June 2015, I remember seeing a new group of 30-50 illegal migrants outside the police station every day. They were arriving from the nearby coast of Turkey. These migrants appeared to be well-groomed, and their outfits and duffel bags were color-coordinated. At that time, most EU countries had a liberal policy for admitting refugees and economic migrants. Around one million people traveled through Greece in 2015, heading to central and northern Europe. In October of that year, during my visit to Budapest, I found that the train station was off-limits to anyone without a "good" passport. Upon arriving in Vienna, I saw several hundred migrants at the railway station, apparently purchasing tickets for Germany.

CHIOS



Chios is located about 10 km away from the Turkish resort town of Çeşme. Its history dates back several thousand years. Homer was born there in the 8th century BC. Apparently, they had a form of democracy even before Athens, in the 6th century BC. The population was over 100,000, which is twice its current population. Prosperity continued during Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine times. Between 1304 and 1566, it was ruled by the **Genoese Giustiniani** family. In fact, Christopher Columbus lived in Chios in the 1470s before his voyages to the Americas. Giovanni Giustiniani was a prominent defender during the siege of Constantinople in 1453. He was wounded on May 29, and the morale of the troops weakened when they saw him leaving on a ship. He died a couple of days later and was buried in Chios.

Under the **Ottomans**, Chios was a very prosperous island, mainly due to mastic gum, a resinous product from native trees. It was used extensively in the Middle East in desserts such as Turkish delight (lokum), beverages, soaps, perfumes, and as a chewing gum. Chios was also one of the most important centers of silk production. During the Greek revolution of 1821, the leaders of Chios were reluctant to join, fearing the loss of their security and prosperity. When a few hundred armed-men from Samos arrived, the locals helped them launch an assault against the Turkish garrison.

In April 1822, some 30,000 Ottoman troops landed under the command of the Grand Admiral of the Ottoman Empire, Kara Ali Pasha. They had orders from the Sultan to kill all males over the age of 12 and all women over the age of 40. It is estimated that 30,000 people were killed, about 45,000 were enslaved, and some 20,000 became refugees. Historians believe that the massacre of Chios was in revenge for Greek atrocities after the fall of Tripolitsa in the Peloponnese, where 8,000 Turkish civilians perished in September 1821. French painter Eugène Delacroix created a large painting over 4 meters tall depicting the Chios massacre. The news of the events, Delacroix's painting, and poems by Victor Hugo created outrage against the Ottoman Turks in Europe and in favor of the Greek cause for independence.

The Greeks decided to retaliate by burning the Turkish flagship. The operation was carried out by **Constantinos Canaris**, a young sailor from the nearby island of Psara. The Turks were celebrating the end of Ramadan in June 1822. Canaris approached on his fire ship under the cover of darkness, latched it to the Ottoman flagship, set it on fire, and escaped on a smaller boat. 2,000 Turks perished, including Grand Admiral Kara Ali Pasha. He was buried in Chios, and his grave is in the old town. Canaris continued his revolutionary activities and later served as the Prime Minister of Greece.

Despite the massacre and destruction, Chios reemerged as a center of maritime trade under Ottoman rule. It became part of Greece in 1912. Currently, 16% of the global shipping tonnage is Greek-owned, and one-third of that is owned by shipowners with family roots from Chios.

SKIATHOS, SKOPELOS and ALONNISOS



Circa 1984



Lalaria Beach, SKIATHOS



SKOPELOS

Skiathos, Skopelos, and Alonissos are three of the 24 islands known as the **Sporades** (the scattered ones), located near the east coast of Greece and not far from my hometown of Volos. Skiathos is the most popular tourist destination due to its numerous beautiful sandy beaches. Skopelos is one of the greenest islands in the Aegean Sea, with several sandy beaches. Alonissos has pebbly beaches and rocky hills. Skopelos was the backdrop for the 2008 hit movie *Mamma Mia*. Some of the wedding scenes were filmed in the little church shown in the picture.

Skiathos is just 4 km east of the Mount Pelion peninsula. The fleet of the Persian King Xerxes was badly damaged by a storm on the shores of Skiathos in 480 BC, before the sea battle at Artemisium (just south, off the coast of Euboea) and the land battle at Thermopylae against the 300 Spartans. The Persian fleet was eventually defeated in the Battle of Salamis (near the coast of Athens).

The Sporades were part of the Roman Empire and later the East Roman (Byzantine) Empire. For about seventy years, they were ruled by the Venetian Ghisi family (1204-1277) before reverting to the Byzantines. In 1538, they were conquered by the Grand Ottoman Admiral Hayreddin Barbarossa (aka Hızır Reis), son of a Greek Orthodox mother and a Muslim father. They remained under Ottoman rule until 1829.

From around 1350, the inhabitants of Skiathos (more than 1000) lived in the safety of the naturally protected **Kastro** (castle in modern Greek) away from the coast, on top of an impressive rock, due to frequent pirate raids. I heard an interesting local legend from a relative from Skiathos. During a siege, they wanted to repair certain parts of the castle walls. There was plenty of limestone around, but water was in very short supply, and they could not make lime mortar. However, they had lots of wine and used it instead of water.

At the Monastery of Evangelistria on Skiathos, the first Greek flag was designed and woven, featuring a white cross on a sky-blue background. In 1807, Nikotsaras, a prominent warlord from Thessaly, gathered several warlords, including Kolokotronis and Miaoulis, and they all swore an oath to fight for Greek independence and freedom in front of the **first Greek flag**, blessed by the Igumen (abbot) of Evangelistria. The flag design shown in the picture was originally used for the Greek navy and became the official national flag after 1978.

Novelist and prolific short story writer **Alexandros Papadiamantis** (1850-1911) was born in Skiathos, moved to Athens as a young man, and lived there writing for newspapers and translating from French. He returned to Skiathos later in his life. Papadiamantis is to Greece what Irish-Greek Lafcadio Hearn is to Japan. They are the national storytellers. My 70-page travelogue "In the Footsteps of Lafcadio Hearn aka Koizumi Yakumo" is downloadable from <http://hdl.handle.net/11375/27486>.



SKOPELOS is the greenest of the islands of the Aegean Sea



Alonnisos boasts a picturesque port (Patitiri) and a reconstructed old town (Chora) on a hilltop



SKIATHOS Airport, world's lowest landings



ABOUT OTHER GREEK ISLANDS

Greece has about 3,000 islands and from them 227 are currently inhabited. I wrote about the **IONIAN ISLANDS** in my travelogue *'In the Footsteps of Lafcadio Hearn aka Koizumi Yakumo'*, which is downloadable from <http://hdl.handle.net/11375/27486>. **Kythira** is south of Peloponnese where the Ionian Sea meets the Aegean. West of mainland Greece is **Zakynthos, Kefalonia, Ithaca, Lefkada, Paxoi** and **Corfu** (known also as **Eptanisa**, it means 7 islands).

Euboea (Evia), Greece's second largest island (after Crete), is separated from the mainland by the 60-meter-wide Euripus Strait. The strait is known for its strong tidal currents which reverse direction four times a day. The speed reaches about 12 km per hour. Large islands that I have not included in my travelogue are: **Lesbos, Lemnos, Naxos, Thassos, Andros, Karpathos, Icaria, Skyros, Tinos, Samothrace, Milos, Kea, Amorgos, Kalymnos, Kythnos, Astypalaia, Salamis, Syros, Aegina, Serifos and Kasos**. I have sailed past nearly all these islands, but I have not stayed overnight on any of them, except on Aegina.



At **Achilleion Palace**, built in 1890 for Kaiserin Elisabeth of Austria (aka Sisi). The Kaiserin was in mourning the tragic loss of her son Rudolf at Mayerling, with his lover Mary von Vetsera, the daughter of Eleni Baltazzi of Chios and Constantinople. This palace was also used by Kaiser Wilhelm II of Prussia for his summer vacations in the early 1900s.

AEGEAN SEA





According to mythology, Aegeus, the king of Athens and father of Theseus, was saddened when he saw black-masted ships returning from Crete. He jumped into the sea, killing himself from a rock roughly where my picture was taken. The **Aegean Sea** was named after him

