

KYTHERIAN WORLD HERITAGE FUND

Gilchrist explains the importance of the book *Life in Australia* in the genesis of Ellinismos in this country

EXTRACTS from Hugh Gilchrist's Australians and Greeks. Volume II. The middle Years

Chapter XIV: Guides for the Greeks; pages 253-257.

Author: Sponsored by Ioannis D. Kominos (John D. Comino) and largely written by

Georgios Kentavros and the brothers Kosmas and Emmanouil Andronikos

When Published: 1916

Publisher: Australia Press

Availability: 1916 edition. Out of print. Rare. Expensive.

2009 reproduction in both Greek and English. Inexpensive. Available by emailing: transoz@bigpond.net.au, or, info@atomindustries.com.au

Description: Hard cover, 310 pages.

Between 1915 and 1939 three Greek books were published in Australia. All had a similar purpose: to guide Australia's Greeks and promote their welfare. What they also did was to raise comparisons between aspects of the Greek and the Australian way of life, as then lived.

I Zoi en Afstralia

I Zoi en Afstralia – Life in Australia – which appeared in 1916, was sponsored by Ioannis D. Kominos (John D. Comino) and largely written by Georgios Kentavros and the brothers Kosmas and Emmanouil Andronikos, Sydney merchants and leaders of the Greek Orthodox Community. Sub-titled “An Encyclopaedic Book, with many Artistic Pictures, Biographical Notes on Prominent Citizens, Interesting Statistics, a full Commercial Guide, etc, etc”, it also recorded exemplary instances of successful Greek enterprise in Australia. Its aim, as stated by Kentavros, was “to provide useful information about Australia and the Greek community there, both for those already living in Australia and for those who come here in the future.” He firmly denied, however, any intention to stimulate migration, saying: “Not for one minute did we have that in mind, nor have we told a single untruth which might lead people to regard us as advocates of emigration.”

A hard-cover book of 310 pages, *I Zoi en Afstralia* was published in Sydney by the Australia Press. Its setting and printing, however, were done in Melbourne by the Australian Printing and Publishing Company Limited, which, directed by Efstratios Venlis, was printing Australia's first Greek newspaper, *Afstralia*. Ten thousand copies were printed, of which the majority were to be donated to various official bodies concerned with Greek welfare at home and abroad. Today it

is one of Australia's rarest books. media release

I Zoi en Afstralia provided facts, figures and photographs of many aspects of

Australian life: history, population, constitution, government, industry, transport, and communications with Europe. It outlined – very sketchily – the history of Greek settlement in Australia, especially in New South Wales, and of the activities of the Greek Orthodox Church and its Sydney and Melbourne Communities.

Practical information was offered on Australian immigration policy, labour laws and business practices, and on the functions of the Greek Consulates. Some 215 brief biographies followed, in most cases adorned with photographs, of Greeks who had succeeded in Australia – most of them as shop-keepers in New South Wales – and who were praised for their industry, philanthropy and philhellenism.

Compilation of the book, Kentavros declared, had been no easy task; nor had its compilers received as much co-operation from their compatriots as they had hoped.

Many of our compatriots refused or disregarded our requests for information – and efforts to identify every Greek in Australia had fallen far short of success. When attempts to elicit replies to letters proved largely futile the authors had visited Greeks wherever they could be found – a slow and costly process; a tour of New South

Wales had cost about £1,500.

When the text was nearing completion, Kentavros wrote, “serious difficulties occurred, due to jealousy, indifference and misunderstanding”, and the outbreak of war in 1914 had created “insurmountable obstacles.”

“For 14 months we laboured to produce this very difficult and expensive publication, and achieved what many thought impossible: the production of the first book in Australia, about Australia, in the Greek language.”

For its completion he gave credit to the patriotic faith and strong will of John D. Comino, and to the help provided by four Brisbane Greeks: Christos Frylingos, Emmanouil Meimarakis, Theodoros Kominos and Ioannis Mavrokefalos (John Black), and by TM. Mantzaris in Newcastle and Konstantinos Argyropoulos (Fisher) in Parkes, and also Greeks in up-country New South Wales, “without whose enthusiastic subscriptions the book would never have published”. (Its price was not recorded.) In a diplomatically-worded reference to the host country Kentavros added:

“On the whole, the laws of Australia, which are to be found in no other country, and the excellent results of their enforcement, have greatly contributed to our venture”; and no official obstacles had been placed in its way while Australia was at war.

The Andronicus brothers seem to have provided most of the book's factual information, to which Kentavros added an account of his tour in 1914 of the New

South Wales north coast. Greeks in other Australian states received scant mention, and were clearly beyond the authors' financial resources. Despite its shortcomings, however, the authors felt that they had produced a work

which Greek communities everywhere would value.

I Zoi en Afstralia's moral tone was lofty and its message specific: work, honesty, philanthropy, compliance with Australia's laws, and devotion to the Hellenic fatherland. Its biographical sketches were strenuously complimentary, although Kentavros disclaimed any intention to publicise individuals, saying the aim was to tell the truth about those who had created something good by honesty, industry and efficiency – and “to prod those who think that success comes through a philosophy of ‘easy come, easy go’, or who offer the excuses that the present is not a propitious time for achievement, or that Australians dislike foreigners, or that wages are too low and costs too high, or that nothing can be done unless one is supported”.

Writing of Australian immigration policy, the authors stated that persons with a

knowledge of farming were preferred, but that anyone free from contagious disease and able to work was allowed entry except “people of Oriental origin” (Chinese, Japanese, Indians and Africans), criminals deported from other countries during the last five years, depraved or mentally retarded persons, persons considered to be a danger to public security, and a few other categories; migrants might be subjected to a language examination, but that was “very rare and confined to certain types of case”; anyone entering Australia without official permission, however, risked six months imprisonment and a fine. Intending migrants were told that if they applied to the Australian High Commission in London they could expect an answer within 15 days, whereas an enquiry addressed to Australia would not be answered within less than three months.

Advice on nationality was also offered, including a warning by Consul Maniakis

that Australian nationality acquired by a Greek had absolutely no effect in Greece, and that a Greek who had not complied with his national obligations before leaving Greece would be prosecuted on his return there; indeed, that the only way to divest oneself of Greek nationality was to have it annulled by royal decree. Nor would a Greek be entitled to consular help unless he had paid his annual “residence fee” of eight shillings to the Consulate.

I Zoi en Afstralia conceded that a Greek could change his name in Australia without formality, but declared that it was better to do so officially and to announce it in the press. Many Greeks in Australia, it went on,

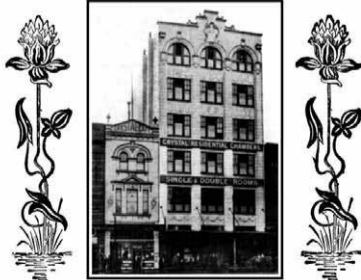


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HARALAMBOS NIK. SAMIOS

In one of the most central locations in the great city of Sydney stand two establishments together. One of these, consisting of five storeys, serves as a hotel and contains about 100 rooms. The other, consisting of three floors, is a richly furnished café/restaurant.

Any who gaze on these magnificent buildings can only admire the commercial spirit of the Greek who, without any help, in a foreign land,



manages in a short time, thanks to his construction of these splendid establishments, to be a notable contributor to the progress made by this great city. And so, admiration and praise are rightly the lot of the managers and owners, who come from Kythera, Messrs. Haralambos and Ioannis Nik. Samios, together with their cousin, Mr Konstantinos I. Kasimaris.

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IOANNIS ATH. LAZANAS

Hailing from Potamos, on Kythera, Mr Ioannis Ath. Lazanas, is married to the sister of the extremely wealthy Mr J. Comino. He is the owner and manager, together with his sons, of the lucrative establishment standing in one of the most central locations in the great city of Sydney.

Mr I. A. Lazanas is to be included among the successfully established Greeks of Australia.



Mr I. Ath. Lazanas with his sons.

GEORGIOS PAPANIKOLAOU

In the country town of Merriwa, in New South Wales, stands the establishment belonging to Mr G. Papanikolaou (Nicholas), from Pireaus, which he opened with his brother. Their commercial name is *Nicholas Bros.*

Messrs. the brothers Nikolau also have an ice factory in Merriwa. They are to be regarded as belonging to the successfully established Greeks, something that they have achieved through their ability and hard work.

