APPENDIX 1:

STORIES OF THE SPONGE FISHERS

Yannis Yérakis, with a preface by Spiro Ampelas

Preface: Yannis Yérakis was born in 1887 in Kalymnos (Dodecanese), then under the Ottoman Empire. At the end of his life, in the 1960s, he felt the need to write down some of his youthful memories in a school notebook, in order to bear witness, and also, as he said, "so as not to take them with him".

In 1900 (at the age of 13) he was sent to Russia, to work in a factory. This was a common practice at the time, because parents wanted to protect their children from poverty, and from jobs at sea, with their terrible associated dangers. But the working conditions in Tsarist Russia were so dreadful that after two years the young Yannis preferred to quit and return to his island to become a sponge diver.

At Kalymnos, sponge fishing had been practised since antiquity mainly by naked divers. In 1866, the arrival of the diving suit using compressed air, immediately referred to by the locals as the "machine" (and the divers using this device as "mechanicals"), shook this millennial state of affairs. The new technology had dramatic social consequences and soon led to a rarification of the resource in the shallowest waters. The "mechanicals" dived deeper, safety instructions were not respected, and numerous accidents occurred, often leading to paralysis or death. Naked divers, being less productive, no longer had a viable way to practise their ancestral technique. So when, in 1903, the Ottoman Empire banned the use of the diving suits, the naked divers nurtured hopes of a return to a "golden age".

That was the year when the 16 year old Yérakis decided to become a naked diver. This was during three fishing seasons, in the summers of 1903 to 1905. Again, though, the results were not up to his hopes and in 1906, when diving suits were once again permitted, he was obliged to return to St. Petersburg, where he was to live the experience of the October Revolution and its dramas. In 1921 he fled to Athens, and had to stay there, since by that time Kalymnos had fallen under Italian rule. He was only able to see his beloved home of Kalymnos again once the Dodecanese became part of Greece in 1947.

Twenty-eight years after his death, his *Sfoungarádhikes istoríes* ("Stories of the sponge fishers") were published in 1999 by the Kalymniot Association of Athens.

Yannis Yérakis had married Anastasia, a sister of my father, Jean Ampélas. Although my father had become a doctor to escape the fate of having to work in the sponge industry, he was for several years owner of a *gangáva* [sponge trawler boat] in Sfax (Tunisia), where he had settled, as had many of his island compatriots.

I wanted to translate this document into French, particularly for my descendants who do not read Greek. Maïa Fourt has strongly encouraged me and helped me in this process. Daniel Faget, a maritime historian at the University of Aix-Marseille, to whom I submitted my work, was impressed with the quality of Yérakis' testimony, and he prompted me to publish it in France, with a preface written by himself. (The manuscript – *Sponge Fishers : Kalymnos 1900 / St Petersburg 1917* – will be published in Paris by Éditions Cambourakis in early 2020.)

The following is a preview of some excerpts describing the fishing campaign of the summer of 1903. It is translated by Ed Emery of SOAS, to whom I express my deep thanks. My hope is that these short extracts will waken the interest of an English-language publisher, with a view to publishing the book in its entirety.

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SPONGE FISHERS / KALYMNOS 1900 / SAINT PETERSBURG 1917

Yánnis D. Yérakis

[*Extract*]

It is not the desire for literary fame that drives me to write these stories of the sponge fishermen.[1] In fact I am the worst placed for this because I am aware of my poor means, because of my age, my health and especially my lack of education. I did only two years of schooling after primary school. In my time (from 1890 to 1898), we did not have a college on our island of Kalymnos. Only rich families could afford to send their children to Vathy on the island of Samos, or Smyrna (mainly to the École Baxer), or elsewhere.

However, this serious handicap cannot be allowed to stand in the way of a project that is my duty, as regards the history of our island, since I personally had the luck (or the bad luck), to exercise an extraordinary job, that of a sponge fisherman. And moreover, this was during the most dramatic and most tragic period of that history, during the three summers of 1903, 1904 and 1905, the period in which the "machines" (the diving suits using compressed air) were banned, and when terrible accidents happened in Crete, to four of our naked divers, who were killed by sharks: Manolis Volarios, Matsos, Theophilos Mazoros and Nikitas Splangourias.

These tragic, overwhelming events, which shook our island to the core, will soon fade from our memories, because there has not yet been a historian to report them. Sixty years later, it is my duty to tell them, exactly as I saw and experienced them – and as an eyewitness for the first three.

I know that people have already written about sponges, sponge fishermen, sharks, the hard-hat divers, and so on, but it has always been in the form of stories or novels, at second or third hand. It is one thing to listen to a story, but another thing to have seen it, lived it and suffered the consequences. That is the reason why these facts are engraved in my memory, to the extent that, despite the passing of sixty years, I have the impression that they happened today. This puts an obligation on me to put them in writing, so that I do not carry them with me when I go, and allow them to disappear. One day there will be a researcher who will write the history of our island and our fishermen. He will be able to use this material as an indisputable testimony of truth and precision.

[*In the following, the second chapter of Yánnis Yérakis' memoir, he offers a detailed description of his first (1903) fishing season in Barbary, on the coasts of Libya and Egypt. He tells how the flotilla suffered attacks by sharks, but decided to soldier on.*]

[…] The year 1903 was a turning point in the history of our sponge fishermen and more generally of our island. Those who lived it surely did not forget it. This was the time when the diving suits were banned throughout the Ottoman territory. The dreams, the desires of our sponge fishermen, for decades, were finally realised. The "machines" had stopped…! The murderous and destructive machines that brought mourning and sadness, and which led to the whole island being dressed in black, had just been banned. Thanks to its naked divers, Kalymnos would regain its former glory and prosperity. The old days were coming back.

And this was after years of work and effort by a distinguished son of Kalymnos, the unforgettable Hippocrates Tavlarios "Pasha",[2] but also by a philhellene philosopher,

an especial friend of sponge fishermen, Charles Flegel,[3] a Polish Jew from Vilnius, who worked all his life for our cause. We owed the ban on diving suits to these two humanists.

[…] Unfortunately the "machines" only stopped for three or four years. Our opponents, the members of the plutocracy, were manoeuvring against this decision that had been taken in our favour. They would eventually win, and the use of the diving suit would once again be permitted.

But in the meantime, the fiestas and celebrations were in full swing in Kalymnos. We had never seen the like. Not even in the old days, the glory days of our divers. The taverns and cafes were always full. The violins, the lutes, and the bagpipes were heard everywhere, continually. The slogan was: "Down with poverty!" Our shipowners (those who financed the sponge expeditions) put their hand in their pockets, and since the diving suits had been forbidden, the boats belonging to the naked divers took over. As their set-up costs were relatively low (we could equip ten for the price of a single "machine" boat), a very large number of boats sailed out, with the few big caiques that remained. […] Lent passed, then Easter, and all the boats set off. There were many of them, but I cannot give the exact number.

I only know that seven or eight big caiques went to Barbary,[4] among them those of captains Sakellaris ("the Deaf"), Yannaros Tsangaris, Michaïlos Iakovou, the two little Billiris brothers (Michalis and Nikolas). Plus Michaïlos Koullias, who, although a peasant, had become captain of a big caique, with his brother Nikolas, the caulker.[5] Three or four large *trechandiria*[6] also sailed for the Barbary coast with, on average, twelve rowing boats carried on each.

Not counting the other boats of various types, more than sixty units set sail for Crete: mainly *trechantiria* and small *mahonnes*[7] (some just out of the yard, and the others, old hulls arranged for the occasion). Five or six older men got together, made an agreement, rented a caique and left for the sponges.

In addition to these there were also the boats that went to work in our Greek islands, the Cyclades and "Up there", as they say, in other words Chalkidiki (Mount Athos), in the "Bogázia" (Gallipoli, Marmara Sea, Koutalos), and to the Princes' Islands. "Up there" went the youngest ones, the apprentices, as part of their training. They worked with the "glass".[8] Each boat consisted of six to eight boys aged fifteen to eighteen. Each had his own glass. Half of them got into the water, holding it in their arms, swimming with their legs. They scanned the bottom through the glass. When they saw a sponge, they let go of the glass, let it float, and dived to pull out the sponge in question. The others, remaining on the boat with the captain, were exploring the seabed with tridents. When they found sponges, the captain called one of the swimmers to pick them. When the first ones got cold, they came back up, and the others went into the water, working shifts. The waters where they worked there were shallow, around two fathoms.[9] But they were capable of reaching five or six fathoms, sometimes more ...

By the end there were no men left on our island, whether young or old. All of them launched themselves, full of hope and enthusiasm, into the hunt for sponges.

The moment has come to speak also of myself, without wishing to push myself forward. I cannot do otherwise, since it is time to tell of events that I witnessed directly! As I said above, older men who knew each other well got together and formed a team. Then they found a funder willing to put up solidarity funding, and they rented a caique. It was a society of this kind that was formed by my father, Dimos N. Yérakis, Themélis Maïllis, Yánnis Gatanis, Nikolaos Spanias (nicknamed

"Vathyotis" – he was from Vathy) [10] and Mikès N. Kardoulias (known as "Bouyoukas"),[11] all of whom are now gone. They were all master divers, and to please my father they took me on as an apprentice. Which meant that I was going to have all the responsibilities without being paid, but I also had the right to dive, if I could, and to keep for myself all the sponges that I had collected.

It was the late Ieremias Tavlarios, brother of Hippocrates Pasha, who advanced the necessary money. We found a caique freshly out of the yard and we agreed with its owner, Andonis Zografakis, that we would rent it for the duration of the summer. They then recruited another rower, Yorgos Alachouzos and we started out on this brand new sailing boat. It was originally built by Anéfalos to transport watermelons and tomatoes from Kos. Its hull was that of a small-sized *mahonne*,[12] rigged in lateen sail, that is to say a mainsail, three jibs and a mizzen mast. Its dimensions were between two and two-and-a-half times the size of an ordinary boat. In addition to the crew of five divers mentioned above, there were the two rowers, and myself as apprentice.

We left Kalymnos on 30 April 1903, without any blessing, because we had vowed to put ourselves under the protection of the Virgin Portaritissa in Astypalia. The weather was beautiful. It was dark when we reached Astypalia. By dawn of the first of May we were at the pier at Kastro…[13]

We went to fetch the priest, and we carried the icon of the Most Holy to the caique, and proceeded to the blessing of the boat before sailing. We filled our barrels at the Moura well, the water of which is very famous. With the second rower, Alachouzos, who was also our cook, we picked up some wood. The chief rower, Antonis Zografakis, the owner of the boat, took responsibility for the ropes, the sails, and all the equipment.

The next day we sailed to Crete. We anchored in Sitia to get the "*kotsani"*, that is the fishing licence. A day later, we sailed for Cape Sideros, the northeastern tip of Crete. There, we anchored for the first time, in the late afternoon, to do the "*seftès*".[14] All the divers undressed. Everyone put his clothes in ball and crossed himself, and so did I. We wished each other good *seftès*, good summer, good harvest, etc. Each of the older men made two or three dives and brought out some "*kapadhika*".[15] For a first dive, the water was shallow, no more than eight to ten fathoms. As the first sponge was pulled out, amid the cheers, we hoisted the flag.

Our flags were banners representing various saints, according to the preference of each owner. Our island was then under the Turkish yoke, but with the exception of the big great transport caiques – and only when they were obliged – nobody hoisted the Ottoman flag.

[…] After each of the older men had made two or three dives for the *seftes*, and to "unclog their nostrils" as they said, my turn came. Having spent the last three years in Russia, I was a total beginner and I had to start in shallow waters. So we moved to get closer to the shore. There must have been six fathoms. I crossed myself, took the stone [16] in my arms, and I dived. I barely had time to realise what was happening to me before I found myself at the bottom. But I did not stay there. I immediately pulled the rope to give the signal and they pulled me up. I was covered in blood. Blood was flowing from my nose, and I felt a very strong pain in the ears and forehead, between the eyebrows. All shouted: "Hold on, my brave fellow!" That's what they always said in those cases. But this "fellow" had not picked a single sponge, or anything else for that matter! He had only hit bottom and had come back up again. After that we went to anchor in a creek, near Cape Sideros. The old men ordered me to put hot oil from

the night light in my ears and to rub them. That was the cure. In a few days I got used to it, and I took my place among the older men.

It was the 7th of May, the eve of St John the Theologian. The next day we did not work, because it was a holiday. The divers honoured the saints a lot, unlike the hard-hat divers, who never stopped. From there we travelled south to the eastern coast of Crete, the richest zone for sponges, and there we joined the caiques, the boats and the others. In total there were certainly more than 70 units, with captain Yannis Ganitis [17] in the lead, with his two boats. He was the "chief".

I need to explain. The sponge fishermen, especially the Kalymniots, all move together behind a captain, the most dynamic. They always follow him. If he drops anchor to work, they stop around him. If he raises his sails, they join him. There is never an isolated boat or caique. He is tacitly recognised as the leader of the armada.

During the first days of May, we suffered a lot of cold weather. Clouds, often rain or bad weather. The diver on his knees, stone in hand, is curled up, a sheet covering his back held by a rower to protect him from wind and cold. He coughs and swallows to clear the bronchi before diving. When he comes out, purplish, he dries off quickly and seeks shelter or the sun to warm him up a little, before it is his turn again. We worked all the while heading towards the west coast, on the Gulf of Libya and arrived at Aï Yánnis Kapsas around 20 May.

On 21 May, the feast day of Saints Constantine and Helen, and a holiday, we were all anchored in front of a beautiful beach that had a cave with crystal clear water. We spent the day there, and the next morning went back to work. We dived until around noon, for not much. Most of the flotilla, with Ganitis in the lead, then changed course and began fishing on their way east. Separated from the bulk of the armada, we stayed on the spot, with another boat. Suddenly, while it was my turn to dive, the crew of the other boat waved a pole at the end of which was attached a rag. They were screaming, "A fish, a fish!" I was still preparing to dive, but one of the older men shouted at me: "Put your stone back in the boat!" So I did. The weather was calm, and while the rest of the fleet was moving away, the boat that had warned us came towards us, rowing. All of them on board were shocked and frightened. They seemed to have lost their heads. Some were shouting, others were crying. We asked them what was happening. They replied: "A shark has eaten one of our men, Manolis Volarios!"

The boat came closer. It was the boat of Captain Yorgis ["Kassiotis"]. When she came alongside we saw a pile of flesh on her prow. We made out two lower limbs and part of the body of a man with his left arm. The head, the right arm and most of the thorax were missing. We were horrified! The captain told us about the terrible accident that had just happened. The deceased – whose name was Manolis, nicknamed Volarios or "to Volàri" ("the Ball"), because he was round and of small size – had dived to the bottom as normal. The captain was in the *komouza*, the manhole at the front of the boat. He was holding the rope when he suddenly felt a strong pull that did not seem like the usual signal. It was too early. Nevertheless, they immediately started to pull him up again. They felt like he was lighter than usual, but the rope was not completely slack. They were really wondering what was going on and they pulled hard. Arriving at the surface, the ballast stone jumped on the gunwale because there was no longer any man to hold it. With it came the remains of the deceased, that is to say the two legs, the flank and his left arm with the *ghássa*.[18] The *ghássa* is a cord about 80 centimetres long, with a metal ring at one end. The diver's rope passes through this ring. At the other end is a slip knot in which he slides his left arm. So the *ghàssa* connects him to the rope. If something happens to him, such as diving sickness, or if he is dragged by a current after letting go of the stone to pick a

difficult sponge, he does not lose the rope. The *ghàssa* maintains the link without getting in his way. As it has a slipknot noose, he can remove it to free himself if necessary.

When they brought the unfortunate Manolis on board, everything was explained. He had been on the seabed and had been looking for sponges, groping, leaning forward, with the stone under his left arm. The beast attacked him from above, on his right. Never seen the like of it! Sharks, these “dogs of the sea”, have their mouths located on the lower part of the body. It is not easy for them to catch prey that are at the bottom of the sea. They usually attack, from above or below, when this prey is moving in open water. But in the case of Manolis, the shark caught him on the seabed. The monster took his head, his right arm and a part of his chest in his mouth, all the way to the left arm that was holding the stone. When it closed its jaws, its teeth locked onto the ballast-stone, which obviously it could not bite into. It released him, stopped at the stone's edge, and shredded Manolis. The traces of its terrible teeth remained engraved in the marble, which looked as if it had been gouged by the tool of a sculptor.

The horror and dismay of the divers was such that, not knowing what to do or where to go, they pressed our crew with questions. Leftéris, brother of the dead man, who was also on board at the time of the attack, was crying and wailing inconsolably. Finally, they made the decision to bring the remains of the unfortunate victim to the nearest inhabited place. We followed them to shore. The shore was not far, two or three miles, at most. It was a long stretch of sand, called “Makrys Yalos” [“long beach”]. We dropped anchor and moored to a few rocks. We hauled the macabre load ashore on a hatch cover and covered it with a tarpaulin. Two crew members went to the houses to look for a priest to bury our comrade. As soon as they moved away, I left our caique and lifted the tarpaulin that covered the tragic remains. I examined them closely. The scapula, ribs, sternum, were clear to see, cut like a sheep in the butcher's shop. But the older men saw me. They shouted at me and covered him again.

In the meantime, the emissaries returned. Instead of the village priest, who had been called elsewhere, they had with them a policeman from the Cretan state,[19] who started to ask questions. When and how did the accident happen? He had to make sure it was not a crime. After that he advised us to transport him to Ierapetra, which is not far from Makrys Yalos. So that is what we did. They put the dead man in the boat and began to row to get there before dark, because it was already three or four o'clock in the afternoon. But there was not a breath of wind, and with our little *mahonne* we could not follow them.

It was also necessary to inform other boats and caiques, so that they would not go diving in the same place and risk another accident. We returned and found them the next day, working and completely unaware of what had happened. We told them the tragic news. When they learned it, they lost their appetite and good mood and sank into sadness.

It had been many years since such an accident had happened. But what to do? Like it or not, we had to be brave. It was a question of self-respect, above all. Who could have endured being called cowardly? To be honest, the next day, especially during the first dives, we took for sharks all the black spots that we saw circling on the seabed. Many of us we were convinced we saw sharks. But it did not last long. In a day or two we had regained our optimism and our spirit. Days passed. We were in early June, the work was regular, there were no clouds, no rain and no cold. Until the day when another incident occurred, very alarming.

We were all fishing together in an area south-east of Crete, called Kakovalla or Vromoskala, when it happened on the caique of Captain Mikès ("The Deaf"). This was a *trechandiri* where all the crew were from the same family, among the first on the island. There was Captain Mikès, the eldest, with the youngest of his brothers, Iordanis, and his three sons, Nikolas, Sakellaris, and Manolis. Five fishermen from one family. Only the two rowers were not of the lineage.

It was past noon, and the sun was at its highest point. Sakellaris had dived. He was at the bottom and while he was looking for sponges, the sea darkened above him, without clouds in the sky. He looked and saw a huge monster slowly circling, and whose white belly was not far from touching him. The unfortunate Sakellaris, despite a deadly fright, did not lose his wits. He stayed still. As soon as the shark passed by him, obviously intending to turn around and catch him more easily, he gave the ascent signal. When he came out and was hauled onto the caique, half-fainting, he recounted the dreadful danger he had just escaped. We were all warned immediately and we moved away as quickly as possible.

Only Ganitis, the captain with the two boats, who, as I said, led our flotilla, he was the only one who, when he heard what had happened, said mockingly: "I reckon it was a trout!" He did not budge an inch and carried on working till the end of the day.

[…] A little later, on 13 June, we were all working at the exact spot where the monster had appeared, a few days earlier, off Vromoskala. And the second accident occurred: Matsos died (I do not remember his full name). He was devoured on the rope, without even being able to see the fish! The news of the terrible accident spread like lightning to all the boats and caiques. Immediately, we all weighed anchor and hoisted the sails.

There was a strong following wind, and we soon reached Sitia. The men scattered to the various cafes, completely shattered, or rather in a mood of revolt.

Nobody wanted to stay in Crete. Everyone was panicking. Losing two divers in three weeks – this had never happened, in the memory of the sponge fishermen! The captains did not want to see their teams dispersed, because we were not even halfway through the summer, so they discussed what was to be done. Ganitis remained in Crete, and with him a number of boats, with the exception of that of Captain Nikolas Karapas, whose diver did not follow. Landing at Sitia, he returned to Kalymnos. Others left for the Greek islands.

[…] The next day we prepared ourselves, loaded up with water and wood. Then all five of us set off, heading south, and sailing line astern.

Editor's postface

This chapter continues with a detailed description of the 1903 fishing campaign on the coasts of Libya and Egypt. Yérakis reports further shark attacks, troubles with arms smugglers, a mutiny, and especially the return to Kalymnos, sailing through a terrible storm. He describes the hard life of the sponge fishers on board, and the religious practices and propitiatory rites of their time.

The preceding chapter concerns the life of the Kalymnians in Russia, before and during the Revolution. The author also describes the living conditions and remuneration systems of the sponge fishers, and everyday life in Kalymnos in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The whole document is an exceptional source of information, of considerable historical and ethnographical interest. In making it available to the world we are fulfilling the hopes of the man who lived these adventures and who decided to record them for us.

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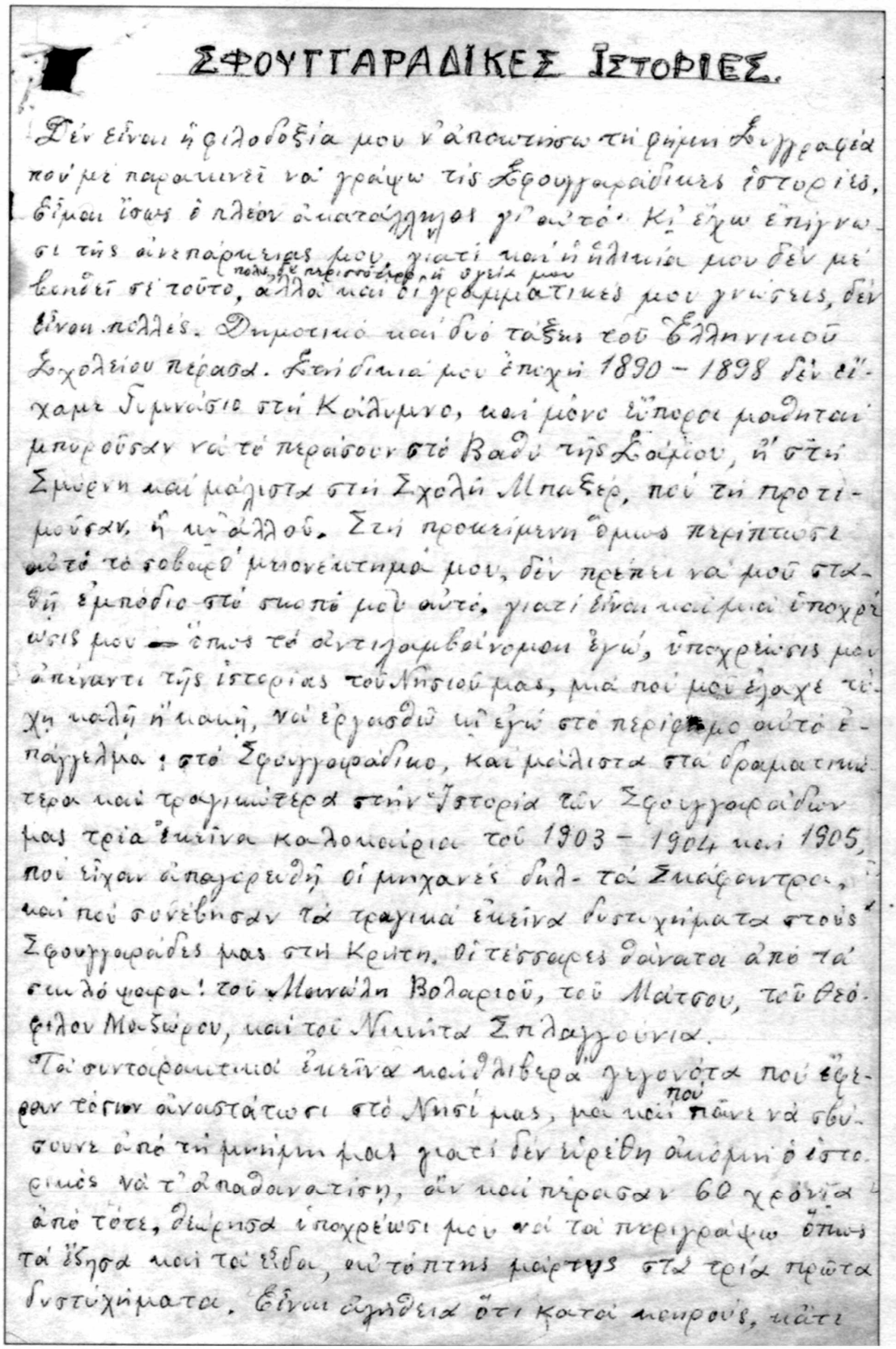
Figure 1: Yannis Yérakis, about 1930.



ΣΦΟΥΓΓΑΡΑΔΙΚΕΣ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΕΣ.

Δέν εἶναι ἡ φιλοδοξία μου ν' ἀποκτήσω τὴ φήμη συγγραφέα
πού μὲ παρακινεῖ νὰ γράψω τὶς Σφουγγαραδίκες ἱστορίες,
εἶμαι ἴσως ὁ πλέον ἀκατάλληλος γι' αὐτό. Κι' ἔχω ἐπίγνω-
σι τῆς ἀνεπάρκειας μου, γιατί καὶ ἡ ἁβρωσία μου δέν μὲ
βοηθεῖ σὲ τοῦτο, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ γραμματικές μου γνώσεις, δέν
εἶναι πολλές. Δημοτικὸ καὶ δυὸ τάξεις τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ
Σχολείου πέρασα. Στὰ δίσεκτά μου ἔτη 1890 – 1898 δέν εἶ-
χαμε Γυμνάσιο στὴ Κάλυμνο, καὶ μόνο εὔποροι μαθηταὶ
μποροῦσαν νὰ τὸ περαιώσουν στὸ Βαθὺ τῆς Σάμου, ἢ στὴ
Σμύρνη καὶ μάλιστα στὴ Σχολὴ Μπαξέ, ποὺ τὴ προτι-
μοῦσαν, ἢ μὲ ἄλλου. Στὴ προκείμενη ὅμως περίπτωσι
αὐτὸ τὸ σοβαρὸ μνημονεύτημά μου, δέν πρέπει νὰ μοῦ στα-
θῇ ἐμπόδιο στὸ σκοπό μου αὐτό, γιατί εἶναι καὶ μιὰ ὑποχρέ-
ωσις μου — ὅπως τὸ ἀντιλαμβάνομαι ἐγώ, ὑποχρέωσις μου
ἀπέναντι τῆς ἱστορίας τοῦ Νησιοῦ μας, μιὰ καὶ μοῦ ἔμοιρε τύ-
χη παιδὴ ἢ παιμὴ, νὰ ἐργασθῶ ὡς ἐγώ στὸ περιβόλι αὐτὸ ἐ-
πάγγελμα : στὸ Σφουγγαράδικο, καὶ μάλιστα στὰ δραματικώ-
τερα καὶ τραγικώτερα στὴν Ἱστορία τῶν Σφουγγαράδων
μας τρία ἐκεῖνα καλοκαίρια τοῦ 1903 – 1904 καὶ 1905,
ποὺ εἶχαν ἀπαγορευθῇ οἱ μηχανὲς δηλ- τὰ Σκάφαντρα,
καὶ ποὺ συνέβησαν τὰ τραγικὰ ἐκεῖνα δυστυχήματα στοὺς
Σφουγγαράδες μας στὴ Κρήτη, δὶ τέσσαρες θάνατοι ἀπὸ τὰ
σκληρὰ ψαρώματα τοῦ Μανώλη Βολαρίου, τοῦ Μάτσου, τοῦ Θεό-
φιλου Μαζώρου, καὶ τοῦ Νικήτα Σπλαγχούνια.
Τὰ συντριπτικὰ ἐκεῖνα καὶ δίβουλα γεγονότα ποὺ ἔφε-
ραν τόσην ἀναστάτωσι στὸ Νησί μας, μοῦ καὶ πού πάνε νὰ σβύ-
σουνε ἀπὸ τὴ μνήμη μας γιατί δέν ὑπῆρξε ἀκόμη ὁ ἱστο-
ρικὸς νὰ τ' ἀποθανατίσῃ, ἂν καὶ πέρασαν 60 χρόνια
ἀπὸ τότε, θὰ μπῶ ὑποχρέωσι μου νὰ τὰ περιγράψω ὅπως
τὰ ἔζησα καὶ τὰ εἶδα, αὐτόπτης μάρτυς στὰ τρία πρῶτα
δυστυχήματα. Εἶναι ἀλήθεια ὅτι κατὰ καιροὺς, κάτι

Figure 2: First page of the original Greek manuscript

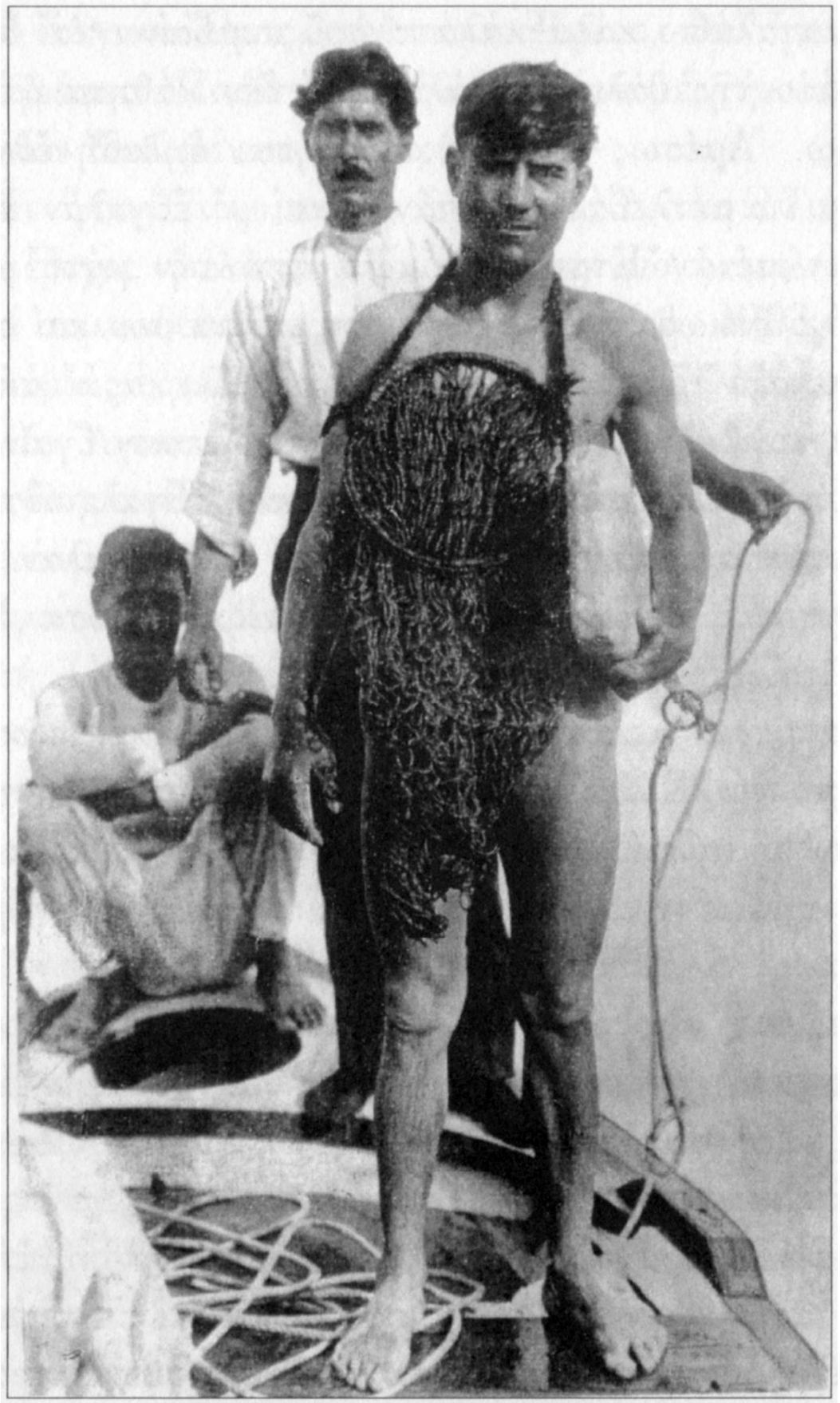


Figure 3: The naked diver with his stone ("*skandalopétra*"). Note the rope (the "*ghássa*"), and the net around the neck

NOTES

1. In his manuscript the author almost invariably capitalises words such as Island (when it comes to "his Island", Kalymnos), or Sponge fishers, or Divers, as opposed to "mechanics" or naked divers. I have used lower case in this translation. Also, I occasionally use the Greek tonic accent in names, to assist the reader in pronunciation.

2. Hippocrates Tavlarios Pasha (1844-1918), a Kalymniot and a senior officer of the Ottoman Empire; considered a benefactor of Kalymnos.

3. Charles Flégel (1850-1920) Professor of Lithuanian Classical Literature. Devoted his life to the defence of sponge fishermen. “The question of sponge fishermen from the Mediterranean”, Chania, Crete 1905.

4. Barbary: refers to the coastline of the Maghreb from Morocco to Libya. For the sponge fishermen this term essentially denoted the Mediterranean coasts of Tunisia and Libya. Very present in the popular imagination, the term is often used in the song repertoire of Rebétiko, the "urban blues" of the Greeks.

5. The work of caulking in shipyards involves inserting tow (hemp fibres that swell on contact with water) between the boards of the hull, and then painting over with tar. The goal is to guarantee the watertightness of the boats. A caulker on board may be useful during voyages, to work on the hull if necessary.

6. *Trechandíri* (pl. *trechandíria*). Fast sailboat (from Greek *trécho*: I run), with a single mast, a mainsail and two jibs.

7. *Mahonne*: a flatboat (barge) with oars and removable rigging, used for transport.

8. A large glass bottomed metal cylinder, hand held. It makes it possible to observe underwater from the surface. It is also called a caulker’s glass.

9. Fathom: unit of length formerly used at sea, corresponding to the length of two outstretched arms (6 feet; about 1.80m).

10. Vathy: only hamlet of an agricultural nature in Kalymnos, in a small plain in the centre of the island, famous for its fruit trees (mainly citrus).

11. Bouyoukas: presumably from the Turkish *büyük* – “large”.

12. *Mahonne*: See Note 7.

13. Kastro: traditional name of the main agglomeration of the island, dominated by a Venetian castle and also called Chora, as in most islands of the Aegean.

14. A word of Turkish origin (*siftah*). It usually means a merchant's first transaction of the day, supposed to bring good luck for the continuation of his business.

15. *Kapadhika*: A type of Mediterranean sponge, of great commercial value. There are many varieties of sponges, but most are unusable.

16. This stone is called *scandalópetra*: a heavy slab of marble, connected to a rope. It increased the speed of the naked diver’s descent to the seabed, and helped him to stay submerged. He picked the sponges, put them into the net hanging round his neck, and then tugged on the rope to give the signal for the ascent.

17. Ganitis: In Kalymniot parlance *ganitis* can mean "lean" – used here ironically because he was very fat.

18. *Ghássa*: in French *ganse* = loop of rope.

19. In 1902, Crete was a newly autonomous Territory, under the protection of the European Great Powers, and with its own police force. It was attached to Greece in 1913.

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