

Και εδώ παρατίθεται το αγγλικό κείμενο του Dawkins που είναι ουσιαστικά και το τελευταίο κεφάλαιο στην ιστορία του πειρατή Νέγρου:

The pirate's grave: A story of Astypalaia

By professor R. M. Dawkins (1945)



THIS paper has nothing to do with the present troubles of the inhabitants of the Dodecanese; it is a story which begins in the later years of the eighteenth century, and is still told in Astypalaia, the most isolated of all the Twelve Islands, since 1912 held in subjection by the Italians. In those days the islands formed a part of Turkey, but had special privileges from the government of the Sultans, which left them very nearly in a state of freedom and independence.

Astypalaia is dominated by its one village, a mass of closely built houses, looking at a distance like a castle, all huddled on the top of a high rock. The view from this crow's-nest is wide, and one of the most conspicuous landmarks stands in a region by the sea called Martezana. It is a white structure surmounted by a column or obelisk, and the enquirer is told that it is a tomb set up not so long ago in memory of a "Frank": a word which to the Greek in those parts covers anyone from Europe. With this information I was foolishly content when I was in Astypalaia in 1905;

the weather was hot, and I had not then learned that, if one goes to a place so hard to reach as Astypalaia, nothing should be left unvisited, if only for the reason that a second chance is hardly likely to present itself. When I was there in the 1914 to 1918 war, I did not even get an opportunity to land.

If I had gone to the Martezana tomb, I know now that I should have found an inscription in memory of a French naval captain called Brisson, whose friends believed that it is he who lies buried there.

The people of Astypalaia know quite a different story, and this is now at my disposal in some papers containing material from the islands collected by Dr. W. H. D. Rouse. We learn that the story of the tomb is one incident in the career of a very notable pirate, a man from Samos, called George Negros. We first learn why he turned pirate. The word is perhaps too severe; it hardly means more than an unlicensed outside-the-law seafarer, not too scrupulous in his methods of picking up his profits.

George Negros was a troublesome boy and one day in school he made a wicked sign of derision, "the fig", at his master; for this he was duly punished. But in those days, for so the story runs, schools were schools, and a boy who had insulted his master in this way had to lose his hand. The master, a priest, insisted on the full penalty. His father pleaded for him and so did a guest in the house, a Cretan. But the priest was obdurate: little did he realize the Cretan character.

When his reasonable plea for mercy was rejected, this Cretan fell into such a passion of rage that he pulled out his dinner-knife and cut the cruel priest's throat. After which there was nothing for the whole family to do but to take to the sea as outlaws and pirates. In a little while, says the story, George Negros' name became famous and terrible on the sea and in all the islands. This is the first of the three Negros stories in the Rouse papers. The second tells of the manner of his death, and how the tomb at Marte-zana came to be built. I translate the Greek text:

Many and great deeds of bravery were done at that time by Captain Negros and his brave lads to men on the sea and in the islands, so that his name became a terror in the ears and mouths of all. In those years there were also other sea-robbers all over the eastern sea, but none of them were like Captain Negros. Then France, a country of great valour at sea, sent a frigate especially to hunt down all those piratical sailing vessels, and above all the ship of Captain Negros.

"One stormy night this French frigate came very near to Astypalaia, and behind her she was towing a pirate vessel which she had captured in the open sea. But the weather was very stormy, and the frigate, whether she wished it or not, was compelled to cut the cable of the sailing vessel which she was towing; so she left her to the fury of the savage wind: Why? Look you, it was to save herself. The frigate rounded a point of land and tried to save herself. But the sailing vessel lost way and was very nearly utterly lost. On board her were two Greeks, and two of the Franks with their arms.

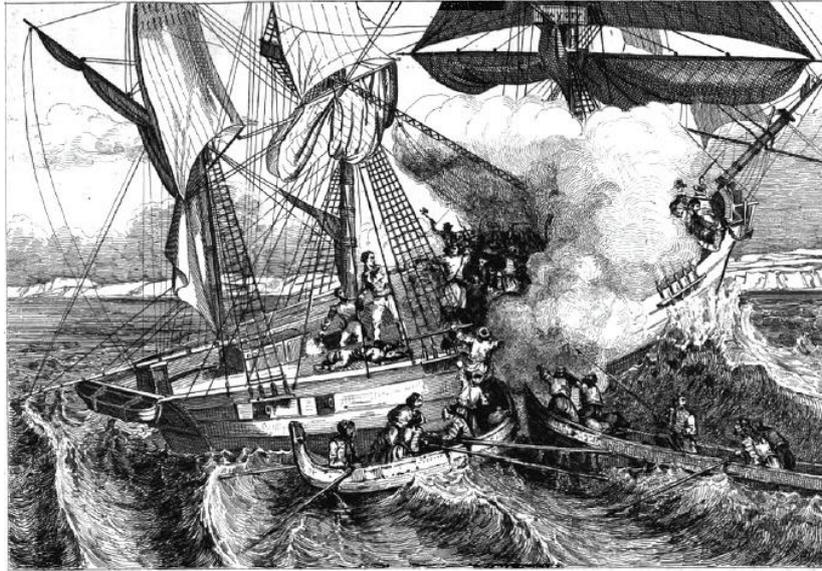
But the vessel was in danger of being cast ashore on the ugly and perilous rocks and being broken up, and the men themselves being broken to pieces with her on the jagged crags. Then the Frenchmen, seeing how surely they were in danger, released the Greeks, whom they had with them in irons, and entreated them, since they knew all the places in the island, to take the tiller themselves to try to come to safety. The Greeks then steered the vessel as they thought fit, and they were near to bringing her on to a favourable beach in Astypalaia.

So when they came quite near to the dry land, splash! one of them plunged into the sea, and the other one too was getting ready to plunge, to save themselves and let the Frenchmen perish. The Frenchmen were at once aware of what they were doing, and were in time, though only with one of them: him they seized to prevent him from jumping into the sea. And so being earnestly entreated by them, this man brought the ship to safety, and also the two Frenchmen: they came out on a sandy beach."
Of this Greek we hear nothing more; he drops out of the story,

That other Greek, the one who leaped into the sea, when he got out on the beach, perceived a fire on the beach near at hand, and ran towards it to warm himself. When he reached it, he saw men there, sailors. He looked carefully at them and questioned them: they too were of his own sort, being the eighteen young men of Captain Negros. Then he told them the whole story; they ate and drank, and at earliest dawn armed themselves and went rapidly to the French frigate. The lads on the frigate were at that time resting in their bunks, and the captain in his cabin. One man only was up on deck, crouching there to keep watch, but he, too, from lack of rest and from the storm was half asleep.

When Captain Negros came to the frigate with his lads, they were all of them aboard her at once, and in a moment some of them tied up the watchman, others nailed up the bunks in which the crew were, and others ran to the cabin of the French captain.

Then the captain, perceiving that the Greeks had nailed up the crew in their bunks, and that there he was, caught like a rat in a trap, lost all hope and resolved to fire the powder magazine, in any case to die honourably, and also because in this way he would kill all the Greek pirates and their captain too. The moment this came into his mind he acted, and ran and fired the magazine. The broken bodies were thrown out on to the land, scattered here and there, and not one remained alive. Only Captain Negros escaped, but he too was wounded, and a day later came to his end and was buried up on the mountain by a shepherd.



Attaque du Ranayotti. - Acte héroïque de Bison.

"The two Frenchmen who had been saved from the sea ran away to the mountains and hid themselves. But the place where they hid happened to be exactly opposite the frigate, although they did not know it. So when the explosion occurred, they were able by its light to see and understand quite clearly everything that had happened: their fear therefore became very great and they hid themselves even more carefully. For many days the unfortunate men lay in hiding, so that they could only keep alive by stealing what herbs they could. After some days the people of Astypalaia became aware of them, and disclosed the matter; the head man kindly did his best for them and brought them to the town and gave them food.

"France was not long hearing of this sad event, and at once sent a warship direct to Astypalaia. When she came opposite to the town castle, she opened her ports and made ready to turn her guns against it; to open fire and destroy it, because they thought that the village was to blame for the destruction of the frigate. Then the head man and the two Frenchmen looked out to sea and saw the destruction being prepared for them. At once they ran down in haste with a French flag and embarked in a skiff and made a signal to stop the threatened destruction. When they came to the ship, all agreed that the men of Astypalaia had been their saviours, and at least very many thanks were owing to them. The French in fact did thank the head man heartily and gave him a decoration. Afterwards they took on board the two Frenchmen and went away from Astypalaia.

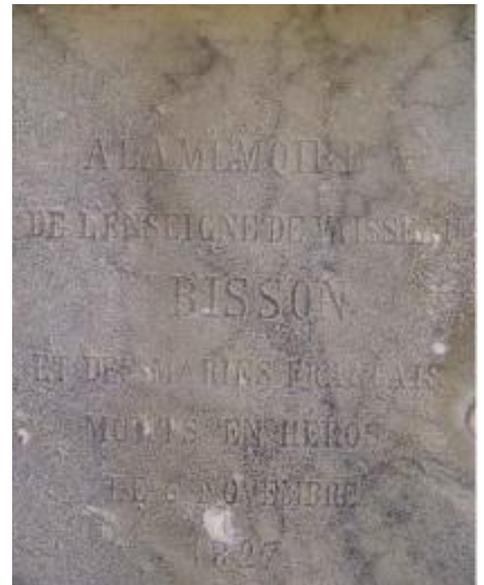
"Fifty years passed, and one day behold, another warship came to the island, to the place called the Far Beach, and dropped anchor. A high officer with laced epaulets disembarked and said that he was the son of the captain who had blown up his frigate, and he had come to find the bones of his father and to bury them. So he sent out a crier to cry a proclamation, that whoever knew or could find out where the bones of his father were buried should have a reward of four napoleons. Then many men began enquiries, but where were the bones to be found? Fifty years had passed, and also the fragments of the body had been scattered by the force of the explosion; who could say into

what little pieces, and who could say where they were ? So they all gave it up. But one sharp fellow, a cunning shepherd, who knew where Captain Negros had been buried, thought he would win the napoleons, so he went and told the Frenchman that he, and he alone, knew where the bones of his father lay buried. The Frenchman was a kindly fellow and believed him: he gave him the four napoleons, and the shepherd showed him what he said was the place of his father's burial. But in actual fact it was the burial-place of Captain Negros, whom the shepherd had himself buried there many years before.



"So the pious and dutiful son brought the priest from his warship, and they went and dug up the bones of Captain Negros, taking them for those of his father. Then they built a new tomb and buried them afresh at a point of land at Martezana: there they buried the bones with great honour and ceremony. Above them they immediately constructed a marble monument, and wrote on it with letters cut in the stone that he had been killed on the sixth of November, 1827: nor did the Frenchman know at all that what he had buried in the tomb were really the bones of the man who had killed his father.

"And what is more, a few years later this son of the captain came , again for this very purpose, and celebrated a memorial service at that tomb with honour and great ceremony, and that good son, the Frenchman, never knew at all that he had in that place given a fresh burial to the bones of his father's murderer, of Captain Negros, and not to those of his father, Captain Brisson, who had commanded the French frigate."



The sudden and violent death of Negros made it at least likely that his body would walk after death as a vampire, a danger to the living. So when the shepherd buried him he was careful to lay on his mouth a potsherd with on it

scratched the mystical and magic pentagram, the pentalpha, over which no wicked or dangerous spirit can pass.

No account of the adventures of a pirate is complete without at least some mention of how and where he buried his treasure, and the Greeks, too, have a special liking for stories of mysterious hoards of immense, of incalculable, value. Real archaeological finds, made either by themselves or by "Franks", stimulate the taste and support the traditions of buried gold: there is magic in the very sound of the word Malama, gold. The same Rouse papers tell us about Captain Negros' treasure. I abbreviate the account a little.

"Here in Astypalaia Captain Negros had a hiding-place for treasure unique in all the inhabited world. Here in this hiding-place he used to conceal all his valuables, gold and silver; in cash, piastres, liras, florins, doubloons; jewellery and stores of all sorts. Before he died, he confessed to his near kinsman where his hiding-place was. Many years after the death of Negros one of his kinsmen told a man of Astypalaia that he knew the place of the hidden treasure. But the man did not believe him, and only seven years later he began to think there might be something in the story. So he went with a friend to the place he had been told of, and at last they found a hole underneath a tufted lentisk bush and thought this must be the place.

'They tied the lentisk bush back so that it allowed some light to enter the hole. Then they saw that the hole went downwards in a sideways direction. They entered and, one following the other, they went down and down until they reckoned that they had gone down some thirty fathoms. There they came to a cave, square, like a Venetian cistern. At one place in it there appeared a separate chamber. They searched but found no sign of the treasure. Then they had the idea of going down still lower, because the hole continued to descend, although they were afraid that perhaps they might be smitten by some spirit haunting the cave."

Buried treasures are often supposed to be guarded by some dangerous spirit; often of a black man.

"Their curiosity drove them on, and they went down yet another thirty fathoms. There they found another cave, still larger, and in it they saw that there were two chambers; one big and one small. In the middle of the smaller chamber they found a stone with a round hole in it: Here, said they, must be the hiding-place. While they were searching in this way, instead of feeling any heat and stuffiness, they being so deep down, they felt a coolness. Then the man found another hole right in front of him; it was gaping open like the mouth of hell, very terrible. Then at once they heard a roar, evil and dreadful, so that the cave echoed in a way to make a man's very hair stand on end: it was as though the spirits all together were answering them with one voice. The men stooped and looked down, and terror seized them; the wind was blowing from below, cold as from the sea. Presently they recovered a little from their fear and tried to lift the stone from its place; in order to make sure of the depth of the gulf they rolled the stone down from its place; they heard it clattering down for the space of three minutes. But of the sound of its final falling on the bottom of the hole they heard nothing; nor was there any sign of it.

"Then they dug in the place where they had taken up the stone, and they found a flat slab; they took it up and below it was the mouth of the hiding-place. They searched everywhere, and dug as well, but all the treasure had been taken away by others. But they were sure that this had been the real hiding-place used by Negros." They were all the more certain when they observed the sudden great riches of the kinsman of the pirate who had told the man of this place; and he was sorry that he had neglected the information and let the kinsman go and dig it all up instead of him.

In these stories Negros and his associates are often called Paraskevades, which means Friday Men. This was a nickname given them by the people of Astypalaia, where the women bake bread every Friday, and Negros and his friends used to come on Fridays to take a contribution of the fresh bread: hence the name. We are told that Astypalaia was his favourite island, because it has harbours all round and good water to drink and many folds of sheep, and there it was very easy for him to provide himself with victuals. But although he may have been on occasion a burdensome friend, we are yet told that "he had such a love for the men of Astypalaia, that he left a command to all his kinsmen that, whenever they met with a man or woman from Astypalaia, they should treat them well and hospitably, as though they were the man's own brothers".

Pirates like Negros, after all, were heroes in their way, and their idea of life was to prey not on other Greeks but on Turkish shipping, and on any intrusive Franks from the west whom they might come across. On the sea these "pirates" were very nearly what the Klephts of the same period were on the mountains of the mainland.

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Richard MacGillivray Dawkins (24 October 1871 - 4 May 1955) was a British archaeologist. He was associated with the British School at Athens, of which he became Director.[1]

He was educated at Marlborough College and at King's College London where trained as an electrical engineer.

He took part in the dig at Palékastró [2], and the survey of Lakonia[3] (see Artemis Orthia; also at Rhitsona, [4]). He undertook linguistic fieldwork in Cappadocia 1909-1911, which resulted in a basic work on the Cappadocian language. Then he led a dig at Filakopí from 1911[5].

He was the first Bywater and Sotheby Professor of Byzantine and Modern Greek Language and Literature at the University of Oxford.