

Theophilos Kairis: The Creator and Initiator of Theosebism in Greece¹

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ABSTRACT *The views of the Enlightenment in European countries are in general well known, while the attempts to introduce the Enlightenment to countries in the periphery of Europe, like Greece, are not known in the same degree. How did the scientific revolution migrate to the Greek-speaking regions occupied by the Ottoman Empire? How did the Greeks accept the truly revolutionary ideas of the French Revolution and liberalism? What were the reactions of the conservative Greek Orthodox Church and who sacrificed their lives in the cause of their ideas? Theophilos Kairis (1784–1853), a scholar, philosopher, and priest, was the tragic victim of clerical bigotry. The creator of Theosebism in Greece, Kairis suffered the tragic end reserved by fate for those who, being pioneers, tried to introduce to Greece the liberal ideas of Western Europe and the Enlightenment.*

INTRODUCTION

Theophilos Kairis, actually baptized Thomas, was born on 19 October 1784 on the island of Andros, a new member of an old island family. At the age of eight, he started his formal studies at the Virgin Mary of the Orphans School, known as Oeconomou's School, at Kydonies (Aivali) in Asia Minor, where his uncle, Sofronios Kampanakis, served as a parish priest. According to the writer D. P. Paschalis,² who has studied Kairis's work, the latter completed his studies at the schools of Patmos and Chios, islands near the coast of Asia Minor, where the scholars Athanassios Parios and Dorotheos Proios taught.

In 1800, Kairis returned to Kydonies to complete his studies at the Higher School of the city (Kydonies Academy of Philosophy). Oeconomou's School, after his death in 1792, was reformed and finally housed in a new building. Having the features of a higher school, it was renamed an academy including 70 classrooms, an auditorium, a library, etc. In this academy, Kairis, as a student of the famous scholar Veniamin Lesvios (1762–1824) was deeply influenced by Lesvios's modern views on natural sciences.³ Indeed, under the directorship of Veniamin Lesvios (1802–12), the Academy of Kydonies had become one of the best schools for science. At the age of 18, Theophilos Kairis became a monk, since every apt student could have access to further education only by turning to the Orthodox Church. This was due to the fact that the Ottoman



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administration had granted to the Greek Orthodox Church the responsibility for the education of the Christian population. It is to be noted that the Ottoman Empire then occupied Greek territories.

In 1803, just like his teacher, Kairis went to Italy, after a suggestion by the Commissioners of the school, where he studied theology, philosophy, mathematics, and physics at the University of Pisa (1803–07). He then moved to Paris, where he stayed until 1810, studying mainly issues of philosophical content. There, Kairis was closely connected to the scholar Adamantios Korais. This friendship would hold in the years to come while another scholar, Evanthia, Theophilos's younger sister, would join them.⁴ Kairis was an enlightened mind and his contact with Western European education, especially in Paris and almost at the same time as the French Revolution and the subsequent ideological debates, greatly influenced the course of his further philosophical cogitations.

It is worth mentioning that Greek scholars, who—due to the proximity and language—initially studied in Italy and then in France, were by no means influenced by Italian culture, probably because most of them were clergymen—either monks or priests—thus being deeply influenced by the antipapal propaganda of the Greek Orthodox Church. On the contrary, studies in Paris greatly influenced all scholars. Liberalism, the ideals of freedom, the new ideas about man and science, impinged catalytically on their philosophical becoming and their personality.

In France, Kairis became acquainted with the mechanistic materialism supported by the eighteenth century French materialist philosophers, which he adopted, as one can recognize in his general teachings. Additionally, Kairis was deeply influenced by the romantic-idealist philosophy and especially by the German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775–1845), Professor of Philosophy at the University of Berlin. According to the writer Coula Xiradakis,⁵ Theophilos was influenced by the theism of the eighteenth century English philosophers as well as by the intellectuals of the French Revolution, who were attempting to simplify religion. Consequently, Kairis built, as we shall see later on, a moral and religious system of his own, Theosebism or Theophilanthropy, as he called it. In his studies in Paris, Theophilos Kairis specialized in matters of philosophical interest and ideological issues, while he started to incorporate into his religious beliefs elements affixed to the religious theories that dominated in revolutionary France.

We may imagine the student and monk Theophilos, a characteristic case of a religious young man, whose faith is tested at the moment he tries to match it with science. The internal struggle of the ideas must have been very intense. However, Kairis attempted to introduce these new, liberal ideas initially to the occupied Greek territories, and then to the New Greek Republic, and this attempt cost too much.

THE RETURN TO GREECE

Returning to Greece from Paris, Theophilos “became eminent for his rare virtues and his wide knowledge.”⁶ In 1810, Kairis taught mathematics and physics at the Evangelical School of Smyrna for a short time. However, he soon left the school due to the differences in his views with those of the school board.

On 15 June 1812, Theophilos Kairis received a letter signed by 39 notables of Andros, who were inviting him to teach philosophy at the School of Andros. Kairis travelled to Andros in August of the same year to discuss this proposition and, by this chance, to visit his relatives. However, on 9 September, he was invited by the Commissioners of the famous Academy at Kydonies, to become a lecturer, indeed the headmaster of the school, thus replacing Veniamin Lesvios who had left the school that year. Lesvios had been accused of introducing dangerous innovative ideas through his teaching of rejecting divine incarnation. Thus, he was forced to give testimonies in favour of his religious orthodoxy to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.⁷ However, we point out that Lesvios was not asked to deny his scientific beliefs.

The offer of the Commissioners was one of great honour and Kairis accepted the position at Kydonies at once. In the mean time he proposed to his fellow citizens to build a proper building in order to house the school, since on the whole island of Andros there no such building existed. Subsequently, the citizens of Andros decided to build such a building in the Kato Kastro region.⁸

At the School of Kydonies, Kairis worked as a teacher making sedulous and systematic efforts to create an educational infrastructure, upon which he wanted to establish the whole liberal movement for the liberation of the Greek nation. Kairis taught mathematics (analytic geometry, differential and integral calculus) and theoretical mechanics. He was also teaching astronomy, meteorology, geography, and biology. Very soon his fame as a great teacher of sciences spread and students from many places in Greece came to attend his lectures.

The late Professor of Meteorology at the School of Physics at the University of Athens and native of Andros, Dr Leonidas Karapiperis, (1908–90), in a Panhellenic Symposium (1984) on the contribution of the indefatigable teacher of Andros, reported:

His lectures were fully updated, including the principles and conclusions of the latest scientific research, they were strictly scientific and detailed, especially in the sciences. They were superior to the corresponding teaching of these courses at the University of Athens. Kairis taught the entire subject of higher mathematics with applications in physics and mechanics. He taught physics and chemistry, theoretically and experimentally as well, trying to state the causes of the various phenomena. He taught astronomy and described several hypotheses and theories on the nature of heavenly bodies as well as on their motions.⁹

The Greek scholars of that period returning to Greece after their studies in Western Europe, had written a great number of articles mainly focused on language, but with clear social and ideological extrapolations. In parallel, they showed an intense writing activity mostly for educational purposes.

We have known Theophilos Kairis by his writings; in particular by a manuscript of “Astronomy,” a copy of which has been found in the library of the 1st Lyceum of the city of Volos in Greece. In 1989, the headmaster at the time, the mathematician Constantinos D. Mavromatis, edited and published Kairis’s *Astronomy* in the original writing form with the corresponding figures.¹⁰ The work Kairis performed in this book, which must have been written before 1818, is superb. Kairis presented all astronomical views of his time, as he had learned them at the universities of Western Europe, and supported the heliocentric system against the geocentric system dogmatically accepted

by the Greek Orthodox Church. As a consequence, this attitude of Kairis led to the first friction between him and the Orthodox Church. Studying Kairis's work, we found his hypothesis concerning the existence of life on other planets in Kairis's teachings: "These (the global molecules), when merged, compose the infinite in number worlds, the union of which comprises this great cosmic accessory . . ." ¹¹

Kairis remained at the School of Kydonies until 1821, the year of the Greek Revolution against the Ottoman Empire. As a member of the Revolution's Directorship, he declared the revolution on his native island of Andros on 10 May 1821. Next, Kairis went to continental Greece (in the region of Roumeli), where he fought heroically and was seriously wounded in his leg. He was healed, but was afflicted by his wounds and his health was unsound ever after. In 1828, after the liberation of a part of Greece from the Turks, he represented the island of Andros in the National Conventions, and addressed Ioannis Kapodistrias, the first Governor of free Greece, on the island of Aegina, on 12 January 1828. Throughout these years, it is evident from his activity that Kairis was trying to bring European Enlightenment to the newly created Greek Republic. His efforts are mentioned in the establishment of and the respect for constitutional order. In his writings during that period one can see the influence of French liberalism as he got to know it during his studies in Paris. ¹² His ideals were dedication and faith to the development of education, as well as constancy of purpose concerning the idea of freedom, manifested through his clear liberalism. Being faithful to his ideals, he refused, in 1835, to accept a medal, the "Golden Cross of the Saviour," from Greece's first king, Otto Von Wittelsbach, for his struggle in the Liberation War. He denied the medal because he considered the king as a mere pawn representing the interests of Great Britain, France and Russia. Kairis also had the moral force to decline a professorship in philosophy at the University of Athens in 1837, offered to him by the Greek Establishment at the time. He was the only one from all the candidates, who denied this offer. ¹³

Kairis's struggle for the liberation of the Greek nation, and his great efforts after the liberation to secure—with the cachet of his blameless personality—constitutional freedoms and institutions in new Greece, render him the title of one of the leading figures of the Greek Enlightenment.

THE CREATION OF THEOSEBISM

In 1833, Kairis was ordained as a priest and he decided to visit Western Europe once again. He travelled through several countries and, for about five years, he tried to raise the necessary funds—from flourishing Greek communities—in order to ensure the operation of Andros's Orphanage. After his return to Andros, and having assimilated the ideas of European Enlightenment, Kairis not only ran the island's orphanage, where the orphan children of the fighters of the Greek Revolution lived (1835–39), but he also founded a higher school with a boarding house free of expenses.

Indefatigably Kairis taught Greek, physics, mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy, all by himself, applying the "teaching-each other" method. In other words, the more advanced students were teaching some courses to the freshmen, and this was because the number of students at the school was extremely large. In total, Kairis's students numbered more than 600, coming from different parts of Greece as well as

from foreign countries (the Bulgarian Hilarion, later Bishop of Tirnavos, and the Turk Ahmet Reshim Pasha, later Governor at Ioannina). Among his prominent students were Theodoros Deligiannis, later prime minister of Greece, Athanasios Kyzikinos, later Professor of Mathematics at the University of Athens, David Molohadis, Bishop of Fokida, Andreas Anagnostakis, Professor of Ophthalmology at the University of Athens, Cyril Avramidis, later Bishop of Vidinio, and many others.

We should stress that, for his teaching, Kairis used several scientific instruments, brought from Europe, where he had acquired them through charitable benefaction from Greeks living abroad. These instruments also included the first telescope in Greece.¹⁴ During that time, the scholar and priest Theophilos Kairis introduced “Theosebism,” due to which he would be persecuted and finally die in a most tragic manner, in the Lazaretta prison on the island of Syros. This original philosophical system by Kairis reflected the views of Theosophism, positivism, and mysticism. Kairis was charged with being a denier of Christ’s godliness, of the Holy Trinity, of the god-inspired character of the Bible, etc. However, Kairis himself wrote:

“While I was still a child, I had plenty of doubts concerning the doctrines of Christian religion and its sacraments.” Theophilos Kairis did indeed deny the existence of Holy Trinity and of Christ’s divine origin, whom he considered as “a simple teacher of ethics among the Hebrews”¹⁵

However, Kairis accepted the immortality of the soul and considered man as capable of investigating, with his reason, all truths about God, and of participating, with his moral life, in the eternal blessedness. So, Kairis accepted the existence of only one God, creator of the world and donator of His providence. His doctrines relied on the imperative “respect God,” hence the name “Theosebism” for his movement.

In summary, Theosebism, Kairis’s philosophical doctrine, accepted the existence of a unique God, creator of the world and donator of His providence. Kairis rejected God’s triune nature, described by Christian dogma and the divine origin of Jesus Christ as well. According to the definition given by Kairis himself, Theosebism is the contact between man and God, the fellowship with God “by the holy mediation.” This relation between man and God is of an absolutely personal character.

It is possible that Theosebism corresponded to the French Directorate’s religion that replaced the religion of the Supreme Being of Robespierre. His opponents also accused the Greek scholar Adamantios Korais of Theosebism.¹⁶ However, the term “Theosebism” has an ancient origin, mentioned by Plato,¹⁷ as well as Xenophon.¹⁸ The translator of Plato translates “theosebism” as “religion,” while the translator of Xenophon translates it as “piety.”

Therefore, according to Roxane D. Argiropoulos,¹⁹ “Theosebism in Koumas as well as in Kairis is but a revival of an ancient philosophical term and expresses in both these two scholars of the 19th century, the excellence of the religious feeling in times where rational reasoning and scientism tried to dominate.”

Kairis confronted the Christian religion, the clergy, and the Church, with Theosebism, a religious system that had nothing in common with the Christian doctrines and the Scriptures, all this considered by Kairis as myths created by ignorant people. On the contrary, the principles of the religion introduced by Kairis were philosophically founded. Essentially he attempted to establish the principles of a new

TABLE I. Month names, their meaning and their equivalence in the Theosebian calendar

No.	Name	Meaning	Equivalence
1	Theosevios	Pious	January
2	Sopharetos	Wise and virtuous	February
3	Dikaios	Righteous	March
4	Hagios	Holy	April
5	Agathios	Good	May
6	Sthenios	Courageous	June
7	Agapios	Beloved	July
8	Charissios	Graceful	August
9	Makrothymos	Forbearing	September
10	Eoneos	Eternal	October
11	Entheos	Divine	November
12	Sossios	Savior	December

religion that would be discerned for the moral and spiritual perfectness of its adherents. To the plausible question, why, since he denied Christianity and its principles, was he ordained after all, the answer can be found in his correspondence, conserved by his ardent disciple, his student, Gregorius Despotopoulos, who reports that, to a relevant question by his disciples, the scholar from Andros answered:

I decided to ascend all clerical ranks, firstly to let the Holy Spirit visit me too, but after I saw that this had not happened, I was compromised; secondly, because I believed that others have had similar compunctions concerning Christianity and they might not dare to open their heart to a clergyman of lower rank.²⁰

Influenced by the Western Christian-social philosophy, Kairis sought for the golden mean accompanied by practical applications, between religious faith, scientific knowledge, and social justice.

Theophilos Kairis did not accept the Christian chronology and—deeply influenced by the French revolutionary calendar of the Republic (“*Calendrier Republicain de la Revolution de 1789*”)²¹—he proposed the abrogation of the weeks and the division of each month into three decades: 12 “30-day” months in three groups of 10 days each.²² Kairis also suggested that the 12 month names should be replaced by the names given in Table I.²³

Furthermore, Kairis considered the year 1801 “as the year 1” in his Theosebian calendar, essentially a covert variation of the French revolutionary calendar cloaked in religion and, being the after-clap of a calendar that did not survive, Kairis’s calendar was also still-born.

The nineteenth century is the first century of the Kairian measuring of time. In his calendar he used the ancient Greek numbering; so in the year $\nu\lambda$ of the Kairian chronology (corresponding to 1852) the “*Compendium of Theosebian Doctrine and Ethics*” was published in London. In this book, the doctrinal background of Theosebism and the Kairian calendar are described in detail. According to his ecclesiastical calendar, Kairis divides the “night and day”—and not “day and night”—into five “Hours” which he calls “Times from the evening to the morning” (see Table II).

TABLE II. The Ecclesiastical “Hours” and the Kairian “Times”

Ecclesiastical “Hours”	Kairian “Times”
Matins	Time of prayer
Hours	Time of studying and reading
Evensong	Time of own profession
Compline	Time of charity work
Midnight	Time of irrevocable comfort (repose)

In his calendar, Kairis abolishes all Christian feasts (those of Jesus Christ, of the Holy Mother, of Saints, etc.). He also replaces Sunday—the day of the Lord—with the “Tithe” (the tenth day), i.e. since he does not accept the divine nature of Jesus Christ he abolishes also the day devoted to Him.

According to the principles of Theosebism, the believers, the God-pious people, were gathering at the middle of the four seasons of the year, beginning at the corresponding autumnal middle, celebrating the following:

1. Entheogona
2. Entheagona
3. Entheobia
4. Entheondia

All these—untranslated—terms were invented by Kairis; their meanings are difficult even in Greek and each one includes the word god (Theo, in Greek).

Among other things, being an admirer of the ancient Greek spirit, Kairis formulated in the ancient Doric language a fully operational hymnbook. He called the corresponding workers “God’s ministers” (Theagi). These Theagi or Hieragi (Holy priests) were classified into five orders: Deans, Readers, Hymnodists, Preachers, and Ministers.

Chrysostomos Papadopoulos (1868–1938), Archbishop of Athens (1923–38) and Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the School of Theology (1914–23) at the University of Athens, has written about Theosebism:

“Kairis’ purpose was not just the correction of his country’s religion, but its replacement by a religion of his own, consistent with his philosophical principles.” Theosebism is Kairism, a philosophical system with purely religious aims and its perspectives were: “worshiping Him in spirit and truth, the first and foremost aim of man and every god-pious being.” Kairis creates his new chronology for the new religion, for its ritual to which he adds new prayers, new hymns, and a new way of worship, thus producing his own particular, theoretical and practical ritual, compiled in the ancient Doric dialect. Apparently, his love for the ancient Greek spirit has been of this magnitude, since, as Chrysostomos Papadopoulos notes: “During the period of his headmastership at Kydonies, he interchanged the Christian names of all his students with ancient Greek names.”²⁴

According to Father Georgios Metallenos, Professor of Theology at the University of Athens, Kairis: “strangely insisted on using a language form incomprehensible by

most of the people and particularly by the children. Nevertheless, Kairis created a mystery and was accreting followers.”²⁵

However, competent researchers of his work report that the gifted presence of the scholar from Andros was very promising for Greek philosophy and science in the nineteenth century, had he not wasted it in dedicating himself to Theosebism, which was not a Christian heresy but a new religion.²⁶ In particular, the scholar E. P. Papanoutsos (1900–82) writes characteristically: “Anyway, one thing is for certain: that the intense focusing of the scholar from Andros on the religious matter, during the last years of his life, became the reason not only for this special man’s rough time, but also for his digression to occupations which did not allow him to leave behind a work analogous to his great abilities and fame.”²⁷

Today, several research papers and books, mainly in Greek, have touched upon the personality and philosophical system of Kairis.²⁸

As should have been expected, all these innovative doctrines of Kairis drew the wrath of the official Church. In 1839, the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece called Kairis to account for his doctrines and, since his answers were not considered as satisfying, he was remorsefully condemned by the Holy Synod as “a denier of our blameless faith and a rebel against the Holy Church of Christ.” It is to be noted, that Kairis’s persecutions coincided with the excitement and intention caused by the issue of the Greek Church becoming Autocephalus. Kairis was essentially accused of teaching Theosebism, the new religion, at his school on Andros; therefore, the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece exhausted its severity against him in order to point out its strength to all those clergymen who questioned its authority. Consequently, the Church of Greece banished Kairis initially to the Monastery on the island of Aegina, and from there to the Monastery of Evangelistria on the island of Skiathos, where he stayed for four months suffering tremendously from the fanatic monks, and finally, at the end of March 1840, to the Prophet Elias’ Monastery on the island of Santorini (1840–42). Next, Kairis was read out and excommunicated from the Orthodox Church of Greece. Later he went to Constantinople, Paris, and London, where he taught philosophy. In London, Kairis stayed for two years with friends and old students giving philosophical lectures. His student, Laskaris Laskarides, being a permanent resident of that city, advanced the founding of the “Greek Association of Theosophy” in London.²⁹

During that period, Kairis’s main opponent was the scholar and priest Constantine Oeconomos of Oeconomos. It is to be noted, that despite all the persecutions and difficulties, his School at Andros was considered a complete educational institution. Thus, in 1837 the Greek Government thought that the Educational Institution of Theophilos Kairis was fully adequate for the educational needs of the island of Andros. Therefore, it was decided to move the corresponding Greek Public School of Andros to the island of Paros, which was lacking any kind of school.³⁰

After the re-establishment of the School of Andros and Kairis’s exile in London, the Holy Synod suggested the preacher Callinikos Jason be sent to Andros, in order to teach Catechesis and thus to make the students once again conscious of the Christian Church’s doctrines.

Kairis returned to Greece in 1844 after the Revolution of 3 September—which resulted in the first Constitution of the young kingdom of Greece—by the intervention of Prime Minister I. Kolettis and his Secretary on Church matters, M. Shinas, who

instituted the law of the “Freedom of Consciousness.” However, Kairis’s enemies persecuted him once again, while the charges against him were rekindled, since his accusers considered him a heresiarch who was deliberately attempting to provoke the Greek public with Theosebism, the religion he was teaching.

THE TRAGIC END

Kairis’s relations to the Holy Synod irrevocably deteriorated from 1844 to 1852, and finally led to his unconcealed persecution and trial before the Court of Law in Ermoupolis, on Syros, being charged with proselytism. The trial of Theophilos Kairis, as well as of those who were considered to be his collaborators and adherents, took place on 21 December 1852.

Although the political leadership of Greece was, in general, against that persecution, the Court of Law in Ermoupolis adopted the views of the Holy Synod and condemned the weak old man to be imprisoned for two years and ten days. The excellent advocacy of his distinguished attorney Nicholas Saripolos (1817–87), founder of the Public Law in Greece, could not baffle neither the bigotry that characterized Kairis’s persecutors, nor the judge: “... neither the godly patriotism, nor the wonderful virtues, the excellent and multiple services, the advanced age, and the physical weakness of this distinguished old and wise man could be pardoned by the representatives of justice.”³¹

Theophilos Kairis was imprisoned, and a few days later, on 10 January 1853, he died in the Lazaretta Prison on the island of Syros. He was buried on the opposite near coast, in the yard of the adjacent pesthouse, without any religious ceremony and without his brother Demetrius, a merchant on the island of Syros, being allowed to attend the burial. Theophilos Kairis was the last and most tragic victim of the clergy’s bigotry. The day after his burial, berserk “believers,” guided by bigoted priests, opened the grave, took out the body of the old scholar, gashed open his belly and stuffed it with lime, for the “attained with heresy” relics to be burned. All this in the name of the God of love ...

The philosopher, teacher, contender, philanthropist Theophilos Kairis, who had arduously worked for the liberation and progress of Greece during all of his life, died as a common criminal.³²

Ironically, a few days later, Areopagus (the High Court of Law) in Athens, in a session which took place on 19 January 1853 and which was published on 26 January of the same year, quashed the sentence and Theophilos Kairis as well as his co-defendants—Spyridon Glafkopides, Gregorius Despotopoulos, and Theophilos Louloudes or Monokondelos—were acquitted of the charges, as the High Court considered that the articles 212, 214, and 222 of the Penal Code were misapplied by the Court for Misdemeanours on the island of Syros.

We happen to have a rare edition of the Transcript of the Theophilos Kairis Trial (1853), which we have acquired from the Library of the University of Sorbonne (Institute Neo-Hellenique a La Sorbonne, Br. 38.18. ‘H’ mod (gr.) ‘Cairis’), where one can find the entire brief of 40 pages.

THE VINDICATION

The people of Andros, honouring the memory of their great philosopher and countryman, erected a monument (bust) of Kairis on Andros' central square, the latter bearing his name.

On one side of the pedestal it is written: "Vale, glorious child of Andros the brave," while on the opposite side is written:

Theophilos Kairis, the teacher of the Nation,

Who suffered much for his country,

Father and protector of the orphans.

Born in Andros on October 9th 1784,

died on Syros on January 12th 1853

They have also established the Kairis Library, where many printed works, manuscripts, and copies of all the hand-written books of Kairis can be found. Kairis used these books for his classes at the School of Andros, and today they are conserved in several State Libraries of different Greek cities, school libraries and private collections.³³

In Andros's library we read that the native of Andros, monk Pagratios Koumelis (1775–1885), although older than Theophilos Kairis, had been a student of the latter. Being a teacher himself, Koumelis had been headmaster of the St. Trinity School of Andros, and it was him who made a catalogue of all the books in the Library of Andros, among them the complete work of his teacher Theophilos Kairis. Koumelis died full of years at the age of 110, while he had served as a bursar of the Rizarios Ecclesiastical School since 1852.

Thirty book manuscripts of Theophilos Kairis have been registered in Andros's Library. Of these, ten are on physics (five on elementary physics and five on general physics) and 14 are on mathematics (six on arithmetic, three on Euclidean geometry, and five on higher mathematics). Finally, five books are on astronomy and one on theoretical mechanics.³⁴

In July 1991, a bust of the scholar from Andros was erected on an edge of Miaoulis' Square, the central square of Ermoupolis, on the island of Syros, which we have visited recently. The monument incurred the cost of the Lawyer Association of Syros. The inscription on the marble plate, right under the bust, says:

Theophilos Kairis

(1784–1853)

A modest dedication

to the great teacher and scholar

by the initiative and cost

of Syros' Lawyer Association

July 1991

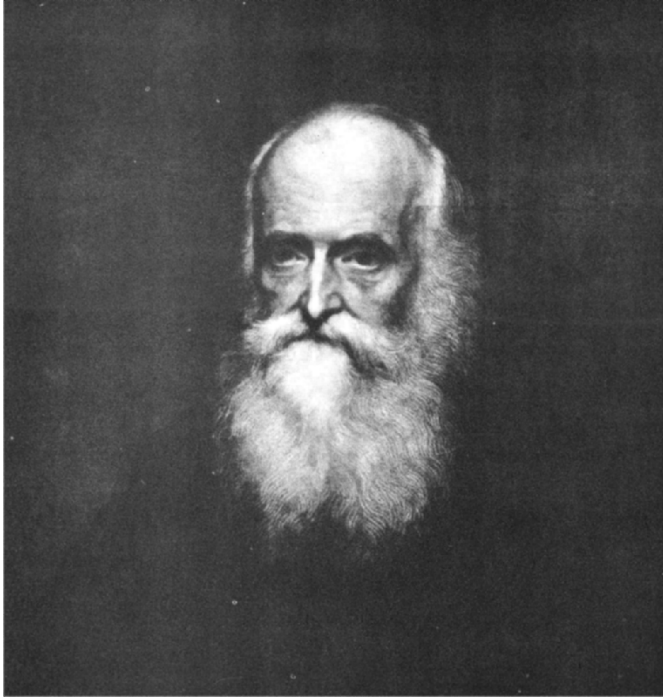


Figure 1. Theophilos Kairis from a copper engraving (nineteenth century).

This is the apology from Syros's attorneys for the unjust condemnation of the contender and philosopher, after his trial in Ermoupolis, in 1852.³⁵

OUR OWN THOUGHTS

Theophilos Kairis (Figure 1), a scholar, a philosopher and a priest, was one of the most eminent representatives of the Greek Enlightenment.

He was ordained a monk at the age of 18, while two years later he went to study in Italy, at the University of Pisa (1803–07), and later in Paris (1807–10). His studies in Paris, during a period so close to the French Revolution and its subsequent ideological conflicts, apparently influenced deeply the evolution of his intellectuality and philosophical views. It seems also that his religious faith suffered in his attempt to couple it with contemporary science.

Returning to Greece he did not show a tendency for ideological or philosophical conflicts. On the contrary, he devoted himself to teaching—and he was systematic and successful as a teacher. In parallel, he lived fully the Greek war of independence against the Ottoman Empire. He declared this revolution in Andros, he fought in its battles, he was wounded and after the liberation his fellow-citizens honoured him by electing him as a representative of Andros in the National Assemblies. In the same period he worked towards the editing and enactment of the first Greek Constitution. In these actions we note the strong influence of French liberalism.

It seems to us that Kairis had a philosophical restlessness from his years of studying in Paris, and most probably the Christian religion did not satisfy him philosophically.

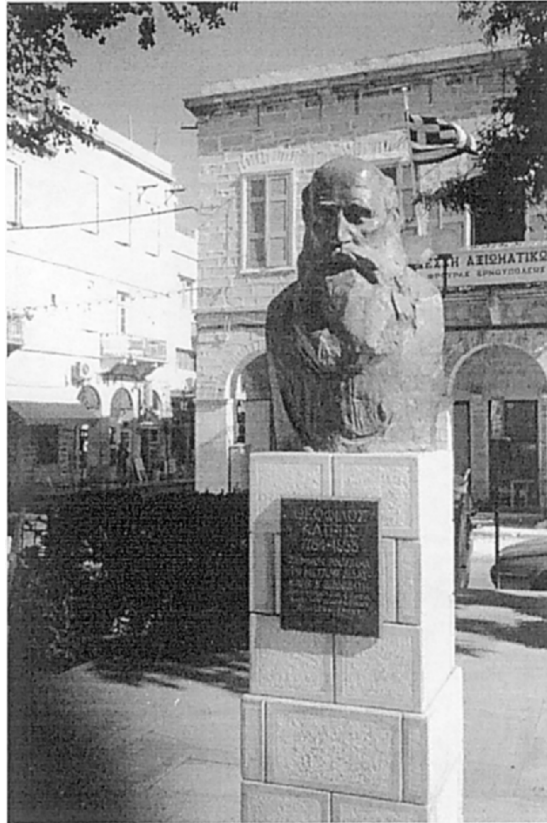


Figure 2. The bust of Theophilos Kairis at Miaoulis' Square of Ermoupolis (island of Syros), erected in July 1991.

It was probably this which led him to the decision to travel once again to Western Europe. Nevertheless, before his departure he was ordained a priest of the Orthodox Church at the age of 49.

After he returned, he founded a school and he worked hard as a teacher, writing educational books, translating and at the same time establishing and organizing the orphanage at Andros. He had probably already formed his novel religious beliefs, though with some elements similar to the revolutionary religious ideas he was acquainted with in Paris.

Being a Christian priest, he tried to create a new religion, Theosebism. We certainly think this was an awkward and unwise action, especially at a time when religion suffered from the trouble and excitement created by the issue of the Autocephalon of the Greek Church, i.e. its independence from the Patriarchate in Constantinople. Kairis, trying during the same period to introduce his Theosebism to the Greeks, was bound to be considered a heretic, and to draw the wrath of the Church, resulting in his confinement, exile, imprisonment and finally his unbecoming way of death.

For what reason? To us it remains a mystery why a respected scholar, acknowledged and honoured by all, insisted so much on a *de facto* unlikely to survive new religion. It is certain that he had his considerations, which notably were manifested

suddenly and at an older age than usual, against a Church, which had helped him to be educated in his youth, and later on supported his work.

Moreover, his fellow-combatants in the war of independence were honouring and supporting him, along with his fellow-citizens who, as we said, elected him as their representative. Other Greeks also honoured Kairis, and considered him as the most appropriate person to deliver the speech of the official reception of the first Governor of Greece, Ioannis Kapodistrias, in Nafplio (1828). In short, he was a respected person. In 1835 the first King of Greece, the Bavarian Otto I, even wanted to decorate him for his national struggles with the Golden Cross of the Saviour, an honour Kairis refused, since he considered Otto to be a pawn of foreign powers. Yet, he equally refused an offer, by the University of Athens, of a Professor's Chair in Philosophy (1837); it seems therefore that by then he had chosen a path of general refusal and of conflict with the establishment, and especially with the Greek Orthodox Church, in a difficult period for the latter. As mentioned earlier, the Greek Church was trying to prove it could exert its self-administration after its independence from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. It was to be expected, then, that its reaction would be harsh against whoever publicized heretical views, especially if he was from its clergy and had previously benefited from that fact.

Our question is why Kairis insisted on his peculiar novel religion so much, in spite of all the reactions. A religion with a liturgy written in the, hard to understand, ancient Doric dialect, with a complex set of rituals, and a peculiar "theosebic" calendar on the steps of the French Revolutionary calendar, *a priori* unlikely to survive since its prototype had already been abolished.

Perhaps Kairis was mentally tired, and suffered from over-fatigue, working and teaching under a devastatingly intense timetable. This can be inferred from the words of his friend in the battle General Ioannis Makriyannis. Perhaps he imagined himself as the great creator of a religion that could mix the ancient Greek beliefs with the corresponding Christian ones, thinking of this as a unique achievement capable of securing him a place among the great persons in history. Maybe he believed he could formulate a new philosophical and religious Greek movement, something truly pioneering. Could it be that he pursued the conflict for his posthumous fame, in order to bear the halo of the martyr?

Unfortunately, in every conflict there are the intolerant and fanatical; these influenced the decision of the court of Syros, and were the ones who, after the death of Kairis insulted the grave and the body of the respected teacher, writing an epilogue unbecoming to him.

NOTES

1. We wish to thank the citizen of Andros, architect Markos Katsiotis (National Technical University of Athens), for granting to us Theophilos Kairis's collected works from his personal library.
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14. *Athena* (6 July 1835).
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