



Summary :

Antigoni is the third largest island of the Prigkiponnisa. Its Greek population has recently dramatically reduced. Since the 19th century, the small fishing village of Antigoni developed into a significant resort for the urban middle-class Greek community of Constantinople.

Other Names

Burgazada

Geographical Location

Princes Islands

Historical Region

Propontis

Administrative Dependence

Constantinople Metropolitan Municipality (İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi)

1. History

The island Antigoni belongs to the complex of the Princes Islands . It lays 9 miles from the port of [Constantinople](#) (Istanbul) and 3 miles from its Asian coast, the third largest island of the Princes Islands.

In antiquity, the island was known as Panormos. In the *History and Geography Dictionary* by Voutyras and Karydis the following are mentioned: “it was called Antigoni maybe by Demetrius Poliorketes in honor of his father Antigonos when he campaigned against [Lysimachus](#) and [Cassander](#) in order to safeguard the freedom of the Bosphorus and the Hellespont, or by Antigonos, son of Caesar Vardas, as is supposed by Scarlatos Vyzantios”.¹ The latter also records that, according to Hammer, Turks call the island Burgaz “in memory [...] of the once standing castle (Panormum castrum)”.²

The Antigoni village was a fishing village almost exclusively populated by Greeks. Petrus Gyllius in the middle of the 16th century recorded that around the seacoast village there were vineyards and that the rest of the island, which was rather rocky, was covered in rosemary bushes, bearberries, oak trees and laudanum.³ According to Evliya Çelebi, the islanders were wealthy ship-owners during the 17th century. The same writer mentions three hundred houses on the island, surrounded by vineyards and gardens.⁴

The *History and Geography Dictionary* states: “the village on the island Antigoni is in whole inhabited by Greeks, while its church dedicated to John the Forerunner is possibly located on the spot where lies the grave where emperor Theophilus had enclosed patriarch Methodius I along with two thieves”.⁵ It is historically documented that Antigoni had traditionally been used as a place of exile for notable personages or dethroned patriarchs. “Furthermore, significant men have been exiled in this island, first of all Methodius, most holy patriarch of Constantinople, enclosed alive by King Theophilus into a grave along with two thieves, followed by Stephanos the Vasilous, son of Lakapenos, dethroned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus”.⁶

When regular boat routes were introduced in 1846, the island was connected to Constantinople. Consequently, with the arrival of the steamboat and the establishment of regular routes, the area was incorporated to the urban nexus and evolved into a resort for the middle-class urban Greek-Orthodox community.⁷

Until the middle of the 20th century Antigoni was largely populated by Greek-Orthodox. Most were occupied with fishery and floriculture. During the summertime the population rose since besides the 1,500 permanent residents, 2,000 summer visitors also arrived.⁸



2. Religion

The Greek-Orthodox community of Antigoni is under the jurisdiction of the diocese of the Princes Islands. On the top of the island towers the plateau of Christ, where the monastery of Theokoryphotos lay from the reign of Vasileios the Macedonian (876-886) until the 17th century. This plateau, of 170 meters altitude, is the second highest mountain of the Princes Islands.⁹ According to tradition, the monastery in question was destroyed by decree of the sultan when a Jewish doctor who had been employed in the palace failed to heal a female courtier, claiming that she had been mortally frightened by a great bonfire lit by the monks to burn a Judas effigy. In 1868 a small church was constructed on that spot.¹⁰

The church of John the Forerunner was built by [Nikolaos Dimadis](#), son of the architect who built the [Great School of the Nation](#). The lead-roofed imposing church was constructed in 1899 on the ruins of an older church. Built with French bricks, the church appeared “purple red” and reminded people of a Byzantine [katholikon](#). In 1950, the community’s board began restoration works, resulting in the coating of the external surfaces.¹¹

A significant holy water fountain ([agiasma](#)) on Antigoni is that of St John the Forerunner, located behind the communal church of the same name, celebrating on August 29th. The fountain’s first building, no longer standing, had been built at the same time with the church. It was renovated in 1961. Other holy water fountains were those of St Nicholas and the Prophet Elias.¹²

The communal [cemetery](#) of Antigoni also had a church, dedicated to the Transfiguration of the Saviour, which was used until 1923.¹³

On the northern part of the island lies the monastery of St George, known as “karip” meaning in Turkish poor or meagre and describes the monastery’s simplicity. It was a [dependency](#) of the Monastery of Mega Spilaio in the Peloponnese.¹⁴ This monastery was ceded to the [guild](#) of tavern owners in 1776, by which it was repaired.¹⁵ The monastery’s church was destroyed in the 1894 earthquake and rebuild right after.¹⁶

3. Education

69 students in total were attending the five-class mixed elementary school of Antigoni in 1923. During the schoolyear 1951-1952, the total of students were 31, in 1961-1962 there were 21, while in 1971-1972 their number had crumbled to just two. The communal school closed down in 1974.¹⁷

In 1951, according to estimations by the newspaper *Makedonia*, the Greek community was comprised of 97 families.¹⁸ Just a few years later, in 1955, according to data provided by Christophoros Christidis from his personal archive, the Antigoni community had a six-class elementary school and an educational association.¹⁹

The number of Greek-Orthodox on the island was drastically reduced after the 1964 expulsions. Indicatively, while in 1965 the first Turkish shop opened in the Antigoni market, about a decade later, in 1978, the last Greek shop standing closed its doors.²⁰ The Greek-Orthodox community of Antigoni nowadays numbers about 25 permanent residents.²¹

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3. Gyllius, P., *Istanbul Boğazi (De Bosporo Thracio)* (Istanbul 2000), p. 241.



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Glossary :

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| | agiasma The holy water (as well as the sacred place from where the water spurts), which the faithful drink, sprinkle or wash themselves in order to be healed. |
| | katholikon The main church in a monastic complex, heart of the monastic activity. |
| | metochion In the Byzantine period, <i>metochion</i> meant the estate that was conceded to a monastery for income purposes and operated as its dependency. Usually the <i>metochia</i> were located far from the monastery to which they belonged and included various structures, such as churches, hospices etc. |



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