Family Business in the Brick and Tile Industry in Athens, 1900–1940

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http://dx.doi.org/10.12681/hr.20446

To cite this article:

FAMILY BUSINESS IN THE BRICK AND TILE INDUSTRY
IN ATHENS, 1900–1940

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Abstract: From 1900 to 1940, family businesses in the brick- and tile-making industry of Athens and its port, Piraeus, were a notable institution that played an important role in the development of the sector and its transformation from artisanal to factory production. They formed a dense network of small and medium-scale units, from which more than 20 big factories would emerge after the 1920s. A strong and constant antagonism between them, on the one side, and the few European-scale large industrial units, on the other, developed. Within this framework, the story of the Athens brick industry in this period can be vividly interpreted through the function and evolution of familial firms (which were under the control of nuclear, extended or multinuclear families) and the actions of their owners.

This article deals with the strong presence and the prominent role of the family business in brick and tile manufacture in Athens and the port of Piraeus from 1900 to 1940. From 1900 onwards, and especially during the 1920s, the Greek

This research was conducted within the framework of my ongoing PhD at the Department of History and Archaeology of the University of Ioannina, entitled "Οι οπτόπλινθοι στην αθηναϊκή αρχιτεκτονική του 19ου και του πρώτου μισού του 20ου αιώνα και ο κλάδος της πλινθοκεραμοποιίας σε Αθήνα, Πειραιά, Χαλκίδα και Πόρο" [Bricks in Athenian architecture, during the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries, and the brickmaking sector in Athens, Piraeus, Chalkida and Poros] under the supervision of Prof Leda Papastefanaki. At this point, I would like to thank her for her guidance on the matter of family businesses, as well as the anonymous reviewers of Historical Review for their corrections. Earlier versions of this text were presented on two occasions: firstly, at the seminar "Crises, Gender and Adaptive Family Economies in Mediterranean Europe (Late 19th–20th Centuries)", held at French School at Athens, on 29 May 1917 and, secondly, at the Fifth Doctoral Seminar in Modern History and Folklore, at the Department of History and Archaeology, University of Ioannina, on 28 June 2017. I would like to thank Angelos Dalachanis, Manuela Martini, Cristina Borderías, Christina Agriantoni, Anna Mahera, Domna Iordanidou, Dimitris Kopanas, Akis Palaiologos and Francesca Sanna for their comments on those presentations, as well as Vassilis Nitsiakos, Maria Papanassios, Margaret E. Kenna and Amy Louise Erickson for their help. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to a group of old brickmakers or their descendants for allowing me to interview them. The article is dedicated to the memory of one of them, Antonios Bakopoulos, who passed away in 2017.

1 Despite the acknowledged existence of familial firms in the – in many ways – interrelated pottery sector, this research focuses on brick and tile production.

The Historical Review / La Revue Historique
Section of Neohellenic Research / Institute of Historical Research
Volume XV (2018)
capital experienced a remarkable demographical and spatial increase, as Table 1 shows.

Table 1
The development of the population of Athens and Piraeus, 1896–1940

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1896</th>
<th>1907</th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>1928</th>
<th>1940</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athens</td>
<td>111,466</td>
<td>167,479</td>
<td>292,991</td>
<td>459,219</td>
<td>481,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piraeus</td>
<td>51,020</td>
<td>71,505</td>
<td>131,170</td>
<td>251,659</td>
<td>205,326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Athens</td>
<td>453,042</td>
<td>802,000</td>
<td>1,124,109</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>


This increase was accompanied by the rapid growth of a substantial building construction sector, which included a large number of companies engaged in the production of building materials. Among them was a group of older or new brick- and tile-making units of every size, which supplied the demand for building materials made of clay, for public works and private housing. Below, we will concentrate on those units which were established in the Athens–Piraeus area.

Although family involvement in the brickmaking sector in Athens (in terms of brickyard owners or renters in, as well as brick workers) is evident in the nineteenth century (and even before), it became more common from the early twentieth century and especially after 1920, when a number of major changes occurred.


\[3\] Many brickyards were situated around Athens, within the Attica basin, in various settlements, such as Liosia, Chalandri, Agia Paraskevi and Kifissia. Additionally, a number of units was established beyond the surrounding mountains of Athens (Aigaleo, Pentelikon and Hymettus) that supplied the building trade; bricks and tiles from small towns of Attica such as Elefsina, Lavrio, Oropos and further afield, as well as from the Chalkida area (and especially villages like Vasiliko and Fylla) and the island of Poros, were employed systematically in the building of the capital since the nineteenth century. These areas are excluded herein, as the data regarding their familial character is insufficient.
Firstly, the total number of units increased dramatically, as stone was rapidly replaced by brick as the main building material. Handmade compact bricks and machine-made hollow bricks became more and more in demand. Table 2 shows the production output of brick and tiles by the few large factories nationwide from 1921 to 1939. These numbers are indicative of the market consumption flow in the period, as there is evidence that the total production of the brickworks in the Athens–Piraeus area could have been in the double digits.

Secondly, most of the units eventually conglomerated in two particular areas: the industrial zones of Kaminia (close to the port of Piraeus) and Elaionas, transforming them into brickmaking “villages”. In addition, from the 1860s two of the four dominant brickmaking patterns (itinerant brickmakers and the seasonal use or rent of a plot for a kiln for making bricks and tiles) almost disappeared, while the other two (the long-term rent of a unit and private brickyards) become dominant, especially after 1900. The homes of brickmakers were usually adjacent or close to the brickworks and it was easy for their families to get involved in the industry. By 1940, there were between 150 and 200 such units. Thus, the Athens brickmaking industry represents an ideal case study to trace the family firm pattern.

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4 The gradual introduction of concrete-framed buildings played an important role in this process, as the use of lightweight materials such as bricks (solid and especially hollow machine-made ones) was considered much more suitable than stone. For a typology of bricks used in Greece after 1900, see Th. K. Papatheodorou, Οικοδομική [Building construction], Athens: s.n., 1947.

5 Lime bricks are excluded. No data for 1940 has been found.

6 In 1934, the production of 64 brickworks – of every kind – in Attica (Athens, Piraeus and Elefsina) reached almost 300 million pieces. National Bank of Greece Historical Archive (NBGHA), A1S34S31F14, Catalogue of brick and tile annual production, 1934), while the table which follows shows 185 million pieces for the same year. Unfortunately, the lack of official data prior to 1921 and especially 1900 prevents an observation of the previously implied increase in production-consumption.

7 A proportion of the production was often given to the owner as a reward.

8 It should be mentioned at this point that the relevant data for 1870–1900 is poor, which is another reason to restrict the present study to after 1900.

9 This number may be assumed in the figures given in a 1931 report. Ministry of National Economy, Η ελληνική βιομηχανία (εκθέσεις και πορίσματα) [Greek industry (reports and conclusions)], Athens: Commerce and Industry Directorate, 1931. Other relevant sources will be presented below.
Table 2
Brick and tile production in Greece, 1921–1939 (in millions of pieces)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Bricks</th>
<th>Tiles</th>
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<td>1921</td>
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<td>1922</td>
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<td>1931</td>
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<td>1932</td>
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<tr>
<td>1940</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Nikolaos Mikelis, “Η εξέλιξη της ελληνικής βιομηχανίας” [The evolution of Greek industry], Βιομηχανική και Βιοτεχνική Επιθεώρησις 5 (1923); Nikolaos Mikelis, Η βιομηχανική κίνηση του παρελθόντος κατά το ετός 1924 [Industrial development], Athens: Makris, 1924; Mikelis, H Βιομηχανική κίνηση παρελθόντος κατά το ετός 1924 [Industrial development in 1924], Athens: Makris, 1925; Mikelis, H Ελληνική βιομηχανία κατά το ετός 1925 [Greek industry in 1925], Athens: Makris, 1926; Konstantinos Argyros, “Αι οικοδομικά βιομηχανία” [Building sector industries], in H Ελληνική βιομηχανία εκθέσεις και πορισμάτα [Greek industry: reports and conclusions], Athens: Ministry of National Economy, 1931; Εμπορικός και βιομηχανικός οδηγός της Ελλάδος [Commercial and industrial guide to Greece], Athens: Commercial and Industrial Chamber of Greece, 1935; Panos Pafylas, “Η βιομηχανία της Ελλάδος” [Industry of Greece], Βιομηχανική Επιθεώρησις 31 (January 1937); UNNRA, Εισηγήσεις επί της αξιοποίησης πλούσιων πολλών Ελλάδος [Proposals for the utilisation of Greek resources], vol. 3, Athens: s.n., 1947.

Our analysis ends in 1940 as, with Greece’s entry in World War II, the brick industry changed radically. Construction, and consequently building materials production, almost stalled for the next six to seven years, remaining problematic for the rest of the decade due to the country’s major political, social and economic problems, like the Civil War and pauperisation. After 1950 and the rapid “rebirth” of the Greek economy, the building sector was engaged in the increasingly significant development and demographic growth of the capital. The brickmaking sector proceeded with a number of changes in order to adapt to the new commercial needs, such as the manufacture of better-quality products and
the increase in overall output. As a result, a number of structural changes, such as the decrease in the total number of brickworks and a massive upgrading of technology in those that survived, as well as the end of seasonal work and child labour, occurred. These alterations led to a major restructuring of the sector.

Prior to attempting to answer questions about the dimensions of the family business pattern in Athens from 1900 to 1940 and its impact on the development of the brickmaking sector, it is necessary to clarify the terminology regarding the topics of family and family business and several related notions. In addition, we will consider the global presence of family businesses in the brickmaking industry. Then, the relevant data regarding Athens and the special role of each family member will be addressed. In addition, the importance of the study of the supporting framework of the family business model, as well as its limitations and the changes it underwent, will be discussed. Finally, the article concludes with some thoughts on the effects of family-business pattern on the brickmaking industry and some general conclusions.

The Terminology of Family and Family Business

Family, as well as notions such as kin, kinship, household and household formation, have been analysed across the humanities. In Greece, the family and its importance in society should always be considered within the framework of the Mediterranean Sea, a somewhat unique “cultural unit” with its own characteristics. Family, on the one hand, and religion, on the other, have been described as the two basic components on which the Greek state was established. Different types of family exist, such as the nuclear (parents and children) or the extended family (parents, children, grandfathers, brothers, sisters and so forth). Another type of family found in Greek society, belonging to the extended family category, is the multinuclear or complex

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family: the father or father-in-law remains the head (patriarch) of the institution, which includes unmarried and married sons and daughters and their own families; he maintains that particular role and the management of the familial property until his death;13 “the iron chain of reproduction and inheritance” functions, at the same time, as a system of reproduction and patriarchal domination”.14 Different types of family could be found according their resilience over time. So, the term “can refer both to the immediate kin group (parents and children) and to a lineage over several generations”.15

Hereafter, as the majority (up to 70 percent, maybe more) of the brickmakers (both brickyard owners and workers) in Athens during the first half of the twentieth century originated from the Cycladic island of Kythnos,16 it is essential to focus on the properties and the development of the family in this area, and particularly in Kythnos. In general, family bonds and hierarchies, as well as kinship relations and marriage patterns, were transferred by islanders who migrated to Athens,17 or were duplicated and reproduced by their descendants, who were born in Athens.18

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Moreover, as a large number of brickmakers in Athens were Arvanites (a clan from Albania that settled in Greece in the Middle Ages), and as many Kythneans were Arvanites too, we are particularly interested in family structures in Arvanitic society. This clan, which gradually integrated into Greek society, is known for its involvement in landowning and agrarian occupations. The dominant role of men over women, marriage strategies and the use of the dowry as a vehicle for financial insurance and upward social mobility are clearly visible.

Concerning family business, a family firm, in its strictest definition, is fully owned and managed by family members. But, in many Western languages family can refer both to the immediate kin group (parents and children) and to a lineage over several generations, as we have mentioned above.

The family business has been defined as an international economic system, with a notable persistence, spread over time and widely diffused, in different economies throughout the world, where the social and economic identification between the two institutions, family and business firm, is almost complete.

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20 Regarding the settlement of Arvanites in the Greek islands and especially Kythnos, see Frederick William Hasluck, “Albanian Settlements in the Aegean Islands”, Annual of the British School at Athens 15 (1908–1909), pp. 223–228; A.N. Vallindas, Ιστορία της νήσου Κύθνου από των αρχαίων χρόνων μέχρι τα καθένας, Συνήθως κατά την των ομοταγών νησών του Αιγαίου [History of the island of Kythnos from ancient times to today in relation to the Aegean island complex], Athens: Spyridon Kousoulinos, 1896.

21 Among others, see Eleftherios Alexakis, Τα παιδιά της σιωπής Οικογένεια, συγγένεια και γάμος στους Αρβανίτες της Αττικής (1859–1940) [The children of silence: family, kinship and marriage among the Arvanites of Attica (1859–1940)], Athens: Parousia, 1996.


Additionally, Mark Casson underlines that a common mistake of historians is to think of the family business as a form of productive organisation suitable only for small and medium-sized firms. Another one is failing to take into consideration chronological and topographical divisions.26

Of course, the family business was closely related to notions that were long considered negative and associated with the preindustrial era,27 such as trust among participants, the paternalism of employers, backwardness, primitive technology, simple organisational structures as well as commercial and distributional weakness.28 As family firms were engaged in small-scale production and were associated with labour-intensive industries, they were said to belong “to economic ghettos outside modernity”29 and seen as a weakness in the industrial capitalist system as they slowed down its dominance.30

Nevertheless, more recent research highlights the contribution of family firms to the evolution of industrial capitalism until the end of the twentieth century (in the era of globalisation, large corporations, scale-intensive industries and managerial enterprises).31 Indeed, they “marked the first steps of economic activity and in most industrially advanced societies evolved into hierarchical structures and paved the way to late capitalism”.32

Regarding Greece, the family has constituted the core of the Greek economy and business, at least since the eighteenth century.33 George Dertlis characterises the Greek family as a highly productive unit and as the predominant production

28 Colli, History of Family Business, p. 1. Colli also states that “the family firm proves historically to be conservative in its policies of development and investment and, subsequently, unable to sustain growth and innovation” (ibid., p. 12).
30 Medick, “Proto-industrial Family Economy.”
31 See Colli, History of Family Business, pp. 1, 11, etc.
cell of the Greek economy for centuries, whereas Ioanna Pepelas Minoglou suggests that kinship business ties were much denser in Greece than abroad. Actually, family firms are “widely recognised as the basic vehicle of Greek development” and they proved to be much more than a transitional pattern to the world of big firms; they seem to be well entrenched, in contrast to other Mediterranean countries. Furthermore, Efi Avdela believes that the role of patriarchal relations in family and family business is known as a non-proletarianisation process in the Greek case.

The small family firm, in parallel with self-employed workers, played a precociously predominant role in the financial, social and political development of the country, both in urban and rural areas. One of the first forms of family business in the newly established country was that of domestic production. Moreover, the role of family and kinship has been detected even in many cases of itinerant work patterns, such as the mobile groups of workers active in Greece at least until the mid-nineteenth century. In addition, the bibliography highlights the prominent role of families in the development of trading companies. The Greek diaspora established large mercantile firms that were based on the development of familial networks and strategies, leading to a successful intergenerational commercial presence.

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36 Aris Dritsas, “Family Firms”, p. 85.
38 Ibid, pp. 38 and 40.
41 Evrydiki Sfíneos, Έλληνες έμποροι στην Αζοφική: Η δύναμη και τα όρια της οικογενειακής επιχείρησης [Greek merchants in the Sea of Azov: the power and the limits of a family business], Athens: Institute for Neohellenic Research, National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2009; Maria Christina Chatziioannou, Οικογενειακή στρατηγική και εμπορικός ανταγωνισμός: Ο οίκος Γερούση τον 19ο αιώνα [Family strategy and commercial competition:
can also be detected in the case of the small-scale commercial firm, as well as craft-based firms or artisanal workshops.

Familial workshops, in particular, existed at least since the establishment of the Greek state in 1828, but they became ubiquitous after 1900; from that time until 1940, when the Greek economy faced stagnation, society was open to small producers.

By 1930, 90 percent of the enterprises in cities were small familial firms, with a staff of one to five people. Most of the workshops were engaged in seasonal production, where all or most of the staff belonged to the owner’s family. Significantly, out of a total of 47,155 employers in the secondary sector in 1928, 30 percent of them recruited employees from within their own family. On the other hand, the familial model had an important presence, too, in joint stock companies. In general, “nearly all Greeks SAs [sociétés anonymes] were private joint-stock companies whose founding shareholders were drawn from the family and a tightly knit group of business or social acquaintances”.

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Clearly, a family firm is directly connected to terms like kin, ownership and succession. Of course, much more detailed terms and notions will preoccupy us here. Firstly, as the literature has underlined the need to highlight the different family roles, we should focus on matters like familial hierarchies and division of labour between members of a family, male (husbands and sons), female (wives and daughters) and child labour, male and female entrepreneurship.


and invisible labour. Clearly, men had the dominant role, especially the founder of a family firm, the patriarch, genitor or patron. His aims were a) the wellbeing of the family firm, as he was the breadwinner, responsible for the family’s survival, and b) to pass on his knowledge and, of course, his company to his sons – his successors – in order to become a patriarch and to establish or continue a dynasty. On the other hand, female involvement is often characterised as subsidiary and secondary, although we should bear in mind that women’s occupational activities are not recorded in many cases, as Leda Papastefanaki notes. Furthermore, terms like domestic autonomy, patronage and paternalism, self-exploitation, work flexibility, household–family
strategies of survival, marriage strategies, dowry and inheritance should not

60 This contribution, by all members of a family, is an acknowledged international survival strategy. See Fontaine and Schlumbohm, "Household Strategies for Survival", p. 3. Medick, in "Proto-industrial Family Economy", notes that "the family functioned as an internal engine of growth in the process of proto-industrial expansion because subjectively it remained tied to the norms and rules of the traditional familial subsistence economy". These strategies could divided into private (personal efforts for a "decent living, serving as valued members of the community and raising children") and public ("when members of various households operate collectively with respect to third parties"). See Marcel van der Linden and Jan Lucassen, Prolegomena for a Global Labour History, Amsterdam: International Institute of Social History, 1999, p. 13. For the Greek case, see Pizanias, Οι φτωχοί των πόλεων [The city poor], pp. 142–146; Antonis Liakos, Εργασία και πολιτική στην Ελλάδα του μεσοπολέμου: Το Διεθνές Εργασιο-Εργασιακό Τμήμα [Labour and politics in interwar Greece: the International Labour Office and the emergence of the social institutions], Athens: Research and Education Foundation of Commercial Bank of Greece, 1993, pp. 76–80; Leda Papastefanaki, "Όψεις της εργατικής εγκατάστασης στον Πειραιά στη δεκαετία του 1930" [Aspects of the labour settlement in Piraeus in the 1930s], in H πόλη στους νεότερους χρόνους: Μεσογειακές και βαλκανικές όψεις (19ς–20ς α.) [The city in recent times: Mediterranean and Balkan perspective (nineteenth–twentieth centuries)], Athens: Society for the Study of Modern Hellenism, pp. 473–489.


be ignored, as they concern the management of a familial firm and also had an important role in its formation in Greece.

Finally, the role of marriage sponsor, god-parenthood,63 kinship business ties, kin assistance64 and commitment65 in the formation of the family businesses should also be underlined.

**Family Businesses and Brickmaking: A Worldwide Perspective**

Fired bricks, being one of the most important and widely used building materials, had an enormous role in architectural tradition across the world.66 Their production depended on several types of brickworks, which consisted of large but not always visible production units. A growing bibliography has shed light on different aspects of the history of the sector, which, despite its dimensions, had remained neglected in many cases, both before and after industrialisation. Although, historians and ethnographers would quite often agree with the

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opinion of Gijs Kessler and Jan Lucassen that “production technique before mechanization […] shows very little variation across the vast Eurasian land-mass (and indeed elsewhere)”, we should not ignore Richard Goldthwaite’s claim that “the industry varies in different parts of Europe at different times. It is not surprising, therefore, that the history of brick and lime production has yet to be written, for it requires a synoptic vision of many local operations, few of which, in fact, have ever been studied.”

As regards familial brickworks, there is evidence that they existed since early Byzantine times at least. Although seminal works on brickyard labour focus primarily on the subject of kinship/familial bonds between the workforce in a unit and less on the matter of its ownership, a considerable number of studies on different places around the world confirm that familial brickyards represented

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a worldwide pattern – a commonplace, at least during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The phenomenon extended to every kind of brickmaking unit, such as household production units, household industries, workshops, manufactories and factories,\(^\text{72}\) which were either run by the owners or rented out to other families.\(^\text{73}\)

Regarding Greece, the literature confirms the existence of brickmaking family firms, both small and large in scale, in many parts of the country. References to family brickworks, based on handmade and seasonal production, or on a partially mechanised process, can be found in publications from the field of anthropology, ethnology and rural studies but less from the economic and industrial history perspective.\(^\text{74}\) A few contributions have appeared on the subject of large-scale, family-owned brick and tile factories that mechanised the production process, such as the Allatini brickworks in Thessaloniki,\(^\text{75}\) Tsalapatas brick factory in Volos,\(^\text{76}\)

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\(^{72}\) The proposed division here is taken from Peacock, *Pottery*, pp. 12–51.

\(^{73}\) Wilson, *Subsidizing Capitalism*, p. 35 passim.


Elephas brickworks on the island of Chios,77 the short-lived Polymeris & Co in Serres,78 and the units established by Efstathios and Kriton Dilaveris in Piraeus.79

Internationally, the labour division in brickworks assigns men, women and children with different duties.80 The brickyard owner, who was always male, except in cases where a widow had assumed control, was responsible for the production line and may also have been involved in the brickmaking process. Brickyard owners’ wives often contributed to the family income by undertaking jobs in the brickyard, although this generally happened in a discreet manner as the gender ideology in many countries "makes it a shame for men to allow their wives to work".81

The participation of children in production is one of the constant characteristics of the industry.82 Children, very often those of the brickyard

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79 Eleni Anagnostopoulou and Litsa Bafouni, “Εργοστάσια μωσαϊκών πλακών και κεραμοποιίας Ευσταθίου και Κρίτωνος Δηλαβέρη στον Πειραιά” [Mosaic-tiles factories and brickworks Eustathios and Kriton Dilaveris in Piraeus], in Ιστορικός βιομηχανικός εξοπλισμός στην Ελλάδα [Historical industrial equipment in Greece], ed. Yannis Polyzos, Vassilis Panagiopoulos, Christina Agiriantoni, Nikos Belavilas, Athens: Odysseas, 1998, pp. 298–307. Especially, regarding the cases of Efstathios Dilaveris and his son Kriton more research is required; it still remains unclear if we should classify among the familial group companies or if they belong to what we call personal companies, where a single man holds the main managerial role. The nature of involvement of Kriton Dilaveris in his father’s enterprise remains unknown until 1935, when he established another big factory, in Nikaia, close to Piraeus. Withal, more light should be shed on the role of Charalampos Dilaveris, Efstathios’ brother, and his children, who probably had a role in the management of the Dilaveris brickworks.

80 Papathanassiou, “Aspects of Industrial Child Labour”, p. 8. It should be underlined that, according the aforementioned international bibliography on brickmaking, there are some differences in labour division, between men and women in a brickyard, across time and space.

81 As in the case of Mexico. See Wilson, Subsidizing Capitalism, p. 76. Similarly, in the Greek case, Georgios Kokkinogenis claims that “back then, a man was ashamed to allow his wife to work”, as it was an indication that he was not the breadwinner. However, he states that “a brickmakers’ wife did not work in the brickworks, rather she helped.” Interview with Georgios Kokkinogenis (2018).

owner, took part into the production process by the age of 10, sometimes even earlier. As Maria Papathanassiou, referring to the Austrian case, states, “children were believed to be in a better position to carry out such tasks, due to their small bodies and feet, which permitted them to move among the lines of drying bricks without damaging the products”.83 Most of the sources state that boys were mainly employed84 and that brickmaking was not internationally a favourable place for female child labour, as other industries traditionally were.85 Despite that fact, exceptions have been documented.86 Finally, as members of a family bound to a business, brickmakers’ children were relatively lucky, as working for their parents they could avoid overexploitation, enjoying simultaneously privileges such as flexibility, protection and care,87 something which did not happen in other cases. So, child labour in brickfields took place within the framework of an apprenticeship, by which “skills were passed down from father to son and those who excelled in the craft … were often referred to as brick masters”.88

**Brickmaking in Athens, 1900–1940**

As part of my PhD research, I compiled an inventory of brickmaking firms in Athens that also includes some details of each unit and a biography of their owners. This has proved an invaluable tool for my research, as a complete and detailed record of brickworks and their owners had been lacking. The inventory contains the names of more than 400 brickyard owners, 100 board members of public limited companies and 200 enterprises in total,89 from Athens and Piraeus alone, between 1900 and 1940.90

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84 For the example of nineteenth-century England, see Goldthwaite, *Building of Renaissance Florence*, p. 201.
85 For the case of Mexico, see Wilson, *Subsidizing Capitalism*, p. 84; for Germany, Kessler and Lucassen, *Labour Relations*, p. 283.
87 Ringer, “Turning up the Heat”, p. 12.
88 The term includes brickyards owned by brickmakers or rented by others. This number could be less, as in many cases a brickworks may have been counted more than once, as it could be, sequentially, used by more than one enterprise. On the other hand, more research should be carried out in this field, as it is clear that some enterprises operated more than one plant simultaneously.
89 Regarding the period under examination, the total number of enterprises in Attica could be 220. If we include all the areas that produced bricks for Athens, that number could exceed 300.
In order to compile the inventory, it was necessary to consult several sources, chiefly commercial and industrial directories of that period, such as those edited by Iglesis, Alexakis, Panagopoulos, Kousoulinos, Sideris and others (amounting to almost 50 volumes in total), as well as a number of company brochures and reports. Also useful were the contributions and advertisements regarding brickmaking firms of all types published in newspapers and technical periodicals such as Αρχιμήδης, Έργα and Βιομηχανική Επιθεώρησις. Research was also carried out in a number of archives, such as the National Bank of Greece Historical Archives (NBGHA) and the Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive (ELIA), which contain files pertaining to several businesses. Finally, a series of interviews (more than 70) and shorter discussions (more than 40) with former brickmakers or their descendants proved an invaluable source, in terms of quality and quantity. Many of these interviewees provided me with items from their personal or familial archives, like rare photographs, family trees, notarial and other public documents, notes and booklets, sketches and architectural drawings.

Before proceeding to the presentation of the relevant data, it is essential to turn to the basic characteristics of the brickmaking industry in greater Athens since 1834 (the year it became capital of Greece). In particular, in 1857 there were more than 50 kilns in Piraeus, as Christina Agriantoni states.91 Until 1920, the vast majority of brickworks worked only five months a year, from May to September. Most of these were small firms, with a staff of 5, 10, or 20 people engaged in handmade production. This arduous work included the following tasks: a) digging clay from pits in order to ensure the appropriate supply of raw material, b) clay preparation and refinement (pugging clay using tools, hands and feet), c) the formation by hand of bricks and tiles on a bench, d) the drying process, e) loading the kiln (in Athens a rectangular intermittent type of updraught kiln was extensively employed), 92 f) the firing process, g) the unloading of the kiln.93

91 Christina Agriantoni, Οι αρχές της εκβιομηχάνισης στην Ελλάδα τον 19ο αιώνα [The beginnings of industrialisation in Greece during the 19th century], Athens: Katarti, 20102, p. 111.
92 This particular kiln was called a "Turkish kiln" in Greece (interviews with Frangiskos Martinos (2012) and Konstantinos Bouritis (2018) and many other interviewees) and a "Roman kiln" in the international bibliography. See Campbell and Price, Brick, p. 49.
93 The manual production process of brick and tiles in Athens is exhaustively described by several interviewees within the framework of my research. Here, among others, I should mention my interviews with Panagiotis Tranoulis (2001) Dimitrios Kokkinogenis (2001), Georgios Kokkinogenis (2018), Kostas Bouritis (2018), Frangiskos Martinos (2012) and Vassilis Tridimas (2003). Of course the aforementioned bibliography on small-scale brickmaking in Greece provides significant information. To this we should add the seminal work of Καλλιπόρος Θεοχαρίδου, "Συμβολή στη μελέτη της παραγωγής οικοδομικών κεραμικών προϊόντων στα βυζαντινά και μεταβυζαντινά χρόνια" [A contribution to the
Efforts to establish big firms involving machinery initially failed. A few big brickworks that relied on steam power shared the same fate from 1870 to 1900. Only after 1900 and especially after 1920, when the population expanded and there was a notable increase in the use of brick instead of stone, did five or six larger brickworks industries emerge, such as Dilaveris, Cyclops and Atlas, which used imported integrated production systems, employed large numbers of workers (over 150 in each case) and operated throughout the year.

At the same time, a great number of the small firms and enterprises proceeded to build extensions and upgrade equipment. The most prominent efforts were those undertaken by Frangiskos Verros, Anastasios Martinos, Angelos Nikas, Papamakarios Bros, Antonios Lebesis & Bros, Markos Goumas & Bros, Manolis Panagiotopoulos & Bros, Ioannis Lebesis and others, which transformed them from the category of “cottage industries” or “workshop industries” to that of medium or large-scale factories (employing up to 100 workers). Machines were adopted selectively for some stages of the production line. Simultaneously, many of these companies continued to produce handmade bricks and tiles too, during the summer. There were more than 170 or even 200 of these enterprises, which may be classified as labour intensive.

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94 Our knowledge of these efforts is very poor. Even if some data has been published, there is a great need for a further and thorough study of the brickmaking industry of that period. See Agriantoni, Οι απαρχές της εκβιομηχανίας [The beginnings of industrialisation], pp. 27 and 198.

95 For the term, see Peacock, Pottery, pp. 25–43.

96 According to the annual production size and the extent of their industrial premises.


98 For the term, see Peacock, Pottery, pp. 25–43.

99 Antoniou, Η πλινθοκεραμοποίηση [The brickworks], p. 157.

100 This number concerns the units in the core of the city until 1940. Brickworks around Athens are excluded. It should be mentioned that 20–30 pottery workshops, which were specialised to the production of other building materials made of clay (such as drainpipes, floor tiles), are not included.
units of small, medium or large scale. Most of them were located in the industrial zones of Elaionas in Athens and Kaminia in Piraeus.¹⁰¹

**Brickmaking Family Businesses in Athens: Data Presentation and Analysis**

Table 3 provides a breakdown of the labour-intensive units in Athens and Piraeus between 1900 and 1940.¹⁰²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>169 labour-intensive brickworks</th>
<th>5 industrial brickworks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>157 labour-intensive units</td>
<td>12 labour-intensive units (with at least 2 persons with different surnames among the owners)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 units</td>
<td>2 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104 units</td>
<td>3 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 units</td>
<td>7 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All brickworks owners with the same surname</td>
<td>One person known as owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 units</td>
<td>Family groups on board of directors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


¹⁰¹ For the many reasons for the acknowledged phenomenon of nucleation (clustering) of pottery and brickmaking units worldwide in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Peacock, *Pottery*, pp. 38–43.

¹⁰² Pottery works that were involved in the production of other clay building materials, such as clay pipes, clay floor-tiles, are not included. Also excluded are firms involved in the manufacture of cement or lime bricks, although it should be mentioned that most of them (more than 10) until 1940 were related to or under the control of big enterprise-industries of other sectors or had been established as departments of the few industrial brickworks.
The data in Table 3 could be read as follows: Fifty-three of the 169 businesses were intergenerational family-controlled firms: the owners of each brickworks were members of a family (with the same surname, so obviously paternal relatives). Even in cases when they were converted into limited enterprises, most were never considered as listed companies and their boards of directors were absolutely identical to the list of owners, who were always family members, as has been mentioned for the Greece case in general. Pepelasis Minoglou, “Επιχειρηματικότητα” [Entrepreneurship], p. 485.
Lebesis–Bakopoulos, Levantis–Fragoulakis, Martinos and Gardelis, whose existence can be confirmed for both before 1900 and after 1940.104

Only one person could be identified the owner in 104 units. The data is not adequate to confirm the further involvement of other family members in these cases.105

In 12 of the 169 brickworks, two or more people among the owners have different surnames. In three cases it seems that they were relatives (fathers and sons or brothers-in-law).106 In another two, no kinship bonds can be traced. A rare case, the adjacent brickworks of Christos Martinos and Alexandros Mantzoros–Efstathia Zafeirakou, located on the Iera Odos road, in Votanikos, merged in 1953.107 Their owners were clearly bound together through godparenthood. This strategic bonding between the two families, which coincided with the merger, gave a family-like sense to the collaboration between the two brickmakers.108 No information exists for the remaining seven cases,109 but the hypothesis that


105 In many cases, brickmakers with the same surname existed. However, it is not always possible to say whether they were involved in the same brickyard. Further study may reveal other links and thus increase the total number of family-owned brickyards in Athens.


107 Interview with Frangiskos Martinos (2012). These two units were established many years ago. This unique example reminds us that “family firms may be unwilling to accept the risk of cooperation for many reasons, which are related to their own nature. Cooperation means, as already stated, giving up – to a greater or lesser extent – control over strategic resources, and accepting a partial loss of independence in business decision.” Andrea Colli, “Risk, Uncertainty, and Family Ownership”, in Fernández Pérez and Colli, Endurance of Family Businesses: A Global Overview, p. 100.

108 It is important to remember that one of the most prominent components of patronage is bestmanship (Pitt-Rivers, "Ritual Kinship", p. 324). Entrepreneurs, as it has been observed in the case of the Greek paint industry, often cemented commercial networks with kinship relationships, such as baptism (Dritsas, “Family Firms”, pp. 92–93). Furthermore, regarding the relation between godfather and godchild, it has been stated that it “is even more asymmetrical than that between parent and child: unilateral beneficence on the part of the godfather, respect on the part of the godchild”. J.G. Peristiany, “Introduction”, in Peristiany, Mediterranean Family Structures, p. 19. The obligations and working arrangements that derive from the bonds between koumbari are discussed in Kenna, “Idiom of Family”, p. 349.

109 Such as the brickworks of Alexandros Geramanis and Georgios Galanakis on Pireos St. Theoklis Skenderidis, Ὑδηγός τῆς ελληνικῆς βιομηχανίας 1933–34 [Hellenic industry guide, yearbooks 1933–34], p. 182.
the partnership involved non-relatives should not be excluded from further research.\textsuperscript{110}

Even among the few larger industries, which of course belonged to the group of limited companies, it is evidently clear that some were under the full control of a person or a family, or of board members. In other cases, small familial groups were in control of the company.\textsuperscript{111}

From the aforementioned data, the prominent, if not the dominant, role of Greek family businesses in the brickmaking industry is more than obvious.\textsuperscript{112} It concerns a group of units that were developed around what we now call the nuclear family (father, mother and children) or stem family (grandparents, parents and children) or even its extended version (grandchildren, nephews, sons-in-law, etc.). The term includes owners or renters of brickyards, whether they were involved in a hands-on way on site (as was especially the case in small or medium-sized brickworks) or acted as managers.

A strong motive for the dominance of this certain pattern was the survival of the brickyard and the wellbeing of the interdependent family of the brickmaker. As bricks and tiles were cheap products in the building materials market and there was a great competition among the producers, brickmakers had no choice other than to sell their products more and more cheaply.\textsuperscript{113} At the same time, as they could not play with the cost of raw material, in order to ensure household survival they intensified the mechanism of self and family exploitation, so that they themselves, their wives and their children (mostly the males, over the age of 10 or 11) were engaged in the brickmaking process. This particular approach provided income for the family economy, in a strategy

\textsuperscript{110} A partnership was the advisable solution for a young entrepreneur whose individual funds/capital was not enough for the creation of a unit. Yannis Yannitsiotis, Η κοινωνική ιστορία του Πειραιά: Η συγκρότηση της αστικής τάξης 1860–1910 [The social history of Piraeus: the making of bourgeoisie, 1860–1910], Athens: Nefeli, 2006, p. 177.

\textsuperscript{111} These particular businesses are beyond the scope of this article.

\textsuperscript{112} It is necessary to examine in the future the possibility that the high percentage of family businesses in the Greek brickmaking industry represent a rare and exceptional phenomenon. A comparison with other sectors of production (or the economy in general) in Greece and the study of the dimensions of familial brickyard patterns worldwide would be essential in this regard.

\textsuperscript{113} To the bricks and tiles made in brickworks in Athens, we should add the millions of products coming from further afield (Elefsina, Lavrio, Poros and especially the villages around Chalkida, as Vassiliko, Fylla and Lefkandi) by carriages and trucks, boats and trains. Thus, prices remained low in general.
known as “endofamilial accumulation”, and ensured the well-being of both business and family.

What social anthropologists call the patrilineal way of family development characterises these businesses: a brickworks passes through conveyance or a will to the male children of the family, over and over. While girls were given a dowry upon marriage, they never received a stake in the brickworks. If her husband was also brickworks owner, a bride would follow him to his or his family’s brickyard. Only if he was at the time of marriage a worker in his father-in-law’s unit or there was no male child in the family would the son-in-law join the business. On the other hand, a rather rare way for a woman to become herself a member, or even the head, of the business was widowhood: by inheriting a share or the whole of the unit. That happened especially when she was childless or her husband died intestate.

Apart from the observations presented thus far, a careful approach to the subject reveals an obvious wider character of the term familial brickyards. It

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115 As Maria Athanasaki (2013), Konstantinos Bouritis (2002), Paraskevi Gonidaki (2013) and many other informers stated in their interviews.
116 The phenomenon is confirmed in many of the cases examined here, and there is no evidence for the contrary. An example is the case of the Lebesis–Bakopoulos unit, on the former Kavalas St, in Vouthoulas, Elionias. Georgios Lebesis transferred (through a rather iconic sale) his brickwork to his grandson Theodoros Bakopoulos, while a dowry was given to his granddaughter, Eleni Bakopoulou, by her father Michail Bakopoulos. Interview with Antonios Bakopoulos (2013). Some other similar cases are the brickmaking units owned by Georgios Papamakarios, Manolis Panagiotopoulos and Georgios Degleris, all established during first half of the twentieth century on Kavalas St. Interviews with Paraskevi Gonidaki (2013), Eleni Panagiotopoulou (2014), Anna Anaplioti (2014) and Georgios Papamakarios (2016).
117 It is necessary to underline that even if marriage among the group brickmakers was heavily endogamous, there is no evidence for collaboration/partnership between the two family businesses after the marriage. None of the interviewees claim that. In general, for the attachment of the wife to the husband’s family in Greece, see Vassilis Nitsiakos, *Παραδοσιακές κοινωνικές δομές [Traditional social structures]*, Ioannina: Isnafi, 2016, p. 86.
119 This is the case of Michail Bakopoulos, son-in-law of Georgios Lebesis. Interview with Antonios Bakopoulos (2013).
120 A notarial document from 1919 confirms the existence of a kiln that belonged to a woman called Strefena. The name suggests that she was the widow of a man named Strefis, probably the owner of the specific brickyard. Contract conducted by solicitor D. Vinandos,
is a commonplace that brothers of brickmakers (who were not co-owners for several reasons), cousins, nephews, sons- and brothers-in-law, godsons and other relatives from both sides (the husband’s and the wife’s), and even women (wives, daughters and nieces) were hired as workers.121 It is certain that in many cases, especially in small brickworks (up to 5 or 10 workers), family members (nuclear or wider) exclusively comprised the working staff,122 thus putting the brickmaker among the petty commodity producers.123 Regarding bigger firms (where the number of workers approached 100), where the brickmaker belonged to the group of petty capitalists,124 the higher the number of workers, the lower the percentage of family members.

In such cases, the working staff were mostly substituted by distant relatives and members of what has been called the pseudo-family, as well as by people with

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121 The Greek law of 1912 on women and child labour, “Περί εργασίας γυναικών και ανηλίκων” [On female and child labour], ΦΕΚ Α’/46 (7 February 1912), defines as family members working in a family firm as the husband/unit owner, his wife, his parents and their children, but also other relatives, until the third degree of consanguinity.

122 An example is the brickworks of Angelos Bouritis [interview with Konstantinos Bouritis (2018)]. In terms of staff, it is not clear if the family brickworks are based only on a type of agnatic extended family (parents and male children and their male descendants). There are many examples where family members from the wife’s side worked in the husband’s brickyard. In the case of the Goumas Bros brickyard at Tavros, among the workers were many people from Amfissa, which was the birthplace of Aspassia Lytra, Kostas Goumas’ wife. Interview with Polyxeni Gouma (2014). This may be linked to the role of the woman in the family and especially to the bonds with the wife’s family that were maintained after marriage. Nitsiakos, Παραδοσιακές κοινωνικές δομές [Traditional social structures], p. 102. On the other hand, the phenomenon cannot be easily traced in the many cases where the husband and wife had the same origin.

123 Wilson, Subsidizing Capitalism, p. 51.

124 Ibid.
a common origin to their employers. Almost half of the owners of the units and the workers in Athens were from island of Kythnos. The formation of a complex familial-regional network, on which the orderly functioning of the enterprise was based, was clearly related to a number of working patterns and different forms of commitments between the owners’ group and the workers in each brickyard, such as loyalty, trust between friends and neighbours, commitment, paternalism and patronage. Thus, a significant degree of flexibility can be traced, in many aspects (such as the total number of the workforce in every unit, wages, working hours, etc.), which led to resilience in many cases, especially in periods of financial depression.

**Husbands, Wives and Children: The Individual Role of Each Member of the Brickmaker’s Family**

The brickmaker, owner or renter of a unit was simultaneously both the head of the family and the master/chief of the brickyard. Qualities such as skilfulness, a willingness to work hard, the wise investment of yearly profits and a continuous desire to enlarge the unit gradually, step by step, not only created the myth of

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125 See Bardanis, “Brickworkers”. Regarding relations between peasants/villagers and their kin/relatives who migrated to cities and the mechanism for maintaining urban-rural connections, see Ernestine Friedl, “The Role of Kinship in the Transmission of National Culture to Rural Villages in Mainland Greece”, *American Anthropologist* 61/1 (1959), pp. 30–38, where she claims that in places (other than Greece) where upward social movement from farm to town exists, the strong kinship ties are not necessarily duplicated (Ibid., p. 36). This indicates the significance of this pattern and its link with the particularity/importance of the family business institution in Greece. For a parallel example to the Kythnos workforce, see Kenna, “Occupational Culture of Building Workers”, which discusses the case of builders from Anafi, another Aegean island.

126 As it has been stated in another context, “with the spectre of bankruptcy ever present, a combination of the common-law partnership and unlimited liability meant that many businesses preferred to be associated with their family and community-based connections rather than with outsiders”. Colli, *History of Family Business*, p. 29.

127 It is known that in the units which were in operation during the whole year and the brickmaking process was partially mechanised, the number of workers increased every summer, when the handmade department was in operation again, for 4–5 months. Interview with Frangiskos D. Verros (2012).

128 We should bear in mind that Greek society was strongly androcentric at that time (Avdela, *Le genre entre classe et nation*, pp. 40). The male was the “head of the household” under Greek law until 1983. See Pepelasis Minoglou, “Women and Family Capitalism”, p. 520.

129 The systematic study of the deeds of several cases reveals that the brickyard site was formed, finally, after a number of consecutive acquisitions of adjoining plots over a period of
the successful, self-made entrepreneur\textsuperscript{130} but also earned him the title of patriarch and patron. A specific personal management style, involving paternalism and a deep knowledge of the craft, made him a respected person in the eyes of the members of the vibrant brickmaking community in Athens, as well as of the community of workers.\textsuperscript{131} One of his aims was to pass on his knowledge and, of course, his company to his sons – his successors – in order to establish or continue a dynasty. Nevertheless, he would always remain the patriarch – the founder – the oldest in the hierarchy. Even if he, ostensibly, handed over the brickyard and the management to his successors, he always had the final say in any subsequent decision.\textsuperscript{132}

On the contrary, brickmakers’ wives followed a different pathway. A few testimonies suggest that they and their daughters participated in the brickmaking process mostly in a subsidiary role.\textsuperscript{133} A typical job for women, after the several years. One of the most characteristic examples is that of the Fragos Verros brickworks in Athens; the brickworks’ 6.5-hectare property was obtained by purchasing 23 properties between 1905 and 1933.

\textsuperscript{130} For the term, see Yannisiotis, \textit{Η κοινωνική ιστορία}, p. 185; Dritlis, \textit{Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Κράτους, 1830–1920} [History of the Greek state, 1830–1920], vol. 2, p. 625.


\textsuperscript{132} Interviews with Athanasia Frangoulaki (2017), Frangiskos Martinos (2013), among others. Nevertheless, the degree to which the father was involved in an “invisible” way in the management of the brickyard after he passed on the firm to his sons depended on their character, too. Of course, we should underline the supporting role of a well-known phenomenon, like the building of different houses for the members of a brickmaker’s family in Athens; the nuclear households of different members of a family were all built close to one another, in the same part of the brickworks, too. Interviews with Frangiskos Martinos (2012), Georgios Tridimas (2015), Georgios Papamakarios (2016) and others. Evidently, we are dealing with a kind of pseudo-nuclear household, actually a type of a cluster “of households whose members bore the same surname”. As Hionidou writes, in a \textit{multi-housed extended household}, the boundaries between each house were not clear and the parental involvement in their children’s social and economic life was, in many cases, unavoidable. “Independence and Inter-dependence”, p. 229.

\textsuperscript{133} This should be seen within a general framework of a low female presence (less than 10 or 20\%) in the brickmaking industry in Athens, during the period under examination; something which is ascertained by all the old brickmakers that I interviewed. Two examples of brickmakers’ wives with hands-on experience in brickmaking process are Maria Martinou, Frangiskos Martinos’ wife, and Angeliki Martinou, Christos Martinos’ wife. Interview with Frangiskos Martinos (2012).
introduction of the brickmaking machine, was the handling of the wire cutting
device to cut the extruded clay into bricks. Widows formed an exception as
they very often had an active managerial role, if not hands-on involvement too.
The capability of widows to continue their husbands’ craft suggests they were
already actively involved in the family business.

But as the family home was attached to the brickworks until the 1930s or 1940s
and even after 1950, it was easy for family members to get involved, beyond
domestic work and childrearing (which was their realm), in supplementary
activities in the unit, in what is called “invisible” work, which included the
raising of small livestock and poultry, preparing meals for the unit’s paid
laborers and doing the laundry.

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134 Interviews with Antonios Bakopoulos (2013) and many other brickmakers.
135 As Beatrice Zucca Micheletto notes for another case. “Only Unpaid Labour Force?
Women’s and Girls’ Work and Property in Family Business in Early Modern Italy”, The
136 As happened in general in the case of artisans. See Pizanias, Οι φτωχοί των πόλεων
[The city poor], p. 147. Examples of brickmakers whose home and brickmaking unit were
built on the same plot are those of the Goumas Bros, in Tavros (interview with Markos
Goumas (2014) and Polyxeni Gouma (2016)), Frangiskos and Christos Martinos on Iera Odos
(interview with Frangiskos Martinos (2012)), Emmanuel Vassalos, in Tavros (interview with
Petros Vassalos (2014)), Antonios Athanasakis, in Tavros (interview with Maria Athanasaki
(2013)), Evangelos Katetzopoulos, on Iera Odos (Ropaiouto-Tsareli, Ο Ελαιώνας [Elaionas],
pp. 222–223), Tridimas Bros, on the former Kavalas St (interview with Georgios Tridimas
(2015)), Frangiskos Verros, on the former Kavalas St (interview with Frangiskos Verros
(2012)), Georgios Degraris, on the former Kavalas St, Vouthoulas (interview with Paraskevi
Gonidaki (2013), Angelos Bouritis, on Ploutonos St, Aigaleo (interview with Konstantinos
Bouritis (2018)), Panagos Panagiotopoulos, on the former Kavalas St (interview with Anna
Anaplioti (2014)), Georgios Papamakarios, on the former Kavalas St (interview with Georgios
Papamakarios (2016)), Georgios Fragkoulakis, Kerameikos (interview with Athanasia
Frangoulaki (2017)), Georgios Vassalos, in Kaminia, Piraeus (interview with Manolis Vassalos
(2014)) and many others.
137 As general, as Avdela notes, “the blurring of boundaries between paid work and
domesticity, workplace and family is repeatedly evoked”. Efi Avdela, “Work, Gender & History
in the 1990s and Beyond”, Gender & History 11/3 (1999), p. 530.
138 This was the role of the sister of Nikos, Georgios and Kostas Vassalos, brickmakers in
Votanikos. Interview with Vassilios Leloudas (2016), who probably refers to the period just
after World War II.
139 As is stated for the case of pottery and clay-pipes works in Marousi, a suburb of Athens
that time. Interview with Antonios Loutsis (2013).
Family members were often called on in emergency situations, such as to save fresh bricks when storms erupted in the middle of the night. In all cases in Athens, it remains unclear whether the brickmaker’s wife was paid for her contribution to the company. Financial remuneration seems rather impossible, but more research is necessary on the subject. Anyway, as brickmakers’ wives did not work outside of the household, they could never claim the role of breadwinner.

Nevertheless, quite often, these women were addressed by the workers as “ma’am” or “lady” (κυρά or κερά in Greek) and were responsible for the orderly functioning of the units in the absence of their husbands. Furthermore, in many cases it is known that they were involved in commercial affairs. A number of interviewees recall them as strict, clever, powerful and respectable women, who could cope easily with both workers and clients.

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140 As Anna Anaplioti confirms for the case of Panagos Panagiotopoulos’ brickyard. Interview with Anna Anaplioti (2014). It is known that “family firms were able to respond quickly to sudden changes in their environment and to neutralize potential shocks”. Dritsas, “Family Firms”, p. 93.

141 For a detailed description of a brickmaker’s wife’s involvement, visible or otherwise, that is quite similar to the situation in Athens, see Wilson, Subsidizing Capitalism, pp. 75–98.

142 Yannis Martinos states that Maria Filippaiou, wife of Michalis Trepas (a brickmaker in Eliaonas–Aigaloi), was engaged in the commercial affairs of her husband’s brickworks after 1945 – and possibly before 1940 – while he was involved in the production line. Interview with Yannis Martinos (2015).

143 These are the cases of Angeliki Degleri, wife of Georgios Degleris (interview with Paraskevi Gomidakis (2013)), Angeliki Martinou, wife of Christos Martinos (interview with Frangiskos Martinos (2012)). Although they are many more relevant testimonies, there is no data regarding wives’ involvement in the decision-making process, even when they had made a contribution to the development of the family firm with a dowry. On the contrary, “in contemporary developing countries, women’s property and its social acknowledgement enhances women’s agency, since it gives them influence over family economic decisions and over society, and finally contributes to the reduction of inequalities among sexes”. See Zucca Micheletto, “Only Unpaid Labour Force?”, p. 2. Obviously, more research should be done in this direction for the herein presented case, while it necessary to view the “hidden” managerial role of the brickmakers’ wife in Athens in relation to the fact that in Greece a) despite the focus on patrilineal development, kinship is often bilateral (cognatic), and b) the remains of matriarchal standards of the past, concealed by the dominant patriarchy for so many centuries, can be found in Greek society. See Eleftherios Alexakis, “Περί της Βιτόρας ή του στοιχείου του σπιτιού: Η συμβολική συγκρότηση της οικογένειας και της συγγένειας στους Αρβανίτες της Αττικής” [Vitora or the spirit of the house: The symbolic construction
Child labour was extensively employed in the brickyards until the 1950s. Often, child labour was related to the system of seasonal work; a brickmaker’s children participated in the brickmaking process during the production period or, selectively, during holidays and school vacations, in order to help their fathers. Sons (and daughters, too, in a few instances) from the age of 10 or 12, were involved in a variety of duties, such as moving the bricks and tiles from the brick worker’s bench and setting them to dry. Skills were passed down from father to son; through a demanding apprenticeship they were actually prepared for the next levels of the hierarchy, like those of the adult worker, brick masters (for those who excelled) and ownership of the unit. As in the case of brickmakers’ wives, there is not enough evidence to state whether their children got paid for their services, though this was certainly the case for other children who worked in Athens brickyards.

144 Between May and September, for the units that operated seasonally, or during the whole year, especially after 1920s and 1930s.
145 Riginos, Μορφές παιδικής εργασίας [Aspects of child labour], p. 43.
146 There are some examples of female child-labour in brickworks in Greece, especially in rural areas and before the 1920s, although sons were always considered as more “suitable” than girls for work outside the home and especially in an open space like a brickyard. Girls from the age of ten were among the staff in the brickyards of G. Levantis in Votanikos before 1920 (interview with Athanasia Frangoulaki (2017)), and in the same unit after 1920, when it was rented by members of the Bouritis family (interview with Konstantinos Bouritis (2018) and Maria Bouriti-Kokkinogeni (2018)). In both cases, the daughters of the brickmakers/owners could be found among these girls. Additionally, Maria Athanasaki recollects that when she was a small child, her father, brickmaker Antonios Athanasakis, gave her, from time to time, permission to work in the brickfield with the boys. Interview with Maria Athanasaki (2013).
149 Yet Konstantinos Bouritis recalls that he received a weekly remuneration when he worked, at the age of 10, in the brickyard of his father, Angelos Bouritis, in Elaionas. Interview (2003 and 2018).
The Supporting Factors

In studying the family business case, “it is important to take account of the country’s system of values, culture and ideology, all of which shape the institutional framework influencing the form – and consequently, the strength and weakness – of a family firm”.150 Of course, the values and culture aspect, and its impact on production patterns, is not new and remains a pivotal parameter in many occupations.151 As regards our subject, having already discussed the prominent role of the family and the dimensions of family businesses in Greece, it is essential to make some comments regarding the supporting factors in familial brickworks.

Historians claim that the institution of the family business has its origins in the agrarian economy.152 In the Greek case with urbanisation, the model of small agrarian production, based on a small piece of land and its exploitation by a single family, was transferred to the cities with the creation of small workshop and

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commercial units. In most of them, as in the agrarian world, the cooperation of husband and wife ensured the wellbeing of the whole family. In our case, the establishment of a small familial brickyard and the personal involvement of the owner in the enterprise, often to the point of taking part in the production line, could be seen as a leftover from the agrarian origin of brickmakers. Moreover, in more than 50 percent from the family brickworks under study, the founders were either landowners (mostly the Athenians) or had once been peasants (primarily the case for brickmakers from Kythnos). Additionally, the bigger the brickworks (and the higher its production), the bigger the proprietary land for clay extraction had to be. Thus, the presence of familial brickyards encouraged, in a way, directly or indirectly, a) the land ownership system in Athens (in Elaionas, fields that had served agricultural purposes continued to be fragmented until 1900 or 1920), b) the gradual increase in land prices in Elaionas and Kaminia (as unbuilt space became scarce), and, especially, c) the land/workshop succession system (with the brickmaker bestowing his property on all his sons).

153 Avdela, Le genre entre classe et nation, p. 49, where she argues also that it was mostly the cultural model of “family autonomy” prevailing in Greek rural society that led to the predominance of small properties in the countryside and in the city, and not only state policy (ibid., p. 38). Actually, the agrarian reforms of 1871 and 1917–1932 led to the consolidation of the small property. See Dritsas, “Family Firms”, p. 90, and Petmezas and Papataxiarchis, “Devolution of Property”, p. 233.

154 Michalis Riginos, “Η ελληνική βιομηχανία 1900–1940” [Greek industry, 1900–1940], in Εισαγωγή στην Νεοελληνική Οικονομική Ιστορία (18ος–20ός αιώνας) [Introduction to modern Greek economic history, 18th–20th centuries], ed. Vassilis Kremmydas, Athens: Typothito, 1999, p. 204.

155 It has been mentioned (for the brickmakers of Mexico) that “peasants and brickmakers are similar along three dimensions: the type of means of production needed to carry out their productive activities; the utilization of various types of labor force; and the internal class stratification”. Wilson, Subsidizing Capitalism, p. 63. This has been proved not only for Mexico and Wilson stresses Alexander Chayanov’s model of transition from peasantry to the world of rural artisans.

156 This particular conclusion derives from the aforementioned inventory of Athenian brickmakers. Further research may reveal a greater percentage, as there is not enough data at present. It is quite indicative that pottery, brickmaking and farming were often successfully combined all over the word. For some case studies, see George Bourne, William Smith, Potter and Farmer, 1790–1858, London: Chatto and Windus, 1919, Hafedh Setherm, “Les artisans potiers de Moknine”, Revue tunisienne de sciences sociales 1/1 (1964), pp. 53–70.

157 Until 1940 the majority of the units had their own clay pits, adjacent or close to the brickworks.
Furthermore, it should be underlined that the operation of the familial brickyard was underpinned by the acknowledged tendency of Greeks to work independently by creating their own businesses. The Greeks’ distrust of central authority, which “was forged over centuries of foreign occupation and by an inefficient state bureaucracy”, boosted the family business pattern. Research has highlighted “the refusal or inability of independent producers (whether male or female) to become industrial workers, seeking instead alternative solutions for survival, and working only opportunistically in industry”. This was combined with the “abnormal” or “defective” proletarianisation process. Additionally, the concept of self-respect in Greece was bound up with the idea that a man must regard himself as subordinate to no one.

Moreover, it was the brickmaking process itself that supported this tendency to engage in the small-unit model. For handmade production, the necessary capital to establish a brickyard, and especially to rent it, was very small; no machinery was needed, and the appropriate piece of land (to buy or to be rented) did not need to be more than 0.1 or 0.2 hectares to provide a small family with a living.

Regarding labour organisation in the sector, during the period of handmade production (which lasted up to the 1940s and even 1950s), the importance of having the minimum number of people who could undertake the production of bricks and tiles is widely acknowledged. A team of five to ten workers, known in the international bibliography as the gang or the table and in Greece as the

158 It seems that the small family firm (as well as property) in Greece “became sacrosanct for the average Greek citizen. It represented an alternative to the much-coveted position in the civil service, and at the same time a refuge and defense mechanism against incursions by the state and dislocations of the market”. See Dritsas, “Family Firms”, p. 90.
159 Ibid., p. 91.
160 Papastefanaki, “Labour in Economic and Social History”, p. 68.
161 Riginos, “Παραγωγικές δομές και ενεργός πληθυσμός” [Productive structures and active population].
162 Kenna, “Idiom of Family”, p. 348.
163 As it has been stated for the brickmaking process worldwide. For example, see Goldthwaite, Building of Renaissance Florence, p. 1920.
164 Interviews with Panagiotis Tranoulis (2001), Frangiskos Martinos (2003), among others.
165 This also applied during the period of the partial mechanisation of production (1920–1940).
166 The bigger the number, the larger the production at the same time.
bench, was the necessary cell to undertake the production of the appropriate amount of product during one season (from May to September). Each member of the team, which was ideally staffed by the members of just one family (nuclear or wider), undertook different roles.

Additionally, the endurance of family businesses in the brickmaking industry in Athens should not just be attributed to the aforementioned migratory pattern and the presence of a workforce from the island of Kythnos, but also to the formation of the brickmaking zones of Kaminia in Piraeus and Elaionas in Athens (Votanikos, Vouthoulas, Tavros and Aigaleo). The conglomeration of the units and clay pits, on the one hand, and a common residential net for both brickyard owners and workers, on the other, is more than obvious. Under these conditions, this strong network, with the aforementioned qualities, played a crucial, supporting role in the development of familial units to the full extent.

Finally, it seems that despite the fact that even in the eighteenth century the state tried on several occasions to control brick and tile production and keep units far away from residential areas, after 1900 it followed a different policy; the brickmaking units in Elaionas and Kaminia were tolerated by

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169 In the big brickyards of the era, the bigger the size of production, the higher the number of cells; Stinis recollects that in the Tassos Martinos and Frangiskos Verros brickworks, two of the biggest units in Athens, there were up to nine brickmakers’ benches in action during the summer. Interview with Georgios Stinis (2017). On the other hand, in units where the production line was partially mechanised after 1920, the necessary and absolutely vital group of workers comprised 10–20 people or even more, depending on the daily production and machinery in use.

170 Interview with Frangiskos Martinos (2012).

171 The presence of this strong ethno-kinship network of labour is probably responsible for the absence of an institution, well known in many countries – that of labour mediation between brickyard owners and brick workers. On this subject, see Piet Lourens and Jan Lucassen, “Labour Mediation Among Seasonal Workers, in Particular the Lippe Brick Makers, 1650–1900”, in The History of Labour Intermediation: Institutions and Finding Employment in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries, ed. Sigrid Wadauer, Thomas Buchner and Alexander Mejstrik, New York: Berghahn, 2015, pp. 335–367. It is obvious that it was no need for a labour mediator in our case, given the immediate relations between employer and employee, through a system of an “invisible”/unpaid mediation, implemented by relatives and compatriots.

172 Agriantoni, Οι απαρχές της εκβιομηχάνισης [The beginnings of industrialisation], pp. 110–111.
of the problem. Kaminia, until the 1950s, and Elaionas, until the 1970s, remained the city’s brickmaking zones, even though they had been surrounded by residential neighbourhoods. Many brickyards, and especially the small familial firms, operated without any control. The state was unable to count the exact number of workers in each unit, to monitor the actual size of annual production, and even to document their existence in some cases, making it impossible to collect health insurance contributions and the appropriate taxes. As a result, these areas became an extended informal economy zone and the ideal place to maximise brickmakers’ profit.

The Limitations of the Family Brickmaking Sector: Reproduction of a Model and its Transformation

It is important to comment on the factors which led, in many instances, to the interruption of the enlargement process and the very existence of a family brickyard. Even if different duties had been allocated to the successors of a company (such as production, technical maintenance, supervision, finance, commerce and transport of output), the enlarged family brickworks, in terms of the total number of involved family members, was no longer a viable system in

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173 “Η βιομηχανική ζώνη” [The industrial zone], Βιομηχανική επιθεώρηση 48 (June 1938), pp. 223–224.

174 Interview with Manolis Vassalos (2014).

175 It should be mentioned that around the brickwork zones, an industrial-housing zone had developed, where the majority of brick workers found accommodation. Interviews with Yannis Martinos (2015), Frangiskos Martinos (2012), Georgios Gonidakis (2014), and many others.

176 From time to time, pressure was put on the brickmakers to operate only the authorised ones. An example is Bakopoulos brickworks, which received a permit for one year until it conformed to the appropriate requirements. Personal archive of Antonios Bakopoulos, File 251, Ministry of Railways and Automobiles, Authorisation, no. 81110, 16 December 1939.


178 Georgios Tridimas claims that at the brickworks, owned by his father and his two brothers, Dimitrios Tridimas was involved in the technical matters of the enterprise, Panagiotis Tridimas, more in management, and Vassilis Tridimas in commercial affairs. Interview with Georgios Tridimas (2015). The situation was similar at the F. Verros and Lebesis brickworks. Interviews with Frangiskos D. Verros (2012), Antonios Bakopoulos (2013) and Georgios Lebesis (2014).
all cases. That they were often shared properties was one disadvantage. Family members could either create their own brickmaking units, based on the same familial-labour intensive model, thus following a reproduction model, more or less successfully (such as in the case of the Lebesis family, outlined below), or they could turn to other professions connected to brickmaking (the sale of building materials, lime and cement production, etc.). As some brickmakers had the opportunity to establish “independent enterprises, [...] inheritance became less important, and dependence on the fathers’ goodwill for economic survival was eroded”.

The family tree of the Lebesis family, one of the most important brickmaker families in Athens, is shown in Table 4. The different units created by or passed down to different members of the family are indicated.

179 The mechanism of leaving the family brickyard to create a new one is internationally known. The case of McGladery family is an example from Northern Ireland. Desmond Sloane, “Brickmaking in Northern Ireland”, British Brick Society Information 65 (May 1995), p. 14. Regarding Athens, among many other examples, we should refer to a) Antonios Athanasakis, who created his own brickworks after leaving the one which he had with his brother Spyros (interview with Maria Athanasaki (2013)) and b) Georgios Martinos, one of the four sons of Frangiskos Martinos, who left the family business to create his own (interview with Frangiskos Martinos (2012)).

180 Splitting a unit was, in most cases, difficult, and the redemption of a share even more problematic. So, abandoning a family firm usually involved a personal cost – the giving up of property claims, including to the brickworks and plots used as clay pits. Interview with Georgios Papamakarios (2016). The phenomenon is mentioned in other cases of production in Nitsiakos, Παραδοσιακές κοινωνικές δομές, p. 95.

181 As Emmanouil Martinos, son of Frangiskos Martinos, did. Interview with Frangiskos Martinos (2012).

182 Mimis Degleris, the youngest son of the Degleris family, was originally involved with the company trucks and the transportation of output to building sites. After 1950, he owned a series of taxicabs. Interview with Paraskevi Gonidaki (2013).

183 As has been observed in the Mexican case. Wilson, Subsidizing Capitalism, pp. 101–102.

184 Family members, including brickmakers, also got involved in other occupations, such as landowning, agriculture and cattle farming.

185 The names of the brickmakers’ wives are mentioned, except for Maria Lebesi, the only child of Georgios Lebesis. Her husband and son got involved in the unit of her father and uncle, Georgios and Evangelos Lebesis, respectively. Moreover, it seems that Afrodití Lebesi’s husband and family had no involvement in the brickmaking sector. Finally, it is not clear how Antonios Lebesis, Evangelos’ son, was involved in the firm.

186 It is not clear if the three children of Antonios Lebesis (the family genitor and patriarch), Ioannis, Georgios and Evangelos, had the same brickyard with their father (so, unit 1 is the same as unit 2), or whether they created another genitor (in that case, unit 1 and 2 would be different).
Moreover, changes in the family-controlled firm should be attributed to the upward social mobility of brickmakers. Increasingly after 1920, female family members stayed away from the kilns and clay pits. Their withdrawal from the workplace was associated with wealth accumulation, the growth of the business and, of course, a sense of dignity. The particular attitude in the Greek family is discussed in a number of papers and publications, such as Eleni Varikas, *Η εξέγερση των κυριών* [The rebellion of women], p. 40; Evrydiki Siñes, "Rentiers, Teachers and Workers: Greek Women in Late Nineteenth-century Odessa", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 34/2 (2010), pp. 182–200.

Regarding place of residence, between 1900 and 1960 members of the Lebesis family followed a trajectory from the brickyards (at Vouthoulas) in 1900, to Metaxourgeio in 1920–30, and from there to Mavromataion St, Mouseion, after 1950 and Kolonaki, Kifissia and other areas during 1950s and 60s. Interviews with Antonios Bakopoulos (2013) and Georgios Lebesis (2014). The same pattern can be traced for the members of many other families, such as the Verros, Goumas, Papamakarios. Interviews with Frangiskos D. Verros (2012), Polyxeni Gouma (2016), Georgios Papamakarios (2016), among others. For the phenomenon in Greek society at
After 1950, the massive introduction of machinery (and the demise of the brickmakers’ bench), the ending of child labour, the notable rise in output, as well as the upward social mobility of brickmakers, led to some structural changes in the family businesses, such as enlargement of the units and, consequently, the reduction in their number (many small and medium-scale units stopped operations). From that point, family members gradually withdrew from the production line and dedicated themselves to the management of units. The brickyards remained under family control, but the physical presence of its members on site and the hands-on participation in the production line decreased.

Conclusions

Before concluding, it is useful to briefly recount the impact of the dominance of the family-business pattern in the brickmaking industry.

The constitution of a strong network of labour-intensive familial brickworks of every size supported the role of the patriarch and personal management rather than the institutionalisation of managerial hierarchies in family-controlled enterprises. Consequently, the persistence of a number of pre-capitalistic patterns of production (such as child labour, handmade production) and the retarded advent of machine and modern systems of production may be noted.

Additionally, a number of pull factors (strongly related to the paternalistic management system and the relatively high pay levels) engendered the
“attachment” of the workforce to the family brickyards and, as a consequence, hindered the proletarianisation process.191

Within this anti-industrial framework, the few big industrial units of the time came under notable pressure.192 Their survival up to the 1950s, sometimes even later,193 should be attributed to competition with other family brickworks, a point that had been stressed here.194 The spread of so-called managerial capitalism, an unpopular institution in Greece,195 had to wait a few more decades196 and in many cases still does.

In conclusion, it is more than obvious that in the case of the brick and tile industry not only did familial patterns dominate numerically but they also served as a catalyst for the endurance of the sector. The family remained a productive, successful and powerful cell. That kind of unit formed a strong group of entrepreneurs, which, through their trust-based collaboration, controlled the market. They did not fight using innovation, novelty, modernity and entrepreneurial risk; rather, they invested more in the well-tested methods of the past, in smaller and more modest schemes of production and in a deep knowledge of the market. Family brickyards, despite their conservative form, proved to be agents of a successful slow development. The intergenerational transition from artisanal brickmaking to the modern production of bricks and tiles (a process that took over 50 years or so) was accomplished through a well-planed transformation that was not at all incidental. Brickmakers’ families and their brickworks were undoubtedly the medium for that. Step by step, every new generation, without risking what the previous one had achieved, proceeded to

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191 Among others, see Fountanopoulos, "Μισθωτή εργασία" [Paid labour], pp. 86–119.
192 For example, see NBGHA, AIS4059F248, Cyclop–G. Ventouris SA, board of directors report, 1927, p. 5.
193 The only exception was Dilaveris, which survived long after 1950 and was also the only personal/familial unit among the others of that size in Athens.
194 The big industrial units, apart from their structural problems, had to deal with complications directly related to the group of their smaller competitors, such as keeping down the prices of products and finding the appropriate workforce.
195 Pepelasis Minoglou, “Επιχειρηματικότητα” [Entrepreneurship], p. 486.
196 Brickworks in Athens passed from the craft sector to a pure industry only after the 1960s, something which comprises a notable delay.
the next level of development. They were grateful to their ancestors, had a sense of duty to the next generation and had faith in tradition. Their choices did not lead to booming enrichment and quick, upward social mobility (even though that did sometimes happen), but minimised risk, ensured the stepwise growth of the firm and fulfilled the successful passage of it to the next generation.

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