

The Historical Review/La Revue Historique

Vol 21, No 1 (2024)

The Historical Review / La Revue Historique

The *H*istorical Review
La Revue *H*istorique



VOLUME XXI (2024)

Section de Recherches Néohelléniques
Institut de Recherches Historiques / FNRS

Section of Neohellenic Research
Institute of Historical Research / NHRF

Marriage, Labour and the Making of Refugee Communities in Greater Athens after 1922

Eugenia Bournova, Giorgos Serafimidis

doi: [10.12681/hr.43834](https://doi.org/10.12681/hr.43834)

Copyright © 2025



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

To cite this article:

Bournova, E., & Serafimidis, G. (2025). Marriage, Labour and the Making of Refugee Communities in Greater Athens after 1922. *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique*, 21(1), 151–187. <https://doi.org/10.12681/hr.43834>

Articles

MARRIAGE, LABOUR AND THE MAKING OF REFUGEE COMMUNITIES IN GREATER ATHENS AFTER 1922

Eugenia Bournova and Giorgos Serafimidis

ABSTRACT: Following the collapse of the Asia Minor front in 1922, approximately 155,000 urban refugee families, primarily from Turkey, arrived in the Greek state, with 48 percent (about 75,000 families) settling in the capital and surrounding districts. This study examines the refugee population in the Municipality of Athens and seven key settlements, primarily new municipalities created by and for refugees. Using 31,796 marriage records from Athens, Aigaleo, Kaisariani, Kallithea, Nea Ionia, Nea Smyrni, Nikaia and Vyronas registered between 1924 and 1950, it analyses refugees' marital patterns and occupational status. In refugee settlements, most men married women from their own regions of origin, though a significant number of local men married refugee women, who accounted for most of the female population. Refugee men and women worked as industrial labourers, builders, private-sector employees and petty merchants, bolstering the capital's working class. Integration was slow and difficult, and marriages between refugees provided a crucial sense of familiarity and stability in their new environments, which were often limited to a single room or shack.

This article explores the role that marriage played in the social integration of refugees who arrived in Greece in 1922 as well as the occupational integration of both men and women refugees. A great number of social scientists have highlighted the role intermarriage¹ and increased participation in the labour force² played in social cohesion and integration of minorities. Nevertheless,

* This research has been funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 101004539.

¹ Richard D. Alba and Reid M. Golden, "Patterns of Ethnic Marriage in the United States," *Social Forces* 65, no. 1 (1986): 202–3; Deanna L. Pagnini and S. Philip Morgan, "Intermarriage and Social Distance Among U.S. Immigrants at the Turn of the Century," *American Journal of Sociology* 96, no. 2 (1990): 405–32; Dimitria Giorgas and F.L. Jones, "Intermarriage Patterns and Social Cohesion Among First, Second and Later Generation Australians," *Journal of Population Research* 19, no. 1 (2002): 47–64; and Jeroen Smits, "Ethnic Intermarriage and Social Cohesion: What Can We Learn from Yugoslavia?," *Social Indicators Research* 96, no. 3 (2010): 417–32.

² Ruben Gowricharn, "Integration and Social Cohesion: The Case of the Netherlands," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 28, no. 2 (2002): 259–73; Frank Bean and Gillian

marriage has received little attention in the historiography of the resettlement of the refugees who arrived in Greece in 1922, perhaps because the refugees were not an ethnic minority, but rather a Christian population from the Ottoman Empire who had been forced to migrate to Greece. Another field that has not been fully researched concerns women's participation in the workforce in this period. Consequently, this study aims to shed light on the integration process from a different perspective than that typically found in the Greek literature, which tends to focus on economic aspects and the treatment of refugee memories. Our first hypothesis is that marriage to members of the local population accelerated the social integration of male and female refugees before World War II. Our second hypothesis concerns the wide range of occupations through which male and female refugees integrated into society, an avenue that has not been systematically studied in Greek historiography.

This article begins by introducing the events of 1922 and reviewing the literature on refugee resettlement in Greece and, particularly, in Athens. Section 2 then outlines the methodology and the data, extracted from marriage registrations in eight municipalities, including Athens, between 1924 and 1950. The next section explores patterns in spouse selection based on geographical origin, emphasising the role of intermarriage in promoting social integration. Section 4 analyses the evolution and composition of the population in the eight municipalities under examination, focusing on the occupational distribution of spouses who married in the period in question. Finally, section 5 concludes the article with a discussion of its key findings.

The Events of 1922 and Literature Pertinent to Refugee Resettlement, particularly in Athens

In January 1923, in the aftermath of the 1922 Asia Minor Catastrophe, Greece and Turkey signed the Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations in the context of the Treaty of Lausanne.³ The convention stipulated the compulsory exchange of the two minority population groups in question and set out the issue of compensation of the expelled populations.⁴

Stevens, *America's Newcomers and the Dynamics of Diversity* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003); and Mirna Safi, "Le processus d'intégration des immigrés en France: Inégalités et segmentation," *Revue française de sociologie* 47, no. 1 (2006): 3–48.

³ *Η Συνθήκη της Λωζάννης: Το πλήρες κείμενο* (Athens: Papazisis, 1990).

⁴ Athanasios Protonotarios, *Το προσφυγικόν πρόβλημα από ιστορικής, νομικής και κρατικής απόψεως* (Athens: Pirsos, 1929); Vika Gizeli, *Κοινωνικοί μετασχηματισμοί και προέλευση της κοινωνικής κατοικίας στην Ελλάδα (1920–1930)* (Athens: Epikairota, 1985).

The definitive character of the treaty extinguished any remaining hope the refugees might have had about returning to the places from which they had been uprooted. This was later concluded with the Treaty of Friendship between Greece and Turkey, signed on 30 October 1930, which attempted to conclusively resolve economic disputes pursuant to the exchange convention.⁵

The Wider Historical Context

After a decade of war (Balkan Wars, World War I, campaigns in Crimea and Asia Minor), the Greek state emerged with its economy and productive activities in recession. Furthermore, its new territorial and population composition made it imperative that the state should undertake the resettlement – immediately and throughout the entirety of its new territory – of more than 1.2 million refugees. The exact number reported in the 1928 census is 1,221,849 refugees (578,824, or 49 percent, of whom were farmers resettled in rural areas and 643,025, or 51 percent, were city dwellers resettled in urban centres).⁶

As regards the origin of refugees (fig. 1), data from the 1928 census indicates that 90.4 percent came from regions of Turkey (Asia Minor, 51.3 percent; Eastern Thrace, 21 percent; Pontos, 14.9 percent; Constantinople, 3.2 percent) and 9.6 percent from Russia and the Balkans. The overwhelming majority of this population were women, children and elderly persons, since they were uprooted during conditions of war that decimated the younger male population.⁷

In his 1926 report to the League of Nations, Charles Howland, chairman of the Refugee Settlement Commission (RSC), refers, inter alia, to the occupational and social status of the newly arrived refugees and the regions they came from (major urban centres, provincial urban areas, coastal regions and rural agricultural areas), concluding that they were more likely to be engaged in urban than rural occupations.⁸ However,

⁵ Ifigeneia Anastasiadou, “Ο Βενιζέλος και το Ελληνοτουρκικό Σύμφωνο Φιλίας του 1930,” in *Μελετήματα γύρω από το Βενιζέλο και την εποχή του*, ed. Odysseas Dimitrakopoulos (Athens: Filippotis, 1980), 309–426.

⁶ Alexandros Pallis, “Προσφυγικόν ζήτημα,” in *Μεγάλη Ελληνική Εγκυκλοπαίδεια*, vol. 10 (Athens: Pysos, 1934), 406–8.

⁷ Ibid. League of Nations, *Η εγκατάσταση των προσφύγων στην Ελλάδα* (Athens: Trochalia, 1997), originally published as League of Nations, *Greek Refugee Settlement* (Geneva: League of Nations, 1926); Nikolaos Andriotis, *Πρόσφυγες στην Ελλάδα 1821–1940: Άφιξη, περιθάλψη, αποκατάσταση* (Athens: Hellenic Parliament Foundation, 2020).

⁸ League of Nations, *Greek Refugee Settlement* (Geneva: League of Nations, 1926), 16.

There are farmers who, originally compelled to earn their living as workmen in the towns, have ended by settling there and swelling the ranks of urban refugees. On the other hand, many refugees who have been settled as farmers belong to that class whose members, although having a small property of their own ... did not in every case themselves work their lands or at any rate did so occasionally, living for the most part by some other trade.⁹

In any case, according to the 1928 census, most refugees over the age of 10 were occupied in agricultural and related activities (about 55 percent), 24.7 percent were employed in the industrial sector and the remaining 20 percent in other sectors (commerce, services, etc.).¹⁰

Regardless of their geographical, occupational or social origin, refugees urgently needed relief, food and shelter. They were destitute people, equivalent in size to one-fourth of the country's existing population, who had nowhere to live and had endured exceptional suffering. As regards their resettlement,



Fig. 1. Origin of refugees and major urban centres of settlement, 1922.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Pallis, "Προσφυγικόν ζήτημα," 1934.

the first move, before the 1923 treaty was signed, was the establishment of the Refugee Relief Fund (RRF) in November 1922; this was a flexible legal entity that undertook the resettlement of refugees, providing them with relief, food, and housing (creating camps, renting or commandeering properties, etc.).¹¹

However, the scale of the endeavour was overwhelming, and the Greek government appealed to the League of Nations for an international loan to fund refugee resettlement.¹² Given the socio-economic state of the country, and to secure the use of a series of loans, the League of Nations established the RSC. This was an international commission for monitoring the applicable loan terms that, in 1925, was also assigned the competencies and functions of the RRF. The first chairman of the commission was US diplomat Henry Morgenthau.¹³

The commission operated until 1930. While it was active, a £10 million loan was issued by the League of Nations, burdening the Greek state with the obligation to manage and pay off the loan in accordance with its protocol. As Morgenthau stated:

Any fresh funds to be advanced to Greece must be used solely for permanent and productive uses, as provided in the Protocol, and none of it for charity or temporary relief. These moneys must be used to restore the refugees to self-support and economic usefulness ... These uses of money would restore Greece to a permanent earning power that would be a blessing to the refugees and that would provide funds to repay the loan.¹⁴

According to Alexandros Pallis,¹⁵ by the summer of 1930, of the two loans issued by the League of Nations, a sum of £10,397,196 was allocated for rural settlement, £1,880,192 for urban housing, and another sum, £110,627, for the support of refugee handicraft workers.

These loans were intended to help refugee families become self-reliant as soon as possible. For the rural refugees, this meant being granting land and the means to cultivate it in time to benefit from the upcoming harvest. Furthermore, refugee

¹¹ Gizeli, *Κοινωνικοί μετασχηματισμοί*; Henry Morgenthau, *Η αποστολή μου στην Αθήνα. 1922: Το έπος της εγκατάστασης*, trans. Sifis Kasesian (Athens: Trochalia, 1994), originally published as *I Was Sent to Athens* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1929); Lena Korma, *Πτυχές της αποκατάστασης των Μικρασιατών Προσφύγων στην ελληνική κοινωνία, 1922–1930* (Athens: Bank of Greece, 2021).

¹² Korma, *Πτυχές της αποκατάστασης*, 10.

¹³ Gizeli, *Κοινωνικοί μετασχηματισμοί*, 154–62; Morgenthau, *Η αποστολή μου*, 171; Korma, *Πτυχές της αποκατάστασης*, 10–12.

¹⁴ Morgenthau, *I Was Sent to Athens*, 80–81.

¹⁵ Pallis, “Προσφυγικόν ζήτημα,” 410.

cooperatives could be established in the carpet/rug-making and silk production/processing sectors – a craft some refugees had successfully practiced in the East.¹⁶

In essence, the RSC focused its interest on such rural settlement.¹⁷ Consequently, a large part of the refugee population turned to agricultural production and related occupations, while – as already mentioned – this did not mean that they had necessarily engaged in the same activities in the East.

The priority given to rural over urban settlement drove the RSC to channel funding in this direction, as shown by Lena Korma: “Although 54 percent of the refugees settled in cities, a mere 13.7 percent of RSC resources was allocated to them, while the remaining 46 percent of refugees who settled in rural areas received the much higher amount of 86.35 percent of their expenses.”¹⁸

The Arrival of Refugees in and around Athens

Refugees arriving in Greece from the coastal regions of Asia Minor, following the collapse of the Greco-Turkish front, arrived at reception centres in major urban centres, such as Athens, Piraeus, Thessaloniki, Volos and Kavala (fig. 1). Despite later efforts by officials managing the refugee influx to resettle these populations in rural areas, a significant number of remained and settled in urban centres. The 1928 census noted the following population increases compared to the 1920 census: 54 percent in Athens, 85 percent in Piraeus, 39 percent in Thessaloniki, 39 percent in Volos, 118 percent in Kavala, and 17 percent in Patras.¹⁹

Of course, Athens lacked the necessary infrastructure – both in terms of suitable buildings and sanitary conditions – to receive thousands of refugees, let alone to let them settle there. Nor could it offer enough work to its existing residents.²⁰ It was precisely along these two axes – housing and employment – that efforts to advance refugee settlement were concentrated. In major cities in particular, settlement efforts mainly concerned housing, as opposed to what was happening in rural areas, where employment, through the distribution of land, was the focus.

¹⁶ Morgenthau, *Η αποστολή μου*, 345–56; Alexandros Papanastasiou, “Πρόλογος,” in *Η αγροτική αποκατάσταση των προσφύγων*, ed. Michalis Notaras (Athens: Chronika, 1934), 5–17.

¹⁷ Morgenthau, *Η αποστολή μου*, 361.

¹⁸ Korma, *Πτυχές της αποκατάστασης*, 18.

¹⁹ Pallis, “Προσφυγικόν ζήτημα,” 410.

²⁰ “And Athens – somewhat out at the heels from financial overstrain, somewhat bare, as after the passage of locusts.” See Melville Chater, “History’s Greatest Trek: Tragedy Stalks the Near East as Greece and Turkey Exchange Two Million of their People,” *National Geographic Magazine* 48 (1925): 590.

Since the RSC, as already mentioned, mainly channelled its activities towards rural settlement, state relief, through the RRF and the Ministry of Welfare, was more concerned with urban settlement, supported by private initiatives (fundraising, charity associations, solidarity organisations, etc.). Housing needs were initially met using tents put up in open fields, while large indoor facilities (schools, theatres) and vacant or commandeered properties were also used. The first settlement built with assistance from the fund was in Pangrati, essentially in the centre of Athens.²¹ In his final address, as he was handing over his competencies as chairman of the RRF to the RSC, Epameinondas Charilaos observed:

The government decided to begin the erection of the first permanent urban settlement at Pangrati, utilizing at that site an area of approximately one hundred stremmas [10 hectares] ... The execution of the work [construction of the first 800 houses] was so satisfactory that during April [1923] the first refugees were settled in the houses. The results achieved at Pangrati demonstrated what were the most suitable methods of construction and arrangement of the dwellings. The procedure followed there having been accepted by the government, it now decided to spend larger amounts for further urban settlements, and we therefore next studied the most suitable sites for the location of these settlements. Sites at Podarades [later renamed Nea Ionia] and also in the valley of Kaisariani were approved at Athens, and Kokkinia at Piraeus, as being situated not far from the towns and as having the advantages of an easy local water supply.²²

By 1930,²³ a total of 46 refugee settlements had been constructed in the area of the capital (Athens and Piraeus) (fig. 2), such as Vyronas, Ymittos, Kaisariani, Nea Ionia, Nea Filadelfeia, Nea Smyrni, Kallithea, Tavros, the blocks of flats along Alexandras and Syngrou avenues, Kokkinia (Nikaia), Kallipoli, etc.²⁴ Broadly speaking, this wave of construction initiated key transformations, shaping both the appearance and functions of the capital and its port until the onset of postwar development.

²¹ Kostas Katsapis, “Το προσφυγικό ζήτημα,” in *Το 1922 και οι πρόσφυγες: Μια νέα ματιά*, ed. Antonis Liakos (Athens: Nefeli, 2011), 126–29; Andriotis, *Πρόσφυγες στην Ελλάδα*, 230–31.

²² Morgenthau, *I Was Sent to Athens*, 75–77.

²³ The first years after the refugees’ arrival were tragic concerning housing; gradually, settlements were created from scratch at various outdoor locations within Athens. Generally, construction materials were cheap, and homes were built using bricks and wood.

²⁴ Andriotis, *Πρόσφυγες στην Ελλάδα*, 234 and 241; Κορμα, *Πτυχές της αποκατάστασης*, 20.

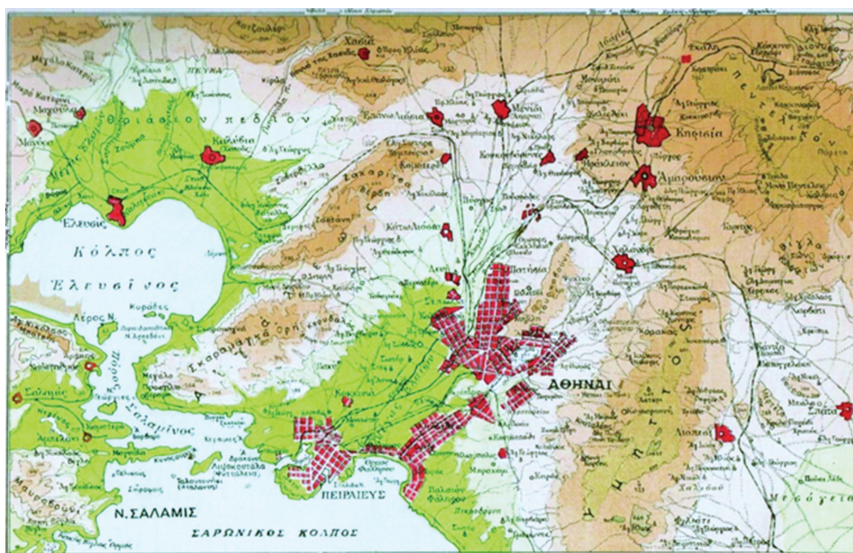


Fig. 2. Settlements around the capital in 1927.

(*Σύγχρονος Εγκυκλοπαίδεια Ελευθερουδάκη*, vol. 10 [Athens: N. Nikas, 1927], 320.)

The census of urban refugee families undertaken by the RSC in 1927 aimed at forming a picture of where to channel its activities next, revealed that of the nearly 155,000 families of the urban refugee population in the state, 48 percent (around 75,000 families) were located in the capital and its surrounding regions. Of this population group, 37 percent (around 28,000 families) settled in homes using their own means, while another 21 percent (around 17,000 families) lived in other urban centres in the country. In other words, the largest proportion of those who could afford to acquire their home privately chose the capital city.²⁵ The outskirts of Nea Smyrni, Nea Filadelfeia and Kallipoli are typical examples of residential districts comprising mainly privately owned houses built on land ceded by the Ministry of Welfare.²⁶

According to data provided by Nikolaos Andriotis, based on the RSC's 1927 census of the housing of refugee families in the urban area of the capital, 63 percent resided in refugee settlements and 37 percent in private residences. As for the settlements established, 54 percent comprised housing built by the RSC or the state and 42 percent by refugees themselves, although there was a group of

²⁵ Gizeli, *Κοινωνικοί μετασχηματισμοί*, 222–24; Andriotis, *Πρόσφυγες στην Ελλάδα*, 240–41.

²⁶ Andriotis, *Πρόσφυγες στην Ελλάδα*, 235–36.

4 percent temporarily housed in tents, warehouses or other premises. Except for the latter group, refugee families resided in settlements created either by the RSC or by care of the state (RRF and Ministry of Welfare), or in homes constructed using their own means, as already mentioned.²⁷

In his 1926 report, Howland estimates the number of refugees from the urban areas of Constantinople and Smyrna, who quickly assimilated using their own financial resources in Athens and Thessaloniki at between 175,000 and 200,000.²⁸ Moreover, the same report notes that 65 percent of refugees from urban centres were craftsmen, cottage industry owners and merchants, while 35 percent were unskilled labourers.²⁹ A limited elite, not included in the figures above, were prosperous enough to soon establish themselves in the industrial and banking sectors, maintaining the status they held in Asia Minor.³⁰

Morgenthau made similar observations:

Particularly numerous have been the coppersmiths, silversmiths, and tanners. It has not been practicable to foster these workers by utilizing them in large-scale factory operations. They flourish best as independent artisans or as small groups employed by a master craftsman. The Refugee Settlement Commission has been able to encourage these men in many cases by providing them with replacements of tools lost in their flight, leaving to the men themselves the problem of securing their materials and finding their markets.³¹

While the RSC focused its efforts on rural settlement, it provided loans to refugees from urban backgrounds to help them restart their occupational activities, primarily as small cottage industry owners and merchants, the largest occupational group among them. Thus, cottage industry units and industry plants were established, mainly in carpet-making and ceramics. However, these developments were not the consequence of coordinated policies aimed at economic recovery.³²

In Pallis' view, urban resettlement was a less complex issue, since it concerned only housing and finding work for the refugees involved. In his view, most refugees – mainly of urban origin – “gathered, due to the pressing need, where there were industry and other jobs”. Financial support was provided through

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 241–42.

²⁸ League of Nations, *Η εγκατάσταση των προσφύγων*, 23.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 146.

³⁰ Katsapis, *Το προσφυγικό ζήτημα*, 157; Renee Hirschon, *Κληρονόμοι της Μικρασιατικής Καταστροφής* (Athens: MIET, 2011), 78.

³¹ Morgenthau, *I Was Sent to Athens*, 257.

³² Korma, *Πτυχές της αποκατάστασης*, 22; Katsapis, *Το προσφυγικό ζήτημα*, 156–58.

occupational loans extended by the National Bank with state guarantees or through refugee emergency loans in the form of cash and bonds, typically amounting to 15 percent of the estimated value of the property the refugees had left behind in Asia Minor.³³

This effort to situate the study in a broader context is reflected in the historiographic output of recent decades. The complex issue of integrating the refugees of 1922 into Greek society has been explored across various disciplines, from the humanities and social sciences to architecture and the fine arts. While a wide range of topics has been examined, a demographic approach grounded in social history remains absent from the existing literature. What has been studied mainly focused on the following: the construction of refugee housing and the procedures followed to establish new residential areas and villages within urban and rural territories;³⁴ the institutional operations of the Greek state and its policies to promote refugee integration³⁵ related to the planning of urban centres and rural areas, which were transformed by refugee settlements;³⁶ the changes on the political stage and in the operation of the economy due to procedures for refugee rehabilitation;³⁷ the relationships among refugees and the management of their memories.³⁸ All these important studies viewed the rehabilitation and integration of 1922 refugees in their new country as a major pivotal event that defined the formation of the modern Greek state and its efforts to modernise, for example, through industrialisation or efforts to establish a modern health system. The concise presentation of the historiographic production presented above mainly highlights the difficulties refugees encountered, rather than the practices they adopted to continue their lives in the new country. Indeed, the research highlighted the issue of employment as being responsible for social discord and conflicts, particularly in the 1930s.³⁹ In other words, marriage practices, which

³³ Pallis, “Προσφυγικόν ζήτημα,” 410; Andriotis, *Πρόσφυγες στην Ελλάδα*, 244.

³⁴ Gizeli, *Κοινωνικοί μετασχηματισμοί*, 1985.

³⁵ Andriotis, *Πρόσφυγες στην Ελλάδα*; Korma, *Πτυχές της αποκατάστασης*, 2021.

³⁶ Aleka Karadimou-Gerolymprou, “Πόλεις και ύπαιθρος,” in *Ιστορία της Ελλάδας του 20ου αιώνα*, vol. 2/1, *Ο Μεσοπόλεμος 1922–1940*, ed. Christos Hadziioffis (Athens: Vivliorama, 2003), 59–105.

³⁷ Christos Hadziioffis, “Το προσφυγικό σοκ, οι σταθερές και οι μεταβολές της ελληνικής οικονομίας,” in Hadziioffis, *Ιστορία της Ελλάδας του 20ου αιώνα*, 9–57.

³⁸ Hirschon, *Κληρονόμοι*; Liakos, *Το 1922 και οι πρόσφυγες*.

³⁹ George Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic: Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922–1936* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Antonis Liakos, *Εργασία και πολιτική στην Ελλάδα του Μεσοπολέμου: Το διεθνές γραφείο εργασίας και η ανάδυση των κοινωνικών θεσμών* (Athens: Foundation of Research and Education of the Commercial Bank of Greece, 1993); Kostas Katsapis, “Αντιπαραθέσεις ανάμεσα σε γηγενείς και πρόσφυγες στην

are fundamental to social integration, have not been studied so far and a general impression persists that, during the first decades, refugees remained isolated in their new communities, living in “refugee towns” that were created by and for them.⁴⁰ Within this context, we examine the origin of spouses to demonstrate that intermarriage was a fundamental mechanism of social integration. We also present a detailed account of the occupations of men and women, aiming to illustrate the true diversity of refugee employment.

The Data and Methodology

This article examines the integration of refugees who arrived in Greece from Asia Minor from 1922 to 1925 in correlation with their marital behaviour. The analysis employs quantitative methods based on an analysis of marriage registrations from 1925 to 1950.

The archive material consulted comprises marriage registration records from eight municipalities within the Athens urban area, namely, the Municipality of Athens and seven other important settlements. Specifically, the dataset includes 31,796 marriage records from the municipalities of Athens, Aigaleo, Kaisariani, Kallithea, Nea Ionia, Nea Smyrni, Nikaia and Vyronas (fig. 3) from 1924 to 1950. A detailed breakdown is provided in Table 1. These municipalities either pre-existed as residential areas or were created from scratch to house the refugee population that arrived in Athens after the Asia Minor Catastrophe. The basic indexing focused on the places of origin and residence of married couples, as well as the occupations of both spouses, in order to access socio-economic integration through intermarriage, employment and potential differentiation from nonrefugee population groups. This process resulted in a substantial dataset, including the following parameters: the year of marriage as well as occupation and birthplace of each marriage partners.⁴¹ It is important to note that marriage registration records were systematically maintained in all municipalities only from 1925 onwards. Prior to that, only a minority of people registered their marriage with the civil authorities.

Ελλάδα του Μεσοπολέμου,” in *Πέρα από την καταστροφή: Μικρασιάτες Πρόσφυγες στην Ελλάδα του Μεσοπολέμου*, ed. Yorgos Tzedopoulos (Athens: Foundation of the Hellenic World, 2003), 104–26.

⁴⁰ Katsapis, “Αντιπαραθέσεις,” 107.

⁴¹ For the purposes of this study, we selected only these six parameters. At that time in Greece, marriage registration was the responsibility of the male spouse and contained the following data: marriage date, order of marriage, spouses’ names, ages and religion, occupations, and their parents’ residential addresses (if they were alive when the marriage was registered). Finally, the priest’s name is recorded, and the municipality where the spouses lived, but not their residential address.

Although a legislative framework mandating the registration of vital events with the municipalities had existed since 1836 – and was reinforced in 1856 – in practise, compliance was limited. Baptisms, marriages and burials were typically recorded in parish church ledgers rather than municipal registers.⁴²

This systematic listing of registered marriages from the archives of the eight municipalities was, naturally, a lengthy and laborious procedure. This methodology

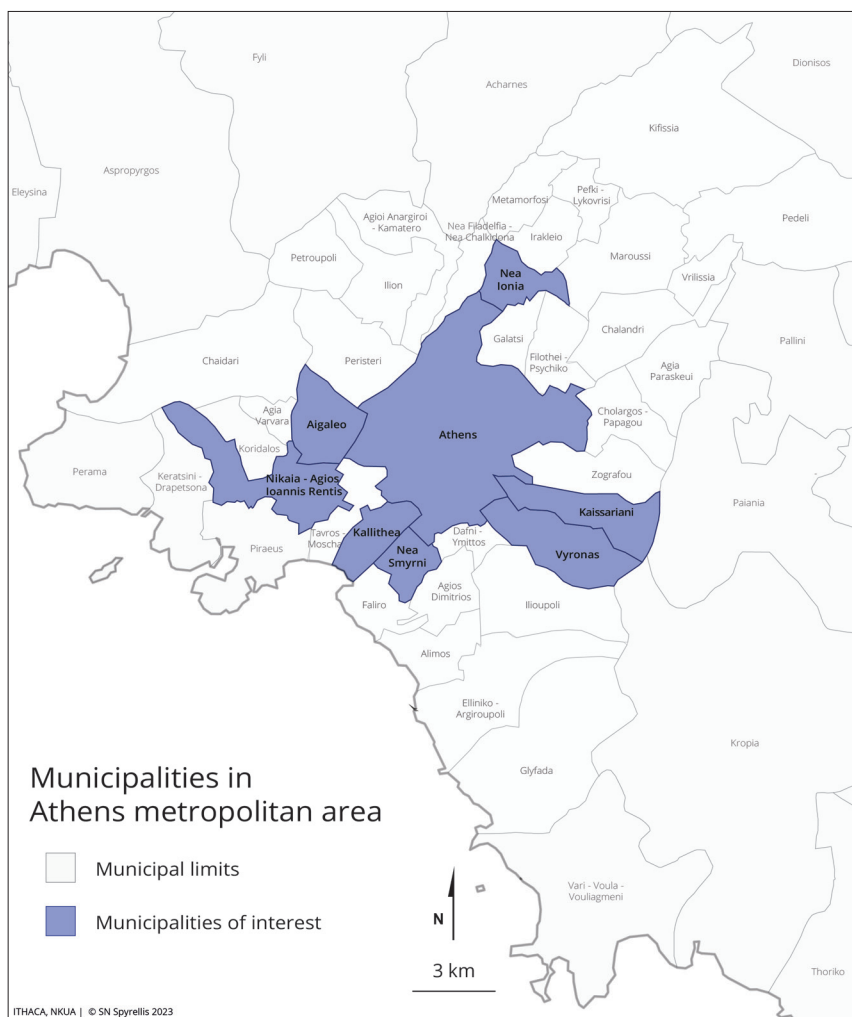


Fig. 3. The case studies: The municipalities of the Athens metropolitan area.

⁴² Eugenia Bournova, *Οι κάτοικοι των Αθηνών, 1900–1960: Δημογραφία* (Athens: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.12681/econ.4>.

was adopted because the actual census forms are no longer available – only the statistical summary tables from the censuses have been preserved. In fact, data on refugees’ occupational distribution are only available from the 1928 census tables presenting refugees’ occupations. Unfortunately, this information does not cover the entire metropolitan capital area, but only the Municipality of Athens (where 129,380 refugees were registered, that is, one in four city residents), the Municipality of Piraeus (101,185 refugees, that is, a ratio of 10 refugees for every 15 locals) and the Community of Kallithea (15,516, that is, one in every two residents). However, there are no analytical statistical tables presenting locals’ occupations: the occupational picture comprises only 13 major categories. Data from the next census in 1940 was never processed for statistical analysis due to the outbreak of World War II, while the 1951 census tables on occupational categories do not distinguish between local and refugee populations, since social integration had been achieved in the preceding 28 years. Consequently, it is not possible to trace the occupational integration of refugees using census data from the 1930s and 1940s, since in 1928 a high percentage of refugees had not yet permanently settled in any municipality and had, of course, not been employed in specific occupational jobs. Moreover, the published census statistics do not permit an analysis of refugees’ social integration through marriage or spouse selection. As such, marriage registration records are the main source for such an analysis.

Table 1

Number of marriages and respective population censuses per municipality, 1924–1951.

Municipality/ Community	Period	Number of marriages	% of total	Census			
				1920	1928	1940	1951
Athens	1925–1950	10,889	34.25	317,209	392,781	481,225	565,084
Aigaleo	1934–1944	1,539	4.84	147	3,135	17,686	29,464
Kaisariani	1925–1950	1,555	4.89	11	15,357	20,151	22,093
Kallithea	1924–1950	3,950	12.42	4,185	29,446	36,572	46,986
Nea Ionia	1924–1950	2,404	7.56		14,135	27,775	33,821
Nea Smyrni	1935–1950	1,633	5.14		6,500	15,114	22,074
Nikaia	1924–1950	8,008	25.19		33,201	59,552	72,176
Vyronas	1924–1950	1,818	5.72		7,723	25,560	31,588
Total		31,796	100				

Source: Municipal marriage records.

Unlike the other municipalities at the focus of this study which were created by the refugees, for the refugees, Kallithea was, like Athens, already a structured residential settlement. A comparative analysis of census data from 1920 to 1951 across the eight municipalities reveals a striking population increase, from the time of the refugees' initial settlement up to and after the war. This growth is related, on the one hand, to the mobility of the refugee population (driven by family reunification, the desire to settle near familiar people, work prospects, etc.),⁴³ and, on the other, to internal migration, particularly after the war, towards newly developed and increasingly attractive resettlement areas (fig. 4).

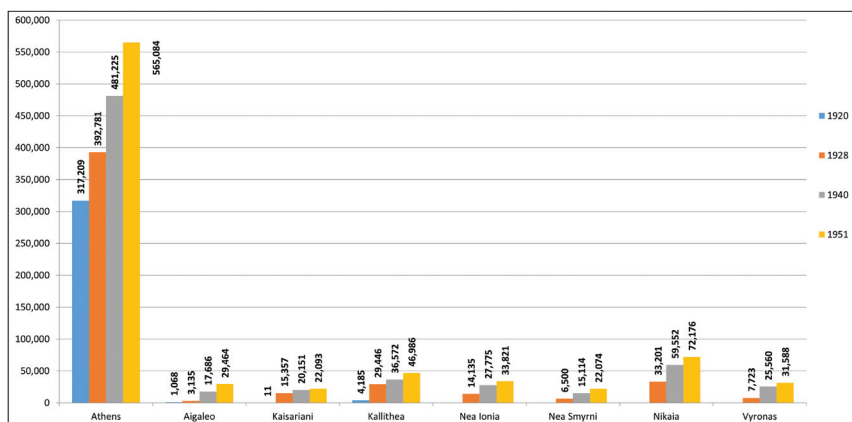


Fig. 4. Population changes in municipalities based on censuses, 1920 to 1951. (Population censuses, Hellenic Statistical Authority).

Choosing a Bride or Husband: Geographical Origins of Spouses as Mined from Marriage Registry Data

During the interwar period, refugee populations constituted the majority in almost all of the municipalities under analysis, prevailing over those originating from other regions, particularly among women. This gender imbalance reflects the higher number of female refugees, as many men died during the war or in the difficult years that followed it. By the end of the 1920s, the populations of the municipalities had been replenished, either due to refugee flows, as already mentioned, or due to internal migration (particularly from the Peloponnese and the Aegean Islands), which mainly involved the male population. It is important to note that the spatial categorisation of the

⁴³ Morgenthau, *Η αποστολή μου*, 357.

refugee population is based on their region of origin: Asia Minor, Pontos and Eastern Thrace (fig. 5).⁴⁴

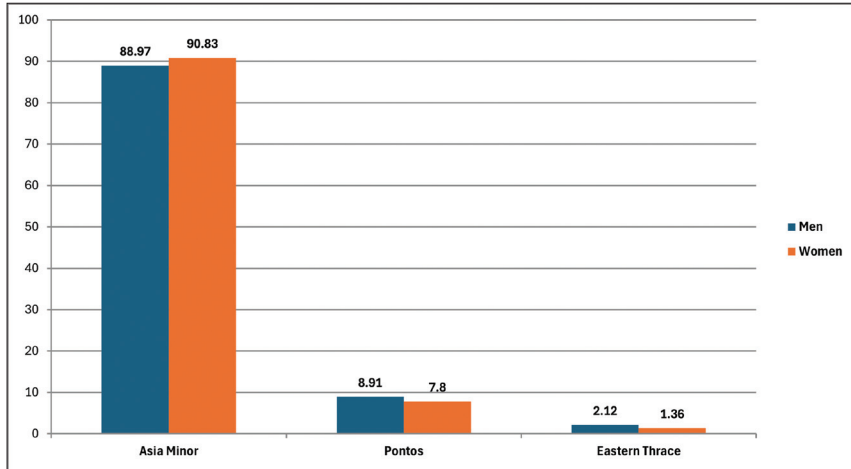


Fig. 5. Origin of male and female refugees (percentage of the total number of refugees in the municipalities), 1924–1950. (Marriage registration records).

From 1914 to 1924, approximately 4,000 marriages took place in the Municipality of Athens, with around 10 percent (particularly after 1919) involving a spouse of refugee descent (6.4 percent of grooms and 9.1 percent of brides). From 1925 to 1940, there were 5,513 marriages, 22.7 percent of which involved refugees: 1,220 grooms and 1,251 brides. In the 1940s, there were 5,376 marriages registered in the municipality, with 12.6 percent involving refugees: 656 men and 562 women. In total, 10,889 marriages were conducted from 1925 to 1950, of which 16.5 percent included at least one refugee spouse.⁴⁵ Almost half (46 percent) of the refugee spouses married partners from the same region of origin, and more than half married locals born in Greece. These marriages with locals confirm the gradual integration of refugees into the expanding population of the capital city (figs. 6–7).

⁴⁴ It is estimated that by November 1922 Greece had received 600,000 refugees from Asia Minor and 300,000 from Eastern Thrace, while, according to the 1928 census, refugee numbers rose to 1,221,849, including those from Pontos, Constantinople, southern Russia and Bulgaria.

⁴⁵ 16.45 percent of men and 16.64 percent of women were refugees.

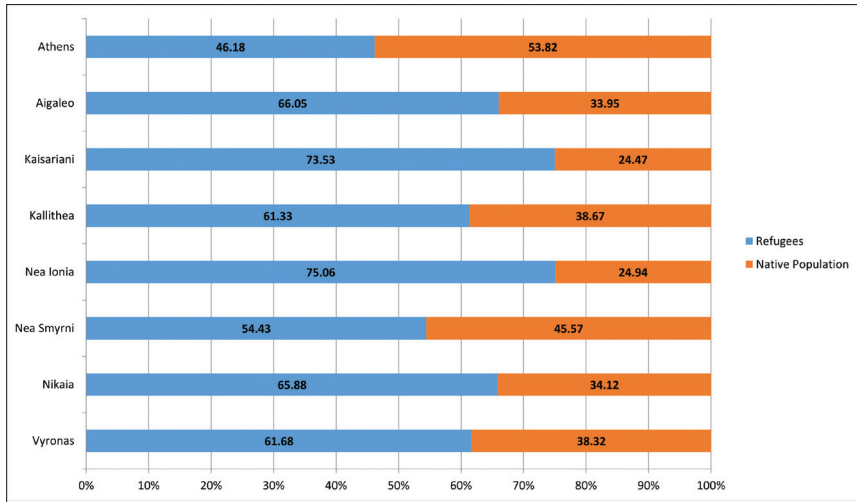


Fig. 6. Origin of women married to male refugees, 1924–1950 (percentage of the total number). (Marriage registration records).

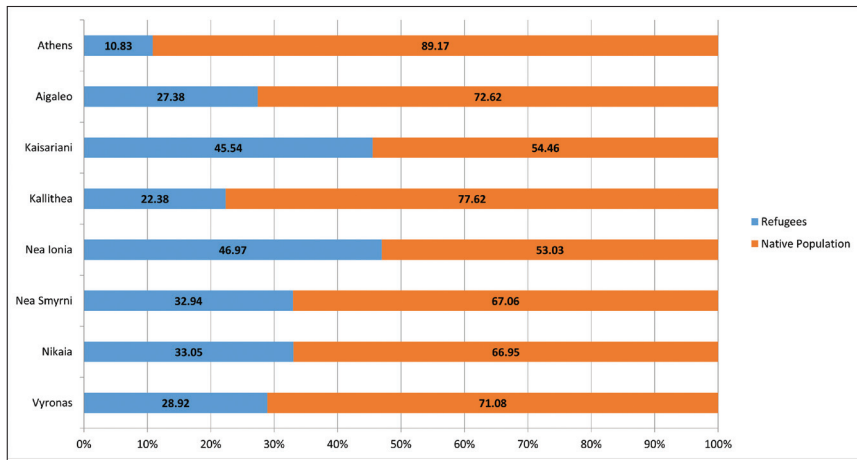


Fig. 7. Origin of women married to local men, 1924–1950 (percentage of the total number). (Marriage registration records).

The settling of internal male migrants in the new municipalities determined, to a large extent, the character of intermarriage. Although within refugee settlements most men chose brides born in their own regions of origin (fig. 6), there was a significant percentage of local men who married women refugees (fig. 7) who, in any case, comprised the majority of the female population.

Consequently, except for the municipalities of Nea Ionia, Nikaia and Kaisariani, where the refugee male population prevailed (65.7 percent, 57.6 percent and 50.2 percent, respectively), both in the Municipality of Athens and in the other districts where refugees initially settled, the majority of male residents originated from the rest of Greece (fig. 8). Refugees who arrived from Constantinople definitely chose to settle in urban surroundings, mainly in Athens and Kallithea. In the three municipalities mentioned, the female refugee population exceeded the number of local women (65.4 percent, 51.9 percent and 59.6 percent, respectively). The density of the female population in Nea Ionia may be attributed to the presence of carpet/rug manufacturing units in the vicinity and the employment opportunities they provided (fig. 9).

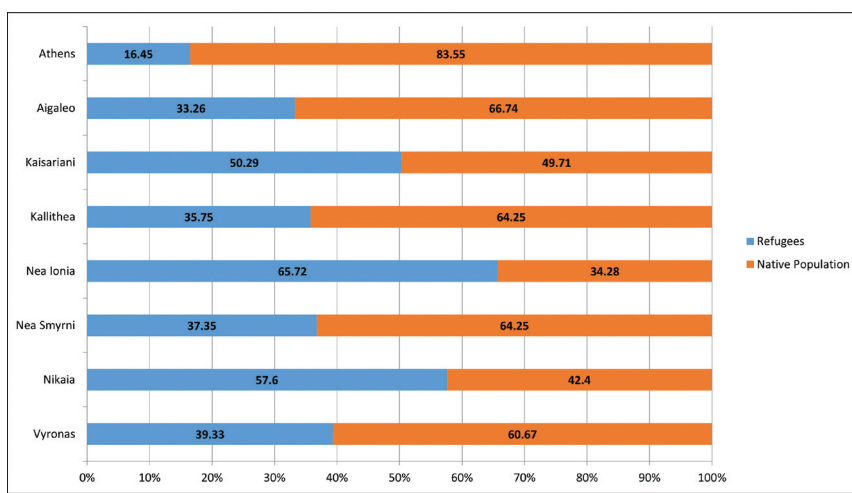


Figure 8. Origin of men per municipality in marriages, 1924–1950 (percentage of the total number). (Marriage registration records).

Overall, intermarriage between refugees and the local population significantly facilitated the social integration of the former in all municipalities, both established ones like Athens and newer settlement like Nikaia. This finding challenges prevailing narratives in Greek historiography, which contend that contact between refugees and locals was limited and that refugees were a socially isolated group, at least until 1940, with intrarefugee marriage considered the norm.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Katsapis, “Αντιπαραθέσεις,” 113 and 117; Andriotis, *Πρόσφυγες*, 316 and 331.

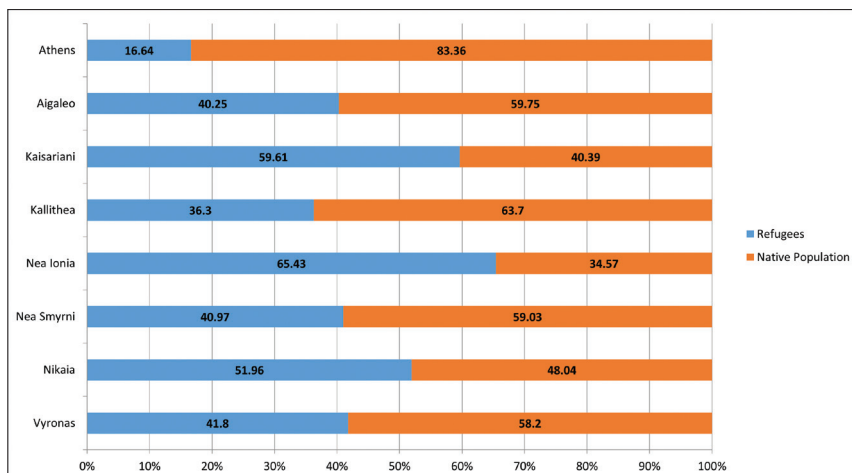


Fig. 9. Origin of women per municipality in marriages, 1924–1950 (percentage of the total number). (Marriage registration records).

Occupations

For urban resettlement to succeed, two major issues had to be resolved: housing and employment. During the interwar period, the urban resettlement process initially concerned concerted efforts by the government and the RSC to monitor the employment of refugees who settled in major urban centres. From the outset, the goal was to prevent the unregulated settlement of refugees. The plan was that “refugees would be placed ... so as to undertake the same occupations and trades they used to have, to ensure that they would become productive and self-reliant as soon as possible”.⁴⁷

It is evident that the Greek state was unable to bear the burden of long-term financial support for tens of thousands of families. The following sections examine in detail the demographic composition and occupational structure in the eight municipalities under study. They also highlight efforts towards refugee integration and notable occupational differences between refugees and the local population. The key findings are summarised prior to the concluding remarks.

⁴⁷ Ministry of Health, Welfare and Assistance, *Διατάξεις αφορώσαι την πρόνοιαν και αστικήν εγκατάστασιν των Προσφύγων* (Athens: s.n., 1926).

Athens Municipality as a Location of Initial Refugee Settlement and Employment

Settlements established on the outskirts of the Municipality of Athens – such as Girokomeio, Kountouriotika and Dourgouti – were located at some distance from the city centre. By 1928, approximately 120,000 refugees had settled in the municipality of the capital city itself, accounting for nearly one-third of all refugees who arrived in the metropolitan region and bringing the city's total population to 396,000. Most of the arriving refugees were women; census data records 50,587 men and 65,792 women refugees arriving in the Municipality of Athens. Almost 80 percent came from Asia Minor, 10 percent from Constantinople and the remaining 10 percent from either Thrace or Pontos. Refugees from Constantinople and other urban centres tended to favour Athens, which, although a relatively small capital, was the biggest city in the country.

As already mentioned, the 1928 census offers substantial data on the occupations of refugees who settled in the Municipality of Athens. Occupations are divided into 13 categories, one of which is “no occupation”, a designation primarily comprising unskilled male and female workers who did not qualify for inclusion in any economic sector. This category, which also encompassed all “housewives”, accounted for nearly half the city's population. A smaller group, about 7 percent of the population over 10 years of age, fell into the category of “no clear declaration or definition of occupation”. These individuals were likely engaged in work of some kind but who could not be classified in a specific sector (table 2).

The arrival of refugees contributed to a 50 percent increase in the number of those employed in the industrial sector from 1920 to 1928. Those registered as merchants, whether refugees or locals, were usually peddlers.⁴⁸ As a newspaper observed in 1923, “many peddlers ended up as members of the proletariat”.⁴⁹ And when the economic recession hit Greece in 1929, the commercial sector entered a period of crisis due to import restrictions and market oversaturation.

⁴⁸ As early as 1921, according to official police data, there were 9,817 “itinerant peddlers” in Athens, besides shoeshiners and newspaper vendors; 1,416 were under 20 years of age, 8,860 were 20–40 years old; see, Alexandros Svolos, “Η μάχη ενάντια στην ανεργία,” *Το Βήμα*, 21 January 1923.

⁴⁹ “Η κρίσις των μεγάλων αστικών μας κέντρων – Αθήναι: η πόλις της φαινομενικής ευημερίας,” *Οικονομικός Ταχυδρόμος*, 29 January 1933.

Table 2
Occupational distribution of refugees over 10 years old in Athens, 1928.

Occupational categories	Total	Men	Women
Agriculture	828	786	42
Animal husbandry and game hunting	58	58	
Fishing	26	26	
Metal and ore mining	55	53	2
Industry	19,771	13,498	6,273
Transportation	2,571	2,542	29
Credit, exchange and mediation	1,837	1,665	172
Commerce	7,418	7,036	382
Personal services	3,917	1,240	2,677
Self-employed tradesmen	3,039	2,012	1,027
Civil service	1,362	1,034	328
No occupation	53,411	8,164	45,247
No clear declaration or definition of occupation	9,306	6,028*	3,278†
Total	103,599	44,142	59,457

Source: Population census, 1928.

* Of which 971 were “clerks” and 4,193 “male workers”

† Of which 208 were “clerks” and 1,603 “female workers”.

According to the analysis of marriage registration records in Athens from 1925 to 1950, approximately 43 percent of male refugees (768 of 1,791 grooms) were employed as craftsmen, small-scale manufacturers and shop owners. The second-largest group was that of private-sector employees, while only 12.3 percent declared themselves as labourers or as employed in the manufacturing or construction sectors. Notably, 8.3 percent were recorded as public-sector employees while 6.4 percent seem to have been part of the Athenian upper strata.

Of the 1,812 female refugees, 1,676 were registered by their husbands as housewives. Of the remainder, 36 were recorded as civil servants or primary school teachers,⁵⁰ 20 as private-sector employees, seven as dressmakers, three

⁵⁰ Being a teacher was one of the few occupations that women had the qualifications to practice during the period being studied; competent agencies facilitated the appointment of

as unskilled workers, six as nurses, two as lawyers, one as a dentist and one as a physician. It is apparent that most refugees formed part of the working-class strata of the capital and that the bulk of “housewives” worked in the private sector as unskilled workers, weavers or washerwomen. It is equally evident that the capital attracted men and women who either had financial means or higher education, and the corresponding occupational qualifications, enabling them to become members of the upper strata of Athenian society. Notably, men and women with the necessary qualifications became civil servants, such as ministry clerks or schoolteachers, as part of the state’s broader effort to incorporate individuals that it required.

Pangrati/Vyronas

The Pangrati settlement was one of the first to be established, its initial part constructed with the financial help of the RRF, before the RSC assumed responsibility for it between 1924 and 1926. On the centenary of Lord Byron’s death, the settlement was renamed Vyronas (reflecting the modern Greek form of Byron),⁵¹ and it became an independent municipality in 1934. According to the 1928 census, there were 7,723 citizens (all of them refugees, that is, 2,933 men and 4,403 women), most of whom came from the regions of Erythrae, Smyrna and Tralles (Aidinio/Aydın). According to the analysis of marriage registration records, during the interwar period the population of the municipality increased; about one-third of male refugees worked as craftsmen, small-scale manufacturers and shop owners (33.91 percent), and one-fifth worked as labourers or in occupations related to manufacturing or construction (19.41 percent). These occupations closely resemble those of nonrefugee residents who had also married within the municipality. During the 1940s, the municipal population continued to grow, accompanied by an occupational shift among the 308 refugees who had married in Vyronas: about half of them were now craftsmen/shop owners, the number of private-sector employees increased (17 percent) and the percentage of labourers decreased (10 percent). It is likely that these men arrived as very young children with their refugee parents and, by the 1940s, had managed to enter the labour market and acquire skills, thus allowing them to move beyond unskilled labourer jobs.

In Vyronas during the interwar period, only a small number of female refugees (18 out of 480) were attributed an occupation in their marriage

teachers by recognising the academic degrees and prior experience they acquired in their places of origin.

⁵¹ Morgenthau, *Η αποστολή μου*, 253–54.

registration: These included five seamstresses, three dressmakers, four primary school teachers, two civil servants, two bank employees, one dentist and one unskilled worker. Similarly, among local brides, only 25 (compared to 392 housewives) declared an occupation. These included six seamstresses/dressmakers, one secondary school teacher, two primary school teachers, one midwife, two hairdressers, two artists, five unskilled workers and one housemaid. During the 1940s, a greater number of married women (53 out of 463) declared a different occupation to that of housewife. The most common was still seamstress, followed by civil servant and private-sector employee. Only a few women stated a more menial job, such as knitter. Apparently, women's work after marriage remained uncommon and was probably more necessary in lower-income social strata; however, a slow and gradual trend was underway, with women working as employees in the public or private sectors.

Kaisariani

At the same time, beyond the northern borders of the Municipality of Vyronas, the settlement of Kaisariani was expanding. Initially, people lived in tents, but by the spring of 1923 more permanent structures, such as wooden sheds and brick rooms, began to be built, mainly under the supervision of the RSC. Kaisariani became a municipality in 1934. According to the 1928 census, there were 15,387 residents (of whom 12,405 were refugees: 5,349 men and 7,056 women), the majority of whom came from the broader region of the Erythrae Peninsula and Smyrna (Vourla, Alatsata, Sivrisari). By 1940, the population of Kaisariani had grown 30 percent to reach 20,000 residents, an increase far lower than that in Vyronas, where, as we have seen, the population jumped threefold in the same period. This disparity can be attributed to the differences in housing: while Vyronas' development was centrally planned, Kaisariani's construction began several months after the refugees had already erected tents and shacks, progressing very slowly until 1935. Population growth remained low in the 1940s, with an increase of only 2,000 residents over the decade.

In Kaisariani, craftsmen (31.3 percent) and workers (27.2 percent) together comprised almost two-thirds of the male refugee population who married between 1924 and 1950, while the next most-commonly declared occupations were workers, private-sector employees and carpenters. The occupational profile of local men who married in Kaisariani did not differ much from that of refugees (for example, craftsmen and small-scale manufacturers represented 26.8 percent of the total sample). Out of the 927 female refugees, 912 were declared as housewives and five as dressmakers, two as primary school teachers, two as

private-sector employees and one as a civil servant, two as unskilled workers, one as a nurse and one as a knitter. Similarly, among local women born in Greece (550 in total), only five were registered as primary school teachers, four as dressmakers, three as textile workers, two as civil servants, two as bank clerks, one as a hairdresser, one as a nurse, and one as a midwife, the vast majority of them in the 1940s.

Podarades/Nea Ionia

The largest site used to establish a refugee settlement was Podarades, situated north of Athens. At the taking of the 1920 census, it was one of seven neighbourhoods recorded as being “outside Athens’ city plan” and had just 50 residents (32 men and 18 women). On 4 April 1923, the government decided to establish a refugee settlement there, and the RRF began the construction of 400 rooms (not full residences) to house an equal number of families. The refugee population that settled in what became the Municipality of Nea Ionia in 1934 originated not only from the Asia Minor hinterland, but notably from Sparta in Pisidia (located about 300 km east of Smyrna and 100 km north of Attaleia). This region was renowned for its carpet and rug production, a legacy that profoundly shaped the development of the new municipality for decades. Nea Ionia became a hub for textile and carpet/rug manufacturing, supported by dedicated industrial plants⁵² and a significant labour force.⁵³ In the 1928 census, 14,135 residents were registered in this district (of which 13,692 were refugees: 5,857 men and 7,835 women), but just before World War II, its population had doubled and continued to rise in the 1940s, this time due to internal migration. In this working-class district, the

⁵² Hellenic Wool Carding was founded in April 1919 by an Arcadian, Nikolaos Kyrkinis, and the factory was located in Ano Patissia, where its deserted skeleton still stands next to Athens Second Cemetery. In 1923, with the arrival of refugees, who were experts in the craft of carpet/rug manufacturing, a new department was founded dedicated to eastern carpet manufacturing (Sparta, Uşak and Gördes types) along with a carpet washing plant. In a short while, a comprehensive textile/spinning mill hub was created in this district, with departments for wool carding, silk processing, cotton processing, an electricity generation plant as well as auxiliary departments, such as a machine shop, a blacksmithing shop and a ginning mill. See Loukas P. Christodoulou, *Από τους Ποδαράδες 1922...στη Νέα Ιωνία 1934* (Athens: Baltas, 2021), 27–29.

⁵³ Olga Vogiatzoglou, “Η βιομηχανική εγκατάσταση των προσφύγων στη Νέα Ιωνία, παράμετρος της αστικής αποκατάστασης,” in *Ο ξεριζωμός και η άλλη πατρίδα: Οι προσφυγοπόλεις στην Ελλάδα* (Athens: Etaireia Spoudon Neoellinikou Politismou kai Genikis Paideias, 1999), 147–59.

overwhelming majority of men who got married (60 percent) were craftsmen (31.7 percent) and labourers (28 percent). Among those of Asia Minor origin specifically, these figures were higher – 35 percent and 30.7 percent, respectively – with “labourer” being the most frequently declared occupation. Notably, one in six female refugees listed their occupation as a worker in a carpet/rug plant, textile factory or silk processing plant.

As in other districts, Neo Ionia also had dressmakers (nine), primary school teachers (seven), civil servants (seven), private-sector employees (12) and nurses (four). There were also two midwives, a municipal clerk, three housekeepers, a hairdresser and a stitching machine operator. Again, it was most common for women to be recorded with an occupation in the 1940s. Local married women also declared working-class occupations, mainly as textile factory workers, as well as twelve dressmakers, four nurses, three maids and chamber maids, three private-sector employees and three civil servants, a teacher, a housekeeper, a hotel clerk, a hospital clerk and an accountant. These occupations reflect the sectors where the overwhelming majority of female population in the capital was employed during both the interwar period⁵⁴ and the 1940s.

Kallithea

By 1885, Kallithea had developed into a residential district, featuring numerous country homes by the early twentieth century. This growth was spurred by the steam tram that began operating in 1887 and was replaced by an electric tram in the first decade of the twentieth century. The tram route started at the Academy of Athens, went along Panepistemiou and Amalias avenues, continued through Kallithea via the present-day Thiseos Avenue, reached the coastline at Tzitzifies, and terminated at Neo or Palaio Faliro along the seafront road. Three years after the arrival of thousands of refugees, Kallithea was split from the Municipality of Athens in 1925 and became an independent municipality in 1933. In 1922 and 1923, 13,917 refugees – 6,211 men and 7,706 women – settled in Kallithea, according to the 1928 census.⁵⁵ Of these, half (7,717) came from Asia Minor, around one-third from Pontos (4,308) and 1,484 from Constantinople.

⁵⁴ Efi Avdela, *Δημόσιοι υπάλληλοι γένους θηλυκού: Καταμερισμός της εργασίας κατά φύλα στον δημόσιο τομέα, 1908–1955* (Athens: Foundation of Research and Education of the Commercial Bank of Greece, 1990).

⁵⁵ Anastasia Leriou and Anna Mourouglou, *Καλλιθέα: Όψεις της ιστορίας του δήμου και της πόλης* (Athens: Cultural Organisation of the Municipality of Kallithea. 2006), table 2.

Table 3
Occupational distribution of refugees aged over 10 in Kallithea, 1928.

Occupational categories	Total	Men	Women
Agriculture	54	42	12
Animal husbandry and game hunting	7	7	
Fishing	11	11	
Metal and ore mining	12	7	5
Industry	2,043	1,557	486
Transportation	232	231	1
Credit, exchange and mediation	216	197	19
Commerce	711	682	29
Personal services	265	138	127
Self-employed tradesmen	354	271	83
Civil service	80	55	25
No occupation	6,828	1,078	5,750
No clear declaration or definition of occupation	1,093	890*	203†
Total	11,906	5,166	6,740

Source: 1928 census.

* Of which 130 were clerks and 727 male workers

† Of which 26 were clerks and 177 female workers

Kallithea, a municipality along the Athens–Piraeus axis with light industry plants, was mainly inhabited by members of the middle social strata but lacked the infrastructure to accommodate the new refugee population. Its population grew rapidly, from approximately 4,000 residents in 1920 to around 30,000 in 1928, about 36,500 in 1940 and 50,000 in 1951, the latter figure obviously due to internal migration. During the 1925–1950 period, again based on occupations declared by spouses in their marriage registrations, one in four was a craftsman or small-scale manufacturer, 15 percent were labourers, and an almost equal rate (14.4 percent) were private-sector employees. It seems that, indeed, Kallithea was a middle-class municipality, as municipal clerks and civil servants accounted for 8 percent of the population, while self-employed professionals made up 3.4 percent

– some of the highest proportions recorded among the new municipalities studied. When refugees are excluded from the analysis, notable differences emerge: more than half of the men were craftsmen or small-scale manufacturers (28.9 percent) and labourers (21.5 percent), while the most commonly declared occupations are those of labourer and private-sector employee, followed by that of cobbler. Less commonly stated occupations were municipal clerk/civil servant (3.2 percent) and self-employed professional (2.4 percent). A comparison with the detailed 1928 census results (table 3) supports the findings from marriage registration records: the occupational profile of male refugees in Kallithea echoes that of Athens, with most employed in the industrial sector (primarily in textiles, followed by shoemaking) and the food trade. Notably, a higher proportion of self-employed professionals initially settled in Kallithea, likely due to the better living conditions it offered.

Among the 1,434 female refugees, 74 belonged to the middle social strata.⁵⁶ These included 23 civil servants (including three secondary school teachers, seven primary school teachers and one kindergarten teacher), 20 private-sector employees (including five bank clerks), numerous dressmakers (12) and many workers (12), as well as a dentist, a physician, a pharmacist and a lawyer. It is worth noting that refugee teachers were eligible for appointment to teaching positions in Greece. The 1928 census data confirmed this picture. While most of the women refugees in Kallithea who declared an occupation were workers – mainly in the textile industry – maids or secondary teachers, a significant percentage had entered the self-employed category as accountants, bank clerks and civil servants.

Local brides declared some form of an occupation in 6.4 percent of the marriages registered (165 out of 2,526). The most commonly stated occupation was that of civil servant (63 out of 165) – many of whom were teachers – followed by private-sector employees, with a significant number of bank clerks, and then by unskilled workers and dressmakers. Notably, the 1940s saw a rise in the number of women enrolling in university, and four university students were married in Kallithea during this period.

Kallithea, the largest municipality adjacent to the Municipality of Athens, benefitted from public transport, which facilitated easier travel and broadened access to job opportunities across a wide range of occupations.⁵⁷

Nea Smyrni

Nea Smyrni is a typical location where the better-off group of urban refugees

⁵⁶ Again, it should be noted that the percentage of female refugees registered with an occupation other than “housewife” was a mere 4.1 percent from 1925 to 1940 and doubled in the 1940s to reach 8.4 percent of the brides registered.

⁵⁷ Gizeli, *Κοινωνικοί μετασχηματισμοί*, 222–25; Georgakopoulou, “Προσφυγικοί συνοικισμοί.”

settled; they mainly originated from the city of Smyrna and its surrounding Asia Minor coastal area. By 1923, there had been a series of decrees concerning expropriation and sale of land plots in the area lying southeast of Athens. The Nea Smyrni residential area was part of the city plan and construction there started in 1926 with a few residences but intensified and was completed in the 1930s. In 1934 the settlement became a community, and in 1943 it was upgraded to a municipality.⁵⁸

Most Asia Minor refugees stated their occupations as craftsmen, private-sector employees and merchants (24.4 percent, 22.1 percent and 18.3 percent, respectively); a group of 5.2 percent also belonged to the professional self-employed class (physicians, dentists, civil engineers, agriculturists, etc.).

Around sixty refugee brides declared middle class occupations: 30 civil servants (many of whom teachers), 16 private-sector employees, three university students, two dentists, one physician, one pharmacist, one musician and one artist (painter). Although, as usual, very few working-class occupations were declared (only one milliner and two dressmakers), it can be assumed that numerous women worked in the hat-making and womenswear sectors at a time when mass production did not yet exist.

Aigaleo

The first information about the population in Aigaleo comes from the 1920 census. An insignificant settlement at the time with a mere 147 residents, it was created by refugees:⁵⁹ in 1928 there were 3,135 residents in the area – in various small hamlets – but only 563 refugees (289 men and 284 women). In the 1930s the state created a new settlement and distributed about 400 small houses to refugees who, until then, used to live in shanties in the capital. Until 1934 Aigaleo was still an administrative part of the Municipality of Athens (which means that up to 1934 marriages were registered in that municipality); however, the significant increase in population due to the arrival of internal immigrants (in 1951 the population amounted to 29,500 residents) meant that Aigaleo was upgraded to a municipality.⁶⁰ In their majority, men worked in the industrial-light industrial sector (55 percent); indeed, about two-thirds of them were salaried employees. The industrial proletariat of the

⁵⁸ Gizeli, *Κοινωνικοί μετασχηματισμοί*, 278–83.

⁵⁹ The initial settlement of Agios Savvas (founded in 1929–1930 with 378 refugees who shared land lots with refugees from other shanty regions such as Polygonon or Asyrmatos) was renamed Nees Kydonies in 1932. Until 1928 there were various small settlements, such as Pyritidopoieio, Chaidari, etc.

⁶⁰ Anastasia Leriou, *Δήμος Αιγάλεω: Όψεις της ιστορίας της πόλης και του Δήμου* (Athens: Media Publishing, 2023).

municipality comprised one-third of working persons. The labelling of Aigaleo as a workers' town was never just a figure of speech.⁶¹

Self-employed persons represented just over one-third of those working, a percentage particularly low at a time when in a city like Athens where self-employment was the norm. This is confirmed by the very low rate of professionals, represented by only 15 individuals (four physicians, eight lawyers, one agriculturalist, a factory owner from Zakynthos, a dentist from Corinth and so on). Finally, the fact that there still were ten landowners underlines once again that, during the interwar period, the landscape was still, to a great extent, rural in appearance, with houses built amid vegetable gardens. Aigaleo, just as the rest of the districts around Athens, supplied the capital with the necessary vegetables and operated as the "city vegetable garden". Towards the end of the interwar period, industrial firms started making their appearance: the largest of them was the Hellenic Powder and Cartridge Company, which manufactured ammunition for the army. It occupied an area of 16.7 hectares where the present-day Aigaleo Park stands.

Furthermore, a large number of persons were classified as "inactive", a degrading term that referred to the unemployed, who made up around 10 percent of the labour force.

Ninety-four percent of women (1,293 out of a total of 1,388) appear to have been homemakers. Those who went out to work, however, ended up working at a factory or some cottage industry with the exception of dressmakers, six municipal clerks/civil servants, five nurses, four refugee primary school teachers, a refugee secondary school teacher and an Athenian pharmacist. For those who, under the burden of dire need, without a home or seeking a better life, made up this municipality, things were clearcut: bare necessities were covered by working at factories, at building sites and, in the best cases, from peddling goods.

At the socio-occupational level, considering the most popular occupations, the most fundamental distinction between locals, that is, those born within the borders of the Greek state, and refugees, had to do with the high unemployment rates among the latter: refugee figures, at almost 10 percent, were double those of the locals' rates, which stood at 5 percent.

Another, less intense, difference is also that refugees presented higher rates of self-employment, particularly in the cottage industry sector, compared to locals, who, relatively speaking, more often worked as salaried employees, which is rather different from what one might expect. Of course, at that time, self-employment

⁶¹ Eugenia Bournova, "The Creation of New Cities in the Region of the Greek Capital during the Twentieth Century: The Case of Egaleo," *International Journal of Regional and Local History* 10, no. 1 (2015): 47–68.

mostly meant “hand-to-mouth” jobs, which often brought in even less than the low salaries employees received. On the other hand, it is a given that refugees of urban origin were knowledgeable and skilled in various occupations, which allowed them to set up a business on their own; they were not obliged to find recourse to a salaried relationship a factory job imposes.

Nea Kokkinia

The first housing sites selected for refugees who arrived by boat to Piraeus included the railway warehouses at Agios Dionysios in the port of Piraeus and various factories in the broader Piraeus and Neo Faliro areas. One of the refugee settlement locations selected was Kokkinada, an empty expanse stretching over 75 hectares north of the Municipality of Piraeus. The area’s name is thought to derive either from the reddish hue of its soil or from the abundance of poppies that once grew there.

The refugee settlement was the first residential hub developed at this location. Founded on 18 June 1923 in meadowlands expropriated for this purpose, it was named Kokkinia, retaining the essence of its previous name. Its residents were refugees from various parts of Asia Minor and Armenia, and it was the largest refugee settlement in the whole of the Attica Basin. Initially, housing comprised mainly of shacks that barely reached the needs of refugees. In the 1928 census, the first conducted there, the settlement housed 33,201 people, of whom 30,301 were refugees (13,588 men and 16,713 women). By 1929, Nea Kokkinia, as the refugee town was now known, had 50,000 residents and supported 300 groceries, 260 coffee-ouzo houses, 200 textile and haberdashery shops, 150 wine taverns and so on. There were also 35 carpet and rug factories, reflecting the traditional Anatolian craft in which thousands of refugees were skilled. By 1926, in addition to over 500 cottage industries, approximately 800 people were employed in 10 carpet and rug factories.⁶²

In January 1934, a large part of Kokkinia was split from the Municipality of Piraeus to form the Municipality of Nea Kokkinia. The remaining area within Piraeus was thereafter known as Palia (“Old”) Kokkinia.

The water supply network in Kokkinia began operating in 1936. Until then, there was no sewage system, leading to the formation of cesspools of stagnant wastewater in many of its districts. Combined with the nearby marshy areas, the area was a breeding ground for infections, with tuberculosis and trachoma rampant.

⁶² Lila Leontidou, “Ένας χώρος ελπίδας κι αρχιτεκτονικής πρωτοβουλίας: Άτυπη εργασία και κατοικία στις προσφυγικές γειτονίες της Νίκαιας,” in *Τα προσφυγικά σπίτια της Νίκαιας: Λεύκωμα μνήμης 1922–2002*, ed. Evi Prousalı (Athens: Livani, 2002): 17–23, 46–47; Vasias Tsokopoulos, “Η ανασύσταση της καθημερινής ζωής στην προπολεμική Κοκκινιά,” in Prousalı, *Τα προσφυγικά σπίτια της Νίκαιας*, 24–29.

On 3 September 1940, the Municipality of Nea Kokkinia was renamed Nikaia (after Nicaea in Bithynia, near the Sea of Marmara). At the outbreak of World War II in Greece, the municipality had 59,552 residents and by the end of the decade, its population had grown to over 72,000.

Of the 8,008 marriages registered in Nikaia from 1924 to 1950,⁶³ 31.1 percent of spouses declared occupations as craftsmen or small-scale manufacturers and 30.3 percent as labourers. Another 10.5 percent worked in the transport sector and 9.4 percent in commerce. In most of these marriages (4,613), the grooms were refugees, of whom 33.7 percent were craftsmen or small-scale manufacturers and 31.7 percent were labourers. The most-commonly declared occupation was that of labourer, followed – at a distant second – by cobbler and private-sector employee. Of the 209 refugee brides who declared an occupation other than that of housewife, 152 were unskilled workers, 12 primary school teachers, 11 dressmakers, 10 civil servants/municipal clerks, and so on. Only two were self-employed professionals, namely a dentist and a pharmacist.

Occupational Patterns

The methodology of systematically listing data mined from the marriage registration records chosen for this article has allowed us to confirm initial information concerning the settlement of refugees in 1928 and to further analyse the social and occupational integration of refugees – particularly women, despite the predominance of “housewife” as a declared occupation – in the rest of the municipalities over a period of more than 20 years.

As already mentioned, in the municipalities studied, most male refugees worked as craftsmen, small-scale manufacturers or small shop-owners (31.8 percent of the male population) or labourers (24.9 percent of the male population) (fig. 10). Private-sector employees and merchants (most likely small in scale) made up about a quarter of the refugee population (10.8 percent and 12.2 percent, respectively). More specifically, the most-commonly declared occupations among refugee male spouses were private-sector employee, cobbler and plasterer; fewer identified as “merchants”, a term that likely referred to peddlers. For instance, the number of grocers rose from 3,116 in 1920 to 4,755 by 1928. Among the local population, craftsmen and labourers made up a third of the working population (fig. 11). Many of the local and refugee workers were employed in workshops and small cottage industry units scattered throughout the capital, as well as on construction sites,⁶⁴ which proliferated during this period due to the expansion of refugee housing.

⁶³ The indexing of these marriages and creating the relevant database for Kokkinia was undertaken by Kyriaki Papathanasopoulou, whom we warmly thank for allowing us to use it.

⁶⁴ According to Morgenthau, 90 percent of those who worked at building sites were refugees. *I Was Sent to Athens*, 238.

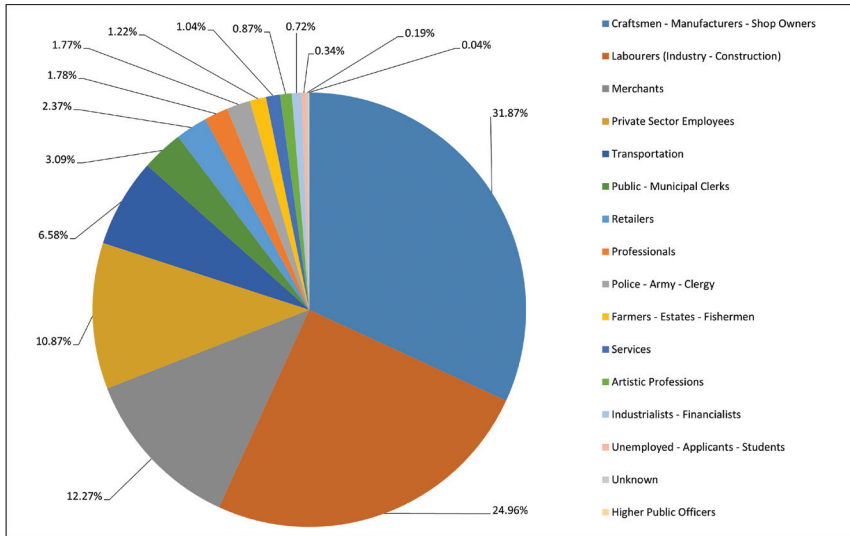


Fig. 10. Occupations practised by refugees, 1924–1950. (Marriage registration records).

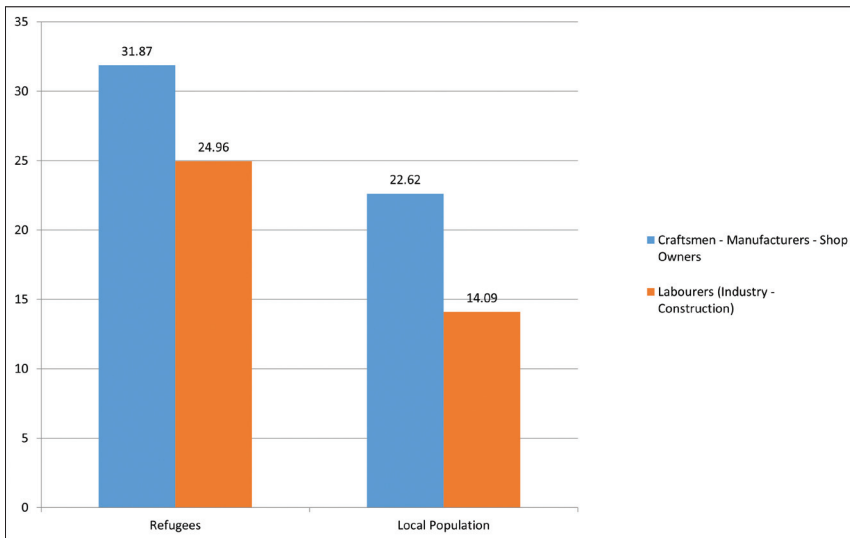


Fig. 11. Occupations of refugees and locals, artisans and workers, 1924–1950. (Marriage registration records).

Refugee groups declared occupations spanning the entire occupational range, though only a small minority (6.4 percent) provided professions associated with the upper social strata. Nearly half were craftsmen, manufacturers, peddlers or shopkeepers –

such as cobblers, carpenters, furniture-makers, barbers and tailors – while almost one in three worked as private-sector employees or construction labourers (table 4). A comparison with the detailed 1928 census data on male refugee occupations confirms that under the “industry” category, which included the highest number of workers, most refugees were registered as working in the textile industry. The most commonly declared jobs were seamsters, carpet makers and weavers, followed by roles in the leather industry (shoemakers) and carpentry (carpenters, cabinet/furniture makers). In essence, these occupations fall under the category of craftsmen, manufacturers, peddlers and shopkeepers. Most refugees registered in the next largest category, that of commerce, were food merchants (for example, 1,222 grocers), clothing merchants, hoteliers, coffee traders, general merchants and shop assistants. The next highest occupational group comprised the self-employed, representing 4.5 percent of the male population. This group mainly comprised health professionals, such as physicians, pharmacists, nurses and dentists, followed by accountants, engineers, architects and chemists as well as secondary and primary school teachers. Finally, the working-class strata were further populated by almost 5,000 clerks and workers not classified in a particular sector, as well as 8,000 individuals listed as having “no occupation”. This latter group reflects the truly fragile socio-economic status of refugees, at least during the first decade following their arrival in Greece.

As for female refugees, although three-quarters were registered as having “no occupation” in 1928, the majority likely worked in the textile sector, with others working as hairdressers and maids, and a few hundred as civil servants. However, classifying the female population per occupation from 1925 to 1950 is difficult, since most women were recorded as “housewives” on their marriage registration. Of the 1,812 refugee brides, only 85 (4.7 percent) declared an occupation other than housekeeping. Among this small minority, most (50 of the 85) were employed in the public sector (for example, primary school teachers) and the private sector (for example, typists), followed by dressmakers (seven) and unskilled workers (six) (table 5). Finally, there were two lawyers, one physician and one dentist. It can reasonably be assumed that when a bride held a position as civil servant or self-employed professional, she did not hesitate to declare it. On the contrary, menial jobs, such as unskilled labour or cleaning, seem to have remained systematically underdeclared, despite the fact that most refugee women worked in such roles, including as unskilled workers or in weaving mills. Local women also held similar jobs, typically until they got married, which was long enough to save the necessary dowry.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Efi Avdela, “Στοιχεία για την εργασία των γυναικών στο Μεσοπόλεμο: Όψεις και θέσεις,” in *Βενιζελισμός και αστικός εκσυγχρονισμός*, ed. George Mavrogordatos and Christos Hadziiossif (Heraklion: Crete University Press, 1988), 193–204.

Table 4
Most common occupations of refugee men, per municipality, 1924–1950.

Municipality	Occupations of male refugees
Athens	Private-sector employee
	Merchant
	Cobbler
Aigaleo	Labourer
	Private-sector employee
	Cobbler
Vyronas	Private-sector employee
	Cobbler
	Civil servant
Kaisariani	Labourer
	Private-sector employee
	Carpenter
Kallithea	Labourer
	Private-sector employee
	Cobbler
Nea Ionia	Labourer
	Private-sector employee
	Cobbler
Nea Smyrni	Private-sector employee
	Merchant
	Labourer
Nikaia	Labourer
	Cobbler
	Private-sector employee
All municipalities	Labourer
	Private-sector employee
	Cobbler

Source: Marriage registration records.

Table 5
 Most common occupations practised by refugee women, per municipality,
 1924–1950.

Municipality	Occupations of female refugees
Athens	Civil servant
	Private-sector employee
	Dressmaker
	Worker
Aigaleo	Primary school teacher
	Worker
	Seamstress
Kaisariani	Dressmaker
	Primary school teacher
	Private-sector employee
Kallithea	Private-sector employee
	Civil servant
	Dressmaker
Nea Ionia	Worker
	Worker in weaving plant
	Private-sector employee
	Primary school teacher
Nea Smyrni	Civil servant
	Private-sector employee
	Primary school teacher
Nikaia	Worker
	Worker in tobacco plant
	Weaver
	Primary school teacher
	Dressmaker
Vyronas	Seamstress
	Civil servant
	Private-sector employee

All municipalities	Worker
	Worker in weaving plant
	Civil servant
	Private-sector employee
	Dressmaker

Source: Marriage registration records.

Discussion of Findings

Using information extracted from the eight municipal registries, this study has explored marriage patterns between refugees and members of the local population from 1925 to 1950. It has also investigated the socio-occupational status of this population as a main factor in their integration.

All the information drawn from more than 31,000 marriage registration records, through descriptive analysis and empirical findings, has allowed us to test our initial hypotheses and to interpret the said results.

Indeed, no prior study has focused on marriage, and the prevailing myth about refugees during the interwar period portrays a miserable picture of a marginalised population group, isolated from local society. However, our detailed findings indicate that, from as early as the 1920s, refugees were marrying local people. This “exchange” of spouses functioned as a direct mechanism of integration into Greek society. Of course, the proverb “a shoe from home is best, even if it is mended” likely held true in places with a plentiful local female population. However, such cases were rare, because the capital attracted mostly young domestic male migrants, whose search for a wife would unavoidably lead them to also marry refugees. Similarly, young female refugees often found husbands among men in working-class settlements, as they worked alongside them in factories. This is the choice of spouse and integration we identified through our study, as opposed to the *idée perçue* that would have refugees living among themselves. The huge volume of photographic material surviving from that period depicts mainly shacks and cheap, one-storey housing with refugee families in refugee settlements, painting a picture of a population of refugees that did not mix with local populations. That said, widows who arrived with children, which our sources do not refer to, must have found it difficult to integrate into Greek society.

In addition to intermarriage and the new relationships created between locals and refugees through wedlock, employment played an equally significant role in integration and survival.

The overall occupational categories of male refugees, as confirmed in our detailed analysis, align closely with those of local working-class males: craftsmen,

small-scale manufacturers, small-shop owners and labourers. Fewer refugees integrated into lower-middle strata, at least until the 1940s. For many, this forced migration was economically catastrophic, requiring them to start from scratch with zero capital. However, a notable portion belonged to the middle strata of the capital's population, either due to the monetary capital they managed to bring with them or the advanced education they had received in their places of origin.

However, our study's second key finding is that women refugees engaged in a much broader range of occupations than unskilled labour. It was not uncommon for them to join the lower-middle strata because of the education they had received in their places of origin.

In the context of Greek industry, women refugees constituted a valuable driving force, often employed as both cheap and, oftentimes, skilled labour. As noted, numerous factories – especially carpet and rug manufacturing plants, cotton textile plants and spinning mills – operated in refugee districts of the capital, employing thousands of women. While marriage registration records serve as a strong primary source for analysing male occupations, they offer limited statistical data on “female” occupations. This is largely because the husband typically made the marriage declaration, and because many women ceased formal employment upon marriage. The working-class municipality of Nea Ionia stood out as an exception, as 20.5 percent of female refugees were registered as having an occupation, compared to local women who notched a rate of 28 percent. By contrast, in all eight municipalities surveyed, over 95 percent of women were registered as “housewives”. Besides, marriage was a ground for the dismissal of women from the National Bank in 1930, and throughout the 1930s hiring women in the public sector was prohibited. However, in the working-class strata, wives often could not afford to stop working.

Thus, during the interwar period, women held a range of occupations, from middle-class roles, such as secondary school teachers, teachers, civil servants, bank clerks and nurses, to working-class jobs, such as dressmakers, milliners and workers in textile, silk-processing and carpet/rug manufacturing factories. Overall, there appeared to be no significant differences between the occupations of refugee and local women in the refugee municipalities studied.

The 1930s were a tough decade for all working-class individuals, who lived in miserable conditions. At least 9,000 refugee families lived in wooden shacks and another 1,500 “in damp and dark basements”. Additionally, 3,000 people, mostly minors, lived in shop stores or lofts and slept in sacks.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Konstantinos Maniadakis, “Με μάτια ορθάνοιχτα,” *Το Βήμα*, 3 January 1938.

The 1940s were equally tragic for refugees, who bore the brunt of the famine during the first winter of the Nazi occupation. In the Municipality of Athens itself, starvation and its complications increased the mortality rate by 1.7 times in 1941 compared to 1940, and by three times in 1942.⁶⁷ In Nikaia, the mortality rate multiplied by 2.9 times in 1941 and by 4.4 in 1942; in Nea Ionia by 2.6 times in 1941 and by 4.6 times in 1942. Workers, peddlers, construction labourers and cleaners suffered the most from hunger. As refugees comprised the bulk of these sectors, they were severely affected, struggling to find work to start with and lacking access to rural areas due to limited contacts there. Consequently, they were among the first victims of starvation.

Men and women refugees in the municipalities studied – industry workers, builders, private-sector employees and petty merchants – bolstered the ranks of the working class ranks in the capital. Their integration was slow and painful, with marriages between refugees providing a sense of familiarity at home, or, rather, in rooms or shacks. Although tin towns were gradually abandoned, the process was slow and as late as February 1978, about 3,000 urban refugee families still lived in shacks.⁶⁸

This study contributes to the discussion about the role of marriage as a major factor in social integration, highlighting intermarriage as one of the most definitive steps in breaking down social and cultural barriers, thus fostering social and cultural integration. Intermarriage and work were the most effective means in the social process of population mixing. In the early years following the refugees' arrival, mixed marriages were relatively rare but steadily increased over time, a pattern typical of older migratory waves, such as those to the United States before the war.⁶⁹

Since the arrival of the refugees from Asia Minor a century ago, the study of this violent migration continues to evoke intense interest and remains highly relevant, as people worldwide are still forced to leave their homelands due to war, persecution or fear.

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

⁶⁷ In the Municipality of Athens, mortality rates rose from 16‰ in 1940, to 26‰ in 1941 and to 46‰ in 1942. See Eugenia Bournova, "Θάνατοι από πείνα: Η Αθήνα το χειμώνα του 1941–1942," *Αρχαιοτάξιο* 7 (2005): 52–73, and Bournova, "Deaths from Starvation: Athens-Winter of 1941–1942," in *The Price of Life: Welfare Systems, Social Nets and Economic Growth*, ed. Laurinda Abreu and Patrice Bourdelais (Lisbon: Colibri 2008), 141–62.

⁶⁸ Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic*, 188.

⁶⁹ Pagnini and Morgan, "Intermarriage and Social Distance," 405–32. Although this is not the case with all recent migration flows. See Hartmut Esser, "Does the New Immigration Require a New Theory of Intergenerational Integration?," Working Paper No. 71 (Mannheimer Zentrum für Europäische Sozialforschung, University of Mannheim, 2003).

