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Research Article

Geographical Dimensions of Nuptiality in Greece During the Inter-War Period

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Abstract: This paper examines marriage patterns in Greece during the 1920s, focusing on regional variations. These variations reflect Greece's diverse historical, cultural, and economic character, particularly considering that some regions, primarily in the north, had only recently been incorporated into the nation after the Balkan Wars and World War I. Analysing data from these administrative regions (formerly known as Geographical Departments), reveals a north-south gradient in marriage patterns, with further distinctions between mainland and insular Greece. In the northern regions, marriage customs, especially for women, resembled those of neighbouring Balkan countries like Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, characterized by early and near-universal marriage. Further south, age at marriage was generally later, and permanent celibacy was more common, particularly for men, and in the Ionian islands, for women as well. The influx of approximately 1.2 million refugees from Asia Minor following the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922) significantly impacted Greek demographics, including marriage patterns, due to the gender imbalance created by the war, specifically a shortage of marriageable-age men. This study argues that regional variations in marriage patterns within Greece during the inter-war period were so pronounced as to suggest disparate cultural contexts rather than mere intra-national differences. The primary findings highlight the enduring influence of pre-existing cultural norms among the populations that came to shape the modern Greek State.

Keywords: Marriage Patterns; Singulate Mean Age at Marriage (SMAM); Permanent Celibacy; Regional Deviations; Sex Ratio at Marriageable Ages

Highlights:

- Striking diversity in marriage patterns across Greece in the 1920s.
- A clear north-south gradient, with the North exhibiting characteristics similar to Balkan countries (early, universal marriage) and the South showing later marriage ages and more frequent celibacy.
- Refugees largely adopted the prevailing marriage patterns of the specific regions where they settled, suggesting that either refugees' region of origin shared similar economic and cultural characteristics with their new homes or/and a rapid adaptation to local customs.

1. Introduction

The study of nuptiality, encompassing marriage patterns and trends, has long been a central theme in demographic research. International scholarship has explored the influence of various factors on marriage behaviour, including economic conditions, social norms, and demographic shifts (Coale, 1969; Becker, 1981; Lesthaeghe, 2010). However, existing research often overlooks the profound impact of large-scale conflicts and mass migrations on marriage dynamics, particularly in the context of rapid demographic change. This study addresses these gaps by focusing on the unique case of Greece during the inter-war period.

The interwar period, that is the period between the “Great European War” and the WWII, lasted at least two decades (1918-1939) for most of the countries that took part in both wars, while for some of them the duration of the inter-war period exceeded the 25 years. For Greece the inter-war period was short: it lasted roughly 17 years, from 1923 to 1940. Yet, what is more important for the historical process is that Greece entered the inter-war period after a full decade of wars. This decade started with the Balkan Wars in 1912 to 1913, continued with the First World War in 1914 to 1918 and ended with the campaign in Asia Minor in 1919-1922.

This decade of wars doubled the territory of the Greek state and more than doubled its population (from 2.65 million on the eve of the Balkan Wars to 6.1 million in 1923). At the same time, however, it consumed the most dynamic and healthy part of the male population, a large portion of which never returned from the battlefields. The end of this decade terminated, with the most tragic way, the notion of the “Great Idea”, that is a Greek State spanning two continents and five seas, which had been the foundation of Greek foreign policy from the establishment of the Greek state until the Asia Minor Catastrophe. While the Asia Minor Catastrophe gave a more homogeneous ethnic composition to the Greek territory, with the exchange of populations in 1923, it also brought 1.2 million refugees in a Greek state that was economically devastated by the continuous wars, and unprepared to receive and house them in decent conditions. Many of these refugees died in the hastily erected camps without basic sanitary conditions, while some emigrated to foreign countries (Rapp, 1924:408).

At the same time Greece experienced mass overseas emigration, which had started from the end of the 19th century. Net emigration to overseas countries alone, in the period 1890-1912 was estimated to have been 320,000 persons (Siampos, 1980:236) in a mid-population of some 2.6 million (i.e. 12.3% of the population). Mass emigration continued at much the same rate in the 1910s and it significantly declined only after 1919. Both emigration and wars were age and sex selective. Emigrants consisted of 94% males, of whom 93% were aged 15 to 44 years (NSSG, 1980:97). Both emigration and wars were age and sex selective: they drained Greece from the healthiest and most productive males.

The above-mentioned historical events left their footprint in the demography of the Greek population. The three censuses that took place from 1907 to 1928 (1907, 1920 and 1928) give a totally different picture of the population structure of Greece by age and sex. The constantly changing population structure had a profound impact on the fertility and on the marriage pattern of the Greek populations as well. In 1907 married women aged 15-49 consisted mostly of young females with the age groups 15-29 making up 41.1% of them. By 1920, when overseas emigration and continuous wars had depleted the male population, the age structure of married women 15-49 had changed dramatically and the younger age groups 15-29 made up only 29.1% of the total group 15-49. In 1928, when the population had been rejuvenated by the influx of 1.2 million refugees, the population of married women 15-49 had a more balanced structure consisting of younger age groups (15-29) in a percentage reaching 33.2.

The research work at hand seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1) How the afore-mentioned demographic changes, caused by wars and mass migration, affected marriage patterns in Greece in the inter-war period?
- 2) Why there were different marriage patterns in the various regions of Greece?
- 3) Did marriage patterns differ between the native Greeks and the refugees that flooded the country after the "Asia Minor Disaster" in 1922, and if so, what factors contributed to these differences?

2. Literature review

Studies in historical demography have shed light on demographic transition in Europe as far as the course of mortality and fertility is concerned (see indicatively Caldwell et al., 2007). Fewer studies have examined in detail the changes in nuptiality during the transition, that is roughly from the end of the eighteenth until the mid-twentieth century. The most well-known typology of the marriage patterns of the early modern Europe remains that of Peter Laslett (1983). He divided Europe into four regions each one corresponding to a particular tendency of domestic group organisation. These regions, which are very vague as far as their geographical delineation is concerned, are labelled 'West', 'West/central or middle', 'Mediterranean' and 'East'.

Although this classification refers mainly to household structures, some information on marriage patterns can also be extracted. Thus, the 'West' marriage pattern is the one described by Hajnal as 'European', which prevailed in 'Europe' from at least the seventeenth century until the beginning of the twentieth century (Hajnal, 1965:101). The distinctiveness of this pattern resides in the facts that people were getting married at a high average age (over 23 for women), and there was a high proportion of the population (usually over ten percent) who never married at all. According to Hajnal this marriage pattern 'extended over all of Europe to the west of a line running roughly from Leningrad to Trieste' (ibid, 101). The main addition made by Laslett is that the age gap between spouses was narrow in that pattern.

The "West/central or middle" marriage pattern is similar to the "West" one. The difference lies in the household structure of the two regions and is underlined by the fact that in the "West/central or middle" region, extra work groups were attached to the family, thus resulting in a high proportion of stem-family households. The "Mediterranean" marriage pattern is characterised by low age at marriage for females, high for males, great age gap between spouses, high proportion of widows, who usually remain unmarried, and overall, by a low percentage of population never married at all. The "East" pattern shares the same characteristics as the 'Mediterranean' one but exhibits one basic difference: age at marriage is low for both sexes and the age gap between the spouses is narrow. Otherwise, the proportion of the population married is similarly high as in the "Mediterranean" pattern and widows, although proportionately fewer, usually do not remarry.

When Laslett proposed the above classification, the "West" model (and its variant "West/central or middle") had been studied relatively thoroughly and had established itself as being the rule in pre-Second World War North-west Europe. On the other hand, the establishment of the "Mediterranean" and "East" patterns of domestic organisation was based only on few case studies, referring to the eighteenth century, from Italy and from European Russia, for the two patterns, respectively. Later on, it became clear that the characteristics of these patterns, and especially of the Mediterranean one, which will concern us further on in this paper, are very fluid, and the typology put forward by Laslett is nothing else but an over-simplification. This was pointed out by more recent studies on Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece which revealed a great variability in these areas as far as household structure and marriage patterns are concerned (Reher, 1990; Kertzner and Brettell, 1987; Hionidou, 1999; Gavalas, 2008; Gavalas, 2019).

As far as the Balkan peninsula is concerned, some of the earlier studies on nuptiality during demographic transition are those by Botev (1990; 1993) and June (1974). Notably, in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Romania, women commonly married in their late teens or early twenties, while permanent celibacy remained uncommon up to the 1920s. Percentages of never married females were around 1% for Bulgaria and Yugoslavia and did not exceed 2.8% in Romania.

In the case of Greece, although many anthropological studies refer to marriage practices, such as post-marital residence and household structure, the demographic aspects of marriage patterns began to be studied relatively recently. It would be reasonable to assume that the Greek marriage pattern was, at least until the first half of the 20th century, the Mediterranean one or some variation of it. However, from the studies that have been conducted, it is known that few regions of Greece had some characteristics of the Mediterranean marriage pattern, and that Greece as a whole was an intermediate case between the Eastern and Western marriage patterns. In fact, Greece cannot be considered as a unified entity due to the great diversity it presented from region to region (Hionidou, 1999 Gavalas, 2008. Gavalas, 2019). The northern part of the country, and especially Thrace and parts of Macedonia, presented a marriage pattern similar to their neighbouring Balkan countries, which can be classified as "East" in Laslett's typology (Zafeiris and Koukli, 2022). The Ionian Islands leaned towards the "Western" pattern until the mid-20th century, with high rates of permanent celibacy for both sexes (7%-13%), a relatively high average age at first marriage for women for the time (26 and over in the inter-war period) and a relatively small age difference between spouses (Gavalas, 2008). The Cyclades in the same period show some characteristics of the Mediterranean marriage pattern (low age of women at first marriage and a relatively large age difference between spouses), but their marriage pattern could not be characterized as Mediterranean since the rates of permanent celibacy for women exceeded 6% (ibid). The Aegean Islands, on the other hand (i.e., the present-day North Aegean Region), during the inter-war period exhibited a high

age at first marriage for both sexes (which ranged around 25 to 25.5 years for women and 28.5 to 29 for men) and relatively low rates of permanent celibacy for women (4.5%-5%) (Gavalas, 2008. Gavalas, 2019). These characteristics do not fit any marriage pattern from Laslett's typology. For the remaining regions of Greece, there are no detailed studies, nor are there studies on whether there was a difference in the marriage pattern of native Greeks and that of the refugees who came to the country after the Asia Minor catastrophe. The present work aims to fill this gap in the bibliography.

3. Data and Methods

Marriage patterns will be examined by the use of three variables:

- 1) Age of spouses at first marriage
- 2) Age gap between spouses
- 3) Index of permanent celibacy

These variables can be derived from census returns that provide population data by age, sex, and marital status. Greek censuses provide the family status of the population by age and sex, since 1879 (though the 1879 data are only available at the national level). Unfortunately, the full census returns of the 1889, 1896 and 1940 censuses were never published for different reasons in each case. The returns of the 1920 census (the first census of the inter-war period) are characterized by serious age-heaping in the ages above 40 years for males. It is very likely that young men were trying to avoid the army recruitment, given that in 1920 Greece was recruiting every available male for the Asia Minor campaign (Si- ampos, 1973:57. Gavalas, 2015: 41-42). Therefore, the 1920 census returns cannot be used for the estimation of the three variables that describe the marriage pattern. There remain the 1928 census returns, which, although they are also characterized by male age heaping in the ages 45-49, they are not so skewed as those of 1920 (Gavalas, 2015).

The age of spouses at first marriage will be examined by using the Singulate Mean Age at Marriage (SMAM), as this measure has been invented by J. Hajnal (1953). SMAM is computed by applying the formulas developed by Hajnal (1953) to the percentages never married by age group. The computation of SMAM is based on the principle that the age at first marriage corresponds to the average number of years spent in the single state by those who eventually marry. This measure is also based on the assumptions that no first marriages take place after age 50 and that there is a consistent fall in the proportion single with age. The computational procedure described here applies to data that provide age by five-year age groups, as is usually the case with census returns. It involves three steps. First, percentages never married by age group, up to and including the age-group 45-49, are added and multiplied by five:

$$\sum_{0-4}^{45-49} S_i * 5 = (1),$$

where S_i is the percentage single at age group i . This will give us the number of person-years lived in the single state between birth and age 50 by everyone in the population. Second, the percentage never married by age 50 is obtained by adding the percentages never married at the age groups 45-49 and 50-54 and dividing by two. The complement of this will give us the percentage ever married by age 50: $100 - (S_{45-49} + S_{50-54})/2 = (2)$. Thirdly, the number of person-years of those who never married by age 50 is obtained by multiplying the percentage still single at age 50 by 50: $50 * (S_{45-49} + S_{50-54})/2 = (3)$. Since the notion behind SMAM is that age at first marriage can be expressed as the average number of years spent in the single state by those who eventually marry, the formula for SMAM is: $[(1) - (3)] / (2)$.

The index of permanent celibacy, that is the percentage of the population never married by age 50, is easily calculated by using census returns. The 1928 census provided the population by family status in 5-year age groups. The formula for this index is:

$$\text{Index of Permanent Celibacy} = \frac{\frac{P_{45-49}^c + P_{50-54}^c}{P_{45-49} + P_{50-54}}}{2} \cdot 100$$

Where: P^c the population never married in the ages denoted and P the general population in the ages denoted.

4. Results

4.1 Age at first marriage

In the first half of the 20th century two dates exhibit extreme values (1920 and 1951) in the mean age at marriage both for males and females (Figure 1). An increase in age at marriage is observed after war periods, implying that many marriages, which had been postponed during the war years, took place immediately afterwards under more peaceful circumstances. Thus, the increased age at marriage noticed around 1920 can be attributed to the very turbulent years 1912-1922, which for Greece represent a full decade of continuous war, as mentioned in the introduction. The increase around 1950 has probably been caused by postponed marriages during the harsh years 1940-1949, when again war conditions prevailed in Greece throughout the entire decade. A drop in the age at first marriage from the beginning of the 1960s until the late 1970s coincides with a similar trend in west-European countries (Coleman, 1980).

As far as the regional differences in age at first marriage are concerned, these can be seen in Figures 2 and 3 at the level of Geographical Department. It is obvious that in Northern Greece, age at marriage was lower than the National Average for both sexes. In Thrace and Macedonia a single woman was expected to get married before her 22nd birthday, while a single man was expected to stand as a groom before his 27th birthday. These ages resembled the East European marriage pattern, though the age difference between spouses was quite big for the East European standards, because in Greece men were getting married in a relatively old age (older than their counterparts in the rest of the Balkans). In Serbia, for example, the SMAM for males was around 23 years of age, while in Bulgaria and Romania was 24,5 in the beginning of the 20th century, while the age gap between the spouses did not exceed 3-4 years (June, 1974:232. Botev, 1990).

For the Geographical Departments of Greece that were situated south to Macedonia, the marriage pattern deviated even more from that of the East European one. Females were taking their wedding vows for the first time at around 23 years of age in Epirus, Thessaly and the Cyclades,

while further south (Central Greece and Euboea, Peloponnese, Crete), and also in Northern Aegean, the mean female age at first marriage was greater than 24 years.

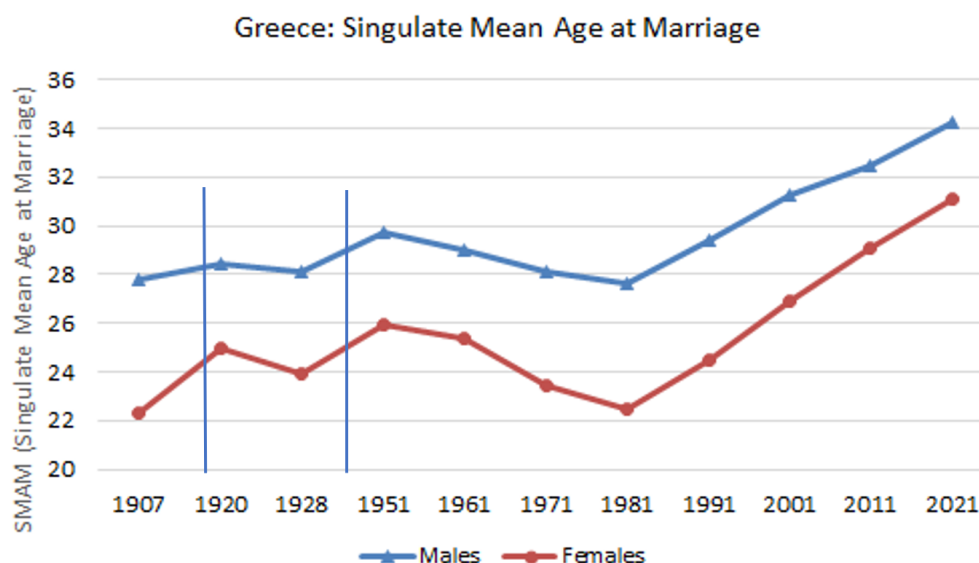


Figure 1. Mean age at first marriage. Greece 1907-2021. Source: Greek census-returns for the period 1907-2021 (own elaboration).

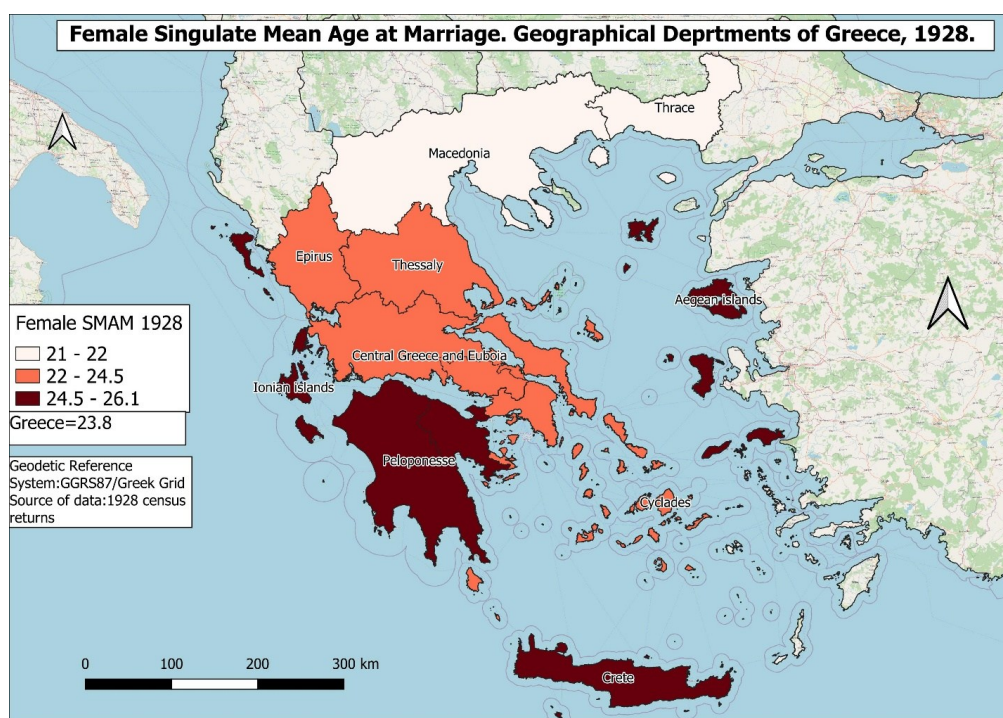


Figure 2. Female Singulate Mean Age at Marriage (SMAM). Geographical Departments of Greece, 1928.

As far as males are concerned the geographical differences in age at first marriage were similar to those of females, though males were getting married at an older age (Figure 3). However, a more detailed analysis in District level showed that urban centres exhibited older ages at marriage for both sexes than the Geographical Department they belonged to. The case of Thessaloniki is noteworthy, where the male SMAM was 28 years, while in Macedonia as a whole it was 26.6 (and even lower in Macedonia without Thessaloniki).

4.2 Age gap between spouses

The age gap between spouses in Greece in 1928 did not exceed, on average, the 4.1 years of age. It was less than 4 in the Aegean islands, in the Cyclades and in Crete, and less than 3 years in Peloponnese and in the Ionian islands. In northern Greece (Macedonia and Thrace), Thessaly, and Central Greece, the age difference between spouses was greater than the National Average (Figure 4).

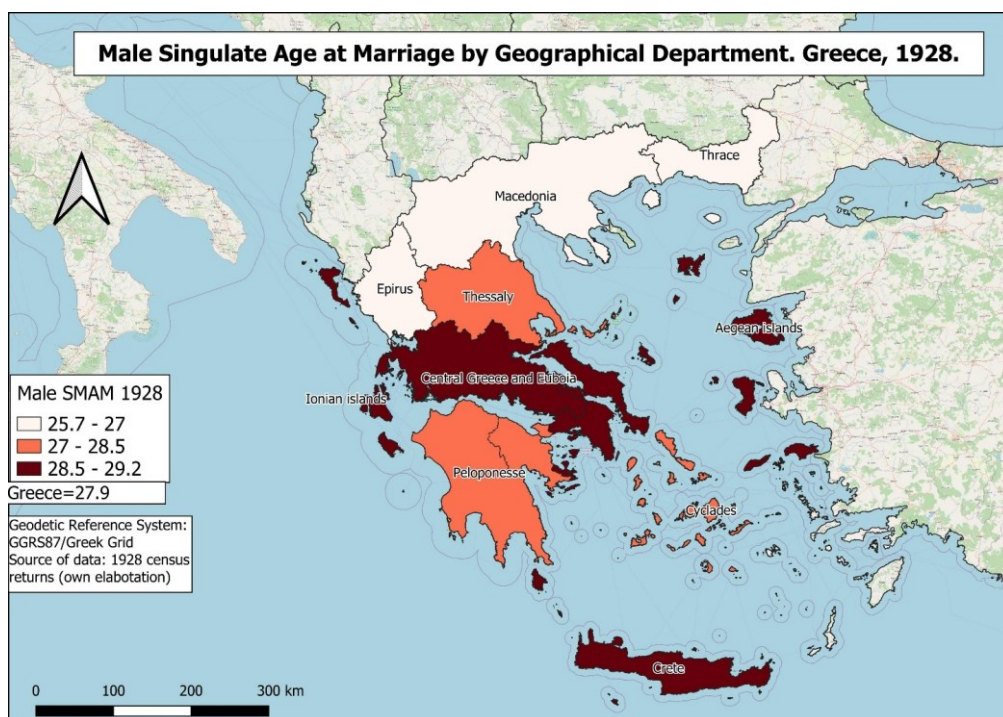


Figure 3. Male Singulate Mean Age at Marriage (SMAM). Geographical Departments of Greece, 1928.

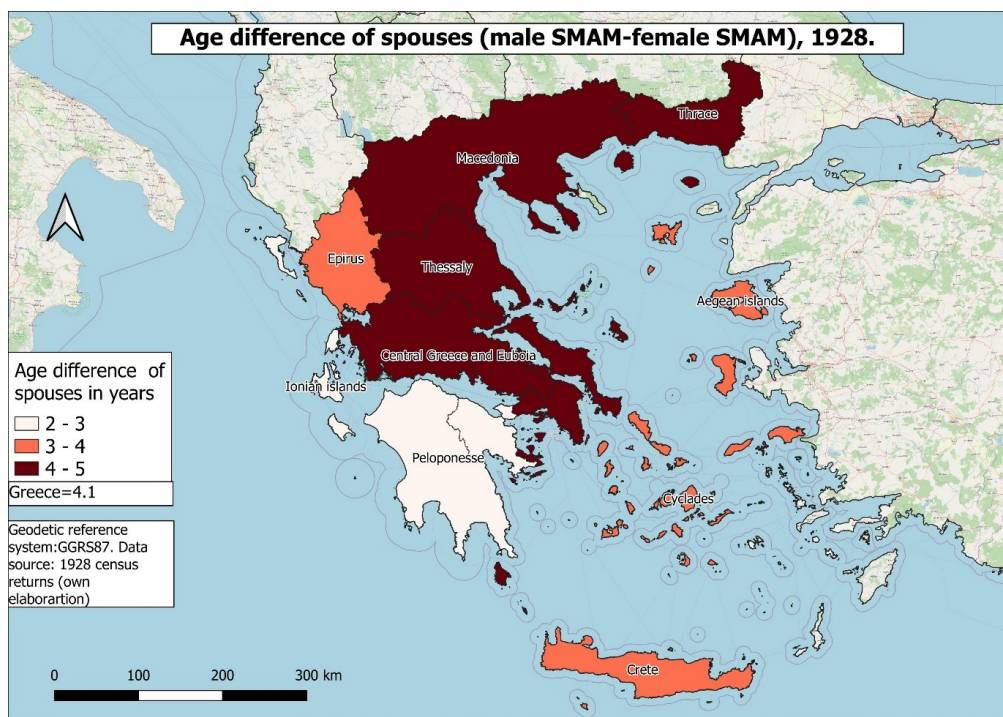


Figure 4. Age gap between spouses at first marriage. Geographical Departments of Greece, 1928.

4.3 Permanent celibacy

What makes the marriage pattern of Macedonia and Thrace similar to that of the neighbouring Balkan countries is the universality of female marriage. Never married women in Macedonia did not exceed 2.5% of all women, while in Thrace just 1.5% of women were never married. Marriage was also universal for women in Thessaly (1.6% never married). At the same, more or less, time (1920-1926), in Bulgaria the percentage of female permanent celibacy was 1.1% and similar was that figure for Serbia (Botev, 1990:108).

On the other hand, in insular Greece female permanent celibacy was relatively high, fluctuating from 5.1% in Crete to 7.4% in the Ionian islands. The rest of mainland Greece (Central Greece, Peloponnese and Epirus) lied in between with percentages of permanent celibacy between 3.3% and 4.5% (Figure 5).

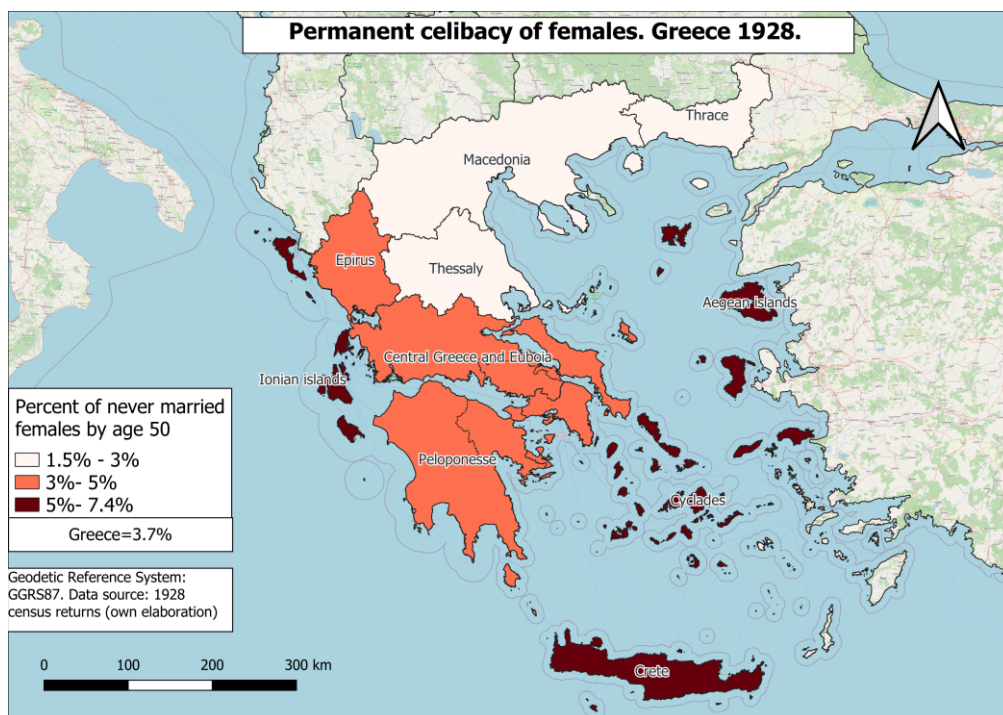


Figure 5. Permanent celibacy of females. Geographical Departments of Greece, 1928.

As far as males are concerned, percentages never married by age 50 were notably greater than those of females (Figure 6). In the case of men, the highest percentages of permanent celibacy were recorded in the islands and in Central Greece and Euboea (7.5%-9.6%), with the Ionian islands having the highest percentage (9.6%), as it was the case for women as well. Crete, with 5.8% permanent celibacy for males, was an exception to the high male celibacy rates of the rest of the insular populations. Nevertheless, the lowest level of male permanent celibacy was recorded in Thessaly and Thrace, where never married males at age 50 made up less than 5% of all men.

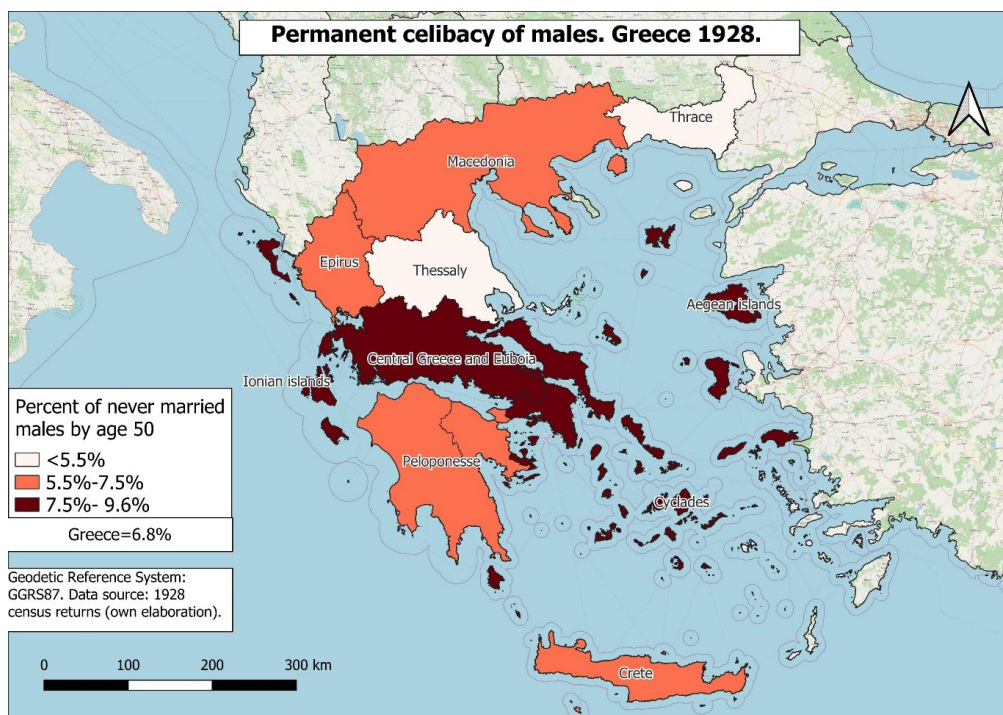


Figure 6. Permanent celibacy of males. Geographical Departments of Greece, 1928.

4.4 Nuptial behaviour of the refugees.

It is noteworthy that refugees in the 1928 Greece, in the regions they have settled, followed the marriage pattern of native population. In general, women who came from Asia Minor after the 1922 disaster, were getting married at a younger age than their native counterparts. SMAM was 24.2 for the native Greek females and 22 for the refugees. However, there were regional differences. In Epirus, the Cyclades, and Thrace age at marriage of female refugees was slightly higher than that of natives (table 1). This contradiction may be due to the fact that in the aforementioned Geographical Departments the age at first marriage for native females was considerably lower than the national average (20.6 years in Thrace versus 24.2 in Greece as a whole). On the other hand, female refugees did not exhibit great differences in age at marriage among different Geographical Departments.

Table 1. Age difference at first marriage between natives and refugees by Geographical Department. Greece, 1928.
Source: Greek census of 1928 (own elaboration)

Geographical Department	Females	Males
	Native SMAM-Refugee SMAM	Native SMAM-Refugee SMAM
Aegean islands	0.8	0.1
Central Greece and Euboea	1.3	-0.7
Crete	2.9	-1.1
Cyclades	-0.2	0.3
Epirus	-0.1	0.2
Ionian islands	1.4	-1.2
Macedonia	1.2	-0.1
Peloponnese	3.1	-0.6
Thessaly	1.2	-0.1
Thrace	-0.9	-1.2
Greece	2.2	0.3

Coming to males, in most Geographical Departments age differences at first marriage between natives and refugees were generally small (table 1). Only in Thrace, Crete and the Ionian islands the refugees were getting married up to 1.2 years older than the native men. In the rest of the Geographical Departments differences between natives and refugees were trivial.

In general, marriage was more prevalent among male refugees than natives, but the opposite is true for females. The percentages of never married male refugees were usually lower than those of the natives (5.9% vs 7.0% respectively for the whole of Greece), with the exception of Thrace, Thessaly and Epirus, where native men displayed lower percentages of permanent celibacy (table 2). In the female population generally, permanent celibacy was lower than in males. Never married native females did not exceed 3.6% nationwide, while this percentage was slightly higher (4%) for female refugees.

Table 2. Permanent celibacy (percent never married by age 50) by sex, Geographical Department and distinction between natives and refugees. Source: Greek census of 1928 (own elaboration). Note: Table 2 is sorted in ascending order by never married native males.

Geographical Department	Natives		Refugees	
	Never married males (%)	Never married females (%)	Never married males (%)	Never married females (%)
Thrace	4.0	0.9	4.8	2.6
Thessaly	4.6	1.5	5.7	3.2
Epirus	5.5	3.2	10.8	6.4
Peloponnese	5.7	3.4	5.2	3.7
Crete	5.8	5.2	5.6	4.5
Macedonia	6.8	2.3	4.6	2.9
Aegean Islands	7.7	5.3	7.6	5.8
Cyclades	8.1	6.0	8.7	7.7 ¹
Central Greece and Euboea	9.0	4.1	8.8	5.8
Ionian Islands	9.6	7.4	8.6	5.9
Greece	7.0	3.6	5.9	4.0

¹ It refers to unmarried women aged 45-49

5. Discussion: Investigating the determinants for variations in marriage patterns

The diversity of the marriage patterns among different Geographical Departments of Greece during the inter-war period is impressive. What is also noteworthy is that the refugees from Asia Minor and the Pontus area that settled in Greece after 1922 followed the marriage pattern of the specific Geographical Department that they settled in. This is not because they were assimilated in the receiving place and started following its marriage pattern. The level of permanent celibacy is not something that can be shaped within 5-6 years, that is from 1922-23, that refugees came to Greece, until 1928 that the census enumerated them. It is rather the place of origin of the refugees that can justify the similar marriage pattern of the sending and the receiving region. Most of the refugees that settled in the North Aegean islands (Geographical Department “Aegean Islands”) came from the region of Izmir and its surroundings. The majority of these people had been raised in an urban environment and had obtained a “bourgeois” mentality. Their marital practices were similar to those of the islands they were settled in (women were getting married in a relatively old age and nuptiality was not universal). On the other hand, refugees that settled down in Western (Greek) Thrace came primarily from the East Thrace, from the provinces of Edirne, Raidestos (Tekirdağ) and Kirkaleri, and secondarily from the provinces of Kocaeli and Bursa (Μιχαλόπουλος et al. 2023). They were mostly rural populations, and their marriage pattern was similar to that of the Western Thrace: they started their married life early and permanent celibacy was almost non-existent for women.

In part of the Macedonia (in the Districts of Drama, Kilkis, Serrais) refugees came mainly from Pontos (Samsun and Kars) and to a lesser extent from the region of Bursa (idid). Their marriage pattern was similar to the East European one, according to the typology of Laslett (early and universal marriage), and it was the same marriage pattern that natives followed in these districts of Macedonia, which were having great percentages of rural populations.

5.1 Availability of mates

The poor quality of prewar censuses in Greece, sets limitations to the derivation of indexes of availability of mates. Figure 7 shows a dramatically skewed sex ratio by age in the 1920 and 1928 census returns. Both censuses show a plenitude of young boys aged 10-14, and a lack of males in the ages 15-44. These were the ages (15-44) from which men were recruited in wartime, and it is quite possible that in the 1928 census (as in that of 1920) the (seeming or actual) lack of men in these ages is explained by the historical context. Greece in the 1920s was exiting from a decade of war conflicts (the Balkan wars in 1912-13, the WWI in 1914-18 and the campaign in Asia Minor in 1919-22), and it is plausible that many young men (those who had survived the wars) would try to avoid military service for fear of being sent to another war (Siampos, 1973:57). The avoidance of declaration of the 15-44 age group also explains the abundance of men in the 10-14 and 45-59 age groups.

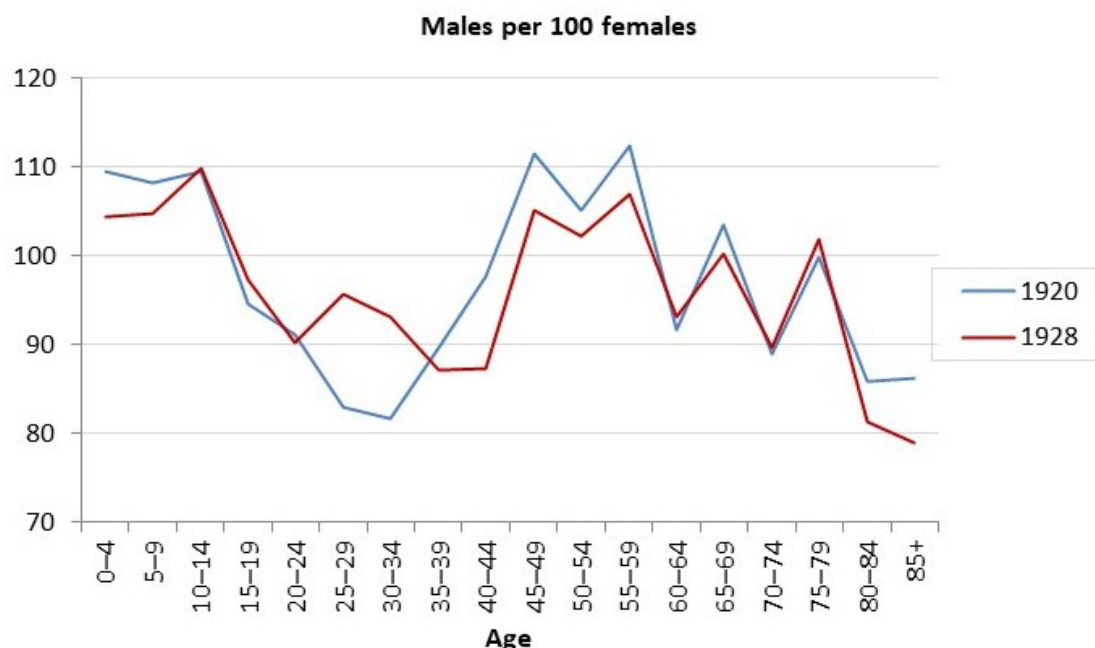


Figure 7. Sex ratio by age group. Greece 1920, 1928. Source: Greek censuses (own elaboration)

Hence the lack of men of marriageable age as recorded by the two inter-war censuses (1920-1928) was partly real (due to war losses and mass emigration of young men) and partly fictitious (due to evasion of enlistment age). It is also noteworthy that the lack of men was not the same in every Geographical Department (table 3). It was considerably larger in insular Greece, while it is smaller in mainland Greece and even smaller in the northern part of the country. The research question that arises is: to the extent that the lack of men was real, could it explain the higher percentage of unmarried women recorded in insular Greece compared to mainland Greece?

The variation in the availability of mates also explains the variation observed in the percentages of permanent celibacy of women from one Geographical Department to another (Figure 8). Pearson's correlation coefficient shows a strong relationship with a negative direction between the two variables ($r=-0.73$). Higher values in the index of availability of mates are associated with lower rates of permanent celibacy. Therefore, it is reasonable that the greater shortage of men in insular Greece is partly responsible for the higher rates of permanent celibacy among women

on the islands compared to mainland Greece. The exception is Epirus and the Peloponnese, where the rates of permanent celibacy among women were low (less than 3.5%) even though the shortage of men of marriageable age was quite severe (72-73 men corresponded to 100 women).

As far as refugees are concerned, the lack of men was greater than that of natives at least in the marriageable ages of 20-49, in all Geographical Departments except Crete (table 2). The tragic shortage of men in the main productive ages can perhaps be explained by the deliberate policy of ethnic cleansing carried out by the Kemal regime, starting in 1919. During the period 1921-23, this policy included sending non-Muslim conscripts to the notorious labour battalions (amele taburlari), from which very few survived until the end of their service (Neyzi, 2003. Fotiadis, 2016).

Table 3. Index of availability of mates at marriageable ages (males 20-49 per 100 females 15-44 year of age) in 1928. Source: Greek census of 1928 (own elaboration).

Geographical Department	General population	Natives	Refugees
Aegean islands	65.7	68.9	52.8
Central Greece and Euboea	85.3	90.6	65.5
Crete	73.0	72.9	74.3
Cyclades	69.3	70.2	48.0
Epirus	72.5	72.8	62.0
Ionian islands	71.2	71.5	54.1
Macedonia	85.8	90.6	79.1
Peloponnese	73.1	73.2	71.1
Thessaly	84.2	85.2	70.2
Thrace	86.5	88.4	83.2
Greece	80.2	81.9	73.3

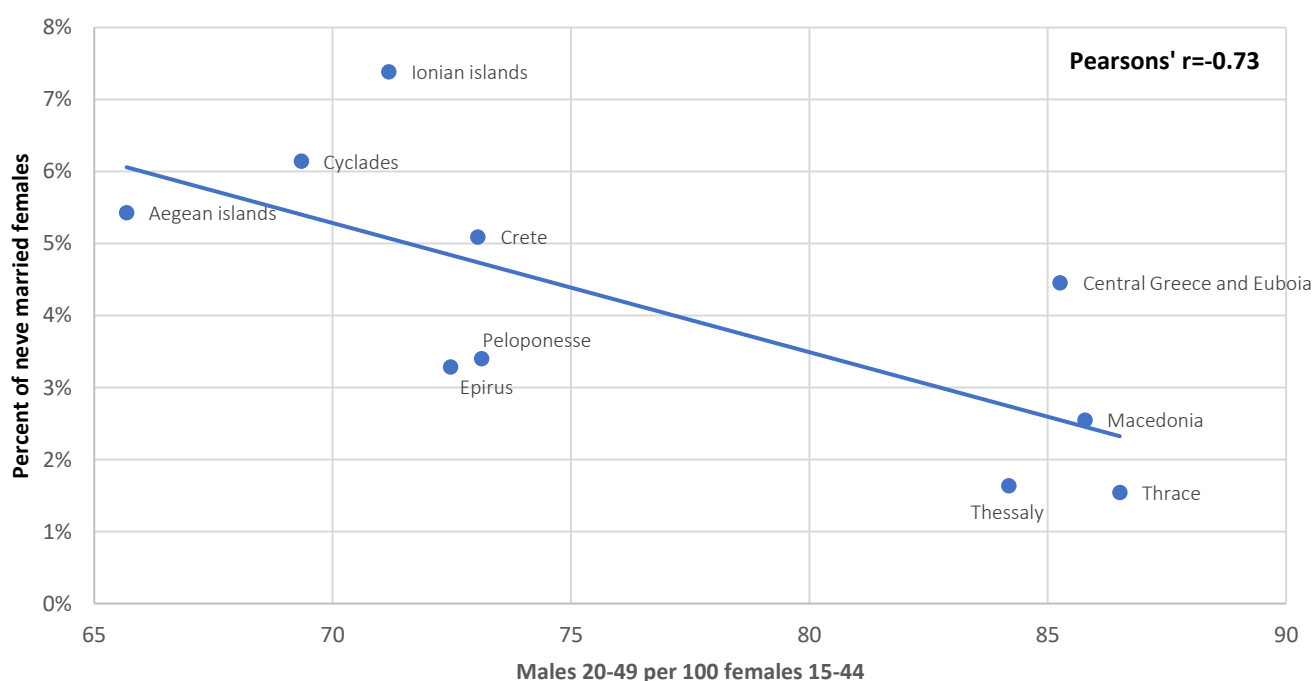


Figure 8. Correlation of female permanent celibacy and availability of mates. Greece 1928. Source: Greek census of 1928 (own elaboration). Note: Pearson's $r = -0.727$ p -value = 0.017

5.2 Desirability of marriage

Marriage is not equally desirable in all societies or in all social classes within the same society. The "desirability" of marriage is difficult to measure because it is primarily determined by cultural factors. It is generally accepted, however, that the more alternative options society offers, the less mandatory marriage becomes. Alternative options can be, for example, women's entry into the labour market, which leads to financial

independence and therefore fewer penalties for remaining single. A variable that can be used as an indicator of women's empowerment, beyond their participation in the labour force, is the literacy rate among women. The research hypothesis is that a high level of education offers women more choices and gives them more outlets besides marriage.

This research hypothesis seems to be verified by the analysis contained in figure 9. In the Geographical Departments where the percentages of literate women were relatively high (Cyclades, Aegean Islands, Central Greece and Euboea), there were more women (as a percentage of the female population) who remained permanently unmarried. An exception was the Ionian Islands (and to a lesser extent Crete), where, although the percentage of literate women was low (20.7% in the Ionian Islands and only 14% in Crete), the percentages of unmarried women were high. Obviously, because of these two exceptions the association between permanent female celibacy and literacy is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level of significance. However, a p-value of 0.112 suggests that it is quite unlikely that this positive correlation could have arisen by random chance alone.

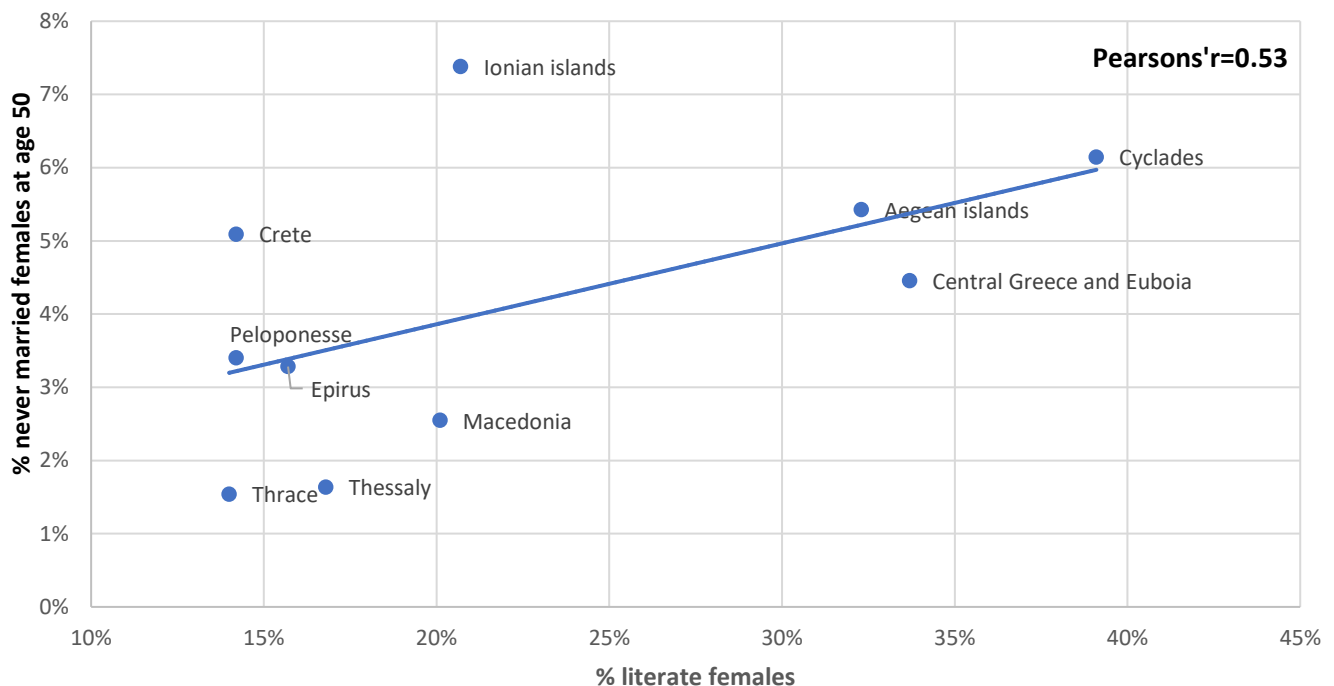


Figure 9. Correlation of female permanent celibacy and literacy level. Greece 1928. Source: Greek census of 1928 (own elaboration). Note: Pearson's $r=0.533$ $p\text{-value}=0.112$

5.3 Cultural factors

The regions of the country that experienced the greatest extent of Ottoman rule and occupation, i.e. most of mainland Greece and especially Northern Greece which was gradually incorporated into the Greek Territory from 1913 to 1920 (just a few years before the 1928 census), were influenced by the Muslim way of life in matters of marital behaviour. Islamic tradition favours extended kinship ties, and through these ties places the control of marital behaviour in the hands of parents and gives great emphasis on the premarital chastity of women. In Islamic culture "a daughter or sister who violates or is suspected of violating the sex code of pre-marital chastity brings disgrace not only to the parents and siblings, but to the entire extended kin grouping" (June, 1974:237-238). Therefore, early marriage of children is in the best interest of their parents. The Orthodox Church, on the other hand, although it supports a strong moral code as far as pre-marital affairs are concerned, it does not place emphasis to the family honour and esteem but to the redemption of the fallen person. Therefore, Eastern Orthodoxy should not have favoured early marriage as a self-evident value. It seems more plausible that the Moslem way of life affected the Balkans and parts of Greece in matters of marriage behaviour, even though they remained Christian.

Especially in Macedonia and Thrace the tradition of an early marriage for both sexes, was also favoured by a system of household organization known as "zadruga", which was widespread in the agricultural societies of the southern Balkans (Slavs and Bulgars). In this system, which consisted of extended households enlarged either horizontally from the families formed by married male brothers ("fraternal zadruga"), or vertically ("paternal zadruga"), the important decisions concerning the household and life in zadruga they were taken by married men jointly. In such a system of patrilineal settlement (the bride settled in the man's household upon marriage) and patrilineal inheritance, it was in the best interest of men to marry at an early age. For women in the "zadruga" it was also imperative to marry early, because an unmarried daughter was considered a servant for her father, her married brothers and their daughters-in-law who lived in the same household, especially after the death of her mother (ibid: 236).

In contrast, women and men in the Ionian Islands, Cyclades, and parts of Epirus and the North Aegean islands (regions without extended household systems and largely unaffected by Muslim populations) grew up in a significantly different domestic environment. Furthermore, insularity in the past largely meant isolation. In pre-war Greece, access to the Aegean islands, and especially to the smaller ones, was difficult due to

infrequent ferry services (which were not daily), long delays and the uncertainty of the journey. The "inaccessibility" of the islands also limited the "reservoir" of potential spouses and turned the smaller and more remote islands into almost endogamous societies.

The normative framework of marriage was even more restrictive in small societies, due to the system of kinship, biological or imaginary ("spiritual"). Up to 1923 marriage between second cousins was prohibited by canon law of the Church, while the god-parenthood system imposed further restrictions on the choice of spouse. Intermarriage between members of the family of the godparent and that of the godchild is also forbidden to the degree of third cousin, "just as marriage is prohibited with any consanguine to this degree" (Kenna, 1976:353). On the top of that, intermarriage between godchildren of the same godfather is also prohibited by canon law imposing further restrictions to the market of available spouses (ibid:353). And although the customary practice for a godparent is to stand sponsor to children of one sex only, so as to alleviate this restriction, this practice is not always observed. It is understandable then why in small islands part of the population has to search for a spouse not only in different communities within the island but also outside of the island. Up to the second half of the 20th century, insularity meant geographical isolation, especially for women, and thus a segment of the population was bound to remain unmarried.

6. Conclusions

This paper examines the geographical dimension of nuptiality in Greece during the inter-war period, down to the level of Geographical Departments. The main limitation of the study is its reliance on data only from the 1928 census. This restriction is imposed by the fact that the census returns of the 1920 census (the first census that was conducted in the inter-war period in Greece), are characterized by serious age structure distortions of the male population (age heaping in the ages 45-59 and lack of males in the ages 15-44). The 1928 census returns, although also distorted, are considered less skewed.

In the 1920s, as evidenced by census data, a typical young Greek male was expected to get married before his 28th birthday and his wife would be 4 to 5 years younger than him. If he remained unmarried (more so out of choice rather than out of necessity, as women were more numerous than men in marriageable ages), he would have been among the 6.8% of men over 50 who had never married at that period. On the other hand, a Greek woman was more likely to marry, since permanent celibacy for women was not more than 3.7% nationwide. This marriage pattern defied categorization within Laslett's framework, exhibiting characteristics of neither the East European nor the typical Mediterranean model. Age at first marriage for both sexes was relatively high by Balkan standards, and permanent celibacy more prevalent than in neighbouring Balkan countries.

As historical demographers have noted, the Greek marriage pattern in the first half of the 20th century constituted an intermediate case between the West and the East/Balkan marriage pattern (Hionidou, 1993, Gavalas, 2008, Gavalas, 2019). However, the regional differences of this pattern had not been studied in detail for every Geographical Department until now. This paper reveals that regional differences among Geographical Departments were so huge that one would think that we have to do with different countries rather than with different regions in the same country. Noteworthy is the age difference at first marriage between northern and southern Greece. In Macedonia and Thrace the female age at marriage (21-22 years) was more akin to the neighbouring Balkan countries (Bulgaria and Yugoslavia) and less to that of the rest of Greece (23-26 years). Moreover, celibacy was rare among women in Macedonia, Thrace and Thessaly (less than 2% were never married). On the other hand, in the rest of Greece, and especially in the islands, permanent celibacy was not uncommon. The case of the Ionian islands, where 9% of males and more than 7% of females remained unmarried, exemplifies the great variability in the marriage patterns of Greece.

Refugee populations from Asia Minor, arriving after 1922, largely adopted the marriage pattern of their new regions with only minor deviations. As discussed in section 5, this similarity can be attributed to the refugees' region of origin which shared similar economic and cultural characteristics with their new homes. If anything, female refugees from Asia Minor tended to marry at younger ages than native Greek women.

The reasons behind this variability in marriage patterns were cultural, demographic and macro-economic. A comparison of the sex ratio at marriageable ages revealed higher rates of female permanent celibacy in regions with a shortage of males, particularly the islands. Nevertheless, while a shortage of males may explain the higher rates of never-married women in the islands, it does not account for the high rates of never-married men observed not only in the islands but also in Central Greece and Euboea.

In an attempt to measure the "desirability" of marriage the percentage of literate females at age 50 (or thereabout) has been used as an index of women's emancipation, assuming that high literacy offers more options to women and improves alternatives to marriage. A strong correlation of female literacy with spinsterhood was not found (Pearson's $r=0.533$ $p\text{-value}=0.112$), although in the level of Geographical Department higher percentages of literate females predispose for greater prevalence of permanent celibacy, without this being imperative.

In conclusion, "availability of spouses" and female literacy can explain to some extent the difference in the percentages of permanent celibacy in the populations under study. However, these factors do not suffice to clarify the different nuptial behaviour across different Geographical Departments. Most probably, one has to resort to other factors, historical and cultural, that have shaped the diversity of the Greek marriage patterns. The diverse historical trajectories of various regions which were gradually annexed to the Greek State over more than a century (1830-1947) likely played a significant role., Geographical circumstances, such as the isolation of some islands and some mountainous regions, also contributed. Furthermore, variations in domestic organization and settlement patterns, the prevalence of patrilocal or neo locality, and both written and unwritten traditions may offer some persuasive explanations for the diversity of the Greek marriage patterns in the inter-war period.

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