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**A Woman's Place, an Oral History of Working Class Women (1920-1970) in Greece. Women labor in the Copais Company: case study**

**Ifigenia Vamvakidou**, *Assistant professor, University of Western Macedonia*

**Venetia Katsifi**, *Phd student, University of Western Macedonia*  
**Anastasia Alevriadou**, *Associate professor, University of Western Macedonia*

**Paraskevi Golia**, *Teacher, phd, University of Western Macedonia*

**Abstract**

*Elizabeth Roberts' history of the everyday lives of "ordinary" working class women in Lancashire between 1890 and 1940 has provided a detailed study of women's history since its first publication in 1985. We are interested for "her story" –a story of a conformist generation, obedient to tradition, their emotional and material wants narrowed by poverty and fatalism, their manners and morals disciplined by Christian values. Causes cannot be assumed, they have to be looked for, Marc Bloch wrote. Oral testimony in this respect delivers few certainties. The truths of subjectivity which this proposal reveals include the enduring features of the female life - cycle - the tensions of sexual knowledge, the continuities of myth and family romance and the repetitions of domestic labour - traces of female experience as indicative of human need, and as unlikely to go away, as poverty however differently formed and experienced in different epochs. In Greece by the area of the lake Copais there is a specific context of labour (draining). The lake was (and is) surrounded by fertile land, but the lake increasingly encroached on the surrounding land because of inadequate drainage. In response to this, in 1867 - 1887 Scots and French engineers reclaimed the land for the British company Lake Copais Ltd., by building channels to drain water from the lake to the Cephissus and from there to Lake Iliki (Iliki Limní, ancient Hyllice). In total about 200 km<sup>2</sup> were reclaimed. This land was returned to the Greek government in 1952. The researchable question is about Woman's Place in this working group. The methodology comes from the historic, archival research in a local level using autobiographic interviews.*



Lake Copais, Kopais, or Kopaida (ancient Greek Κωπαΐς, modern Κωπαΐδα) used to be in the centre of Boeotia, Greece, west of Thebes until the late 19th century. The area where it was located, though now a plain, is still known as Kopaida.

## Introduction

Recent scholarship on gender and the state suggests that women's agency has been critical to the formation of welfare policy. Yet, nations with strong, mobilized feminist movements do not necessarily develop the most supportive welfare policies. By historically analyzing the emergence of British and French family allowance policy, researchers suggest that the key to this conundrum lies in the interaction between women's movements and the value given to women's paid and unpaid labour. Woman - friendly state policy requires an active women's movement and ideologies valuing women's paid and unpaid labour. In addition, women's movements must be able and willing to strategically use those ideologies to pursue their goals.

Marx and Frederick Engels located the origin of women's oppression in the rise of class society. Their analysis of women's oppression was not something that was tagged on as an afterthought to their analysis of class society but was integral to it from the very beginning. When Marx wrote *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848, ideas of women's liberation were already a central part of revolutionary socialist theory: *The bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production. He hears that [under communism] the instruments of production are to be exploited in common, and, naturally, can come to no other conclusion than that the lot of being common to all will likewise fall to women. He has not even a suspicion that the real point aimed at [by communists] is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production* (Smith, 1997). Marx and Engels developed a theory of women's oppression over a lifetime, culminating in the publication of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* in 1884 (Engels, 2010).

Until the women's movement of the late 1960s began to challenge male chauvinism, sexist assumptions provided the basis for broad generalizations. Claude Levi - Strauss, a leading anthropologist within the structuralist school, goes so far as to argue that "human society...is primarily a

masculine society". He argues that the "exchange of women" is a "practically universal" feature of human society, in which men obtain women from other men - from fathers, brothers and other male relatives. Moreover, he asserts that "the deep polygamous tendency, which exists among all men, always makes the number of available women seem insufficient". Therefore, "the most desirable women must form a minority". Because of this, "the demand for women is an actual fact, or to all intents and purposes, always in a state of disequilibrium and tension". According to Levi - Strauss, then, women have been the passive victims of men's sexual aggression since the beginning of human society (Burke - Leacock, 2010: 17; Lerner, 1986: 46-53).

### **Historical context**

Women workers in England at 1861 were about 586.298: among them 115.242 were younger than 20 years old and almost 16.650 younger than 15 years old (Engels, 1989). At that period the poverty and the death were everyday facts for young people. Housework alone required enormous physical effort. Few women stayed in bed past daybreak, even when they were sick. They ran the house, made the clothes, cared for the sick, and grew and processed much of what the family ate. Middle class families in urban areas were beginning to install indoor plumbing and electrical wiring. The sewing machine changed the face of industry by creating the new field of ready - to - wear clothing. Electric sewing machines were first introduced by Singer in 1889. Modern electronic devices use computer technology to create buttonholes, embroidery, overcast seams, blind stitching, and an array of decorative stitches. But the typical housekeeper's sole labour - saving devices were her treadle sewing machine, the mechanical wringer she used to do the wash, and the great cast - iron stove she fired up each morning to cook the meals and boil the water. Elizampeth Roberts (1995) writes about the period 1890-1940: "The women they worked and worked...they had babies and worked like idiots...they died..."<sup>1</sup>. Lindsay German also says that "Work: all day, every day...Women were concentrated for a long time in two main areas of production - the textile industry and domestic service, which were the two major employers of women until after the First World War" (Lindsay, 2007).

As Lenin though, *Soviet Russia puts our demands for women in a new light. Under the proletarian dictatorship those demands are not objects of struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. They are part of the structure of communist society. That indicates to women in other countries the decisive importance of the winning of power by the proletariat. The difference must be sharply emphasised, so as to get the women into the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat. It is essential for the Communist Parties, and for their triumph, to rally them on a clear understanding of principle and a firm organisational basis. Their occasional recognition of the necessity and value of a powerful, clear-headed communist women's movement is a platonic verbal recognition, not the constant care and obligation of the Party* (Zetkin, 2004; Lenin, 1988: 138 - 139 & 282 - 284). As Zetkin supports: *the*

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<sup>1</sup> Woman's Place tells the story of a conformist generation, obedient to tradition, their emotional and material wants narrowed by poverty and fatalism, their manners and morals disciplined by Christian values (not doctrine). They inhabited a moral world of sharing, duty to others and a sense of fairness which derived, Roberts's repeats, from Christianity and working class custom. Children had "transmitted to the", as they were growing up, "a working class culture, a complete design for living and a set of rules to be learned about 'proper' behaviour".

*investigations of Bachofen, Morgan and others seem to prove that the social suppression of women coincided with the creation of private property. The contrast within the family between the husband as proprietor and the wife as non - proprietor became the basis for the economic dependence and the social illegality of the female sex. This social illegality represents, according to Engels, one of the first and oldest forms of class rule. He states: "Within the family, the husband constitutes the bourgeoisie and the wife the proletariat". Nonetheless, a women's question in the modern sense of the word did not exist. As long as the old type of family still existed, a woman found a meaningful life by productive activity. Thus she was not conscious of her social illegality even though the development of her.*

Major social all helped to propel women towards change: war, the great boom following the Second World War which opened up jobs and education for women, and mass migration. In turn, women's ideas changed as result of these changing circumstances and they become to think of about themselves and the world around them in different ways (Lindsay, 2007: 15).

### **The research- the Methodology**

As Janis Kordatos (1972) states the number of women-workers in Greece at 1907 were about 31.981. The installation of the communist party at 1918 became the significant post for many changes. In the communist newspaper *Rizospastis* Jean Komioti published many articles for women's rights (1920) revealing the social and economic problems.

In the area of the Lake Copais<sup>2</sup>, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>3</sup> a special structure of labor became: the lake was surrounded by fertile land, but the lake increasingly encroached on the surrounding land because of inadequate drainage. In response to this, in 1867 - 1887 Scots and French engineers reclaimed the land for the *British company Lake Copais Ltd.*, by building channels to drain water from the lake to the Cephissus and from there to Lake Iliki (Ilíki Limnί, ancient Hylice). In total about 200 km<sup>2</sup> were reclaimed. This land was returned to the Greek government in 1952.

In this historic context we pose the questions: what sort of workers did the Company want, was there any chance for women workers? <sup>4</sup> Which are the strategies for controlling the work force include the division of labour, organizational hierarchy, rules and procedures, the uses of secrecy and hoarding of knowledge, and the maintenance of ethnic and gender divisions in the work force?

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<sup>2</sup> Kopais or Kopaida (ancient Greek Κωπαΐς, modern Κωπαΐδα) used to be in the centre of Boeotia, Greece, west of Thebes until the late 19th century. The area where it was located, though now a plain, is still known as Kopaida.

<sup>3</sup> In the 19th century, Greek agriculture was very basic. Implements found in Western Europe had not yet appeared. The following description was reported by William Henry Moffett, American Consul in Athens and was published in the American periodical *Garden and Forest* (Volume 2, Issue 95, 18 December 1889, p. 612: published by Garden and Forest Publishing Co., Tribune Building, New York, N.Y.): *William H. Moffett, United States Consul at Athens, reports the impossibility of making any official statement as to the agriculture of Greece, because "agriculture is here in the most undeveloped condition. Even in the immediate neighbourhood of Athens it is common to find the wooden plow and the rude mattock which were in use 2.000 years ago. Fields are plowed up or scratched over, and crops replanted season after season, until the exhausted soil will bear no more. Fertilizers are not used to any appreciable extent, and the farm implements are of the very rudest description. Irrigation is in use in some districts, and, as far as I can ascertain, the methods in use can be readily learned by a study of the practices of the ancient Egyptians.*

<sup>4</sup> Since there is no script data.

The aim in this historic research is to find out the women's self-determinations about the working labor and the household. The method used is the narrative interview of individuals. Many researchers (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Chase, 2003) have suggested that allowing respondents to provide narrative accounts of their lives and experiences can help to redress some of the power differentials inherent in the research enterprise and can also provide good evidence about the everyday lives of research subjects and the meanings they attach to their experiences. Based on this assumption, a narrative will not capture a simple record of the past in the way that we hope that a video camera might. However, if the research focus is more on the meanings attached to individuals' experiences and/or on the way that those experiences are communicated to others, then narratives provide an ideal medium for researching and understanding individuals' lives in the social and historic context (see also Kvale, 1996).

Until 1920 the constructive plans were completed, but there is no information about the role of women in the sources (ESYE; Chouliarakis, 1973) for the labor. Particularly in the archives for the census all the workers seem to be men (Archive of Copais Organism). These men were probably interior emigrants (Archive of Copais Organism) who have come in the area without their families. As far as it concerns the farmers who gave their land, all the archives are written in a patriarchic form.

After the Second World War and the ending of the agriculture issue all the workers and the cultivators who have been involved in the Copais Company were established at the area of Aliartos. Some of them managed to live in the Company's shanties and others at the agricultural settlements (Mazi, Moulki). Women who lived in the shanties seemed to be privileged comparing to the others, because of electricity. In this context of the permanent installation, women were to be mainly mothers: the nuclear family couldn't support women's labor in the Company (oral evidences). At the end of 1940 almost 80-100 families have been installed in the Company's shanties among the total population of 2.548 (ESYE). At that time English employers had young girls as servants, who enjoyed the English life - style and the good payment. According to the oral stories at that time there were almost 10-15 servant-girls (E. Koudourioti, oral evidence). Nevertheless local women from extended families aimed at the labour in English Company. These women worked all day and their children grew up by their grandmothers (K. Koudourioti, oral evidence).

After 1952 men - agricultures had obtained the land as a legal property but the role of women as an agriculture - proletariat subject had no improvement. The English Company has been replaced by the Institution of Copais, where women aimed at "more easy labor". Generally at that time people in the area thought it's good for women to work outside the household (G. Zigogiani evidence). In the first industry that operated in Aliartos (Flour industry I. Abatzoglou & I. Marakis, 1942-1982) almost 40 workers were preoccupied and among them 7-8 were women as seamstress for the sacks or as workers in the chemistry laboratory. In 1950, the private schools that have been established (by Pantazi and Marakis)<sup>5</sup> gave a chance for education

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<sup>5</sup> In 1959 were founded the Pantazis' School, that included Kindergarten, Public school and 3/class High school. The Public School was very from the area of Copais, so the private Pantazis' School is attended mainly from

to the girls, since the Greek families have been persuaded by the English mentality.

Life story, oral history, narrative, autobiography, biography are being used more and more to explore how individuals interpret experiences and social relationships. In this research information on genealogical trees emanates from the families themselves, through the completion of the special Genealogical Tree Report by those who so wish, and by processing Municipal Files, Records, and lists of workers as well as from archival sources, the Press or existing literature. Our aim is to safeguard for future generations, the right and the potential of knowing the origins and the historical course of their family and communities from which they come from. Additionally, we collect autobiographic interviews - testimonies - autobiographic texts and personal histories that illuminate sides of the workers historical experience that would otherwise be ignored or lost. Through Testimonies and personal histories, all people emerge as individuals and as agents of history and offer their recollections as well as personal and family evidence.

The historical evidence, photographs, texts, maps, ephemera and objects that are offered by their descendants and the collective bodies or their local authorities are digitalized and filed in the project's archives in connection with the genealogical trees and the "testimonies of" depositors as well as with the necessary information on their origin and keeping. The interviews are not limited to the simple citation of metadata or descriptions of evidence. Instead, they develop into a narrative of recollections initiated by pieces of evidence, the events they are connected to and the feelings or thoughts they cause. In this way, displaying the evidence along with the texts that accompany it creates extracts of a parallel history, which begins with the experiences and the mnemonic culture of individuals.

The development of new theory (Goldman & Van Houten, 1977) should be informed by the Marxian concepts of (a) labour theory of value, (b) the forces and relations of production, (c) historical development of capitalism and (d) class structure and class struggle. Strategies for controlling the work force include the division of labour, organizational hierarchy, rules and procedures, the uses of secrecy and hoarding of knowledge, and the maintenance of ethnic and gender divisions in the work force.

We try to apply Marxian and Marxist analysis that strictly refers to the particular analysis made by Marx himself, like the critique of capitalism and its characteristic commodity fetishism, division of labour-production. Instead, the term Marxist analysis refers more to the critical analysis of how societies work, particularly the capitalist one, and to lay down a theory of social change. One of the Marxist analysis tools is to approach to the understanding of a concrete reality *not through its momentary surface form, but "through conceptualization of those dialectical relations that determine it.*

According to this we focus on *behaviours, opinions, feelings, values, sensory, backgrounds/demographics as they appeared in the oral evidences* in order to find out the specific historic information.

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children of Public Employees of Organism Copais. Only on 1962 the Public school was transmitted to flour industrialist Mr Marakis. In 1964 were founded the 2nd Public School and the private education were waived.

In these oral evidences<sup>6</sup> which took place in Aliartos at Mazi on 20th/05/2009, we try to focus on the previous topics as mentioned above and particularly on the historic information about women's labor at this period in the specific area.

*A - oral evidence*

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<sup>6</sup> We shall call the first oral evidence as A - and the second as B - and go on.

**Backgrounds - Demographics:**

She was a refugee from Smyrni. After the destruction she left her home and with her brother and her father came in Greece. Her mother had died. They relocated in Ljvadeia. She did not study, but she worked as a nurse. She married a worker and gave birth to a girl (1943). The girl moved in Athens and she had been working in a flour industry J. Ambatzoglou & J. Maraki from 1966 to '70 - '71. She married a machinist. After few years we moved in Kalamata. I (the daughter) worked in the chemical laboratory. Working hours were from the morning until the afternoon. The schedule was: early in the morning to 2-3pm and after a break from 5pm to 8pm. The flour mill was working until 10pm. And sometimes it worked later than 10pm. There were four trucks. Firstly, they should unload all the trucks and after that they could close the mill.

**Behaviors:** They were the perfect couple. They were my exemplar; I wanted to find a man like my father. Women in work sewed sacks and they swept. John's Maria said a lot of jokes ... and Zaharo...

**Opinions:** He was very pleased from Englishmen, but he was also very good in his work. The English were very different from the Greeks, they had discipline. If you were hardworking, you would be appreciated. I had heard from my father that our house had been commandeered by the Germans, but they did not cause us any problem. We all, the children, took care for each other. We did not know for rebels and for the civilian war, nothing concerned us.

**Feelings:** Afterwards, Stefanakis undertook the factory. When I was working there, I remember Stefanakis as an accountant...(at that point Mrs. Georgia made a curious grimace of abomination or disapproval)... and his niece, Georgia ... I think that Stefanaki's woman was Maraki's relative...He make a mess of, with some others... this was the destruction (it is meant the Maraki's destruction)

**Values in work in society:** Marakis was a little bit mingy, thrifty; he did not want to lose anything. Nor a grain of wheat. I think he was right...I think that this is the right attitude for an industrialist to have, as of today. Otherwise, how he could keep his factory. He was all day in the factory...and in the chemical laboratory... I did not have any problem with him. And he gave us all our revenue stamps. Of course the wage was low, up to the legal wage. However, working there was better from working in the fields ...I did not want to work in the fields ...

*B - oral evidence*



**Backgrounds – demographics:**

We were six children, three boys and three girls. We were poor. My father did not have fields, just few. He rented some in the English Company Lake Copais Co. L.t.d.) That drained the lake Copais. As soon as I graduated from the Public school, I began working in the fields.

**Behaviors:** I remember Macinter (she means Mac Eldery, last General Director of the English Company), Leeds, (she means the head of cultivation's department) he was milder than ...also, I remember someone called Robert, he was a head of something...Every two steps rural guards and heads were present. Copais was full of outposts. Greeks were these, but they were also afraid of send them away. They scrutinized everything, what they had in their sacks, because some people stole ... people were poor, they did not have anything to eat; what they should do?

**Values – opinions - social life:** Working there was very difficult, but we had a day's wages at least. We had day labour with English and with Germans as well. They left us for one's hour recession, just to rest ourselves. I remember an old lady, Arsenena, she had two daughters, Vagelio and Paraskevi. They were have - nots ... in the evening we entered also in the loom. And we made the entire trousseau and our clothes in the loom. And then we did not wear romba (dressing gowns) (she means a woman's cloth dress), we wore polkaki and petticoat, all loom-made. And we knead, and we wash ....

**Feelings-personal life:** I was old when I got married, I was thirty. What do you think about Kalomoira and Theodora? They were married at the same age. We were poor and nobody wanted to marry us. As singles we worked a lot...with my husband the life was better and easier. Both of us, we had our own fields to cultivate. Afterwards I gave birth to my girl, so I was given the chance to stay for a while in my house and stop working in the fields. And my man cooked sometimes, bean soup, all the men cooked then. When women were at work, men cooked. They did not do anything else than cooking, because they did not know; we tidy up the rest

## C - oral evidence

### Backgrounds – demographics:

I was given birth in 1931 in the Xino, in Copais. We were four children, three girls and one boy. In 1936 we came here in Malaki (Aliartos) and we made huts ... We were many Sarakatsanoi that we came here, there would have been up to 50 - 60 konakia (shacks) until 1950 - 55 when we built our houses. In '42 my mother died and my father in 1946. I and my sisters undertook all the works. As for my studies, I attended the elementary school only up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> class.

**Behaviors:** We had sheep, we were stockmen...I was the smallest among my brothers and sisters and I was taking the donkey with the food and went to Xino to feed the sheep. We knead loaves of bread and then we hung up them. We made pies stuffed with wild herbs, we sowed maize. We made bread and pies using corn flour. Also, we made bread mouldy with cheese, frumenty, and that was our life. We ate meat rarely. We did not butcher our sheep for feeding ourselves. We wove, we spun. We did not buy our clothes, we sewed them. After 1950 we began buying clothes. We washed our clothes to the river, here in Ambla and then we flush them in the river. And the woods we used for the fireplace, we carried them on ours back.

**Feelings:** We, the Sarakatsanoi, did not have houses, we were nomads. (in this point she smiled with a sentiment of pride and bitterness simultaneously). Women were responsible for the housekeeping while men took care only for the sheep. Even if the water-butt was next to men, they would say women to give them a glass of water. The woman was stand-up next to man. It was a custom, a rule for a husband to slap his wife, I do not complaint. My man had totally different manners. We got married in 1954. And in 1955, the forest inspection gave us the land here and we built our house. We brought up also good children, two boys and two girls. We lived a long life and saw our grandchildren to grow up.

**Values - opinions:** Do you know what Sarakatsanos means? It's an insult that was used by the Turks. *Sara* is the dark place, the barren and *katsan* is the beggar. When we saw the English we flinched. They didn't harm us, but we were afraid of them. We needed them because a lot of people worked for them in Copais. We did not have problems with the Germans, because we didn't intervene anywhere, nor even with the rebels. We had something to eat. Most of the people died because they could not find food.

## D - oral evidence

**Backgrounds:** I was born in 1932 in the Mantoudi of Evia. This is where I come from. We were four children in the family, two boys and two girls. I was the smallest. When I was two years old, my dad took all the family and we came in Larimna. However, in 1940 my father died and we came back to Mantoudi. I haven't finished the elementary school. I have attended only up to fourth class.

**Opinions:** We had good time with the English, they were gentle... They didn't discriminate us, but if we didn't like their foods, we could cook ours. They ate boiled potatoes instead of bread and other light foods. Their supper was always cold dish, it is consisted of ham, some slices of turkey, leg of lamb, such mainly. Someday, Giannoula made braised lamp, served with rice and she invited them all to join us. They liked it very much and she cooked it from that time. The desert was essential for them; they ate also a lot of chocolates. **Behaviors:** There were mines in Mantoudi but the best mines were in Larimna. Since we didn't have fields there, we came here. Both of my parents were working here. Women were working, too. Meanwhile, my brother had come and worked as a guard in the English, in Copais. He informed us that the English wanted three women, one cook and others, and he called us. Three days by food. Giannoula was the cook and I was the waitress and did the housekeeping. The chambermaid was someone else. I worked there until 1955 when I got married. I have never worked again.

**Feelings:** In 1949 Taylor left because they did not give him the house in Malaki that he wanted. Later, I went to Bally's. I met there my husband, Alexander. He was the janitor and he had undertaken all the English houses. Thanks God I lived a good life with Alexander.

**Values-opinions:** Alexander was paid very well by the Organism and there is no need to work. I took care of children ... I wished English would remain here in Aliartos for 4 - 5 years more. Aliartos was like a little Paris. We had everything we wanted. We kept our salary; we didn't spend anything; we made money that time. Any time we wanted to do something personal, we could go out. We took a day off and a 15 days holiday during the summer. Also they gave us our Christmas and Easter bonus. Doctors came frequently and examine all the workers for free. We did not wear aprons, certain other girls wore aprons, as for us who worked in Taylor's wore robes, plain dressing gowns. Taylor lived with three men, their wives didn't live here. He was very gentleman. When Taylor left, he gave us 25 pounds as a gift to both of us, and to Giannoula. He gave us 4 - 5 pounds more, because we bought a building site in Glyfada, in 1949, with 29 pounds and we didn't have all the money.

## E - oral evidence

### **Backgrounds - Demographics:**

I was given birth here, in 1924 or in 1923, I'm not sure. I have been registered in 1923. Afterwards the possession they changed our birthdays. We have been registered older than we were, because we were told that we could take our pension earlier. They were right; we took our pension earlier.

I cannot remember my mother well, she had broken her leg and after that she died. At that time people died for nothing, as there were not doctors. My father died two years after my mother's death. He left me, Niki the eldest, Foto was the last, but first was my luckless brother...

**Behaviors:** What they could do with us, you see we were four children. We went anywhere we could find day labour. And in the plain in Liatani (Saint Thomas) I had gone during summer and in Copais for gathering cotton. We went with Niki. And my aunt, Giannena, God bless her, told us to be careful with our boss. We should stay with the other women, so as for our boss not to have the chance to find us alone and take advantage of us. We got soaked, the rain made us cold, mosquitoes bit us. We were and worked for many summers in Copais. We didn't come back in Copais after 1941. We lived in poverty and misery before the bondage. Dry bread, olives, greens, onions, a red herring sometimes and ...beans soup. We ate the same food in the field as well. We ate meat at Christmas, at Easter, during festivals and weddings. We guard our oven any time we fire it for cooking some meat, cause there were a lot of hungry people who could steal it. We also bake some peas in the oven. During winter we wove clothes, carpets, trousseau, andromide (woven textile). Sometimes I was paid with money, some others I took wheat, it depended.

**Feelings:** ...my unlucky brother was the first. He was killed in Albania (She didn't want to mention his name. According to the local customs, a dead person is called not with his name but he/she is named "sighoremenos").

When I was in Copais I turned round and looked at the mountain. I used to say that behind this mountain was my village. And this is how I comfort myself....

... And with the other women with whom we went to work, to the river, we were friends. We had never quibbled, we liked each other.

During the bondage I was engaged with Spiros, I didn't want, I was wearing mourning clothes for my brother

**Values-opinions:** Spiros was a good man; he has his manner. Some fields, olive trees, some sheep. We didn't miss anything after the bondage. He was hard working and I was smart too. We worked together, but I had the housekeeping and brought up three children. My mother was neither with us, nor my mother in law. I brought up my children by myself.

Thanks God, we have got everything. There were not poor and rich those days. We all were the same. Now, the world has changed; everyone wants to become rich.

## Results

The interest in women's labor and status has resulted in increased documentation of women's participation and agricultural experience. As it's appeared in these specific oral evidences women play important roles *in food and dress production, natural resources management, income increasing, house management, and food - nutrition security*. Men and women play different roles, have different needs and face different constraints.... *I was old when I got married, I was thirty. What do you think about Kalomoira and Theodora? They were married at the same age. We were poor and nobody wanted to marry us. As singles we worked a lot...with my husband the life was better and easier. Both of us, we had our own fields to cultivate. Afterwards I gave birth to my girl, so I was given the chance to stay for a while in my house and stop working in the fields. And my man cooked sometimes, bean soup, all the men cooked then. When women were at work, men cooked. They did not do anything else than cooking, because they did not know; we tidy up the rest ....*

Categorizing the responses we notice that the qualitative results describe women's contribution in agricultural production in family income, the impacts of parents' work on children - see the most references to their parents - the forces and relations of production, the division of labor, the organizational hierarchy, the rules and procedures, the uses of secrecy and hoarding of knowledge..... *I was born in 1932 in the Mantoudi of Evia. This is where I come from. We were four children in the family, two boys and two girls. I was the smallest. When I was two years old, my dad took all the family and we came in Larimna. However, in 1940 my father died and we came back to Mantoudi. I haven't finished the elementary school. I have attended only up to fourth class.*

This article explores the effect of women's labor in *factory, in household, in the farm* on the gender segregation of work-including housework and paid work-. Because the "keeping house" occupation is large and predominantly female, including it produces higher levels of segregation.....*Marakis was a little bit mingy, thrifty; he did not want to lose anything. Nor a grain of wheat. I think he was right...I think that this is the right attitude for an industrialist to have, as of today. Otherwise, how he could keep his factory. He was all day in the factory...and in the chemical laboratory... I did not have any problem with him. And he gave us all our revenue stamps. Of course the wage was low, up to the legal wage. However, working there was better from working in the fields ...I did not want to work in the fields ...*

By studying the family's and *class background, the women's feelings, opinions, behaviors and the values* as they have been defined in the oral evidences, we can understand the different meanings that refer to the labor and consequently to the Woman's Place: *Working there was very difficult, but we had a day's wages at least. We had day labour with English and with Germans as well. They left us for one's hour recession, just to rest ourselves. I remember an old lady, Arsenena, she had two daughters, Vagelio and Paraskevi. They were have - nots ... in the evening we entered also in the loom. And we made the entire trousseau and our clothes in the loom. And then we did not wear romba (dressing gowns) (she means a woman's cloth dress), we wore polkaki and petticoat, all loom-made. And we knead, and we wash ....*

After a deeper exploration of the spoken facts, we found out that the living level of the family specifies the possibilities and opportunities of girl's education. Parent's educational and social level influences girl's growing up and development. We identify the value of knowledge only when the father has a basic educational level, but this is an exception.

As it appears the Greek woman at that period is growing up to become a good house wife, an effective worker in the fields or in the factories and strong against all the difficulties of life.

As a result, her marriage is a continuation of the existent family situation. The housewife's role is little different from her previous role of that of daughter. In addition, she has to be stronger, more patient and more productive, because of growing her own children and taking care her own family. The developments and changes in the above role and in the women's living condition are mostly due to the economic and political changes in local society and which are very slow throughout the pass of time.

Causes cannot be assumed, they have to be looked for, Marc Bloch (1954) wrote. Nevertheless oral testimony delivers some certainties since the sentences begin with a "yes" and the conversation is punctuated with definitions about the men's role in the factory and in the family.

Our claim for oral history on these qualities unique to speech which expose, we argue, the truths of subjectivity, as well as the provisional nature of all historical narratives. The truths of subjectivity which the memory-work of *A Woman's Place* reveals include the enduring features of the female life-cycle - the tensions of sexual knowledge, the continuities of myth and family romance, the repetitions of domestic labour - traces of female experience as indicative of human need, and as unlikely to go away, as poverty however differently formed and experienced in different epochs.

The sources of individual change are more elusive:...*I remember Macinter (she means Mac Eldery, last General Director of the English Company), Leeds, (she means the head of cultivation's department) he was milder than ...also, I remember someone called Robert, he was a head of something...Every two steps rural guards and heads were present. Copais was full of outposts. Greeks were these, but they were also afraid of send them away. They scrutinized everything, what they had in their sacks, because some people stole ... people were poor, they did not have anything to eat; what they should do?*

Few women were politically conscious: *Alexander was paid very well by the Organism and there is no need to work. I took care of children ... I wished English would remain here in Aliartos fo 4 - 5 years more. Aliartos was like a little Paris. We had everything we wanted. We kept our salary; we didn't spend anything; we made money that time. Any time we wanted to do something personal, we could go out. We took a day off and a 15 days holiday during the summer. Also they gave us our Christmas and Easter bonus. Doctors came frequently and examine all the workers for free. We did not wear aprons, certain other girls wore aprons, as for us who worked in Taylor's wore robes, plain dressing gowns. Taylor lived with three men, their wives didn't live here. He was very gentleman. When Taylor left, he gave us 25 pounds as a gift to both of us, and to Giannoula. He gave us 4 - 5 pounds more, because we bought a building site in Glyfada, in 1949, with 29 pounds and we didn't have all the money.*

Labour's institutions - based on masculine collectivism and mutuality - scarcely touched women's lives. For the women of Copais Company's labouring, the spirit of change sounds from private memory: *I was given birth here, in 1924 or in 1923, I'm not sure. I have been registered in 1923. Afterwards the possession they changed our birthdays. We have been registered older than we were, because we were told that we could take our pension earlier. They were right; we took our pension earlier. I cannot remember my mother well, she had broken her leg and after that she died. At that time people died for nothing, as there were not doctors. My father died two years after my mother's death. He left me, Niki the eldest, Foto was the last, but first was my luckless brother...*

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#### *Oral evidences*

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*Archive of Copais Organism  
Greek National Static Inventory  
Newspaper Rizospastis*



