

“Resistances, Contestations, and Resilience in the Migration Experiences of Cretan Women in New Zealand in the 1960s”

Dr. Bantiou Marina

Adjunct Lecturer of History Didactics and Oral History
Department of Early Childhood Education
University of Thessaly

[Assoc. Prof. Evangelia Papoutsaki & Athina Tsoulis]

Permission for research access to the interviews was granted
by the producers of the oral history project:
Associate Prof. Evangelia Papoutsaki and Athina Tsoulis



Photo: Alexander Turnbull Library, Evening Post EP/1962/2905

Records Summary

Location: National Library of New Zealand, Alexander Turnbull Library Collections

Reference: OHColl-1118

Collection: *Greek Female Immigrants to New Zealand in the 1960s Oral History Project*

Date: 2010-2011

Description: 16 interviews conducted with women who emigrated from Greece to undertake domestic work in New Zealand in the 1960s. The interviews were conducted mostly in Greek with some English interspersed. Unprocessed for research purposes.

Funding: Ministry of Culture and Heritage & Australian Sesquicentennial Gift Trust for Awards in Oral History

Interviewer(s): Evangelia Papoutsaki, Athina Tsoulis

Digital Archive: "CONNECTING HOMELANDS: Telling the stories of Post-war Cretan Migrant Women in Aotearoa New Zealand An oral history and digital storytelling project" including 7 video recordings of selected participants and curated material. Available at: <https://cretannzwomen.nz/>

Acknowledgments

Research access was generously granted by the producers of the oral history project, Associate Professor Evangelia Papoutsaki and Athina Tsoulis (Film Director), whose permission and support have been invaluable for this study.



CONNECTING HOMELANDS

Telling the stories of Post-war Cretan Migrant
Women in Aotearoa New Zealand

An oral history and digital storytelling project



HOME -

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

DIGITAL STORYTELLING PROJECT -

THE WOMEN



Argyro
Pendaraki



Efrosini
Sifothaskakali



Adrianna
Weston-
Solonaki



Aikaterini (Kaiti)
Galanaki (Kafaki)



Eleftheria (Eli)
Katsigaraki



Eleftheria (Ria)
Manioudaki /...



Akrivi (Voula)
Hiotaki



Alexia Pendaraki



Evangelia
Nionaki
(Ikonomaki)



Ilektra Rinieri
(Drakaki)



Anastasia
(Tassoula)
Despotaki



Angeliki (Kiki)
Potichronaki

Available at: <https://cretannzwomen.nz/category/the-women>

Permission granted for research access by Assoc. Prof. Evangelia Papoutsaki and Athina Tsoulis

Additional Records

New Zealand newspaper articles were obtained from the National Library of New Zealand > Papers Past online archive.

Greek newspaper articles were obtained from the Vikelea Library of Heraklion.

Photographic materials were obtained from:

- Nancy Swarbrick, 'Greeks – the Hellenic community - Arrivals', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, Available at: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/greeks-the-hellenic-community/>
- Digital Archive of New Zealand
- National Archives of Australia

Passenger arrival records obtained from the National Archives of Australia.

Former Soldiers Want Cretan Migrants

(N.Z. Press Association)

AUCKLAND, May 28.

Some of the New Zealanders who went to Greece for the unveiling of the British Commonwealth War Memorial want the Government to bring Crete migrants to the Dominion. The New Zealand party returned to Whenuapai by air on Saturday.

Members of the party who revisited Crete are anxious to arrange immigration for the sons and daughters of families associated with New Zealand soldiers in World War II.

They intend to ask the Returned Services' Association to approach the Minister of Immigration (Mr Shand).

Domestic Training For Greek Migrants

Should Cretan or Greek migrants be brought to New Zealand, opportunities are already available in Greece for them to learn the way of life of their new country before they leave.

One of the five domestic training centres in Greece run by the Inter-Governmental Committee for European Migration was visited recently by Mr A. F. McGregor, of Christchurch.

He was a member of the New Zealand party which went to Greece for the unveiling of the British Commonwealth War Memorial at Athens, and which is now advocating bringing Cretan migrants to New Zealand to repay help given during

It shows the detailed care taken in the instruction of the girls, many of whom have never seen a sink or a refrigerator. Most of the household duties that a New Zealand housewife would take for granted are carefully explained.

"There is an unlimited number of girls available, and they would make excellent immigrants," said Mr McGregor. "The girls I spoke to indicated they would be willing to find all their fare to New Zealand provided they were given an opportunity in life."

The Press, Volume C, Issue 29525,
29 May 1961, p. 10
National Library of New Zealand
Christchurch City Libraries

The Press, Volume C, Issue 29526, 30 May 1961, p. 2
National Library of New Zealand
Christchurch City Libraries

**“I heard that New Zealand wanted
to help poor Cretan girls
because of the help we had given
them during the war.**

I didn't know what New Zealand was.

[..]

My mother said apply but you won't
get through and **I won't let you go
anyway.** When I was accepted my
mother would not believe it.”

– Adrianna Weston-Solonaki

MIGRANTS FROM GREECE “New Zealand Can Help”

The Press, Volume C, Issue 29526,
30 May 1961, p. 12

National Library of New Zealand
Christchurch City Libraries

Immigrants From Crete

The plan to give young Cretans a new start in this country is not a big one in terms of numbers; but it is heart-warming evidence that New Zealanders in prosperity have not forgotten those who were their friends in time of need. It

marked. The evacuation of many New Zealand troops after the German victory was as notable as the fierce fighting that preceded it. Those men owed much to the help they were given by Cretans at great personal risk. Some of the men who

This is a debt of gratitude that New Zealand should be glad to repay. From the accounts given by New Zealanders who have just returned from Greece the obligation should not be onerous. Apparently the young persons whom it is proposed to help would make good settlers; and the girls, particularly, have been given training that fits them to fill serious gaps in our labour force. If so.

The Press, Volume C, Issue 29526,
30 May 1961, p. 12

National Library of New Zealand
Christchurch City Libraries

Six Greek Girls To Work In City

Among the group of 41 Greek girl migrants who arrived in Wellington on Monday to begin a two-year working visit to New Zealand as domestic servants in New Zealand hotels and hospitals, were six young girls bound for Christchurch.

Less than a week after leaving their homes they are today beginning their new occupation as staff assistants in city hotels.

Soon after their arrival in Christchurch yesterday, four of the girls spoke through an interpreter about their reasons for deciding to join the Government-sponsored scheme.

Christina Kapadoukakis, aged 19, from a small town in Crete, has also been a dressmaker. Zoanna Kaladzaki, aged 23, and her sister, Andonia, aged 21, from Crete, are interested in embroidery and dressmaking. Andonia has worked as a dressmaker.

Before leaving, all the girls took part in a three-month domestic training course involving instruction and practice in all aspects of hotel work. They also took part in a short English language training course, but have not yet learned enough to make themselves easily understood.



ΜΑΘΗΜΑΤΑ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΕΩΣ ΔΙΑ ΜΕΤΑΝΑΣΤΡΙΕΣ ΕΙΣ ΑΥΣΤΡΑΛΙΑΝ

Υπό της ΔΕΜΕ συνεχίζεται η εκπαίδευσις κοριτσιών για μετανάστευσιν εις την Αυστραλία, και την Νέα Ζηλανδία.

Οι κοπέλλες ποθ μεταναστεύουσιν εις την Νέα Ζηλανδία εργαζονται ω βνηθητικα προσωπικα Νοσοκομείων, Ιδρυμάτων κ.λ.π εις την Αυστραλία εργαζονται εις έργα σια τη: προτιμησεως των.

Αυστραλία: Γίνοντες δεκτές νέες ηλικίας 18-35 χρόνων άγαμες ή χήρες χωρίς παιδιά και με γραμματικας γνώσεις 6η Δημοτικου και άνω.

Νέα Ζηλανδία: Γίνονται δεκτές νέες ηλικίας 18-35 χρόνων άγαμες ή χήρες χωρίς παιδιά και με γραμματικας γνώσεις 6ης Δημοτικου και άνω.

Εκπαίδευσις γίνεται: Διά την Αυστραλία εις την Αθήνα, Θεσσαλονίκη, Πάτρα, Ιωάννινα και Ρόδο, δια την Νέα Ζηλανδία εις την Αθήνα.

Διά πληροφορίας οι ένδια φερόμενες ν' απευθόνωνται εις τα γραφεία της ΔΕΜΕ εις την Αθήνα όδου Σοφοκλέους 1.

“Educational Programs for Migrant Women to Australia
 Organized by the ICEM, the training of young girls to emigrate to Australia and New Zealand is continued.
 The girls emigrating to New Zealand are working as support staff in hospitals, institutions, etc. [..]
 New Zealand: Accepted are young women aged 18-35, unmarried or widowed without children, with a minimum 6th-grade education level.
 Training Locations [..] For New Zealand training takes place only in Athens.”

Newspaper *Εθνική*, 13.3.1964
 Issue: 1185
 Vikelaia Municipal Library



Greek girls migrating to Australia and New Zealand learn how to use a washing machine in Athens.

Date range: 1962 - 1962

Item ID: 9759641

© Copyright National Archives of Australia 2024

“Migrant Arrivals in Australia - Greek domestics before and after arrival in Australia”

“They taught us how to wash, how to iron the sheets, the shirts, and such, how to iron, then how to clean a hotel, in case we got a job at a hotel, how to clean the rooms, make the beds, mop, and clean... [..]

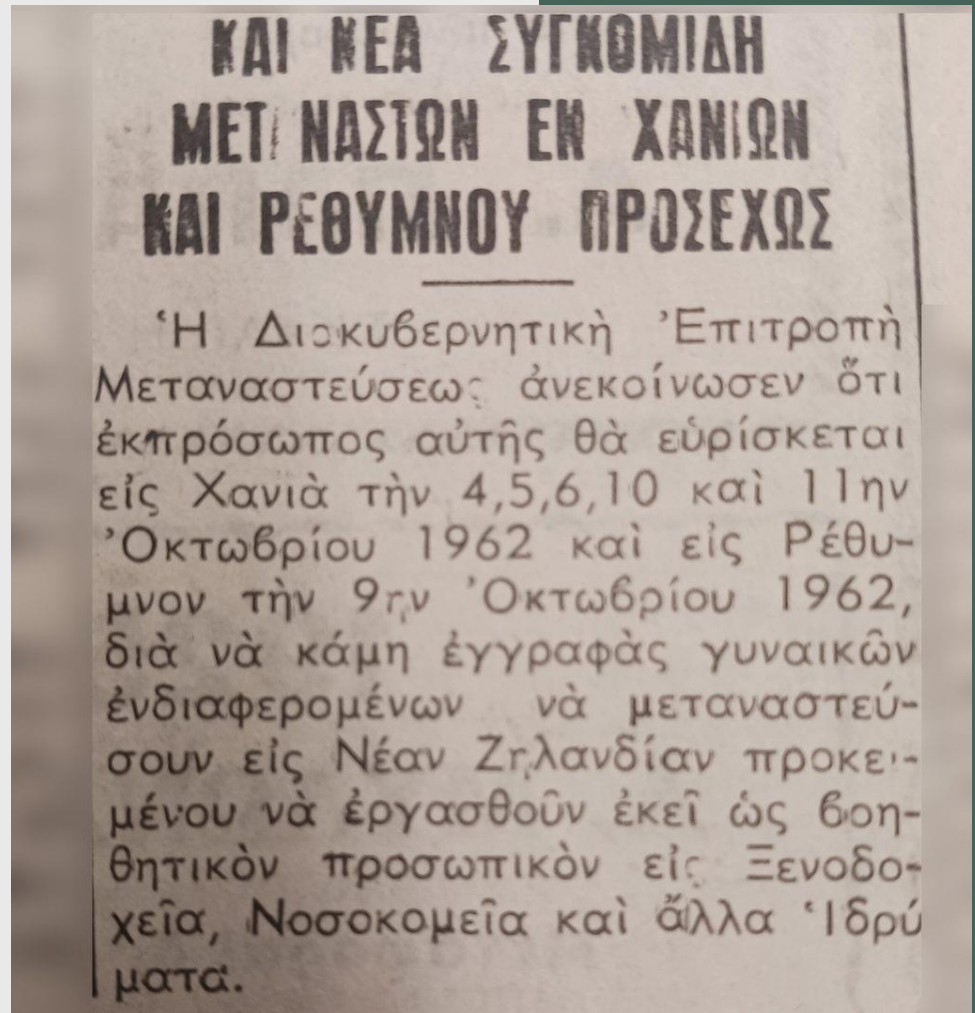
They also taught us English.”

- Sifodaskalaki Efrosini

“The Intergovernmental Migration Committee announced that a representative would be in Chania on October 4, 5, 6, 10, and 11, 1962, and in Rethymno on October 9, 1962, to register women interested in emigrating to New Zealand to work as support staff in hotels, hospitals, and other institutions.”

Newspaper *Κήρυξ*
29.09.1962

Haniotika Nea. (n.d.). 1962: Και νέα συγκομιδή μεταναστών εκ Χανίων και Ρεθύμνου προσεχώς. Retrieved [30.10.2024], from <https://www.haniotika-nea.gr/1962-kai-nea-sygko-idi-etanaston-ek-chanion-kai-rethy-noy-prosechos/>



“We were picking olives and we worked everyday. It was raining all day and we had a sack to cover our heads as we picked olives. A man came by and he said to us slaving away in the heavy rain.

‘Why don’t you leave and go to another country’ and he gave us a newspaper which had an item about migrating.” -Anastasia Despotaki

“I couldn’t stand the idea that mum didn’t have money to buy sugar. [...] Do you understand that?
And then came that proclamation on the radio and the newspapers to go to New Zealand.”

-Argiro Pentaraki

“It was something in the paper actually. I saw it in the paper and then when I read it -oh my God yeah. And my mother tells me ‘no no, you wouldn’t go to the other side of the world’.
Well, but I didn’t care, you know, I wanted to go.” – Katsigaraki Eleftheria

“And straight away we read it [in the newspaper] with my sister and we say ‘yes’ but how can we go to Chania and do the papers? **Our father will kill us.** And where we find the money, 2 drachmas for the bus? And anyway, we asked our boss, if we could have some 5 drachmas to go to Chania. 2 to go and 2 to come back. And he gave it to us. And then we went and do all our papers and everything. **Didn’t tell my father, nothing.**

[..]

A week later the papers came. [..] And he said ‘I will let her [her sister] go but **you will not go, you are going to pick up the olives. And I was so upset. I try that time to kill myself three times**”.

–Despotaki Anastasia

Migrant Arrivals in Australia Greek Women arriving by air from Athens

Date range: 1962
Item ID: 7529434

“I wanted to work and have money. Yes, to work to have money. Dressing up, having clothes, I never had anything, I mean I grew up and became a woman and I never had a watch or any little cross that all girls wear or something, a good coat, a good outfit we didn't have anything then.

-Galanaki Kaiti



Incoming Passenger Cards

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.
INCOMING PASSENGER CARD (AIRCRAFT) 006
Required under Migration Act and Regulations.

1. Arrival at SYDNEY Airport 35
On (Date) 13/12 1963 by Flight No. QF176

2. Name HALKIADAKI SPIRIDOULA
(Surname First. Then other given Names. Print in BLOCK Letters.)

3. Nationality GREEK 35
If British, specify Country of Citizenship

4. Country of Birth GREECE 35
*Please TICK APPROPRIATE BOX THUS

5. Sex	6. Age last Birthday	7. Single <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2
Male <input type="checkbox"/>	<u>20</u> Years	Married <input type="checkbox"/>	20
Female <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Widowed <input type="checkbox"/>	1
		Divorced <input type="checkbox"/>	

8. Usual Occupation H.S.I. Worker 86

9. (i) Country in which I last stayed for 12 months or more GREECE 35
(ii) Country in which I next intend to stay for 12 months or more NZ. 69
(If Australia, specify State or Territory.)

10. Purpose of Journey to Australia: 62
(i) Returning to live in Australia
or (ii) In Transit
or (iii) Visiting; mainly for:
Business Education
Holiday Other Purposes
or (iv) Settling in Australia

11. Intended Length of Stay in Australia:
Years Months or Days (Give figures)
or write "Permanent", "Indefinite", &c. 99

12. Last Permanent Residence: 99
Australia
Overseas (incl. Papua, N. Guinea)
If "Australia", how long since you were last in Australia?
Years Months or Days 3
2

13. I joined this Aircraft at Ath
(Insert Country.)
Signature of Passenger S. Papadimitriou

1963/62 Archives of Australia NAA: A1225, 1963 NSW DECEMBER 13 - 14.

Halkiadaki Spiridoula, 13-14/12/1963
Item ID: 11595302

607 COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.
INCOMING PASSENGER CARD (AIRCRAFT) 057
Required under Migration Act and Regulations.

1. Arrival at ADELAIDE AIRPORT 35
On (Date) 20-2-64 1964 by Flight No. 176-571

2. Name HIOTAKI AKRIVI
(Surname First. Then other given Names. Print in BLOCK Letters.)

3. Nationality GREEK 35
If British, specify Country of Citizenship

4. Country of Birth GREECE 35
*Please TICK APPROPRIATE BOX THUS

5. Sex	6. Age last Birthday	7. Single <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2
Male <input type="checkbox"/>	<u>19</u> Years	Married <input type="checkbox"/>	19
Female <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Widowed <input type="checkbox"/>	1
		Divorced <input type="checkbox"/>	

8. Usual Occupation H.S.I.W. 84

9. (i) Country in which I last stayed for 12 months or more GREECE 35
(ii) Country in which I next intend to stay for 12 months or more NZ. 59
(If Australia, specify State or Territory.)

10. Purpose of Journey to Australia: 62
(i) Returning to live in Australia
or (ii) In Transit
or (iii) Visiting; mainly for:
Business Education
Holiday Other Purposes
or (iv) Settling in Australia

11. Intended Length of Stay in Australia:
Years Months or Days (Give figures)
or write "Permanent", "Indefinite", &c. 15
99

12. Last Permanent Residence: 99
Australia
Overseas (incl. Papua, N. Guinea)
If "Australia", how long since you were last in Australia?
Years Months or Days 3
2

13. I joined this Aircraft at GREECE
(Insert Country.)
Signature of Passenger A. Xiroszun

9052/62 National Archives of Australia NAA: A1225, 1964 NSW FEBRUARY 21 - 26

Hiotaki Akrivi, 21-22/2/1964
Item ID: 12375804

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA INCOMING PASSENGER CARD Serial Number 48
To be completed in the English Language

1. Name PENDARAKI ARGIRO
Surname in Block Letters Given Names

2. Nationality (If British specify country of citizenship) GREEK
3. Passport or other Travel Document No. 57649
4. Country of Birth CRETE
5. Date of Birth 22.11.1931
day month year

Please MARK APPROPRIATE BOX THUS

6. Sex: Male Female
7. Conjugal Condition: Never Married Widowed
Non-Married Divorced

8. Usual Occupation COOK

9. Country in which I last stayed for 12 months or more NEW ZEALAND

10. Country in which I next intend to stay for 12 months or more NEW ZEALAND
(If Australia, specify State or Territory.)

11. Purpose of Journey to Australia:
(i) Returning to live in Australia
or (ii) In Transit
or (iii) Visiting; mainly for:
Business Education
Holiday Other Purposes
or (iv) Settling in Australia

12. Intended Length of Stay in Australia:
Years Months or Days (Give figures)
or write "Permanent", "Indefinite", &c. ONE

13. Last Permanent Residence: Australia Overseas (incl. Papua, N. Guinea)
If "Australia", how long since you were last in Australia?
Years Months or Days

14. Intended Address in Australia 410 CANNING ST
N. CARTON VIC AUSTRALIA
Signature of Passenger A. Pendaraki

(The completion of this card is required by the Migration Act 1953-1964.)

National Archives of Australia NAA: A1197, PEARCE T-PENSON

Pendaraki Argiro, 2-7/6/1962
Item ID: 9788333

Incoming Passenger Cards

30w 72.106

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
INCOMING PASSENGER CARD (AIRCRAFT)
Required under Immigration Act and Regulations

1. Port of Embarkation ATHENS 35

2. Name DRAKAKI ILEKTRA 35
(Surname First. Print in Block Letters.)

3. Nationality GREEK 35

If British, specify Country of Citizenship _____ 35

4. Country of Birth GREECE 2

5. * Sex: Male 18 Female 18

6. Age last Birthday _____ Years

7. * Single Married ; Widowed ; Divorced 1

8. Usual Occupation W. & I. WORKER 86

9. (i) Country in which you last stayed for 12 months or more GREECE 35

(ii) Country in which you next intend to stay for 12 months or more N.K. 59
(If Australia, specify State or Territory.)

10. * Purpose of Journey to Australia 62
(i) Returning to live in Australia
or (ii) In Transit
or (iii) Visiting; mainly for: Business ; Holiday ; Education ; Other Purposes
or (iv) Settling in Australia

11. Intended Length of Stay in Australia: 99
____ Years ____ Months or ____ Days. (Give figures or write "permanent", "indefinite", &c.)

12. * Last Permanent Residence: Australia 99
Overseas (incl. Papua, N. Guinea)
If "Australia", how long since you were last in Australia? 3
____ Years ____ Months or ____ Days.

Signature of Passenger: J. J. Jovanovic 2
* Please tick appropriate box thus

St 1888 V. C. N. B. Government Printer

Aircraft Registration VH-EPK

Port and Date of Disembarkation SYD. 2/8/63

National Archives of Australia NAA: A1225, 1963 NSW AUGUST 20 - 22

Drakaki Ilektra, 20-22/08/1963
Item ID: 13046816

382

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
INCOMING PASSENGER CARD (AIRCRAFT) 23
Required under Immigration Act and Regulations

1. Port of Embarkation ATHENS 35

2. Name SIFODASKALAKI EFROSINI 35
(Surname First. Print in Block Letters.)

3. Nationality GREEK 35

If British, specify Country of Citizenship _____ 35

4. Country of Birth GREECE 35

5. * Sex: Male Female 23

6. Age last Birthday 23 Years 23

7. * Single Married ; Widowed ; Divorced 1

8. Usual Occupation Household Sec/worker 84

9. (i) Country in which you last stayed for 12 months or more GREECE 35

(ii) Country in which you next intend to stay for 12 months or more _____ 61
(If Australia, specify State or Territory.)

10. * Purpose of Journey to Australia 62
(i) Returning to live in Australia
or (ii) In Transit
or (iii) Visiting; mainly for: Business ; Holiday ; Education ; Other Purposes 62
or (iv) Settling in Australia

11. Intended Length of Stay in Australia: 99
____ Years ____ Months or ____ Days. (Give figures or write "permanent", "indefinite", &c.)

12. * Last Permanent Residence: Australia 99
Overseas (incl. Papua, N. Guinea)
If "Australia", how long since you were last in Australia? 3
____ Years ____ Months or ____ Days.

Signature of Passenger: Sifodaskalaki 2
* Please tick appropriate box thus

St 1888 V. C. N. B. Government Printer

Aircraft Registration VH-EPF

Port and Date of Disembarkation SYD. 5-6-62

National Archives of Australia NAA: A1225, 1962 NSW JUNE 2 - 7

Sifodaskalaki Efrosyni, 2-7/6/1962
Item ID: 12289765

370 031

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
INCOMING PASSENGER CARD (AIRCRAFT)
Required under Immigration Act and Regulations

1. Port of Embarkation ATHENS 35

2. Name NIONAKI EVANGELIA 35
(Surname First. Print in Block Letters.)

3. Nationality GREEK 35

If British, specify Country of Citizenship _____ 35

4. Country of Birth GREECE 35

5. * Sex: Male 18 Female 18

6. Age last Birthday _____ Years

7. * Single Married ; Widowed ; Divorced 1

8. Usual Occupation Household Sec/worker 84

9. (i) Country in which you last stayed for 12 months or more GREECE 35

(ii) Country in which you next intend to stay for 12 months or more _____ 61
(If Australia, specify State or Territory.)

10. * Purpose of Journey to Australia 62
(i) Returning to live in Australia
or (ii) In Transit
or (iii) Visiting; mainly for: Business ; Holiday ; Education ; Other Purposes 62
or (iv) Settling in Australia

11. Intended Length of Stay in Australia: 99
____ Years ____ Months or ____ Days. (Give figures or write "permanent", "indefinite", &c.)

12. * Last Permanent Residence: Australia 99
Overseas (incl. Papua, N. Guinea)
If "Australia", how long since you were last in Australia? 3
____ Years ____ Months or ____ Days.

Signature of Passenger: Evangelia 2
* Please tick appropriate box thus

St 1888 V. C. N. B. Government Printer

Aircraft Registration VH-EPF

Port and Date of Disembarkation SYD 5/6/62

National Archives of Australia NAA: A1225, 1962 NSW JUNE 2 - 7

Nionaki Evangelia, 2-7/6/1962
Item ID: 12289765



“And we thought, hello, there must be a better life than this...

We were so naïve those days, let's face it and we just looking for something better.

All I wanted is at those days to have a nice car. [...] Always dream to have a nice car. Stupid might be but yeah.”

– Weston-Solonaki
Andriana

Migrant Arrivals in Australia - Greek girls processed at departure point

Credit: Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs

Emigrants from Greece at work in the Wellington Hospital laundry

Original newspaper caption reads:

"They arrived in the country yesterday - five Greek girls who were among the 80 Dutch and Greek immigrants to arrive at Wellington Airport, at work today in the Wellington Hospital laundry.

They are (from left): Adriane Solanaki, Erene Kalogeraki, Sofia Bobolaki, Margarita Tsosela, and Maria Kiriakaki".

(Evening Post, 19 March 1963)



Greek hotel workers



Archives New Zealand - Te Rua
Mahara o te Kāwanatanga
Reference: AAQT 6401 A71466

Nancy Swarbrick, 'Greeks – the
Hellenic community - Arrivals', Te
Ara - the Encyclopedia of New
Zealand,
<http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/photo-graph/122/greek-hotel-workers>

“One day we sat around the table, I remember that, and my mother said: «I cannot provide for all of you to go and study, so the boys will study and the **girls will learn a craft**»”.

- Pendaraki Argiro

“I went to school and then when I finished school [elementary] I went and collected [olives] for a year and then my mom said **I can't go to school anymore**, I had to find a job and to **learn a craft.**”

–Sifodaskalaki Efrosini

“**25 drachmas a day. And we never see it. My father took it.** And never give it to us. And then another thing, **we worked and all the money we have to give it to my father** to keep it for the oldest daughter and marry her and then the second and then the third.

And nothing for the others.”

–Despotaki Anastasia

“I was working, we gave all the money to the parents... I gave it all to the parents. All.”

-Sifodaskalaki Efrosini

Escaping from the dowry

ONE of the reasons Greek girls migrated to Australia was that here they did not need a dowry when they married, a Greek social worker said in Melbourne yesterday.

She is Miss Voula Lagou, who has been working in Athens with migrants for the Inter-governmental Committee for European Migration and the Young Women's Christian Association.

Miss Lagou said that some Greek country girls had to have as a dowry a piece of land and a house and its contents. All the men had to do was get married.

Other reasons for girls migrating was unemployment in Greece, their wish to see a new way of life and wanting more freedom, she said.

Miss Lagou said she would

been concerned with the movement of Greeks to other European countries — Germany, Belgium, Holland, for instance—to work for several years.

She has visited several of these countries to see them.

Since 1962 she has spent about 15 hours a week working for the YWCA in Athens, helping prepare migrant girls for life overseas.



“If a girl wanted to get married, she had to have a dowry, give her a house, or give her property, oil, whatever they had, and we didn't have enough to give to the grooms...”

– Sifodaskalaki Efrosini

“I felt so sorry for my parents [trying to get all the stuff for her sister's dowry] and I said ‘no way, I can put my parents do this, probably again, I will leave,’ and every year I used to say ‘oh, next year I won't be here’, and they use to laugh.”

–Fragoulaki Maria

“I could not understand why I have to pay a man to become a slave to him.

Why? ... You marry somebody and you have no right to talk, I’m talking about Crete ... You do as you are told, you treat him like a God and you just work.” [..]

“I had those views forever since I noticed that a girl has to buy a husband.”

– Alexia Pendaraki

“Me, that's why I left...I didn't like to think of dowry. From a young age it seemed to me that it wasn't right... [..]

Why shouldn't each girl take the necessary things and work alone to make them, as I later did, and like all of us...”

-Fragoulaki Maria

Interviewer: Why did they leave. Why?

“eh.. because if they weren’t asking for dowry, I am not talking about myself, because my fate didn't have any dowry, we didn’t have, we had mountains, whole mountains, but who was going to work there?

But we didn't have dowry, I didn't have dowry, for this I left...”

– Andriana Weston-Solonaki

"I heard their stories about America, Germany and something inside of me just wanted to go.

I wanted to leave. They offered me matches {marriage proposals} from here, there and everywhere but I didn't want it. **I just wanted to leave."**

– Spirithoula Vlondaki

"To be honest, they were match-making also me, before...haha...when I was fifteen years old...

No, not...it seems that I did not want it, to be honest, I cannot answer this..." – Andianna Weston-Solonaki

"My parents made me a match-making with a young Greek man from New Zealand to go, to invite me, but **I didn't want to, I didn't want to**, because I had also made an unfortunate engagement, in the village, and **I didn't want, I didn't want him, I didn't want, I didn't want to**, I broke up with him, **I didn't want to stay in the village, I didn't want to**, and I told them '**No, not like that**'."

–Halkiadaki Spiridoula

“When I came to New Zealand, my father wrote to me that a friend of his had a son and that he is a good boy and to marry him... And then I wrote back to my father and said to him:

‘Dad, the man I'm going to marry, I want to know him, to know what I'm going to get, if he's not here... I can't get married’... Exactly the words I wrote were:

‘Through the post office, I'm not getting married.’“

–Manioudaki Eleftheria

“I had more freedom, I was not told, let’s say “do not go here, do not go there”. [..] **In New Zealand, I was going wherever I wanted.**” -Galanaki Kaiti

“My uncle wrote to me and said ‘come, let your mother see you, that you are well because she will die of her misery, she will die, come’. I said, ‘**uncle, I am not coming, because they won't let me go , I don't want to**’. He told me ‘I give you my word that I will help you leave again’, but I didn't believe him.” – Halkiadaki Spiridoula

Homesick

The hardest problems for Greek girl migrants, Miss Lagou said, were homesickness, the language and the freedom of the way of life.

She said she had seen letters from migrant girls to the YWCA in Athens telling about their problems.

"And then I go to the country and I see their parents and friends and they are anxious," she said. "They get unhappy letters at times.

"Many are not happy but others are. They like their work and find people are friendly.

"It's necessary to know for ourselves, so I am here."

The Age, 28.04.1966

"Even when we went overseas we were very depressed to start with. I even got sick. Because when we got there and started to work, we said «now, we have no one here, neither family, nor...nothing... [..] I was homesick.

I had my mind here and I say: "ah where did I go, what did I do". That's what I kept thinking.

I mean, it wasn't interesting for me, because I had my mind back."

-Galanaki Kaiti

"What to remember, the plane? where I was sitting in the middle and crying from...the beginning... [..] Since I'm still crying and I'm 66 years old, wouldn't I cry then? [..] I'm still very homesick. Still very homesick."

- Drakaki Ilectra

Interviewer: How do you feel being in New Zealand after all these years?

"I cry all night. I cry because I wrote half a dozen traditional folk songs [mantinades] and I read them".
-Pentaraki Argyro

"I don't regret, that I went to New Zealand, I'm grateful to New Zealand, but I don't know, **I became a different person**".
-Oikonomaki Evangelia

"We didn't regret going but **we regretted more that we left and didn't come back.**" –Sfinarolaki Maria

"Migrating to NZ gave me a lot of confidence in life, you know... **I realized am a person as well,** I got a say, I couldn't do that here [in Crete] then, now you can..." –Oikonomaki Evagelia

"We have not changed the morals and customs we had in Greece. At least I continue to be a true Cretan. [...] I haven't changed anything! [...] I am very proud...
Cretan women are different. "
-Manioudaki Eleftheria



Nine Greek women standing outside a bus in Wellington.

Date: 1957

Evening post (Newspaper. 1865-2002) :Photographic negatives and prints of the Evening Post newspaper.

Ref: EP/1957/3689-F.

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. [/records/22592375](#)

Young Greek women
arriving at Wellington
airport to work in New
Zealand hotels, hospitals
and other institutions,
October 1962.



Photo: Alexander Turnbull
Library, Evening Post Dominion
Post Collection (PAColl-7327)
Reference: EP/1962/2905