

Article

Women Physicians and Their Careers: Athens—1900–1950: A Contribution to Understanding Women's History

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Abstract: This article combines history of the family with women's and gender history and the history of women's education; it is based on an extensive range of archives and aims at highlighting the attitude of society and families towards women who wanted to attend University studies in the beginning of the 20th century. The matter of women's university education is directly related to the emergence of the feminist movement in Greece. The strong preference of female university students for the exact sciences at that time was justified by contemporary scholars as a choice reflecting women's nature. This article highlights the role played by family and social class background. To this effect, the life course of three 'heroines' is followed from their initial desire to undertake further studies to their participation in the social and cultural life of the capital of Greece, as a contribution to current literature on gender studies. Despite the limited number of cases discussed, we strongly believe that these women's upbringing enhances our understanding of women's scientific pursuits and their place in Athenian elite families.

Keywords: women's history; gender history; family history; micro-history; elite; Athens; university studies; women physicians



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1. Introduction

This study concerns Athenian society, and mainly its elite and upper middle class during the best part of the 20th century, and aspires to bring together the history of the family and women's and gender history (Avdela 2010; Fournaraki and Yannitsiotis 2013; Kantsa et al. 2012; Vassiliadou 2015) as well as the history of women's education (Dalakoura 2008; Dalakoura and Ziogou Karastergiou 2015; Kiprianos 2007; Manitakis 2004); these fields have presented a true explosion of studies with significant bibliographical production in South-East Europe (Daskalova et al. 2012), and, naturally, Greece. Moreover, the study combines research into archives related to educational institutions, such as the University of Athens (Gavroglou et al. 2014), with micro history and a social anthropological approach to better look into family practices, matrimonial networks, the question of ties and solidarities that unite them (Boudjaaba and Arrizabalaga 2015) and the ties between individuals (Vassiliadou 2018). The question of family and kinship solidarity offers an encompassing approach to the way in which human groups function, both anthropologically and culturally as well as socially and economically (Alfani et al. 2015; Bestard Comas 2011; Fontaine and Schlumbohm 2000).

Despite the proliferation of Greek studies on families (Boudjaaba et al. 2022; Boudjaaba et al. 2019; Kaser 2012; Katsiardi-Hering 2011; Katsiardi-Hering and Kaser 2004; Peristiany 1976; Todorova 1993), the majority of these studies focus on villages and islands in Greece (Karachristos 2004; Piault 1985), i.e., on rural societies. Urban centres, and the modern capital in particular, were rarely investigated by researchers (Bournova and Dimitropoulou 2023). Besides, until quite recently, these studies mainly discussed the type and structure of families and households, the devolution of property and kinship practices, demographic trends, and marriage strategies. The position of women in the family and Greek society

has attracted little scholarly attention. Studies on gender history have mainly focused on women's position and rights, the feminist movement and women's protest, while recently there has been a shift towards matters such as sexuality (Avdela et al. 2020; Vassiliadou and Gotsi 2020), power relations (Vassiliadou et al. 2013) and prostitution (Solou 2022). We still know very little, however, about the daily, family and private lives of women (Vassiliadou 2018), their points of view, attitudes and practices or their participation in vocational activities.

Focusing on the micro history of mainly three women and incorporating further biographical information found in available sources and concerning other women, this article reconstitutes the course of three heroines' lives, starting from their desire to study at university (in fact, qualifying as physicians) and moving onto their participation in the social and cultural life of Athens. The presentation of these three stories aims at highlighting the context and attitude of both society and family towards their female members. We try to shed light on their family history, their educational trajectories, and their eventual participation in the feminist or other social movements. Naturally, one cannot generalize, especially given the small number of cases. However, we believe that the upbringing of these women, within specific family environments and under specific social conditions, enhances our understanding of women's places in families of the Athenian elite and women's scientific pursuits, and adds an important dimension to the pertinent historiography.

2. Methodology

This study is based on primary sources, the Greek press, published works and oral testimonies. Primary sources mainly concern the archives of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, kept at the N.K.U.A. Historical Archive, and the archives of the N.K.U.A. School of Medicine, as well as private family archives kept by Mr. Antonis Fakaros and Ms. Moscha Delagrammatika. Secondary sources, such as the press and N. Igleis' Commercial Guide, helped us identify the family members studied in regard to their geographical base and social status. We also drew on the rich literature on women's issues in Greece and education. All these allowed us to contextualise the lives of our three leading heroines against the backdrop of Greek society.

The first part of the article presents the female university students in Greece at the end of the 19th century and the inter-war period, which is an original study based on a wealth of archival materials, so as to highlight the participation of Greek women in exact science disciplines. The article goes on to present the biographies; the courses of the three women's lives based on the wealth of available archival material that has enabled us to piece together the individual portraits but also those of their families.

3. Female University Students in Greece at the End of the 19th Century and the Inter-War Period

In 1917 women's secondary education was included for the first time in the free state educational system. Until that point, girls used to attend primary education for four years, taught "at the most elementary level", and were, in essence, prepared for the role of mother and wife¹. Even fewer girls (privileged enough to be living in the urban centres of Athens, Hermoupolis, Patras, Piraeus and Corfu) attended private girls' schools, as there were no state schools for girls, for five years, receiving 'perfunctory' education (namely, some basic general knowledge, French, singing and playing the piano) (Bakalaki and Elegmitou 1987). Until 1917, when girls were permitted to enrol and attend boys' secondary schools, girls who wanted to receive a secondary education certificate had to prepare for the necessary examinations through private tutoring by qualified secondary school teachers, this obviously being a significant financial burden for the girls' families.

In 1879, for the first time, female graduates from Arsakeion Girls' School² could apply for enrolment at the University. In Greece, similar to Italy, no laws or regulations forbidding women from being admitted to university were ever introduced. Their applications were

rejected on the pretext that Arsakeion was not officially recognised as a secondary school and, therefore, its curriculum and syllabus were not equivalent to boys' secondary education. In fact, this was an excuse reflecting the views of society, i.e., that co-ed attendance³ would raise moral issues (Parren 1887). In any case, this was the starting point for the Greek parliament to recognise the educational level offered by Arsakeion; five law drafts were submitted related to the regulation of the length of the course of studies and the distinction of general secondary education (3 years) from teachers' training (4th and 5th year of attendance at Arsakeion). It was in 1890 that the University of Athens accepted its first female student: she was Ioanna Stefanopoli (Ziogou-Karastergiou 1988, 2015). A graduate of the Hellenic Girls' School of Aikaterini Laskaridi; Stefanopoli enrolled in the Department of Philology⁴. Two years later, in 1892, two sisters Angélique (1872–1954) and Alexandra G. Panagiotatou from Cephallonia were admitted to the Department of Medicine⁵. The third woman to be admitted to the School of Medicine was an Athenian, Anthi Ch. Vasileiadou (1862). Anthi, at the age of 32, managed to receive her Secondary Education certificate in 1894 to immediately enrol in the School of Medicine, which she graduated from in December 1898. The following year, 1895, two more women were admitted: Anna Katsigra from Philippopolis (present-day Plovdiv) and Eleni Antoniadou from Kea (Tzia), a Cycladean Island. The percentage of female students at the University of Athens grew steadily. From a mere 0.1% at the end of the 19th century⁶, the percentage approached 16% in 1938 and 28% in the 1955–1956 academic year⁷. Nevertheless, a mere handful of women had embarked on an academic adventure by the end of the 19th century.

A larger number of women were enabled to have university education, including some from the lower socio-economic strata, at the beginning of the 20th century (see Figure 1). This was due to the gradual acceptance of the right of girls' primary school pupils to go on to state secondary school, the extension of the network of schools, and the access of women to new employment sectors.

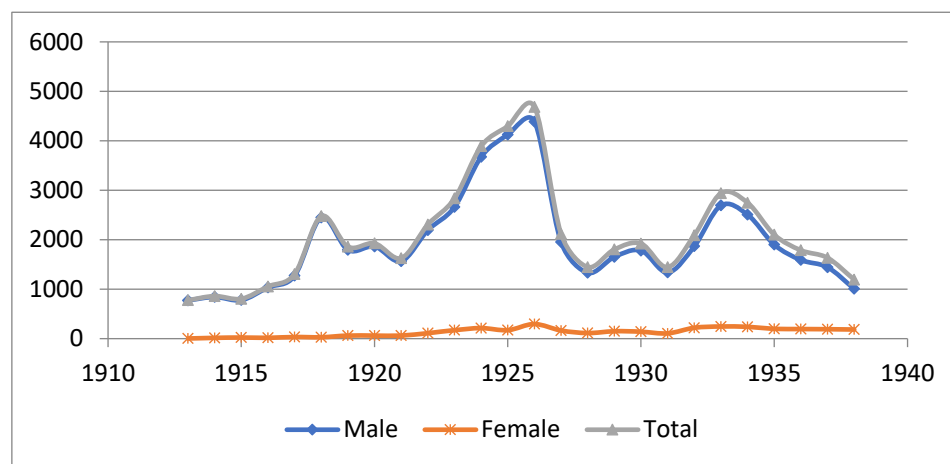


Figure 1. Number of students at the University of Athens per gender, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 1913–1938. Source: Statistics Annual 1939.

At the School of Medicine of the University of Athens, the ratio was lower. Although the number of female students kept increasing (at a slow pace), the percentage of their participation rose from 0.2% at the end of the 19th century to a mere 9% before WWII. Still, the School of Medicine had on average, 26% of female students in the 1887–1938 period. Six out of 10 women chose to attend the Schools of Medicine, Pharmacy or Dentistry. Contrary to what might be generally expected, women were attracted more by the exact sciences⁸ (54%) than by humanities⁹ (46%). Dentistry had the highest women/men ratio, reaching an average of 1:3 in the 1922–1938 period.

In other words, the women who chose to study seem to have 'scorned' anthropological and medical studies of the times, as well as social views claiming that women's intellectual

abilities were limited due to the smaller size of their skull and brain and, therefore, they were unsuited to work in many fields of knowledge, and, particularly, the exact sciences. The same strong preference of female university students for science in the beginning of the 20th century is also encountered in Italy¹⁰, where female university graduates in the same period had a successful career as opposed to those who pursued the humanities path. In any case, women's professional emancipation started in the West with the practice of medicine rather than law¹¹. Furthermore, the School of Medicine in Paris had an average of almost 12% of female students in the 1900s¹², but the majority of them were international students who chose to study in France.

Selecting the disciplines described above was justified by contemporary scholars who supported that such a choice reflected women's nature (caring for the family, looking after the sick), as well as the overall vocational prospects of that time¹³. Indeed, studies indicate (Avdela and Psarra 2005; Bakalaki and Elegmitou 1987; Fournaraki 1987; Fournaraki 1999; Psarra 1999) that the female model, up to at least the 1920s, defined the home as the only field for women's reference and action. Relevant argumentation appealed to 'nature's commands' and the consequent biological gender differences. Nevertheless, studying medicine did not automatically mean that women could enter public life, since there were deep links with the traditional roles of wives and mothers in the "women's sphere" (Avdela 1993; Maragoudaki 2008). Women chose Medicine because it did not distance them from the traits traditionally attributed to them, i.e., their maternal role and care for family members. Some of them, of course, gradually managed to reverse gender discrimination and the dominant perception regarding their position in society, according to which they firstly serve the role of motherhood and, secondly, their place in the professional sector. So, in the beginning of the 1930s,

"Women physicians are by far more successful in their profession. Today, there are about 150 women physicians, most of them having a private practice or working at hospitals. Women stand out mainly in microbiology. The director of the best-known microbiology laboratories in Athens is a woman, namely Mrs. Momferatou-Florou. Mrs. Katsigra is also a well-known gynaecologist and Miss Farmakidou a physiotherapist, just to mention only those best-known." (Stouditi 1931)

In 1930, Greek legislation excluded women from civil service posts, but not from posts related to educational and health services; they could also work at women's prisons, as telephone operators, in the police force, as cleaners and at the customs offices. These positions were regarded as compatible with, according to the prevailing views of the time, women's nature and mission. What is definitely true, though, is that they were the lowest and least significant services (Avdela 1995; Kontorepanidou 2009)¹⁴.

3.1. Origin and the Role of the Family

The choice of a woman to attend university was driven by personal desire. Indisputably, however, at least in the initial years the consent and support of their families were indispensable. Besides the necessary financial support, the first female university students needed moral support, since there were vehement reactions against them from male students, a phenomenon which, of course, did not only appear in Greece¹⁵. According to Z. Papantoniou, when a woman student entered the amphitheatre, male students noisily stamped their walking sticks (Papantoniou 1911). Quite often, the women had to come to lectures accompanied by their fathers or enter the hall along with the professor¹⁶.

During this initial period until 1920 (see Table 1), 1 in 4 women who graduated from the school of Medicine originated from the Ionian islands (a region with an intense intellectual milieu and tradition), while 1 in 6 were from Athens and 1 in 6 from some significant Greek community of other regions (e.g., present-day Bulgaria or Asia Minor). The Ionian Islands were never part of the Ottoman Empire and during the 18th century they became a haven for members of the intelligentsia and revolutionaries who contributed to the outbreak of the Greek Liberation War of 1821. From 1809 until their union with Greece in 1864, the

islands were a British protectorate. As early as 1824, the Ionian Academy in Corfu was attended by the local elite, and its graduates would continue their education at Italian or French universities. In other words, there was a close relationship with western cultures.

Table 1. Place of origin of female graduates from the School of Medicine, 1897–1951.

Region	N	%
ATHENS—PIRAEUS—ATTICA	179	26
STEREA ELLADA/CENTRAL GREECE	50	7
PELOPONNESE	91	13
THESSALY	32	5
IONIAN ISLANDS	44	6
CYCLADES	14	2
EPIRUS	10	1
MACEDONIA	39	6
THRACE	11	2
CRETE	23	3
AEGEAN ISLANDS	34	5
REFUGEE AREAS/DIASPORA/OTHER COUNTRIES	150	22
Unknown	7	1
Total	684	100

Source: Directory of Medicine graduates 1858–1951, Records of Athens School of Medicine.

In a similar manner, the merchant elites, mainly from the urban Greek communities of the diaspora (particularly along the Danube), were closely linked with Balkan cities as well as Constantinople and Alexandria, even during the 19th century. Greek families of these regions had a long tradition of ensuring all their children received an education. Consequently, at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, they were bound to turn to the Greek university in Athens when they relocated to the newly established Greek state.

With time, the percentage of Ionian female students and those from the rest of mainland Greece dropped significantly¹⁷, while those from the capital region kept growing in number; in the 1940s the latter made up 32% of female university students.

Besides geographical origin, the family's social class played a significant role in girls' choice of university studies. Relevant literature indicates that, in the 1890–1920 period, female students admitted to the University of Athens (in all schools) were mainly born to wealthy upper-middle class families. We have already referred to the Panagiotatou sisters. There was also the Corfiot Isavella Theotoki, who graduated from the School of Medicine in 1904: she was probably a member of the aristocratic Theotokis' family and a descendant of the Corfiot (Contessa) Countess Isavella Teotochi Albrizzi (1760–1836).

Regarding the period until 1920, Dalakoura & Ziogou-Karastergiou¹⁸ indicate that it was primarily the daughters of educated fathers with a private professional practice (physicians, pharmacists, lawyers, pedagogues) who chose further education; this confirms that the educational level of parents played a significant role, particularly when it came to their daughters' having a professional career, as the example below illustrates.

Eleni Skalleri, from Hadrianopolis in Eastern Thrace (present-day Edirne in Turkey), graduated in 1907. Her father was a merchant of pharmaceutical products in Hadrianopolis, who sent his daughter to Athens to attend Arsakeion Girls' Secondary School; Eleni graduated with a teacher's certificate. At the same time, she worked as a private tutor of Latin and Maths so that she could earn money and study medicine in order to become a physician. When she graduated from the School of Medicine in November 1907, Eleni "served as a physician, having been elected after an internal examination, at Balikli Greek Hospital in Constantinople, where she trained the nursing staff. She was the first woman physician in Turkey and practiced at a time when women were not allowed to practice this profession. She had to register as chief nurse of Greek hospitals to avoid perfidy by persons of ill-will. The situation changed when Kemal Atatürk came to power: Eleni then participated in the Turkish official examinations and secured her licence for professional

practice. The then Greek physicians club established the famous Siniosoglou Clinic at Galata(s) (Karaköy) and hired Eleni to oversee the hospital. In 1921 Eleni went to Vienna, London, and Paris to update her knowledge about new developments in medicine. She was already a recognised and sought-after physician.

After her marriage to Petros Persinakis, Eleni came to live in Athens and offered voluntary medical services to the Children's Home Foundation in Drapetsona, founded in 1931 to support families of Asia Minor refugees who settled at this district of Piraeus. Later she became the Chairwoman of the Children's Home in Dourgouti . . . "¹⁹

When Eleni found herself in the conservative, as compared to the rest of the western capitals, climate of Athens, she put an end to her career and worked as a volunteer for the health of refugee children from Asia Minor.

3.2. Studies and Qualifications

University studies did not always lead to a degree. From a total of around 7500 students enrolled in the School of Medicine during the 1890–1920 period, around 5500 received degrees (72%)²⁰. Figures for female students were even lower: of the 113 who had enrolled, 53 physicians graduated by 1920, that is, 1 in 2²¹. These data suggest the impact of marriage on the course of their studies as marriage was an impediment for a woman's career. Women's work was perceived as something temporary and morally harmful, which was unfit for femininity and anathema for family balance (Chronaki 1999). Of course, giving up one's studies might also reflect financial straits, but this is true for a small minority, since, as already stated, female university students of that period were primarily born to elite families. Research into the School of Medicine records shows (see Figure 2) that of the women who enrolled in the school between 1922–1923 and 1923–1933 academic years, 68% received a degree after an average of 7 years of studies. The same figure, for the grand total of students, comes to almost 56%. In 1941, of the 377 female students enrolled in the School of Medicine, only 64 received a degree (17%) after an average of 9 years of studies.

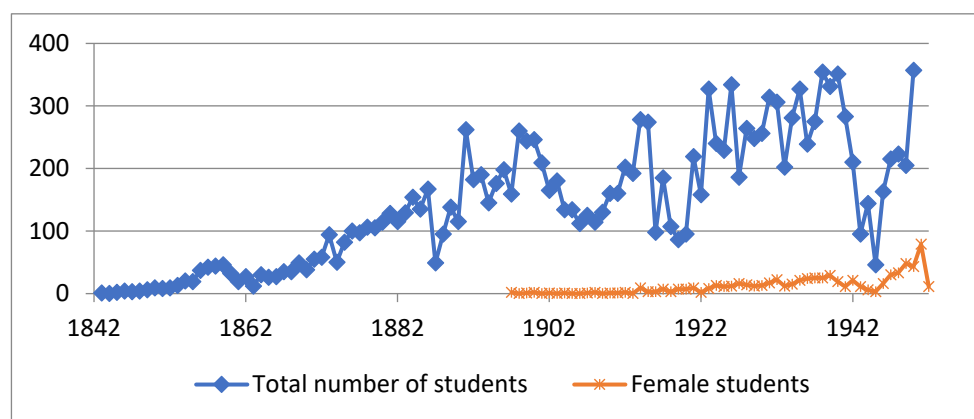


Figure 2. Number of graduates from the School of Medicine of the University of Athens, 1842–1952. Source: Boukis, D.²² and Directory of graduates from the School of Medicine, Historical Archive Secretariat of School of Medicine, Athens.

After WWII was declared, legislative decree No 215 (Official Gazette 210^A 25 June 1941) provided a range of benefits for students. One of them was the abolition of limited student admission number, of examination fees, and of charges for receiving one's degree title for those with no financial means. We also know that during the war period, free meals were provided to university students. These are the main reasons behind the rising number of female students during the war.

In the first half of the 20th century, there were very specific career prospects for graduates. The Public Sector offered few employment opportunities. Some women worked at public hospitals. The professorial level was still inaccessible for women, since they were

not eligible to be employed in the higher echelons of the public sector until 1953²³; until then, women's employment meant a low position in the hierarchy, such as typists and telephone operators. In the first half of the 20th century, discrimination in education and the professions was supported by legislation as well as prejudice.

Therefore, it seems that the private sector and maintaining a private practice was virtually the only route open to those who wanted to practice medicine. There are no official data or studies as to how many of the female graduates ended up practicing their profession. Once again, Greece was not the only country where female medicine graduates did not practice their profession; the same was observed in France until the 1920s²⁴. Making a cross-reference between the Directory of the graduates of the School of Medicine and the Commercial Guides to the city of Athens by Nikolaos Igleis contributes to drawing important conclusions. From 1896 up to and including 1957, a total of 684 women received a degree. Of these, 112 registered stating 'Athens' as their place of origin²⁵. Indeed, we were able to identify 77 of these (69%) with a private practice in N. Igleis' Commercial Guides for the 1910–1957 period.

In the same period, i.e., 1910–1957, there were 266 women physicians whose origin was not from Athens practicing medicine in the capital city. As early as the 19th century, the capital attracted significant floating population percentages. The University of Athens was one of the poles of attraction for such population groups: dozens of young people who came to the capital to study left the city as soon as they had received their degree; a typical example was the case of Eleni Skalleri, as already discussed. Another example is that of Ourania Anastasopoulou from Argostoli; after she completed her studies, she practiced her profession in Serres, where in 1913 she married Hippocrates Makris (1883–1967) from Constantinople, (son of physician Konstantinos Makris), who came to the region to fight in the Balkan Wars²⁶. The couple established a surgical and obstetrics clinic together. The husband was elected twice as a city councillor for Serres and was the President of the City Council. Ourania worked only at the clinic. In 1902, as soon as she received her degree, Eleni Kosmidou, from Philippopolis (present-day Plovdiv), married physician Xenophon Serdaris who had a private surgical and gynaecological clinic, as of 1908, on Dionysiou Areopagitou Street (Makrygiannis' Mansion)²⁷, but the wife does not appear as an associate at the clinic. The phenomenon of inter-professional marriages is typical for that time, as well as the fact that women follow their husbands and their main interest is to help their husbands' careers.

To conclude, after Alexandra and Angélique Panagiotatou from Cephallonia received their medical degrees with top marks in 1896, another eight women followed: Anthi Vasileiadou from Athens in 1898, Eleni Antoniadou from the island of Kea (Tzia), Anna Katsigra from Philippopolis and Vasiliki Papageorgiou from Ioannina in 1899, Eleni Kosmidou from Philippopolis in 1902, Isavella Theotoki from Corfu in 1904, Ourania Anastasopoulou from Argostoli and Eleni Skalleri from Hadrianopolis, Eastern Thrace (present-day Edirne in Turkey) in 1907. The first three are well known in relevant literature because they were the very first women studying medicine at a Greek university. Anna Katsigra is known due to her published works and her participation, along with Maria Kalapothakes²⁸ and Eleni Antoniadou, in caring for soldiers in the 1897 Greco-Turkish War and in WWI. Indeed, the involvement of Greece in wars, such as in 1897 and the Balkan Wars, offered an opportunity for women to participate in public life. Most of these graduates were Greek women born and raised either on the Ionian islands or outside the borders of the Greek nation state; in other words, they were daughters of Greek diaspora families.

4. "La Bourgeoisie Diplômée Athénienne" during the 20th Century

To shed some light on family practices, the bonds of family and relatives, and women's higher education, we focus our analysis on the female members of three families active in Athens. This is not, by any means, an exhaustive record, but rather highlights the methodological interest of micro history in the broader history of family and gender.

4.1. Born to “a Noble and Aristocratic Family”

In 1912, i.e., five years before women’s secondary education was incorporated in the state educational system and almost two decades after the first female student was admitted to the School of Philosophy, Mylonas Kyriacos Dion (1836–1914), an archaeologist and Privatdozent at the University of Athens, sent a reference letter to Paul Foucart (1836–1926), a professor of Archaeology and a Hellenist:

Precious friend and colleague, Mr. Paul Foucart,

The person dispatching this very letter of mine, Miss Elmina Zannou, a member of a noble and aristocratic family of a merchant, born to a Greek father and a French mother, is travelling to Paris, the city of cities, her intention being to pursue the study of Letters, which she has a great aptitude for; her motive is not to ultimately undertake teaching from a Chair, but her ardent zeal for Letters and Antiquity, her knowledge of which is most praiseworthy.

This excellent young maiden, most favourite to me and closely related to my family, I am introducing to you, a fervent friend of Greece and the Greek Letters. Please, guide her in the most expedient manner so that she may best pursue the study of Letters and guide her as to the courses she should attend at the Sorbonne.

Miss Elmina is accompanied by her father, a knowledgeable and well-educated man, a leading and most powerful industrialist in Greece, and by her mellifluous sister, who is also arriving at your city to perfect her vocal music studies, a field she is incomparably talented in.

Wishing you health and happiness and remaining your loving friend, I embrace you

K. Th. Mylonas”²⁹

The “knowledgeable and well-educated man” accompanying his daughter to Paris was Aristovoulos Zannos³⁰, who had studied in Athens (Law) and Montpellier (Horticulture), and was the central figure behind the significant business activities of the Zannos family (see Figure 3), which started as a wine-making company, later extending to cultivating high quality tobacco and to manufacturing. Aristovoulos (1856–1943) was married to a Frenchwoman, Alice Roche (a tanner’s daughter), and they had seven children: six daughters³¹ and a son who, at the age of 16, in 1905, went to Zurich to study Chemical Engineering before working for the family businesses (Pantelakis 2022).

In September 1912, Aristovoulos travelled to Paris with two of his daughters, 18-year-old Elmina and “mellifluous” 21-year-old Lucie. The purpose of the journey was for Elmina to enrol at the Sorbonne University where she had been accepted to study Letters³², having already completed her home tutoring. Lucie was to attend singing lessons. Elmina seemed to be passionate about her courses and the environment she had entered, as already during her first months in Paris she was dreaming of continuing her studies to receive her doctorate. It was a dream that her family seemed to support. In December of the same year, the firstborn, Edith, wrote from Athens:

“You are right, Mina; why should you not also receive the doctorate if you can, or if you wish to do so? If, on the other hand, you do not succeed, it is not the end of the world. Yesterday I read a card from Mr. Pernot to the Kanels. (Kanellopoulos’ family); he writes that you are very intelligent and that he will try to make something out of you if “husband ne nous l’ enleve pas long before that!!!”³³

The first obstacle blocking Elmina’s dreams, however, was the declaration of the Great War. A mere two years later, in 1914, Elmina was obliged to return to Athens, missing out on the opportunity to complete her studies. Her dreams for further studies were finally aborted a few years later, in 1919 when Elmina, at the age of 25, married Nikolaos Pantelakis, a bank employee who later became a broker; the couple had three children.

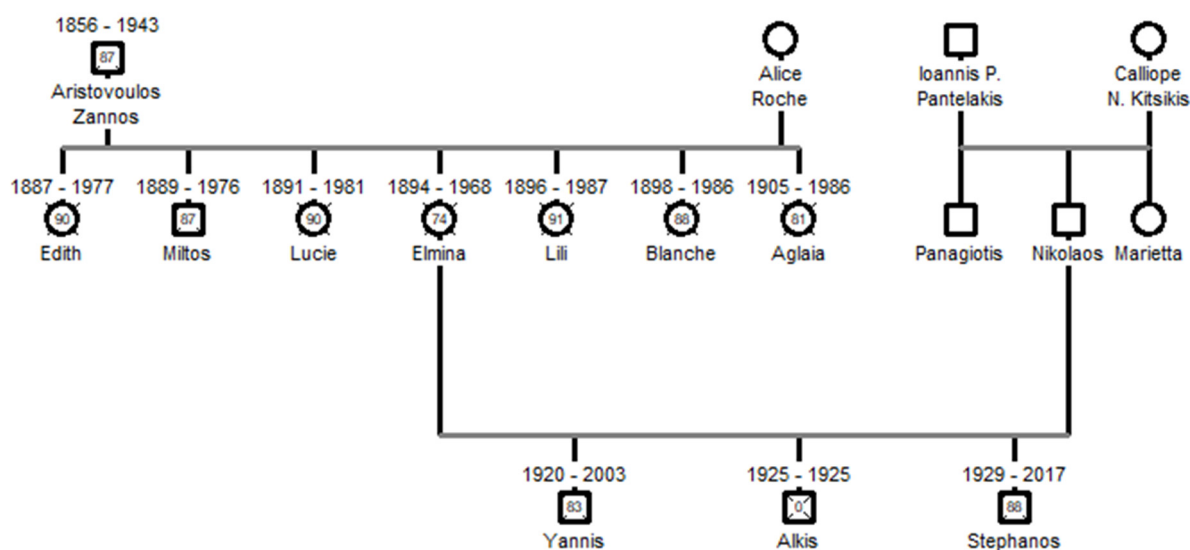


Figure 3. Elmina Zannos' family tree.

For the first few years of their married life, the couple lived with Nikolaos' parents, namely Ioannis Pantelakis and Kalliope, née Nik. Kitsiki, at their residence on Charilaou Trikoupi Street in the centre of Athens. Later on, when Aristovoulos Zannos, Elmina's father, had a new three-story house built nearby, Elmina and Nikolaos moved there and lived with Aristovoulos' family. In any case, Nikolaos' family residence was to be the dowry received by his sister, Marietta, when she married Merchant Stylianos K. Vlastos.

Elmina's contribution to society in matters pertinent to education, child upbringing and protection, as well as women's rights was quite significant. She joined the Socialist Women's Group, founded in 1919 (a branch of the Socialist Labour Party of Greece) and, as of 1922, she participated in the three-member Committee of the League for Women's Rights [Syndesmos gia ta Dikaionomata tis Gynaikas] founded in 1920. She served as the Chairwoman of the National Council of Greek Women from 1947 to 1966³⁴. She participated in numerous international conventions, such as the General Assembly of the International Union of Family Organisations in Geneva in 1948, as well as numerous others. Elmina was also an active participant in the First World Conference of Women organised in Athens in 1951. She was one of the first women Councillors of the City of Athens, in 1949–1951, and fought for women's suffrage in the general elections. Due to all of these activities, Elmina Pantelaki was invited by the US Government as the leader of the women's movement in Greece to go on a four-month-tour of the USA and deliver a series of speeches. For this activity, the Greek State presented her with a medal and the Municipality of Athens awarded her the golden key of the City of Athens. She died in Athens in April 1968³⁵.

The story above is typical of the attitude of the Athenian elite vis-à-vis women's education and university studies. The life of Elmina Zannou-Pantelaki indicates that women's university studies in the early 20th century, at least for families of the Athenian elite, did not necessarily aim at the acquisition of professional qualifications but, rather, at expanding one's knowledge and earning social recognition. Holding a degree was also an asset enhancing one's prospects of marrying a professional man. The university education of the first female students seems to have been a declaration of financial independence but, at the same time, of enriching one's personal life, widening the horizons of middle and upper social strata women's interests, and finding a way out of the ennui that characterised the lives of women of elite families and the idleness often characterising the members of these groups.

4.2. The First Female University Graduates and Their Difficulty in Being Recognised during the Inter-War Period

Our second heroine was the 4th female student admitted to the school of Medicine. Anna Katsigra was born on 12 December 1877, in Philippopolis (present-day Plovdiv in Bulgaria), a city with a significant Greek community of around 5000 to 6000 persons. Her father, Georgios (1810–1880) was a manufacturer of woolen fabrics, and he had four sons and four daughters. The family (see Figure 4) moved to Greece after the unification of Bulgaria in 1902–1903, a few years before 1906 and the expulsion of the Greeks from Eastern Rumelia, but Anna, the youngest daughter, had already moved in 1895. Following the practice adopted by many of their compatriots who established the ‘enclave’ of Philippopolis, the family settled in Larisa, the first Greek city, immediately after the Greco-Ottoman borders. Anna’s brother, Ioannis, studied agronomy in Bulgaria and worked in Larissa as an agronomist-arborist (Tryferoulis 2003)³⁶. He and his Larisa-born wife had two daughters and a son, Georgios (1914–1998), who made a name for himself as a surgeon and practiced at his own private surgical clinic established in 1947. Georgios I. Katsigras was also a collector–donor of works of art³⁷.

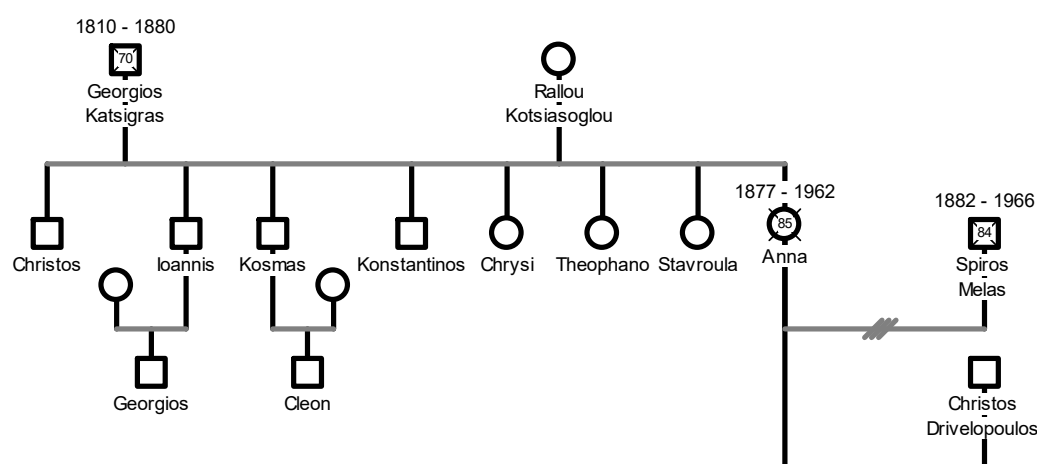


Figure 4. Anna Katsigra’s family tree.

Anna’s other brother, Kosmas, graduated from Tsotyleios Boarding Secondary School in Tsotyli³⁸ (near Kozani) in 1905 and continued his education in Athens; he initially enrolled at the School of Pharmacy and later, in 1907, at the School of Medicine. Kosmas specialized in gynecology and returned to Larisa, where he practiced and got married to a physician’s sister. In 1943, while being transported as a hostage to Italy, he met a tragic death along with numerous other citizens of Larisa, when the boat carrying them was torpedoed by an English submarine in the Adriatic Sea. His son, Cleon, also studied Medicine and established his own private clinic in Larisa, in the 1950s. The two cousins, Cleon and Georgios, had a leading role in the community of physicians in Larisa.

The youngest brother studied pharmacy and practiced in Almyros, a small city near Volos. Three of the sisters remained in Bulgaria and one of them, Stavroula, studied pedagogy in Switzerland.

As already mentioned, Anna enrolled at the School of Medicine in September 1895. Still a student during the 1897 Greco-Turkish War, Anna volunteered and served as a nurse³⁹, along with Maria Kalapothakes⁴⁰. Later, during the Balkan Wars and the First World War, Anna served as a military nurse in Volos, Larisa, Preveza, and Thessaloniki. She was decorated for her services in the 1897 Greco-Turkish War, the Balkan Wars and WWI, and also received an award from the Red Cross. In 1900, Anna, Eleni, and Vasiliki Papageorgiou from Ioannina (Giannena) in Epirus, graduated from university. Anna left immediately for Paris and Tarnier University Clinic (an important Obstetrics & Maternity and Infant

Care Clinic), where she specialized in Obstetrics and was taught by Pierre-Constant Budin (1846–1907), a pioneer in modern Pediatrics⁴¹.

In January 1902⁴² Anna returned from Paris to Athens; a month later she opened her own private practice in the heart of the capital, close to the Municipal Hospital. From the Athenian Press:

*“Anna Katsigra, physician, obstetrician, gynaecologist; studied at specialised clinics in Paris. Working hours, daily: 2–5 pm at 20, Pinakoton Street (present-day Charilaou Trikoupi Street, Athens); Thursdays: free clinic for the indigent”*⁴³.

Later, in 1908, a plain announcement in the press stated that the physician moved her private practice to 84, Akadimias Street and received patients daily from 3 to 5 pm⁴⁴. From 1903 to 1905 Anna Katsigra was the Director of the Public Obstetrics Clinic of Athens, and after 1905 she worked as a private physician.

Although Anna held the view that, in a couple, the husband should be at least 10 years older than his wife, when she was 32 in 1909, she married 27-year-old Spyros Melas (1882–1966), a nationalist journalist and playwright, who later became a member of the Greek Academy. They divorced 5 years later⁴⁵ and had no children.

In 1910 Anna was a candidate for the professorial chair⁴⁶ at the School of Medicine of the University of Athens. Among 87 male physicians⁴⁷ vying for various Chairs, Anna, a candidate for the Chair of Obstetrics, was elected for the honorary title of Privatdozentin ([Ziogou-Karastergiou n.d.](#)) in 1911, that is three years after Angélique Panagiotatou was elected as the first woman Privatdozentin who was awarded this title at the Medicine School. Men continued to dominate the professoriate at Greek universities; Greek Society accepted female teachers, but it was inconceivable that there could also be female university professors. Zacharias Papantoniou, a major Greek intellectual and man of letters, wrote about Katsigra's election:

*A new Privatdozentin in Greece. Mrs. Anna Katsigra-Mela. The supporters of patriarchal kitchens will feel another bite in their stomachs and hearts as another pot of ragout is to be delayed. . . . The three thousand Privatdozents will see one fewer Chair at the University . . . For years I've been hearing Greek professionals and professors attacking each other about plagiarising books of foreign authors and presenting them as their own. . . . Mrs. Mela recently authored a treatise on children's morbidity in Greece. I am confident that everything presented in it is her own work, accumulated case-by-case by a worker bee, with the great patience, faith, acuity, and idealism a woman develops when she wants to work. Besides everything else, her book is revolutionary . . . It raises a flag reflecting her concern for infants, presents shameful morbidity statistics—which should make everyone in the country blush to their ears—and raises awareness for a campaign . . . As for the ragout, what is there to say? I have no idea. I remember that I only tasted once a sweet cake homemade by Mrs. Mela—earth and skies! She is indeed a physician*⁴⁸.

Having received the title of *Privatdozentin*, Anna became even more active and left an even brighter trail in the daily press thanks to her activities and general contribution to society. She delivered public lectures at various venues (at the Lyceum Club of Greek Women⁴⁹, the foyer of the Royal Theatre⁵⁰, Parnassos Literary Society⁵¹ and the Archaeological Society⁵²), she authored articles and books and participated in conferences, where she delivered speeches on maternity and childhood⁵³. Anna was also active in the battle against tuberculosis. In 1912 she was the only woman physician who participated in the Pan-Hellenic Tuberculosis Conference in Volos; she invited all women's organisations to join their forces and help fight TB ([Panagou 2017](#)). Besides, as of 1914, Anna taught at the Sunday School for female workers at the Labour Centre⁵⁴ in an effort to influence young men and women and teach them how to protect themselves from TB⁵⁵ as well as how to control their sexual urges. Finally, in 1914, she was appointed to the post of school doctor in Volos.⁵⁶ That is where she met her second husband, the inspector of primary schools in Thessaly, Christos Drivelopoulos. When he was appointed General Inspector in the

northern regions newly united with Greece after WWI, Anna followed him and worked as a school doctor. We do not know how long they stayed there or the spouses' age difference.

"It is not an absolute fact that a man should be 10 years older than his wife. When a girl is 20 years old, a suitable husband is a young man of 30. However, when a girl is 30, a 45-year-old man is more suitable. (. . .) Still, it is good for you to know that a man can become a father even at an advanced age. This is why an old person of advanced age is worth having, as a partner or father, compared to a young one who has aged and is overworked prematurely due to late nights, debauchery and venereal diseases." (Katsigra 1935a)

Anna Katsigra, as an upper middle-class physician, feminist and author of numerous books and leaflets, often focused on sexuality (Katsigra 1928; Katsigra 1932; Katsigra 1935b; Katsigra 1951) and Greeks' nutrition (Katsigra 1940; Katsigra 1957). However, her work on sexuality, albeit open-minded for that time, also aimed at moral guidance (Gotsinas 2020). Her life work goes far beyond the field of medicine; she was a pedagogue and a social reformer. As a feminist physician she authored newspaper articles to highlight the working conditions of young female employees who "pay a high toll to the Minotaur of phthisis". Another topic she often wrote about was the importance of observing hygiene rules, regular medical check-ups, and higher pay for young women to ensure they would have a healthier diet and more rest (Katsigra 1927).

In the 1950s, during the eighth decade of her life, a widow by then, Anna had left the city center and lived in the suburb of Patisia. She was still active and authored books. In 1958, at the age of 81, she had her last book published; it was titled "Extended Youth" (Paratetamena neia). The book was presented in an article⁵⁷ by her first husband, who she obviously maintained a good relationship with. Anna Katsigra died four years later, in 1962, at the age of 85 years.

Artist P. Lefkothea (1865–1941) painted a portrait of Anna Katsigra, which is exhibited at the museum founded with the donation of Georgios I. Katsigras, her nephew, an art lover and donor of artistic works to the city of Larisa. Katsigras' family—hailing from Philippopolis (present-day Plovdiv, in Bulgaria), a significant commercial hub of the Balkans and its members, living in Larisa and Athens, are closely associated with medicine, and known for their contribution to society.

Anna Katsigra herself initially spent several years offering her services as a nurse, and she only started her own private practice when she finally returned from Paris. Patently, she could not have been welcomed by her male university contemporaries at the University of Athens. It was, however, only her specialisation in gynecology that could afford her some clientèle. It should be kept in mind that women sought consultation mainly from midwives, rather than gynecologists. This explains why Anna devoted herself to authoring articles and books and to delivering speeches and that, though a serious and distinguished fully qualified physician, she remained a self-employed professional. The only thing she gained from her work was an honorary title and her good name. It was clearly too early for a woman to pursue a distinguished medical career.

4.3. Moscha Delagrammatika—A Woman Physician in Post-War Athens⁵⁸

Our third heroine, Moscha Delagrammatika from the Island of Andros, established the first private pediatric clinic in Athens.

Moscha's grandfather (see Figure 5) was Zorzis Kampanis, a notary public (1836–1917) from Aidonia Korthiou village on the Island of Andros; his father was Antonis Kampanis (1790–1886), one of the Village Elders (Dimogerontas) and his mother Aikaterini Kotaki. Zorzis married Moscha Bisti and they had four children: three daughters and, finally, the much-desired son. It was quite rare at the time, particularly in insular regions, but all three daughters of the family were 'learned', in other words they had attended school, most probably in Hermoupolis, the capital of the Cyclades. Besides the girls' good education,

the parents saw to it that all three had good marriages by picking husbands who held high offices or were university graduates.

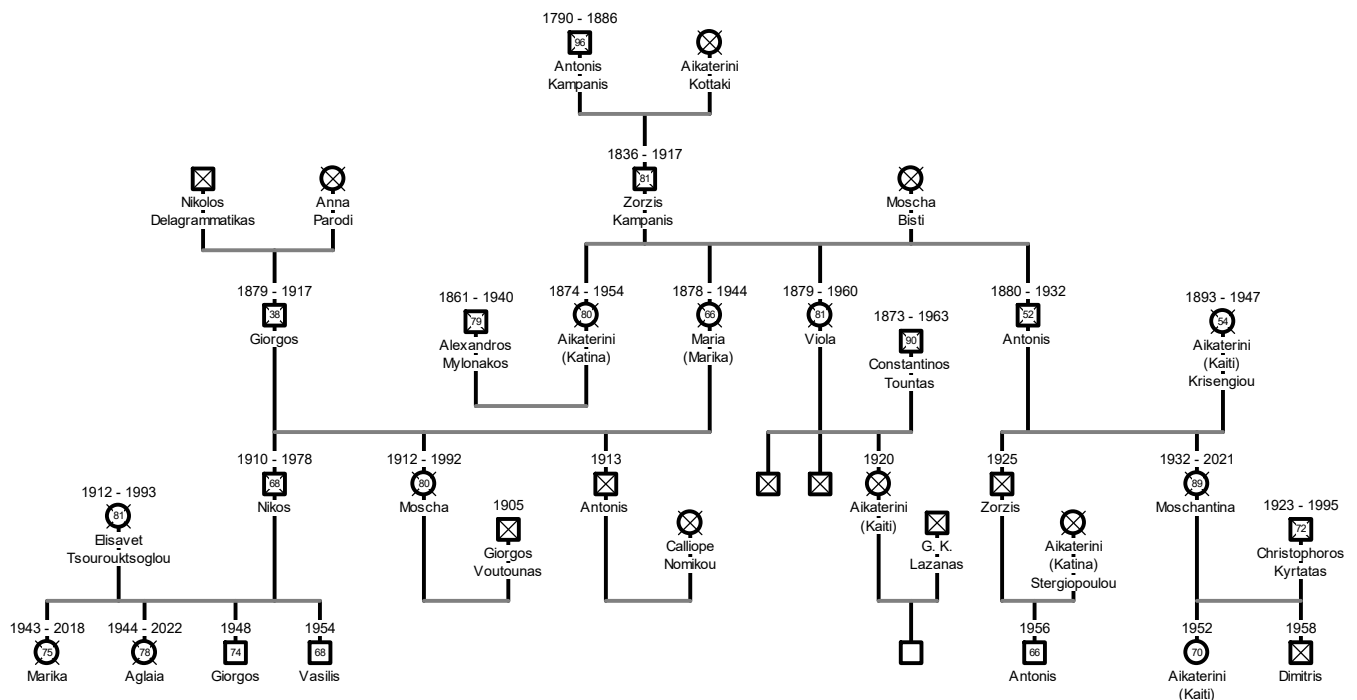


Figure 5. Family tree of Moscha Delagrammatika.

In 1901 the eldest daughter, Katina (1874–1954), married Alexandros Ant. Mylonakos (1861–1940), a military man and the Commanding Officer of the Palace Guards⁵⁹. The couple had no children and lived initially in the neighborhood of Exarcheia, and, after 1935, in their own house in Piraeus.

The third daughter, Viola (1879–1960), married a husband from Andros (born in the village of Gavrión); his name was Constantinos Tountas, son of Antonios (1873–1963). After graduating from the 1st Secondary School of Athens in 1891⁶⁰, Constantinos, along with his brother Nicolaos, enrolled at the University. Both brothers graduated in 1896: Constantinos from the Department of Mathematics and Nicolaos from the School of Law. Viola and Constantinos had two sons and lived in the then developing upper middle-class neighbourhood near the Church of St. Panteleimon, in a two-story house they owned. After both of their children died from diphtheria at the age of around 10 years, Viola and Constantinos adopted their niece, Kaiti, the daughter of Nikolaos (born around 1920). Kaiti studied at the School of Dentistry and married gynecologist G.K. Lazanas (from Kalamata). Until the death of Kaiti's adoptive parents, the couple lived with them and had their private practice surgeries in Pangrati, Athens⁶¹. The couple then moved to Kalamata, where they bought property and established an obstetrics clinic. Their son became a physician, too.

The fourth child of the Kampanis family, and the only son, was Antonis (1880–1932). Although the family saw to it that their daughters were 'educated', their son did not pursue the most likely course, i.e., to follow his father's profession or attend university. Antonis worked for a while at a local branch of the Bank of Athens in Chora, the capital of Andros. He then lived on the family's estate property income. He went on to have a 'good marriage'; his wife, Kaiti Krisengioui⁶² (1893–1947), was the daughter of one of the two pharmacists in Chora. The couple had two children: Zorzis (1925), named after his grandfather, and Moschantina (1932–2021)⁶³, given a name that combined those of her paternal grandmother, Moscha, and her maternal grandfather, Constantinos. Antonis died of typhus at the age of 52, soon after his daughter was born.

The second daughter of Zorzis, the Andriot notary public and his wife, was Marika (1878–1944), our heroine's mother. In 1908–1909, Marika also married a man from Andros, who was around her age; his name was Giorgos Delagrammatikas (1879–1917), son of the Andriot farmer Nikolos, and Anna Parodi⁶⁴ (daughter of a seaman). Giorgos went to Athens in 1898 to study at the Philosophy School of the Othonian University; he graduated in 1902⁶⁵. Giorgos initially worked as a Language and Literature teacher at the secondary school of the small town of Domokos (in Central Greece) and was later appointed Headmaster in the town of Argos (in Peloponnese), where he died at the young age of 36 in 1917 (probably from malaria or pneumonia).

Marika and Giorgos had three children: Nikolaos (1910–1978), Moscha (our heroine) (1912–1992), and Antonis (1913/4). According to oral testimonies, the family did not follow the father to the various places where he served as a secondary school teacher. This meant that the children spent their early childhood at Chora, on the Island of Andros. After her husband died, in compliance with the customs of those times, Marika's brother, Antonis (still single then), became the guardian of his sister and her orphaned children, while Nikolaos, the first born of the widow, started working in the summer holidays at the age of seven so as to help with the family budget. It is not known when Marika's family left Andros, but it could not have been long after her husband died. Seeking proximity to the family, Marika and her children moved to a rented flat very close to her sister Viola's home, in the district of St. Panteleimon. The three children attended school, learned French, and took music lessons. Nikos and Antonis learned how to play the violin and Moscha the piano.

Nikos, Moscha's elder brother, the firstborn, was the one who had to work and support the family (and later finance the studies of his sister and his younger brother at the Sorbonne in Paris). Until Nikos was appointed to the Consignments Deposit Bureau in 1940 (where he worked until his retirement), he had been involved in various 'entrepreneurial' activities. He kept accounting books, drove lorries, rented and ran open-air cinema theatres, worked at open-air cinema canteens. In 1940, keeping his mother in the dark because she would not approve, Nikos married Elisavet Tsourouktsoglou (1911–1993), a refugee from Kordelio (present-day Karşıyaka); her father, Hippocrates, was an artist and her mother, Aglaia (†1943), a teacher at the Evangeliki Scholi (Evangelical School). Nikos and Elisavet (Veta) had four children⁶⁶. Nikos, a Francophone, had an artistic personality: he painted and wrote poetry⁶⁷ and was a regular member of the inner circle of poet Kostis Palamas, a central figure of the Greek literary generation of the 1880s. Nikos had a stroke and died in 1978, shortly after his third grandson (who was named after him) was born.

Antonis, the youngest brother, studied at Panteios School of Political Sciences, received his doctorate from the Sorbonne and worked for the Inland Revenue Agency until his retirement. At the age of 50, in 1964, Antonis married Calliope Nomikou (born to the shipping family from Santorini), at Pireaus; the wedding was an imitation of the king's wedding ceremony. The couple did not have any children and separated a few years later. Calliope's sister, Sophia⁶⁸, was Moscha's friend and contemporary at the School of Medicine.

In 1941, ignoring her mother's threats to fall from the balcony and kill herself, Moscha, at the age of 29, enrolled at the School of Medicine⁶⁹. In the summer of 1949, Moscha completed her medical studies and, in 1951, having specialized in Microbiology, she left for the Université de Paris to continue her studies (1951–1952). Moscha returned to Greece (traveling on the train on her own) in 1952. Due to her severe myopia, once back in Athens, she decided to specialize in Pediatrics. She 'trained' with Professor Constantinos Choremis, at the Pediatric Clinic of Agia Sophia Children's Hospital, where she also became a Privatdozentin.

In July 1953, Moscha established one of the first private pediatric clinics, in the upper middle-class neighbourhood of Kypseli in Athens. The clinic was housed in an old two-story mansion. The wards were on the first floor and the radiology and biochemistry

laboratories in the basement. Isolation ‘areas’ (beds ‘separated’ by glass panes) were also available.

In March 1954, an employee of the National Bank of Greece, El. N. Kypraios, publicly thanked Moscha by publishing this in EMPROS Newspaper:

“I consider it my duty to publicly express my gratitude to the Administration of ‘PANACHRANTOS’ Model Paediatric Clinic, namely Miss Moscha Delagrammatika, who saved and cured my young son, Neocles, who was admitted to the Clinic in a truly serious condition. It is fortunate for a child and a relief for us, the parents, that the distinguished physician had the salutary inspiration to establish, all on her own, the only Specialised Paediatric Clinic in Greece, where sick children find such immediate and effective care.”

In 1955, at the age of 43, Moscha married Giorgos Voutounas, 7 years her senior (born in 1905), a friend and former colleague of her elder brother⁷⁰. The bride arrived at the church wearing a simple light blue dress and cap, accompanied by her nephews and nieces. In November 1956, the married couple rented a flat on Phokionos Negri Street, very close to the clinic.

The clinic seems to have been well-known and Moscha participated in various scientific conferences in Europe⁷¹; she also visited European hospitals to keep up with new developments in her field. However, the clinic was not doing as well as she would like. In 1956, while at a conference in Rome, she wrote to her husband: “... There are some issues with the clinic that trouble me somewhat. Are we ever to find the magic button for happiness? Is it necessary for us to always be so anxious?”⁷² Despite the large number of patients treated at the clinic, the high rent and the remuneration of the staff and visiting doctors (among them the eminent Greek physician C. Choremis himself), almost always resulted in a negative balance.

The clinic finally closed in 1959. For a short period of time the couple lived on the ground floor where the clinic used to be, and then moved to Moscha’s old neighbourhood. In 1980 they moved to a property⁷³ they owned, in the community of Daphne on a plot of land Moscha had inherited from her aunt Katina. All these years, Moscha had her own private practice at their rented flats of residence. She was finally appointed as a physician at IKA (Social Security Institute), and was promoted to inspector, a post she held until her retirement.

Mocha and Giorgos had no children. However, the couple treated the children of the extended family as if they were their own children and grandchildren. In compliance with their wishes, Moscha and Giorgos were buried at the 1st Cemetery of Athens.

When Moscha enrolled at university in 1941, female students were not an object of scorn, nor did she have to face men’s reactions as at the end of the 19th century. Even so, it was not easy for her to pursue her dreams in defiance of her mother’s wishes. She was rather an unconventional and pioneering spirit, considering her delayed decision to marry, her traveling around Europe unchaperoned, and her driving a car. Moscha was definitely supported by her family, since it was her elder brother, according to testimonies, who financed her studies and helped her open the clinic. Furthermore, her husband used to keep the clinic accounting books.

The role of the brother-guardian had also been seen in the previous generation, when Uncle Antonis, although the youngest, but a boy, undertook the care of widowed Marika and the orphans. After his death, his wife gave the widow a significant sum of money so that she could buy a house for her family in Athens.

Although Moscha’s genealogical tree includes some of the oldest noble families of the island of Andros (Kampanis, Kairis, Bistis, Kotakis), her career does not seem to have been helped by it. It seems that this family branch severed its bonds with the island family members and the broader network of relatives following the mother’s death. Though, family bonds were close and further strengthened by the roles that female family members adopted. The eldest and childless daughter, Katina, offered a home to the orphans of her

brother Antonis, but also made available to her nephews and nieces the significant real estate property she inherited from her husband. This real estate remains in the hands of the extensive family three generations later. The ‘koumbaros’ relationship established through godparenting is another factor strengthening family bonds. Aunt Katina and her husband were the godparents of the daughter of Katina’s brother while Aunt Viola was the godmother of the first son of her eldest nephew, Nikos (Moscha’s brother). Moscha was the godmother of her eldest niece, Marika, and Marika’s firstborn son, while Moscha’s husband, Giorgos, was the godfather and best man of the younger nephew, Vasilis. Later he became the godfather of Vasilis’ youngest daughter. Moscha was also the godmother of two ‘granddaughters. Indeed, the youngest was named after her.

The three cases we examined in detail represent different family mentalities. The first case, that of Elmina Zannou-Pantelaki, typical of the elite of the era, was characterised by wide general knowledge. It also reflects the Athenian elite practice of creating family bonds through marriage with individuals of the upper social strata similar to themselves, probably to remind us that exchanges are the foundation of the system of kinship and alliance. In the second story, that of Anna Katsigra, we encountered a family of extended geographic mobility; all family members attended university. This was typical of Greek diaspora families who moved to the newly established Greek state. Anna and Elmina were rather conservative feminists (Avdela and Psarra 1985; Moshou-Sakorrafou 1990): they do not seem to be ideologically related to the radical feminist Avra Drakopoulou-Theodoropoulou (1880–1963)⁷⁴ nor to embrace the more progressive ideas of the League for Woman’s Rights. The third case was a family from the islands, one of many incorporated in the Athenian population during the inter-war period; this family held rather conservative views and the young woman whose life we traced had to use ‘rebellion’ as a last resort option. To conclude, the three heroines of our study changed dramatically the scale of their own families compared to their families of origin: Elmina had only three children despite coming from family of seven children, Anna married twice but had no children, though she came from a family with eight children, and Moscha had no child, either, although she came from a family of three children. Since none of them was against having children, there must have been other reasons why there was such a significant reduction in the number of progeny from one generation to the next.

Different places of origin, different customs and family cultures lead to this variety of backgrounds and family configurations.

5. Conclusions

The matter of women’s university education, contemporary and directly related to the emerging feminist movement in Greece, has already been studied (Ziogou-Karastergiou 1988, 2015). When Callirhoe Parren launched the feminist movement in Greece with the founding of the newspaper, *Ephemeris ton kyrion* (Ladies’ Journal), in 1887, her main aim was to awaken women, inform them about their rights and lead them towards self-awareness. The main goal for Parren was for women to have access to all educational levels and be financially independent by having an ‘honest’ job that would reflect their education and qualifications and skills.

“For us, the very position of a woman is despairing. There is no actual state education, in the true sense of the word, for women. There is no technical or vocational training either. Life outside wedlock is impossible. Marriage without a dowry is equally impossible. [. . .] Who is it that suffers most among the working classes? Women. [. . .] Are women in upper social strata happier? Not always. This is, in general terms, the picture of contemporary women”. (Parren 1891)

It took almost two decades before women (only single women) were allowed to work at post offices (1907), telegram offices (1908) and the National Bank (1910) (Avdela 1995). At the end of the 1920s, women were excluded from becoming judges; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not allow women to follow a diplomatic career, nor did the General

Chemical State Laboratory of Greece employ them⁷⁵. Besides, the Chemical Laboratory of the Ministry of Finance excluded women chemists from joining their personnel⁷⁶.

At the end of the 19th century, 80% of women were illiterate, secondary education was mainly private, and the only profession an educated woman could choose was to be a primary school teacher⁷⁷, and these were members of low and middle social strata (very few could become authors or journalists). Establishing schools, high schools, and girls' secondary schools in the 1910s provided broader access to university education for women. Our first heroine, feminist Elmina Zannou-Pantelaki, who did not complete her studies in Paris, became a member of the National Women's Council. She also wrote articles on the need to establish a "Superior Women's School", which was finally founded in 1921 by the Association for Women's Rights:

"The Educational Sector is one of the main branches of the National Council, which, with hard work, can undoubtedly achieve truly significant results for the progress of women's intellectual development in our country. The aim of the sector is, generally speaking, to investigate all issues concerning women's education so as to be successful in improving and completing it and so as to bring the educational system of Greece to the level of systems in all civilized states." (Pantelaki 1921)

Three decades later, during the inter-war period, 40% of all women were literate (1928), and, furthermore, the number of female civil servants had increased.

Despite the increased number of female students, few were the women who completed their studies. In the 1910s, 36 women received a degree in medicine, in the 1920s there were 104, in the 1930s 203, and in the 1940s 198. Although most of these women worked as nurses or midwives rather than as gynecologists, it was their education that helped them enter 'men's' forbidden world.

However, little is known about female university graduates who worked as self-employed professionals, and it is this gap our study wants to fill. Numerous archives and records were studied to trace the course of these women and their struggles to practice medicine in a range of fields, from charity to private practice and participating in public life. When women started seeking to practice their profession in earnest, and, therefore, compete with male physicians (Bournova 2023), they came up against a huge obstacle: the conservative culture supporting that the ideal position for women was to be a wife and mother at home. In other words, there was no time for women to engage in further training or to improve their knowledge. Additionally, it was rare for women physicians to appear as authors in medical journals, and the only post they could have at a hospital was that of a microbiologist. In fact, this is what most of them did until WWII.

In the 1950s, besides women pediatricians, gynaecologists and microbiologists, there were some who started specializing in anaesthesiology and ophthalmology, and the number of practicing women physicians skyrocketed. Women's knowledge of foreign languages was often truly impressive; since they stated⁷⁸ that they spoke French, English and German; this is evidence that they were born to families of the upper social strata. However, in the first half of the 20th century, the mentality about the position and role of women in the family does not seem to differ much from that held predominantly by members of the lower social strata.

As very aptly noted (Varikas 1987) about the beginning of the 20th century, inequality of educational opportunities was more apparent among the upper and middle social strata of urban centres. Girls started their primary education on equal terms with boys to be later excluded from actual secondary education and, of course, from university studies. Such exclusion was a true disadvantage for these women because it deepened the cultural gap separating them from men. Furthermore, it reinforced the views about women being backward and ignorant within a milieu where culture and knowledge were considered primary values.

Our three heroines escaped, to a certain extent, the fate of their contemporary women thanks to their education and to the encouragement of their family members. These women

managed to use their education to contribute to society as well as to gain, if not a university post or the success of a thriving enterprise, social recognition and a worthy place in society.

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Notes

- ¹ The notion that a girl pupil is to be prepared for the role of mother and wife influenced the curriculum/syllabus and contents of textbooks; at that time language books were published specifically for girls' schools, p. 62. The Royal Decree of 6/18 February 1834 stipulates that "at girls' schools training in women's handicraft is to be offered". An 1882 Decree stipulates that the subject of Physical Education "is to be substituted by sewing and women's handicraft lessons". In 1894, Geometry and Experimental Physics were removed; girls' school syllabuses and the view adopted was that "education in primary schools for girls should be teachings subjects at the most elementary level". (Dalakoura and Ziogou Karastergiou 2015). In 1917 the first state secondary and Greek schools for children were established; see (Ziogou-Karastergiou 1986, p. 355).
- ² One of the first private boarding and day-students' schools founded in Athens (1837) that received most students. Arsakeio comprised the Lower School for girls aged 6–14 years and the Higher School, the graduates of which received a teacher's certificate after passing examinations before the State Teachers' Training School Committee. After 1840 Arsakeion also had a kindergarten.
- ³ In 1884, Sevasti Kallisperi submitted an enrolment application to the School of Philosophy of the University of Athens; she received a permit and, although she was successful in her examinations, the then Ministry of Education did not allow her to attend due to her gender. Sevasti Kallisperi, however, did not lose hope; she went to Paris, where she studied at the Sorbonne and, when she returned to Greece in 1891, she was appointed as a teacher of French at Arsakeion Girls' School.
- ⁴ In the same year, applications by two Arsakeion graduates, namely Eleni Rousou and Florentia Fountoukli were rejected. Fountoukli was finally admitted to the Department of Mathematics two years later.
- ⁵ Born to a wealthy family with a merchant father, Alexandra Panagiotatou had received a very good education, first in Corfu and later at Arsakeion, the Athenian Girls' Secondary School. She also attended the French École of Saint-Joseph, a Catholic school run by Sisters of St. Joseph, as well as private courses at Varvakeion Boys' Secondary School to receive her baccalaureate. After Alexandra received her doctorates in December 1896, the Panagiotatos' family moved to Vienna, where their daughter completed her studies. In 1900 the family moved to Alexandria, Egypt. Alexandra died a few years after they arrived in Alexandria. Angélique worked at the Greek Community Hospital in the city and held a private practice as well. She was also active in a wide range of cultural and scientific fields and charitable agencies and maintained a literary salon. Angélique specialised in tropical diseases and microbiology at the Institut Pasteur, in Paris, and was a lecturer in Hygiene from 1908 to 1910 at the Faculty of Medicine in Athens; in other words, she was also the first woman tutor at the Greek University. Angélique also taught the course of tropical diseases at the University of Athens at various time periods (e.g., in the Academic Year 1938–1939). She was elected to the Academy of Athens and received an award for her scientific work from the Academy of Sciences and the Academy of Medicine of Paris. Angélique was a genuine example of the Greek elite of the diaspora during the first half of the 20th century.
- ⁶ In 1913, out of 1000 registered students, there were 79 women in Germany, 92 in France and 287 in Switzerland. Pierre (Moulinier 2012, p. 83).
- ⁷ Country Grand Total: 24%. Women university students outnumbered men in the 1990s.
- ⁸ Medicine, Pharmacy, Dentistry, Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics.
- ⁹ Philosophy, Law.
- ¹⁰ "At any rate, between 1877—the year the first women received a university degree- and 1900, 32% of women students chose to graduate from exact sciences or medicine schools, more often than we might be led to believe today: Almost one graduate in three" (Govoni 2008).
- ¹¹ Moulinier (2012). Les étudiants étrangers à Paris au XIXe siècle. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, p. 88.
- ¹² Moulinier (2012). Op.cit. pp. 124–33.
- ¹³ Ziogou-Karastergiou, Sidiroula. 2015. p. 197.

- Furthermore, the National Bank of Greece in 1931, stated in its internal regulation that only single women were to be hired, who would automatically be dismissed when they got married.
- Concerning the attitude towards women students at French universities at the end of the 19th century, see Moulinier, pp. 91, 98–106.
- Regarding the hostility of male students towards female students see (Moulinier, 2012, pp. 102–3).
- An exception was noted in the 1930s, when women students originating from refugee regions made up 19% of women students at the School of Medicine. This was obviously a consequence of the arrival and settlement of refugees in Greece in the previous years.
- Ziougou-Karastergiou, Sidiroula. 2015. p. 191.
- <https://history.arsakeio.gr/index.php/2018-07-13-09-47-16/131-elene-skalleri-persinaki> (accessed on 6 January 2023).
- Boukis, Dimitrios. No dated. *Οι καρποί του μανθάνειν ιατρική στο ΕΚΠΑ [Οι καρποί του manthanein iatriki sto N.K.U.A] (The Fruits of Studying Medicine at the National Kapodistrian University of Athens, (1837–1937 a Centenary)*, hand-typed manuscript, Athens: Historical Archive of N.K.U.A., p. 18.
- The percentage for the total number for all University Schools is much lower. Of the 319 women students who had enrolled in the years 1890–1920, only 64 graduated by 1920. Ziougou-Karastergiou, Sidiroula. 1988, p. 50 and graduate registers, Historical Archive of the National & Kapodistrian University of Athens. We would like to thank Chaido Barkoula, researcher in the Historical Archive of the N.K.U.A. for her help.
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- In other words, when Greece signed the International Convention of New York in 1952 stipulating equal civil rights for women and equal access to all public offices, and by virtue of the special law of 1955. (see Avdela, Efi. 1987. *Μισθωτές σχέσεις και φυλετικός καταμερισμός της εργασίας: οι γυναίκες δημόσιοι υπάλληλοι στην Ελλάδα, στο πρώτο μισό του 20ού αιώνα [Misthotes scheseis kai fyletikos katamerismos tis ergasias: oi gynaiikes dimosioi ypalliloi stin Ellada, sto proto miso tou 20ou aiona] (Salaried Employment and Gender Distribution of labour in Greece, in the first half of the 20th century)*. MNEMON, vol. 11, po. 234–46. <https://doi.org/10.12681/mnimon.607> (accessed on 6 January 2023).
- Moulinier (2012, pp. 386–92).
- Of the 684, 161 did not state their place of origin.
- <https://www.serresparatiritis.gr/ekilwsi-apo-tin-emeis-kai-ton-iatriko-sullogo-serrwn-%E2%80%8Equotippokratis-makris-1883-1967-iatros-logios-k-politikosquot-savvato-11-martiou-sti-vivliothiki/articles/38/15979/> (accessed on 6 January 2023)
- EMPROS Newspaper 4 October 1908.
- Born in Athens in 1859, to a pastor father, she enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine in Paris in 1886 to become a physician in 1894, at the age of 35. (Moulinier, 2012, pp. 160–61 and p. 392). Manidakis, Nikolas. 2004, pp. 70–104.
- Letter of introduction by Kyriacos Dion Mylonas (1836–1913) to Professor of Archaeology and Hellenist Paul Foucart (1836–1926), Athens 12/25 September 1912, Archive of Lucie Zannou-Fakarou, held by A. Fakarou, Letter No 856. A sincere thank you to Mr. Antonis Fakaros for entrusting us with valuable material from his family archive.
- <https://www.nspantelakis.gr/images/pdf/3oikonomikiistoria/s1622012.pdf> (accessed on 6 January 2023).
- Edith (1887–1977), Miltos (1889–1976), Lucie (1891–1981), Elmina (1894–1968), Lili (1896–1987), Blanche (1898–1986) and Aglaia (1905–1986).
- In the 1880s the ‘licence’ document (Bachelor’s Degree) was received from the Faculty of Letters in four categories: Letters, Philosophy, History, Modern Languages. French, Latin and Greek were compulsory for all students.
- Letter from Edith Zannou to Elmina Zannou, Athens 29 December 1912, Archive of Lucie Zannou-Fakarou, held by A. Fakarou, Letter No 236.
- , 2009. *100 Anniversary National Council of Greek Women [E.S.E.]*, Athens: E.S.E., p. 20.
- <https://greekarchivesinventory.gak.gr/index.php/u-1853> (accessed on 6 January 2023).
- A sincere thank you to Mrs. Lytra, descendant of the family Georgiou Katsigra, for the information she shared with us.
- G.I. Katsigras’ collection, created in 1950–1965, includes 780 works -paintings, engravings and drawings- from the 19th century to the mid-20th century, which was donated to the City of Larisa in 1981, the stipulation being to build new premises and establish a Legal Entity named “Larisa Municipal Gallery - G.I. Katsigras’ Museum”; this was founded in 1983.
- The Boarding Secondary School known as Tsotyleios School, was erected in 1873 by the Macedonian Brotherhood for Education (*Macedoniki Philekpaideftiki Adelphotita*), under the auspices of the Patriarchate in Constantinople.
- EMPROS Newspaper 26 April 1897.
- Maria (1849–1941) was the first Greek woman to enrol in the Académie de Médecine de Paris. She was the daughter of Evangelist physician and pastor Michael Kalopothakes (1825–1911) and the American Martha Hoover Blacker. Maria’s mother died very young, when Maria was 12 years old. Maria was then sent to the States to continue her secondary education. She returned to Athens and then, in 1886, left for Paris to study medicine. She received her doctorate in 1893, her thesis being on gastric disorders and lesions due to chronic gastrointestinal dyspepsia in infants. She returned to Athens in 1894, passed the Medical Council

examinations and began to practise. She played an active role in the provision of medical services during the Greco-Turkish War of 1897 and the Balkan Wars. In 1909, Maria married an Orthodox priest, Theodoros Stergioglidis, whose origins were from the island of Samos; the couple had no children. Maria taught Hygiene at Arsakeion Girls' Secondary School. [Maria was also in charge of the nursing school the Union of Greek Women established in 1897 to ensure nurses were trained for military hospitals in Athens, Volos and Lamia as well as the military surgical units following the Greek army to the northern borders of the country under the auspices of the Red Cross. Tzanaki, Dimitra. 2007. *Δούλα και κυρά [Doula kai kyra] (Mistress and Maid)*. Athens: Savvalas, p. 407.

Pierre-Constant Budin advocated the matter of breast-feeding and neonate care and was one of the founders of modern perinatal medical care; his studies aimed at reducing neonate mortality.

EMPROS Newspaper 28 January 1902, p. 3.

EMPROS Newspaper 27 February 1902, p. 3.

EMPROS Newspaper 4 October 1908, p. 3.

Marriage rates in the capital in 1917–1922 period stood at 8.44%; this means that for every 100 residents there were 8.44 weddings per annum; average divorce rates were 6.73% of wedding certificates: Andrianakos, Tryphon. 1926. *Obstetrics and gynecology in Greece*, Athens, p. 19. Furthermore, see numero préparé par Bree, Sandra and Brunet, Guy (dir). 2020. *Séparations et divorces, désunions matrimoniales dans les sociétés européennes, XVIIe-XXe siècle. Annales de Démographie Historique*, 2020-2.

EMPROS Newspaper 21 July 1910, p. 2.

EMPROS Newspaper 23 August 1911, p. 4.

Papantoniou, Zacharias. 1911.

SKRIP Newspaper 13 May 1911, p. 2.

SKRIP Newspaper 30 December 1913, p. 4.

SKRIP Newspaper 29 December 1926, p. 2.

SKRIP Newspaper 10 April 1929, p.2.

1st Pan-Hellenic Conference on Maternity and Childhood Protection EMPROS Newspaper 13-6-1930.

The Sunday School was founded in 1911. As of 1921 it was managed by Anna's friend, Avra Theodoropoulou (1880–1963). Avra Theodoropoulou was born to a wealthy, bourgeois family in Hadrianopolis in Eastern Thrace (present-day Edirne, Turkey); Avra studied in Athens and taught music at Athens' Conservatory and at the National Conservatory. She was a regular contributor to numerous newspapers and a pioneer of the feminist movement in Greece; she was also one of the founding members of the Association for women's rights and served as its Chairwoman for many years.

Katsigra gave a speech on tuberculosis at the Educational Club (*Ekpaideftikos Omilos*), as well. SKRIP Newspaper 12 January 1914, pp. 1, 3.

SKRIP Newspaper 22 October 1914, p.5.

ELEFTHERIA Newspaper, 7 November 1958, p.1.

All information about Moscha's life comes from open, semi-structured interviews conducted in April and May 2022 for the purposes of this article. We would like to thank all Moscha's relatives, who shared with us their family history.

Alexandros originated from Gytheion and had a brother, Kimon, who was a lawyer with his practice at 28 Akominatou Street. He was also the Treasurer of the Archaeological Society.

Historical Archive of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, General student registries, Constantinos, A. Tountas, <https://pergamos.lib.uoa.gr/uoa/dl/frontend/en/browse/203413> (accessed on 6 January 2023) and Nicolaos A. Tountas, <https://pergamos.lib.uoa.gr/uoa/dl/frontend/el/browse/203412> (accessed on 6 January 2023).

N. Iglesias' Commercial Guide.

Krisengios had 4 daughters and a son, who was also a pharmacist and died of tuberculosis. He had been hospitalised at a Sanatorium in Davos. After his death the family surname was lost.

Moschantina's godmother was her aunt Katina. When her own mother died, Moschantina went to live with Katina in the house in Piraeus. She married Christophoros Kyrtatas from Andros (he graduated from the School of Commercial Navy Captains on the Island of Hydra and had his own ship). His brother, Yiannis, was one of the first plastic surgeons in Greece. Yiannis' sons are Professor Dimitris Kyrtatas and biologist Vasilis Kyrtatas.

According to Anna's dowry agreement, among the estate property items given to her as dowry by her mother and aunt, there is a house at the Aidonia village, where the couple to be married would reside. At this house, her mother Annezio, kept a room where she would live with her husband, along with the "single children until they marry and settle. This privilege they are to enjoy for the basement under the stairs". Dowry contract No 1559, 2 July 1874, by notary public and Local Judge of Korthion, Stylianos Alevizakis. Archive of Moscha Delagrammatika, held by M. Dimitropoulou.

Historical Archive of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Printed documents, Rector speeches, <https://pergamos.lib.uoa.gr/uoa/dl/frontend/en/browse/184871> (accessed on 6 January 2023).

- 66 His grandchildren were Marika (1943–2018, named after Nikos' mother), Aglaia (1944–2022, named after Elisavet's mother),
Giorgos (1948, named after Nikos' father) and Vasilis (1954, who was given his godfather's brother's name).
- 67 Nikos' poems appeared in literary magazine *Nea Estia*, Issue 76, p.186, 15 February 1930 and in the *Anthology* of Apostolidis, 5th
ed., 1954, p. 151.
- 68 Sophia graduated in 1950. She married ship-owner Margaronis and they lived on Herodes Atticus Street, near the Presidential
Mansion. Sophia maintained her private practice at #9 Drosopoulou Street. N. Iglesis' Commercial Guide, 1957.
- 69 In that academic year, there were 1803 first year students admitted (as opposed to 632 in the previous year). Among them there
were 377 women (21%). Of these, only 64 (17%) graduated (3 in 1948, 17 in 1949, 28 in 1950 and 16 in 1951).
- 70 Giorgos Voutounas, with family origins from Arcadia (probably Megalopolis), worked at the Consignment Deposit Bureau from
1924 to 1945 (1st class Manager) and received a pension from his employment there. In 1945 he resigned due to "not accepting
his degradation". Voutounas went on to work in commerce and represented foreign firms (imported machinery for marble
processing). He also took over the accounts of his wife's clinic. He had probably studied law.
- 71 This is a relevant announcement from the Press of that time.
- 72 Letter from Moscha Delagrammatika to Giorgos Voutounas, Rome, 17 September 1956. Archive of Moscha Delagrammatika held
by M. Dimitropoulou.
- 73 A ground floor with 2 flats which they let, and a flat on the first floor where they lived themselves.
- 74 Leading figure of the Greek feminist movement, founder and President (1921–1936 and 1944–1958) of the *Syndesmos gia ta*
Dikaiomata tis Gynaikas (League for Women's Rights), affiliated to the International Women's Suffrage Alliance (IWSA).
- 75 Law 4328/1929, Article 9 §2 stipulates that: "Only males are to be appointed to posts of technical personnel at the General
Chemical State Laboratory of Greece." This exclusion was abolished in 1955 by virtue of Law 3192/1955.
- 76 Avdela, Efi, *ibid.* pp. 144–53.
- 77 Being a primary school teacher has been considered one of the oldest jobs for women: of the 10,500 primary school teachers
in 1926, 38% (i.e., 4000) were women. In other words, this was a massive presence of women in a profession that required a
relatively high educational level (Avdela 1988).
- 78 According to their personal cards in the archives of Athens Medical Association.

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ζητήματα μιας εικοσαετίας [Istoria ton gynaikon, istoria tou fylou, feministiki istoria: Methodologikes diergasies kai theoritika
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