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*Collective memory and refugee identity:  
Asia Minor Greeks after 1923*

The collapse of the Asia Minor front and the defeat of the Greek army in 1922 had as a tragic consequence the uprooting of the Greek Orthodox populations of the Ottoman Empire. When these people arrived in Greece, the country was politically divided, financially ruined and utterly unable to deal effectively with the issue of the refugees. There was an urgent need for immediate and decisive solutions. As a result, the Greek government consented to the obligatory exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey signed at Lausanne on 30 January 1923.

This paper does not examine the practical aspects of the population exchange and the refugee settlement in Greece. It focuses instead on the different processes of collective memory formation and on the gradual development of a unique refugee identity in relation to the host country and its people. How is the 'Asia Minor Catastrophe' of 1922, the displacement and the refugee experience represented in arts and literature? What is the importance of these representations for the preservation and strengthening of memory and the transmission of this specific historical experience to the next generations? What role did the refugee associations and organizations play in the emergence of a cohesive refugee identity and to what extent did they determine collective mnemonic practices? Could historical research challenge the dominant and to a certain degree constructed narrative regarding Asia Minor through the creative synthesis of official documents and oral testimonies of first generation Asia Minor Greek refugees? These are some of the basic issues this paper will attempt to examine in an effort to highlight some less tangible, but equally significant aspects of the refugee settlement in Greece.