

## **Abstract**

The major task of the Greek policy in Greek Macedonia during the Interwar period and after the Greek Civil War was to reduce the numbers of the ethnic groups that were perceived as hostile by the Greek State and at the same time to establish the settlement of Greeks of “healthy national ideas” as they used to be called. The settlement of the refugees from Ottoman Empire/Turkey and additionally from every other neighboring country in both Greek Macedonia and Thrace proved a very useful tool in the transformation of these territories to Greek. The most striking demographic change during this procedure has been the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey. Although other demographic changes took place the succeeding decades, the changes of a symbolic character are of much greater importance. I support the idea that from early 80s, and essentially during the 90s and especially during the appearance of the “new Macedonian issue” in Greece, a quite important and emblematic change took place: Macedonia started to be identified not simply as Northern Greece but most of all as the land of the refugees from Asia Minor and especially the land of Pontic Greeks. The cultural and physical presence of the local population was further diminished. On the contrary the refugee presence and their culture has been raised as the dominant -if not the unique- worth mentioning and important Greek culture of Macedonia. Gradually, the Pontic Greeks achieved great importance as “guardians” of the Greek character of Macedonia and put aside every other different tradition even that of the ideal “capital of Hellenism”. A group which was used to be classified at the bottom of the socio-cultural hierarchy of Northern Greece took its place at the top of it. Over a 20-years-period, “Pontic refugees” were reborn as Macedonians, indigenous of the land of Macedonia.