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From Local Community to Glocal Network: Place, Memory, and Identity Politics among the “Jews of Trikala” and Their Diaspora (Greece)

Abstract

In this paper I present some initial findings from my multilocal ethnographic and ethnohistorical research on the “Trikalan Jews”, i.e. Jews living in or originating from Trikala, a city in the Thessaly region of central Greece. In particular, my research focuses on two axes: the historical processes of community formation and its social transition after World War II as well as the recent sense of belonging of the potential members of that “community” and the ways they experience and negotiate their collective memory and identity.

On a theoretical level, the first hypothesis grounded in the field is that the “community” tends to appropriate/be appropriated by subjects who currently live “elsewhere”. In this sense, it is reproduced as a glocal network in which Jewishness and locality are interconnected, experienced, and performed in multiple, fluid, and often fragmented ways. On a methodological level, my research is based on the fundamental techniques of ethnographic and ethnohistorical research which have been adapted to the conditions and restraints of a multilocal field.

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From the research we can assume that the Holocaust resulted in the extermination of an important part of the Trikalan Jewish community, while post-war emigration led to its gradual social disintegration, diffusion, and integration to broader ethnoreligious and national realities. Today this glocal “community” has imaginary, symbolic, and ceremonial rather than “practical” sociocultural dimensions. However, the recording, “rescue” and disclosure of communal history, memory and “cultural heritage” compose a fundamental field for the reconstitution of the bonds between the potential members of the “community” and thus for its reconstruction as a glocalised network of sociocultural interaction.

Keywords: Greek-Jews, Trikala, community, identity politics, ethnicity, glocality, memory, ethnography.

Introduction

This paper presents some initial findings from my multilocal ethnographic and ethnohistorical research on the “Trikanal Jews”¹, i.e. Jews who live in or claim to originate from Trikala, a city in the Thessaly region of central Greece. In particular, my research focuses on two axes. The first concerns the historical processes of community formation and its social transition after World War II. The second concerns the recent sense of belonging of potential members of that “community” and the ways they experience and negotiate their collective memory and identity.

It should be noted that there are a couple of reasons why the term “Jews of Trikala” in fact refers to a multilocal ethnographic reality. The first is that since the turn of the 19th century, this community also included families that moved periodically or settled in the neighbouring towns of Karditsa and Pharsala. Additionally, after World War II the vast majority of the local Jews migrated to Athens, Thessaloniki, or abroad (Israel and the United States). This resulted in the emergence of a relevant diaspora that seems to maintain some ties with the local Jewish community. In this context, my research extends to Jews who are related to Karditsa and Pharsala, as well as to people who are linked to the community by relationships of origin and today live in Athens and Thessaloniki.

On a theoretical level, the first hypothesis grounded in the field is that the “community” tends to appropriate (or be appropriated by) subjects who currently live “elsewhere”. Although this appropriation has mainly

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an imaginary (Anderson, 1991) and symbolic dimension (Cohen, 1985), it is mutually linked to the reproduction of a glocal network (Roudometof, 2016) in which Jewishness and locality are interconnected, experienced, and performed in multiple, fluid and often fragmented ways. In this context, although this “diasporic community” (Reis, 2004; Story & Walker, 2016) seems to still have Trikala as its symbolic centre, its “borders” are negotiable and depend on “structural” – i.e. historical, sociocultural or institutional – factors as well as subjective and contextual senses of belonging (Cohen, 1982, 1994). In this sense, the “Jews of Trikala” simultaneously constitute a community of memory (Booth, 2006), a context of sociocultural interaction, and a culturally meaningful – although often flexible or even contradictory – form of identification (van Zoonen, 2013).

On a methodological level, my research is based on fundamental techniques of ethnographic and ethnohistorical research which have been adapted to the conditions and restraints of a multilocal field (Falzon, 2009; Gupta & Ferguson, 1997b; Hannerz, 2003; G. E. Marcus, 1995, 1999). Thus, participant observation and “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) remain the basic methodological tools for my research in Trikala. My sojourn in the city for extended periods permitted me to develop interpersonal relations and interaction with some local Jews, but mainly to participate in a number of the community’s public manifestations (religious celebrations, cultural events, and so on). In this context, I not only had occasion to observe how local Jews interact and perform their identity, but also their relations with the broader local society as well as with their diaspora and the broader Jewish institutions in Greece and abroad. Moreover, this allowed me to investigate the position of local Jews in the framework of the city’s public history and memory. For this, I used an ethnohistorical emic approach, giving place to the terms by which the subjects themselves perceive and interpret the convergences or divergences between the hegemonic “local history” and their specific historical experiences (Axtell, 1979; Harris, 1976; Sahlins, 1981, 1985).

However, participant observation could not be applied to the research on the “Trikala Jews’ diaspora” in Athens and Thessaloniki because of the ambiguity of “who-and-what belongs to this diaspora”, resulting from the spatial diffusion and the multiple social participation of potential members. Moreover, these cities’ large size and spatial distances within them make it difficult to establish interpersonal relations and “participate” in “community life” through contiguity. Furthermore, there is no community of “Trikalan Jews”, but only broader Jewish communities into which Jews from Trikala are – or are not – integrated.

Participant observation in these communities in order to “discover” and study their members who originate from Trikala requires a very long time.

This is why I used different types of ethnographic unstructured in-depth interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994), such as oral history (Perks & Thomson, 1998; Thompson, 2000) and creative interview (Douglas, 1985) and, in the second phase, the semi-structured interview. All these methods were also used in Trikala in addition to participant observation. For selecting interviewees, in Trikala as well as in the diaspora, I followed the snowball method, starting from a small number of key informants in Trikala, such as the president of the local Jewish community (McKenna & Main, 2013).

The Ethnohistory of the Jewish Community of Trikala under the Greek State. A Reflexive Retrospection

The dominant narrative among local intellectuals and the “Trikanan Jews” presents the latter as a coherent and active urban community at the time of Thessaly’s annexation to the Greek state in 1881. Available sources, however, offer a confused image of its demographic size. The first version that emerged from a comparative analysis is that between 1873 and 1881 the community had a relatively fixed number of some 400 members (out of 10,900 inhabitants) (cf. Triantafyllou, 1976, p. 16).² A second version is that between 1860 and 1880 the community numbered about 800 members (out of 17,000 inhabitants) (cf. Triantafyllou, 1976, p. 8). Finally, according to a third version, between 1873 and the end of the 19th century, the number of local Jews increased from 600-700 (150 families) to 800 people (S. Marcus & Kerem, 2007). The same picture emerges from the oral narratives of our interlocutors. In these, the number of Jews living in Trikala at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century usually ranges between 400 and 600, more rarely being higher, even reaching 1,000 members.

The community archive’s destruction by the Nazis during the Occupation, as well as the probable interaction and mutual influences between “printed history” and “oral memory” makes it difficult to interpret the above “demographic” divergences. However, according to the official census which the Greek state carried out in 1881, 510 Jews lived in the province of Trikala, probably all of them in the city (Hypourgeion Esoterikōn³, 1884, p. 56). A part of the community possibly left Trikala before or after its annexation, although it is difficult to estimate to what extent this happened. In any case, the majority of the (remaining?) local Jews – or at least the official community institutions and leaders – adopted a strongly positive public attitude to the city’s “liberation” (Kliafa, 1996, p. 21; Michalakēs, 2014, p. 19).

² Cf. also the official website of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece/KISE. https://kis.gr/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=393&Itemid=11.

³ Greek Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Moreover, for both local and community history, the absence of strict spatial segregation of the local Jews in the form of a ghetto constitutes a fundamental argument for their successful integration into local society (cf. Michalakēs, 2014, p. 17). However, the vast majority of the local Jews lived in their own quarter, which was located in the city centre, next to the market (cf. Kliafa, 2009, p. 3; Katsogiannos, 1992, pp. 225–231). This is not a coincidence, as they engaged in a series of related professions, with the majority being traders, artisans (tinsmiths, hatmakers, shoemakers, etc.), moneychangers and travelling merchants who visited neighbouring villages selling textiles and other products used in sewing (Kliafa, 2009, pp. 10–11). Some enjoyed a prestigious socioeconomic, even political status (Michalakēs, 2014, pp. 28–30, 65–71), among them a number of major textile merchants and some bankers (cf. Kliafa, 2010, pp. 217–221).

From the last decade of the 19th century onwards, a number of local Jews moved to Thessaloniki, but also to the neighbouring cities of Karditsa (about 80 people) and Pharsala (about 10 people). This was partially due to an anti-Semitic mood provoked by various facts: the accusation that the Jews had helped the Ottomans during the Greek-Turkish war of 1897 (Kliafa, 2009, p. 6); the blood libel (Kliafa, 2009, p. 6; S. Marcus & Kerem, 2007); finally the professional competition between Christian and Jewish merchants, expressed inter alia in the conflict for the “compliance” of the latter with the Sunday holiday (cf. Michalakēs, 2014, pp. 60–63). The Jews installed in Karditsa and Pharsala maintained close relations with the community of Trikala, at both the institutional and the sociocultural level. This relationship was preserved largely because community institutions such as a synagogue or Jewish cemetery were not created in these cities. Thus, the Jews of Karditsa and Pharsala continued to be members of the Jewish community of Trikala and to exercise their religious duties there (at least in terms of great feasts and burials). Despite the migration of some of the community to Karditsa and Pharsala, the number of Jews in Trikala appears stable and even rose in the first decades of the 20th century. Thus, a 1907 census records 559 Jews in 110 families (V. Venouziou, 2009, p. 2), while in 1925 the community numbered 120 families (S. Marcus & Kerem, 2007).

The community’s growth during the same period isn’t only reflected in demographic and economic data, but also at organizational and ideological levels (cf. Michalakēs, 2014, pp. 40–41; cf. Moustane, 2017). In the 1880s, Trikala’s Jews had founded a number of social and cultural associations: the Israeli Charitable Association in 1884, followed in 1902 by another charitable association named Ezra Bétarote and, also around the same period, the Bikour Holim association for patient care and Hevra Kantissa for community members’ burials (I. Venouziou, 2003; V. Venouziou, 2009, pp. 11–12).

In 1911, the Jewish school of Trikala was inaugurated, and a proprietary building acquired in 1915; the school had 70 students who were taught in both Hebrew and Greek (Kliafa, 2009, p. 8; V. Venouziou, 2009, p. 5).

In the second decade of the 20th century, the development of a communitarian organization was accompanied by the dissemination of Zionism among local Jews. A 1918 photo depicting the Trikalan Jews en masse celebrating the Balfour Declaration (1917) confirms the important dynamic of Zionism among the local Jewish community (cf. Kliafa, 2009, p. 5). This is also confirmed by the fact that in 1916, the then-young students and future lawyers Asher Moïssis and Yiomtov Yiakoel were founding members of the local Zionist association Eres Israel (Land of Israel) (Kliafa, 2009; Michalakēs, 2014; Moïssēs, 2010; V. Venouziou, 2009, p. 5). This association created a theatre group that performed several plays of Jewish interest, to mention Racine's *Esther* in 1917 (Vogiatzēs, 1985). Moreover, under the direction of Moïssis and Yiakoel, in 1917-1919 the association published the revue *Israel*, probably in collaboration with the Jewish associations of Larissa and Volos (Kliafa, 2009, p. 9; Michalakēs, 2014, p. 86; I. Venouziou, 2003, p. 339; V. Venouziou, 2009, p. 12).

In addition to their own community associations, many Trikala Jews also participated in the city's major social, cultural, and sports associations (cf. Kliafa, 2004, 2009). In addition, a considerable number of native Jews joined the trade union movement and the Greek Communist Party (Michalakēs, 2014, pp. 106–107). Indeed, the Trikalan Jew Raphael Felloush was senior executive of both in the 1920s and, along with another local Jew (Solomon Kapetas), among the leaders of the bloody 1925 peasants' and workers' protests in Trikala (Kliafa, 2009, pp. 12–13; Nēmas, 2010; Vrachniarēs, 1978, pp. 82–84, 100). The participation and the central role of a significant number of local Jews in the protests strengthened latent anti-Semitism among a section of the Christian population through the hegemonic identification of “communism” and the Jews by representatives of the local elite and the local press (Kliafa, 2009, pp. 12–13; Michalakēs, 2014, p. 111).

As we have seen, this latent anti-Semitism was manifested aggressively from time to time in the form of professional competition between Christian and Jewish traders and, according to some interviewees, also in the form of blood libel. This may, in part, explain the relative demographic stagnation of the Jewish community between 1907 and 1940. Nonetheless, it seems that interreligious relations were relatively smooth and Jews were an integral part of Trikala society until World War II. Many interviewees thus claim that anti-Semitism in Trikala was marginal. To support this, they refer to the fact that in 1940 there were a number of Christian families residing in Trikala's Jewish quarter (cf. Michalakēs, 2014, pp. 19–20). More saliently, they cite the

help in “saving” the majority of local Jews during the German Occupation offered by Christian peasants and the left-wing resistance (cf. V. Venouziou, 2009, pp. 23–25).

On the eve of World War II, there were 520 Jews living in Trikala (I. Venouziou, 2003, p. 340), 82 in Karditsa (V. Venouziou, 2009, p. 23), and nine in Pharsala. However, as is the case for Jewish populations across Greece and Europe, the consequences of the war and the Holocaust were catalytic for the community. During the Occupation, especially in 1944, Nazi persecution led to the detention of 145 local Jews; of them, 139 were murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau. All were from Trikala, except one male from Karditsa. According to the dominant narratives among the community, the majority of them were elderly people and children. According to the official catalogue of victims,⁴ 42 were younger than 20, 29 were older than 65, and 64 were between the ages of 20 and 65 years, with four of unknown age; 67 were women, 68 men or unreported (cf. Kentriko Israēlitiko Symvoulío Hellados [K.I.S.E.], 1979, pp. 120–123). The rest of the community escaped the Holocaust with the help of Christian peasants, who offered them shelter, and the left-led resistance in the area. The Karditsa Jews were rescued as a group—with the exception of one man who was arrested in Athens—by the inhabitants of a Christian community (Amarantos) located in the Agrafa mountains (V. Venouziou, 2009, p. 25). Additionally, the Nazis destroyed the city’s three synagogues and the community register.

According to data I was given by the president of the community, according to the new register created after the war, in 1946 the community numbered 447 members, of whom 361 were living in Trikala, 77 in Karditsa, and nine in Pharsala (cf. V. Venouziou, 2018). But in fact, the Jews who had been living in the city were around 270, taking into account that a number of the survivors had already settled in Athens and Thessaloniki (V. Venouziou, 2009, p. 10). In 1949 the Jews of Karditsa were officially recognized as a separate community, and the number of official community members decreased further. (In 1970, the Karditsa community was declared inactive.)

In this context of demographic weakening, the community tried to reorganize. The synagogues were restored, but in 1954 destroyed again by an earthquake. Subsequently, only the central Romaniote synagogue was

⁴ The official book in memory of the Holocaust victims among the Greek Jews published by the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (K.I.S.E.) refers to 135 Trikalan Jews murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau. However, according to the local community the victims were 139. This number is also written on the local Holocaust monument. The book gives the demographic characteristics of the 135 persons. Given that the demographic characteristics of the other four persons are not yet clear to me, I refer to them as being “of unknown” age and sex.

restored in 1957 (I. Venouziou, 2003, p. 338). In place of the small Sephardic synagogue, some residences were built as housing for the community's poorest members, with the aid of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece and the US-based American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (I. Venouziou, 2003, p. 338).⁵

Thus, a segment of the local Jewish community gradually bolstered their various forms of capital. At the economic level, a number of former artisans and merchants created artisanal and commercial enterprises. Especially in the textile sector, Jews controlled a good part of the local market. Thus, to date Christians in the broader region of Trikala remember the "big Jewish traders" from whom they bought textiles and sewing items. The reconstruction of the community was also reflected at the political, cultural and social levels. Thus, after 1960, two local Jews were elected municipal councillors of Trikala, while a number of educated Jews occupied important professional posts in the public or private sectors.

However, under the community's successful reconstruction, a simultaneous process had begun that would gradually lead to the community's demographic and social decline. Thus, from the end of the 1940s onwards, we observe accelerated emigration of local Jews to Israel and the United States. The first wave was between 1944 and 1950, with a peak in 1949 (cf. Simpē & Lampsa, 2010); in all, 24 families totalling 112 members from Trikala and four families totalling 19 members from Karditsa migrated to Israel. Migration to the United States had its starting point in 1954 and was prompted, among other things, by the destruction caused by a severe earthquake that year. A total of 25 members of the community from Trikala (but none from Karditsa or Pharsala) migrated to the United States at this time. Meanwhile, some 115 people from Trikala, several dozen from Karditsa, and the entire Pharsala community migrated to other cities in Greece, mainly Athens and Thessaloniki. As a result, in 1959 the remaining Jewish families in the area numbered approximately 40 in Trikala, fewer than 10 in Karditsa, and zero in Pharsala.

In subsequent decades, the number of Jews in the area declined further as they continued to migrate to Athens, Thessaloniki and, to a lesser degree, Larissa—cities where the most populous, organized and active Greek Jewish communities are based today. At the same time, the community institutions that had escaped the Holocaust ceased to exist. The Jewish school, which operated informally after the war, closed in the 1960s. The community has not had a rabbi since 1978, and is served either by the rabbi of Larissa (in cases such as naming and coming-of-age ceremonies, funerals, or the

⁵ For the activity of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in Greece, cf. Sampetai, 1985.

ceremonial slaughter of animals under kosher rules) or by priests (Hazan called in from abroad (during the great feasts).

In 2001 there were no more than 40 Jews living in Trikala. Although today the community officially has the same number of members, the permanent Jewish population of Trikala is smaller, around 20-25 people. In practice, the Jewish community is fewer than 15 households; six are the result of mixed marriages, and therefore their members are not in their entirety all Jews, although they participate in community events, at least in the most important ones. Four other households have just one elderly member. Even the younger members of the remaining households live elsewhere in their majority, mainly in Athens and Thessaloniki. At the same time, there is only one Jewish family in Karditsa, with three members. According to an interviewee, "...there are no really Jewish families in Trikala, but just remnants of families..."

In any case, both the Holocaust and migration have resulted in the gradual disintegration of the social network of the community. As the overwhelming majority of emigrants sold their houses and real estate, the Jewish quarter of Trikala disappeared from the map. Moreover, the emigrants were gradually integrated, at both the institutional and the social level, into the Jewish communities of their new places of settlement. However, the de-localization of the Jewish community of Trikala preceded the emigration of the members, and started within the context of its post-war "reconstruction". The initiatives and actions for this "reconstruction" came mainly "from outside". It was the result of a top-down procedure reflecting the gradual domination of the supra-local Jewish and Greek-Jewish institutions, mainly the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KISE) (cf. I. Venouziou, 2003, p. 340),⁶ but also the catalytic influence of the (Greek, but also Israeli) national state over the local Jewish communities.

From History to Prehistory: 'Origins', 'Autochthony' and the Localization of Jewishness

The relationship between "Jewishness" and "locality" seems to be fundamental for the collective identity experience and negotiation among the "Trikan Jews". However, *locality* embraces multiple meanings that express different perceptions about the "oldness" of the relationship between the "community" (or specific families and individuals) and the "city" and also about their "autochthony". These perceptions do not only concern the subjects' sense of "locality", but are also related to how they experience,

⁶ For the founding of KISE and the post-war reconstruction of Greek-Jewish communities cf. "Aferōma K.I.S.E.", 1996.

perform and eventually reproduce their “Jewishness” as a complex identity/alterity with religious, ethnic/national as well as spatial references (Ben-Shalom, 2017; Papamichos Chronakēs, 2015; Yalonetzky, 2018).

A privileged field to explore ways of interconnecting “Jewishness” and “locality” is the different origin and foundation myths of the “community”. Despite the variations of individual narratives, these are mainly organized according to the Sephardic/Romaniote dipole corresponding to the basic ethnocultural classification of the Jewish populations of the current Greek area (“Afierōma: Evraioi stēn Hellada”, 1994; Connerty, 2003; Fleming, 2010). So, while other narratives emphasise the community’s “Sephardic” character, others underline the “Romaniote” one. According to the former, its “birth registration act” is connected with the settlement in Trikala of Jews from Spain during a period roughly corresponding to 1492 or later, i.e. “after The Inquisition”. In the narratives of the latter category, the community’s “roots” are at an undefined time, which is traced to either the Hellenistic period (S. Marcus & Kerem, 2007) or, more often, to the exile of Jews after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE,⁷ or at least to the Byzantine era (cf. I. Venouziou, 2003, p. 337).

The above distinction, of course, is largely ideotypical. In practice, the specific narratives may approach “Sephardic” or “Romaniote” theory, but they usually combine elements from both in different ways. Thus, narratives that express the first theory do not deny the pre-existence of Romaniote Jews in Trikala. However, they consider them as having little effect on the formation of a fundamentally Sephardic community, as they were assimilated by the more numerous Sephardim. In this sense, it seems that they downgrade the importance of the Romaniote presence, banishing it to the “prehistory” of the local Jewry. In contrast, narratives expressing the “Romaniote” theory do not deny the large-scale settlement of Sephardic Jews in Trikala during the early Ottoman period. However, they claim that they were incorporated and assimilated by the “native” Jews. Thus while their arrival demographically strengthened the city’s pre-existing community, it did not substantially change its “Romaniote character” (cf. S. Marcus & Kerem, 2007; I. Venouziou, 2003, p. 337; V. Venouziou, 2009, p. 1).

This composite image becomes even more complicated if we take into account that in some narratives, other types of origin myths emerge. These myths go beyond the distinction between Sephardim and Romaniotes, connecting the community with other Jewish subgroups such as the Ashkenazim (cf. I. Venouziou, 2003, p. 337; V. Venouziou, 2009, p. 1). Such interconnections also emerge in family genealogies of specific – albeit very

⁷ We find the same myth of origin among the Romaniote Jews of Ioannina. Regarding the Jews of Ioannina, cf. Dalven, 1990.

few – interviewees who, without explicitly mentioning the Ashkenazim, refer to particular ancestors as coming from places related to them (Central and Eastern Europe).

The convergences and divergences of the above-mentioned rhetoric about the “origin” and the “ethnocultural character” of the “community” at first seem to reflect the complex procedures by which the community historically formed and evolved. Related research (mainly by local Christian intellectuals, far less by professional historians or members of the community) confirms, but also reflects, aspects of the above “indigenous theories”. Available sources confirm a population of Romaniotes already installed in Trikala, if not since the Byzantine era, at least since the early Ottoman period (cf. Beldiceanu, 1972; Bichta, 1997; Epstein, 1980). More specifically, during the first half of the 15th century there were about 387 Romaniote Jewish families in the broader area of Trikala (S. Marcus & Kerem, 2007). Part of this population seems to have been forced to move to Constantinople (along with Jews from other cities), after it was dominated by the Ottomans in 1453 (S. Marcus & Kerem, 2007), with the aim of demographic and economic stimulation of the new capital of the empire (Bichta, 1997, p. 296).

In contrast, successive flows of Jewish populations settled in Trikala between the late 15th century and the mid-16th century (or shortly thereafter): Ashkenazim from Hungary in the wake of the Ottoman military campaigns, a few Sicilian Jews, but mainly Sephardim from Spain and Portugal who had found shelter in the Ottoman Empire following their expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula (Bichta, 1997, pp. 298–299; Kliafa, 2009, p. 3; S. Marcus & Kerem, 2007; Moustane, 2017). The result was the multiplication of the local Jewish population between 1506 (about 95 people) and 1566 (1,050 people) (Bichta, 1997, p. 299; S. Marcus & Kerem, 2007) and the formation of an “ethnoculturally mixed” Jewish community (cf. I. Venouziou, 2003; Michalakēs, 2014, pp. 51–55; cf. Moustane, 2017).

It seems that each Jewish subgroup partially preserved its distinct ethnocultural character. Thus, during the 19th century there were three synagogues in Trikala, each one corresponding to some degree to a different ethnic subgroup.⁸ However, already from the previous centuries, the Sephardim had dominated among the local Jews. We can assume this domination was related at first to the fact that “Trikanan Jews” in their majority were descendants of those who had come from the Iberian Peninsula

⁸ Although there is agreement among both local researchers and interviewees on two of these groups (Sephardim and Romaniotes), there are some deviations regarding the third subgroup. Thus, while according to the narratives of most interviewees, the third synagogue was Ashkenazi (cf. also I. Venouziou, 2003, p. 338; V. Venouziou, 2009, p. 2), other narratives connect it with the “Sicilians” (cf. Kliafa, 2009; S. Marcus & Kerem, 2007).

(Michalakēs, 2014, p. 53). Nevertheless, it was not only demographic but mainly socioeconomic domination based on the fact that the Sephardim introduced or controlled, or both, some of the community's basic economic activities such as wool production, tanning, and trading in wool and leather (S. Marcus & Kerem, 2007).

However, the questions that arise here concern the relationship between socioeconomic domination and cultural hegemony and, in this context, what the subjects mean each time by the Sephardim/Romaniotes distinction. According to the narratives, it seems that this distinction refers hegemonically to the relationship with the Ladino language. The two excerpts below are characteristic:

... Unlike Larissa, where the Jews are Sephardim, in Trikala we did not speak Ladino... we are not Sephardim; most of us are Romaniotes... those who spoke Ladino were mainly women who came from Larissa to Trikala as brides ... and some grooms from Thessaloniki spoke Ladino... most of us did not ... some people knew some Ladino ... but in general we did not speak Ladino...

... There was no Jew from Trikala and Karditsa who didn't know Ladino ... if you didn't know Ladino, you were not a Jew ... until the war we were speaking to each other in Ladino⁹... and then later, we used it when we did not want the others to understand us...

Such opposing views are expressed not only today, but also in written sources from the late 19th century (cf. Michalakēs, 2014, p. 51). Nevertheless, it seems that the Jews of Trikala not only knew Ladino, at least their vast majority, but had it as their native language (Michalakēs, 2014, pp. 51–53). However, the question remains: does knowledge of Ladino automatically imply acceptance of Sephardic identity?

The question is directly connected with another one. This concerns the relationship between socioeconomic stratification and ethnocultural classification within the local Jewish community. Such a relationship is also implied in contemporary narratives and memories of the “Trikanan Jews”. Therefore, as many interviewees told us, the city's synagogues were differentiated not only along “ethnocultural” lines, but also according to socioeconomic status. Thus, at the end of the 19th century and until World War II, the community's wealthiest members mainly attended the small Sephardic synagogue, while the poorer ones used the Romaniote synagogue. Similarly, most local Jews who adopt the “Romaniote theory” today come mainly from “less rich” families, in contrast to those supporting the “Sephardic” theory who, for the most part, belong to the traditional Jewish elite of Trikala.

⁹ Allegra Fellous, a Jewish woman from Trikala, narrates something similar to historian K. Michalakēs (Michalakēs, 2014, p. 53).

In interpreting the relationship between ethnocultural and socioeconomic classification, we should take into account the fact that a significant part of the economic activity of the “Trikanan Jews” during the Ottoman period concerned interregional or international trade through the commercial networks they developed with the most important cities of the Ottoman Empire, but also with the most important ports of the Adriatic, such as Ragusa, and Italy (Bichta, 1997, p. 304; S. Marcus & Kerem, 2007). In this context, it seems obvious that knowing Ladino offered the Jewish traders of Trikala a fundamental advantage. This might have led to the language also being learned by their “non-Sephardic” compatriots. However, this does not necessarily mean automatic abandonment, as opposed to gradual oblivion, of the “Romaniote” (or some other) sub-identity.

Some oral narratives reinforce this hypothesis, without confirming it with regard to the Ottoman period. These are narratives of interviewees whose families moved to Trikala relatively recently (in the late 19th or early 20th century) from Epirus and therefore were “carriers” of Romaniote identity. According to them, although Ladino was not their mother tongue, their ancestors (or they themselves as well) knew it (even its basic elements), because it was useful to them in their trade transactions with the Jews of Thessaloniki.

Thus the rhetoric regarding “Sephardic domination” does not necessarily reflect—or at least does not only reflect—some “objective” and crystallized ethnocultural composition of the “Trikanan Jews” based on their “real origin”. On the contrary, it is very likely that many of those who initially adopted Ladino for practical reasons gradually became “carriers” of Sephardic identity that, in turn, claimed hegemony or even a monopoly among the Trikanan Jewry. It is possible that over time this identity was partially disconnected from knowledge and use of Ladino. In this sense, “Sephardic domination” can be considered a cultural idiom that metonymically expresses the socioeconomic classifications, hierarchies, forms of mobility and subversions within the community.

However, we could also interpret the rhetoric about the “survival”, “resistance” and even “dominance” of the Romaniote culture among the “Trikanan Jews” in a similar way. This interpretation should be disconnected, at least in part, from the fate of or the role played by the Romaniote population that already existed in the city, or the Sephardim and other Jews who settled in Trikala during the early Ottoman period. On the contrary, we should take into account that the Jews of Trikala gradually developed economic and matrimonial exchanges with other neighbouring communities, both Sephardic (such as those of Larissa and Volos) and Romaniote (such as those of Ioannina and Arta) (cf. V. Venouziou, 2009, p. 1). Thus, even if we accept

that the initial Romaniote population of Trikala disappeared or assimilated into the more numerous and socially stronger Sephardim, there was a continuous and diachronic “enrichment” of the community with members of Romaniote “origin” (Michalakēs, 2014, p. 54).

In this context, the ethnic pluralism or hybridity, or both, of Trikala’s Jews makes sense not so much on the basis of one or more (real or hypothetical) “origins”, but on the basis of social exchanges within the community as well as with other Jewish communities (Michalakēs, 2014, p. 138). Matrimonial exchanges at both the local and interregional levels do not seem to exclusively follow the sub-ethnic similarity/difference (Sephardim-Romaniotes), but primarily the economic-social/class position of the subjects. Thus, according to the oral narratives, it seems that matrimonial exchanges with the “Sephardic” Jewish community of Larissa usually concerned women, who married relatively affluent Trikala Jews and settled in Trikala. Conversely, despite the settlement in Trikala of some wealthy or politically influential Jews from Ioannina,¹⁰ matrimonial exchanges with the Romaniote communities usually concerned men from the lower economic and social strata marrying women (probably with a higher economic capacity than them, but not members of the community’s elite) and settling in Trikala.

It therefore seems that, at some point, “Romaniote origin” was involved in the formation, or also metonymically expresses, a counter-discourse of “non-privileged” members of the community: the economically weaker ones, or even those whose “foreign origin” still survives in memory due to the short temporal depth of their installation in Trikala. Their imaginary and symbolic connection with the “Romaniote prehistory” of Trikalan Jewry (regardless of when they or their ancestors settled in the city) often reflects the claim of an “autochthony” equally or more “authentic” than that of the (relatively recently settled in Trikala, but nevertheless socioeconomically dominant) Sephardim.

In any case, the polyphony of Trikala’s Jews about their “origin” should be interpreted in the light of the fluid strategies and identity politics that the subjects develop within different spatiotemporal and cultural contexts. These strategies and politics not only have an “ethnic” character, they also express the subjects’ overall sense of their collective history, culture and identity, and the way they interact in the formation of self-experience and consciousness (Baerveldt, 2015; Barash, 2011; Carr, 2014; Cohen, 1994; Climo & Cattell, 2002; Passerini, 1998). This is how we should interpret the totally different and contradictory images of the Trikala Jews’ relationship

¹⁰ Such is the case of Joseph Sidis, community leader and the first local police director after the annexation of the city by Greece (cf. S. Marcus & Kerem, 2007; Michalakēs, 2014, pp. 28–30), and of the pioneering bankers Meyir (cf. Kliafa, 2010, pp. 219–221).

with Ladino that underpins the “Sephardic” and “Romaniote” theories. The relevant narratives not only contradict each other, but in their most extreme versions contradict a number of other oral or written documents on which the hitherto conducted historical research on the Jewish community of Trikala was based. Given that I do not believe that history is simply a narrative reconstruction of the past, a view that emerged in different ways in the context of postmodern theories about history (Jenkins, 1997; Liakos, 2011), this fact has its importance (Evans, 1997).

However, assessing such narratives exclusively in terms of “historical” (McCullagh, 1980; Waites, 2011) or “ethnological” realism offers us little in terms of an interpretative anthropological and ethnohistorical approach to memory and identity (Brockmeier, 2002; Geertz, 1973, 1985; Harkin, 2003; Yelvington, 2002). Simply discarding them as expressions of “deliberate concealment”, “refusal” or “ignorance of ethno-demographic reality” carries the risk of breeding some dominant (political, but often at a scientific level) essentialist, linear and deterministic perceptions of “history” and “ethnicity” (Liakos, 2011; Rancière, 1981). From this perspective, “Trikan Jews” would emerge as a “uniform whole” (van Meijl, 2008) based on a “common origin, identity and history” having as its starting point “a founding act of merging” that is directed indiscriminately towards the “future” (Eller, 1997; Evans, 1997).

However, my ethnographic experience leads me to conclude that the subjects often perceive, interconnect and signify “their” history, culture and identity under different and multiple cognitive schemes (Bloch, 1977, 1997; Hodges, 2008; Ringel, 2016). Thus the “Trikan Jewish community” is not perceived necessarily as a one-off “entity” shaped “from the beginning”, but as a cultural process fluid in space and time. The beginnings, boundaries, intersections, outcomes, but also historical subjects of this process are continuously being negotiated and redefined within each conjuncture and through fluid strategies of selective combination of memory and oblivion (Augé, 2001; Bodei, 1992; Connerton, 1989; Liakos, 2011).

Thus, in order to interpret the rhetoric about the “origin of the community”, we must look each time at how the subjects define the term “community”, and in this sense not only by “whom” it is referred to, but also “where” and “when” they refer to when they talk about it. First, this requires exploring ways of linkage, interaction and hierarchy among “community”, “family” and “individual biography” (Armbruster, 2014). But it also presupposes that we should explore ways of interconnection not only among past, present and future, but also among different chronological strata within each one of these temporalities (Passerini, 1998).

In this way, the rhetoric claiming that the Jews of Trikala “never spoke Ladino” can be interpreted not based on its “historical precision”, but as an

alternative and contextual reading of “community history” (Gable, Handler, & Lawson, 1992). It does not necessarily “ignore” or “conceal” the use or even the dominance of the Ladino language, but probably perceives it as something conjunctural or “externally imposed”. Therefore, this is assessed as a temporary (in the long term) “deviation” from a fundamentally “Romaniote history” and therefore as something that “can” or “must be” forgotten (Ankersmit, 1994, 2005; Liakos, 2011; Passerini, 1998). In this context, the recent abandonment of Ladino is not perceived as a “loss” but rather as a “restoration” and “reset” of the “authentic culture of the community”. Symbolically, this is expressed by the emphasis given by some interviewees to the Romaniote style of the oldest and only surviving synagogue in Trikala¹¹ (cf. S. Marcus & Kerem, 2007; Michalakēs, 2014, p. 55).

We can therefore conclude that Trikala forms a “boundary” between the Sephardic and Romaniote Jewish communities of Greece (cf. Michalakēs, 2014, pp. 51–55). However, given, *inter alia*, the augmented interethnic matrimonial exchanges at the local and trans-local levels and the accelerated de-territorialization and de-localization of the “community” (Appadurai, 1996; Dawson, Zanotti, & Vaccaro, 2014; Gupta & Ferguson, 1997a), this boundary is symbolic and fluid in space and time. Moreover, it is mainly an “internal”, intra-subjective boundary continually reconstructed by social actors through the dynamic recombination of available imaginary and symbolic materials (cf. Cohen, 1985, 1994). Thus, “Sephardic” and “Romaniote” theory can be viewed as two potential metonymic cultural tropes for narrating a “Trikanan Jewish self” (Bennett, 2015), while their eclectic mixtures reflect the multiple and complex experiences and articulations of “Jewishness” and “locality” (Ben-Shalom, 2017), but also class and gender. In this sense, they correspond mainly in fluidly hierarchized discourses. Although they invoke the *past*, these discourses are orientated towards the *future* and engaged in complex ways in the present identity politics of the “Trikanan Jews” (cf. Bloch, 1977; Friedman, 1992).

The Past and the Future in the ‘Long Present’: Identity Politics and the Claim of a Glocal “Trikanan Jewishness”

The complex historical procedures of the “founding” and spatiotemporal transformations of the Trikanan Jewish community are related to the multiple ways its potential members perceive and reproduce it in the present. As we have seen, after World War II the community was gradually integrated into broader frameworks. Thus, at the organizational level, today it can be

¹¹ Historian K. Mihalakis considers the style of the synagogue in Trikala as an example of the role of the „Romaniote element” in the formation of the local Jewish community, cf. Michalakēs, 2014, p. 55.

considered a local branch of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece rather than an “autonomous community”. However, at the sociocultural level it can be seen in a more complex way: on the one hand, as the “glocal” expression of the Greek – or even of the broader – Jewry as place-originated and at the same time as a translocal, transethnic, or even transnational collective; on the other hand, as a special “ethnoreligious version” of a multicultural Trikalan identity.

In this context, the Holocaust and the post-war emigration of the Trikalan Jews constitute, in different but interconnected ways, two fundamental elements signifying the community’s violent and traumatic passage from the “past” to a “long present”. Thus, in my interviewees’ discourses there emerges a sense of “community loss” related to both these catalytic historical events. Regarding the Holocaust, the “Triakalan Jews” recognize that compared to other Jewish communities in Greece or abroad, theirs had “few” human losses. However, as an interviewee characteristically said, “what does few mean..? We lost 139 people...our people... for us, they are many...”. Moreover, the sense of loss is not expressed exclusively in quantitative, but fundamentally in qualitative terms. Thus, as another interviewee told us, “we lost our leaders, them who could guide us...this makes much harder the feeling of loss...”.

The fact that our interviewees identify these “lost leaders of the community” with the most elderly male victims indicates the hegemonic patriarchal ideology within the community, despite the matrilineality of Jewishness. In this context, we can interpret the fact that, in contrast to the available data, the dominant image wants the “eldest” along with the “children” to comprise the two basic categories of the community’s victims in the Holocaust: if the loss of the former is symbolically attached to the community’s social destruction, the loss of the latter is attached to its physical destruction—and the loss of both to its hard (social and physical) reproduction within the “long post-war present”. From this perspective, the experience of the Holocaust not only reflects a sense of “loss” of the “past” but also the frustration of a potentially different “future” leading up to the “present”. It expresses the fundamental cultural trauma (cf. Alexander, Eyerman, Giesen, Smelser, & Sztompka, 2004) that this inconceivable event caused the local Jews (and the broader Jewish community). In this sense, it also reflects fear for the future of the community “hereafter”.

However, the fear for the community’s future is also related to the post-war emigration of the “Triakalan Jews”. It thus has multiple dimensions. On the one hand, it expresses longing for the “existence” of local Jewishness as a distinctive ethnoreligious culture and identity in situ, within the framework of Trikala society. But it also expresses anguish regarding the “survival” of “Triakalan Jewishness” as a historically localized “community” within Greek

and broader Jewishness. Thus many of the diaspora's "Trikan Jews" combine the trauma of "their community loss" with nostalgia for their "lost hometown".

I note that one effect of the Holocaust and emigration was the accelerated invisibility of the Jewish past and present in the public space of Trikala. The one remaining synagogue and the Jewish cemetery are today the only material signs of their presence in the city (cf. Ireland & Lydon, 2016). As far as the former is concerned, although it is situated in the city centre within the former Jewish quarter, the building maintained a discreet presence until recently and hardly makes the visitor suspect its character. Indeed, after the war the community installed three shops in the synagogue façade, in a space once occupied by a courtyard, in order to make the synagogue even less visible in the public space. The Jewish cemetery covers an area of 20 acres and has about 800 graves (cf. V. Venouziou, 2004), but its location on a hill outside the main urban web also makes it less visible to the uninformed.

Tourist information and maps posted online or at information points around the city by the municipal authorities are a typical example of this "invisibility". Moreover, they are also indicative of the marginal position local Jews held until recently in the public production of local history in general, but of their "own" history in particular. Thus, while the monuments and tourist attractions promoted by the city authorities include places of worship, such as old churches and the only surviving mosque—which is now a museum, references to the synagogue and the Jewish cemetery are absent despite the fact that, according to some Jewish interviewees, their synagogue is a monument of particular architectural value due to its Romaniote rhythm and is visited by a number of Jews from Greece and abroad.

Nonetheless, the situation appears to be changing. Especially over the last decade, a growing interest has been observed among local Christian intellectuals both in integrating Jews into wider narratives of the "history of Trikala" and in the particular history of the local Jewish community. In this context, as we have seen, a number of relevant articles have been published in local periodicals¹², the local press, as well as in the formal magazine of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KISE). However, the most important publication is a book—the first and only one so far—written by a local professional historian on the history of the local Jewish community (cf. Michalakēs, 2014).

Similarly, aside from researchers, local institutions are also showing increasing interest in promoting Trikala's Jewish heritage. One typical

¹² Indicatively, in 2007, a local literary journal, *Kērēthres*, included an extended special section on Trikala's Jewish community, which contained texts written mostly by local intellectuals (cf. Afērōma stēn Evraikē Koinotēta tōn Trikalōn, 2007).

example is the privileged incorporation of the Jewish community into the “narrative” of the most important institution for local history and culture. Other examples include a number of events related to the history of local Jews organized by the community during the last decade. These events were organized as initiatives of the community, local intellectuals, or individual “Trikan Jews” of the diaspora, and in cooperation with local authorities and national or international Jewish institutions¹³.

This process of increased visibility peaked in the autumn of 2018 with the unveiling of the Holocaust Memorial erected by the municipal authorities and the Jewish community of Trikala in memory of the 139 local Jews, but also of all Jews murdered in Nazis death camps (cf. “Mnēmeio Olokautōmatos sta Trikala”, 2018; Saltiel, 2018). The ceremony was part of a three-day Holocaust remembrance programme. The programme of events was organized by the Italian presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), the Greek delegation in IHRA, the local Jewish community, the Municipality of Trikala, the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KISE), the Jewish Museum of Greece, and the Jewish community of Thessaloniki. It was attended by the president of KISE, the presidents or representatives of all the active Jewish communities in Greece, the rabbi of Larissa, representatives of the Greek state and the Greek Jewish museum, the ambassadors of Italy and Israel, and diplomatic representatives of 12 other countries. Parallel activities included two exhibitions on the Holocaust: one organized by the Jewish Museum of Greece and one by the Auschwitz Museum and the Polish Embassy in Greece.

With regard to the “Trikan Jews”, the event was attended not only by all the Jews living in Trikala, but also by a significant number of people born in Trikala or Karditsa, as well as by members of other Greek Jewish communities. According to an interviewee, “all these people are Trikanans... all have at least a root in Trikala”. In this sense, the event constituted the spatiotemporal context for the imaginary, symbolic and temporary “material” (Godelier, 1984) reunion of the community with its diaspora.

On the other hand, the monument and all the events symbolize the exile and the reintegration of the Trikan Jews into the broader public history of the city. Its design is indicative: the monument is a railway track in the

¹³ It is worth mentioning the event that was co-organized by the Israelite Community of Trikala and the Trikala Prefecture honoring the memory of the Greek Jews who were victims of the Holocaust. A small pamphlet with texts concerning the Holocaust was published in this context (cf. Nomarchiakē Autodioikēsē Trikalōn & Israēlitikē Koinotēta Trikalōn, 2006). Another event focusing on the history of the local Jewish community was co-organized in 2010 by the Israelite Community of Trikala and the “Kliafas Center for History and Culture”. In this context, the aforementioned special issue of the *Kērēthres* journal was re-issued under the form of pamphlet (cf. Israēlitikē Koinotēta Trikalōn, 2010).

shape of a tear, symbolizing the trains that deported local Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau. In the centre of this track/tear there is an olive tree, symbolizing peace and regeneration (“Mnēmeio Olokautōmatos sta Trikala”, 2018, p. 37).¹⁴ The Trikala mayor’s speech at the unveiling emphasized the symbolic “return” of local Jewish memory to the city: “With these tracks, which marked their deportation, the memory of the lost Jews returns to Trikala” (cf. “Mnēmeio Olokautōmatos sta Trikala”, 2018, p. 37).

However, this reintegration runs parallel to selective memory and a corresponding hegemonic discourse. The latter idealizes, in part, the diachronic relations between local Jews and Christians, highlighting the relative absence of serious tensions between the two groups. A speech made during the above events is indicative: according to the speaker, Trikala constitutes *a privileged example of successful integration of the Jews into local society*.

Indeed, the above image is not arbitrary. In contrast, as we have seen, there are many facts indicating the relatively successful integration of Jews into local society: their participation before World War II in various aspects of the city’s social life; the residences of several Christian families within the Jewish neighbourhood on the eve of the war; and, above all, the “rescue” of the majority of the city’s Jews from the Holocaust thanks to the help of local Christians and the left-wing resistance (cf. Kliafa, 2009; Michalakēs, 2014; “Mnēmeio Olokautōmatos sta Trikala”, 2018, p. 37; V. Venouziou, 2009).

However, we have also seen a number of references in historical sources to anti-Semitic incidents before the war. Some interviewees told me that while they were in hiding during the Holocaust, some local Christians looted their houses looking for money and gold. Additionally, repeated desecrations of the local Jewish cemetery during the second half of the 1990s – and, most recently, in autumn 2018 – indicate that even today anti-Semitism is not completely absent in Trikala. Such anti-Semitic incidents are usually downplayed, or even ignored in the public “historical” discourse.

The Jewish community’s integration into the hegemonic narratives of local history and the reinforcement of its visibility in the public space of Trikala undoubtedly serve its ceremonial “revival”. However, this does not change its difficulty with being reproduced in situ as an active sociocultural context of living and everyday interaction. The hard demographic effects of the Holocaust and emigration are related, inter alia, to accelerated interreligious exogamy among the remaining Jews in Trikala. This fact seems to augment the uncertainty of many interviewees regarding their community’s prospects.

At the supra-local level, we have already seen that Trikala’s Jews who emigrated “elsewhere” were gradually integrated into the Jewish communities

¹⁴ See also Gokun Silver (2019).

of their new places of settlement. This concerns firstly the institutional level, as they became members of the corresponding Jewish communities, or even citizens of another state (mainly Israel). However, integration concerns mainly the sociocultural level. Matrimonial exchanges seem to play a fundamental role in this, at least for the interviewees. I note that the hegemonic matrimonial practice among diaspora “Trikanal Jews” is to marry other Jews. It is rare, however, for their spouses also to “originate” from Trikala. Thus the majority of interviewees evaluate this in a positive way: as something necessary for the survival of Greek or broader Jewry. However, for many of them, the intra-Jewish but “outside the local community” marriages express, at least symbolically, the danger that the community will “disappear” and be reduced to a mere “footnote” of (Greek) Jewishness.

The question arises here as to the meaning subjects give to “community” and “origin” as interconnected elements of identification. The deterritorialization and delocalization of the community and its “reconstruction” on a new, “glocal” basis means that they have to renegotiate the shifting relations between locality and Jewishness as well as the ways both are interconnected with a complex – multiple, hybrid, or even contested by the dominant conceptions of Greekness – sense of nationality. All these elements are mutually related to the augmented importance of subjectivity in how “being a Trikanal Jew” is signified. In this context, the “Trikanal Jew subject” emerges as a field where the collective memory of the community meets the individual or familial biographies, life plans and expectations of its potential members.

For the majority of the diaspora “Trikanal Jews” – and even more so for their descendants – “Trikala” and their “community of origin” gradually became places of symbolic and imaginary significance, playing a decreasing practical role in everyday life. However, both are important for the construction of an “individualized version” of collective memory and identity. Thus, it is indicative that several members of the “Trikanal Jewish” diaspora in Athens and Thessaloniki have organized personal archives. These include miscellaneous material that varies from case to case: family heirlooms, old family photos or newer photos from family and “community” reunions in Trikala, Karditsa, or elsewhere; photographic journals from “pilgrimages” to people who saved their relatives during the Occupation, or places of special symbolic significance for their Jewish identity (Israel, concentration camps, monuments and museums of the Holocaust in Greece and abroad); draft records of their family history; articles from the Trikala press and studies on the local Jewish community; publications about Jews in general, and often material concerning their places of origin in general.

These archives are largely recorded as personalized and “private” attempts to “reconstitute”, “record”, “rescue” and “revive” family genealogy and memory. Similarly, the ritual performance and the symbolic “revival” of family and community history are mainly manifested by private visits to the villages where their ancestors fled, in order to honour the people who offered them shelter. Using the opportunity, they also visit the synagogue and the cemetery of Trikala. We can assume that the diffusion and fragmentation of community ties, the traumatic experience of the Holocaust, as well as anti-Semitism in general, has played a catalytic role in this personalization and privatization of historical memory (cf. Benveniste, 2017; Varon-Vassard, 2013).

Nevertheless, the institutional “local community” diachronically constitutes a predominant agent for the asset of the familial memory of its “diasporic” members. Thus, it has officially and successfully supported the efforts of some to have their rescuers (or their descendants) declared as *Righteous Among the Nations*. In this context, the local community emerges as the “core” of a broader network of social and symbolic interaction and exchange. This network is primarily activated in “exceptional”, commemorative or other ceremonial contexts such as religious feasts. However, the growing interest of local intellectuals and institutions in Trikala’s Jewish history potentially gives this network a far more “practical” significance as it seems to stimulate the interest of Trikala’s Jews (in Trikala as well as the diaspora) in collective and organized recording and “saving”, and in the public display of their “history”. This is indicated by the fact that all of the interviewees very willingly granted me access to their personal archives, expressing their wish that I use it not only to “write” and “preserve”, but also “to make their history known”. But their “interest” in “their history” mainly seems to motivate them to participate actively in “saving the community”, and in this sense to reinforce, at least symbolically, their bonds with their “place of origin”.

The current restoration of the local synagogue is a privileged example for investigating the convergence of what is described above. First of all, while restoration is necessary for practical reasons – the need to strengthen the foundations of the building – the project itself indicates the desire of the local Jewish community to enhance its visibility in the public space. This is supported by the decision to demolish the shops that were built in the courtyard, whose purpose was basically to obscure the synagogue from public view. As the president of the community told me, although this entails a loss of revenue for the community, it will allow the restoration of the historical form of the synagogue and, most importantly, will make it visible in the eyes of the “other” inhabitants of Trikala and visitors alike.

This, according to him, in combination with the Holocaust Memorial, will contribute to enriching the local cultural product with the ultimate ambition of making Trikala a place of cultural pilgrimage for the Jews of Greece and other countries.

Moreover, the synagogue's reconstruction also prompted the mobilization of the networks that link the local Jewish community to its diaspora. In particular, the community leaders addressed, among others, all its potential members (people who were born and raised in Trikala or Karditsa, but also those who are connected with the community through a relationship of origin) and the broader Greek Jewish community to contribute financially to the synagogue's restoration. With regard to "Trikanan Jews" (including those from Karditsa), according to the president of the community "everyone responded". This is compatible with the narratives of other informants from Trikala, Athens and Thessaloniki.

According to the above analysis, the identity politics of Trikanan Jews first of all expresses their claim of visibility in the public space and memory of their place (of origin and/or residence). However, they also express a claim of visibility and distinctiveness in the context of Greek and broader Jewry. The promotion of "Trikanan origin" in the KISE is indicative of that.

This strategy was instigated and inspired by the lawyer and intellectual Asher Moïssis (1899-1975) mentioned earlier. Following studies at the University of Athens, School of Law, he settled in Thessaloniki, where he married a Jewish woman from Ioannina. He soon became an influential agent and leader, and in 1936 became president of the largest Jewish community in Greece and the Balkans. During World War II and before the German invasion, he relocated with his family to Athens. There, he developed important resistance activity for saving Greek Jews (cf. Lampsā & Simpē, 2012, pp. 285-314). After the war, he took the lead in founding KISE and the Organisation for the Care and Restoration of the Greek Jews (OPAIE). He became the first president of KISE (1944-1949) and, after the creation of Israel in 1948, its first honorary consul in Greece. Moreover, he wrote an important number of texts. Many of them concern the relations between Greeks and Jews, expressing an integrative Zionism (cf. Dalven, 2007; Moïssēs, 2010).

Despite his origin, the life and work of Asher Moïssis connects him with many places and communities and primarily with the Greek Jewry as a supra-local collective and identity. However, his "Trikanan origin" is something indisputable and part of his official and institutional biography (cf. Dalven, 2007; Moïssēs, 2010). However, some interviewees believed that this is not "widely-known enough" and that their community must "promote his Trikanan origin more". It is thus not coincidental that in recent years, Asher

Moissis “claims” a central role in the “intellectual” Jewish history of Trikala (cf. Michalakēs, 2014; Moissēs, 2010; Molho, 1990).

We can suppose that the Trikala Jews’ “claim” to Asher Moissis expresses a multiple struggle: on the one hand, their struggle to increase their symbolic capital and sociocultural recognition within the local society of Trikala and, on the other, their struggle to increase their symbolic capital and status within institutions and sociocultural fields related to the broader Jewry. Finally, given that Asser Moissis strongly promoted the historical relations between Greek and Jews, “claiming” him expresses his compatriots’ struggle to empower their national capital and recognition within the Greek nation-state.

This multiple struggle should be interpreted in the light of the interaction and/or integration of the “Trikanan Jews” with or in “communities” and identities of supra-local character, such as the Greek Jewry, but also the Greek and the Israeli national states (cf. Detrez & Plas, 2005, p. 19; Doxiadis, 2018; Lewkowicz, 1999, pp. 51-54, 89-97; Papamichos Chronakēs, 2015). In this context, Trikanan Jewishness as a localized identity constitutes the point where multiple senses of belonging converge and co-exist (cf. Gaither, 2018; Papamichos Chronakēs, 2015). The result of this process is the emergence of a multi-layered identity, combining and hierarchizing the above spatial, ethno-religious and national references. One interviewee’s comment is indicative: “Trikala is my real homeland...I’m Trikanan and Greek-Jewish... Israel is for me an ideal homeland...”. Similarly, another interviewee said: “Many people confuse the terms Israelite and Israeli...[the Trikanan Jews] are not Israelis, we are Greek Israelites...of course, Israel is something important for us, given that it is a Jewish state and we have many relatives and compatriots living there...however, we are Greek Jews, our homeland is here ...”.

The multiple and at the same time hierarchized layers of the “Trikanan Jewish identity” are also expressed by the national symbolism practices they adopt and perform in the public and communal space. Such practices incorporate, on the one hand, the leading symbolic role of the Greek flag and national anthem during official and public ceremonies of the community, as well as the official participation of the institutional community in the celebration of Greek national anniversaries. On the other hand, they include hanging small Greek flags, but also hanging portraits of leading founders of Israel on the walls of the community centre and celebrating the State of Israel’s founding within the framework of the community.

In this context, we can also interpret the accelerated importance of a Romaniote identity among Trikala’s Jews. The hegemonic perception of Romaniotes as the “most original Greek Jews” confers heightened “national prestige” and dynamic on the corresponding identity. Moreover, it creates a symbolic place where Jewishness and Greekness can be perceived as

compatible and not as contradictory forms of consciousness and loyalty (cf. Papamichos Chronakēs, 2015). This fact possibly contributes to its increasing adoption by the members of the community, regardless of their “real origin”.

Conclusions and Future Research Prospects

From the above analysis we can assume that the Holocaust resulted in the extermination of an important segment of Trikala’s Jewish community, while post-war emigration led to its gradual social disintegration, diffusion, and integration into broader ethnoreligious and national realities. However, for the local Jews the “Trikan Jewish diaspora” constitutes a source of expectation for the future survival of their community.

Today this glocal “community” has more imaginary, symbolic and ceremonial rather than “practical” sociocultural dimensions. However, the recording, “rescue” and disclosure of community history, memory and “cultural heritage” form a fundamental field for rebuilding bonds between the potential members of the “community” and thus for its reconstruction as a glocalized network of sociocultural interaction (cf. Hannerz, 1996).

In this context, Trikala’s Jewish community emerges as a field where many different individual or family experiences and histories meet. In this sense, even when the “community” plays a small role in the everyday life of the subjects – especially of those born, raised or residing elsewhere – it potentially constitutes a “place” of particular symbolic significance. We can thus assume that the “community” is not only a place of imaginary or symbolic attachment but also an active network of memory and symbolic exchange. Within this network, narratives and articles, but also photos and objects (Kopytoff, 1986) related to the community’s history and culture are exchanged in the subjects’ effort to restore “their lost familial and community bonds” – in other words, to be reconnected to “their own people” who were murdered in the Holocaust or migrated “elsewhere” or, conversely, to become acquainted with “their ancestral homeland”. Thus, “community” practices such as sending the KISE annual diary to potential members in the diaspora or pilgrimages by the descendants of Trikala Jews to Trikala and the surrounding area can be recognized as ritual practices of symbolic reintegration of the places and people of a glocalized community.

Until recently, such practices were limited by the boundaries of an intimacy network formed by family, kinship, and only partly by the community in the context of personalized and often competitive ways of experiencing, performing and signifying historical “origin” and memory. However, it is worth exploring further whether the attempt to publicly restore and promote the Jewish heritage of Trikala, and the added social and cultural

value that this gives it, reinforces the desire to reunite with the “community” as a collective social actor and reformat a shared body of public memory and identity.

Moreover, the “community” emerges as a multi-layered and flexible identification context, expressing the historical convergence and hierarchization of different political and sociocultural (local, ethnoreligious, national) fields of loyalty. In this sense, the “Trikan Jewish” identity expresses the multiple experience of a localized, nationalized, diasporic and even trans-nationalized Jewish identity. Conversely, it also expresses the experience of an outgoing, multicultural and cosmopolitan “Trikan” and “Greek” identity, which goes beyond localism and contests the ethnonational and ethnoreligious (Christian Greek Orthodox) imaginary foundations of Greek nationalism (cf. Lekkas, 2011).

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Από την τοπική κοινότητα στο παγκοσμιο-τοπικό δίκτυο: Τόπος, μνήμη και πολιτικές της ταυτότητας στους Εβραίους των Τρικάλων και τη Διασπορά τους

Στο παρόν άρθρο παρουσιάζω ορισμένα πρώτα ευρήματα από την πολυτοπική εθνογραφική και εθνοϊστορική μου έρευνα στους Εβραίους των Τρικάλων. Η έρευνα κινείται σε δύο άξονες. Ο πρώτος αφορά στις ιστορικές διαδικασίες συγκρότησης και κοινωνικού μετασχηματισμού της κοινότητας μετά τον 2ο Παγκόσμιο Πόλεμο. Ο δεύτερος διερευνά την αίσθηση του

ανήκειν μεταξύ των εν δυνάμει μελών της «κοινότητας» και τους τρόπους που αυτά βιώνουν και διαπραγματεύονται σήμερα τη συλλογική τους μνήμη και ταυτότητα.

Σε θεωρητικό επίπεδο, μια πρώτη υπόθεση, είναι ότι η «κοινότητα» έχει την τάση να οικειοποιείται (αλλά επίσης γίνεται αντικείμενο οικειοποίησης από) υποκείμενα που ζουν σήμερα «αλλού». Υπό αυτή την έννοια, αναπαράγεται ως ένα παγκοσμιο-τοπικό δίκτυο, εντός του οποίου η *Εβραϊκότητα* και η *τοπικότητα* διασυνδέονται, βιώνονται και επιτελούνται με πολλαπλούς, ρευστούς και συχνά αποσπασματικούς τρόπους. Σε μεθοδολογικό επίπεδο, η έρευνά μου βασίζεται στις βασικές τεχνικές της εθνογραφικής και εθνοϊστορικής έρευνας, προσαρμοσμένες στις ανάγκες και τους περιορισμούς ενός πολυ-τοπικού ερευνητικού πεδίου.

Από την έρευνα προκύπτει ότι το Ολοκαύτωμα είχε ως αποτέλεσμα την εξόντωση και τον αφανισμό ενός σημαντικού τμήματος της τρικαλινής εβραϊκής κοινότητας, ενώ η μεταπολεμική μετανάστευση που ακολούθησε οδήγησε στη σταδιακή κοινωνική αποδιοργάνωση, τη διάχυση και την ενσωμάτωση της σε ευρύτερες εθνο-θρησκευτικές και εθνικές πραγματικότητες. Σήμερα, αυτή η «παγκοσμιο-τοπική κοινότητα» έχει περισσότερο φαντασιακές και συμβολικές, παρά «πρακτικές» κοινωνικο-πολιτισμικές διαστάσεις. Ωστόσο, η καταγραφή, «διάσωση» και δημοσιοποίηση της ιστορίας, της μνήμης και της πολιτισμικής της «κληρονομιάς» συγκροτούν ένα θεμελιώδες πεδίο για την αποκατάσταση των δεσμών μεταξύ των εν δυνάμει μελών της και την ανασυγκρότησή της ως ενός παγκοσμιο-τοπικοποιημένου δικτύου. Υπό αυτή την έννοια, η «Τρικαλινή Εβραϊκή Διασπορά» αποτελεί για τους ντόπιους Εβραίους τη θεμελιώδη πηγή προσδοκιών για τη μελλοντική επιβίωση της κοινότητάς τους.

Λέξεις κλειδιά: Έλληνες Εβραίοι, Τρίκαλα, Κοινότητα, Πολιτικές της Ταυτότητας, Εθνοτισμός, Παγκοσμιοτοπικότητα, Μνήμη, Εθνογραφία.

Od społeczności lokalnej do glocalnej sieci: miejsce, pamięć i polityka tożsamości wśród Żydów z Trikali oraz ich diaspory

W artykule prezentuję wstępne rozpoznania z mojego multilokalnego etnograficznego i ethnohistorycznego badania Żydów z Trikali, tzn. Żydów żyjących lub pochodzących z Trikali, miasta w Tesali w Grecji Środkowej. W szczególności, moje badania skupiają się na dwóch osiach: (1) historycznym procesie kształtowania się tożsamości i zmianach w społeczności po drugiej

wojnie światowej oraz (2) na poczuciu przynależności potencjalnych członków tej społeczności i sposobach, w których dziś doświadczają i negocjują oni zbiorową pamięć i tożsamość.

Na poziomie teoretycznym, pierwszą przyjętą hipotezą jest to, że „społeczność” ma tendencję do zawłaszczania podmiotów żyjących „gdzie indziej”, jak i do bycia przez nie zawłaszczaną. Zatem jest ona reprodukowana jako sieć globalna, w której żydowskość i lokalność są łączone, doświadczane i odtwarzane na wielorakie, płynne i często fragmentaryczne sposoby. Na poziomie metodologicznym, moje badania opierają się na podstawowych technikach badań etnograficznych i etnohistorycznych, które zostały zaadaptowane do warunków i ograniczeń obszaru multilokalnego.

Badania prowadzą do wniosku, że Zagłada przyniosła eksterminację ważnej części społeczności Żydów z Trikali, podczas gdy powojenne migracje prowadziły do jej stopniowej dezintegracji, rozproszenia i włączenia do szerszych realiów [systemów] etnoreligijnych i narodowych. Dziś owa „światowo-lokalna społeczność” ma raczej wyobrażony i symboliczny niż „praktyczny” społeczno-kulturowy wymiar. Jednakże spisanie, „ocalenie” i publikacja historii, pamięci i „kulturowego dziedzictwa” stanowią fundamentalny obszar dla rekonstrukcji więzi między potencjalnymi członkami społeczności, a zatem jej odbudowania jako zglokalizowanej sieci interakcji socjo-kulturowych.

Słowa kluczowe: greccy Żydzi, Trikała, społeczność, polityka tożsamości, etniczność, globalność, pamięć, etnografia.

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