

Paper for the 4th Hellenic Observatory PhD Symposium on Contemporary Greece

Hellenic Observatory, European Institute, LSE, June 25-26, 2009

Assimina Gouma

26. June 2009, Panel 2 – Perceptions & Identities

### **Confronting Identities by Greeks in Austria – The Challenge of “Being a Migrant”**

The simultaneous circulation of messages, media and audiences produces transnational patterns of social experience and challenges everyday concepts and identities. Analysing media practices of migrant audiences is therefore associated with the question on how people deal with internalised national borders and identities through the experience of migration.

Media and migration are seen as core elements of the metaphor of “flows” and of the “dialectic of routes and roots”. (Appadurai 1996) Media fertilize processes of identification and produce chains of variable “we” in the way Orvar Löfgren (2001) refers to as the “technologies” or “microphysics of belonging”. But concepts of belonging are strongly linked with social power and dynamics of exclusion. Despite of the microphysics of belonging, media and their audiences reproduce stereotypes in order to make foreignness distinct, involved in the processes of “othering”. Acting in-between different media landscapes offers therefore a space for renegotiating “foreignness”, “nation” and “identity”.

The focus of my research is the transnational media practices of Greeks living in Austria. Doing qualitative interviews with 18 Greeks who migrated to Austria as adults I look into the meaning and relevance of media and the social positions taken by a transnational audience. My study deals further with exclusion and inclusion both in the country of residence and the country of origin. In the case of Greek migrants in Austria the (media) distribution of xenophobic stereotypes towards “foreigners” in both countries challenges the identity of “being migrant”.

Neglecting being “μετανάστης/μετανάστρια” has less in common with the objectives of the European project (European Community) and the idea of European citizenship: the European identity is still not an issue. Important is though the distinction to the generation of Greek “gastarbeiter” and also to former concepts of diaspora (Hasiotis 1993). In order to understand the line of argumentation the paper examines on the one hand the role of media stereotypes in the confrontation with the migrant-identity. On the other hand the paper tries to interrogate the different identity strategies of Greek people in Austria and the sociopolitical dimensions of them.

### **Dominant frames of migration: The paradigm of “integration”**

When Robert Parker (1922) published the results of his study “Immigration Press and its Control” in 1922 the core concern driving the research of the Americanization Studies had been to interrogate if European migrants would be loyal to the project called American society. Loyalty became an important topic for politics and the social sciences in USA, as an opposite to emerging national awareness about European countries of origin, since World War I (WWI) strengthened the involvement of migrants in European affairs and the ties towards countries of origins (see also Glick Schiller/Basch/Szanton 1995: 51) In this case, the media migrants used and produced were regarded as key issue for approaching the research question.

Intrinsically it is a struggle of peoples, culturally isolated, to preserve their own cultural inheritances and at the same time [...] to gain access to the cosmopolitan culture of Europe and the world. It is to state it generally, a struggle to get into the great society, to enter into and participate in the conscious life of the race. The most important instrument of this movement is the press. (Park 1922: 467)

In contemporary social research on media and migration the core question is about integration instead of loyalty. According to Heinz Bonfadelli and Andrea Piga (2005) the influence of media use on integration processes and the relationship between media use and integration is the research question which ranks highest in the field of media and migration by communication scholars. The topic of media consumption and its role for the formation of identity rates second among recent research.<sup>1</sup>

“Integration” as a duty of migrants became a political desideratum. In the case of media studies there is a longing for inquiry on the power of media through the particular perspective of integration.<sup>2</sup> Though, from a stronger sociological point of view the exercise of political power by national governments and their insisting on the hegemonic concept of integration is the most interesting aspect on media and migration. To put it short, the idea of integrating into a “whole” and homogeneous society neglects the differentiation processes that have always been part of social life.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the integration discourse enables primarily political practices of inclusion and exclusion. Furthermore, integration became the argumentative arsenal in order to justify the social exclusion of migrants in school classes, in labour market etc..

---

<sup>1</sup> Bonfadelli/Piga (2005) refer further to two projects on the integration of media use into everyday family life and one project on the influence of culture-specific characteristics.

<sup>2</sup> Andreas Hepp describes this perspective as a longing for communicative homogeneity. This definition was presented und discussed during the Meeting of the German Communication Studies Society in Bremen (29.4.-1.5.2009)

<sup>3</sup> In the era of globalisation theories boom such processes became even more visible in large scale. Seyla Benhabib describes globalisation in the contradictory terms of system-integration and fragmentation: „Eine weltweite Systemintegration einerseits und eine soziokulturelle, linguistische und ethnische Zersplitterung andererseits bilden die Bruchlinien, an denen sich die Widersprüche der heutigen globalen Zivilgesellschaft abzeichnen.“ (1999: 28)

The older claim for loyalty as expressed in the Americanization Studies at the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is similar – regarding the consequences – with the concept of integration. In both cases at the stake is the “common social project”. For the European states with a pronounced history of nationalistic movements the common social project in modernity has been delineated through the nation. The ambivalence of the “community” as the *people*, the *citizens* or an *ethnic group* and the transnational shift taking place is according to Étienne Balibar (2003: 9) maybe *the* core topic societies deal with, influencing our understanding of rights. Balibar uses the words of Hannah Arendt, the right to be

This construction [the imagination of the “people” as *ethnos* or as *demos*] resulted in the subjective interiorization of the idea of the border – the way individuals represent their place in the world to themselves (let us call it, with Hannah Arendt, their right *to be in the world*) by tracing in their imaginations impenetrable borders between groups to which they belong or by subjectively appropriating borders assigned to them from on high, peacefully or otherwise. That is, they develop cultural or spiritual nationalism (what is sometimes called “patriotism,” the “civic religion”). (ibid.: 27f., emphasis in the original, translation from Erin M. Williams)

The exploration of the relevance of transnationalism for modern societies consists in the questioning of the fate of communities in terms of time, territories, the local and space. Therefore, social scientists started to focus on networks (Castells 1996) instead of communities based to face to face interactions. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1992) contend that “something like a transnational public sphere has certainly rendered any strictly bounded sense of community or locality obsolete. At the same time, it has enabled the creation of forms of solidarity and identity that do not rest on an appropriation of space where contiguity and face-to-face contact are paramount” (9, cf. Vertovec 1999: 3-4). But these new forms of solidarity have been accompanied by the weakening power of labour movements, the raise of individualism theories and furthermore, violent ethnic fragmentation – such as the Yugoslavian war in Europe. Based on such facts the fate of community or in other words, the common social project of nation, has become a major concern of the theoretical concepts attached to transnationalism and globalisation.

### **The Transnationalism of Media**

In order to understand these processes the perspective of transnationalism has been intensely discussed over the last years. To put it with the words of Nina Glick Schiller “the study of transnational migration was an idea whose time had come” (2004: 449). Transnationalism turned aside globalisation and multiculturalism into a buzzword that appears in the focus of different disciplines, demanding closer definitions. To put it simply, the term describes “multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states” (Vertovec 1999: 1).<sup>4</sup> In the more specific case of migration Linda Basch and Nina Glick Schiller (1995) define transmigrants

---

<sup>4</sup> Though, several meanings emanate from this broad definition. As Steven Vertovec further notes the US-Department of Defence operates also with the same notion of transnationalism – but with a different meaning – in order to indicate illegal and violent social networks of terrorists, insurgents, opposing fractions in civil wars conducting operations outside their country of origin etc.

as migrants, “whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state” (48). Accordingly transnationalism is the “process by which transmigrants, through their daily activities, forge and sustain multi-stranded social, economic and political relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement, and through which they create transnational social fields that cross national borders” (Basch/Glick Schiller/Blanc-Szanton 1994: 6)

In contemporary western societies experiences and fields of activity depend strong on communication processes through mass media and less in face-to-face interactions. Therefore, and keeping the definition of transmigrants above in mind, the link between media and transnationalism is central. Since Park’s estimation about the importance of the press in the social movements of migrants, the role which media play in the emerged discussions on transnationalism is still one of great significance. Paradoxically this also led to their simultaneous marginalisation. On the one hand media and new technologies like internet appear ubiquitous in papers on globalisation. On the other hand their effects in transnational processes are taken for unquestioned, driven so by technological determinism in a-theoretical marginalisation. One of the reasons for doing so is that the idea of transnationalism as a new phenomenon gave emphasis to a deterministic role of the media. But transnationalism isn’t a new phenomenon but a rather “new” theoretical concept and a new field of inquiry in order to understand interconnections across the borders of nation-states. (Glick Schiller/Basch 1995; Portes 2001) Therefore, instead of taking new media technologies as initiative craft for the emergence of transnationalism the authors insist on that media influence social fields of immigrants but they don’t produce them.

The increase in density, multiplicity, and importance of the transnational interconnections of immigrants is certainly made possible and sustained by transformations in the technologies of transportation and communication. [...] However, the tendency of today’s transmigrants to maintain, build, and reinforce multiple linkages with their countries of origin seems to be facilitated rather than produced by the possibility of technologically abridging time and space.” (Glick Schiller/Basch 1995: 51-52)

In order to overcome accusations of conceptual muddling in transnationalism-paradigm Alejandro Portes (2001) suggests a typology of actors in order to differentiate i.e. between media system and individual actors. Similar is the critique on the diverging scientific approaches on the metaphor of roots or routes. Then although the world has always been “an interconnecting realm of cross-boarder relationships” (Wimmer/Glick Schiller 2002) the present processes generate fascination within contemporary social sciences and increasing critical voices. Again, the use of “travellings” instead of “migrancies” results in the criticism of fostering social science fluidism by disregarding the different concerns of “real people” (migrants, asylum-seekers, minorities etc.): “For the rest, real people give way to flows, images and virtual connections, agency to the intersection of ‘things’ and ‘desires’.” (Favell 2001: 391) The fascination about exploring “flows” rather than people might be brought about in the context of economical globalisation: “Capitalism, they say, is everywhere breaking through the boundaries of states and localities to create a global economy and therefore a global society.” In critiquing that argument, Mann states that even economic “globalisation does not sweep away national, regional or other local differences, but it partially operates *through* them.”(Mann 2000, cf. Favell 2001: 391, emphasis in the original)

The role of communication technologies in flows of transnationalism has generated at least two opposite positions. A part of the debates unfolded due to the assumption that the “flows” of media threaten the bounds of communities through the import and distribution of foreign cultural patterns and ideologies, another part argues that the globalisation through media will contribute to integrating the world, to the one global society. (see again Mann 2000) Technologies like international satellite TV transmission have intensified these claims but made the output possibilities more complex: ‘The relationship between the states and transnational satellite broadcasting is also an entangled story. Transnational media, by its nature, escapes state controls and could become subversive to state powers. However, there is no such intrinsic necessity that all transborder media will become subversive to the state.’ (Caglar 2002) And Löfgren claims after his study on the role of radio in after war Sweden and particularly by analysing the contents of weather forecast that media are a stage for the distribution of the national meaning.

Traditionally the modern mass media has been seen as a globalizing force, threatening the national project, undermining local cultures. From a historical perspective, however, the truth of the matter would seem to be the opposite. During the two past centuries the mass media have created many of the specifically national understandings around the world. They have provided the forums through which much national discourse have been pursued, and established platforms of shared experiences and routines. (Löfgren 2001)

As he introduces the ‘technologies of belonging’ Löfgren uses the metaphors of home and motel in order to describe how the notions of home and nation and further of belonging have become intertwined through the nationalization of the media. According to the conclusions, media fertilise processes of feeling ‘home’ by giving the impression that the national is the one.

In the experience of migration the loss of grounding and belonging is therefore regarded to be an option to renegotiate “foreignness”, “nation” and “identity” both for the space of origin and the space of the new settlement. The optimistic transnational view behind this expectation has though to be limited. “Routes bringing certain ideas for democratization. It’s a hope put in the migrants paths but the osmosis with new ideas is not determined by migration processes” (Çaglar 2006). Hence, the empirical approach has to be discussed since “much of the present debate deals with loss, the loss of grounding, of belonging. Identities today are described in terms of deterritorialisation and displacement. Identities no longer take place, territories are less important: Space or rather place is no longer the dimension around which we organize our lives and construct our identities.” (Löfgren 2001) What he suggests is though “to look much closer at the complex micro-physics of taking place. Although mediascapes, dreamscapes and fantasylands always are part of our physical movements in space, there is a social and cultural elaboration, a sensuous massivity and redundancy in actually being there.” (ibid.)

According to Helma Lutz (2005) the core research question in the sociology of migration asks, does migration help individuals, groups or societies to improve their economic and social situation or does it rather lead to discrimination and deterioration? Starting with this question inequality becomes the perspective that interrogates patterns of exclusion and inclusion in migration and withdraws theoretical triviality. Following this path and in account of recent results a thesis could be that

national media systems are rather unable to provide migrant audiences with the resources they regard as essential for their lives.

The need to recall core sociological concerns depends also to a general shift from structural to cultural debates in migration. Similar theoretical paradigm shifts are also well under way in communication, media, and cultural studies: “From a social problem or welfare conception of migrant to an appreciation of cultural difference, from a view of media as an imposed force to a recognition of audience activity and selectiveness, and from an essentialist or “heritage” to a more dynamic adaptive model of culture” (Sinclair/Cunningham 2000: 13) The process of changing media practices after migration is not an effect of cultural hybridity. It has to be taken into account that there are no pre-given categories but different practices (Çaglar 1997) and migrancy might rather change life style perspectives. As Kevin Robins and Asu Aksoy (2001) remark “[...] media consumption is not determined ethnically but, rather, socially.” (cf. Madianou 2005: 524)

### **Migrants and their “places”**

According to recent data people with migrant experience use the media in a different way as audiences who lived since in only one country. Thus, migrants tend to seek news very broadly: “By engaging in transnational practices ethnic minorities often distinguish themselves from the majority population.” (Christiansen 2004: 188) The use of media is one perspective of analysis towards understanding, how migrants construct and reconstruct their simultaneous embeddedness in different societies. Besides the dominant integration paradigm in research and society, the meaning of media practices of migrants cannot be reduced in the hegemonic discourse of getting “integrated” into one society. Since the genealogical origins of a cultural object don’t determine the meaning of it, my research is based on interrogating the relevance of media in every day concepts of migrants and the meanings of media use. In the following paper the media practices of migrants manifest the dealing with different public spheres by contradicting the Greek and Austrian media. The analysis interrogates the political dimension of involvement in different public spheres by focussing on the issue of migration. Greek migrants in Austria involve with their media practices at least between Greek and Austrian public spheres in migration discourses that conceptualize “their place in the world” by contradictory terms. As Anthias Floya points out: „Displacement has become the most powerful imagery for the modern world. Displacement already presupposes its opposite, which can be thought of as being ‘in place’.” (2006: 17) The position of “being migrant” and therefore the question about who is the “migrant” in the migration discourse is challenged.

According to David Morley (1996) new technologies influence our sense of the viable world, our “geography” changes: “Our senses of space and place are all being significantly reconfigured. [...] Patterns of movement and flows of people, culture, goods and information mean that it is now not so much physical boundaries – the geographical distances, the seas or mountain ranges – that

define a community or nation’s ‘natural limits’.” (Morley 1996: 1)<sup>5</sup> Parallel to the interest in flows of capital and labour, migration research focuses in social remittances like the transfer of ideas, information and knowledge. Through the theoretical perspective of Michel Foucault, the involvement in spaces of power produces “lust” and generates knowledge, like a productive net, that covers the whole social body. (see Foucault 1978: 35). The media practices of migrants is can be described an involvement in the knowledge systems of a society and hence a struggle for empowerment. The ‘eagerness for knowledge’ (Wissbegierde) becomes in this way significant for the understanding of migrant media audiences in the sociality of the information and knowledge society.

However, “being” a migrant isn’t all about what people “are”. The homogenization through identities is an obstacle especially against practices that try to break through the restrictions of identity concepts. (Butler/Menke 1991: 36)<sup>6</sup> In the case of migration, identities are a critical point since in western politic discourses the marking of ethnicities becomes crucial while class becomes unmarked. At the same moment media are concerned to be the most important social institution for the production of “otherings”.<sup>7</sup> But media are simultaneously filters of “othering” and persisting producers of “we” (see Löfgren 1995). These two opposite aspects that are implicit in the role of media get further blurred according to the encoding-decoding-model of Stuart Hall (1980) of active audiences that reinterpret media messages. Taking into account the discussion on methodological transnationalism the question arises if media are an institution of naturalisation of the nation. To put it with Orvar Löfgren and in the case of audiences with migrant experiences, “before we accept the idea that mobility equals cultural and social change or new identities, we have to look much more closely at what people learn or do not learn by leaving their homes, their localities, their nations.” (1995: 14)

### **Seeking for a European public sphere**

In the following chapters two contradictory approaches on setting meaning of media practices will be discussed. The first example, a European and therefore a rather cosmopolitan concept of “being migrant”, enables to state media practices as a praxis of empowerment. Amalia, a Greek Student in political sciences in Salzburg, identifies herself as a migrant. Although both public spheres, the

---

<sup>5</sup> However, the feeling of diminishing distances fertilized sociological thoughts long before. Such a “prophecy” dates in the time before the “globalisation paradigm” emerged in industrialised societies: “The need for a constantly changing market chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must settle everywhere, establish connexions everywhere [...] the bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country [...] The individual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible.” (Marx/Engels 1952 [1848]: 46-47, cf. Urry 2003)

<sup>6</sup> I regard the gender studies and in particular the feminist discourse on the category „woman“ as very fruitful for interrogating several fields with concepts of homogenous groups, in that case of immigrants.

<sup>7</sup> Media studies often focused on the mass media representation of migrants: “On the other hand, treatments of diasporic identity have concentrated on issues of representation *by* mainstream media *of* ethnic and racial identities.” (Sinclair/Cunningham 2000: 13) The not surprisingly conclusion was that “Western mass media operate as prime filters of a hegemonic discourse ‘othering’ minority cultures and identities” (ibid.).

Greek and the Austrian, are core part of her quotidian world, “Europe” is the “place” where she finds her position in order to articulate political demands. The exploration of possible media places (places in town, where Greek media are accessible) and the organisation of time for the media are strategies to structure media practices. Avoiding being “left to my fate”<sup>8</sup> is a key code for Amalia, explaining the development of tactics and desires, especially regarding the media of the country of settlement.

Amalia longs for a meaning of “media equality” that globalisation and the “internet revolution” yet cannot generate. Out of the “European position” she demands public spheres with strong pluralistic and less national agendas. In the following quotation she refers to the eavesdropping of oppositional politicians through the government that has dominated in 2005 the Greek public. The media coverage has been extensive and had an effect in public debates that lasted for several months. Since then she distrusts the agenda setting of Austrian mainstream media and regards the Austria press as an insufficient source of information. Therefore, she evolves a variety of communicative strategies, seeking news very broadly. Besides the information given by Greek media and social networks, she insists in her position as a European migrant and her right of a European public sphere.

Και.. έψαχνα σαν τρελή να βρω τι έχει γίνει, εεε, και μέχρι να, δηλαδή: Έψαχνα στην αυστριακή εφημερίδα. Τίποτα. Και δεν βγήκε ποτέ, το θέμα. Εεε, και μάλιστα μ' ενδιέφερε πάρα πολύ να δω πως θ' αντιμετωπιστεί αυτό το θέμα από την Αυστρία. Λοιπόν δεν βγήκει ποτέ, και έψαξα μάλιστα σε άλλες.., δηλαδή, δηλαδή βρήκα, στο γαλλικό τύπο βρήκαί άρθρο για τις υποκλοπές. Έ, λοιπόν μετά παρακολουθούσα πάρα πολύ, διάβαζα όλα τα άρθρα στην Καθημερινή, στο Βήμα, στα Νέα, τα διάβαζα όλα, για να δω τι θα γίνει στις υποκλοπές. Γιατί το θεωρούσα, ας πούμεεε.., τεράστιο θέμα αυτό. Μεγάλη ξεφτίλα.

The neglect of Austrian press to report about the affair is perceived as a conflict with the own validation on news and fosters therefore research in further media channels but produces frustration at last. The proof for the legitimation of the expectations concerning the agenda setting happens through the coverage of French media: Francophone media become relevant as they are a proof that the eavesdropping affair is a matter of European range. The question, how do people or media handle with this issue in Austria, becomes important, involves aspects of politics of recognition through media. While in the case of mainstream media the objective is to cover majority interests, the intimacy with this particular landscape lets the asymmetry of expectations and media to reflect.

Further, having interests for issues, which are excluded from the media agenda, reduces the chances of political involvement in discussions with other actors. The migration discourse and migration right are though a way to negotiate an emancipative position towards information by criticising, debating and analysing mass media contents.

Για παράδειγμα, εάν εγώ δεν ξέρω ποιά είναι η στάση του τάδε κόμματος σε π.χ. απέναντι στους μετανάστες, και εγώ είμαι μετανάστης.., και μπορούν να παρθούν αποφάσεις που αφορούνε εμένα και εγώ να μην έχω ιδέα. Δηλαδή.., αν εεε ενημερώνομαι θα μπορέσω να ενημερωθώ και για το τι ας πούμε μη-

---

<sup>8</sup> «...της μοίρας έρμαιο»



κυβερνητικοί οργανισμοί υπάρχουνε. Πως μπορώ εγώ να δραστηριοποιηθώ, αν δεν συμφωνώ με αυτά που συμβαίνουν. Δηλαδή, αν δεν ενημερώνεσαι δεν μπορείς να... να διαμαρτυρηθείς και αν συμβαίνουν πράγματα εναντίον σου. Δηλαδή, αν δεν ασχολείσαι, δεν μπορείς και να παραπονιέσαι. Έτσι το βλέπω. Δηλαδή, αν αν είμαι εκτός τότε είμαι και, πως το λένε, εεε..... της μοίρας.. έρμαιο (γελά) Άντε μετά να το μεταφράσεις αυτό.

Although Amalia is „in place“ in Europe she defines herself further as a migrant. She regards the use of Austrian media parallel to the Greek ones as a premise for political participation and action. Furthermore she links the right of involvement in the public sphere with the responsibility of gathering the relevant information.

### “I am not a migrant”

Και αυτό που λέμε, γιατί, σ' αυτό το σημείο δε μπορώ να πω ότι είμαι, γι' αυτό έλεγα μετανάστης; Δεν είχα έρθει γι' αυτό το σκοπό εγώ εδώ δηλαδή. Εγώ, για δουλειά δεν ήρθα, για να μείνω δεν είχα έρθει, για να βγάλω λεφτά και να τα στείλω στην Ελλάδα ή να κάνω ούτε. Εγώ δεν είχα αυτά τα προβλήματα. [...] Και ποτέ δεν είχα αισθανθεί όλα αυτά τα χρόνια αυτό που λέμε, καμιά φορά λένε ότι, δε αισθάνεσαι τί είναι εδώ πέρα όλοι ψιλομύτες ειδικά στο Σάλτσμπουργκ ή ότι είναι ρασιστές ή και πάει λέγοντας. Ότι είναι, είναι. Όχι όμως με τους Έλληνες. Μιλάμε για τους Τούρκους, μιλάμε vielleicht για τους Σέρβους ίσως, μιλάμε για κάτι άλλους δηλαδή οι οποίοι τους θεωρούν ότι είναι πιο... Τέλος πάντων. Όπως είναι και εμείς στην Ελλάδα καμιά φορά τους θεωρούμε ότι είναι διαφορετικά δηλαδή, αλλάά για τους Έλληνες: Κανένα πρόβλημα.  
(Timos, Salzburg)

In contrast to the position of Amalia – as young, well-educated woman with high social capital –, “being migrant” is often a neglected identity. “Migrants” – so the quote of Timos before – is an identity concept that seems to apply for other (Serbs, Turks etc.) but not for the Greeks in Austria. While the topos of Greece as a privileged origin among others, regarding the stereotypes in the Austrian society, is a common place during the interviews, “being migrant” appears as a threatening situation. Although there is no disagree that from a technical point of view my interview partners “migrated” to Austria, the identity of migration is refused.

Lina, who lives since 1979 in Austria, lives with her three children and husband in Vienna. Her husband is also Greek and instead of him, who finished his studies and works in a prestigious job for an international organization, she stopped her studies and took care of the family. Together with her family she tried to return to Greece some years ago, but the minor job perspectives in Greece have been the reason for the decision to stay in Austria.

Lina describes herself as a very politically interested person. She subscribes to a Greek link-wing newspaper since many years and is highly committed in using media and being informed about what happens in Greece and Austria. Speaking about her involvement in watching and reading Greek media Lina neglects that nostalgia could be the reason of it. Similarly she refuses being a “μετανάστρια” or of having anything in common with former models of Greek migrants. Not being a “gastarbeiterin” is a very important issue. Like Timos she identifies and homogenizes other ethnic groups of migrants, but negates that she could also be one.

I: Πχ νομίζεις ότι αναφέρετε σε σένα ότι ο τρόπος που είναι η δημοσιογραφία πάνω στη μετανάστευση. Νομίζεις ότι είναι κάτι που αναφέρεται σε σένα προσωπικά;

Λίνα: Όχι δεν αισθάνομαι. Γι' αυτό, δεν αισθάνομαι ότι αναφέρονται σε μένα, σε δικά μου θέματα. Επειδή ούτε πολιτικός μετανάστης είμαι (γελάει) ούτε οικονομικός. Παρ' όλο μου εξαναγκαστήκαμε να μείνουμε εδώ, έτσι; Βέβαια θα μπορούσαμε να πάμε στην Ελλάδα κάτω από άλλες συνθήκες. Όχι δεν αισθάνομαι. Παρακολουθώ όμως τα θέματα. Είναι μια φρίκη. Σήμερα, άμα σου πώ, άκουγα στην Ελλάδα στις ειδήσεις, πάνω αυτό στη Μακεδονία, στην Έδεσσα κάπου. Εχθές μάλιστα το άκουσα πρώτη φορά και λέω μπράβο τους. Ήτανε παπάδες απο διάφορες συνορίες της περιοχής που καταγέλλανε τη κατάσταση που είναι οι οικονομικοί εργάτες εποχιακοί, Ρουμάνοι, Πολωνοί, ότι θέλεις, κάτω από άθλιες συνθήκες, να κοιμούνται στους δρόμους με αυτή τη παγωνιά τώρα. Και σήμερα ξανακούστηκε το θέμα από άλλους. Δηλαδή με, χωρίς να με αφορά προσωπικά, παρ'όλο αυτά δεν με αφήνει αδιάφορη και με γεμίζει έτσι μια αγανάκτηση, θλύψη. Άλλα έχει να κάνει με αυτή την πολιτικοποίηση που σου 'λεγα.

Asking about her place in-between the migration discourses, Lina prefers to refer to contents of the Greek media instead of criticizing Austrian discourses.<sup>9</sup> Although and because of her interest in media Lina has a high insight into the distribution of racist knowledge (Wissen) through media in both countries. In this sense she is also aware of the integration imperative toward migrants and responds to it – not without being ironic about it – for example by adding Austrian habits to the Greek ones. Lina knows that even if she neglects a migrant-identity her social performance responds to a spectrum of “places” that are structural possible: in the Austrian public sphere she is regarded as a migrant and political discourses refer to her in that manner. But the racist outlines of the public sphere toward migrants make such an identification threatening; hence her concept of creative deformation of structures is based on the neglection of the subject of migration.

## Conclusions

In my analysis I tried to contrast to different approaches towards media and migrant identity. The concept of transnationalism enables the simultaneous consideration of public spheres and their intertwined character in order to formulate social positions. Concerning the communicative value of public spheres (Arendt 1981) the core question is – to put it with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2008) – “Can the subaltern speak?” The place of “being migrant” makes people often and for different reasons speechless. Emancipative concepts arising from the idea of European Union are still not relevant for migrancies which are not connected to a cosmopolitan view.

---

<sup>9</sup> Lina discusses in the interview the topos of gratitude: „Austria gives us the bread we eat”. Therefore it is not possible for her to criticize Austrian media contents.

## References

- Anthias, Floya (2006): *Belongings in a Globalising and Unequal World: rethinking translocations*. In: Yuval-Davis, Nira/Kannabirāan, Kalpana/Vieten, Ulrike (Hrsg.): *The situated politics of belonging*. London: Sage, S. 17-31. (= Sage studies in international sociology, Bd. 55)
- Appadurai, Arjun (1996): *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation*. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Arendt, Hannah (1981): *Vita activa oder Vom tätigen Leben*. München: Piper.
- Balibar, Étienne (2003): *Sind wir Bürger Europas? Politische Integration, soziale Ausgrenzung und die Zukunft des Nationalen*. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition.
- Basch, Linda/Glick Schiller, Nina/Blanc-Szanton, Cristina (1994): *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-States*. Basel: Gordon & Breach.
- Bonfadelli, Heinz/Piga, Andrea (2005): *Media Use of Ethnic Minorities. A Critical Analysis of European Research*. Papier präsentiert im Rahmen der "First European Communication Conference", Amsterdam, 24. bis 26. November 2005.
- Butler, Judith/Menke, Kathrina (1991): *<<Das>> Unbehagen der Geschlechter*. Frankfurt, Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag.
- Çaglar, Ayse (2002): *Mediascapes, Advertisement Industries and Cosmopolitan Transformations: Turkish Immigrants in Germany*. Network-Migration.Online im Internet unter: [www.network-migration.org/workshop2002/papers.htm](http://www.network-migration.org/workshop2002/papers.htm) (18.04.2005).
- Çaglar, Ayse (1997): *Hyphenated Identities and the Limits of 'Culture'*. In: Werbner, Pnina/Modood, Tariq (Hrsg.): *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe. Debating cultural hybridity multi-cultural identities and the politics of anti-racism*. London: Zed Books, S. 169-185. (=)
- Çaglar, Ayse (2006): *Transnational Migration: The conceptual network and the blindspots*. Unpublished Manuscript, Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna.
- Castells, Manuel (1996): *The Rise of the Network Society*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Christiansen, Connie Carøe (2004): *News Media Consumption Among Immigrants in Europe*. In: *Ethnicities*, 4 Jg., H. 2, S. 185-207.
- Favell, Adrian (2001): *Migration, Mobility and Globaloney: Metaphors and Rhetoric in the Sociology of Globalisation*. In: *Global Networks*, 1 Jg., H. 4, S. 389-398.
- Foucault, Michel (1978): *Dispositive der Macht. Über Sexualität, Wissen und Wahrheit*. Berlin: Merve Verlag.
- Glick Schiller, Nina (2004): *Transnationality*. In: Nugent, David/Vincent, Joan (Hrsg.): *A Companion to the Anthropology of Politics*. Malden: Blackwell, S. 448-467. (=)
- Glick Schiller, Nina/Basch, Linda (1995): *From immigrant to transmigrant: Theorizing transnational migration*. In: *Anthropological Quarterly*, 68 Jg., H. 1, S. 48-64.
- Gupta, Akhil/Ferguson, James Ferguson (1992): *Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference*. In: *Cultural Anthropology*, 7 Jg., H., S. 6-23.
- Hasiotis, Ioannis K. (1993): *Επισκόπηση της ιστορίας της νεοελληνικής διασποράς*. Thessaloniki: Vaniis.
- Löfgren, Orvar (2001): *The Nation as Home or Motel? Metaphors and Media of Belonging: Sosiologisk Årsbok/Yearbook of Sociology*. Oslo, S. 1-35. (=)

Lutz, Helma (2005): Migration: Equalizer or Amplifier of Social Inequalities? Keynote of the Semi-Plenary Session 2. Papier präsentiert im Rahmen der 7th Conference of the European Sociological Association (ESA), Torun (Polen), September 2005.

Madianou, Mirca (2005): Contested Communicative Spaces: Rethinking Identities, Boundaries and the Role of the Media among Turkish Speakers in Greece. In: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31 Jg., H. 3, S. 521-541.

Mann, Michael (2000): Globalisation and Modernity. Papier präsentiert im Rahmen der Wiles Lecture Series, Queen's University, Belfast.

Marx, Karl/Engels, Friedrich (1952 [1848]): *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Moscow: Foreign Languages.

Morley, David (1996): *EurAm, Modernity, Reason and Alterity*. In: Morley, David/Chen, Kuan-Hsing (Hrsg.): *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. London/New York: Routledge. (=)

Park, Robert Ezra (1922): *The immigrant press and its control*. New York/London: Harper & Brothers.

Portes, Alejandro (2001): Introduction: the debates and significance of immigrant transnationalism. In: *Global Networks*, 1 Jg., H. 3, S. 181-193.

Robins, Kevin/Aksoy, Asu (2001): From spaces of identity to mental spaces: lessons from Turkish-Cypriot cultural experience in Britain. In: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 27 Jg., H. 4, S. 685-711.

Sinclair, John/Cunningham, Stuart (2000): Go with the Flow. Diasporas and the Media. In: *Television & New Media*, 1 Jg., H. 1, S. 11-31.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty (2008): *Can the subaltern speak? Postkolonialität und subalterne Artikulation*. Wien: Turia & Kant.

Vertovec, Steven (1999): Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism. In: *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 22 Jg., H. 2, S. 447-462.

Wimmer, Andreas/Glick Schiller, Nina (2002): Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation-State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences. In: *Global Networks*, 2 Jg., H. 4, S. 301-334.

**4<sup>th</sup> Hellenic Observatory**  
**PhD Symposium on Contemporary History of Greece and Cyprus**  
**(London School of Economics, 25 & 26 June 2009)**

**„Forced Migrations” in Greece and Turkey: The twisting way of Historiography**

The twentieth century is often described in modern European historical literature as “the century of forced migrations”<sup>1</sup>. The history of south-eastern Europe at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century could nearly be characterized by a massive transformation in the relations of the region’s ethnic groups, caused by military conflict, expulsions, state-directed population exchanges and other forms of forced migrations in the context of the establishment of nation states in the region.

**Forced migrations shaping the nation**

Migrations – forced or voluntary - towards the Greek State rising as a consequence out of military conflict or political decisions at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, were not new to the Greek Kingdom: the arrival of thousands of Greek refugees fleeing from the British bombing of Alexandria 1882, the implications of the Cretan Crisis 1886, the persecutions in Eastern-Rumelia 1906 and finally the massive population transfers in the frame of the Balkan Wars, just to cite some examples. But whereas these migrations were relatively small in numbers and stretched mostly over a short period of time, the mass influx of refugees following the “Asia Minor Catastrophe” after the Greek-Turkish War of 1921-22 implied for the Greek state major challenges. For Turkey, the withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire from the Balkans and the mass migrations of Muslim populations from South-Eastern Europe following military clashes with the emerging Christian Nation States in 1876-1878 and the significant restrictions in the juridical status of the formerly-privileged Muslims in these States were of primary significance to the future history of the Turkish Republic/the Ottoman Empire. In both states the receiving and the integration of these refugee populations into the Greek State or the Ottoman Empire was later to be seen as one constituting factor and helped to shape the new Nation state.

**Forced migrations shaping Historiography**

The experiences and consequences rising out of the mass transfer of populations in Greece and Ottoman Empire/Turkey not only helped to build the new Nation States in the Region, but were also determining factors in shaping the future historiography of Greece and Turkey. But Studies on forced migrations of the “own” refugee populations – plentiful in numbers - mostly approach the issue from within “national” historical narratives and through polarizing ethnic stereotypes, demonstrating a one-sided victimization discourse, which hinders academic research into a broader trans-national regional history.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Ther, Ph. (2001), A Century of Forced Migration: The Origins and Consequences of “Ethnic Cleansing”, in Ther, Ph. and Siljak, A. (eds.), *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944-1948*, Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 43-72.

<sup>2</sup> Analyzing Greek historiography of the population exchange 1923: Yildirim, O.(2006). “Repräsentation und Realität: Historiographie, nationale Meistererzählungen und persönliche Erfahrungen des griechisch-türkischen Bevölkerungsaustausches von 1923“, in: Brunnbauer, U. and Esch, M. G. and Sundhausen, H. (ed.),

Moreover, views - once canonized by official traditionally received historiography - are also applied retrospectively towards earlier migrations of different ethnical groups in the Region and thereby obstruct reconsideration of coherent motives for earlier population movements. An expedient - though hardly researched - example for the controversial approach of “forced migrations” in Greek and Turkish historiography are the population transfers of Muslims living on the territory of the new Greek Nation State before the Balkan Wars in the period from the Congress of Berlin 1878 until the Balkan Wars 1912/13.

The Congress of Berlin 1878 had decided that Greece and Turkey should settle their political and territorial issues in separate meetings, which finally led to the cession of the Sandschak of Thessaly and the town of Arta to the Greek kingdom. Incorporating the regions of Thessaly and Arta not only meant a considerable enlargement of the Greek territory but included the integration of non-Christian minorities which for the first time almost reached 10% of the total population. 8,2% of the total population of Greece were now of Muslim faith and 1,1% belonged to the Jewish communities of Thessaly.<sup>3</sup> The numbers given vary from 290.000 to 330.000 for the whole population, including 35.000-40.000 Muslims and 4.000-6000 Jews in the year after the cession to the Greek State. However, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century most of the Muslim population in this recently-acquired territory had left Greece for regions still under Ottoman governance.

Starting with the Turkish side many historians try to classify these population transfers into a general context of migrations of Muslims in South-Eastern Europe at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century. Declaring these migrations as state directed expulsions of Muslims from the new Balkan States and as a “continuum” in South-Eastern European History valid for all new Balkan States, the expulsion of the Morea Muslims in Peloponnes in the frame of the Greek Revolution 1821 is often considered as the beginning of forced migrations of Moslems in South-Eastern Europe. As Justin McCarthy states it in his often-cited book “Death and Exile”: “*The greek rebellion was the first of the movements that identified themselves by the murder and expulsion of Muslims from their land. (...) The Greek revolution set a pattern for future revolutions in the Balkans. The policy of ridding regions of their Turkish population in the name of national independence was seen again in the wars of 1877-78, 1912-13, and 1919-23*”<sup>4</sup>. Bilal Simsir, Kemal Karpat and others have done extensive research on the expulsions of Balkan Muslims towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century showing that the new emerging Nation States as Bulgaria, Serbia as well as Montenegro fostered emigrations of Muslims with every military conflict in the region.<sup>5</sup> Striking is the fact that Muslim emigration from Greece is often discussed in the same context as forced migrations of their co-religionists in the neighbouring states of Serbia and Bulgaria in roughly the same period without referring to any examples from the Greek case or using instances from the period of the Greek Revolution. Although nearly no research has been done - especially not in an international frame - on the Muslim Populations in Greece and their political and sociological situation before the Balkan Wars, it is often argued that after the political changes of 1878, or respectively 1881 that “*It was clear that the successful establishment of national*

---

*Definitionsmacht, Utopie, Vergeltung. „Ethnische Säuberungen“ im östlichen Europa des 20. Jahrhundert,* Berlin: LIT Verlag, 49-76.

<sup>3</sup> The data regarding the size of the new minority vary depending on the sources consulted. Quantitative records of the population of the new provinces in the years 1878 until 1881 can be found in a variety of sources and statistics which cannot be discussed here.

<sup>4</sup> McCarthy, J. (1995). *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of the Ottoman Muslims 1821-1922*, Princeton: Darwin Press, 12.

<sup>5</sup> Simsir, B. (ed.) (1968-1970), *Rumeli'den Türk Göçleri* (eng.: *Turkish Emigrations from the Balkans. Documents*), Vol. I-III, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu; Karpat, K.(1985), *Ottoman Population 1830-1914. Demographic and Social Characteristics*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press; Eren, A.C.(1966), *Türkiye'de Gök ve Göçmen Meseleri*, Istanbul.

*states depended on the liquidation of the muslim element or, at least, on the reduction of the Muslims to the status of a politically and economically harmless minority.”*<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile official national Greek historiography on the years after the Congress of Berlin and before the Balkan Wars 1878-1912, mostly neglects the existence of Muslim Populations in newly-acquired regions and therefore does not even broach the issue of emigration of Muslim populations in Greece at all. A common justification, conveyed by many scholars is, that the Muslims, meaning mostly to the great land owners, had already left the region in the years 1876-1878 having sold their property to extensively low prices because of fear of the anticipatory takeover of the region by the Greek State.<sup>7</sup> This widely held belief has seriously to be reconsidered since research has shown that the presumptions made by the most scholars concerning the political circumstances as well as the political and social consequences arising for Muslim populations in the Greek case are not similar to those in the neighbouring states in the same time.

What Greek and Turkish Historiography has generally agreed to is that – based on the assumptions concerning mass expulsions of Muslims in Bulgaria and Serbia 1878/79 and in the frame of the Balkan Wars 1912/13 - the reasons for Muslim emigration are exclusively to be found in ethnical conflict. In a recently published book on the history of Thessaly Angeliki Sfika-Theodosiou nevertheless mentions Muslim presence in Thessaly after 1881, but assumes that the Ottoman nobles of the town, although they welcomed the political and administrative Representatives of the new Government, were full of contempt, disrespect and even hatred or grave animosity.<sup>8</sup> Motives for Muslim Emigration are furthermore found by Greek Historiography in the religious fanaticism of the Balkan Muslims. Muslim populations are often pictured as religiously or/and politically extreme assuming a strong political affinity to the Ottoman Empire and to Islam.<sup>9</sup> As Sfika-Theodosiou states without giving any references: “*the feelings of the Muslims were to such a degree hostile, that there existed a permanent threat of clash/collision.*”<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless intensive research on source material from Thessaly and Epirus after 1881 suggests that Muslims emigrated from Greece, in contrast to that of Muslim migration from neighbouring states, primarily due to social and economic reasons rather than as a result of open discrimination or ethnic violence.

Furthermore both narratives point out that Muslim Populations, which were resident in European Turkey until the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century, not only left the Greek Kingdom in response to ethnic conflict within and after armed hostilities. In considering the migration of Muslim populations to the Ottoman Empire as a “natural response” to the tide of events, their migration is also received as a natural “return” or “remigration of those populations, as Jasna Žmegac put it, going back to their

---

<sup>6</sup> Karpat, K.(1985), *Ottoman Population 1830-1914. Demographic and Social Characteristics*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

<sup>7</sup> Allamani, Efi (1983). „I Thessalia sta televtaia peninta chronia tis tourkikis kyriarcheias (1832-1882), in: *Praktika, I televtaia fasi tis anatolikis kriseos kai o ellinismos (1878-1881)*, Athens, 75-101, 87. This presumption has to be critically reconsidered, because in the negotiations the incorporation of the town of Larissa, a city with a high percentage of Muslim Population, to Greece was not to be foreknown, but arised within the proceedings. See Davidson, R. (1983), “The Ottoman-Greek Frontier Question, 1876-1882: From Ottoman Records”, in: *Praktika, I televtaia fasi tis anatolikis kriseos kai o ellinismos (1878-1881)*, Athens, 185-204.

<sup>8</sup> Sfika-Theodosiou, A. (2006). “I entaksi tis thessalias sto elliniko kratos (1878-1881)”, in *Thessalia: Themata Istorias*, Vol. 1, Larissa.

<sup>9</sup> Allamani, E, (1983). „I Thessalia sta televtaia peninta chronia tis tourkikis kyriarcheias (1832-1882), in: *Praktika, I televtaia fasi tis anatolikis kriseos kai o ellinismos (1878-1881)*, Athens, 75-101, 86; Sivignon, M. (1992), *Thessalia*, Athens: Morphotiko Institutouto tis Agritikis Trapezas, 150.

<sup>10</sup> Sfika-Theodosiou, A (1989). *I Prosartisi tis Thessalias: I proti fasi stin ensomatosi mias ellinikis eparchias sto elliniko kratos (1881-1885)*, Salonica: Aristoteleio Panepistimio Thessalonikis, 33.

“ancestral home land”<sup>11</sup>, they came from, meaning the Ottoman Empire or respectively Turkey. This “Return-Theory” could also be seen as related to another suggestion made by many historians of both sides of historiography. Based on the assumption and therefore explained with that live of Muslim populations is generally characterized by a high intensity of migration. According to some historians they have developed a so to say high “ethnic mobilisation” in order to escape violent actions and military conflict.<sup>12</sup> Exponents of Greek historiography support this theory in relating the immigration of Muslim Populations at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, occupying “our Greek lands”, to their emigration in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and their final return to “their homeland.” Following such an easy concept of “belonging of populations” it is therefore not astonishing if traditionally received historiography in consequence expects the “other side” to research on “their” populations and “their own” minorities.

Interesting is meanwhile regional historiography or historiography originating from the region itself, which - in many cases- tends to be popular science local history (Heimatkunde). Whereas many regional and local descriptions at least mention the presence of Muslim communities in the region after the cession of Thessaly 1881 to the Greek kingdom, they do not further investigate Muslim participation on a local level concerning socio-economic processes after the incorporation of Thessaly to the Greek Kingdom. While regional research has focused exclusively on the political and economical consequences of the cession for the Greek population, it simply neglects any activities of Muslims not having emigrated at the same time. Most of the descriptions of political, economic or social developments of the region after 1881 do not make any references to Muslim population, although Muslim participation in Thessaly can be noticed on all social and political levels. This is even more remarkable since their mass migration must have had heavy economic and social consequences for the whole area of Thessaly, especially on the towns of the region. Some scholars from the region itself do mention for example the two Muslim delegates of Larissa in the Greek parliament after the first election 1881, further information about these outstanding Muslim personalities, although active in politics on the state, regional and city level is nowhere existent.

Finally it seems that such a historiographical approach supports the general trend in national Greek official historiography of constructing a picture of a pure Hellenic population in newly acquired regions to justify their incorporation into the Greek kingdom.

## **Official politics of remembrance**

This is also reflected – as the official politics of remembrance requests - in State Institutions and official sides in regions where Muslim populations resided, but left no visible traces in land- and townscapes for instance in Regional or Ethnical Museums. Perceiving and constructing the history of Thessaly as a exclusively Greek history can be also observed in the description of the Ethnological Museum of Larissa made by the Ministry of Culture on their homepage. The aim of the Museum is – so the Ministry - depicted as follows: The Museum “*presents aspects of contemporary/modern Greek culture focusing on the region of Thessaly*”<sup>13</sup> In the Ethnological Museum of Larissa, which – as stated recently in a speech by

---

<sup>11</sup> Jasna Capo Žmegac (2009), Keynotespeak InASEA Conference, unpublished paper, Haçetepe University, Ankara.

<sup>12</sup> Höpken, W. (1996), „Flucht vor dem Kreuz? Muslimische Emigration aus Südosteuropa nach dem Ende der osmanischen Herrschaft (19./20. Jahrhundert)“, in Höpken, Wolfgang (ed), *Zwangsmigrationen in Mittel- und Südosteuropa*, Comparativ 6 (1996,1), 1-24, 6.

<sup>13</sup> See [http://www.culture.gr/h/1/gh151.jsp?obj\\_id=3416](http://www.culture.gr/h/1/gh151.jsp?obj_id=3416).



the curator of the Museum - claimed to be “*a key to open the door to acceptance and tolerance of ‘otherness’*”<sup>14</sup>, no reference was made to Minority populations living in Thessaly, which attributed to the rich culture and history of the region.

The same treatment can be noticed in the case with architectural remains of Muslims in Thessaly. The archaeological museum of Larissa is situated in the last surviving mosque of the town – out of 26 in the 19<sup>th</sup> century -, but in the Museum the original utilisation of the building is nowhere indicated. This is even more astonishing, because due to – until now unsecured information – this mosque was a donation of the Greek princess to the Muslim community of the city after the incorporation of the region to the Greek Kingdom.

---

<sup>14</sup> Gourgioti, L. (2006), “Ethnographical Historical Museum of Larissa: a museum in continuous evolution”. Conference on “Cities’ portraits in City Museums – Global Stances, local practices”, Volos, [http://www.diki.gr/EN/museum\\_conf.html#LenaGourioti](http://www.diki.gr/EN/museum_conf.html#LenaGourioti).

# Perceptions of Jews in the Greek State: From the Don Pacifico Affair to the Shoah

## Introduction

This paper will examine how the Jew was perceived and constructed in the context of the Greek state over the *longue durée*. The evidentiary basis for this examination will be chiefly literary texts where the figure of the Jew is both discernable and central to the substantive content of the text. The paper's main concern are ideas and conceptions concerning Jews, that is, what orthodox Greeks believed about Jews rather than the reality or indeed realities of their co-existence.

In choosing the texts which follow I have looked for works which reflect three broad and intertwined themes. Firstly, the long-term and complex legacy of the Jewish-Christian schism of late Antiquity. Secondly, the profound discontentment engendered by the many social and economic dislocations brought about by the rise of the modern nation-state and the alleged role of the Jew in those dislocations. Thirdly, the functioning of the Jew as the ever-present 'other' in Greek society, politics and culture.

## Terminology

While it may seem somewhat tedious to begin our discussion with comments on terminology, there is however no other option. The terms which Greek uses to signify the Jew do not exist in a social and cultural vacuum and must therefore be contextualised. Greek provides three basic words for the designation of Jewish people, *Εβραῖος* (*Evraios*), *Ισραηλίτης* (*Israelitis*), and *Ιουδαῖος* (*Ioudaios*) with their English equivalents being *Hebrew*, *Israelite* and *Jew* respectively. These terms are essentially Hellenised versions of the original Hebrew words, which in all probability entered the language at some point in Antiquity.

These basic denotations came to be used in nineteenth century Greek to designate Jews generally, often being used interchangeably with little distinction. Newspaper reportage throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century clearly evidences this use. However with time the use of the word *Israelitis* and its adjectival forms such as *israelitkos* or *israelitike* began to appear principally in official documents when in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the state granted legal recognition of the communities in Athens and Chalkida. It is highly likely that the choice of this term was influenced by the French where the equivalent term *Israélite* was adopted by the founders of the educational organisation *Alliance Israélite Universelle*.

If the term *Israelitis* began to take on a formal use, the word *Evraios* and its innumerable variations, *Οβραῖος* or *Οβριός* continued to be used repeatedly in many pejorative ways. The most obvious examples arise from folklore and the rituals of the Holy Week. Let us consider the following examples, the first taken from a folksong performed on Good Friday and the second from collections of proverbs:

Σήμερα βάλαν τη βουλή οι άνομοι Οβραῖοι  
οι άνομοι, οι παράνομοι κ' οι τρισκαταραμένοι<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Akademia Athinon (1933) 1: 237

Today a council the perfidious Jews made  
the perfidious, the lawless and thrice-cursed

Αλάγρα από Οβριό κι' από σκυλί <sup>2</sup>  
Beware of the Jew and the dog

Ο Οβριός σα μουφλουζέψη τα παληά τεφτέρια πιάνει <sup>3</sup>  
When bankrupt the Jew grabs his old[unclaimed] debts

The associations the above language makes are very clear indeed. In short, the Jew is associated with impurity of spirit, avarice and deicide. It is in this context that we should also view another, particularly vulgar, term, namely *τσιφούτης/ tsifutis*.

According to numerous lexicographical authorities *Tsifutis* initially denoted the person who denies the truth, that is, religious faith. With time further connotations were added and so *tsifutis* came to be associated with malice, stinginess and perfidy. Together with similar words like *αλάδωτος/ aladotos* and *αμύρωτος/ amyrotos*, literally 'unoiled', 'unanointed', *tsifutis* underscores the religious divide and the supposedly recalcitrant insistence of the Jews not to be baptised and through baptism achieve salvation.

Judging from the examples just cited one could easily surmise that the Greeks were especially prejudiced or disdainful of Jews. Such a view however would neglect to recognise the broader context of language development in Greek vis-à-vis other non-orthodox groups. The Greek word for *Jesuit*, *Ιησουίτης*, with its figurative meaning of hypocrite and zealot is a case in point. Similarly the word *μουρμάς/bourmas*, a term which in its strictest sense described the curved moustache of Muslim men was nevertheless used by Orthodox Cretans to belittle their fellow Muslim islanders. Finally, one must not forget that although the Greek language has developed numerous and often pejorative terms for Jews and Non-Jews alike, these terms belong to a living, multi-levelled and complex cultural context replete with a multitude of often contradictory images and it is within this context that ultimately writers, poets and artists work.

## Images

It is in light of the above context that the first of the writers I will examine, Maria Michanidou, wrote, published and achieved notoriety. In 1891 Maria Mechanidou published the play *The practice of human sacrifice by the Jews/ An original drama ending in comedy/ Greco-Jewish Symposium in five acts/ Η ανθρωποθυσία παρά τοις Ιουδαιοίς/ Δράμα πρωτότυπον απολήγον εις κωμωδίαν/ Ελληνοεβραϊκόν συμπόσιον εις πράξεις πέντε*. This work is essentially a dramatisation of the true events of a blood libel charge raised in 1880 by Alexandria's Greek-Orthodox population against the city's Jews upon the discovery of the corpse of a twelve year old boy, Michael Poliades Kassios during the Holy week of Orthodox Easter.

The play's plot consists of two key events. The first is the ritual murder of Michael. The murder by way of vein incisions, *φλεβοτομίαν*, is committed by the city's rabbis. The second event encompasses the numerous responses of the local community. They include the finding of the doctors that the death was caused by haemorrhage, the

---

<sup>2</sup> Zevgoles 1933:819

<sup>3</sup> Argenti, P.P & Rose, H.J. 1949: (2) 879

bribery of municipal officials by the city's wealthy Jews and immediately following the bribery those same officials declaring the death an accident. As a consequence of all the above actions, rumours begin to be spread by the Christians, implicating the Jews in the death and claiming it was a ritual murder. The play ends with the *symposium* alluded to in the title at the home of the wealthy Alexandrian Jew, Menas Effendi.

The characters are essentially the vehicle by which Mechanidou juxtaposes good and evil, right and wrong and by extension just and unjust, patriotic and unpatriotic. The play's Jews are depicted as cruel and calculating murderers who will use any means to cover up their crime. In contradistinction to this image of the Jew, the murdered boy is portrayed as a courageous hero in life and death.

Mechanidou's writing technique consists of rather crude and naive dichotomies. She eulogises the poor and the victims of injustice while she belittles and demonises the privileged and powerful. Into this central schema she also inserts a specific ethno-religious factor. The wealthy and privileged are always Jewish and in some cases Greek while the underprivileged are always Greek.

What is however significant about this particular work is ironically not the work itself but the accompanying introduction. In its introduction Mechanidou sets out *in extenso* details of her family history, her views on the Jews and their religious practices, her concerns for the plight of the Greek lower classes, her views on the political situation of Greece and the Greek Diaspora as well as a commentary on the governing classes. This introduction provides *the vital* context to any examination of the play. Thus, when the two texts are read together they provide in even clearer terms, a detailed insight into the thinking vis-à-vis Jews.

The introduction does provide a very clear picture of the Mechanidou's profound angst regarding the society of her day. There is a sense of deep frustration in its rambling tone and endless detail and especially a frustration with the dislocation and loss of identity wrought by immense social and economic change. These changes appeared to people like Mechanidou to be beyond their control while the benefits they supposedly brought in terms of wealth and modernisation appeared to be enjoyed only by a handful of people, in the playwright's view, the Jews. *Ergo* in Mechanidou's play we have a clear projection of the supposed ills of the age upon the group believed by her to have profited the most from those ills.

As a consequence in the world Mechanidou creates, the Jews utilise their incredible wealth to arrest control of the world's nations either through various forms of villainy, and/or extensive interbreeding with the Christian and specifically the aristocratic, populations of the world.

Finally, one must forget that Mechanidou was neither the first Greek writer nor the only to portray Jews in such a manner. Both Stefanos Xenos' *Ο Διαβόλος εις την Τουρκίαν/ The Devil in Turkey* (1851) and Stefanos Koumanoudis' *Στράτης Καλοπίχειρος/ Stratis Kalopicheiros* (1851) used the ritual murder motif well before Mechanidou published her work. In this sense Mechanidou's play does not differ materially from the pertinent older literature.

In contrast to the dehumanised Jew of Mechanidou, Konstantinos Kavafis is able to grant us a Jew who is a rounded human being. Let us examine the poem *Των Εβραίων* (50 μ.Χ)/ *Of the Jews* (50 B.C.):

Ζωγράφος και ποιητής, δρομεύς και δισκοβόλος,  
Σαν Ενδυμίων έμορφος, ο Ιάνθης Αντωνίου.  
Από οικογένειαν φίλην της Συναγωγής.

«Η τιμώτερες μου μέρες ειν' εκείνες  
Που την αισθητική αναζήτησιν αφίνω,  
που εγκαταλείπω τον ωραίο και σκληρό ελληνισμό,  
με την κυρίαρχη προσήλωσι  
σε τέλεια καμωμένα και φθαρτά άσπρα μέλη  
Και γένομαι αυτός που θά ήθελα  
Πάντα να μένω των Εβραίων, των ιερών Εβραίων, ο  
υιός.»

Ένθερμη λίαν η δήλωσίς του. «Πάντα  
να μένω των Εβραίων, των ιερών Εβραίων - »

Όμως δεν έμενε τοιούτος διόλου  
Ο Ηδονισμός κ' η Τέχνη της Αλεξάνδρειας  
Αφοσιωμένο τους παιδί τον είχαν.

Although a mere thumb nail sketch, this image has a very potent effect because it reminds us of the *realness* of human action and especially folly. This poem with its deep irony represents tangible proof that behind the shifting fantasies of religious dogmas and petty ideologies the Jews are real people attempting, albeit with some self-deception, to live their lives.

Moving on to the case of Alexandros Papadiamantes we can definitely observe that over the course of his writing career, his Jewish characters develop from the lifeless stereotype of Greek folkloric tradition to a complete, albeit suspect, human being.

Let us consider the short story *Childhood easter/ Παιδική πασχαλιά*<sup>4</sup>, written in the early 1880's in which Papadiamantes' concern for the welfare of children, a common theme throughout his corpus, is once again illuminated.

As a consequence of the death of her mother during childbirth, the young Morfo recalls with joy the previous year's Easter festivities, the last the girl was to share with her mother. Within that recollection of happier times we find the image of the effigy of Judas dressed in *colourful, long and striped dresses/ μακριά μακριά φορέματα, παρδαλά, ραβδωτά*<sup>5</sup>, who is duly mocked, fired at and set alight. The Jew in this text is not only the conventional personification of cowardice and greed, but more importantly an object of scorn.

---

<sup>4</sup> Papadiamantes 1981: (2) 169-176

<sup>5</sup> Papadiamantes 1981: (2) 175

The shift in the author's attitudes to the Jews takes place in the very last story Papadiamantes published shortly before his death, *Repercussion of the mind/ Ο αντίκτυπος του νου*<sup>6</sup>, a fact of immense significance.

In this story the Jewish character belongs to a company of friends who frequent the same tavern or *καπηλειόν*. The company's members consist of an Orthodox Christian, *Lysandros Papadionisios*, a character presumably modelled on Papadiamantes himself, three Catholics, the most significant being *Poupis* and the Corfiote Jew, *Sabbatinos Levis*.

Despite the common love of food and drink, Papadiamantes' narration of Sabbatinos wavers between an admiration for his piety and a certain amount of suspicion. Sabbatinos is known by multiple, either Greek or Italian, names, *Σαλβατώρος, ή Σάλβος, ή Σάββας* as well as speaking several languages and professing many trades, *ομίλων ικανάς γλώσσας, και εξάσκων πολλάς τέχνας*. Sabbatinos is therefore the image of the outsider, the man who although pious and multi-skilled cannot be easily classified, cannot be 'tamed' and thus brought into the world inhabited by Papadiamantes. Sabbatinos inhabits the cusp of the Greek and Italian worlds as he hails from Corfu and so effectively does not clearly inhabit either one completely. The themes of the Jew as the alien, as the timeless outsider are thus consequently clearly present in the character of Sabbatinos.

That said, Papadiamantes does however give a voice to Sabbatinos. He writes with immense sensitivity in the following excerpt:

‘Αλλ’ εις τας ομιλητικάς του ώρας εφαινετο τελείος κοσμοπολίτης. Έτρωγεν και έπινεν, όχι με απληστίαν, αλλά με άκραν κοσμιότητα και ταπεινωσιν, μετά Ιταλών και Ελλήνων.’<sup>7</sup>

‘But in his conversations he was perfectly cosmopolitan. He drank and ate not with greed but absolute decorum and modesty among Italians and Greeks’.

Consequently the image that Papadiamantes gives of the Jew here, is neither idealised nor does it belong to the petty anti-Judaic sentiment of *Childhood easter* and as a consequence achieves a wholeness absent in any of the previous works.

This friendship's harmony is severely fractured when Poupis reads the news of the death of a young Jewish girl in Corfu, believed by some newspapers to be Christian and vows to kill Sabbatinos. The girl turns out to be Sabbatinos' niece.

While all the other members of the group begin to demonstrate immense intolerance, Lysandros finds himself at an impasse, unable to provide sympathy to a friend he sees in great anguish over the loss of his niece. However, the torment and tears of Sabbatinos soon force Lysandros to come to terms with his friend's hopeless predicament and by extension Papadiamantes to come to terms with the Jew's place

---

<sup>6</sup> Papadiamantes 1981: (4) 367-380

<sup>7</sup> Papadiamantes 1981: (4) 369

in his world as well as the Jew's inherent humanity. Papadiamantes finishes the story with the following candid, if not poignant sentiment:

‘Έντοσούτω τα δάκρυα του Σάλβου ήσαν δάκρυα. Δεν ηδύνατο να είπη τις αν ήσαν φώκης ή κροκόδειλου, πλην οπωσδήποτε ήσαν δάκρυα. Ο Λύσανδρος εστάθη, τον εκύτταξε και πάλιν εν συμπεράσματι καθ'εαυτόν είπε «Μήπως οι Εβραίοι δεν είνε άνθρωποι...Ιδού ο άνθρωπος αυτός κλαίει.....[.].’<sup>8</sup>

‘In any case the tears of Salvos were tears. He could not say whether they were those of a seal or a crocodile, but they were indeed tears. Lysandros stood and looked at him and said ultimately to himself.....“Perhaps the Jews are people.....Here this man weeps...[.].’

*Repercussion of the mind* was published in 1910, a year before the death of Papadiamantes. He did not publish anything after it. This fact, I believe, cannot be overlooked in assessing the legacy of the Ionian island ‘pogroms’ on the work of this author. In the twilight of his life, nearly nineteen years after the actual events, the author engaged with the myriad of themes and dilemmas which the events threw up not only on a societal level but especially on the personal level. The only resolution Papadiamantes can provide for the problems of prejudice and religious fanaticism is to recognise the Jew's humanity and belatedly recognise his own part in assuming and perpetuating prejudice against Jews.

## Conclusions

In conclusion it is worth noting that all three texts just presented attempt to come to terms with the Jew's otherness. In doing so they have created a plethora of varying, often contradictory images which are more significantly informed by the larger ideas, the subtexts and contexts that provide the framework from which each work of art and literature is drawn.

The Jews of Papadiamantes, Cavafy and Mechanidou do not differ from this general pattern and it is in this larger text, the broad cultural assumptions which evolve and amass over time, in relation to which each individual work must ultimately be measured and understood. Cavafy's *Holy Jews* sit beside the church's perfidious deicides thereby underscoring a deep ambivalence.

**Dimitrios Varvaritis**

June 2009

---

<sup>8</sup> Papadiamantes 1981: (4) 380

Akademia Athinon. (1933)

*Ιστορικόν λεξικόν της νέας Ελληνικής της τε κοινώς ομιλούμενης και των ιδιωμάτων*, Athens: Estia & Akademia Athinon [Academy of Athens], 4 Volumes (Incomplete)

Argenti, Philip P. & Rose, Herbert J. (1949)

*The Folklore of Chios*, Cambridge: University Press [2 Volumes].

Cavafy, Constantine Petrou (1963)

*Ποιήματα*, Athens: Ikaros

Mechanidou, Maria P. (1891)

*Η ανθρωποθυσία παρά τοις Ιουδαιοίς. Δράμα πρωτότυπον απολήγον εις κωμωδίαν/ Ελληνοεβραϊκόν συμπόσιον εις πράξεις πέντε*, Athens: G.N. Nandakis.

Papadiamantes, Alexandros (1981)

*Άπαντα*, Athens: Domos, 5 Volumes (1981-1986).

Zevgoles, G. (1933)

*Λεξικόν της Ελληνικής Γλώσσης*, Athens: Proias, 2 Volumes.