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Maria Christina Chatziioannou, Στη δίνη της χιακής καταστροφής (1822): Διασταυρούμενες ιστορίες και συλλογική ταυτότητα [Entangled histories and collective identity: Narratives of the Chios massacre (1822)]

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Maria Christina Chatziioannou,
*ΣΤΗ ΔΙΝΗ ΤΗΣ ΧΙΑΚΗΣ ΚΑΤΑΣΤΡΟΦΗΣ (1822):
ΔΙΑΣΤΑΥΡΟΥΜΕΝΕΣ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΕΣ ΚΑΙ ΣΥΛΛΟΓΙΚΗ ΤΑΥΤΟΤΗΤΑ*
[Entangled histories and collective identity:
Narratives of the Chios massacre (1822)]
Athens, IHR / NHRF, 2021, 184 pages.

In this concise volume Maria Christina Chatziioannou deals with a well-known major event of the 1821 Greek Revolution: the massacre of the Chiot population by Ottoman forces in 1822. In reprisal for the revolutionary operation conducted on the island in March 1822 by the Samiot leader Lykourgos Logothetis with the assistance of several Chiot, the Ottoman fleet attacked Chios while its forces besieged the castle and held the island's notables, both secular and ecclesiastical, as hostages before executing them. The massacre and devastation which followed provoked the flight and dispersion of a large part of Chios' population, an important migration wave of whom was initially directed towards the islands of Psara and the Cyclades, the Asia Minor coast and the Peloponnese. The island was thus deprived of its prosperous bourgeois society and culture and underwent a violent disruption of its hitherto flourishing commercial activities, while Chiot migration after 1822 contributed to the creation of one of the most important Mediterranean and international commercial diasporas of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Contemporary witnesses, along with a rich Greek and European nineteenth-century literature and art, regarded the Chiot massacre as one of the major human, ethical and cultural tragedies of the century, giving vent to a strong philhellene public discourse in favour of the Greek Revolution, as well as generating novel forms and institutions of humanitarian and religious support and intervention, accompanied by a fervent anti-Muslim occidental rhetoric.

Having presented a critical survey of the international occidental reception of the events, the writer focuses on a manuscript narrative, produced by a member of the Kalvokoressis (Calvocoressi) family of Chios, who had survived the massacre as a child: the narrative of Mathios, the son of Zannis Kalvokoressis-Mouzalas, born into the Chiot family of Kalvokoressis through his father and the Genoan branch of the Grimaldi through his mother. Mathios, who had witnessed the violent death of his father, a Chiot notable highly placed among the island's authorities, and his grandmother during the massacre, had tried to escape towards the coast with his brothers and sisters but was

captured by the Turks, sold as slave with his younger sister and transferred to the Asia Minor coast. Serving in several Turkish households, Mathios lost trace of his sister on the slave market but unexpectedly crossed paths with one of his brothers, was finally brought back to Chios, where he had his freedom bought off by his mother through the intervention of the Austrian ambassador.

The originality of the writer's contribution to the history of a famous revolutionary event lies in three different novel lines of approach.

In the first place, Chatziioannou explores a historical event through the autobiographical reconstruction of childhood-adolescent memory. Although children's memory has been largely studied by psychology, the complex, uncertain dynamics of childhood memory have long excluded child narratives from legal inquiries and testimonies,¹ sociological research as well as historical studies. The development of autobiographical memory has only recently been systematically discussed in relation to childhood or adolescent memories and

their retrospective adult reconstruction as personal histories shaped by a complex variety of family patterns, and larger social and intellectual factors.² Nevertheless, childhood autobiographical memories were first explored in the "new history" of childhood inaugurated by the French historian Philippe Ariès,³ who was the first to show that "childhood" constitutes a flexible analytical tool, as well as a social and intellectual construction, often identified with adolescence or youth in history. The uncertainty around Mathios' age, underlined by the writer, besides the fact that biological age was rarely calculated or defined in rural societies, opens the question of the shaping of new, ambiguous childhoods or adolescences during the revolution. It seems that during the massacre and flight of his family, Mathios developed a new role within the family: an inexperienced, protected and fearful child, born into an upper-class family of the island, under the extraordinary circumstances of the massacre and flight, he was forced to take on the responsibility of keeping his family together and continuing the name.

In the second place, the writer contributes a novel perspective on the construction of a collective memory of trauma as a spectrum of narratives between childhood and adulthood, explicitness and silence,

¹ See, for instance, Gail S. Goodman, "Children's Testimony in Historical Perspective," *Journal of Social Issues* 40, no. 2 (1984): 9–31; Gail S. Goodman, Bette L. Bottoms, Beth M. Schwartz-Kenney and Leslie Rudy, "Children's Testimony About a Stressful Event: Improving Children's Reports," *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 1, no. 1 (1991): 69–99; Margaret-Ellen Pipe, Michael E. Lamb, Yael Orbach and Phillip W. Esplin, "Recent Research on Children's Testimony about Experienced and Witnessed Events," *Developmental Review* 24, no. 4 (2004): 440–68.

² Qi Wang and Sami Gülgöz, "New Perspectives on Childhood Memory: Introduction to the Special Issue," *Memory* 27, no. 1 (2019): 1–5.

³ Patrick H. Hutton, "The Problem of Memory in the Historical Writings of Philippe Ariès," *History and Memory* 4, no. 11 (1992): 95–122.

intimacy of feelings and psychological distancing. Memories of twentieth-century traumatic experiences have been generally regarded as timeless intergenerational narratives passed down from parents to children, unaltered by changing historical, social or intellectual circumstances, or as non-narratives, developing a stereotypic, often pathological, family or community culture of silence and denial.⁴ On the other hand, the few but important works in Greek historiography that explore oral intergenerational narratives in their historical, social, intellectual and gendered contexts deal mainly with twentieth-century traumatic experiences, the Holocaust, the 1922 refugee experience or the Greek Civil War,⁵ while a considerable part of

the Greek bibliography concerning traumatic childhood or adolescent memory has almost exclusively been dominated by literature and the study of autobiography as a literary genre.⁶ In her approach, Chatziioannou explores the memory of a much earlier trauma, looking at Mathios' narrative as a family "legacy" of the Chios massacre, through which the Kalvokoressis' family memory and identity is constructed and reconstructed. Around 1888–89, sometime before his death in 1891, Mathios related his memories of the events to his young grandson Pandia, a narrative which the latter wrote down from memory much later, around 1950, in London, passages of which he translated into English and French. Having inherited the manuscript of Mathios' narrative from his father, Pandia's son, Peter John Ambrose Calvocoressi, passed it down to his

⁴ See also the autobiographical memory as traumatic oblivion: Anna Mantoglou, "Αυτοβιογραφική μνήμη και 'λήθη' σε προσωπικό, οικογενειακό και κοινωνικό πλαίσιο," *Hellenic Journal of Psychology* 8 (2011): 193–228. Among the rich psychological bibliography on multigenerational legacies of trauma and the transmission of cultural victimisation in family and group therapy research, see Yael Danieli, ed., *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma: Group Project for Holocaust Survivors and their Children* (New York, Plenum, 1998); Amy Lehrner and Rachel Yehuda, "Cultural Trauma and Epigenetic Inheritance," *Development and Psychopathology* 30, no. 5 (2018): 1763–77.

⁵ Riki van Boeschoten et al., eds., *Γεφυρώνοντας τις γενιές: διεπιστημονικότητα και αφηγήσεις ζωής στον 21ο αιώνα: Προφορική Ιστορία και άλλες βιο-ιστορίες*

(Volos: Enosi Proforikis Istorias, 2013). 217–34; Jacques Hassoun, Rika Benveniste, Yannis Th. Thanassekos, Odette Varon-Vassard and Tsvetan Todorov, *Εβραϊκή ιστορία και μνήμη* (Athens: Polis, 1998). On child narratives and adult reconstruction of memory, see Riki van Boeschoten, *Παιδιά του ελληνικού εμφυλίου: Πρόσφυγες και πολιτική της μνήμης* (Athens: Alexandria, 2015); Pothiti Hantzaroula, *Child Survivors of the Holocaust in Greece: Memory, Testimony and Subjectivity* (London: Routledge, 2020).

⁶ Michalis Chrysanthopoulos, Vasileios Vasileiadis, Gianna Delivoria and Ekaterini Tiktopoulou, *Αυτοβιογραφία: Μεταξύ Ιστορίας και λογοτεχνίας στον 19ο αιώνα* (Athens: Syndesmos Ellinikon Akadimaikon Vivliothikon, 2015).

own son, the archaeologist David Calvocoressi, who entrusted the writer with the family history's material. On the other hand, in 1900, Pandia, who seems to have played the role of the "family archivist", received a family chronicle, written by Nikolaos Kalvokoressis, Zannis' great-grandson. But different family narratives in different historical circumstances and ages hold different attitudes towards the memory of trauma. Chatziioannou finds it intriguing that, while Mathios Kalvokoressis' narrative from the end of nineteenth century describes in detail a youth experience of violence, of estrangement from the family and his birthplace, of forced migration and enslavement, recurring in an adult, literary but intimate language of feeling, Nikolaos Kalvokoressis' chronicle, written at the turn of the twentieth century, remains almost silent on the Chios massacre, focusing on the Kalvokoressis' commercial and entrepreneurial activities and high-placed administrative or military careers. It is his chronicle that mentions the establishment of a family branch in the United States.

More than a common memory landmark, personal narratives of the Chios massacre constitute the common starting point of autobiographical and family memories within the Chiot diaspora. The writer compares other similar testimonies, such as the literary narrative of *Loukis Laras* by the Chiot writer and commercial entrepreneur Dimitrios Vikelas, and the narrative of Christoforos, the son of Plato Kastanis, who had been captured in his tender years by the Ottomans and forced to embrace the Islamic religion. Added to

other autobiographical references of the massacre, such as those of Andreas Zanni Mamoukas, a Chiot politician and intellectual, of Grigorios Foteinos, a churchman, or of Andreas Syngros, a Chiot entrepreneur, and to several oral testimonies recorded in various local histories of Chios (by Petros Vlastos or Georgios I. Zolotas, for instance), the above narratives form the common "founding tradition" of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Chiot diaspora and its historical identity: therein lies the third novelty of Chatziioannou's line of approach. This tradition, which became more systematically developed and internationalised mainly through the work of Philip P. Argenti, emerged around the end of the nineteenth century (after the destructive earthquake of 1881) and before the Balkan Wars, which prepared Chios' integration into the Greek state, that is, during the period in which the Chiot diaspora was on the verge of confirming its financial and entrepreneurial presence outside the Mediterranean-Ottoman area.

The latter is closely related to the common theme of Chiot youth migration to the United States after the massacre, and the educational and cultural shaping of young migrants, boys and girls, through the American Protestant networks that connected the Mediterranean with the Atlantic, a subject that has been discussed in contemporary historiography under the light of an American cultural and religious imperialism that largely contributed to the creation of the racial, cultural and confessional supremacy of Christians against Jews and Muslims in the Mediterranean. The Kalvokoressis

family branched out in the United States after a seven-year-old member of the family was rescued from the island and transported to the United States by a passing European ship; a descendant of the above American branch held a senior position in the American navy. Alexandros Paspatis, captured during the Ottoman invasion of the island and sold as a slave to Smyrna, was, after his mother purchased his freedom, transported to Boston, where he studied along with other young migrants, with the financial support of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). Christophoros Kastanis was liberated by Protestant missionaries and taken to Boston, where he studied as the protégé of the philhellene doctor Samuel Gridley Howe. Taking into account the above historiographical debates, the writer further regards the common American Protestant itinerary of her young Chiot survivors as one of the shaping procedures of the diaspora's international and cross-cultural identities during the nineteenth century, while migration to the United States illustrates the refugee experience during the revolution as a positive cultural

procedure, in contrast to the debasing experience of flight and slave markets in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Through the above different approaches, and the meticulous editorial process for the publication of Mathios Kalvokoressis' narrative, along with Pandia Calvocoressi's notes and translated passages in English and French, Chatziioannou offers an exciting and dynamic view of the Greek Revolution: a rich mesh of personal intersecting itineraries traversing the seas of vast geographical and cultural spaces, of escape and migration routes, of travels through fragile childhoods and difficult adulthoods, of missing persons and estranged families, of hardships and careers, among a colourful crowd of Turkish beys and slave traders, Greek captains, European ambassadors and American Protestant missionaries in the Mediterranean. Thanks to the historian's acute sensibility and penetrating look, in the very heart of the "age of nationalism" the Greek Revolution of 1821 becomes the par excellence construction site of modern cross-cultural, transnational and international identities.

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