



EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
1117 BUDAPEST PÁZMÁNY PÉTER SÉTÁNY 1/A
PHONE: (1) 372 2997, FAX: (1) 372 2912

Ildikó Barná, Ph.D. habil.
Associate Professor
Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE)
Faculty of Social Sciences

Budapest, 6 October 2019

Review of Habilitation Thesis

Trajectories of Return: Jewish Repatriation to Greece by Kateřina Králová

The habilitation thesis of Dr. Králová deals with the topic of Greek Jews during and right after the Holocaust. More specifically, it scrutinizes the trajectories of survival and return of these Jews. The thesis is based on a long-lasting and extremely thorough research process, which is reflected in the wide variety of utilized sources and the depth of the analysis.

The thesis consists of 343 pages, including an appendix, a bibliography, and an index. The bibliography is divided into primary and secondary sources. The former includes 120 testimonies from seven different archives and nine interviews conducted by Dr. Králová herself. Moreover, it contains archival sources from twelve different archives. Among these archives, there is the International Tracing Service Digital Archive, which has been open for research only since 2007 and one of the yet mostly undiscovered sources of Holocaust research. It is important to note here that Dr. Králová takes into account also the limitations of these sources. The secondary sources of the habilitation cover 334 items.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. In the first chapter, Dr. Králová sets out the goals of her work, outlines the structure of the thesis, and gives an interdisciplinary overview of Greece, touching upon not only its history but deals also with societal and political aspects. This is the chapter where Dr. Králová sets up a typology of survivors as a starting point of her analysis. She differentiates between those returning from hiding, the armed forces, the camps, and emigration. In chapters 2 to 5, she deals with these groups, respectively; however, she also illustrates their interconnections and the dynamics between them. In the last chapter, Dr.

Králová covers the period after the return of survivors, the hardships they faced, and the choices they had.

The thesis greatly contributes to Holocaust research in general and the history of Greek Jews in particular. It fills a gap in Holocaust historiography as it deals with one of the very poorly explored chapters of it. Dr. Králová deals with her topic from a bottom-up perspective, however, successfully connecting microhistory to the mezzo and macro level. Moreover, she goes beyond the schematic division of Western-type and Eastern-type of Holocaust experience and takes a closer look at the specificities of the Greek Jewish experiences. However, at the same time, she also contextualizes these experiences. Dr. Králová draws a picture that not black and white, but multilayered and complex. Not only the wide range of sources help her to be able to grasp this multifaceted picture, but especially the way she uses her sources. She utilizes this “plurality of information” not only to crosscheck personal accounts, to compare narratives about similar Holocaust experiences, but also to explore those layers of history which have been missing from mainstream historiography. Dr. Králová also explores the multilayered, many times silenced memories and sheds light on the background of this silencing by differentiating between memories silenced by the mainstream narratives or self-censorship of the survivors themselves.

There are two additional characteristics of the thesis that further increase its value. These are attributes that are often neglected from the evaluation of scientific works. The first is its close connection to our present history, to which Dr. Králová does not fail to draw her readers’ attention. It is enough to think of displacement, factors behind the return, multilayered memories, as a few examples of this connection. The other such attribute is the language of the theses as it is thorough, based on a wide range of scientific sources but easy-to-read at the same time. These two characteristics ensure that this work will not remain in the ivory tower of science but will be valuable for both researchers from other disciplines, but also interested readers.

Based on the review presented above, I conclude that the thesis meets all requirements of the habilitation dissertations. I recommend the approval of this work and after a successful defense, the appointment of Dr. Kateřina Králová for the Docent title.