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REVIEW

Rock, Jonna. *Intergenerational Memory and Language of the Sarajevo Sephardim*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. xvii, 283 pp. eBook.

The present monograph is a fruit of an interdisciplinary (and, to an extent, transdisciplinary) research conducted by Jonna Rock. The book derives from her PhD thesis defended at the Humboldt University Berlin in 2019. This valuable and well edited book offers a methodologically novel and fresh approach to etnolinguistic identity of the Sephardim living in present-day Sarajevo. Namely, the approach of Rock's "qualitative, ethnographic and sociolinguistic study" is from the perspective of South-Slavic studies (the author's field of expertise) and is not, as it has been common in previous studies on Sephardic communities in the Balkans, conducted from Hispanic, Sephardic or Jewish studies' point of view. The main reasons for this change in approach is that the language shift of Sephardic ethnic language towards former Serbo-Croatian language, which started around 1900s, is today almost complete and only sporadic remnants of Judeo-Spanish language are present among the Sephardim in today's Bosnia and Herzegovina. As the author acknowledges in her introductory chapter, "(a)lmost no research has been conducted on Sephardic identity formation and their language choice after the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the simultaneous disintegration of the Serbo-Croatian language", so this book promises "to fill those lacunae" (Rock 2019: 2-3).

The empirical research Jonna Rock pursuits in the book has a sound, well based methodology that follows the contemporary trends, not only in the analysis, but also in the ways she approached her interviewees. This up-to-date methodology has especially high standards in ethical approach to the field work. The author is well aware of the fact that her presence and her status as an outsider to the community (but experienced in language and identity issues) matter. In addition to the transparent description of methods and procedures applied in the study, the author provides the reader with 13 high-quality illustrations from the field, detailed sociodemographic data on the informants (*Appendix A*), as well as the questionnaire used for semi-structured interviews

conducted with them (*Appendix B*). Furthermore, Rock provides a short film (*Appendix C*) in order to show how the interviews were undertaken. Likewise, later, she provides a short documentary on the status of Judeo-Spanish among the members of the same community. By providing internet links to these video materials, Rock's work, that already reached "audiences beyond the academia" in different countries (Rock 2019: 6), strongly marks her involvement in contemporary transdisciplinary and multimodal research.

Although based on interviews with only 9 informants pertaining to three different generations (three members from each generation), this case study is successful in revealing "the complex relationship between language, religion and ethnicities in their own loyalties" (Rock 2019: 1), as was announced in the beginning. Although the research is limited to 9 interviewees only, the author manages to reach reliable results, mainly thanks to in-depth interviews that provided the author with valuable information that she was able to rectify/verify during her repeated visits to Sarajevo and her re-encounters with the interviewees.

This particular reference group that belongs to a minority whose ancestors have been present in Bosnian milieu for centuries offers a valuable insight into a dynamic relationship between language and identity in Sarajevo in the past and present. In spite of the fact that the interviewees' have a unique position between different cultural spheres, it is due to their special attachment to Yugoslav identity that Rock's study turns out to be mainly about "telling the story of Yugoslavia through the lens of Jewish history" (Rock 2019: 2). Nevertheless, this book opens many other interesting points that have not been told before, such as a detailed analysis of the reactions of the Sarajevo Sephardim to the possibility of applying for Spanish and Portuguese citizenship.

The author's main focus is oriented toward the analysis of how her reference group that identifies with its Bosnian-Sephardic origins perceives their belonging to different political entities throughout their modern history due to their actual presence or just due to their emotional or sentimental bonds (First and Second Yugoslavia, present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel and Spain). Here, a clarification is needed. The author's choice to name metaphorically different political, social and linguistic ideologies by the label of national-states as "identity-creating factors" seems simplified at first glance, but her systematic and careful presentation of those ideologies in their political and social contexts amends this shortcoming. The secondary sources that were chosen for this purpose are relevant and accurately incorporated and cited, but occasionally they direct the author toward making digressions from the main topic. This is probably due to the fact that the text was originally written to adapt the contents and style of a doctoral thesis. Nevertheless, the bright side of this fact is that the reader is given an opportunity to learn systematically about the political and cultural history of Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Israel in general, and of the Sephardim in different settings in particular.



It should be noted that the detailed account on Yugoslavia's and Bosnia and Herzegovina's history and identity are among the best argued chapters in the book.

The present case study, as well as the interviewees that made it possible, successfully “bridges South Slavic and Sephardic cultural spheres” (Rock 2019: 2), as it accomplishes several benefits. Firstly, the post-Yugoslav studies, historical as well as (socio)linguistic and alike, are obviously in a need of accounts that pursue a minority perspective. Secondly, the Jews in Sarajevo in the past and present have often been neglected by scholars from the multidisciplinary fields of Sephardic and Jewish studies that investigate Jewish communities outside the territories of the former Yugoslavia. Hence, the book also contributes to our knowledge in this field. The mentioned studies also gain from Rock's research as the question of “what actually remained Jewish and/or Sephardic” has only seldom been pronounced in contemporary research (Rock 2019: 2). Last but not the least, this book, as well as the two short films that accompany it, will certainly help the target-community members who, similar to previous generations of fellow Sephardim before them, have to “to grapple with issues of identity, community, loyalty to the collectivity versus the local state, and with the larger question of how to be a Jew, indeed a Sephardi Jew, in the modern world” (Benbassa & Rodrigue 2000: xxiii).

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