

**UNIVERSITY OF ARTS – BELGRADE
UNIVERSITÉ LUMIÈRE LYON 2**

Interdisciplinary postgraduate studies
UNESCO Chair for Cultural Management and Cultural Policy in the Balkans

Master thesis:

**INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN MUSLIM
MAJORITY AND JEWISH MINORITY**

CASE STUDY:
CONTEMPORARY JEWISH IDENTITY IN TURKEY

By:

Tatjana Divjak

Supervisor:

prof. Nada Švob-Đokić, PhD

Belgrade, June 2008

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The difficulty of the chosen topic for my master thesis made its creation more challenging than it would be in other circumstances. The process from deciding to move into Istanbul for the purpose of doing this research, until this study was completed, was long and difficult. Doing a research not only for the first time, but moreover, doing it in a foreign country, naturally made me dependent on help and good will of many people around me. My gratefulness to them extends far beyond words on these pages.

Firstly, I would like to thank Mrs. Burcu Çavuş and Mr. Serhan Ada from Cultural Studies Programme of Istanbul Bilgi University where I was a guest student and researcher. Their guidance and contacts lead me to people who proved to be of key importance for my thesis. From Bilgi University, I also express gratitude to professors Arus Yumul and Soli Ozel.

Further on, I am deeply indebted to Mr. Rifat Bali who was the first person to patiently lead me out of cloud of confusion which was hovering above me at times when surrounded by many books, I was trying to understand the minority issue in a complex Turkish context. Also, I am extremely grateful to the leading people of Jewish institutions for their time and willingness to meet me. Here I give wholehearted thanks to Mrs. Lina Filiba, Mrs. Karen Gerson Şarhon and Mr. Naim Güleriyüz. I also give special thanks to Yigal Schleifer and Laurent Mallet for their kindness and help.

To my mentor, prof. Nada Švob, whose suggestions and help encouraged me to write this thesis in the best manner, I am especially obliged.

In Istanbul my life would be impossible without friends' help and support on many various tracks. To my Turkish and international group of friends who know best how life can be harsh in Istanbul, I could never express enough gratitude for all their understanding and support. I am especially grateful to the people who are now life-long friends – Nomi, Karen, Rivka, Hadar.

Of course, to all participants who agreed to spend their precious time in order to answer my questions openly and frankly, I am especially indebted.

Lastly and personally most importantly, it is my family whose unselfish support enabled this odyssey into the unknown. Without them none of this would ever be possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	7
RÉSUMÉ	13
1. INTRODUCTION	20
1.1. A PERSONAL NOTE	20
1.2. SUBJECT OF RESEARCH	23
General context	23
Basic hypothesis	25
Supporting hypotheses	27
1.3. AIMS OF RESEARCH	28
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	30
2.1. A POINT OF DEPARTURE	30
2.2. DEFINING CONCEPTS	31
On identity	31
On culture	33
On cultural identity	35
On (Jewish) identity in the diapora	39
3. THE SETTING	44
3.1. HISTORICAL SETTING	44
Turkey and the Jews	44
Jewish groups in Turkey	48
3.2. RELIGIOUS SETTING	50
Judaism in Turkey today	50
Jewish community in Istanbul today	52
Islam in Turkey today	54

4. JEWISH COMMUNITY IN A PREDOMINANTLY MUSLIM COUNTRY	59
4.1. ELEMENTS OF INFLUENCE ON FORMATION OF CONTEMPORARY IDENTITY IN TURKISH JEWRY	59
Creation of the Turkish Republic	59
Turkey during the Second World War	65
Creation of the State of Israel	68
Turkey and Israel	69
Defining the position of Jewish minority vis-à-vis other minorities	
- the Armenian question	70
Overview of elements which influenced the formation of Jewish identity	71
4.2. IDENTITY FORMATION AMONG TURKISH CITIZENS	72
5. APPROACH TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN TURKEY	
– METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH	75
Individual semi-structured interviews	76
Being an outsider	78
Selecting the participants	79
6. INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS	80
6.1. DOMAINS OF IDENTITY FORMATION, MAINTENANCE AND TRANSMISSION	80
Family and Community – environment which initiates and forms Jewish identity	80
Growing up – family as a foundation for the creation of identity	80
From family to the community	84
Jews about Jewish community	87
Jews about Jews – “us” and “them”	93
6.2. ENCOUNTER WITH THE OUTER WORLD	
– LIVING IN TURKEY AS A JEW	98
Jewish-Turkish differences and similarities	98

Where is home?	100
Living through changes	103
Jews and Muslims – who rejects whom?	104
Challenges of living in the diaspora – Anti-Semitism	106
Challenges of assimilation – the question of intermarriage	111
6.3. CONTEMPORARY EXPRESSIONS OF JEWISH IDENTITY	
IN TURKEY	116
Hybrid identities	117
Tradition	120
Religion	121
Other expressions of Jewish identity	125
7. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS	127
8. REFERENCES	130
9. APPENDIX	134
10. ABOUT THE AUTHOR	138

ABSTRACT

Due to its distinctive place on geographical maps and a unique position in historical contexts, Turkey and the city of Istanbul have always attracted special interest of researchers from all academic fields. Amid the complex history of different religious, ethnic and cultural groups that played a significant part in the knitting of a rich mosaic of that country, Jewish community occupies a peculiar place. Researching into this small community that is surviving in a predominantly Muslim state under ever-changing ideopolitical circumstances, was a source of my personal interest. This curiosity led me to Istanbul, where I spent one year inquiring into and researching the position and life of Jewish minority in Turkey. The result of that research is the presented study which explores the participants' construction of Jewish identities, primarily in the city of Istanbul, with a special emphasis on the dialogue with the Muslim surroundings in which the community dwells. This study aims to further an understanding on how Jewish identity is formed, experienced and maintained in a society where the dominant culture and religion is Islam. It looks deep into the community life, describes how it responds to its present socio-cultural milieu and examines complex Jewish-Moslem relations in the City of Istanbul and Turkey, how these relations develop, transform and influence current and possible future intercultural communication.

In dealing with the above-mentioned questions, this study largely relies on concepts and theories on cultural identity. It approaches identity as a phenomenon that is achieved through historical, social and cultural contacts and encounters, and is therefore directly defined by membership of particular communities and cultures. Formation of identity, individual and collective, is seen as an active process based on the continuous two-way dynamics consisting of inclusion and exclusion. The study relies on the ideas of crucial critics and theoreticians like Charles Taylor, Stuart Hall, Bhikhu Parekh and Jonathan Friedman, who agree that identity cannot be formed in isolation. According to them, identity formation happens in continuous negotiations with the others. Thus, Taylor believes that collective identities are not predetermined by social scripts, but are formed in an open dialogue. The crucial feature of human life is its fundamentally dialogical

character. Hall talks about identities as a concept that changes and is dependant on the context and our connection to it. Identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, and therefore we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices. For Friedman, cultural identity, sometimes also known as ethnicity, is something that individuals have and that is the basis of a certain kind of social identity. Parekh, just like Taylor and Hall, argues that identity and our conception of ourselves are defined by membership of particular communities and cultures. Personal identity is, therefore, not independent of the social context, but entirely defined by it, and viewed through the prism of the community's sense of its self.

This kind of interrelation and dialogue becomes more significant in minority and diasporic communities, where interaction with the dominant host culture becomes one of the crucial factors in the determination and formation of members' identity. In that sense, diaspora politics largely debates two specific points – dual or overlapping loyalties and hybridized identities. The notion of dual or overlapping loyalties, denoting allegiance to both host country and homeland, is peculiar to the Jewish diaspora, who nourishes strong and continuous primordial and psychological-symbolic attachment to the land of Israel. Second concept, the one of hybridity, describes cultural mixture where the diasporized meets the host culture, denoting at the same time the evolution of new, dynamic, mixed culture. It also stresses the fact that identities are not created by a “mechanical” fusion or synthesis of many elements, but result from intensive exchanges between various social and cultural factors. Therefore, the formation of identity in the diaspora is inevitably defined by diversity and hybridity through transformations and clashes of differences.

Second part of the study determines the setting in which this predominantly Sephardic community exists today. It briefly explores major historical developments that shaped Turkey's present and the environment in which Turkish Jewish community resides. It explains how certain historical events and the particularities of Turkish Muslim milieu determined contemporary Jewish identity formation and expressions.

Turkish Istanbul and Turkish Jews trace the beginning of the establishment of their community as we know it today to the fifteenth century, when the Ottoman Turks completed the conquest of the Byzantine Empire with the capture of Constantinople and opened the doors of their empire to Jewish refugees from Spain and Portugal fleeing from the aftermath of Iberian Reconquista. Due to tolerance and acceptance shown by the Ottoman sultans, Constantinople and much of the Ottoman Empire became a safe sanctuary for expelled Iberian Jews. Throughout the Ottoman Empire, the Jews, as well as other religious communities, possessed the status of *dhimmis*, or ‘protected’ peoples, and constituted a special religious-administrative unit which enjoyed an extensive internal autonomy, in accordance with the system of the community divisions which was known as *millet*. Thus Jews lived for centuries in relative harmony with other ethnic and cultural groups, which were many at that time in the Empire. The birth of a new Turkish Republic in 1923, brought along drastic changes affecting its all citizens, and especially non-Muslim population, turning their communities from millets to minorities. Aggressive politics of secularisation and turcification that was present in the first years of the republic, subjected the Jewish community of Turkey, like the rest of the populace, to a series of laws designed to turn Turkey into a modern secular state. This severely affected the position of Jews in Turkey, determining further development of its lifestyle, as well as its attitude towards the newly formed state. From the earliest days of the republic, Jewish community started expressing approvals of the new provisions and conditions, quickly attaching onto itself an attribute of a loyal community. Unlike the other two big non-Muslim groups, the Greek and the Armenian minority, which both fought their own battles with the Turkish state in different historical contexts, the Jewish community has always been recognised as a friend of the Turkish state. In World War II, Turkey managed to maintain a façade of neutrality, admitting many European Jews fleeing from the Holocaust-struck Europe. Nevertheless, at that time, Turkey made some unfavourable decisions and proclamations which affected the status of all minorities. One of them was the introduction of a new tax, the so called Capital Tax, implemented in order to meet the country’s financial needs during WW II. It was unjustly imposed on the fixed assets of all citizens, including the minorities that were taxed up to 50 times more than non-Muslims, which brought many non-Muslim families into bankrupt. This

example, being probably the most notorious one, was not the only challenge they were faced with in new changing circumstances. There were many more - placing and defining Turkishness in their identity formation, relating to Jewishness and assimilation which started rapidly threatening their centuries-long firm position, and organisational and political relationships to the new Israeli state. Their responses to these challenges varied from continuing their characteristics of being loyal, neutral and silent, accepting a significant degree of integration into Turkish society, emigration to Israel, to the present determined maintenance of Jewish identity and social and cultural institutions.

Today, Jews are, along Greeks and Armenians, one of the three recognised minorities. Turkish Jewish Community is a diminishing community concentrated around two centers. The biggest is Istanbul, where the majority of members live, and that hosts all major communal infrastructure. The other community that has managed to survive throughout historical changes, is situated in the city of Izmir, numbering around 2,500 members left. Overall, it is a small community of a total of 20,000 - 23,000 members, struggling for survival in a country with the total population of more than 70 million. In this predominantly Muslim state, that has been experiencing significant political and ideological turmoils over the last decades, Jewish community is trying to stay neutral, which has been its historical position since the first days of the republic.

The most recent tensions in the country have been infused by the specific nature of Islam in Turkey itself. Apart from understanding multilayered history of Turkey, comprehending the nature of Turkish Islam, which differs in many ways from the Islam in the surrounding countries, is another crucial point in describing complex environment which hosts Jewish community. Islam in Turkey is often regarded as neither fanatical nor fundamental, as an Arab or Iranian. The majority of people in Turkey see themselves as citizens first, and count religion as second, while some are so secular that they pay little or no attention to religion at all. However, the past several years have seen drastic rise in Islamism, dividing the country between pious Muslims and the secular urban elite. In terms of identity formation, these particular circumstances where Kemalist secularism and Islam represent two completely hostile, clashing identities, created a special attitude

to what and who is considered a Turk. A person who is not a Muslim is usually referred to as a minority person or as a Turkish citizen, but not as a Turk. “Turk” designates an ethno-religious characteristic of the political community. Therefore, although a secular country, Islam is an indispensable element in the definition of a Turk. These standpoints adopted by the majority of population, have important effects in Jewish identity formation, especially when it comes to hybrid identity expressions.

The last and central part of this study consists of interpretations of results of field research using methods of qualitative research analysis. This part of the research seeks to explore how participants create their identities, how they experience and communicate the meanings of their identities in their own terms. For that purpose, a total of 31 in-depth interviews were conducted with randomly selected participants. All participants in the study are members of the Jewish Community of Istanbul, the youngest interviewee being 18 years old, and the oldest 84. In addition to these, 8 interviews with renowned researchers, professors and managers of several major institutions of the Jewish community in Istanbul were conducted. Their insights offered a different, supplementing look into this complex subject. The analysis of the in-depth interviews was done based on the following basic nodes:

1. Family as a central unit of identity formation, and community as an environment which further incites identity expressions
 - Meaning of family in initial identity formation
 - Meaning of community in further identity expressions, and how members relate to it
2. Living in Turkey as a member of Jewish minority
 - Problems and challenges
 - Intercultural communication with the Muslim majority
 - Feelings of belonging and relation to the state of Israel
3. Contemporary expressions of Jewish identity
 - Hybrid identities
 - Tradition
 - Religion

- Other expressions of identity

Even though, as this study shows it, different dimensions of Jewish identities become more salient at different times and in different sociohistorical circumstances, the overall finding is that Jewish identities are strongly developed among the Turkish Jewry, and the participants are actively involved in an identity construction process. What was once a closed and inaccessible community, now is slowly and cautiously becoming an active participant in intercultural dialogue with the Muslim environment.

RÉSUMÉ

A cause de sa place distinctive sur les cartes géographiques et une position unique dans le contexte historique, la Turquie et la ville d'Istanbul ont toujours attiré une attention spéciale de la part des chercheurs de toute catégorie scientifique. Parmi l'histoire complexe de groupes de différentes religions et ethnicité, qui ont joué une part significative dans l'assemblage d'une riche mosaïque de ce pays, la communauté Juive occupe une part étrange. Faire des recherches dans cette petite communauté qui survit dans un état Musulman de prédominance, sous des circonstances idéo politiques en constant changement, était une source de mon intérêt personnel.

Cette curiosité m'a conduit a Istanbul ou j'ai passé une année étudiant et recherchant la position et la vie de la minorité Juive en Turquie. Le résultat de dette recherche est l'étude ci-présente, qui explore l'identité Juive des participants, particulièrement dans la ville d'Istanbul avec une attention spéciale sur le dialogue avec l'environnement Musulman, dans le quel cette communauté survit.

Cette étude a aussi pour but de comprendre comment l'identité Juive est formée et maintenue dans une société ou la culture et religion prédominante est l'Islam. L'étude inquier profondément dans la vie communale, décrit comment elle répond a son milieu socioculturel et examine les complexes relations Judéo-Musulmanes dans la ville d'Istanbul et en Turquie, comment ces relations se développent, transforment et influencent les actuelles et possiblement futures communications interculturelles.

En travaillant avec ces questions ci-mentionnées, cette étude largement se base sur les concepts et théories sur l'identité culturelle. Elle approche l'identité comme un phénomène qui est obtenu par des contacts et rencontres historiques et sociaux, et sont donc directement définis par l'appartenance a des communautés et coutures particulières. La formation de l'identité individuelle et collective, est perçue comme un processus actif, basé sur une dynamique a double phase consistant de l'inclusion et l'exclusion.

Cette étude se base sur les idées de critiques et théoriciens comme Charles Taylor, Stuart Hall, Bhikhu Parekh et Johnathan Friedman, qui affirment que l'identité ne peut être formée dans l'isolation. Selon eux, la formation de l'identité se réalise dans la négociation continuelle avec les autres. Donc, Taylor croit que l'identité collective n'est pas prédéterminée par un scénario social mais est formée dans un dialogue ouvert. L'aspect crucial de la vie humaine est dans son caractère de dialogue. Hall parle de l'identité comme un concept qui change et est dépendent sur le contexte et nos liens avec ce contexte. Les identités sont construites dans le dialogue et donc nous avons besoin de les comprendre comme produites dans un site historique et institutionnel spécifique, et des pratiques et formations spécifiquement discursives. Pour Friedman, l'identité culturelle, parfois connue comme ethnicité, est quelque chose que les individuels ont, et est la base d'une certaine forme d'identité sociale. Parekh, tout comme Taylor et Hall, affirme que l'identité et notre conception de nous-mêmes sont définis par appartenance a des communautés et cultures particulières.

L'identité personnelle n'est, donc, pas indépendante du contexte social, mais entièrement défini a travers le prisme du sens de soi-même de la communauté. Ce type d'interrelation et dialogue devient plus significatif dans les communautés minoritaires et de la diaspora ou l'interaction avec la culture hôte dominante devient un facteur crucial dans la détermination et formation de l'identité du membre. Dans ce sens, la politique de la diaspora discute en amplitude deux points spécifiques, loyauté duale ou superposée et identités hybridisées. La notion de la loyauté duale ou superposée, dénotant l'appartenance au pays hôte et mère patrie, est particulière a la diaspora Juive, qui nourrit un attachement ferme et continu, psychologiquement symbolique, à la terre d'Israël.

Le deuxième concept, celui d'hybridité, décrit le mélange culturel ou le diasporisé rencontre la culture hôte, dénotant en même temps l'évolution d'une nouvelle, dynamique culture mélangée. Cela souligne le fait que les identités ne sont pas créés par une fusion "mécanique" ou synthèse de plusieurs éléments, mais sont le résultat d'échanges intensifs entre certains facteurs sociaux et culturels. Donc, la formation de

l'identité dans la diaspora et inévitablement définie par diversité et hybridité entre transformations et heurts de différences.

La deuxième partie de l'étude détermine l'état dans lequel cette communauté prédominamment sepharadique, existe aujourd'hui. Elle explore brièvement les développements majeurs historiques qui ont formé le présent de la Turquie et l'environnement dans lequel la communauté Juive de la Turquie vit. Elle explique comment certains événements historiques et les particularités du milieu Turco Musulman ont déterminé la formation et expressions de l'identité contemporaine Juive. Les Juifs de Turquie et Juifs d'Istanbul tracent l'établissement de leur communauté au XVème siècle, quand les Turcs Ottomanes complétèrent la conquête de l'empire Byzantin avec la capture de Constantinople, et ouvrirent les portes de leur empire aux juifs réfugiés d'Espagne et du Portugal, fuyant les effets de la reconquisition Iberique.

Due a la tolérance et acceptance des sultans Ottomanes, Constantinople et la majorité de l'empire Ottoman devinrent un sanctuaire pour les Juifs Iberiques exclus. Dans tout l'Empire Otoman, les Juifs, tout comme les autre communautés religieuses possédèrent le statut de peuples "*dhimmis*", ou "protégés", et constituèrent une unité religieuse – administrative spéciale, qui jouit une extensive autonomie interne, en accord avec le système de divisions communautaires, nommé "millet". Donc les Juifs vécurent pendant des siècles en harmonie relative avec les autres groupes ethniques et culturels, qui étaient nombreux dans ces temps a l'empire. La naissance d'une nouvelle république Turque en 1923, apporta de changements drastiques, affectant tous ses citoyens, et spécialement la population non-Musulmane, changeant leurs communautés de millet à minoritaires. D'agressives politiques de sécularisation de turcification, qui étaient présentes durant les premières années de la république ont soumis la communauté Juive de la Turquie, tout comme le reste de la populace, à une serie de loix conçues afin de transformer la Turquie en un état séculaire moderne. Cela a sévèrement affecté la position des Juifs en Turquie, déterminant un développement de son style de vie, tout comme son attitude contre l'état nouvellement formé. Des les premiers jours de la république la communauté Juive commença a exprimer l'approbation aux nouvelles provisions et conditions, rapidement

attractant à eux-mêmes l'attribut de communauté loyale. Autrement que les deux autres grands groupes non-Musulmans, les minorités Grecque et Arméniennes, qui toutes les deux conduirent leurs batailles avec l'état Turque, dans de différents contextes historiques, la communauté Juive a toujours été reconnue comme amie de l'état Turque.

Pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale, la Turquie est parvenue à maintenir une façade de neutralité, acceptant plusieurs Juifs Européens fuyant l'Europe frappée par l'holocauste. Tout de même, pendant ce temps la Turquie prit quelques décisions et proclamations défavorables qui ont affecté l'état de toutes les minorités. Une de ces décisions a été l'introduction d'une nouvelle taxe, appelée la Taxe Capitale, implémentée afin de pourvoir aux besoins financiers de l'état durant la seconde guerre mondiale. Cela a été injustement imposé sur les capitaux de tous les citoyens, inclus les minoritaires, qui ont été taxés à plus de 50% en plus que les Musulmans, ce qui a conduit plusieurs familles non-Musulmanes à la faillite. Cet exemple, étant probablement le plus important, n'a pas été la seule difficulté à laquelle ils ont dû faire face dans les nouvelles circonstances. Il y en avait plusieurs autres – plaçant et définissant leur Turquité dans la formation de leur identité en relation au fait d'être Juif, et assimilation, qui commencèrent à menacer leur position stable de durant des siècles, ainsi que les relations politiques et organisationnelles avec le nouvel Etat d'Israël. Leur réponse à toutes ces situations, varia de continuer leur caractéristique de loyauté, neutralité, et silencieux, acceptant à un certain degré signifiant l'intégration dans la société Turque, en émigration en Israël, à la présente détermination de maintenir l'identité Juive ainsi que ses institutions sociales et culturelles.

Aujourd'hui les Juifs ainsi que les Grecs et les Arméniens sont parmi les trois minorités reconnues. La communauté Juive Turque est une communauté qui diminue, concentrée dans deux centres. Le plus grand est Istanbul, où la majorité des membres vit et qui comprend toutes les majeures infrastructures communales. L'autre communauté, qui est parvenue à survivre parmi les changements historiques, est située dans la ville d'Izmir, une communauté d'à peu près 2,500 membres. En tout c'est une petite communauté d'un total de 20, 000 à 23,000 membres, luttant pour survivre dans un pays d'une

population totale de plus de 70 millions. Dans cet état prédominamment Musulman, qui a expérimenté des bouleversements politiques et idéologiques importants pendant les dernières décennies, la communauté Juive essaie de rester neutre, ce qui a été sa position historique à partir des premiers jours de la république.

Les tensions plus récentes ont été infusés par la nature spécifique de l'islam en Turquie elle-même. Donc, a part de comprendre l'histoire a plusieurs niveaux de la Turquie, compréhension de la nature de l'islam Turquie, qui diffère en plusieurs aspects de l'islam des pays avoisinants, est un autre point vital en décrivant le complexe environnement qui abrite la communauté Juive. L'islam en Turquie est souvent vu ni fanatique, ni fondamental, comme un arabe ou Iranien. La majorité du peuple en Turquie se voient d'abord comme citoyens, et comptent la religion en deuxième plan, alors que certains sont si séculaires qu'ils paient peu ou pas du tout attention a la religion. Pourtant, les dernières années ont vu une hausse drastique dans l'islamisme, divisant le pays entre les Musulmans pieux et l'élite urbaine séculaire. En termes de formation d'identité ces circonstances particulières, ou le sécularisme Kemaliste et l'islam représentent deux identités complètement hostiles, ont créé une attitude a ceux qui devraient être considérés Turques. Une personne non-Musulmane est d'habitude référé a comme une personne minoritaire, ou comme citoyen Turquie, mais non un Turque. "Turk" désigne une caractéristique ethno-religieuse de la communauté politique. Donc. Tout en étant un pays séculaire, l'islam est un élément indispensable dans la définition d'un Turque. Ces points, adoptés par la majorité de la population, ont un effet important dans la formation de l'identité Juive. Spécialement pour des expressions d'identités hybrides.

La dernière, et centrale part de cette étude consiste d'interprétations des résultats de recherches en place usant les méthodes d'analyse quantitative des recherches. Cette partie de l'étude cherche a explorer comment les participants créent leur identité, comment ils expérimentent et communiquent le sens de leur identité dans leurs propres termes.

Dans ce but un total de 31 interviews en profondeur ont été conduits, avec des participants choisis au hasard. Tous les participants dans cette étude sont de membres de

la communauté Juive d'Istanbul; le plus jeune interviewé âgé de 18 ans, et le plus âgé de 84 ans. En plus 8 interviews avec des chercheurs renommés, des professeurs et directeurs de plusieurs institutions majeurs de la communauté Juive d'Istanbul, ont été conduits. Leurs idées permirent un regard différent supplémentaire dans ce sujet complexe.

L'analyse des interviews en profondeur est basée sur les sujets suivants:

1. La famille, comme une unité centrale de la formation de l'identité, et la communauté comme un environnement que incite l'expression de l'identité.
 - Sens de la famille dans la formation initiale de l'identité.
 - Sens de la communauté dans l'expression de l'identité et comment les membres s'y rapportent.

2. Vivre en Turquie tant que membre de la communauté Juive.
 - Les problèmes et défis.
 - Communication interculturelle avec la majorité Musulmane.
 - Sentiments d'appartenance et relations avec l'état d'Israël.

3. Expressions contemporaines de l'identité Juive.
 - Identités hybrides.
 - Tradition
 - Religion
 - Autres expressions d'identité.

Malgré que, comme le montre cette étude, différentes dimensions de l'identité Juive deviennent plus proéminents, et plus demandantes a différentes périodes et circonstances, il est observé que l'identité Juive est fortement développée parmi la Juderie Turque, et les participants sont activement inclus dans le processus de la construction de l'identité. Ayant été exposés a de nombreux facteurs qui ont demandé le maintien du sens d'eux mêmes comme Juifs, les participants de cette étude révèlent que leur identité Juive n'est pas seulement une quête continuelle mais aussi une poursuite collective qui est largement

formée par interaction avec la société dominante. Ce qui au début était une communauté fermée et inaccessible, maintenant est entrain de devenir, lentement et avec précautions, un participant actif dans le dialogue interculturel avec l'environnement Musulman.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 A personal note

Rich historical complexities and ethno-cultural diversities in Turkey have always presented infinite challenging grounds for scientists and researchers interested in cultural diversities, minority policies and formations of identity. Occupying a central position on the routes between Asia and Europe, the country served as a crossroads between the east and the west, and between the Mediterranean, the Black Sea region and north continental Europe. Throughout history, world's traders passed through the land and its illustrious city of Istanbul, invaders attacked it, various empires ruled over it, thereby providing a momentous exchange of not only goods, but also for ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious entangling that deeply affected people and life in Turkey and the city of Istanbul¹.

Throughout history, because of its unique position and place in the world, the city of Istanbul has always attracted special attention of people from all walks of life. A home to a variety of religions, ethnic groups and cultures, Istanbul does not cease to be a continuous source of inspiration and admiration. Amid the rich history of different groups that took a significant part in the knitting of a rich mosaic of this distinctive city, Jewish community occupies a peculiar place. Researching into this small community that is surviving in a predominantly Muslim land under ever-changing political circumstances was a source of my deep personal interest.

¹Turkish names used in the study are spelled in their original way. The only exception are the names of "Istanbul" and "Izmir", which will be used in their English version. In the Turkish language, there is a distinction between letters "i" and "ı". The first one is used in the same way like in the English language, while the other letter is completely different in pronunciation and changes the meaning of the word. Therefore, the correct Turkish spelling of the word "Istanbul" and "Izmir" would be "İstanbul" and "İzmir".

The study here presented is primarily an academic work. However, with time, it turned into a personally significant journey into a world that appeared distant and unrecognisable from afar, but that became increasingly close during the times of research. During the period in which the research took place, I lived and experienced a life deep inside a community and a culture very distinct to the one that I came from. Challenges that I had to face at the time in order to handle my insecurities and dilemmas arising from attempts at understanding a world so different were many and they were often harsh. As it is often the case, a road taken with a certain intention, took on a new direction during the course of the journey. Thus, researching into other people's identities, more often than not, became a research into my own questions and predicaments. Therefore, with all the new experiences and cognitions that were gained while researching into this subject, the study presented here turned into a life-changing personal experience itself.

In this study I tried to explore the participants' construction of Jewish identities in the city of Istanbul, with a special emphasis on the dialogue with the Muslim surroundings in which the community dwells. Limited by various resources, the study was intended to be done primarily in the city of Istanbul where the biggest part of the Turkish Jewish Community lives today. While acknowledging the importance of the other significant community in Turkey – the Izmir community – my intention for this study was, however, to investigate mainly into the life of the Istanbul Jewish community. However, due to the fact that there are almost no Jews left in other parts of the country, with the exception of the city of Izmir, speaking about the Jewish community in Istanbul often means speaking about Turkish Jewish Community itself.

I divided the study into three main parts. The first part offers a theoretical framework for the research into Jewish identity that is analysed in the last section of the study. In the second part I tried to give a brief overview of complex historical events that shaped today's reality in which the community dwells. During the course of the research, I came to realise that understanding contemporary Jewish identity in Turkey is not possible without overall comprehension of all major influences that defined its character today. Many moves and decisions made by both individuals and the management of the

community today, draw direct connections to multilayered past events. With this in mind, I gave an extensive space to the explanation and understanding of those factors that have shaped the life of the community and its members. The third and core part of the study consists of qualitative analysis of the conducted field research on expressions of Jewish identity in Turkey.

More than anything else, the love for the city of Istanbul has encouraged me to decide for such a big change in my life and spend a considerable amount of time as an insider, as a resident of the city and do this research. However, despite the fact that I have spent enough time living in Istanbul in order to be able to feel its everyday pulse, I am and will always remain a foreigner here. I am aware of the fact that this could have influenced my ability to fully understand this country, its current affairs and the subject of my research. In addition, not knowing Turkish well enough has restricted me in using many sources that would have been helpful for the purpose of this study. Still, I have tried to do my best in comprehending the vast scope of issues presented here. And yet, I accept that there will be many that will remain out of reach of my comprehension, maybe even forever.

1.2. Subject of research

General context

In today's world no such thing as a closed culture is possible. Cultures inevitably develop, influence one another and unavoidably transform from continually changing interactions. Culture has never been a simple abstraction or just a dry concept, it is a living, open totality that constantly evolves and expresses itself in many different ways. All the differences that we witness every day on all levels of communication, as well as all related relationships, do not happen only between individuals, but they also occur between states, groups and communities, with set values, models of behaviour, norms and beliefs. They exist within one single culture to a large extent, but they are even more visible when they occur between cultures.

The widespread and globally incited idea of “intercultural dialogue” has its roots in the recognition of these differences and varieties. According to the Internet-based Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe, intercultural dialogue is “a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange or interaction between individuals, groups and organisations with different cultural backgrounds or world views. Among its aims are: to develop a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and practices; to increase participation and the freedom and ability to make choices; to foster equality; and to enhance creative processes”. When open and effective, intercultural dialogue can boost the respectful sharing of ideas and viewpoints, and encourage exploration of a different mindset, through which the world and the self is perceived and experienced. As a result, the creation of new or hybrid identity expressions are possible, and altered cultural constructions and changed behaviour models can arise. Therefore, this kind of interaction emphasizes opportunities for broadened and deepened self-knowledge and worldview. How much this sort of communication has gained importance in the new era, explains the fact that the Council of Europe has proclaimed 2008 “The Year of Intercultural Dialogue”. While “intercultural dialogue” is taking whole new

meanings in the context of globalisation and current international climate in socio-political developments, as a process it encourages a (re)-identification of both the notions and the boundaries that define individuals and groups, and thus influences the forming of their identities.

Because of the delicate nature of their history, Jews have at all times been in search of their identity, while its defining has always largely depended on intercultural dialogue with host cultures. From the very first days, Jewish history and identity has been characterised by interaction with different cultures through processes of independence and adaptation, exclusiveness and inclusiveness. In a centuries-long dialogue between themselves and their host societies, Jews have tried to determine their identity by a number of forces. In modern humanistic studies, this question has taken on all kinds of different approaches and interpretations, turning this subject into a never-ending source of debate and research.

Attempts at defining Jewish identity in the diaspora today are numerous and are subject to endless discussions with no final and finite explanations or descriptions. Problems in formulating Jewish identity inevitably entail numerous sociological, psychological and cultural doubts. Questions that are being posed by both Jewish academic community and laics alike when trying to explain Jewish identity in the diaspora today are similar and universal, while the answers differ according the size of the community, its environment and historical developments. Doubts and problems unquestionably become more acute in small, rather than in large communities. However, wherever we look, we come to the conclusion that being Jewish in the diaspora today seems to be more complex than ever. Many old and all kinds of new questions inevitably arise within each person who is trying to define and understand his or her Jewish identity. Is being Jewish today a free choice, a decision, a matter of responsibility, historical consciousness, is it a part of belonging to a family, a people, a culture, a tradition? Is it communal, religious, cultural, national, cosmopolitan? Does being Jewish mean having a Jewish mother, a Jewish education, a Jewish “background”? Should and can one be Jewish *and* Christian, Jewish *and* Turkish, Jewish *and* European? To what extent is assimilation into host society acceptable and

does no serious harm to one's feeling of belonging to the Jewish heritage and community, as well as to their offspring? Neither of these questions, and so many more, can be neglected when approaching and defining Jewish identity in the modern world. It is just because of such and similar questions that any serious attempts at defining Jewish identity today without fail imply many different levels of culture(s) and are therefore intercultural in nature.

With the view of all the above mentioned points, this study is an attempt to research and present the cultural identity of the contemporary Jewry in Turkey and explain its contemporary complexities in relation to the current socio-political environment in which it is formed. It explores the practice of self-identification in a particular social, political and cultural condition. Relying on relevant identity theories, and using as the main source the descriptive analysis of the conducted field research, it will try to answer some of the posed questions, and explain some of the numerous complexities pertaining to this subject.

Basic hypothesis

Both socio-anthropological and political sciences treat the question of identity from various angles using a variety of notions. The study of identity is becoming even more complex by the presence of relatively new terms that are being attached to descriptions of identity – “hybridization”, “transculturalism”, “transethnicity”, etc. However, most widely spread approaches define identity as a product of interaction between the individual and society, that is, as a process created in social situations, and thus characterised by multiplicity and the possibility of frequent change. Founders of various theories, and their followers alike, agree that identity cannot be formed in isolation. Instead, it happens in continuous negotiations with the others, and it can only be achieved through social and cultural contacts and encounters. Charles Taylor, Stuart Hall, Bhikhu Pakekh and many other renowned theoreticians, whose works will be quoted in the later

chapters of this study, continuously stress the importance of dialogue character of identity. This idea becomes even more meaningful when we speak about identity in the diaspora, where various identities clash and form diverse hybridities. Therefore, this research is grounded on these basic ideas. Throughout the study, identity will be observed as a phenomenon that can only be achieved through historical/social/cultural contacts and encounters, and is therefore defined by membership of particular communities and cultures. When it comes to Jewish communities as minority and diasporic communities, interaction with the dominant host culture and environment becomes one of the crucial factors in the determination and formation of their identity.

In observing and explaining how these interrelations function and develop, this study will largely rely on theories and insights on cultural identity. However, when discussing cultural identity as such, ethnicity becomes of paramount importance. In order to further elaborate on anthropologically based interpretations of these connections, as well as the above mentioned interactions between individuals and ethno-cultural groups in identity formation, two major tendencies should be briefly examined first. They will show us opposite approaches, both equally applicable to exploration of this topic, and will offer a basis for further understanding of the problem.

The first of the mentioned approaches favours a primordialist approach which explains the sense of self and belonging to a group as a priori, as a fixed thing that is defined by objective criteria such as shared traits and histories and common biological characteristics. These serve as the prime units of linkage. The concept of primordialism is described by Geertz, as: “One that stems from the 'givens' or, more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed 'givens' of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These congruities of blood, speech, custom and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering coerciveness in and of themselves” (Geertz, 1973). In that sense, the primordialism of Jewish identity is reinforced by historical evidences of their origin. The

persistence of Jewish culture worldwide can be seen as proof of the strength of primordial ties.

The second approach, rooted in social constructionist theory argues that ethnic identity is a product of social interaction in particular circumstances and has no necessary basis in ancient atavistic constraints. This approach specifically emphasizes the importance of our actions and how we interpret our environment. It explains that identities vary across space and times, due to societal circumstances and change the conditions that groups encounter. Anderson, for example, as we shall see later on in more detail, used this approach to explain social change and the power and political force of nations and nationalism because nationalism incorporates the dynamic nature of states and nations, but does not deny its origins. Looking from this standpoint, Jewish identity is not only the product of ties of blood, speech and custom, but a particular practice formed within specific historical and spatial contexts. It is continually being constructed and modified, taking on new expressions and changed meanings.

Supporting hypotheses

Complex and multifaceted context in which Turkish Jewish community has been surviving throughout centuries, and which defines its present reality, has influenced the formation and expressions of Jewish identity and practices in Turkey in a unique way. These expressions differ from those in surrounding countries, or in many other communities which are similar in size and character. The Turkish Muslim environment, specific for its strictly laic outward appearance, together with major recent historical events, determines Jewish identity expression to a considerable extent. Further on, primarily Sephardic character of the Turkish Jewry serves as another central point in attempts to understand and explain this community. Due to the mentioned particularities and overall circumstances, some ideas supporting and determining identity in Balkan and/or European, predominantly Ashkenazi Jewry, prove largely inapplicable in this case.

1.3. Aims of research

Given all the above-mentioned, in this study I will try to tackle several different aspects of this complex issue. Firstly, in order to identify the context and tendencies in which Istanbul Jewish community exists today, it is important:

- To give basic historical overview of the Jewish community in Istanbul
- To explain how certain historical events determine today's decisions and standpoints of the community
- To describe current position and practices of Istanbul Jewry
- To specify the particularities of Turkish Islamic environment in which it dwells
- To understand how these particularities influence the formation of Turkish Jewish identity both in the past and now
- To clarify relation to the dominant Turkish Muslim culture

The second and core part of the field research will be focused on the following major issues:

- How Turkish Muslim society influences the shaping and expressions of Jewish identity in Turkey today
- Which cultural and social processes influence possible transformations in Jewish identity, and in what way
- What are the processes employed by Jews in maintaining their Jewish identity
- How is their Jewish identity manifested

The overall aim of the entire research is to further an understanding on how Jewish identity is formed, experienced and maintained in a society where the dominant culture and religion is Islam². It looks deep into the community life and searches for explanations that would describe and determine the Jewish community in Turkey today. It aims to describe how it responds to its present socio-cultural milieu and examines complex Jewish-Moslem relations in the City of Istanbul and Turkey, how these relations develop, transform and influence current and possible future intercultural communication.³

² Religious observance in comparison to other predominantly Muslim countries is still rather low in Turkey. Turkish Muslim identity tends to be based more on tradition and culture, although recent events show a somewhat different trend. According to its constitution, Turkey is a secular republic. Therefore, although 99% Muslim, this country profile differs from the profile of other Middle Eastern Muslim countries. This complex question will be given due attention and explanation in later chapters.

³ In this research, Jews and Muslims will be primarily regarded as separate religious and cultural entities. Use of term Turkish Jews in this study refers to the Jews who were born in Turkey and are currently living in Turkey.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. A point of departure

Human beings have always been characterised by their need to belong to a certain community. Not only does belonging to a community offer a sense of security, but it also presents a milieu in which a person gains his meaning and importance in the world. Communities today are constructed in the context of multiple and partial belongings (Mesić, 2006). People can belong to more than one community, or can participate in various communities at certain periods of their lives. Lines dividing communities are not so visible anymore, neither are they strictly identified by unique values and characteristics. Likewise, it can be noted that cultural identities are not exclusive either. People can identify themselves as belonging to one or another particular culture, depending on existing circumstances and prevailing factors. They may also identify with more than one culture or group. But no matter how someone chooses to identify, a well-defined cultural identity will always prove to be important for people's sense of self and how they relate to others. A strong cultural identity can significantly contribute to people's overall welfare. Identifying with a particular group or culture gives people feelings of belonging, and it provides them with access to social networks which offer meaningful support and a solid ground for exchange of shared values, wishes and goals. These can help break down walls and build a sense of trust between people, although, extremely strong cultural and ethnic identity can at the same time create barriers among different groups and become a source of misunderstandings and rejections.

In order to be able to discuss the notions associated with cultural identity, we should first examine basic terminology that is widely used in naming and categorizing this concept. And in doing so, we should keep in mind that due to today's growing globalization and vast migrations that bring along cultural mixings and constant transformations, defining and explaining cultural identity has become an especially complex task.

2.2. Defining concepts

A special terminology has been used since as early as the ancient times when the Greeks and Romans already utilized particular words to categorize groups of “others” who were considered linguistically or politically different. Modern history and its events has influenced on the formation of new, or the change of existing terms and concepts. Thus for example, notions like “nation” or “race” have gained new meanings throughout modern history. Today academicians and researchers widely use the term “identity” in sociology, psychology, politology and anthropology. It has been mostly used as ethnic, national or cultural identity. In the last decades the term has been used in a variety of contexts and meanings and has also become a subject of cultural studies. It can easily be noted that the modern world has overall been marked by an increasing focus on identities as such and their transformations that occur as a result of cultural mixings and growing mobility of people.

On identity

In social science literature, identity as a concept has occupied a significant place and many have tried to define it and explain how it is formed. Many theoreticians and researchers will agree that hardly any notion in social and cultural sciences has been used in such a broad sense. Sudden inflation of theories and discussions on identity has become omnipresent, which makes it ever more difficult to lead a consistent discussion on its such a vast usage today. Regardless of a wide range of approaches, academics across a variety of disciplines recognize that the individual person constructs his ‘self’ from a variety of distinct sources. Identity, in other words, is a construct of plurality even within the singular individual (Libin). For the purpose of this study, I shall first shortly examine its original meaning to serve as a strong starting point for further elaborations on that concept. Further on, I shall refer to the ideas of the renowned philosopher Charles Taylor, and the cultural theorist Stuart Hall, in order to relate to the concept from their particular approaches.

According to Oxford English Dictionary, identity has a Latin root *identitas*, which is “the same”. It has two basic meanings. The first is a concept of absolute sameness. The second is a concept of distinctiveness which presumes consistency or continuity over time. From this it can be interestingly noted that the notion of identity establishes two opposing concepts - similarity or sameness and difference or distinctiveness. In social and cultural sciences, identity denotes belonging, or what we have in common with other human beings and/or what differentiates us from them (Mesić, 2006). Identity gives a person a sense of personal location and ensures the formation of a stable core of human individuality (ibid.) Today people live with different kinds of potentially contradictory identities, and which of them will prevail often depends on circumstances and factors surrounding them. Identities, as we shall shortly see, are inseparable from communities in which they are formed.

In his celebrated works ”Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity” Charles Taylor asks us to consider what we mean by identity. According to him we become full human beings, capable of understanding ourselves, and thus of defining our identity, through the acquisition of language, but language in its broadest sense. This broad sense covers not only the local spoken language but also many other modes of expression whereby we define ourselves. That is, it is through our cultures and communities, that we become capable of self definition. This leads to his conclusion that forming and revealing ones identity doesn’t happen in isolation, but in negotiations with the others. “My discovering my own identity doesn’t mean that I work it out in isolation, but that I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others...My own identity crucially depends on my dialogical relations with others” (Taylor, 1994). It is evident from these words how much Taylor stresses the importance of the dialogue character of the identity. He strongly believes that collective identities are not predetermined by social scripts, but are formed in an open dialogue. The crucial feature of human life is, therefore, its fundamentally dialogical character (Taylor, 1994). This process is never complete as our situations, dialogues, identifications and spatial orientations change throughout our lives. “One is a self only among other selves. A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it.”

Identities, Stuart Hall argues, "are always based on excluding something and establishing a violent hierarchy between the two resultant poles." An identity, Hall adds, is not "a point of origin and stability but is constantly destabilized by what it leaves out" (Hall, 1996). Identities change and are dependant on the context and our connection to it. "Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies."

As we shall shortly see, many theoreticians, while defining formations of identity and the influence of cultures and communities on it, are deeply aware of their mutual interaction, communication and interchangeability. It will soon come into our view to what extent they are inseparable parts of one wholeness.

On culture

Defining "culture", at the same time, proves to be no less challenging. Outside the natural sciences, the term "culture" is mainly used in three relatively distinct senses to refer to:

- The arts and artistic activity (music, literature, painting and sculpture, theatre and film); (Baldwin et al., 1999)
- The learned, primarily symbolic features of a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group, or humanity in general;
- And a process of development (used to describe the development of individual's capacities and it has been extended to the idea that cultivation is itself a general, social and historical process).

UNESCO adopts a similar formulation: "Culture comprises the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, intellectual and emotional features that characterise society or social

groups. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also different modes of life, the fundamental rights of human beings, value systems, traditions and beliefs.”

Jonathan Friedman deconstructs culture in two broad ways. The first is generic culture which refers to that quality of Homo sapiens that is specific to human behaviour, that is its organization into meaningful schemes, or rather schemes of attributed meaning as opposed to simple visceral reaction and instinct (Friedman, 1994). The second usage of culture is as differential culture, which consists in the attribution of a set of social behavioural and representational properties to a given population. This usage consists in the identification of otherness. The source of this notion is the relation of differential identity common to nationalism and ethnicity long before its appropriation by anthropology” (ibid.).

For Parekh, on the other hand, culture represents the totality of human life: For him culture is a historically created system of meaning and significances or, what comes to the same thing, a system of beliefs and practices in terms of which a group of human beings understand, regulate and structure their individual and collective lives. (Parekh, 2006). It is a way of both understanding and organizing human life. Every culture, as he says, is internally plural and reflects a continuing conversation between its different traditions and strands of thought. They grow out of conscious and unconscious interactions with each other, define their identity in terms of what they take to be their significant other, and are at least partially multicultural in their origins and constitution. As we can see, cultures are prone to outside influences, from which also derives that the public discourse on culture is conducted in both religious and secular idioms and is necessarily multilingual. In his defining of culture, Parekh puts a special stress on the connection between culture and religion saying that there is no culture in whose creation religion has not played an important part. Since culture is concerned with the meaning and significance of human activities and relations, and since this is also a matter of central concern to religion, the two tend to be closely connected. In different cultures religion plays different roles and they influence each other at various levels. Religion shapes a culture’s system of beliefs and practices and no religion can be culture-free. In the next chapters, we shall first see what this means on the example of Turkish Islam,

while the analysis of the field research will examine how this particular intersection influenced the formation of Turkish Jewish identity.

If we look at Taylor and Parekh and their ideas of identity and culture, we can see how much identity, our conception of ourselves, is defined by membership of particular communities and cultures. Various communal connections and attachments form our identity. We are the sum of the roles we occupy and inherit in a particular context. As a result we are inseparable from the cultural context in which we find we belong, to which we are rooted. The self is thus fixed and utterly defined by the context and it is determined by a cultural background. And since a culture's system of beliefs and practices is constantly contested, subject to change, and does not form a coherent whole, its identity is never completely established, static and free of uncertainty.

To sum up, formation of identity, individual and collective alike, is an active process based on the continuous two-way dynamics consisting of inclusion and exclusion. No identity whatsoever is possible without a dialogue with the others. We form our sense of ourselves only in relation with the others and other cultures. Given the all above, it can be concluded that communities, cultural and national, in which identities are formed today are “a field with porous borders and hybrid exchanges” (Mesić, 2006).

On cultural identity

From what we have seen so far, the concept of identity inevitably relates to a sense of community. Moreover, it denotes not only a sense of one's self as an individual (personal identity) but rather as a bearer of particular cultural heritage (cultural identity). Cultural identity is derived from our sense of belonging to a particular cultural or ethnic group. For Friedman cultural identity, sometimes known as ethnicity, is something that individuals have and that is the basis of a certain kind of social identity. Personal identity is thus not independent of the social context but entirely defined by it, and the sense of self is viewed through the prism of the community's sense of its self and heritage.

From all this it can be derived that a central construct in thinking about the way human organizes their lives is the notion of community. In sociology, a "community" is traditionally defined as a group of interacting people living in a common location. Anderson, in his work "Imagined Communities", suggests that communities are to be distinguished, not by their "false genuineness", but by the style in which they are imagined. Thus, "communities" can be "imagined" around shared cultural practices beyond any historical and geographic characterization. In that sense, national identity, too, is something which exists in the imagination of people. Anderson claims that nations offer a sense of identity and security in the modern world by replacing wider and vertically ordered religious and dynastic forms of social organisation with a new sense of time (a linear history rather than a cyclical sense of time) and a new sense of space (the world divided into well-demarcated territories). These collectivities, and the way of identifying with them, should, Anderson argues, be understood as imagined communities. They are imagined because "the members of even the smallest nation will never now most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 1991). This means that nations are identified with particular territories and that nationalisms and national identities are always built as much on the exclusion of people who do not fit and the drawing of boundaries as on the imagining of a community and the territory where they can live together (Baldwin et al., 1999). The imagining of this community is a collective cultural process. It is about trying to establish existence of the collectivity by defining what makes it a community: isolating national characteristics, defining crucial historical moments or significant places. This is important to emphasise as it suggests that all cultural identities – be they national, regional, local, - are, on one way, of the same order (Tomlinson, 2001). They are all representations of belonging.

National identity and nationalism is a relatively modern thing. Although nations claim long histories, national identity in the form as we know it today is a product of the past two hundred years. Ernest Gellner defines "nation" as a political principle which holds that that political and the national unit should be congruent (Gellner, 1983). According to him, nations are engendered by nationalism. With the birth of nations in the 19th century,

a new dominant elite was created, as opposed to “outsiders”. The nationalist discourse on “majority rule” crystallized, indeed brought into being, groups defined as “minorities” (Benbassa and Rodrigue, 2000). This was inherent in the very structure of the nationalist world view (ibid.). The same happened with the dissolution of the mighty Ottoman Empire. The Jewish community had to face the fact that the old Ottoman mosaic of which it had been a constituent element had ended up and accept a new status, that of “minority” under various political units (Benbassa and Rodrigue, 2000). Thus they faced new hardships as to their new position and its definition.

Political, like any other community, says Parekh, intends to form a kind of identity that would answer its members some basic questions of collective existence. These questions, however, vary from individual to individual. Inside a political community, people can identify themselves as Turkish, for example, but how they define their Turkishness may differ from person to person. They can see a Turkish identity in aspects of Turkish history, national symbols or maybe some achievements or endeavours unique to the country, for instance. From this example we can see that culture is not something added on later to the community, it defines nations, national identities and territories (Baldwin et al., 1999) From the totality of such different replies to the question national identity of a country, it is apparent that it should be defined in such a way “so as to include as equal, as its citizens and enable them to identify with it. When a majority community defines itself as a nation and tries to monopolise the state, it provokes its minorities to declare themselves as ethnic groups or nations (Mesić, 2006). Minority ethnicity is therefore defensive reaction against majority nationalism. (ibid.). However, Parekh insists that identity of a political community should be defined in politico-institutional rather than ethno-cultural terms (Parekh, 2006). The ethno-cultural characteristics are too vague to specify and agree upon, are rarely shared by all or even a majority, pertain to their private lives, at best define a people and a political community, and can easily become an instrument of suppressing unconventional lifestyles and forms of behaviours. Members of a certain nation, or imagined community, often belong to different ethnic, religious and cultural groups, and these identities should allow for such multiple identities without subjecting those involved to charges of divided loyalties . As we shall see later, the idea

of national today is threatened by the consequences of a serious consideration of diaphora and hybridity (Klara et al., 2005).

Going back from defining nations and national identity with modern words, let us return shortly to our original question of cultural identity and let us examine its two broad types designated by Friedman. The first is that of “lifestyle”, which refers to the practice of a culturally specific scheme which makes no claims to historical legitimacy and which can be freely chosen by the individual subject (Friedman, 1994). It maintains the autonomy of the subject with respect to the culture in which he participates and it is relativistic since there are no higher-order cultural criteria by which to compare different lifestyles. This is, then, a kind of minimalist cultural identity, permitting a broad cultural pluralism within the larger domain of non-cultural citizenship of the nation state. The second type is designated as ethnic. He also calls it substantive identity that is “in the blood”. This identity is not practiced but inherent, not achieved but ascribed. It can be interpreted as common tradition, history, descent, or as race. In a weaker sense it is expressed as heritage, or as cultural descent, learned by each and every individual and distinctive precisely at the level of individual behaviour. This latter is the most general western notion of ethnicity. Furthermore, Friedman argues that these two kinds of identities are in contrast with one another. Traditional ethnicity is based on membership defined by the practice of certain activities including those related to descent. Ethnic affiliation can be easily changed or complemented by geographic mobility. Where a member of a group changes residence he adopts the local ancestors and gods and becomes a practicing member of the new community. Personal identity in such societies, once again we can see, is not independent of the social context but almost entirely defined by it. Cultural identity is something that individuals have and that is the basis of a certain kind of social identity, but that identity is never the content of the social institutions of society. Inside the sphere of cultural modernity, a move from culturally strong identity – ethnicity – to weaker forms – lifestyle – is noticeable. It is only in periods of “declining hegemony that cultural identities become increasingly accentuated.

From the all above mentioned, it is noticeable that the definition of cultural identity rests on a whole spectre of remarks - from place, race, ethnicity and history, to nations, religion and even habits, convictions and beliefs. We as individuals participate in the social practice known as culture and culture is a significant, if not the major factor, in the shaping of our identity. And since cultures and communities are always in mutual interweaving, something that is becoming increasingly true of the modern globalized world, we can easily conclude that postmodern worlds are always multicultural in a way, that they are never complete and unified. Cultures, as Parekh noticed, do not exist in a vacuum nor are they created ex nihilo (Parekh, 2002). And because of all of that, dialogue between cultures is of utmost importance, it brings together differences and helps us understand ourselves in a better way.

On (Jewish) identity in the diaspora

Due to specific historical facts related to Jewish people, discussions on Jewish identity always take on a unique direction. The preoccupation with identity among Jews often takes many different forms and angles. However, the question of Jewish identity is a relatively new thing. Medieval Jews did not search for their identity because there was no other choice for them. If you were born a Jew you were naturally a member of a closely knit and clearly defined community (Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1972). Reality, though, started changing with the emergence of the new concepts of nation and national identity. As a result, many new, and until that time, completely unknown, questions arose and started forming today's core of the ultimate question of who is a Jew. Today different parts that compose this big question are many and are well-know. To name only some - Is Judaism a nation or a religion, can Jews survive with their identity unimpaired, what happens to their identity if they get assimilated, what is actually assimilation, and so many others. These are subject of endless debates and no Jewish community in the world has managed to settle for a solution, thus all communities are in a constant state of flux.

(Eisenstadt, 2004). Many scholars within Jewish studies are now referring to Jewish identity through a constructivist approach wherein the individual constructs his identity through the practices, traditions, and values that he finds personally meaningful (Libin). Approaching different aspects and ever-emerging dilemmas on Jewish identity requires special place and time. Instead, as a continuation to the previous discussions on identity formation, in this passage I shall concentrate on how one (“foreign”) community answers to the challenges of living and communicating with another (dominant) community. We shall explore the rules of their shared existence and see what their contact can possibly produce in terms of attitudes and identities.

Let us start from the fact that relations to both the mother land and the host country play a crucial role in the numerous arguments concerning modern Jewish identity. This is no surprise if we consider the fact that the worldwide Jewish population today is estimated at 13.3 million. As of 2001, 8.3 million Jews lived in the diaspora and 4.9 million lived in Israel. This actuality colours, to a certain degree, the way Jewish people are perceived by outsiders and among themselves alike. In their essay “Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish identity”, Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin argue against the idea that geography is the only source of connection for identity, suggesting instead that generational links offer alternative ways to construct Jewish identity. They agree that memory, history, family, and practice might be more significant factors determining (Jewish) identity than the claim to belong to a certain land (Brazier et al., 2003).

When speaking of diaporas as such, Sheffer warns that we should be careful when defining diaspora and distinguishing between global religions and ethnic diaporas because it is difficult to detach religious sentiments and beliefs from other cultural elements that constitute the primordial component of a diaporic identity (Sheffer, 2006). This is especially true of diaporas such as Jewish. He argues that various diaporas take on different strategies towards their host countries, and divides them according to them (Sheffer, 2006). The so called “communalist and corporatist strategies” are, he claims, adopted by most diaporas today. Communalist strategy thus is intended to lead a voluntary and relatively loose framework for preserving ethno-national identity, for defending the diaporas, and for organising members’ activities vis-à-vis the host country,

the homeland, and the other fragments of the dispersed nation. In other words, the strategy aims to achieve a reasonable degree of “absorption” of diasporans into the host society, but not full integration, which might lead to assimilation – and the while maintaining continuous and unwavering relations with the homeland. The corporatist strategy, is much like the communalist, based on maintaining the ethno-national identity and on nurturing communal organisations and activities that will promote identification with the group and provide services complementary to those supplied by the host country. The choice of communalism or corporatism as a main strategy has become almost universal among state-linked diasporas that remain relatively small minorities in host countries. However, regardless of how we define diasporas or their attitudes, as a result of increasing ethnic and cultural heterogeneity and pluralism in most countries, membership in those groups overlap, sometimes to the point that it is difficult to determine which element is dominant among members of a particular coalition (Shaffer, 2006). And here we have arrived to the two specific points in diaspora politics and identity largely debated over the past years – dual or overlapping loyalties and hybridized identities.

Loyalty to a culture, claims Parkeh, refers to loyalty to a way of life including its values, ideals, system of meaning and significance, and moral and spiritual sensibilities (Parekh, 2002) Cultural communities are not voluntary associations that we join, instead we are born into them, and are not so much members as part of them (ibid.). Among diasporans, on the other hand, we notice a phenomenon tagged as dual loyalty. It consists of a collective state of mind such that diasporans feel they owe allegiance to both host country and homeland (Sheffer, 2006). In other words, they do not see a substantial contradiction between their two loyalties. Thus they accept the general social and political norms of their hosts and comply with their legal, political and economic regulations. At the same time they feel affinity for and maintain close contacts with their families and other groups in their homelands and are willing to promote their homeland’s interests in host countries and elsewhere. As long as relations between their homelands and host countries are friendly, they will not face major difficulties in determining the balance between their loyalties and maintaining the patterns of loyalties they have forged. Two preliminary points concerning the general situation of the Jewish diaspora should be emphasized at this stage. First, the Jewish

diaspora's strong and continuous primordial and psychological-symbolic attachment to the land of Israel posed and still poses political dilemmas for many diaspora members in their host countries. The second point is that past and current patterns of loyalty have not been identical among different Jewish diaspora communities residing in different host countries (Sheffer, 2006.) But regardless of the colour of ties to the land of Israel, they have always been strong and deep in character, marking one of the peculiarities of Jewish diaspora in contrast to others.

Another point that should be closely considered is the notion of hybridity. It is by now established that authors writing on diaspora very often engage with it. In its most recent descriptive and realist usage, hybridity appears as a convenient category at “the edge” or contact point of diaspora, describing cultural mixture where the diasporized meets the host in the scene of migration, denoting at the same time the evolution of new, dynamic, mixed culture (Klar et al., 2005). The concept of hybridity stresses that identities are not created by a “mechanical” fusion or synthesis of many elements, but result from intensive exchanges between various social and cultural factors (Sheffer, 2006). In the dialogue between the works of Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha and many others, hybridity has come to mean all sorts of things to do with mixing and combination in the moment of cultural exchange. Bhabha, for example, uses hybridity as an “in-between” term, referring to a third space. Hall makes a strong link between the development of hybridity and the changing character of diasporas. For him, the late modern world is marked by two broad contradictory tendencies (Sheffer, 2006). On the one hand, the drift of globalisation is towards homogenisation and assimilation. On the other hand, and perhaps in reaction to globalisation, is the reassertion of localism – notably in the form of ethnicity, nationalism and religious fundamentalism. Although these tendencies appear to be irreconcilable, he makes a cogent case that cultural identities are emerging that are in “transition”, drawing on different traditions and harmonising old and new without assimilation or total loss of the past. He designates this process as the evolution of “cultures of hybridity” and closely associates the growth in these cultures with the “new diasporas” created by the colonial experience and the ensuing postcolonial migrations. Bhabha, on the other hand, argues that cultural identity is found in the ‘in-between’ spaces. For Bhabha, it is in this in-

between space that culture is truly articulated, where hybridity becomes reality and both the fluidity and evolution of the culture and the construction of the self are recognized.

Having in mind the already mentioned Taylor's idea that identities come from transformation, that they are a production which is never complete but always in process, we come to the conclusion that the diaspora experience is inevitably defined by diversity and hybridity through transformations and difference. Considering the fact that all societies today are culturally heterogeneous in different degrees, we are lead to the inevitable conclusion that hybridity is becoming an increasingly acute reality in the modern era.

3. THE SETTING

3.1. Historical setting

Turkey and the Jews

The history of the Jews in Anatolia¹ can be traced back to the 4th century BC. Synagogue ruins dating back from the 3rd century BC have been discovered near the towns of Sardis and Bursa and along the Aegean, Mediterranean, and Black Sea. In the city later to be known as Istanbul, Jews have lived since the Byzantine times. Some of these Jews had lived there for centuries, others arrived from Italy as merchants. Throughout the Byzantine period the Jews in Constantinople had close contacts with Christians and were active in public life (Encyclopedia Judaica, 1972). However, due to persistent persecution under Byzantine rule which included forced conversion and expulsion, the number of Jews gradually declined (Karmi, 1992)

Istanbul and Turkish Jews trace the beginning of the establishment of their community as we know it today to the fifteenth century, when the Ottoman Turks completed the conquest of the Byzantine Empire with the capture of Istanbul and opened the doors of their empire to Jewish refugees from Spain and Portugal fleeing from the aftermath of Iberian Reconquista. When Mehmet II (also known as el-Fatih, “the Conqueror” or Fatih Sultan Mehmet) captured Constantinople from the Byzantines in 1453, he brought in Turks, Armenians and Jews – principally from Anatolia and the Balkans - to replace that part of the city’s indigenous population depleted by war and emigration (Elazar, 1983). He granted Jews full religious rights, as well as the right to own property and to travel freely throughout the empire (ibid.). Because of this tolerance and acceptance shown by the Ottoman sultans, Constantinople² and much of the Ottoman Empire soon

¹Anatolia is a region east of the Bosphorus, between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.

²From the conquest until the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the name Konstantiniyya was used. The final and official replacement of Constantinople did not take place until 1930 (Bernard Lewis, 1963).

became a sanctuary for Jews expelled from Spain in 1492 and Portugal in 1497. Their numbers have been estimated at about 40,000 at the time (Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1972). With this influx, the Jewish community grew considerably and it was blooming rapidly. Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries Jewish community of Istanbul was the most creative and productive in the Middle East (Elazar, 1983). The 16th century was a specially flourishing period when Istanbul became one of the most important Jewish centres of the world (ibid.). In the 16th century, Istanbul constituted the second largest Jewish community in the Ottoman Empire (Karmi, 1992). Only Saloniki could boast a larger community. In the Jewish literature of the 16th century, Istanbul is called “a mother-city” (Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1972).

Throughout the Ottoman Empire, the Jews, as well as other religious communities, most notably the Greek and the Armenian, possessed the status of *dhimmis*, or ‘protected’ peoples and constituted a special religious-administrative unit which enjoyed an extensive internal autonomy in return for the payment of a poll tax, in accordance with the system of the community divisions which was known as *millet*. This is to say, every non-Moslem minority was granted a substantial measure of internal self-rule within the Ottoman Empire, and the appropriate communal institutions existed to maintain internal control on behalf of the Sultan (Elazar, 1983). Thus the Jewish community could follow its own laws on many matters and administer its own affairs within the limits imposed by the Ottoman authorities (ibid.)

It needs to be noted, however, that historians and researches do not share the same views on the position of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire. Some claim that it was only in the Ottoman Empire that the exiles were really welcomed (Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1972). The Ottomans had no prejudices and the Sephardim were treated with particular favour, since they brought skills which were needed (ibid.). They settled in all the major cities and reconstructed the ruins of their shattered life and culture. “Is it not better for you to live under Muslims than under Christians? Here every man may dwell at peace under his own vine and fig tree” – so a Jew of Constantinople wrote to his brothers in the Rhineland in 1454 (Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1972). In his letters to a fellow Hungarian

diplomat, the Austrian ambassador to the Ottoman Empire under the rule of Suleiman the Magnificent, Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, wrote: "...Sultan possesses Janissaries...to protect the Christians and Jews from the violence of the populace. There is no village, town, or city of any size in which there are not some Janissaries to guard the Christians, Jews, and other helpless folk from the attacks of malefactors." Others, on the other hand, believe that there is some exaggeration in talking about the favourable position and well-being of the Jews under the Ottomans. They governed themselves, but partly because the authorities regarded Muslim law as too sacred to be applied to them (Cohen, 1997). Protection was often afforded to them, but largely because they were economically useful. They were integrated to the body politic but did not fully belong to it. It was even regarded as unsporting to kill them, because they were so evidently inferior.

Whichever standpoint is taken, history shows that regardless of the special and unique community system of the millets unique to the Ottoman Empire, the Jews, along with other non-Moslems, were second-class citizens by law until 1839. That was the year when Sultan Abdülmeçid I, proclaimed among other decrees, a declaration granting, for the first time, full equality in matters of life and property on all minority groups in all parts of Ottoman Empire. The overall and thorough process of modernisation undertaken by the Empire at that time included in its aims political centralisation, secularisation and nationalism. These reforms, known in the Turkish history as Tanzimat (reorganisation), effectively started the modernization of Turkey and had a profound impact on the legal, social and economic status of the Jews (Elazar, 1983). Since that time, the Jews of Istanbul witnessed a period of cultural and economic revival which lasted until the early 20th century³(ibid.). The same principles of the modernisation that started in the Ottoman Empire were later adopted by the Turkish Republic established in 1923 (Benbassa and Rodrigue, 2000).

³ During the first decade of the 20th century the Jews lagged behind the Greeks and Armenians until the end of the Empire. These two communities had diversified economic foundations and possessed dynamic business leaders. Jews were not dominant in the economy anywhere except in Salonika (Elazar, 1983)

Between 1844 and 1856 there were 150,000 Jews in the Empire, by the early 20th century, their numbers had risen to more than 250,000 (Elazar, 1983). In the 19th century, nearly 40 active synagogues provided the focus for more than 60,000 Jews in Istanbul (Karmi, 1992). During World War I, the Jews of Istanbul prospered greatly. This fact encouraged a mass influx of Jews from other parts of the country seeking to re-establish themselves in the capital. However, the World War I put an end to the unique position of Istanbul Jewry as a leading community in a far-flung Empire (Karmi, 1992). In these turmoil times, a new republic was born. The national and secular nature of the new Turkish state was created by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1923. Atatürk's doctrine of a secular nation-state under a single secular law, was that any minority community activities determined by the authorities to be secular in character are to be exclusively a function of the state (Elazar, 1983). In that sense, the Jewish community of Turkey, like the rest of the population, was subjected to a series of laws designed to make Turkey a secular state, which severely affected the position of Jews in Istanbul and Turkey. In the first official census of the Turkish Republic taken in 1927, there were 47,035 Jews in Istanbul and 81,872 Jews in Turkey. This number rose to 125,000 during World War II (Shaw, 1991).

During World War II Turkey managed to maintain a façade of neutrality. During the period of Nazi persecution, Turkey admitted many European Jews, especially those who had family in Turkey. From the Jewish perspective, Istanbul was far more important as a base for gathering information and providing refuge for Jews fleeing from the Nazis than were the other neutral centres in Europe since only Istanbul provided direct connections between European Jewry and the Jews in Palestine (Shaw, 1991). The Turkish government policy at those times was not fundamentally hostile to the Jews as such, but showed anti-foreign attitude (Elazar, 1983). Several decisions and proclamations were made which affected the status of all minorities. One of the most notorious examples was the introduction of a new tax. In order to meet the country's financial needs during WW II the Turkish government approved a Capital tax (Turkish *varlık vergisi*) in November 1941. Capital tax was introduced in order to pay for the extremely large army being maintained against the possibility of a German invasion through Greece. This created

new unfavourable conditions for all hit by these provisions, resulting partly in the start of a first mass emigration from Turkey. Naturally, the Jewish minority chose the newly formed state of Israel as their new destination.

However, the Capital tax with its extremely negative effects on the whole community, was not the only factor for the beginning of mass emigration to Israel. The deterioration of relations between the central power and the religious minorities, and the beginning of compulsory military service for all Ottoman citizens irrespective of religious origin also affected the Jews, with many choosing to leave Turkey (Kastoryano, 1992). On the eve of the II World War, Turkey was home to 85,000 Jews (Weiker, 1992). In the late 1960s and early 1970s a second, much less numerous wave of emigration to Israel took place (Shaw, 1991). The number of Jews in Istanbul, estimated at 50,000 in 1948, dropped to 31,000 in 1965 (Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1972). The number continued dropping to the estimated present number of 20,000 – 23,000.

Jewish groups in Turkey

Historically the Jews in Turkey formed several different groups. The differences between these groups are important to emphasize, as they often influence and shape the expressions of identity to a large extent.

1. Romaniots

The Romaniots were the Jewish inhabitants of Greece and Byzantium and they represent the first and oldest continuous Jewish presence in Europe going back for more than 2,000 years. Some of them had been residents of Constantinople much before the arrival of the Ottomans, while the others were settled by the Ottoman sultans in their intention to populate the new capital. With time, newcomers from abroad slowly took over their position of influence and the Romaniots ceased to exist as a separate

congregation. Nowadays only an infinitesimal number of Istanbul Jews can claim a direct relations to ancestors of Romaniot origin (Karmi, 1992).

2. Italians

Byzantine Constantinople had already contained a great number of Jews coming from Genoa, Venice and other Italian cities. Another influx of Italian Jews flocked to Istanbul following the Ottoman conquest. The Italian community of today administers its congregation of some 500 members (Elazar, 1983).

3. Ashkenazim

Ashkenazi Jews of European origin had also settled in Istanbul much before the Ottoman conquest. After the arrival of the Ottomans, Ashkenazi Jews swept in from the German lands, Austria, Hungary, Poland and Russia (Elazar, 1983). Fleeing pogroms and especially anti-Semitism during World War II, these Jews found a welcoming haven in today's Turkey. In the early 20th century, the Ashkenazim constituted nearly 10% of the total Jewish population of Istanbul while today there is a congregation of only about 1,000 Ashkenazim, most of whom are situated in Istanbul (Elazar, 1983).

4. Sephardim

The decree of Sultan Beyazit II in 1492 inviting Spanish Jews to populate the city not only provided a safe refuge for these exiles, but also brought historic changes for the city of Istanbul. So large was the first wave of Sephardic immigrants that the Jewish population of the city more than doubled (Karmi, 1992). The bearers of a magnificent cultural heritage quickly established themselves as a leading social and economic force within local Jewry (*ibid.*). The Spanish language of these émigrés was preserved in the Ladino (Judeo-Espagnol) spoken to this very day. Thus, from the very outset of their arrival, the Sephardim formed the leading section of Istanbul Jewry, both culturally and numerically (Karmi, 1992). 96% of the total Turkish Jewish population today is Sephardic.

5. Karaites

These Jews have traditionally rejected the Rabbinic authority, and this group is formed by the so called Karaites. Not recognised as a separate community until the late 19th century, the Karaite community functioned largely under the authority of Rabbinic

Jewry (Karmi, 1992). Today there are few remaining Karaites who continue to strive for the preservation of a fading heritage (ibid.).

6. The Sabbatians (known in Turkish as *Dönme*, meaning religious convert)

Their formation of this group dates back to the 17th century with Shabbetai Zevi who proclaimed himself the long-awaited Messiah. After the sudden and stunning conversion to Islam of this self-proclaimed Messiah, some families decided to do the same. By the early 20th century there were 20,000 members of this community in Saloniki, some of whom made their way to Istanbul (Karmi, 1992). Recognised neither by the Chief Rabbinate as Jews nor by the more fundamental Islamic circles as full-fledged Muslims, the Sabbatians lead a somewhat isolated life (ibid.). Outwardly Muslims and, to a lesser extent, Christians, the Donmeh secretly continue to observe Jewish rituals and pray in Hebrew as well as Aramaic and Ladino. Number of today's Donmeh descendents is not known.

Nowadays, all groups, except from the Sabbatians, are united around the elected community leadership. The Chief Rabbinate and the elected councils represent all these groups regardless of their origin.

3. 2. Religious setting

Judaism in Turkey today

Today the diminishing Jewish population in Turkey is concentrated in only two urban centres. There are two reasons for this phenomenon. First, the Jews have gravitated to the country's commercial centres as part of the overall trend towards urbanisation and metropolitisation in Turkey and the world. Second, the majority of those who left Turkey were from the smaller communities (Elazar,1983). The vast majority today lives in Istanbul, which is now recognised as the political, financial and economic center of Turkish Jewry. The other considerable community is in Izmir with around 2,000

members. A dwindling population has been the fate of some of the smaller communities, such as Bursa and Edirne, where communal activities have ceased.

The official Turkish census commission has not compiled statistics by religion since the 1960s as the official census no longer has a classification under the rubric “religious community” or “linguistic community” as was the custom until the national census of 1960. Therefore, it is difficult to secure an accurate count of the Jewish population in Turkey today. The Chief Rabbinate, the only reliable source, counts 23,000, which makes it 25th community in size according to the World Jewish Congress study. Some claim that many of those registered members do not in fact live in Turkey so that the actual figure could be less than 20,000. Whatever the figure, it is only one-fourth of that when the Turkish Republic was established, but it remains the second largest Jewish community in the former Ottoman lands, exceeded only by Israel (Shaw, 1991).

Jews, like other minorities are protected under the Turkish Constitution. Jews no longer pay special taxes, nor are they treated differently from other citizens in the eyes of the law or with regard to military service. Anti-Semitism in the media is a periodic problem. Anti-Semitism often takes the form of anti-Israeli acts (Elazar, 1983). Jewish citizens, like all Turkish citizens are permitted no international affiliations. In terms of Jewish communal life this means that Zionist organisations, fund-raising and international Jewish organisations are forbidden.

The only legally recognised Jewish community structure today is the Chief Rabbinate, which is the supreme representative body of Turkish Jewry. The origins of this institution date back to the early Ottoman period. According the local tradition, the first chief rabbi was appointed by the Ottoman Sultan, Mehmed the Conqueror, soon after the conquest of the city (Karmi, 1992). A religious and a lay council are constituted under the direction of the Chief Rabbi. Synagogues, schools, hospitals, youth and sports clubs, and welfare agencies that function under the Rabbinate are non-profit. Their revenues are derived from contributions from members of the community, fees for ritual services and school tuitions

Jewish Community of Istanbul

From their very first days in Istanbul, Jews have always resided in neighbourhood side by side with their Muslim and Christian neighbours. Yet, during 15th -17th centuries, certain neighbourhoods were predominantly Jewish and where in that sense locally recognised as Jewish neighbourhoods (Balat, Hasköy, Kuzguncuk). The 19th century saw a sudden shift to other district – mostly Galata and Pera - as the major focus of Jewish life. Such was the impact of this population flow that Galata became the nerve centre of the entire Jewish community (Karmi, 1992). Moving further, they populated the areas of Şişli, Nişantaşı, Ortaköy, Kuzguncuk, Ulus, Güztepe, and the nearby islands of Büyükada and Heybeli Ada. Now there is a large migration to the suburbs, resulting in a breakdown of organised Jewish synagogue affiliations. All in all, Jews have lived in most of the major neighbourhoods of the city. Only such neighbourhoods with strong Muslim majorities as Fatih and Üsküdar have rarely housed a Jewish population of any size (Karmi, 1992). However, it needs to be stressed that those neighbourhoods that witnessed a large influx of Jews were by no means European-style ghettos. Jews tended to flock together for reasons both social and religious, but there was never any pressure, either political or governmental, to isolate their presence in the city (Karmi, 1992). Today, 73% live in the European side, while the other 27% live in the Asian side of the city.

Around 40 synagogues served the Jewish community of Istanbul during its zenith. The oldest one dates back to the Byzantine period. They were not only serving as the house of worship but they also functioned as local community centres and meeting places (Karmi, 1992). Such is the case today too. Nowadays, most active synagogues conduct daily services, although the number of participants is not high. Others are open only on the biggest holidays. Certain services (e.g. marriages) are carried out only in one particular synagogue (Neve Shalom) that has been hallowed for this specific ritual. Currently there are 19 active synagogues, each independent, with elected boards, but not congregations. Other communal institutions include – hospital, social assistance institution, old-age home, school from kindergarten to end of high school, philanthropic societies and several cultural centres and clubs offering informal education. The Jewish press is represented by

one Jewish weekly – Shalom, written in Turkish with one page in Ladino. Located in an old synagogue, there is a Museum of Turkish Jews.

According to the internal research⁴ conducted in the Jewish community in 2002, the community is getting both smaller in size and older in age. The biggest percentage of members of the Community are aged between 45 and 54 (20%), with a high percentage of members aged 65 and older (18%). Families usually have 1 or 2 children, with only 1-2% with 4 or more children. These results clearly show the diminishing size of the community, this being one of the biggest challenges it faces today. Unlike earlier times, more than 90% of children and youth today do not speak Ladino largely spoken by their grandparents, while only 52% of their parents speak and understand it. This indicates another sweeping tendency among the Istanbul Jewry, showing how rapidly some parts of traditions die out. Today, Turkish, rather than Ladino, has become their primary language, while Judeo-Spanish and French remain the second language for most older Jews. Among the middle-aged generation, there is a huge percentage of women who are not working (aged 31-40 – 63.5%, aged 41-50 – 75.7%) illustrating another long-lasting trend where women are mostly in domestic affairs, which leaves them time and space for voluntary work in the community. The figures show that the Community is largely educated. Master and doctor diploma is possessed by 24% of the Community members, while 55% possess university diploma. It is interesting to note that 2% of the Community members express Islam as their religion while 0.28% claim to be of Christian faith.

⁴Results of the research obtained from the Jewish Community – Chief Rabbinate in Istanbul

Islam in Turkey today

This study tackles in its main aspect the question of how a Jewish community and its individuals exist, behave and feel inside a predominantly Muslim society. Although much of Turkey's territory is situated in the area which is geographically, politically and culturally close to the Middle East, its unique position and history created a somewhat different attitude toward the predominant religion. Islam in Turkey has many particularities and differs in many ways from the Islam in other Muslim countries. Turkish Islam is often regarded as neither fanatical nor fundamental, as an Arab or Iranian, and this is its most distinctive characteristic. Therefore, the nature of Islam in Turkey that shapes and influences to a large extent the country's past, present and future movements within the regional and world map needs to be defined more closely. Nonetheless, these distinctive features could not bypass all citizens irrespective of their ethnic and cultural background and religion.

Significant events and legal changes affecting Islam under the Republic began first with the abolition of the Ottoman Sultanate in 1922 and then of the Caliphate in 1924 (Tapper, 1991). The major redefinition of Islam in Turkey began with the actual creation of the Republic in 1923. Secularism emerged as one of the key principles of Atatürk's new state, and religious expression came under strict government supervision and control. His reforms restricted Islam to the completely personal sphere. Individuals were supposed to start worshipping privately while the social and political side of Islam was outlawed and driven underground. In the 20s the Sharia was replaced with adapted European legal codes, the Vakif (religious endowment foundation) was abolished, tarikats (orders, brotherhoods) were closed, alphabet was romanised, western form of hats, clothing and calendar were adopted and Sunday was accepted as the weekly holiday. Any religious signs as a part of attire became forbidden whatsoever for members of all religious groups. With the abolition of the Caliphate, the outlawing of the powerful Sufi tarikats and the discouragement of mystical forms of Islam, Turkish Islam in effect became more standardised, circumscribed and compartmentalised, while republican ideology and associated institutions came to dominate much of everyday life (Tapper, 1991). The

Kemalist goal of becoming civilized would forever be contested as unconstitutional, imitationist, or hostile to the religiocultural ways of the Turkish people (Andrew Davison, 1998). The furthest point in secularization of the country was when the Arabic word Allah was tried to be substituted by the Turkish word Tanrı and Turkish was introduced for the daily calls to prayers. These decisions were, however, called off in 1950. Islam was finally deleted from the Constitution in 1928, and the state was officially declared secular in 1937. Thus, slowly a simple conceptual opposition was encouraged between “republican (modern, secular, European) and “Islamic” (backward, decadent, Ottoman) (Tapper, 1991). Davison explains the concept of “laiklik” using similar terms: “Laiklik is not atheism, as expressed by the major actors and party publicists; laiklik is, in their conceptual and power frame, a progressive, civilized, forward-looking principle of national development whereas anti-laiklik principles are uncivilized and regressive. (Davison, 1998). However, over time, Turkish laiklik earned its reputation as strict, firm, militant and rigid. It derives these attributes from rigid state control over religious life and modernization against Islam (Bromley in Davison, 1998)

In the last decades, Turkey has seen rapid developments: vast economic growth especially in major urban centres, population increase, urbanisation, the spread of universal education and mass communications. Of Muslim countries other than those with oil-based economies, today Turkey is the most industrially and technologically advanced, and the closest economically and culturally to Europe (Tapper, 1991). The 1950 elections brought in the Democrat Party in place of Atatürk’s Republican People’s Party, the biggest advocate of secularism and modernism. The new ruling party took a clearly religious character and since that time, religious revival has been taking place. The last ten years have seen an especially rapid increase in the public demonstration of religion affiliation, such as the number of covered women. There are many explanations for this in both inside and outside influences. Some say that the religious revival of the 70s and 80s was a part of wider 20th-century movements, such as anti-materialism and post-modernism. Expansion of education brought greater popular awareness, both of the country and its relative position in the world and of Islamic movements elsewhere such as Egypt, Iran and Afghanistan (Tapper, 1991). Today we are witnessing a gradual, varied

upsurge of faith within a society that is simultaneously growing increasingly heterogeneous. Many have been pleased to see a partial re-Islamification of Turkish society, but many others are now strongly against or even express great concern over its further rise. Combining these ideas suggests the following: the state is open to conflicting opinion and influence from diverse groups, much more so than is commonly realised (Shankland, 1999). Among the new generation, in Istanbul, Izmir and in many larger cities, a large sector of the youth population is simply not interested in religion, they prefer a life based on modern consumerisms and mass media attractions. The army, much of the bureaucracy and legislature, the left, many young people and businessmen support secularism. On the other hand, many Sunni people, usually villagers or recent urban migrants, support a large politician party explicitly founded on furthering Islam, and a considerable portion of the political right increasingly push for more Islamic involvement in the life and government of Turkish society.

Today Turkey is not a Muslim state, but it is a country with an overwhelmingly Muslim population. The Internet-based CIA factbook states that 99.8% of population are Muslim. Most of them are Sunnis, with the second largest Muslim sect being Alevis. The state is defined as secular, separating religion from worldly affairs in constitutional, educational, sociocultural, and legal spheres. While a relatively small number of people regard themselves as Muslims first and citizens of the Turkish Republic second; the majority see themselves as citizens first, and count religion as second, while some are so secular that they pay little or no attention to religion at all. The past 5 years have witnessed the political dominance of the AKP party (Adalet Ve Kalkınma Partisi – Justice and Development Party) in Turkish politics. Prime Minister Erdoğan and President Gül are often considered by Western analysts to represent a version of the Christian-Democrats of the European political systems. Some, on the other hand, view them as Islamists in disguise. As a result, the country is deeply polarised between pious Muslims and the secular urban elite. One sign of this polarisation is the continuous controversy over how women should dress in public. Muslim women often argue that wearing a headscarf is their human right and a religious duty. Secularists, on the other hand, see the headscarf as

a provocative political symbol and had it banned from universities, state schools and government offices.

In terms of identity formation, these particular circumstances where Kemalist secularism and Islam represent two completely hostile, clashing identities, created a special attitude to what and who is considered a Muslim or a Turk. Tapper explains it in these words: “A person who is not a Muslim is usually referred to as a minority person or as a Turkish citizen, but not as a Turk. “Turk” designates an ethno-religious characteristic of the political community. Islam is an indispensable element in the definition of a Turk. The population of contemporary Turkey is composed of peoples of various origins who settled in the country under the Ottoman Empire. Many came as refugees after their lands fell under foreign (that is, Christian) domination. They came not because they were ethnic Turks, but because they were Muslims. In the building of a nation out of the conglomeration of people who inhabited the borders of the Republic, the integrative function of religion could not be ignored (Tapper, 1991).

Many aspects of Islam in republican Turkey have been widely debated, both among Turkish commentators and among foreign observers. One constant theme of discussion has concerned the sources, nature and future of Turkish laicism. These debates have taken on a new swing with the above mentioned political developments in the country. For many, the revival of religious activity had merely confirmed prejudices about the continuing cultural backwardness of the peasants, which would in due course be remedied by education and modernisation. Educated opinion in Turkey has been divided as to the depth of ordinary people’s commitment to secularism, and whether or not Turkey could ever experience an Islamic Revolution (Tapper, 1991). There is considerable debate over the meaning of manifestations of Islamic revival in Turkey, and how far they are the product of external material or ideological influences. Other debates have focused on whether there are specifically Turkish constructions of Islam, rooted in Turkish culture, political history and geography, which might explain or provide a model for current revivalist movements (ibid.).

To conclude, religion has clearly been central in the developments that have occurred over the last decade. Islam has emerged again as a new dynamic element in the culture and identity, and has increasingly been recognised as such. Some conclusions about this, generally agree that Islam in Turkey was, and continues to be, multi-dimensional.

4. JEWISH COMMUNITY IN A PREDOMINANTLY MUSLIM COUNTRY

4.1 Elements of influence on formation of contemporary identity in Turkish Jewry

Reading the complex history of Turkish Jews, with a special emphasis on the complex 20th-century events which raised numerous issues for the Jews of Turkey, I could abstract several major elements that have influenced the formation of contemporary Jewish identity in Turkey. Profound changes in their position and status that had started with the so called Tanzimat era, continued in the new secular republic when the Jews were compelled to re-define their role as individuals as well as a community. Challenges were many – from placing and defining Turkishness in their identity formation, to relating to Jewishness and assimilation which started rapidly threatening their centuries-long firm position, and organisational and political relationships to the new Israeli state. Their responses to these challenges were various – 1. cautious entry into Turkish political activity, 2. continuing their characteristics of being loyal, productive and silent, 3. accepting a significant degree of integration into Turkish society, 4. emigration to Israel and elsewhere, 5. determined maintenance of Jewish social and cultural institutions (Weiker, 1992).

I have grouped the mentioned elements according to particular periods of Turkish history, each of which played a crucial role in the formation and expression of identity:

Creation of the Turkish Republic

One of the biggest events throughout Europe in the early 19th century was the emergence of the modern state and the birth of nations and nationalism that came along (Benbassa and Rodrigue, 2000). This significant historical episode changed the maps of Europe and had a deep effect on European Jews. The Sephardic Jewish community that survived for more than 300 years as an entity distinguished by its language, religion, and culture in the

Ottoman Empire now came under the rule of different states (Benbassa and Rodrigue, 2000). Although the creation of these new nation-states did not definitively undermine Eastern Sephardic unity or weaken the preservation of their language and culture, ultimately they had to adapt themselves to new circumstances, regimes and ideologies and follow the development of these new states (Benbassa and Rodrigue, 2000). These factors determined future developments of Jewish communities.

For the Turkish Jews, the new situation was challenging in its own peculiar way. They seem to have been caught between two seemingly distinct trends. On the one hand, they had centuries-long deep attachments to their strong Jewish identity. On the other hand, during the First World War the Jews in Turkey had been treated well, particularly in contrast to the Greeks and Armenians. Thus they were caught between identifying with the new state and sticking to the old attachments, which brought confusion into their commitments. Today many historians and researchers stress this unique historical position of the Jewish minority in relation to the Turkish nation. Because of different historical circumstances, the Jews, unlike the Greeks and the Armenians, had not pursued separatist or nationalist ambitions during the last decades of the Ottomans (Cagaptay, 2006). Countries that were conquered by the Ottomans wanted to win their independence back. But Jews were not conquered, they were invited (Güleryüz, private interview). As a consequence of their different position, they had allied with the Turks during the dissolution of the Empire (Cagaptay, 2006.). This was a blatant sign of a loyal¹ and invisible community, a hallmark attached to this community and a trend that would continue in different ways until this very day. This attribute, which, as we shall see, will prove to be an unavoidable point in analyzing perceptions and expression of Jewish identity, can best be described with the words of the vice-president of the Quincentennial Foundation and Curator of the Jewish Museum of Turkey, Naim Güleryüz: “If it rains in Turkey, it also rains for us“. (private interview)

¹This particular characteristic of the community deserves special attention. The epithet “loyal” attached to this community is one of its most known distinctive features, as compared to other two minorities. Therefore understanding its roots is vital in that sense.

For most non-Muslims, the formative years of the Republic were extremely harsh. After the huge 1915 Armenian issue², the Turkish Independence campaign, which was led under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the early 1920s, posed new challenges in relations with the other numerous minority - the Greeks. In tense war years, the Jews, who suffered in the hands of the Greek armies as much as the Muslim Turks, again allied with the Turks (Cagaptay, 2006). They aided the Kemalist forces and fought against the Greeks (ibid.). Accordingly, Turkish nationalism, which formed anti-Greek and anti-Armenian sentiments through its struggles with Greek and Armenian nationalisms, nurtured a neutral, if not positive, attitude towards the Jews (ibid.). In a way, it can be said that Jews are the only minority that has never betrayed Turkey (Bali, private interview). As a consequence, in comparison to other non-Muslims, they were always relatively safe. So, for example, it is said that during numerous attacks on Armenians in Istanbul in anti-minority outbursts in the 1950s, not a single Jewish hair was touched and there were instances when Armenians would take refuge in Jewish houses (Weiker, 1992)

However, as Jews grew into prominent businessmen, that created a wave of hostility against them and accordingly in 1920s there was growing anti-Jewish resentment among Turks and Muslims in the commercial centres of Turkey (Cagaptay, 2006). With these new sentiments towards the minorities, a new Turkish republic was born in 1923. It was constructed on three major pillars of reforms - nationalism, secularism and populism. Nationalism was a matter of attitudes, that primary loyalty should be given to the Turkish state and it was defined as opposite of internationalism, and that no ties were to be permitted with any ideologies (socialism, communism, Zionism...) (Weiker, 1992). Secularism involved the disestablishment of religion and Islam ceased to be the state religion in 1928, while according to populism, there was to be equality of all Turkish citizens. As a part of these profound reforms, many changes that affected daily life of all citizens immediately took place.

² This issue refers to the destruction of the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire during and just after World War I. The Republic of Turkey, does not accept the word *genocide* as an accurate description of the events that started in April 1915.

Religious marriages were banned; minorities were not allowed to teach any sort of religious instructions in their schools and they were required to follow curricula drawn up by the state; Rabbis, like Muslim or Christian clerics, were no longer allowed to wear special religious clothing in public except on special occasions and affiliations with foreign bodies were forbidden. But since all of these reforms were introduced in order to strengthen the Republic's secularising programs, which Turkish Jewry strongly supported, they accepted these restrictions for the good of the nation, which can be observed as another sign of their loyalty. The Constitution of the Republic established a secular nation state in which all citizens had equal rights regardless of religion; in return it was expected that all citizens would have primary loyalty to the state rather than to their communities and that, therefore, privileges based on religion as well as communal legal and cultural autonomy would come (Shaw, 1991). Rifat Bali concludes that the behaviour of the ruling elite vis-à-vis non-Muslims was contradictory. On one hand they were repeatedly stating that they would accept the minorities as real "Turks" provided that they sincerely embrace the Turkish ideal, language, and culture, and on the other hand they interpreted the legislation and the concept of non-Muslim in a manner that made it very clear that they considered Turkey as a predominantly Muslim country in which non-Muslim citizens did not have full rights (Bali). This inconsistency created confusion in terms of both identity and citizenship formation, as we shall see later on.

With the politics of "Turkification", the Turks slowly became xenophobic towards all non-Muslim minorities. The victorious nationalist Turkish state was determined to encourage the formation of a national, that is to say, Muslim Turkish, middle class, and its economic policy used every means to this end (Benbassa and Rodrigue, 2000). In this process, local elites played the most significant role as they opened themselves for influences coming from the West. This had as a result sudden and particularly strong Westernisation of the Jewish population, which in most cases meant Frenchification of all aspects of their lives, and to a lesser extent Germanisation. As a result, the work of the Alliance Israelite Universelle, an organisation which was founded in Paris and which represented Western Jewry's urge to reform its coreligionists in the East, became of utmost importance for the lives of most Turkish Jews. Renowned for its defence of the

rights of Jews throughout the world, its main work was in education. The consequences are that French and French culture became referents for the Eastern Sephardim, especially for the middle and upper classes (Benbassa and Rodrigue, 2000). Substantial numbers adopted French as the medium of cultural and intellectual life. Although the existence of French culture within Turkish Jewry has been pushed by the Anglo-Saxon dominance, its influence is still visible.

The beginning of the republic era is seen by some researchers as another opportunity for Jews to display their loyalty that they had already expressed under Ottoman rulers. For example, as a show of patriotism to an independent Turkey, the Jews refused to participate in the Sultan-sponsored and Allied Powers-encouraged legislative election of 1920. In Izmir, one of the first reactions by any group against the Greek occupation in 1920 was a demonstration by the Jews (Weiker, 1992). This is all to say that the Jews showed welcoming signs to the proclamation of the republic in 1923.

The Treaty of Peace signed at Lausanne in 1923, marked the final end of World War I and established the present borders of Turkey. For the minorities it was significant in that it guaranteed the legal status of the non-Muslim communities as well as the special privileges and foreign protection which they had secured during the late years of the Ottoman Empire. Along with these benefits, the Treaty brought along issues rather unknown until that time. The special protections and privileges for minorities written into the Treaty, primarily because of the entreaties of Armenian and Greek nationalist delegations, created Muslim hostility not only against them but also against Turkey's Jews as well, something which had not existed before (Shaw, 1991). However, three years later the Jewish community, reasoning that it was in their best interests to signal that they intended to accept the Republic's offer to be full Turkish citizens, voluntarily renounced minority status and affirmed the Jews' desire to live as full Turkish citizens.

The Armenian and Greek communities soon made similar declarations, though with considerably greater reluctance because of their different wartime experiences and national expectations (Shaw, 1991). Non-Muslims were now subjected to the same laws and regulations as were all other Turkish citizens.

As we can see, all minorities, without exception, were struck by these new historical developments. With the new republic, new rules and regulations were being rapidly introduced and some of them proved to be discriminatory and extremely harsh. Although in the constitution which was adopted soon after the creation of the new republic, non-Muslims were raised to the status of citizens, rights accorded to the minorities were never fully implemented in practice. But as long as they remained none too visible or vocal within Turkish society, the minorities could somehow maintain the illusion of equal rights and treatment before the law (Bali). One of the most infamous examples in those years was a campaign launched in the 1930s which aimed against those who spoke foreign languages in public. Rifat Bali argues that its main target was actually the country's Jewish community. The campaign's slogan was "Citizen, speak Turkish". As part of this campaign, posters were hung in the cities, bulletins were distributed on the streets, and public declarations were made advocating that Turkish must be spoken by all Turkish citizens regardless of their backgrounds. But in accordance with the already mentioned loyalty policy, some Jews also argued for turkification of the Jews in this case. A recurrent theme in these polemics consisted of reminding the Jews that they ranked as guests and that it was therefore incumbent on them to demonstrate their gratitude to the Turks by turkifying themselves as rapidly as possible. Some Jews reacted by making positive public statements for example when they announced a decision to speak only Turkish and that they were setting up a committee to spread the use of Turkish among Jews (Weiker, 1992). A number of Jewish associations were established to encourage the spread of Turkish language and culture in the community (ibid.).

Another troubling reform undertaking in those early republic years was nationalisation of education. Within a few years of their opening, Alliance schools were forbidden and official syllabuses were imposed in all schools. A few years later, all Turkish citizens were forbidden to attend foreign primary school. In the 1950s, Jewish religious education had disappeared from the institutionalised educational system and only just managed to survive outside the curriculum on a voluntary basis. In 1923-4, all non-Muslim state officials were dismissed from their posts. Until 1945 Jewish conscripts could not reach officer rank. The majority of Jews remained concentrated in trade.

To conclude, it can be said that despite their attempts of expressing loyalty to the new republic, the Jews' social integration was limited by the state's exclusivist nationalism (Benbassa and Rodrigue, 2000). It became difficult for them to integrate and they remained apart, anxious to keep a low profile. Keeping a low profile often means being neutral in the political scene. By being neutral it means they never declared they are for this or that party, that they are good citizens at the service of the state. (Bali, private interview). They internalised the label "guests" given to them during the first two decades of the Republic (Benbassa and Rodrigue, 2000). This trend will continue for many years until this very day, and is still one of the commonest marks attached to this minority.

Turkey during the Second World War

Turkey did not enter the Second World War, and as a result the Jews of Turkey did not face the same dangers as their coreligionists elsewhere. Moreover, in the 1930s, Turkey developed a policy of admitting well-qualified Jewish refugees from Central Europe. On the whole, it is a commonly accepted belief that the Jews of Turkey are one of the few "fortunate" Jewish communities in that, historically, there has been little anti-Semitism in Turkey, an exception to the commonality, universality, and historicism of the phenomenon (Toktaş). Turkish Jews have never been the victims of pogroms and were not part of the Holocaust, as were their counterparts in most of Europe (ibid.). Open anti-Semitism hardly existed but there was in some quarters of Istanbul great indignation against Jewish community (Weiker, 1992). The peaceful existence of Turkey's Jewish community is a basic theme in the frequent public declarations by the Chief Rabbinate in Istanbul. In a similar vein, the secular representatives, the leaders of the community, repeatedly underline the harmonious coexistence of different religions and cultures in Turkey, maintaining that the status of Turkish Jewry is a presentation of cultural mosaic and proof of the tolerant environment.

However, the war years brought what can once again be characterised as polarised trends in the treatment of the Jewish minority. As it is often the case, this war proved to be a favourable ground for different kind of anti-Semitism and xenophobia. The government developed some discriminatory policies towards non-Muslims, while the worst example was the introduction of the Capital tax introduced in 1942 and repealed in 1944. Some describe this period as the lowest point in Turkish-Jewish relations in the Republic. A tax of 5% was levied on landowners, while merchants and companies were obliged to pay between 50 and 75% of their net earnings (Weiker, 1992). On average, per capita, Muslims were taxed 5% of their annual income, Greeks 156%, Jews 179% , and Armenians 232%. In order to pay the tax, most non-Muslims were forced to sell off their property (Toktaş). It is estimated that 98 percent of the real estate owned by non-Muslims was either bought by individuals, mostly Muslim, or made property of the state (ibid.). Those unable to pay their taxes were sent to work camps. This tax in many respects was the culmination of the aims of Kemalist Turkey to create a national Turkish-Muslim bourgeoisie by ending the supposed non-Muslim domination of the economy (Benbassa and Rodrigue, 2000.). Anti-Semitism was subsumed under generalised xenophobia. The first decades saw heated press polemics and discrimination on many fronts. The Jews no longer trusted the Turks. As a result of vicissitude of the war and its repercussions on the Jews, a massive wave of emigration to Israel took place. Bali directly connects the principle of keeping a low profile to the Capital tax affairs. He explains it in the following words: “The ostentatious lifestyle led by many wealthy members of Turkey’s non-Muslim population, who tended to frequent Istanbul’s more luxurious restaurants, cafes and entertainment venues in the 1940s, as well as own or rent summer homes out in the Prince’s Islands, gave rise to much resentment and envy on the part of the poorer majority. This simmering resentment eventually made itself heard at the state level, and at a time of great national hardship, this enmity became expressed in the Capital Tax and its discriminatory imposition, something which led to the large-scale appropriation of minority - and particularly Jewish – wealth” .

Today there is a general discrepancy on the questions of the presence of anti-Semitism in public space. It ranges from denial and mild accusations to very strong statements about

its existence in many spheres of life. However, open anti-Semitism is today mostly attributed to radical Islamist and nationalist identity rhetoric. Traditionally, the nationalist and Islamic extreme right in Turkey had always been anti-Semitic, targeting not only Jews but also converts and from time to time Freemasons, but with the creation of Israel, the themes which were frequently utilized increased in variety (Toktaş). In comparison to Europe for example, Turkey is less anti-Semitic in action, but in rhetoric it is more or less the same (Bali, private interview). Anti-Semitic acts are mostly connected to Israeli politics and are impacted by Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. Events in Israel directly reflect on the range and tone of anti-Semitic acts. While there is no official anti-Semitism in Turkey in any area, the governments have never had an agenda on it and politics in Turkey could be said to have been ignorant with respect to combating anti-Semitism. (Toktaş). The same kind of disagreement is visible in relation to several bombings that took place over the last decades and that were not for the most part characterized as purely anti-Semitic. In 1984 bombing of the Neve Shalom Synagogue in Istanbul, which left a death toll of 23, was blamed on foreign elements and anger over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the bomber was an Arab. Two more synagogues were bombed in November 2003 for which Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility. Together with the synagogues, a branch of a British bank and the UK embassy were also bombed in this attack. A total of sixty-one people died and over 700 were injured as a result of these bombings.

Creation of the state of Israel

After the war, huge numbers of Jews, especially those from lower classes, decided to leave for Israel. Israel represented a new alternative for those who were not well off in Turkey or who could not recover from the consequences of new state laws and circumstances. Despite showing open loyalty and accepting turkification, their Jewish consciousness had remained strong and many of them opted for leaving the country for good. The emigration to Israel in 1948 completed the demise of almost all the Jewish communities outside the cities of Istanbul and Izmir.

Describing the circumstances in which emigration took place, Mina Rozen writes: “The Turkish aliyah in the early years of the state was not as sweeping as that of Bulgaria or Yugoslavia. That’s why many of Turkey’s Jews had something to lose. After the danger had passed, they hoped that the balance between themselves and the Turks would return to its “Ottoman” status, which they were ready to accept – a tranquil existence and the opportunity to practice their culture and religion and take care of their families, without aspiring to positions of authority. Most of the immigrants during these years came from the outlying communities, where their economic status had been something they were more than willing to give up. Particularly hard-pressed were the Jewish communities in the southern and south-eastern districts of Anatolia, which were considered, culturally speaking, more a part of Syrian or Iraqi Jewry than of the Aegean Sea community. Turkey’s strong sense of insult in the face of the desire of half its Jewish population to leave for another land, even if it was their own. True, the Jews were perceived as foreigners who did not belong, but the state of being foreign carries with it in Turkish culture not only negative connotations but also positive ones as well. As long as the stranger knows his place, his presence is an honour to his Turkish host, and proof of the latter’s generosity and nobility of spirit. The Jews certainly knew their place and the Turks saw themselves as gracious and magnanimous hosts. The fact that at least half of their guests were ready to decline their hospitality meant that it was not generous enough or esteemed enough in their eyes. In Turkish terms, this was the gravest of insults” (Rozen, 2005).

Benbassa and Rodrigue, on the other hand, notice that Turkey was the only country in the Eastern Sepharadi culture area where the phenomenon of mass departure to Israel can be observed without the factors of push which normally provoke such emigration. (Benbassa and Rodrigue, 2000) They explain this with an interesting observation, maybe not unique, but definitely very specific to Turkish Jewry until this very day. Namely, a mixture of religiosity and areligiosity was perceived, with knowledge neither of Jewish history nor of the traditional religious literature (Benbassa and Rodrigue, 2000). An overall trend of religious indifference was omnipresent. The Jews were Jews in Turkey because they were perceived as such; that was enough to perpetuate and reinforce their Jewish identity. Surprisingly enough, when it comes to expressions of identity, my field research will bring out very similar conclusions about the present state among Turkish Jews.

Nevertheless, after the creation of Israel, that was a big, and at the same time, the last notable wave of emigration to Israel. It is estimated that from 1948 to 1956, approximately 37,000 Jews emigrated from Turkey to Israel. (Elazar, 1983.)

Turkey and Israel

In 1949 Turkey became the first country with a Muslim majority to formally recognize the State of Israel. Since then, both countries have experienced strong military, strategic and diplomatic cooperation. Over the years there have been numerous examples of mutual recognition. For example, in 1997 the Turkish Minister of Defence, Turhan Tayan, publicly acknowledged that the Turks had had no problems with Israel and the Jewish nation throughout their history, something that he would not and could not honestly say about the Arabs (Jung and Piccoli). Being on an official visit to Israel, Tayan thus referred to Turkey's decision to embark on an alignment with Israel, which officially began with a military co-operation agreement in 1996. Before that, the former Israeli President, Ezer Weizman, declared upon his arrival in the Turkish Republic in 1994 that "Israel will never forget that the Jews were accepted by the Ottoman Empire

when they were expelled from various European countries some 500 years ago. Two years earlier, various groups in Turkey, Israel and the United States celebrated the Ottoman past on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Sultan Beyazid's decision to welcome to his domains the Jews expelled from the Iberian peninsula.

These examples undoubtedly show once again how much Turkey differs, not only in religious affairs, but also in some of its political activities, from its neighbouring countries and the worldwide predominant picture about this whole region. Partnership with Israel certainly defines further attitudes of the state towards the Jewish minority, although good relations between the two countries have not influenced common prejudices still prevalent among general population in Turkey.

Defining the position of Jewish minority vis-à-vis other minorities - the Armenian question

Although the Armenians, the Greeks, and the Jews are categorized as recognized minorities, there are significant historical differences between them that need to be taken into account. In order to further explain the unique and complex position of the Jewish minority in Turkey, which, as we shall see later, directly reflects on personal experiences and individual expressions of identity, a connection to one specific issue should be made shortly. Just as understanding of the position of the Jewish minority is not possible without comprehending the overall geopolitical and historical context, and so its full placement within the overall framework is not valid without referring to an ever controversial issue from the Turkish history – the one concerning the Armenian question. Let us, therefore, give main coordinates in placing the two minorities in contemporary context.

As we have explained in the previous chapters, all researchers and historians agree that Jews in Turkey traditionally had been the least politicized among the three minority

groups. They were smaller in number in comparison to Armenians and Greeks and they had better relations with the Turkish state. The Turkish state had been in a longstanding struggle with the various national/territorial claims of the Armenians and the Greeks (Toktaş). Unlike the Greeks and the Armenians, with respect to the Jews, there had been no similar kind of unrest as they were never involved in any separatist activities, which as a consequence lead to stable relations between the Jewish community and Turkish state. This created new circumstances, which opened the door to a new phase in overall good relations between the Turkish state and the Jews. Namely, at the end of 1980s, the Turkish state started using the “Jewish card”, as Laurent Mallet calls it, in trying to defend its interests in the West. Under the term “interests”, he defines them as non-recognition of the Armenian genocide, and since 1991, non-creation of the Kurdish state in the north of Iraq. This “card” has been used mostly to somewhat balance Turkey’s negative image in the West, with regards to the treatment of minorities. Thus, Jewish community has taken on a new role, that of an advocate for the Turkish state, which has been continuing ever since. This peculiar role puts Jewish minority into a very delicate situation, where they cannot advertise to have any problems in the state, as there is no room for any maneuver or to act otherwise (Bali, private interview).

Overview of elements which influenced the formation of Jewish identity

To sum up, these are the most significant elements that influenced and shaped expressions and formations of Jewish identity in Turkey to a large extent. Without them, understanding contemporary Turkish Jewish identity is virtually impossible. They offer clear answers to some somewhat confusing points which we shall come across while exploring individual experiences of identity.

- Secular nature of the new republic and all the actions pertaining to it undertaken
- Expressions of loyalty and neutrality of the Jewish community, with the stress on the comparison with different approaches of other minorities

- Renouncement of the special status provisioned by the Lausanne Treaty in 1923
- Neutral position of Turkey in World War II and the relatively safe existence of Turkish Jews during the Holocaust years
- Campaigns and state provisions targeting non-Muslims (“Citizen, speak Turkish” and Capital tax)
- Foreign influences on education
- Anti-Semitic acts
- Formation of the state of Israel
- Armenian genocide question

4.2. Identity formation among Turkish citizens

Concerning the above mentioned particularities of multifaceted historical events and present Turkish actuality, it can be concluded that the rich complexities of Turkish reality influenced general identity formation in a specific way. It is also clearly noticeable that the Jewish history in Turkey is closely linked to the history of the other non-Muslim groups. Today the three officially recognized minorities in Turkey are the Armenians, the Greeks, and the Jews. These groups are recognized only as religious minorities and not as ethnic. Other minority groups – including, the Kurds, the Alevis, the Laz, the Circassians, and the Roma – have been granted no formal recognition and are thereby deprived of protection of their rights as communities. According to the first republican census from 1927, there were 110,000 Greeks, 77,000 Armenians, and 82,000 Jews, altogether composing 2 percent out of a population of 13.5 million (Toktaş). Today, despite the lack of census data on numbers of non-Muslims, it is estimated that out of a total population of 70 million in Turkey in 2000, there are only around 1,000 Greeks, 50,000–60,000 Armenians, and around 20,000 Jews (Bali, private interview). While Turkey has no laws in place specifically addressing minority issues, it has an abundance of laws that do not directly deal with minorities but have been used against individuals who have sought to promote their right, or even to address the existence of minorities (IHF Report, 2006).

Many researchers and historians agree that the republican regime in Turkey was not in reality welcoming towards pluralism of identity which was characteristic of the cosmopolitan Ottoman Empire. It is evident from the previous historical examples that the enormous diversity and complexity of the population in the republican Turkey was considered to be unfavourable to the achievement of national unity. This dates back from the Ottoman times when the non-Muslim millets received different treatment in the affairs of public employment, military obligation, judicial proceedings taxation, and those relating to everyday circumstances. Only the Tanzimat era gradually renounced these inequitable practices. The new republican government, on the other hand, pushed through the idea of cultural homogenisation. It aimed to transform Turkish national identity through uniform incorporation, connecting the concept of citizenship with that of social-cultural-linguistic assimilation (Keyman and İçduygu eds., 2005). Kemalist ideology created an image of a unitary and unified people, the People-as-One, that figured in the project to create a new life in Turkey. There was no place for ethnic or religious differences in this project, or for social and political differences. Non-Muslim minorities were perceived by the general society as “alien elements” within the society who were not to be trusted and whose loyalties were constantly questioned. The case was the same for all groups, even though, as we have seen, Jewish minority, unlike the other two minorities, expressed continuous support for the state. The separatist history of Greeks and Armenians before and during the War of Independence came to dominate the general perception towards all non-Muslim groups and they were simply put into the same category of non-Muslims.

Also, as already mentioned, Islam has always played an important role in Turkish culture and formation of identity. The nation state started processes of Turkification and by this definition, Turk was often equated with Muslim, and so the non-Muslim minorities were not in this way included in the invented definition of “Turk.” Thus the concept of the name “Turk” was limited to the cultural community of Turkish-Muslim peoples. In this context, Muslim implies no religiosity, and possibly not even belief, but the possession of what we may call “Islamic credentials” (Tapper, 1991). That is, if a person bears a name

that sounds Turkish or Islamic, if his parents are thought to be Muslims, and if he does not profess belief in another religion, then he is treated as a Muslim (ibid.). An agnostic or an atheist may qualify as a “Muslim” if he is of an “Islamic” background. Clearly, then, we are dealing with a cultural tradition not a belief system, a phenomenon found in other countries as Israel and Greece (ibid.) As a consequence, for non-Muslims it was not easy to be a part of the Turkish nation-building. Even more so, it was demanded of them not to participate in the public with their identities. Citizens could be part of the public only if they left their particular identities in the private realm (Baban in Keyman and İçduygu eds, 2005.). This strictly crafted and controlled public sphere, which ensured the unity of the people and the state, not only operated as a strictly communitarian project, but it was also based on the excusion of those others whose values and aspirations were not in harmony with the general will of the modern project (ibid.). However, recently ethnic and religious diversity have become increasingly recognised and appreciated in Turkish cultural identity. Turks are more and more conscious of the demographic heterogeneity and complexity which evolved out of the Ottoman empire. With the EU-Turkey relations, Turkish governments became more prone to increasing international pressure on those issues of minority protection (Soner in Keyman and İçduygu eds., 2005.). Generally speaking, the reports have insisted on the extension of official recognition of the 3 non-Muslim communities (Armenians, Greeks and Jews) to the Kurdish, Alevi and Assyrian groups. Furthermore, it has been recommended that Turkish governments facilitate the cultural and political expression of minority differences whether Muslim or non-Muslim. The republican state has undertaken several steps to guarantee the equal status of non-Muslim citizens. Over the last decade there have been repeated examples of expressions of equal position of non-Muslim citizens in the eyes of the authorities.

5. Approach to the Jewish Community in Turkey: Methodology of research

The present study researches into how identities are constructed and expressed in a particular social context. It seeks to explore how participants create their identities and how they experience and articulate the meanings of their identities in their own terms. The purpose is to understand the world of the participants, to relate it to particular sociocultural relations, and to interpret it within the given social context. For this reason, but also for the reasons of complexity and sensitivity of the issues involved, the present study was conducted using qualitative research method. Thereby, one major technique was used – in-depth individual interviews organised in a semi-structured format. This method as an informal and open-ended encounter between the researcher and the interviewee allowed the researcher to put the focus within the individual, while at the same time, encouraged the interviewee to freely expound on the given topic.

As the title of this paper suggests, this paper is the results of empirical research on Turkey's Jews. Given the fact that most of the Jewish population, as well as the vast majority of the community's institutions, synagogues, and museums are located in Istanbul, this city was chosen as the principle research site. The research consisted of 31 in-depth interviews conducted with a sample group composed of ordinary members of the Jewish community. Prior to this central part of the field research, vast library research was used in order to obtain all the necessary factual historical and geo-political information. During the course of my entire research, I was a guest student and researcher at the Department for Cultural Studies at Istanbul Bilgi University, whose extensive library records I used.

Individual semi-structured interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews proved to be most valuable source of data collection for this study. Pre-planned questions enabled access to participants' insights and meanings of identities giving them space to expand on the predetermined questions that only served as a topic guide. The idea of these interviews was not to ask a set of fixed questions, but questions served more as an incitement to the participants to talk in their own terms, providing closer looks into ways in which they connect their personal narratives with the overall sociocultural processes.

The research itself was done in Istanbul between January and August 2007 and between January and May 2008. The participants were approached either via telephone or in person. In recruiting participants, each was given a brief explanation of the research, and asked if they would be interested in taking part. If interest was shown, a time and place for the interview was set. A number of different locations were used, e.g. café bars, restaurant, offices or the participants' home. At all times participants were invited to express their viewpoints in a relatively intimate and relaxed atmosphere. Before starting, the interviewee was briefly introduced to the topic I was interested in. Then the following points were stressed to the participant: the interview is strictly anonymous and the given information will remain strictly confidential, the participant should try to be as honest as possible; the participant can feel free to discontinue his or her participation in the study or stop the interview at any stage. This happened on several occasions, while discussing some particularly sensitive societal issues. Therefore, these parts of the interviews, if recorded, were not used, or in most cases, the interview was stopped and the sensitive topic was not recorded at all. Besides the questions that investigated the individual characteristics of the respondents such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, level of education, place of birth and citizenship, there were also central questions which were prepared beforehand that aimed at understanding how the respondents perceived and experienced their membership of a non-Muslim minority group in a Muslim majority society. In addition to the predesigned questionnaire, many ad-hoc supplementary questions, prompts and suggestions were addressed to the respondents which helped to

clarify their ideas, values, and perceptions. These questions were related to the specific and personal histories and positions of the respondents. The duration of the interviews varied, the shortest taking 25 minutes and longest taking two hours and 45 minutes, with a total average of 90 minutes. Most of the interviews were conducted in English, with 3 of them being done in Turkish. All of the interviews were face-to-face and the presence of third parties in the interviews was eliminated, except from the interviews which were conducted in Turkish with the help of an interpreter. All interviews were recorded and later on transferred to the computer and finally transcribed in full by the researcher herself. After all the interviews had been transcribed, analysis took place using methods of qualitative research analysis. Therefore, rather than the quantification of the ideas mentioned in the interviews, the focus was on the diversity as well as the articulation of the opinions. Each question was analysed separately. The first step involved reading carefully each transcript and identifying the emerging themes and sub-themes (“coding”). In the next stage, shared themes across the interviews were detected, first within each generation, and then across all generations. During this stage, I was involved in a form of analytic thinking, searching for patterns and connections, and I reflected on how categories related to each other and to the research questions. The quotations were selected on the basis of richness and the extent to which they enlighten the aspects of the study.

Apart from the mentioned 31 interviews, additional interviews were conducted with renown researchers and professors, as well as with people who are actively involved in the management of institutions of the Jewish community in Istanbul. Interviews were conducted with the following persons:

1. Rifat Bali, Turkish author and editor renowned for his researches on the Turkish Jewish question (2 interviews, May and July 2007)
2. Lina Filiba, executive vice president of the Jewish Community of Turkey (June 2007)
3. Karen Gerson Şarhon, Coordinator of Ottoman-Turkish Sephardic Culture Research Center (May 2007)

4. Naim Güteryüz, director of Quincentennial Foundation Museum of Turkish Jews (June 2007)
5. Soli Ozel, professor at Bilgi University's Department of International Relations (June 2007)
6. Arus Yumul, Director of Sociology Department, Istanbul Bilgi University (July 2007)
7. Yigal Schleifer, American reporter living in Istanbul (July 2007)

Being an outsider

My endeavours to emerge into and understand a culture and community rather unfamiliar to me until the beginning of the research, were at all stages faced with challenges. Comprehending overall historic, and even more so, present circumstances in which the Jewish community strives for existence, is for no foreigner easy. Rising complexities and polarisations within the country itself, made it even harder to approach the topic of my research with a clear understanding.

Accessing and selecting participants was not an easy job itself. It took me a long time to find the first possible interviewees. As I got to know more and more people in the city and within the community, selecting participants became easier with time. Language proved to me another obstacle, especially in interviewing older generation, who mostly speak Turkish, Ladino and/or French. This limited the choice of respondents and determined a lower number of members of the older generation encompassed in the research. The interviewees who responded in English were all fluent in English and had no difficulties in expressing their ideas and opinions in a foreign language. Overall, full 8 months were spent in their full intensity until I was able to conduct all the desired interviews. Additional time was spent in reading all the necessary written materials in the form of books, articles and academic theses that enabled me to obtain the comprehension of such a complex and demanding topic. Often, talking to friends and people who possess non-academic knowledge about the issues covered in this research, were of special help.

Their insights and personal experiences enabled me to receive a fuller picture of the country that I was residing in during my research.

Selecting the participants

All participants in the study are members of the Jewish Community of Istanbul. They were chosen on the basis of diversity within the given social milieu. The main variables in selecting were age and gender, but also involvement in the community activities. Different generations ensured that data represented a wide range of views. Moreover, the age range corresponded with different historical periods and political changes in relation to the research questions. The sample group selected from Turkey's Jewish population presented a diverse picture. In total, 31 in-depth individual interviews were conducted, of which 7 were interviews with participants from the older generation (aged 60+), 8 with the middle generation (aged 35-60), and 14 from younger generation (18 – 35). The youngest participant was 18 and the oldest 84. Out of them, 19 were female and 12 were male. For the interview questions, please refer to the Appendix. Most of the respondents of the middle and older generation were married, all of them to Jewish spouses. All of the respondents were born in Turkey and had Turkish citizenship. With the exception of two interviewees who were born in Izmir and Edirne, the rest were all born in Istanbul. All 31 respondents were Sephardic Jews. In terms of employment status, of the 31 respondents, 16 were employed at the time of the interviews (3 with part-time jobs), mainly in white-collar jobs or self-employed, 8 were students and 7 were retired. The education level of the 31 respondents was very high. One of the respondents finished elementary school, 4 were high school graduates, 14 had university diplomas, 3 were holders of master diplomas, one was a holder of PhD diploma and one respondent at the end of her PhD studies.

6. Interpretation of results and implications

Interpretation of in-depth interviews is always complex and demanding. The task becomes even more challenging if the research is done by an outsider and the interviews are conducted in a language other than interviewees' mother tongue. The fact that this research was conducted in a country that is fighting its numerous ideopolitical battles on many fronts, makes the understanding of this particular topic even harder. Having all this in mind, it must be noted that the multifaceted observations and complex facts that emerge from this study do not allow simple descriptions and presentations of results in any way. Any attempt at classification fails to represent the complexity and richness of the data. The results in this section are represented on the basis of the extent to which they illuminate aspects of the research questions.

6.1. Domains of identity formation, maintenance and transmission

Family and Community – environment which initiates and forms Jewish identity

Jewish identity in the diaspora is generally expressed both within the family and inside the community. Likewise, these two domains have been the most significant frameworks for the formation and preservation of Jewish identity in Turkey. They remain central units for identity construction. In reality, these domains need not be mutually exclusive, but are often complementary.

Growing up – family as a foundation for the creation of Jewish identity

At the very beginning of the interview, I wanted all participants to recall how they became conscious of being Jewish. This question enabled them to express their very first experiences of Jewish life in a historical perspective. As all participants in the study come from families

where both parents and grandparents were Jewish, it came as a natural conclusion that the family was indeed a fundamental unit for all generations alike, where the first encounter with Jewishness was experienced. It was within the family that the participants became conscious of their Jewish identity:

- Both my parents are Jewish, most of my parent's friends were Jewish, so I grew up in a Jewish environment. We always knew we were Jews, my father always told us we were different – Male, 38, employed, married

In preserving the importance and cohesion of the family as such, Friday night dinners, which are originally held so as to celebrate the beginning of the holiest day – Shabbat¹ – play essential role.

- We had Shabbat dinners every Friday. Shabbat dinners were only family reunion. My family is a strong family believer, they think that family should be together. – Male, 31, employed, single

In many families, Shabbat dinners are seen as an occasion for family gatherings. They are losing their religious purpose, but serve, in many cases, as the only connection to a strong tradition. In this way, family remains the most important practicable unit and a source of initial education. First knowledge of customs and traditions is received within the family. Therefore, participants of all generations expressed awareness of the significance the Jewish family has as a unit of transmission and identity formation. All of them find extremely important having fundamental elements of Jewishness in their own homes.

¹ Shabbat is the weekly day of rest in Judaism, symbolizing the seventh day in Genesis, after the six days of creation. Though it is commonly said to be the Saturday of each week, it is observed from sundown on Friday until the appearance of three stars in the sky on Saturday night.

- I'm lucky because I learnt all traditions at home, we do Shabbat, I mean I don't observe it, but it means a lot because we get together My family cares about tradition.- Female, 24, student, single

Such and similar answers could be heard in all except one interview. Getting together on Friday nights to commemorate the beginning of Shabbat, even in strictly atheist and non-observant families, still survives as a custom in most families. Even in the cases where all tradition is lost for any reason whatsoever, Friday night family reunions still remain important.

- We don't do Shabbat dinners anymore because of the city, we all live in different parts, it's very difficult to make people come to your place, its too far where I live. Most of my family is in Israel, and when I'm there, yes, we do have Shabbat dinners. – Female, 50, employed, married

To elderly participants who experienced life in predominantly Jewish neighbourhoods, surrounded only with Jews during their childhood, Jewishness came as an inseparable and indistinguishable element of their overall personal identity. Being Jewish for them was “natural”. First encounters with the outer world would start in school years. This was the time when they realised they were different.

- Being Jewish for me was like having blue eyes, nobody told me why, but I knew it from the first day. At elementary school I found out actually that our tradition was Jewish. In school I saw I had a different name, and the teacher couldn't pronounce my name and it make me flush in class, that's how I found out that I was different. - Female, 52, employed, married

It can be easily concluded that participant of all ages and generations, without any exception, received first Jewish impulses within the family. Despite the fact that the city hosts various Jewish educational and cultural institutions that play an important role in preservation of the identity, it was predominantly within the family that Jewish identity

was formed and transmitted. Although families differed in the extent of their religious observance, basic and most recognizable symbols of Judaism were present within the families of all the participants.

- My grandfather was religious, he prayed at every dinner. My family was religious, we ate kosher, therefore we never ate outside. My father was more pragmatic, but he still kept certain rules, like having Kiddush² every Friday, Rosh Hashanah³, Passover⁴, Purim⁵ – that's what we did. My father used to tell us stories, history. When I was 6, I knew all these stories because he used to tell us a story for every dinner. Or he would ask us questions- Female, 57, employed, married

Family is the place where traditional and family narratives are told and shared through social interactions and communications. It is within the family that an awareness of being Jewish and a sense of belonging to Jewish heritage is established. Family is the core unit for the cultivation and fostering of identity.

² A blessing recited over wine or grape juice to sanctify the Shabbat or a Jewish holiday

³ Jewish New Year

⁴ Jewish holiday

⁵ Jewish holiday

From family to the community

Jewish community with its educational and social facilities, served as the next step for many youngsters in forming and expressing of their Jewishness. Although family remained a significant environment to expose and practice Judaism, at a relatively early age, attention of many participants, especially those pertaining to younger and middle generation, shifted to community activities. Many would, thus, start attending youth clubs situated around the city. Various activities in those clubs became all encompassing, and many members would devote all of their free time and their full attention to the goings-on within their clubs. Unlike before, today there are no predominantly Jewish quarters any more, which makes youth clubs and the Jewish school the only social meeting point for today's generations. While participants who attended Jewish school, never specially mentioned or stressed any significant influence of those school years on the formation of their identity, the years spent in youth clubs seemed equally intense and attractive for the majority of participants who decided to dedicate their teenage years to the community. They offered various means of education and entertainment, and served at the same time as an important place to create life-long social bonds. These kinds of clubs serve as a means of preservation of culture against assimilation and are not peculiar only to Jewish minority.

This interviewee explained how the process of intense involvement usually starts and finishes.

- First I went to a youth club, I spent all my weekends there, I was a madrih⁶, I invested lots of time, every night. Until the age of 19 I spent my life there. Then I stopped, as many people do at that age, because the kids you taught now start teaching other kids and then it's not social any more because people your age are not there any more.

⁶ Youth leader

It was so intense all those years that you become fed up with that and want to see the world out. This is usually what happens with people. So at the age of 20, you already have Jewish friends and you continue meeting them, but not in clubs. It's a very natural process, you cannot avoid that, you cannot keep people at the place just because they are Jewish.— Female, 31, employed, single

For many younger participants community activities, and even more so, social interaction that comes along, played major role in further determining and strengthening of their identity. While traditional and religious practices still remained within the family, the community became another central viable sphere of Jewish activities and identity expression and recognition. It served as a valuable place to exchange ideas and values, or simply just as a meeting point for young people who shared the same history, tradition and views.

- These clubs and Büyükada helped me to be Jew because all my friends were here. I'm here (in the community) every day. For nothing, just to be here. —Female, 23, student, single

However, it is exactly at first encounters with the community that some participants started feeling differences between the ideas and views they brought from home and the general standpoint and outlook that is dominant inside the community. These differences would become more obvious as the years went by.

- I tried to go to clubs but I always felt I was different. Many people there didn't have intellectual curiosity; they were always in material things, just to show the money. We were from a different kind of family.— Male, 38, employed, married

Attending youth clubs proved to be major turning point for many members in the future formation of their identity and perspectives, especially in regards to the dominant official standpoint of the community. The amount and intensity of their “intellectual curiosity” as the previous participant called it, and the willingness or resistance of the official

community to respond to it, determined in most cases future participation and connections with the community . It was exactly at this point that many members decided to drop out. Some of them would be lost to the community forever, while others would try to return and become a part of it.

- At the age of 12 we started getting culture classes. I liked it and asked a lot of questions. When we reached contemporary history and Zionism, I started having arguments, I was having fun and good friends with Muslims, and my tutors in these classes told us that we shouldn't spend a lot of time with Muslims. I was arguing about that. I was the only one who asked for the explanation for that, but I didn't get it and that's why I left. When you ask too many questions, everybody gets bored. I remember my last argument was about getting married. This was at the age of 15 and there I stopped going there. I was asking these questions and they didn't like it. They told us that we definitely shouldn't marry non-Jews because of assimilation and that we should stick together. Then I realised I couldn't be selected to continue as madrich because I was asking wrong questions. – Male, 31, employed, single

- I went to clubs and at 15, 16, I started questioning many things, but they are not open to questions, you have to agree and just march – Female, 31, employed, married

This was the stage where a big division could be noticed. Even those members who dedicated their time to the community activities, and who declared themselves as devoted active members, expressed a certain dosage of criticism to certain unwritten rules that were shaping the lifestyle of the community. Disapprovals of divisions based on different viewpoints, various degrees of religious curiosity, as we shall see later on, or just mere competition between different youth clubs, was the most talked about.

- There are rules, people from one club don't speak to people from the other club, they are like enemies, they don't go to the same places, they always say for the other club-they are the other side. We don't speak to each other. We always think of ourselves as belonging to one club or another. - Female, 23, student, single

As we shall see from examples in the next section, differences in attitudes towards official community sometimes became so wide that they would create a strict dividing line between those who characterized themselves as belonging to the community and those being against its policy. The distinction would go so far that often a pronoun “them” would be used to describe “the other side”.

- I never had any connections with them (the community). It's the way they speak and they treat you. They are very (interviewee puts her nose high), it has always been like that. They have two faces, and I can't be like that I can't go to that society.— Female, 71, retired, married

Many Jews, especially at a young age, make sense of their identities through community membership, participation and activities. The community is often seen as a social and educational niche, where one expresses his or her identity and nourishes it. However, some participants do not feel close to the community for various reasons. They feel either rejected by it, or they decide to stay away for their own personal reasons. If we have in mind that most participants, while talking about their feelings towards Turkey, which we shall discuss in later chapters, also used the pronoun “them”, “their”, to describe Turkey, we can see that a part of Turkish Jewry feels somewhat isolated and secluded, without strict feelings of belonging either to the official community, or being a part of the whole society. However, all of them, without exception, showed deep interest and concern in preserving and maintaining their Jewish identity. This would be done either through community activities, family reunions, individual quests or as a combination of all these.

Jews about Jewish community

Division that separates devoted members of the community and those who either never belonged to it, or decided to drop out at one point, showed clear discord between the views and wishes of a part of members and the official principles and actions undertaken

by the community. The amount of criticism towards the official strategies varies. Some noticed positive changes in the attitude of the whole community and the overall official policy, especially over the last years. These were mostly recognised as the willingness of the community to participate in the dialogue with the wider society and adopt a more open approach towards it. Others remained critical and suspicious of the official actions, to the extent that some would refuse to participate or even be identified with Turkish Jewry.

Out of 31 interviews that were done for the purpose of this study, approximately half were conducted with the members who could be characterized as slightly to very loyal and approvable of the official community policy and activities. In their statements, they stressed the importance of not only educational and social activities undertaken by the communal institutions, but even more so, unity and cohesion of all Jews in a politically relatively unstable Muslim country. The other half slightly to extremely disapproved of actions and attitudes being undertaken by the management and some active members. Some of these participants, belonging to all age groups, showed a certain dosage of disappointment or even, in some cases, resentment and anger. Certain participants stated to have even been rejected by the community. The following examples show clear polarization on the mentioned issues.

These are the words of an actively involved female, who did not show strong attachment or interest in maintaining Jewish tradition within family circle, but who was devoted in her participation in communal activities.

-Before people didn't know so much about who were Jews, how is a Jewish person. Now books are being published about Jews and Jewish life, we are giving correct answers to those who search and learn the truth. We can say that before the community was closed, but now it's opening its doors. – Female, 54, employed, widow

On the other hand, the following words show resentment from a person who tried to “return” to the community after a few years of living outside the country, but who

encountered a certain resistance to the implementation of her ideas and wishes. She not only accuses the community of being closed for others, but also for being closed to its own members who are not in strict line with its policy.

- You always have to prove yourself. I would have to work for example for the synagogue, and then one member will say: "Ah, she has proved to be a good member". There are certain rules. Those people who were always around, they have already filled in certain spots. So if you come after several years: "Hey, here I am, and I have ideas what to do", they will say – "Who are you?" And they don't want you. You haven't been with them and they haven't been with you. I don't understand why the community has decided to close itself. Certain things and attitudes simply haven't involved, I don't know if that's good, maybe we should stay underground and do our own stuff, maybe if you are too loud, they will kill you. – Female, 31, employed, married

The biggest controversy arising from the discussion on community policy was about whether the community is being open enough to the surrounding society, or whether former policy of seclusion should be maintained in the future for the wellbeing and protection of the community as a whole. Different answers could be heard, but on the whole, the majority of participants agreed that the current policy of strict closure to anyone who does not belong to the community should be changed to a certain extent. Host society should be allowed to get in touch with Jews, the urgency of which is more noticeable in the modern era of globalization, when it is becoming difficult and "old-fashioned" to be isolated. However, participants belonging to younger and middle generation noticed positive changes among their generations, explaining this trend as "growing up with the Muslims, unlike our grandfathers".

- My friend had a Muslim boyfriend and he was interested to see. And one day I tried to bring him to the synagogue but they didn't let him. These kind of things maybe should change, but others no. This is the reason why we survived because we were so closed. It was like that from the first days. – Male, 21, student, single

- I spent all my school years lying to my best friends, because I was going to the club every day after school, and all weekends, but at school I had close friends, and I became a professional liar for them, mostly for the security reasons, Muslims are not welcome to the club and no one should know about that. The Jewish community here is a very closed community. I'm not against the community, but there is a part of it that lives in a jar, it's like they live in another world among themselves, you cannot get in or out of there, it would be impossible for a non Jew.. -Female, 31, employed, single

The question of low-profile, meaning being silent and invisible in the public space, which is one of the most distinguished characteristics of this minority in Turkey, was one of the most prominent ones in the conducted interviews. There is an overall disagreement and confusion about this issue among participants themselves. Some see it as a wise centuries-long decision that has secured peace and prosperity to this minority. Others regard it as an expression of fear that should be changed, if not entirely, then to a certain degree. They find it unacceptable to continue being silent in the face of all domestic and global events.

- Keeping a low profile used to get on my nerves. I used to find it coward. I believe that things should be put on table and discussed. But in order to preserve the peace of the community's life, it might be a wise decision to keep the low profile so I'm not against it anymore. But still I would like to hear more opposition whenever a negative thing happens. I would like to see a press release from our community protesting some attitude from the government, they never do it. They are very loyal to the state.... The community should keep low profile here if they want to stay together in Turkey. If they have a high profile there will be anti - Semitic movements more than in France and in France they have government that is protecting them and the whole world is watching France. Here we would have lesser chance of survival – Male, 31, employed, single

- They shouldn't continue with low profile. They should react. They are scared.- Male, 30, employed, single

Still, silence is the wisest policy in an unstable country, many would agree. It has, along with other factors, contributed to good relations with the Turkish state and this practice should not be changed. It was exactly the silent and invisible mode that has provided for the favourable position which the Jewish minority enjoys, especially vis-à-vis other minorities.

- We are on good terms and we always take precautions to do everything they ask. And it's give and take. Whatever we ask they do. It's always been like that. We are very loyal. We shall not speak up in public. Low profile is our motto and it should stay like that. This is a democracy that's emerging, this is not a real democracy, you cannot have democracy in 70 years. So while we still don't have real democracy, I don't think it's good to raise a flag. We are in no trouble and keeping a low profile has always given us many advantages. We have everything, why should we speak against them, they don't do anything against us. There is no reason.. –Female, 57, employed, married

At the same time, the official policy of non-reaction and silence would be portrayed by some as “cowardly” and not transparent enough. A certain air of confusion and shame was felt when speaking about traditional Jewish silence in the public sphere. Often, participants would refer to other minorities whose practice, which arises from their diverse historical situation, is different.

- Turkey's biggest enemy is Greece; there is a Greek minority here. They have schools, big organizations, and they are not hidden, there is a big school in Beyoğlu, in Karaköy, in Fener⁷. But we are not an enemy, we know that and Turkey knows that, so why are we hiding? Do we have to hide ourselves? Turkish people don't have problems with us. Maybe we have a complex because we live in a Muslim country. – Male, 32, employed, married

⁷Districts of Istanbul, once heavily populated by non-Muslims

- *They are too closed for many things. Everything is so hidden.....I think the problem is they never did the good job of saying – Hey, I helped you through independence war, hey my money helped you buy the weapons, hey I was here before you were here, while you were in middle Asia, I was here in Istanbul helping the Ottoman state. They never did a good job explaining – Hey I'm your equal.* – Female, 31, employed, married

In many interviews, the example of the prominent Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, famous for his call to dialogue between Armenians and Turkish, was mentioned. Hrant Dink was assassinated in Istanbul a few months before the interviews took place. After his assassination, thousands of people gathered on the streets of Istanbul wearing banners saying “We are all Hrant Dink”, and “We are all Armenians”. Some, especially young participants, expressed a certain dosage of disappointment because Jews do not have such advocates in the society, ascribing it not only to traditional silent mode of Jewish behavior, but also to general fear. Middle-aged and older participants would express a more careful approach to this issue, recognizing differences in historical backgrounds of various minorities in Turkey leading to their different position in the present political scene.

- *When Hrant Dink was killed everyone went out to the streets, but after those bombings nobody walked. We were all hiding in our houses, I don't like this idea. We are here since the Ottoman Empire, why aren't we walking. If we are scared and if they see that we are scared, it will be even worse. Christians are different from us. But we hide in our houses.*
– Female, 20, student, single

- *When Hrant Dink was killed so many people walked in the streets saying “We are all Hrant Dink”. I'm not sure if it would be the case for Jews, because the Armenian genocide concept is different.* – Male, 18, student, single

Jews about Jews – “us” and “them”

Riva Kastoryano noted that in the language of the Jews of Turkey, “the term community has taken on an institutional meaning and refers to the Chief Rabbinate, the central body which represents the interests of the collectivity” (Kastoryano, 1992). However, in these interviews, for many participants, “the community” denoted not only the institution, but they also connected the term to all “loyal” or active members of the community. On the basis of these observations, the division between “us” and “them” was created.

It is exactly at this point that an outsider faces the biggest challenges in understanding the life of the Jewish community and Jews in Istanbul. Different interests and lifestyles determined in many cases that some participants felt they did not share the same mindset of the majority of the Jewish population. As a consequence, they did not want to be identified with them, and regarded themselves as individuals, equally, or even more keen on preserving their Jewish identity. “Other” Jews were often characterized as “materialistic”, “shallow”, “without culture”, or even “rude” They were even accused of not cultivating Jewish tradition in the right way.

- Money and status are very important. It's important where we live and where we go out, where you work, to have a good social life. For example, they have bar/bat mitzvah⁸ just for inviting friends, so that they can talk about it. It doesn't really matter if you are rich, the lifestyle is always important. Although they say they keep tradition, they keep it to have status. They don't think about what they do, appearance is more important.–

Female, 24, student, single

Some could not even identify with the Community or Turkish Jewry on the whole, regarding themselves as individuals nourishing their Jewish identity in their own way.

⁸ The coming of age of a Jewish boy or girl. According to Jewish law, when Jewish children reach the age of majority (thirteen years for boys and twelve for girls) they become responsible for their actions, and become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

“They” had a “group mentality” that did not pose enough space or opportunities for certain individuals to identify with, or even fit in. *I don't like to be stereotyped with all Jews*, said one female participant. Interesting enough, many were unanimous in describing “them”.

- *I'm against the mentality of our community, how we show off, how we raise our kids, how we try to show we do the best, but actually we don't know what we are doing. We are not conscious enough of what being Jewish means. You are born to a Jewish family, you are somehow Jew because of these consequences, you are born into money and you can be spoilt for that and you can have whatever you want in this life and this gives you opportunity to underestimate other people who are not Jewish..... That's why I dropped out of the community.... You don't have any cultural life here, it's sad! It's only going to cafes, drinking, and that's why I don't belong there. I cannot speak to anyone, anyone!*—
Female, 27, student, single

-*They speak about fashion, women, and I don't speak, I listen only. I'm bored. They never go to the theatre, cinema, they go to comedies for example, they don't read, so I'm bored. They are interested in fashion, houses, servants...it's not worth for me to speak about that. They are not intellectual at all, of course we have some, but very few-* Female, 71, retired, married

- *I never attend any activities, I don't like the atmosphere, they are fake and dummy. I don't feel at ease with these people. Hello there, hello here, I don't feel like being with these people. I don't have a complex that I'm missing something. I don't need them, few friends that I like is better than 100 fake people. You should see, it's a hello world. There is no depth in it, all surface, there is nothing at the bottom, like a wave and I don't like to be with these people.* – Female, 63, retired, widow

Some interviewees even felt rejected by the community itself. The community set its standards and proved to have low tolerance to those who do not wish to obey them for any reason whatsoever.

- There are many women; they talk like KGB agents, when you approach them they shut up, as if I'm a spy. I don't like this kind of behaviour. I know what's going on, they don't have to whisper when someone is approaching, and they really have a superiority complex. They make a difference between Jews who are not members and themselves. They really feel superior. They also feel superior to the rest of the society. It's been like this in the last few years. -Female, 63, retired, widower

This “internal” rejection felt by some Jews was most strikingly expressed with the following words:

- Even as a Jew it's difficult to be accepted, I have some Jewish friends who sometimes look at me as if I'm from Mars. – Male, 38, employed, married

Community has high demands on individuals, creating limits to what is desirable and what is unacceptable. Certain professions, for example, are strictly unwelcome, and so is absence of success in its traditional form. While some participants took these unwritten rules for granted, others questioned them and refused to comply.

- This is a big pressure, it comes from Jewishness, they were not stable in one place and had to be strong and earn money, this is what I see in my life, you have to be brilliant outside. My life was like that in the beginning too, I had to be beautiful, successful, I was so afraid to show bad notes, I had to have secrets in front of my parents..... I read a book about a Jewish girl in Istanbul, at the beginning of 20th century, in it it says that a Jewish girl can never die and can never live. This means for me that the society is so much putting a pressure on them, they cannot be what they want really, they cannot open themselves to the persons who they are really, there is always a pressure of what you cannot be. For example this girl in the book wanted to be a writer, there was a pressure

to get married not to write and so on. But she can never die also, which means that the family will never let you die, they will come together to keep you alive. This is how I felt here in this community. Female, 33, employed, single

Similar vocabulary was used by several participants who spent a part of their lives living abroad. Their experience of participation in foreign communities coloured their words into an even more resentful tone. They found Turkish community “unwelcoming”, “closed” and concerned with “wrong things”.

- I always thought Turkish Jews are just a bunch of, you know, compared to other Jews, they are ignorant, they are behind in many ways, in education, they are just very behind and I thought that the Jewish community was very tough, very rough, very demanding on other people, not accepting other people, too materialistic, too concerned about the image than what is inside the person - Male, 38, employed, single

- In London they are more effective than us...here you try to do something, people think it will be weird or it's not up to them. You try to do a Purim party, we can do it only for children because people my age don't want to dress up. We are snobbish, but in London they are not like that. – Female, 27, student, single

Further on, the same participants who lived abroad, tried to explain this as a phenomenon whose roots are more global. They portrayed mentioned differences as already recognized discrepancy between Ashkenazi and Sephardic cultures and traditions.

- One of my friends said: “Sephardic Jews, you suck. Tell me a Sephardic writer, director...you only think about money, money, money”. But he is right, we are just living, we don't have any impact on anything. We are just living and trying to save our ass. We couldn't even save Ladino! Ashkenazi's have made their culture go on and on, and look what we've done! Sephardic culture is in the shade. We don't have an intellectual air and that hurts me. I have met lots of Jews and they don't read. I've been in and out many Jewish houses and I never came across a small library.A few months ago there was a

Bulgarian play here, I wasn't there, L. told me about it. They had a stage divided into 2 – Sephardic and Ashkenazi house. The Sephardic house was full of goblets and small details, but in the Ashkenazi there were books. It's a small detail, but if you catch it! – Female, 27, student

Ashkenazi culture was considered patronising and non-welcoming towards more Eastern-oriented Sephardic culture.

- I most felt Turkish in Israel, everybody called us Turks, we were filthy Turks, we were bad Turks, homosexual Turks, more than anywhere I felt Turkish. Ashkenazi dominating culture have dislike for Middle Eastern culture, they try to make everyone Ashkenazi. Ashkenazi don't like anything eastern, Arabic music, food is the biggest sin, you have to like American food, New York, New York culture. Now it started with Europe, before they were not so crazy about Europe. Overall, Ashkenazi Israelis inject into the rest of the population the dislike of Middle Eastern culture. They used to tell me: "Oh you are from Turkey, you must be liking those stupid Turkish movies, this stupid Turkish belly dancing, stuff like that." It's a dislike for everything Middle Eastern. There is this conflict between Ashkenazi and Sephardim culture, they look down on us. –Male, 38, employed, single

As a general conclusion, it can be noted that members of Jewish minority prove to be divided between those who found their place within official communal activities and standpoints, and those who showed disapproval and criticism of the general way of life. Lifestyle displayed by some Jews, which was described by some as not enough intellectually appealing and superficial, was sometimes recognised as unacceptable. At this point, I find it important to emphasize that these very trends which were so harshly criticised by some participants, only reflect overall tendencies in the general society. In that sense, social habits and the general way of life demonstrated by a part of Jewish population cannot be isolated from general observations about socio-cultural trends in Istanbul and Turkey.

6.2. Encounter with the outer world – living in Turkey as a Jew

Jewish – Turkish differences and similarities

In the previous chapter we could see how participants themselves noticed disparities within the Turkish Jewry, and between Turkish Jews and Jews of other nationalities. Further on, I asked them to think of differences they experienced as Jews living among Muslims. Do they feel different, what makes them different, how much are they part of the Turkish society and how much they feel to be a part of a minority that has its own internal rules and life.

Although all participants accepted Turkey as their home, a vast majority said they did feel different indeed. These differences were mostly ascribed to different cultural traditions, viewpoints and priorities in the lives of these two cultural/religious groups.

-Jews used to be higher than the rest up till now, but now non-Jews as well have the right to the same education level. Jews are generally better educated and better educated compared to the Muslims. We have a broader view.– Female, 50, employed, married

- In Turkey I feel I belong to a minority, I feel different. My way of life is different. Our priorities are different. Our priority is family, education of our children, our social life. – Female, 47, employed, married

- Its hard to live here sometimes because its about life standards. For example, we don't like to have such close relationships with our neighbours. We say hi, how are you, but we don't go for tea there. In our building we are two Jewish families and others understand that we are Jewish because we don't go for every cup of coffee, tea. Neighbourhood for them is a tradition so according to them we have to drink a cup of coffee every week. But for us it's not a tradition..... Muslims are backwards. It's not a rule, some can be open

minded, but there are few. Jews are more open minded than Muslims. – Female, 20, student, single

Some felt these differences so strongly that they created insuperable obstacles in creating close relationships with the members of the dominant group. Differences were deeply rooted in the two distinctive traditions.

- When I was in college, I had close Muslim friends, when I first went to their house and met their parents then I understood there is something different. Even the smell, the look of the house, the traditions, everything is different. When I was 13, at 13 no one goes out and I went to parties to our club and came back at 2. They were always surprised, I was open minded. – Female, 23, student, single

In addition to different customs and traditions that separated Jews from Turkish Muslims, the presently controversial questions of headscarf, was seen as another issue that could potentially divide the two communities. When asked if they had or could have a covered friend, many stated that the headscarf would or did in the past come between them and their Muslim friends. Many saw as it as a threat not only to them as members of a minority, but also as a threat to the whole country and its progress. “Headscarf” was often seen as a symbol of political Islam, and concerns were constantly expressed over rapid widespread introduction of headscarf into society, which was portrayed as rising Islamism. This new Islamism, as a consequence, limited scope of movement within the city itself. Most participants would never go to strictly traditional neighbourhoods of Istanbul where religious tradition is particularly high and visible.

- I don't have covered friend and I would never have one. Today in Turkey it has become a political symbol. All these girls with scarf are brainwashed. It not their personal conviction, they are forced to wear it by their parents. I could never ever be friends with them. I never go to Eyüp or Faith⁹, terrible places, there is no interest for me there, why

⁹Districts of Istanbul with conservative image

should I go there, when I go there I'm disgusted. It doesn't have to do anything with my being Jewish, I also have Muslim friends who never go there. These people are brainwashed and they want to turn Turkey into Iran. It's a threat to Turkey and all open minded Turks, not only to Jews..... Now I'm talking as an open minded Turk, not as a Jew. If the government becomes more Islamic, I would never wear a scarf, and we would have to leave. – Female, 57, employed, married

- I have no covered friends. We are too different, we have nothing in common. I never go to Faith or Eyüp. I feel bad. It's disgusting, It's like a different country. I don't feel comfortable there, I don't know if it has anything to do with my Judaism, probably. They give me the idea that this kind of population is growing and it makes me uncomfortable.– Male, 30, employed, single

On the other hand, it was Turkish Muslims who, according to participants, had prejudices and negative stereotypes about Jews. Jews were, in the eyes of Muslims, “stingy”, “greedy for money”, “businessmen”, “secretive”. Most participants used the same words in describing their impressions about general Jewish image in the society. These were, however, stereotypes particular not only to Turkey, but they existed worldwide. All participants were unanimous on this question.

Where is home?

How much is Turkey a home, and where is home at all? Many participants wholeheartedly accepted Turkey as their only home. This can be observed slightly more in interviewees belonging to middle, and especially older generation who openly expressed their Kemalist orientation. However, in their expression of gratitude to the state, they automatically put themselves into a position of a guest in a foreign house. A

pronoun “they”, meaning “Turkish republic”, was often used when speaking about Turkey as their home.

- *I'm very grateful to this country. They gave us a good life. We are happy here.* - Female, 64, retired, single

- *The community is very careful to be on good term with the government. They rely on us. For us, we have always been very good here. We make special prayers in synagogues for our president (Atatürk) – we say “May God protect him”. We do the same for the Turkish Republic.....For my parents when the Republic was proclaimed, nothing changed. They supported the ideas of the Republic, they believed in it, everything was clear. They liked the republic, of course Ataturk was a dictator but everyone approved of what he did. In my generation everyone approves of what Atatürk did.* – Male, 84, retired, married

Middle and younger generation was equally aware of their position, claiming to have been accepted fully as members of another religious and cultural group.

- *I live in their country, I have gratitude for this. It's their country. Ethically we know it and they know it, Jews are always foreigners, no matter where they go, it's a proof. ...I feel I belong to the minority, definitely. But they accept me as a minority. I'm happy here, overall we are treated fine for a Muslim country, it has been overall good here, not perfect, but good.* – Male, 38, employed, single

Some expressed a somewhat higher awareness of their different place as a minority in a predominantly Muslim country. However, all participants, regardless of where they put themselves in relation to Turkey, accepted their position without further questioning it.

- *In a sense I am and I am not at home here. it is exile. The danger begins when you start feeling at home, like German Jews for example. Or in Spain, they fired us when we thought we were at home. One good thing about Turkish Jews – we knew we were not at home. Many people will probably say differently, but my father always said – you are a*

guest here, react as a guest. Never make politics, never say your opinion about something that is not convenient for us, act as if you are a good guest in a house. I still feel like that. I always feel different.— Male, 38, employed, married

Rozen used almost the same remarks to explain how the Turkish society traditionally treats its guests. In her words, the state of being foreign carries with it in Turkish culture not only negative connotations but positive ones as well. As long as the stranger knows his place, his presence is an honour to his Turkish host, and proof of the latter's generosity and nobility of spirit. The Jews, she concludes, certainly knew their place, and the Turks saw themselves as gracious and magnanimous hosts (Rozen, 1992).

After the Second World War, Turkey has not witnessed major waves of emigration to Israel. However, Turkish Jewry showed to have a special emotional bond with the state of Israel. With most of them having close relatives and friends there, they visit Israel frequently, and often call it their "second home". All showed special interest about the goings-on in Israel, and many spoke with special affection about that country. Those who were more keen on preserving their identity and identity of their children, chose to leave Turkey.

- Its difficult to say if I'm comfortable. I'm happy here, I like my country, I like to be here, but I'm very pessimist about the future of my community – the population will decrease, assimilation, mix marriages and anti-Semitism.....I love Turkey, I'm comfortable here but I have decided to go to Israel. It's not easy to be Jew here anymore. First of all we have problems in the community, population problem, people are not interested about their identity. It's difficult to find a husband here. What about my children, 10 years later, population will be smaller. It's difficult to keep identity here..... I would be more comfortable to practice my identity in Israel... I'm not religious, I'm traditional and here it's hard to really keep tradition. Jews here know the tradition but don't keep it. I will be more comfortable there. I will have many opportunities.— Female, 24, student, single

Living through changes

Political, ideological, economical and social turmoils within the country determine the way participants experience their lives in Turkey and how they see their future. Migrations from small towns and villages in Eastern Anatolia to Istanbul, change not only the shape of the city, but also the entire atmosphere of even the most urban areas of the city. Many feel as if “living with strangers”, and see this situation as a potential threat to their well-being not only as a minority, but also as a part of urban elite.

- I spent all summers in Büyükkada and most of the friends were Jews. It's not so Jewish anymore, less Greek too. It's worse. That place was like a different place, different than any neighbourhood in Istanbul, people would walk freely in bikinis, now when our girlfriends walk in bikinis they have people shouting at them, it gives you a feeling that your way of life will be threatened in this country. It's all because of all these people coming from outside to Istanbul. And as people become more religiously conservative they become more anti -Semitic. - Male, 30, employed, single

- We have a house and used to spend the summer in Büyükkada. I still go there. I love it there, it used to be a marvellous place for Jews, we had a club, we used to be together every day. Now it's changed, last years I heard people are handing out the papers – do not rent the houses to the Jewish. A friend told me that there are some people handing out free tickets to go to the island and stop the invasion of the minorities because the other island is mostly Christian....The atmosphere has changed, there are lots of people coming from eastern Turkey who are not used to city life. We have different life styles and the atmosphere has changed. It's all because of all these new people. But it's not only the problem of island its also the problem of Istanbul.. – Male, 31, employed, single

A certain dosage of scepticism, and fear in some cases, could be felt when discussing questions on current political situation in Turkey. The rise of Islamism that can be felt recently in the country, made interviewees feel uncomfortable and fearful about the future. Often they would recall the case of Iran and drastic changes that took place with

the Islamic Revolution in that country. Whenever fears over similar Turkish destiny were expressed, they were expressed by participants as “secular Turks who share the destiny of this country”. If the country became more Islamic, some would seriously consider moving out. “I will never wear a headscarf” was the usual response of female interviewees.

- *It's the first time in my life that I feel uneasy because I live in Turkey, because of current political situation. I started feeling like that since Erdoğan¹⁰. It's getting more in my eye every passing year and I don't know what's going to happen.*- Male, 31, employed, single

- *I don't know how far these Islamic people will go, but when I think about it I get depressed...maybe it's not good to have these bad feelings for your home country, this is our home country in the end. But I don't have trust for the future, I don't have this comfortable feeling inside me.* – Female, 27, employed, married

Jews and Muslims – who rejects whom?

Previously mentioned socio-cultural differences between Jewish Turks and Muslim Turks, lack of dialogue and existence of wrong image and universal prejudices, sometimes leads to rejection from either sides. At times, it is the Turkish society that rejects the Jews and refuses to accept them as full citizens of the country. Often, participants said the society made them feel different, because it could not accept that a person who practices another religion can be fully Turkish. This issue will be discussed in detail in the next chapter on identity. Here, I would like to quote several opposite

¹⁰ Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is the Prime Minister of Turkey and the leader of AKP party.

opinions on the question of acceptance or rejection. While some feel rejected by the Turks, others believe that the Jews are the ones who create this situation with their attitudes. The first two quotations are from participants who felt rejected by the society, the other two quotations come from participants who think differently.

- Actually I'm the only Jew they had ever seen, but they say all the time – yes, you are Jew, but you are like us. They don't have any idea about Jew. They don't accept me as Jew, they see that we are the same, so they always say-you are not like others. Who are the others?? I always say, I'm Turkish Jewish. But they don't accept me like that. They always say – they are Jewish and they only live in Turkey. It makes me upset. – Female, 24, student, single

- The thing is you always have a feeling you are a minority here; especially a Jewish minority wasn't really appreciated in Turkey. I think we were less appreciated than other minorities because they think we are a part of another nation which lives in Turkey. I think it's easier to be Christian – Male, 30, employed, single

- We reject the society, the Jews reject the majority and make them uncomfortable when they want to get into the circle. When a Jewish girl or boy wants to date a Muslim, it's never Muslims who reject. Jewish boys are actually very popular, they are good husbands, they make good money, they are ideal in many ways. But almost in every Jewish family it would be a disaster. The level depends, but they would be furious, try to convince and in some families they will say “no”. – Female, 31, employed, single

- I heard from outsiders that they came across such a resistant community , we don't welcome people because we are so afraid that we shall lose something, I don't know what, but we don't allow people in. And we are against changing, in the sense of opening up. – Female, 27, student, single

Whichever standpoint we look at, they all demonstrate cases of non-willingness by either side to fully integrate with the other. Both Muslims and Jews show awareness of mutual differences that are sometimes difficult to overcome.

Challenges of living in the diaspora- Anti-Semitism

The question of anti-Semitism is an ever controversial issue in Turkey. While there has been an overall tendency both among members of the community and among the its leadership to speak more openly about this issue in the last years, there are still disagreements on this question among people. These differences in interpretations of experiences tend to be bigger between generations. Relatively elderly, having had a relatively peaceful existence, have chosen to ignore what happened in the past, because in comparison to what happened to Europe, Jews here were better off, says Lina Filiba (private interview). It is almost impossible to hear from elderly people any complains about anti-Semitism in Turkey. They would all repeatedly emphasize the peaceful existence Jews have had with Muslims over centuries. *“It’s a hidden sympathy between Turks and Jews”*, one elderly participant stated. The most extreme example is of an 84-year-old male who was a victim of the 2003 bomb attacks on the 2 synagogues in Istanbul. Although he was badly injured in those attacks, he still persists in claiming that Turkey is not anti-Semitic, explaining those events as *“...PKK¹¹. It was a foreign action and it affected everyone. It wasn’t especially against us, it happens everywhere”*. Generally, the 2003 attacks on synagogues are another point of disagreement. While some see them as purely anti-Semitic acts, others explain them as *“coming from outside, and not specially targeted against Jews”*. *“2003 bombings were not just against us, it was an act of terrorism, it was political terrorism and it could happen to anyone and*

¹¹The Kurdistan Worker’s Party; Kurdish Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan

anywhere”, claimed a 57-old lady. 50, 40-year-olds and younger, however, feel more comfortable to say what is wrong, and are more likely to attach the problem to anti-Semitism.

The phenomenon where elderly people emphasize the peaceful coexistence with the Turkish state, forgetting or forgiving what was in the past, Rifat Bali explains in psychological terms. Elderly people, who at the end of their lives, have to make certain peace with themselves, have come to the conclusion that probably nothing would ever change as far as policy towards minorities is concerned and once they reached this conclusion, they could either continue living here and abide with that, or decide to go abroad. Those who decided to stay simply had to reduce their expectations about living in this country. (Bali, private interview).

- I never had any problems. In 1943 there was this Varlik Vergisi, the application was very bad for non Muslims, my father was overtaxed so he lost his job. They applied this tax unjustly. Then my father was deported to the east for 3 months, he couldn't pay, so he was forced to work. He was sent to Erzurum. Some of us got angry, but it was a short time, after that everything was forgiven..... Except from that I didn't have any discrimination. There is no anti-Semitism here. Only, if you want to get to the army, there is a problem. But there is no Jew who wants to work in the army. – Male, 84, retired, married

In this survey, while speaking about anti-Semitism, one general agreement was achieved – there is no official anti-Semitism. It is not a part of the official rhetoric and compared to other countries, Turkish Jews live a relatively peaceful life. Many would remember some minor incidents, mostly connected to experiences in school, usually incidents coming from other students, or in daily encounters with a certain cast of population (e.g. taxi drivers), but no major anti-Semitic act was personally experienced by any interviewee. On the whole, everyday encounters pose no threat of serious anti-Semitic acts.

- I have never had any problems. This is not anti-Semitic country. They care about Kurds, they don't care about us because we don't do anything to them. Anti-Semitism is not the policy of the country. I am free to say I'm Jewish. I'm proud of it..... Ataturk is our protector, we call him El Gadol - The Big One. When we come together, we call him like that. Look at the Armenians...they were discriminated. But we are ok. All the Jewish are Turkish. But the Armenians are Armenian, Greek are Greek, but not us, we are Turkish. It was very clever. - Female, 71, retired, married

Sometimes, in certain circumstances or among certain kind of people, being Jewish can even be advantageous.

- I never had any bad experience, I even had an advantage because of that, while I was looking for a job, people who know Jews and are not afraid or far away from them. Even statistically as a small community we don't have burglars and criminals, so it's a gain. For the employer it's important to know whom they are hiring, twice I heard that people prefer to employ Jews, because at least they know who he is. They think we are more hard working, and I think it's true, we are well educated, almost everyone goes to university, speaks the languages, you can generalize that if you hire a Jew, you will be happy with that. At my job, at the interview they said it's an advantage for them that I'm Jewish.- Female, 31, employed, single

Anti-Semitic actions or rhetoric is mostly connected to Israeli politics and the events in that country. At times when Israel undergoes military activities, anti-Semitism is reported to rise significantly, especially in the media. Anti-Semitic feeling among the general population is also explained by the lack of education and non-objective sources of information that the Muslims are exposed to.

- There is no anti-Semitism. We have a few extreme newspapers, there are terrible things there..... Only when Israel is in war with Palestine, we feel that anti-Semitism is on the rise. That's a flow of anti-Semitism. But it has never personally touched me. - Female, 57, employed, married

- *In business I meet people, once one man said “I would rather sell this to you rather than to a Jew or a Christian” (he didn’t know I was a Jew). Or I met a lot of people who don’t know difference between a Jew and a Christian but they are so far away from the idea, when they hear that I’m a Jew, they step back, they are not easy around me because I’m a Jew. It’s because of their ignorance and prejudices. But I feel free to say I’m Jewish.*— Male, 31, employed, single

For many Turks, being Jewish means being Israeli. They do not make any distinction between the two, which consequently opponents of Israeli politics turns into anti-Semites.

- *I’m sad and disappointed about Muslim people, I can see that people cannot make difference between Israeli and Jewish. Maybe they are only anti-American, then they become anti-Israel which here means anti-Jew. Here it doesn’t make a difference for them.... I feel that the society rejects me in some way. Actually for finding job, I never had a problem, I never had problems with my friends, but when I look at the political issue, I can see it’s very difficult to be accepted in the society. For example I cannot work in the government, in foreign affairs, I cannot work in the public sector, they reject us, and this is the reality. In my private life I don’t have problems.*- Female, 24, student, single

Many participants recognized a relatively to extremely negative image that Jews have in the society.

- *People don’t know what is Jewish. They don’t understand what is Jewish. Most of the Muslim people never see Jews. People only see TV, and TV only says Israel is bad.... Turkish Muslims don’t like us. Right and left wing don’t like us. Nobody likes us in turkey. Maybe just highly educated people who can be objective.* – Male, 22, student, single

The “oh you look like a normal person” or “maybe you are Jewish but you must be different” reaction is often experienced in close encounters between Jews and their Muslim friends. “You are our friend and therefore must be different, but others are still bad” is a kind of language that is characterized by many as personally very disappointing.

- I have friends from Konya, which is very Muslim, I told them I m Jew, and they said – oh you look like a normal person! - Female, 23, student, single

When asked if they feel free to say they are Jewish, most participants agreed that the decision on whether to express their identity openly depends on the neighbourhood and the social milieu. In modern and westernized quarters of Istanbul most of them would be more or less free to express their identity openly. Some would be slightly more careful, but no participant openly said that they would hide his or her identity.

- For intellectuals of course I have no problems, but for an ordinary person, I wouldn't really just fire away, as far as I'm not asked. Because of ignorance, it's because of general Muslim anti-Semitism, they believe that the Jews are torturing Arabs and that's the main reason why they don't like us. But this is the case for many countries, of course. But this is a Muslim ignorant country. – Male, 30, employed, single

In opposition to views of older generation, younger and middle-aged are more straightforward in saying clearly that Turkey is anti-Semitic indeed. If not personally, but you can “feel the difference, you cannot say that you are equal” says a 52-year-old female. Many connected this attitude to general xenophobia in Turkish society, all minorities are treated badly in the same way, many agreed.

- 1980s I remember they used to throw bottles on the Jewish club during the Lebanon war. We couldn't talk about Israel those days, in public, in the 70s you never mention Israel, now that there is peace and connections with Israel, we can speak. But in the 70s, 80s you couldn't mention. In high school I had problems, there was a Muslim guy who cursed me a couple of times. “Hitler should have killed all of you”, and comments like

this. There is anti-Semitism here. Many Israeli tourists openly told me they were insulted in Kapalı Çarşı¹², shop owners didn't want to serve them, but there is anti-Semitism also in the States. In America it's easier because Jews have a lot of power inside the country, especially in New York. You see them all over the place, so even if there is anti-Semitism, it feels like It's not a big deal. But if you go somewhere where like Iowa, South Dakota , there is a million times more anti-Semitism than in Turkey. – Male, 38, employed, single

- If you look at the history you will see that anti-Semitic acts happened here. At university we had sociology class, one guy said Jews are not human beings. He said he read a lot about Jews and Torah and he said that all the Jews think that all others are their slaves. They read non objectives sources, that could be the reason and also high nationalism also there are some educated anti-Semitic people. – Male, 18, student, single

Challenges of assimilation – the question of intermarriage

In contemporary Jewish rhetoric assimilation is often used as a euphemism for intermarriages, which has come to be seen as the main threat to the survival of the Jews as a group (Jewish encyclopedia, 1972). In Turkey, social ascent, and a greater openness to the outside society achieved in large part by the schools, inevitably increases the number of marriages between Jews and Muslims (Kastoryano, 1992). Also, great numbers are exposed to an increasingly educated and outward-oriented host society (Weaker, 1992) Intermarriage has therefore become an inevitable consequence of social integration. Turkish Jews handle this issue in different ways. Majority still thinks that marrying a Jew is a must, an obligation towards the entire community. Especially for middle-aged and older participants, it was almost unimaginable to marry a non-Jew.

¹²The Grand Bazaar is one of the largest covered markets in the world.

Many of them demand on their children to follow the same path today. Anything else would be a serious threat to their identity and to the identity of next generations. One participant said that her parents were happy because she was finally going out with a Jew, although he was completely ignorant about his identity. “*He is Jewish enough for them (participatant’s parents)*”, she said. Such discrepancies often create clashes and misunderstandings in viewpoints between youngsters and their parents.

- My parents wanted me to marry a Jew. It would be impossible to marry a non Jew. They would oppose. For my children I want the same. I think like my parents. I’m Jewish and I want to continue the Jewish generation. It would be a threat to their identity if they marry a non Jew...We have to say no from the beginning. Today with my children I try to show them as much as I can, I want them to be proud of their Jewishness. Then know this, they know I don’t want them to marry a non Jew. They know this from the childhood. But if they come one day with a non Jew, I can’t do anything. – Female, 47, employed, married

In many cases, especially in the previous decades, it was not tolerated to bring a Muslim into the family. It would be a sign of disobedience and could create feelings of offence or animosity within the family.

- There was no question that I will marry a non-Jew. But my brother who is 7 years younger than me married a Muslim girl and that caused a lot of problems with my mother. She took it very badly, it caused a lot of pain for her, but there was nothing to be done. – Female, 50, employed, married

While some would accept the pressure created over inter-Jewish marriages and explain it as the only justifiable way for the generations to come, others would express worry over the fact that the community is very small, which consequently leads to difficulties in finding a suitable Jewish partner.

- We are getting smaller and smaller. I’m not sure that my son will be able to marry a Jew. But it’s important for me and also it’s difficult for the child to be brought up. My

cousin is married to a Muslim, now she wants her daughter to be more Jewish. Other friends in mixed marriages, everything is different, the food is different, the smell is different, the customs are different. If you belong to a group, you want your child your child to belong to that group. A person should belong somewhere. Young people think it's not important, they say- child will decide when he grows up but you have to show him something so that he can decide. It's confusing for the child and the child doesn't know what to do. – Female, 47, employed, married

- I know people that practically don't even communicate with their children just because they married with a non Jew. I understand and respect the idea that you want your children to marry a Jew, I prefer this for myself also, but if it doesn't happen, it's not the end of the world and this is something that you should be expecting actually. Because we are not living in Israel, we are in the diaspora and this is the part of our lives. Nobody should be blaming their kids for this. – Male, 30, employed, single

The biggest dilemma and challenge arises from the question of bringing up children in a mixed marriage. For some, mixed marriage posed a serious threat to nourishing Jewish identity. In that sense, they regarded it as an impossibility.

- If my daughters had come with a Muslim boy, my husband would die. But I knew that they wouldn't, they said - Mother don't worry, I will marry a Jew, because I want my children to have Passover, to have Kiddush, it's a tradition we grew up in. This is impossible in a mixed marriage, I saw this many times, they become unhappy, the children get unhappy, they get confused, you have to be very intelligent to bring up children in a mixed marriage, it's very difficult for a child in terms of identity. – Female, 57, employed, married

Assimilation has already become very threatening to today's Jews. It is taking many different forms. For example, the custom of giving Jewish names to children is slowly disappearing. Thus today's young Jews, who do not have Jewish names and do not speak

Ladino at home, cannot be distinguished from their Muslim compatriots as easily as before.

- I was married to a Jew, of course. There was no option in my time. Even the Jews are changed now, now they put names without meaning. Now there are not names like Sara, Esther....now they put names without meaning, it's a modern life. It has become fashion, people see from others and want to have the same. The connection with old families is broken because people used to use family names. I gave my children my mother and grandmother's names. – Male, 84, retired, widower

Others, on the other hand, believe mixed marriages are inevitable and cannot do much harm to the identity formation of a child. In a modern world, and in such a small community, choices are few and if it comes to a mixed marriage, it is children who will decide for themselves. Maintaining Jewish identity in a mixed marriage is thus possible. Education is more important. Marrying a Jew without having any knowledge about Judaism, can lead to an even worse kind of assimilation.

One female interviewee said to have participated in a seminar organized for 15-20-year-olds in one Jewish youth club. She participated in the seminar under a false pretense to be a Muslim who was going out with a Jew and planning to get married. This event was organised as a test to see what young generation thought about this question. In the seminar, she claimed to have been attacked by all participants. “I was shocked, everybody was against me, they were talking like my grandma”, she said, referring to their tendency to repeat what they had heard at home. In that sense she called them “brainwashed” because they tend to do what their parents tell them, without thinking things through and making their own decisions.

- I would never have a problem marrying a non Jew. My children would know what Judaism is and then it's up to them to choose or not to choose, I cannot force anyone. I would try to teach, it important to know what you are refusing or accepting, then it's up to my child. And I don't see this as a problem. We are 18000 here, and your chances are

so limited and life is so short. If I can't find happiness or peace that I don't enjoy my life with, I don't care if he's Jewish or Muslim. I cannot waste a chance to be happy just to serve a greater good! – Female, 27, student, single

- We will lose the community if we don't pass the knowledge. But I will not sacrifice my children's happiness for this goal. We had unpleasant experiences in the family, one of my cousins in Israel, he doesn't speak to my brother and this hurts me so much, there is no reason for a thing like that. – Female, 50, employed, married

On the whole, close social interactions seem to be inevitable in today's Turkey. The only question remains on how individuals can respond to that.

- When I was a child, I wouldn't say that it was forbidden but it was a non said law that we had to be together with Jewish friends, we didn't have too many Muslim friends, just at school. But now I see from my children they have good Muslim friends, they go out, they share their weekends and their hobbies, things changed because of globalisation and we take our share in that, you cannot be isolated anymore. - Female, 54, employed, widow

It is not only the question of intermarriages that poses the biggest threat to preservation of identity. The overall lifestyle has changed, there are more opportunities for young people about how and where to spend their free time, and as a consequence, their interest dissolves. A new challenge – how to keep younger generations interested and involved – has arisen.

- 15, 16-year-olds, they have everything, many opportunities. Their parents don't care so much about Judaism, they don't insist to come to the community and to the synagogue. They don't come often, other things are more important. This generation doesn't want to take on responsibility. When I was 15 I wasn't so responsible either but I wasn't like them but not like that, they really don't care, they just want to go out and be with friends – Male, 21, student, single

- They (the youth) are interested but every year is less and less. Generally people are less interested, people think about clothes, money. We were forced to go to the club. But now I cannot hear anything from their parents to make them go. They don't have idea about being Jewish. They just know they are Jewish and that's it. – Female, 20, student, single

The problem of assimilation, which is so much dealt with in many forms and ways in communities around the world, is acute in this community too. In line with global changes, it is taking on new forms, but also offering new solutions as to how to handle it. The question of assimilation is stepping out of its traditional frame of intermarriage, demanding new dynamic language in discussing this issue. One of the key words in this new language is certainly “education”.

6. 3. Contemporary expressions of Jewish identity in Turkey.

In the first part of this study we had the chance to see how various theoreticians deal with the problem of identity. On the whole, it is seen as an activity that arises from social interaction and exchange. It can be envisioned as emerging out of a dialectical relationship between the self and society, and is manifested through social actions. This section presents different forms of expression of Jewish identities in Turkey, out of which the identities develop. Here we shall see how the process of reconstruction of different elements of Jewish identity is closely related to a parallel process in the selection of different elements of Jewish tradition (Eisenstadt, 2004).

Hybrid identities

All participants in the study insisted on declaring themselves as Turkish Jews. This means that while they were aware and often proud of their Jewish identity to a bigger or lesser extent, at the same time they accepted Turkey as their home and expressed love and deep attachments to the Turkish Republic, and especially their birthtown Istanbul. No participant denied his or her Turkish part of identity. Some insisted that they were “Turkish Jewish”, and not just Turkish or just Jewish. Turkishness is therefore an inseparable part of the identity in Turkish Jewry. “I am Turkish Jew” or “I am 50-50”, was the most common answer. In many cases, if specifically asked, participants would say that “Jewishness means more”, forming a special emotional bond to that part of their identity. Turkishness could, however, be more prominent in relatively elderly participants. They explained this as a result of their not only life-long peaceful coexistence in Turkey, but also as a result of their “pro-Atatürk” education.

- I'm 50-50. I'm a Turkish Jew. I love Turkey, I respect the traditions here and I like many traditions that we have here, like respect for your parents, friendship, closeness of feelings, here people are very close, I love this warmth here in these people, I'm also very friendly, I'm like that, that's why I feel very Turkish. Besides, we had a very pro-Ataturk education, it gave us a strong Turkish identity, every week we would sing İstiklal Marşı¹³, I'm proud of being Turkish and Jewish too. – Female, 57, employed, married

- I am a Turkish Jew. I am 50-50. I have done everything that was expected from me satisfactory – military, taxes, I got diploma and now I got pension form the state. I'm grateful for that. I'm proud of being Turkish and I should be! All what I am, I must be grateful to Turkey, I am a Kemalist, yes - Male, 84, retired, married

¹³ Turkish national anthem

However, many expressed resentment at not being accepted as such by the Muslim part of the population. They felt rejected as members of a minority and declared that as such, they could never be fully accepted into the society whose identity is predominantly based on religion. As a result, in the eyes of other people, they would be “less Turkish” or “never fully Turkish”. In certain situations they would even be considered foreign. The example that most people gave was when being introduced to someone for the first time, because of their non-Turkish names, they would always be asked where they were coming from and if they were Turkish. This created a certain feeling of bitterness, because “we have been here longer than them”. On the other hand, there is a phenomenon among the recognized minorities in Turkey – the Armenians, the Greek and the Jews – that the latter feel most Turkish among the three, to the extent that some Jews “are more Turkish than Turks”. This situation can be discussed in both positive and negative contexts. This feature of Jewish identity can easily be explained by their traditional loyalties that they expressed towards the country over the centuries.

- A regular Turkish person wouldn't consider me as a regular Turkish. The Jewish roots in Turkey are from the ottoman empire, that's more than 500 years, maybe an ordinary man doesn't have this much roots in this country but still I'm considered less Turkish. It's a Muslim thing actually. Non-Muslims are considered less Turkish. Because of the religion they think I'm a foreigner. The main reason is ignorance of course. My name is not Turkish so I'm not considered a Turk, which I am and should be. I'm not an Israeli person. I'm emotionally connected to this country, it's my hometown, my mother tongue, it's where I spent all my life. So this should be where I belong. – Male, 30, employed, single

- Being a minority in Turkey is very hard. It doesn't matter in which group you belong but you will always have problems with identity. I'm doing a research about Kurds and Alevis, and they have lots of problems with their identity, but beside that I can say that Jews feel more Turkish than other groups. Greeks and Armenians try to keep their languages and are more traditional and more closed than us, we are trying to be more

open, not to have a problem. Maybe that's an excuse for us, we always say we are so Turkish so that we don't have problems like others. Now I can understand that they will never accept us as Turkish, even if we say that we are Turkish. But our policy is like this. We say we are Turkish to protect us..... I will be always Turkish Jewish, but I cannot be Turkish Jewish in Turkey, that's my problem. I want to live both identities at the same time here, but I'm sure I can live them both in Israel – Female, 24, student, single

Sharing the same mentality and certain traditions is what most participants mentioned as an element which made them feel Turkish. This was explained as cultural bonds that connected them strongly to the country and its people. Family, friends, beloved places, jokes, and above all – strong bonds with the birthplace, in most cases, Istanbul, was mentioned as strong elements that attached them to Turkey. For that reason, the majority decided never to leave Turkey. Younger participants, who are growing up in a more globalised world, had a tendency to adopt a more “westernized” outlook. They would, in some cases, say that national holiday meant nothing to them, but at the same time, they would continue supporting ideas on which the Turkish Republic was founded. Still, no participant rejected Turkish identity or expressed any form of negativity towards it.

- I'm Turkish and my Jewishness is a part of it. If I have to decide, I decide to be Jewish of course. But I'm Turkish also. What makes me Turkish – I live here, in our personality also, we have Turkish customs because of living here. We are different from Europe, in mentality. Here we live with our feelings I think, in Europe it's more straightforward. Here, it's more passionate, we are more friendly here. People are trustable, now things are changing, things were more comfortable before. But we are more social. More helpful. We are not so open minded, we are more conservative as Turk – Female, 47, employed, married

- I'm very pleased to be Turkish, I like almost everything about Turkey. Of course my Jewish identity is more important but I like everything that is connected to my Turkish identity too - jokes, friends, places, all my close friends are Muslims. – Male, 38, employed, single

Tradition

The most prominent element of Jewish identity in Turkish Jewry is tradition. Vast majority of participants described their Jewishness as belonging to tradition. Tradition in this case means respecting certain customs that come from religious background but were deprived of any religious meaning. Thus for example, a strong tradition of family reunion for Friday night dinners is still wide-spread and maintained in most families. Even in strictly atheist families, family reunions for Friday dinners are obligatory. In many cases, this is the only remained custom that is regularly observed. Many described it as a special, different night. Often, Friday evenings serve only as an opportunity for the family to get together, but no other special actions pertaining to religious customs are taken. Other customs that are kept regularly in most families pertain to certain Jewish holidays. Thus for example, in most cases, families would get together for Purim, Passover and Hanukah in order to observe basic rules connected to the celebration of those holidays. The so called “High holidays” – Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, because of their extreme importance, would mostly be observed in synagogues.

- I respect tradition and still try to be with them (family) every Friday night. We don't light candles, we just say the prayers. I keep Passover, I don't know if I believe in god but I try to keep the tradition as much as I can do because we are a minority here , it's a part of the culture here and I wouldn't want to go away one day.....Judaism is not only religion. It's not the nation either, because if it's like that then it should be only Israeli people. It's something else, it's a weird mixture-religion, language....Some people believe that Judaism is a race. So if your parents are Jewish, then you're Jewish even if you don't practice anything. But mostly I think it's tradition, that what I believe. – Male, 30, employed, single

All participants attached big importance to these traditions, describing them as their most prominent connection to their identity and the identity of the entire community. For some, it is the last connection to their Jewishness. Therefore, everyone stressed the

importance of keeping this kind of traditional practice. However, in many families, the mentioned traditions are respected in a rather automatic way, meaning, they do not have the knowledge of why certain things are done in a certain way, but they rather do them because they have been performed in the same way for generations. Lina Filiba recognised this issue as one of the most acute challenges the community is facing today (private interview). As a result, additional educational activities are being undertaken by the community.

- I'm not religious. And I will tell you why – they had all services in Hebrew, we didn't understand anything. If I go to synagogue I don't understand anything, I can't understand it. In other countries it's in English, French....but you will see people here go to synagogue and they don't understand at all and can't find the pages. They don't understand, they read but they don't know what they are reading. Why should I spend my time in a place where I don't understand anything? They make movements which I don't understand. How can I care about something that I don't understand .- Female, 63, retired, widow

Religion

The official community estimates an approximate 10% synagogue attendance for Shabbat services, a figure which can be used to show the relatively low trend in religious observances in the community. Turkish Jewish Community can not be characterized as religious. Synagogue attendance serves more as social activity, rather than a religious one. Most participants reported going to the synagogue only for Bar Mitzvahs and weddings. Because of its importance, Yom Kippur¹⁴ is the only religious feast that

¹⁴ Day of Atonement, is the most solemn and important of the Jewish holidays. Its central themes are atonement and repentance. Jews traditionally observed this holiday with a 25-hour period of fasting and intensive prayer.

attracts people to synagogues, and apart from those with health problems, interviewees obeyed the rule of strict 25-fasting on that day. Those who declared themselves as atheist, also reported to fast on Yom Kippur, explaining it as something that is good for health. In addition to that, it should be noted that due to little or no religious education, especially in elderly generation, religious activities were until recently further estranged from general population. The majority of services are kept in Hebrew, the language that Turkish Jews never spoke. Lately there have been various activities in publishing materials in Turkish, which, according to some, might bring people closer to religious practices. Therefore, it can be said that most participants believe that being Jewish does not exclusively mean being religious. Still, their own narratives confirm that a non-religious upbringing does not result in a loss of Jewish consciousness.

However, among some participants, there is religious curiosity and willingness to learn. They recognized religion as an undividable part of their Jewishness that should not and cannot be neglected.

- I know many people who are very active but don't care about their religion identity, they want to learn about history, but not about religion. The older generation is even more traditional. Religion is important for me, it has the same importance like tradition. Without religion we are not a complete Jew. We have to learn about religion, I don't say we have to practice, it's a personal choice, but it's important, it attracts all Jews together, that's why its more important for me - Female, 24, student, single

There are big differences among generations in this respect. Older generations tend to be more traditional, with the exception of some individuals who decide to turn to religion in search for answers and peace at the end of their lives.

-I didn't eat kosher before, I started eating 8 years ago. Before I used to eat everything. I started eating kosher because I felt like that, I'm close to death and I became religious, but I don't know which things I can eat really. – Male, 84, retired, widower

Some are trying to keep their level of religious observance in the best way they can. This often means respecting certain rules pertaining to keeping Shabbat, or, in many other cases, obeying certain rules of Kosher diet¹⁵. This, however, in the vocabulary of Turkish Jewry, usually means not eating non-Kosher meat, whereas other dietary rules are not respected. Exceptions are rare. On the other hand, complete observance of strict religious rules is almost impossible in Turkey, everyone agreed. Modern way of life in a strictly secular country and such a big city where there are no Jewish quarters that could provide for all their needs, does not enable full religious observance. Those who decide to follow that path, mostly choose to move to Israel.

- I don't cook on Shabbat. I don't use any machine, I don't watch TV. In childhood I kept more Shabbat. But it's very difficult to lead a Jewish life. The city is big, I have to drive to go to synagogue. For young they are working, they have to work on Shabbat, it's hard. For mothers also, when they come home, they are very busy, how can they prepare meal for Shabbat?— Female, 47, employed, married

- Every Shabbat I go to the synagogue. Since I was a child. I know myself like this. My father is a Shohe¹⁶ and Chazzan¹⁷. At home we always say Kiddush at Shabbat and eat Kosher. But I don't keep Shabbat.— Male, 21, student, single

¹⁵ The laws of Kosher diet derive from various passages in the Torah, and are numerous and complex. Among them are the following: only meat from particular species is permissible. Meat and milk (or derivatives) cannot be mixed in the sense that meat and dairy products are not served at the same meal, served or cooked in the same utensils, or stored together. Mammals must be slaughtered in a specific fashion.

¹⁶ Kosher butcher

¹⁷ A cantor in the synagogue, a musician trained in the vocal arts who helps lead the synagogue in songful prayer

Some noticed changes in religious observance, especially among young and middle generation. These were explained by general trends in the world, further development of educational activities undertaken by the community, and to a certain extent, by the presence of the Chabad-Lubavitch¹⁸ family, whose endeavors attract a certain number of people who chose to see the Chabad rabbi as their true guide.

- I can say that some things changed while I was away – there is a much bigger assimilation today. Jews are more Turkicized, names are Turkish, they speak perfect Turkish and less and less ladino and French, differences between Jews and Turkish laic are very few, that's why the assimilation is big, most of the culture is lost. On the other hand, there are some young people that discover that identity and grasp it, they become more and more Jewish, more and more people eat kosher, more young people go to synagogues, even some people are becoming orthodox, this never existed in Turkey. On the one hand you have people who become less and less Jewish, and on the other, people who become very religious, the community is splitting into 2. Since 2, 3 years you can see this tension.- Male, 38, employed, married

¹⁸ Chabad-Lubavitch is one of the largest movements in Orthodox Judaism. It runs thousands of centers around the world, Jewish community centers, synagogues and schools, providing educational activities for Jews.

Other expressions of Jewish identity

Mostly, however, Judaism is perceived as a mixture of many elements that cannot be divided strictly. Since the majority of traditions are derived from customs with religious background, Jewish identity cannot be divided into separate elements. History, belonging to a nation and culture are seen as equally important elements of Jewish identity by most participants.

- Jewish identity is very different from other identities because it's made of many factors like religion, belonging to a people.... So you have to mix them all together, if you take only one part, you miss something because in Jewishness you need all factors but the level is different.If you want to be Jewish you have to do some of the tradition to show it to you children, and also the traditions belong to the religious part. – Female, 47, employed, married

For most participants, therefore, religion plays a small role in their conceptions of Jewish consciousness. The observance of religious rituals becomes a matter of symbolic manifestations, such as candle lighting or fasting. The participants seem to be attracted to Judaism in terms of its historical relevance, memory, and traditional customs, and are genuinely interested in learning more about Jewish history and culture.

- I see myself as a Jewish person. I don't have a belief of god but I feel like a Jew because I believe in history that lies behind me, I believe what comes from my history and my ancestry affects my way of living. So I cannot deny it, and I don't want to deny it and it's a fact, and its nice.– Male, 31, employed, single

- If I know my history I can go on to the future. Whether I do Shabbat or not it's my business. You can live your Jewishness in many different ways. – Female, 52, employed, married

Others explain their Jewishness as their birthright or ethnical identity.

- *I was born Jewish, I will always be Jewish. History is there. Sometimes I say I'm an atheist Buddhist Jew, because I do more meditation and yoga. I was born Jewish, that's why I'm Jewish.* – Female, 50, employed, married

- *Judaism is my ethnical identity, it's something else than religious, I'm ethnically Jewish, my religion is Jewish, but I don't believe. I fast in Yom Kippur and we do the feasts. But I can eat bread in Pesah¹⁹. Ethnically for me is something else, I don't have to be religious to be Jewish. I think as a Jew, I'm like a Jew.* – Female, 63, retired, widow

All these examples show us how Jewish identities continue to be many-sided and diverse, challenged at the same time with modernities arising from multifaceted realities in which they are formed. Many Jews, as Eisenstadt notices, continuously change the cultural patterns of their lives, and in the diaspora few lead lives which are primarily or fully Jewish. At the same time, they do not want to lose their Jewish identity, and they attempt to reformulate it, even if it is no longer their sole or even predominant identity (Eisenstadt, 2004).

¹⁹Pesah or Passover is a Jewish holiday followed by the seven day Feast of the Unleavened Bread commemorating the Exodus from Egypt and the liberation of the Israelites from slavery.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study explores contemporary expressions of Jewish identity in Turkey through approaches to the question of cultural identity as a phenomenon that is achieved through historical, social and cultural contacts and encounters, and is therefore directly defined by membership of particular communities and cultures. It observes the formation of identity as an active process based on the continuous two-way dynamics that is not independent of the sociocultural context, but entirely defined by it. The aim of the study was to present constructions in cultural identities among the Jews of Istanbul, and how they relate to the general sociohistorical context and the predominantly Islamic milieu in which this minority exists in.

The Jews of Turkey, who have been residing in its territory since the 15th century, have seen many changes, which shaped their identity formation and their position as a minority. These changes became more prominent with the end of the Ottoman Empire, which could boast with a relatively peaceful coexistence of many ethnic and religious groups. The twentieth century brought along the new Turkish republic, rapid modernisation and secularisation and the equally rapid integration of the Jews into many parts of Turkish society. The expressions of loyalty throughout turbulent historical events, were already clearly noticeable under the Ottomans, and became even more visible with the birth of the new republic which showed its apparent appreciation. As a consequence, the Turkish state sees a friend and partner in this numerically the smallest non-Muslim group residing in Turkey today. A community numbering some 20,000 - 23,000 members, has been a traditionally silent community, that is in the era of new global and regional circumstances slowly becoming more vocal in the communication with the general society. Today, Jews of Turkey bear Turkish names, speak Turkish language, go to Turkish schools, live all over the city of Istanbul, organise cultural events open for the broad public with an intentional aim to introduce themselves to their compatriots, and nourish many other social and cultural contacts with the general community. All these

factors create a complex framework in which Turkish Jewish identities are formed and expressed.

The presented study shows that Turkish Jews are active participants in their identity construction and have strongly developed their Jewish identities. Historical transitions have significantly influenced spheres in Jewish life and manifestations of Jewish identities, which are being re-shaped in new global circumstances. Having been exposed to numerous external factors that challenged the maintenance of their sense of selves as Jews, the participants in this study reveal that their Jewish identity is a continuous and active individual and collective pursuit. A sense of self as a Jew develops from social interactions and meaningful relationships that start within the family, continue through participation in communal activities and individual quests for identity nourishment.

The research shows that family continues to be a central Jewish unit where initial identity is formed, and that the Jewish Community serves as an important vehicle in its further preserving. While many generations have expressed and experienced their Jewish identities through practices related to tradition in the first place, and all continue to nourish their primordial ties with the state of Israel, in the new era more and more Turkish Jews express their Jewishness in ways that are personally and culturally meaningful. On the whole, Turkish Jewry cannot be characterized as religious, although these trends are changing and more interest is being shown in that direction. Among the customs which even the least religious Jews observe are those which are related to the primordial elements of life, like circumcision, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, ritual marriage and burial. In addition, there is a continuous strong tendency to observe traditions or customs whose origin is religious, but which have become symbols of collective identity, such as having family reunions on the eve of the Shabbat. Just like in other communities, here too Jewish identity is closely related to process in the selection of different elements of Jewish tradition. These claims prove Taylor's argument that while our selves are necessarily created against a setting of frameworks, no framework is shared by everyone. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize that, just as the self is constructed from a variety of

disparate elements, so too must Jewish society, culture, and above all, identity be recognized as heterogeneous. Turkish case is no exception.

While some internal and external views about the Turkish Jewish community have been fairly pessimistic, stating that the diminishing number, as well as unavoidable assimilation and the challenges posed by Islamic environment will inevitably lead to a somber future, the tenacious optimism that one comes across while looking deep inside this community, offers a different perspective. Turkish Jews, for the most part, consider themselves well integrated into Turkey, yet also determinedly Jewish. They are determined to preserve their identity and show ability to accept and manage well the hybridities of their identity. Recognising the diasporic problem of assimilation and all the consequences it brings along, it can be concluded that hybridity, i.e. incorporating other elements into Jewish identities, does not necessarily lead to assimilation in the sense of dissolution of Jewish identity per se. In Bhabha's words, cultural identity is found in the 'in-between' spaces where culture is truly articulated, where hybridity becomes reality and both the fluidity and evolution of the culture and the construction of the self are recognized.

On the whole, this study proves that identity is a social phenomenon and a dynamic two-way process, influenced by historical and socio-political changes which can be understood only in close relation to its sociohistorical milieu. Following Hall's ideas on identities which are constructed within and not outside discourse, this study demonstrates that Jewish identities in Turkey are highly sensitive to transformations in the sociohistorical and cultural context, and any study investigating cultural identities should take these processes into account.

8. REFERENCES

1. Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities, Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, New York, 1991
2. Baban, F., *Community, citizenship and identity in Turkey* in Keyman E. F., and İçduygu A. (eds), *Citizenship in a Global World, European questions and Turkish experiences*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005
3. Baldwin E. et al., *Introducing Cultural Studies*, Prentice Hall Europe, New York, 1999
4. Bali, R., *Les Relations entre Turcs et Juifs dans la Turquie moderne*, Les éditions Isis, Istanbul, 2001
5. Bali, R., *Politics of Turkification during the Single Party Period*, in Hans Lukas-Kieser (ed), *Turkey Beyond Nationalism*, London: I.B. Taurus, 2006
6. Bali, R., *The Alternative Way to Come to Terms with the Past, Those Who Try to Forget: Turkish Jewish Minority*, in Ulrike Tischler (ed.) *From "Milieu de Mémoire "to lieu de mémoire" The Cultural, Memory of Istanbul in the 20th Century*, Martin Meidenbauer, München, 2006
7. Benbassa E. and Rodrigue A., *Sephardi Jewry, A History of the Judeo-Spanish Community, 14th-20th Centuries*, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 2000
8. Bhabha, H. K., *Culture's in Between* in Bennet, D., (ed.) *Multicultural States, Rethining Differences and Identity*, Routledge, London and New York, 1998
9. CIA The World Factbook Web Site at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>
10. Cagaptay, S., *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey*, Routledge, London and New York, 2006
11. Cohen, R., *Global Diasporas, An Introduction*, University of Washington press, Seattle, 1997

12. Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe at <http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/index.php>
13. Çolak, Y., *Citizenship between Secularism and Islamism in Turkey* in Keyman E. F., and İçduygu A. (eds), *Citizenship in a Global World, European questions and Turkish experiences*, Routledge, 2005
14. Davison, A., *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1998
15. Eisenstadt, S. N., *Explorations in Jewish Historical Experience, The Civilizational Dimension*, Brill, Leiden, 2004
16. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Volume 5, 9, 10 Keter Publishing House Jerusalem, Ltd., Israel, 1972
17. Evans J., and Mannur A. (eds), *Theorizing Diaspora: a Reader*, Blackwell Publications, Malden, 2003
18. Friedman, J., *Cultural Identity and Global Process*, Sage Publications, London, 1994
19. Geertz, C., *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, Fontana, London, 1993
20. Geller, E., *Nacije i nacionalizam*, Politička kultura, Zagreb, 1998
21. Jung D. and Piccoli, W., *Turkey at the Croosroads, Ottoman Legacies and a Greater Middle East*, Zed Books, London and New York, 2001
22. Kalra, V. S., Kaur R. and Hutnyk J., *Diaspora & Hybridity*, Sage Publications, London, 2005
23. Karmi, I., *Jewish Sites of Istanbul*, A Guide Book, The Isis Press, Istanbul, 1992
24. Kastoryano, R. in Rodrigue A. (ed.) *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry Community and Leadership*, Indiana University Press, 1992
25. Landau M. J., *Jews, Arabs, Turks*, The Magnum Press, Jerusalem, 1993
26. Libin, N., *Jewish Constructivism: Making Room for Hybridity*, at http://web2.concordia.ca/canadianjewishjournal/pdf/nicole_libin.pdf
27. Lewis, B., *Istanbul and the Civilization of the Ottoman Empire*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1963

28. Mallet, L. O., *La Turquie, les Turcs et les Juifs : Histoire, représentations, discours et strategies*, PhD thesis, Univeriste Aix-Marseille I
29. Liberles W. A., *The Balkan Jewish Communities: Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, & Turkey*, University Press of America, 1984
30. Mesić, M., *Multikulturalizam, društveni i terijski izazovi*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 2006
31. Parekh, B., *Rethinking Multiculturalism, Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*, Harvard University Press, 2002
32. Robins, K. *Interrupting Identities: Turkey/Europe* in Questions of Cultral Identity, Hall S. and du Gay P. (eds), Sage Publications, London, 1996
33. Rozen, M., *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond, The Jews in Turkey and the Balkans 1808-1945.*, Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2005
34. Shankland, D., *Islam and Society in Turkey*, The Eothen Press, Cambridgeshire, 1999
35. Shaw, S. J., *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*, New York University Press, New York, 1991
36. Sheffer, G., *Diaspora Politics, At Home Abroad*, Cambridge University Press, Cammbridge, 2003
37. Soner, A. B., *Citizenship and the minority question in Turkey* in Keyman E. F., and İcduygu A. (eds), *Citizenship in a Global World, European questions and Turkish experiences*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005
38. Šiljak, L., *Quest for Identity: A Social Psychological perspective in Investigatig the Transformations of Jewish Identities in Croatia*, MSc Research Report, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2002
39. Tapper, R. (ed.), *Islam in Modern Turkey, Religion, Politics and Literature in a Secular State*, I.B. Tauris and Co Ltd, London, New York, 1991
40. Taylor, Ch., *The Poltics of Recognition* in Goldberg T. D., (ed.) *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*, Blackwell, Oxford UK & Cambridge USA, 1994
41. Taylor, Ch., *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*, Harvard University Press, 1989

42. Toktaş, Ş., *Perceptions of Anti-Semitism among Turkish Jews*, Turkish Studies, Vol. 7, Routledge, 2006
43. Toktaş, Ş., *The Conduct of Citizenship in the Case of Turkish Jewish Minority: Legal Status, Identity and Civic Virtue Aspects*, Proof, Duke University Press Journals
44. Tomlison, J., *Cultural Imperialism; a Critical Introduction*, Continuum, London, 2001
45. *Turkey: Minority Policy of Systematic Negation*, International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, 2006
46. Turkish Jews Web Site at <http://www.turkishjews.com/>
47. Unesco Web Site at www.unesco.org
48. Weiker, W. F., *Ottomans, Turks and the Jewish Polity, A History of the Jews of Turkey*, University Press of America, Lanham, New York, London, 1992
49. Wikipedia Web Site, www.wikipedia.org

9. APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR YOUNGER GENERATION

General

1. Age
2. Place of birth and citizenship
3. Current level of education
4. Employment status

Personal narratives

5. When did you start feeling Jewish? Are your both parents Jewish?
6. Does your family observe holidays, if yes which and in what way? Describe your family life in terms of observance.
7. How important for you is it that your (future) partner is Jewish? Is your boyfriend/girlfriend Jewish?
8. How do you or will you raise your children?
9. Have you ever been to Israel, how often do you go there, do you have friends there, do you consider moving there?
10. Are you active in the community activities? What does community mean to you? What does it give to you? How do you perceive its official standpoints and policies?
11. How religious are you, what does religion mean to you? How often do you go to synagogue, do you observe holidays and customs?
12. Describe your Jewish identity. Is it connected to tradition, religion, belonging to a nation or something else.
13. To what extent is religion important in maintaining Jewish identity? What other elements/dimensions are important in maintaining Jewish identity?

14. Describe conditions for leading a Jewish life in Istanbul.

Living in Turkey - Intercommunication

18. Does being Jewish make you feel different? Do you feel that you belong to a minority?
19. How would you define yourself – Turkish Jewish, Jewish or just Turkish? Which identity personally more important? What makes you Turkish, what makes you Jewish? Do you think that you are more Jewish in some, and more Turkish in other situations?
20. Are the majority of your friends Jewish or Turkish Muslim?
21. Do your non-Jewish friends observe you differently, how do they experience your Jewishness? Do they take part in any of your Jewish activities?
22. Have you ever experienced any form of anti-Semitism or any kind of similar problems? Do you think that this society is anti-Semitic?
23. Are there any stereotypes in the society about Jews? What is the image of a Jew in Turkey?
24. Importance of maintaining Jewishness in Turkey and your thoughts of the future of the Jewish community?
25. How does the raise of Islamism affect the community and how will it affect the future of the country? Do you feel comfortable in Turkey at the moment?

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MIDDLE AND OLDER GENERATION

General

1. Age
2. Place of birth and citizenship
3. Level of education.
4. Employment status

Personal narratives

5. When did you start feeling Jewish? Are your parents both Jewish? Which district did you grow up in? Describe your childhood.
6. Do you observe holidays and keep tradition at home? How was it when you were a child and how is it now? Describe your family life in terms of observance.
7. Is your spouse Jewish? How important was it to have a Jewish spouse?
8. How do/did you raise your children? Do your children have a Jewish name and did you give them Jewish education at home?
9. How often do you go to Israel, do you have friends there, have you ever considered moving there?
10. How active are you in the community activities? What does community mean to you? What does it give to you? What are your thoughts on its official standpoints and policies?
11. How religious are you, what does religion mean to you? How often do you go to synagogue, do you observe holidays and customs at home?
12. To what extent is religion important in maintaining Jewish identity? What other elements/dimensions are important in maintaining Jewish identity?
13. Describe conditions for leading a Jewish life in Istanbul.

Living in Turkey - Intercommunication

14. Compare the times of your childhood and today's times? Was it easier or more difficult to be Jewish when you were a child?
15. Does being Jewish make you feel different? Do you feel that you belong to a minority?
16. How would you define yourself – Turkish Jewish, Jewish or Turkish? Which identity is personally more important to you? What makes you Turkish, what makes you Jewish? Do you think that you are more Jewish in some, and more Turkish in other situations?
17. Are the majority of your friends Jewish or Turkish/Muslim? Compare now and your childhood.
18. Do your non-Jewish friends observe you differently, how do they experience your Jewishness? Do they take part in any of your Jewish activities?
19. Have you ever experienced any form of anti-Semitism? Do you think that this society is anti-Semitic? Are there any problems that you face in this society as a Jew?
20. Are there any stereotypes in the society about Jews? What is the image of a Jew in Turkey?
21. How does the raise of Islamism affect the community and how will it affect the future of the country? Do you feel comfortable in Turkey at the moment?
22. Importance of maintaining Jewishness in Turkey and your thoughts on the future of the community?

10. ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tatjana Divjak was born in Zagreb, Croatia, where she graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy in English language and literature and Spanish language and literature. She had worked as a translator and interpreter for many years, before the decision to enroll in the partnership Interdisciplinary Studies for Cultural Management and Cultural Policy in the Balkans, University of Arts, Belgrade and University Lyon 2, France in 2005. She is about to obtain her MA Degree at these studies.

Tatjana Divjak currently lives and works in Istanbul, Turkey.