From the Call to Prayer to the Silences of the Museum:  
Salonica’s Soundscapes in Transition

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Parts of the modern city’s function as the classical locus of collective memory\(^2\) are its soundscapes.\(^3\) They provide access to overlapping acoustic communities that construct and experience them, to which they are meaningful and intelligible.\(^4\) The various soundmarks of these communities (ranging from religious sound practices, such as church bells and calls to prayer, to the sounds of craftsmen and music-making) shape individual and collective identities (ethnic, gendered, religious, professional) and help community members make sense of urban culture overall.\(^5\) Salonica qualifies beyond doubt as such a modern city, having undergone over the twentieth century -and especially its first half- a rapid transformation of its soundscapes that both reflect and articulate changes in its social and material fabric.\(^6\)

Even though the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the transition to nation-states has been a broadly researched theme in historical studies, a sensory or sound

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3 The term ‘soundscape’ was originally coined by Canadian composer Murray Schafer (1977) to describe ‘the sonic environment’, or the total experienced acoustic environment including all noises, musical, natural, and technological. The concept was subsequently taken up as an analytical tool by scholars from a range of disciplines with an interest in the study of culture, to denote ‘an auditory or aural landscape’, which ‘like a landscape, is simultaneously a physical environment and a way of perceiving that environment; it is both a world and a culture constructed to make sense of that world’ (Thompson 2002, after Alain Corbin). In this respect, this article focuses on sound and sound perception as a culturally constructed experience, placing emphasis on the ways that people listen to and understand sounds.


approach to history has not been adequately explored. The current article aims to highlight aspects of this transition that reside beyond its literate, visual, and conceptual representations, in the sphere of the senses, and in particular of sound. More specifically, the purpose of this article is to trace those soundmarks, regarding a specific case study: that of Yeni Cami (1902), the mosque of the Dönme community of late Ottoman Salonica, through its consequent usages as a refugee shelter (1922-1925) and subsequently as the first Archaeological Museum of Salonica (1925-1962). Our focus is on the sound history of the building up until 1940, when the museum was temporarily closed down due to WWII. The aim of this article is to point to the value of cultural listening as a tool to understand social transformations from the perspective of different subject positions. Through this case study, our article aims to offer broader insights and understandings of the modern history of the city of Salonica and to approach the ‘structure of feeling’ of life in periods of transition, to quote Raymond Williams’s famous term.

Call to prayer, languages and tram horns: the Soundscape of Hamidiye, 1902-1922

All historical accounts of late Ottoman Salonica mention the number of languages one can listen to in the streets of the city. Few, however, if any, discuss these languages in relation to all other sounds produced by social activities and all these as components of a soundscape that makes sense in particular ways to the people producing it. For the Dönme community of Salonica attached to the Hamidiye Câmi’ (as was the official name of the popularly known as Yeni Cami) language had always been a significant marker to


distinguish between the private and public sphere, the two being historically identified with the use of Ladino and Hebrew, and Ottoman Turkish and Arabic. In this respect, the Dönmes unlike other communities of the city who were bound to certain language barriers could move freely between speech communities. For example, even if they did not publicly identify with the Ladino speech community they recognized it as a “sacred language”; at the same time, they identified with the ‘Muslim’ speech community in the use of Arabic language in the context of the mosque, their daily transactions, and their newspapers. Therefore, in the case of the Dönmes the notion of ‘locality’ differs significantly from that in all other speech communities of the city.

The history of the presence of the Dönme community in the Hamidiye district is parallel to that of the extra muros expansion of the city, following the destruction of the north-eastern walls in 1889, and to the need for settling of those affected by the fire of 1890, who were mainly Jews. In contrast to the traditional settlement pattern of the community at the borders between the Muslim and the Jewish communities, and to the internal community divisions that were reflected in the choice of specific neighbourhoods within the city, the Dönmes of Hamidiye participated in a process of modern urban transformation which was dictated by social rather than strictly ethno-religious criteria.

In this process, it is mainly the wealthier members of the community who had gained an active role in the entrepreneurial life of the city that chose to move to Hamidiye. This social group had greatly contributed to the educational life of the community, and the city in general, through the founding of schools, such as the Yadikâr Terakki Mektebi. This

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9 Marc David Baer, ‘Revealing a Hidden Community: Ilgaz Zorlu and the Debate in Turkey Over the Dönme/Sabbateans.’ The Turkish Studies Association Bulletin 23.1 (1999), pp. 68–75 and “The Double Bind of Race and Religion: The Conversion of the Dönme to Turkish Secular Nationalism”, Comparative Studies in Society and History 46.4 (2004), 678–712, p. 17. The language issue of the Dönme community remains disputed and requires further research. For the purposes of the present analysis is worth considering the following information. According to Nikos Stavroulakis, the Yakobi branch were in general only Ottoman-Turkish speaking, while the Karakash might have retained Judezmo or some form of it for home. Also by the 19th century there was no interaction between Jews and Maminler and therefore less opportunity to keep Judezmo alive. However, Stavroulakis points out that in the context of business it may well be that the men used Judezmo. We are indebted to Paris Papamichos-Chronakis for sharing with us this piece of information.


12 Baer 2012: 50.
was a ‘progressive school’, as its title proclaimed, founded in 1879, with a particular emphasis on finance and commerce in its curriculum.

By 1907, the Yadikâr Terakki Mektebi had in addition to its original premises in the city new branches at the Hamidiye district. In the Yearbook of the Province of Salonica (Selanik Vilâyeti Salnamesi) of 1906 that lists the subjects taught at the Yadikâr Terakki Mektebi, in addition to Ottoman Turkish, one finds courses in Arabic and Farsi as well as French and German. For the sound historian this is an example of a source that rather than being ‘read’ is being ‘listened to’. The sounds of German and French, as well as of Farsi complement in density the polyglot soundscape of the community; in addition to the use of Ladino and Ottoman Turkish, a further distinction is added by the use of French, which stands as a marker of social distinction within the community and in relation to the wider social stratification of late Ottoman Salonica. Similarly, a wide variety of languages – including Greek, Albanian and Bulgarian – was heard in their households due to the presence of wet-nurses and nannies and daily helpers. All this resulted to a marked hybridity.

This very vocal character of the soundscape of the Dönmes of Hamidiye should be conceived as part of the broader public soundscape of the neighbourhood of the Hamidiye Câmi’. The loud sounds of the tram that crossed at certain times the Sahilhaneler and the mosque’s call to prayer that sounded five times a day implemented a certain periodicity in the everyday life of the inhabitants of the area. Yet, in Hamidiye, which was a socially and ethno-religiously diverse district, this periodicity – or better repetition, since the local press of the time is full of complaints regarding tram delays – did not mean the same to everyone. For certain inhabitants the sound of the tram signified the very modern process of the urban expansion of the city, while for others it was a sound out of place, to

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13 Baer 2012: 34, 50.
16 See the interesting memoir by Ahmed Emin Yalman, Turkey in my time, Oklahoma: Oklahoma University Press, 1957.
17 Kostas Theologou, Χώρος και Μνήμη. Θεσσαλονίκη 15\textsuperscript{ο}-20\textsuperscript{ο} αι. Από τις παραδοσιακές κοινότητες στην αστική νεοτερικότητα, Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2008, p. 162
paraphrase Mary Douglas.\textsuperscript{18} After all the notion of noise is culturally defined. The tram sound was conceptualized as noise due, firstly, to the antimodernizing discourse of religious elites and, secondly, to the discourse of, mainly European, travelers who were nostalgics of the serene, idyllic past.\textsuperscript{19}

Equally, the sound of the call to prayer structured the life of certain inhabitants but for others it was sheer hullabaloo that nevertheless acted as a powerful reminder of Muslim domination – for the Jews – or Ottoman rule – for the Greeks. For the European inhabitants of the city who were followers of the orientalist trope vis-à-vis the city it was an indication of the presence of the Orient, just like the cypresses and the minarets, which shaped optically the skyline of the city. While the minaret and the tram are conceived as landmarks of the specific sites in the city, they are also soundmarks carrying not only specific but also conflicting meanings for those that listened to the sounds emanated from them. Modernity (and by consequence tradition) became the site of an acoustic struggle.

The soundscape of the Yeni Cami neighbourhood was not solid and stable, however. It transformed and changed and therefore was highly ephemeral and fluid. In 1906, for example, trams approaching the area were accompanied by people warning passers-by with horns in order to prevent accidents from happening. An article at the Journal de Salonique is quite telling regarding the soundscape surrounding such everyday practices:

The employees of the Tramway Company placed in charge of walking with their horn in front of the tram, cleaning the horse dung and warning off passers-by, found it more leisurely to stand on the vehicle next to the coachman and to deafen the passengers with their obnoxious shouts and the sounds of the horns. Thus, despite the noise, passers-by don’t have enough time to move aside and, consequently, too many accidents keep happening.\textsuperscript{20}


\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Journal de Salonique}, 23 June 1906.
In 1907, one year after the article in the Journal de Salonique, the tram ceased being drawn by horses and became electric.\textsuperscript{21} In 1912, moreover, following the annexation of the city to the Greek Kingdom, the demography of the area changed as a significant number of Muslims left the city, followed by an increase of the Greek population in the district.\textsuperscript{22} The call to prayer addressed a community smaller in size, while for the emerging dominant community the sound of the ezan sounded more and more awkward. Even though a good number of mosques were destroyed in the catastrophic fire of 1917,\textsuperscript{23} by 1922-1923 the minarets and their fate had become a favourite topic in the local press, particularly the leading Venizelist –and fiercely nationalistic– newspaper Makedonia. Among a number of short articles that argued for the non-necessity of the minarets in the city of Salonica, their poor architectural and aesthetic value and the ‘barbaric’ symbolisms they carried, is a war chronicle from 1921, narrating a Greek soldier’s traumatic experience of listening to the ezan in Sivri Hisar (Eski Şehir province) during the Asia Minor campaign:

Suddenly, a voice cuts through the infinite silence like a knife. A loud and sharp voice. Yet, full of secretive harmony and grievance. It is a voice that comes from above and descends from the Sky. Lai-lalai-lalahi……[…]. The city echoes with the cries of these hysteric barkers who, the more they climb up the stairs of the minaret towards the sky, the more they fall and squirm in a mire of an anti-humanitarian civilization.\textsuperscript{24}

The publishing of this ‘soldier’s note’ in the press of Salonica in 1923, namely almost a year after the war was over, signified that, to certain Greek sections of the local society, the call to prayer had started to sound very differently from the past. Of course, this does not mean that reactions had not been reported in the past. Already from the times of the Young Turks the anti-Muslim trope had started to appear, with regular reactions against

\textsuperscript{21} Anastassiadou, Salonique 1830–1912, op.cit., p. 136.
\textsuperscript{22} Kolonas 1991: 59-65. Already in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars the Greek press was pressing in the best of cases for the banning of the use of the fez by Muslim employees at the tramway and other public enterprises and in the worse for their sacking. This fact indicates the multiplicity of the numerous temporalities of transition and the various Übergangs. See Papamichos-Chronakis, op.cit.
\textsuperscript{24} Makedonia, 9 February 1923.
the Dönme. However, whereas the careful minority politics of Eleftherios Venizelos had kept this tendency in check, the violent shift in the political (and geopolitical) landscape after the end of World War I rendered this tendency dominant. This dramatic reconfiguration of the semiotics of prayer meant that cultural difference was now seen as cultural dissonance, and therefore could not be tolerated and respected anymore.

Nikolaos Fardis, an ultra-nationalistic journalist, wrote in a similar tone: “Who can tell me why that disgusting Hamza mosque remains on the key corner of Venizelos and Egnatia streets? Architectural value? None! Historical value? Less than none! […] As soon as we can we must tear down the Hamza mosque […]”

25 To the Greek soldier and a section of the the readership of Makedonia newspaper, just like to journalists like Fardis, the ezan signified neither time for prayer nor a daily timer. Instead it meant that time had come for this already declining aural practice to be silenced once and for all.

A Noisy Symbiosis: the Soundscape of the Refugee shelter, 1922-1925

By the fall of 1922 the Greco-Turkish war had resulted in a massive influx of refugees from Asia Minor, members of the Rum community, to Greece. An estimated 1.1-1.5 million people flooded the Greek Kingdom, transforming dramatically the country’s urban and rural social fabric.

26 As a large number of refugees were placed strategically in Macedonia, the once predominant Jewish community – 40% of the city’s population in 1912- was relegated to the third position with the Greek Orthodox community rising to 80 % by 1926.

Those who arrived at the port of Salonica, sought, with the aid of the various relief organizations and committees or on their own initiative, temporary shelter wherever they could, including in churches, synagogues and mosques, as well as schools and other public buildings, settlements and camps – a practice that was common also after the


27 Mazower, Salonica, op.cit.

second Balkan War, causing considerable friction between the various religious communities and the Greek authorities. Lots of families would live side by side under a single roof, often for months or even years. There, variants and local dialects of Greek, Pontic Greek and Turkish were mostly heard. Some village and neighbourhood communities or families arrived together and were sheltered together; others were separated and found themselves scattered across the Greek lands.

The soundscape outside the Yeni Cami was likewise transformed: it was marked by the absence of the voice of the muezzin (the minaret itself would be demolished a few years later); and by a speech community which was gradually turning linguistically homogenous, in which Greek would eventually prevail. The surrounding area hosted a web of private and public structures of aid and relief towards the refugees that also left their sonic imprint on the soundscape. In 1923 a wooden booth was erected at the square of Yeni Cami and served as a point for the distribution of bread to the refugees by the American Red Cross.29 During the same year, the Census Bureau of Yeni Cami was one of the points in the city of Salonica where the state census of the refugee families who arrived after 1914 was conducted. Through announcements posted in the daily press, the Chief of the Relief Service invited all ‘heads of family, men or, in the absence of men, women’ to present themselves with their refugee documents in hand to the census bureaus.30 The Bread Distribution Station of Yeni Cami was used also by the state Relief Service for the distribution of a subsidy to the refugee heads of family for the months of August and September 1923; and for the distribution of bedding to those in utmost need in December 1923. Women – who also came to register for the census and to receive the relief distribution if they qualified as heads of family – were the protagonists of another incident which unfolded at the Yeni Cami and was documented in the press in August 1924:31 the women’s committee that had rallied a few days earlier in support of the return of detainees and non-combatants held captive in Turkey, invited those with captives and hostages in Turkey to join the cause by sending letters of notification to the Yeni Cami. Sound in this respect would carry the resonance of a gendered inversion: until that point male voices used to dominate the interior of the mosque – with its male imam and its

29 Makedonia, 5 March 1923
30 Makedonia, 6 April 1923.
31 Makedonia, 9 August 1924
male community of worshippers occupying the central area of the interior. As a refugee shelter, the building would resound with the high-pitched timbres of female and children’s voices, reflecting the demographic composition of the refugee population and the respective transformation of the area but also the total transformation of space in terms of gender dynamics.

Besides attesting to gendered social relations and hierarchies, the soundscape of Yeni Cami bore the marks of a forced symbiosis. In 1922 sound became central in defining the multiple spatialities of the building. What is more, the borders between private and public were blurred and rendered fluid. As numerous oral testimonies of refugees indicate, families hanged pieces of cloth and rugs, or piled sacks one on top of the other to partition the interiors of public buildings in order to achieve a degree of privacy and isolation. Yet the visual compartmentalization of space achieved by such improvised techniques with the help of material objects was far from soundproof. One interview is quite telling:

Q- During the six months that you stayed in these camps, what were the relations between the people staying there like? Did you have difficulties?
A- We had difficulties in the tents. We used sacks to separate ourselves from one another, and from there what they said we too could hear. Sometimes they were decent people and they would not talk, neither would we talk. Sometimes we quarrelled, they were… We had no isolation. In the tents one could hear everything.32

Here, sound tells a different story from sight: although spatial separation was achieved visually, the sounds and smells circulated rather freely and defined a different, porous condition of symbiotic experience. The multiple ways in which sound and smell travelled within this context, carrying with them some of the most intimate aspects of everyday life, cancelled in a sense the distinction between the private and the public. Anthropologist David Howes describes this as the ‘conflict model’ of the sensorium:

32 Oral testimony of Georgios Zografos; Historical Archive of Refugee Hellenism of the Municipality of Kalamaria, Oral Testimonies Archive. Salonica, 20 September 1994. Interviewer Eleni Ioannidou. In our research at the Kalamaria archive we did not locate testimonies of people who resided in Yeni Cami. The testimonies, nevertheless, even though referring to tents, possibly reflect similar experiences of people who had to share indoor, undivided space.
‘The senses are not always in agreement with each other. At times conflicting messages are conveyed by different sensory channels, and certain domains of sensory expression and experience are suppressed in favour of others’. Since sounds and odours travelled freely they often led people to adopt silence or silent talking, denoting who was “decent” and who was not, therefore creating new social hierarchies among the “bourgeois” refugees. Therefore the senses were forging not only new national but also class identities.

This brings to the forth the recent theoretical discussion on ‘intersensorality’ or ‘multisensorality’, which has emerged especially in the fields of sensory history and anthropology of the senses. The critique to ocularcentrism (or visual bias) as a defining feature of modernity, came together with the realization that the premodern era assigned an important role to vision, while, conversely, touch, sound, smell and taste continued to be significant bearers of meaning in the modern era. Thus, we need to address how the senses worked together in particular times and places rather than conduct separate analyses of each sense in isolation. The shelter period of the Yeni Cami during the period 1922-1925 highlights the interconnectivity of the senses of the refugees, which interacted with each other ‘in different combinations and hierarchies [...] of social importance’. The bread distributed in front of it which its inhabitants would eat and conjure up its tastefulness back home; the keeping of hygiene and the occasional quarrels that would break out among the inhabitants; the smells of human bodies and everyday objects that would circulate across the cluttered space of the interior; and the sounds of voices reminiscing, interacting, making plans, making demands. All senses, all domains of sensory experience, at times in conflict with each other and at times working together,

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33 David Howes, Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press 2003, xxii.
‘offer a field of cultural elaboration’\textsuperscript{38} that provides insights into the experience of forced migration and temporary settlement of the Asia Minor refugees. These were bringing not so much the material culture of their homeland, but the sensory experience thereof.\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{A Silent ‘Kaiadas’ for Antiquities: the Archaeological Museum, 1925-1940:}

1925 was a crucial year regarding the various metamorphoses of the monument and its soundscape. In that year the decision was made to turn the Yeni Cami into the city’s first archaeological museum. This decision had been, for quite a long time, a demand of the archaeologists Giorgos Oikonomou and Efstratios Pelekidis. The building was assigned by the General Office of Exchange to the Ephorate of Antiquities of Salonica.\textsuperscript{40} After the rejection of a number of public buildings as possible loci that could host antiquities - the Rotunda included -\textsuperscript{41} Yeni Cami was selected, partly due to the fact that it was not affected by the great fire that had devastated the city centre in 1917, partly due to the fact that it was a relatively novel space and partly due to the eclectic characteristics in its architecture that rendered it supposedly more ‘European’ in nature. Despite all this rationale behind it, the decision to use this space as an archaeological museum is paradoxical. Archaeological museums function as the ‘temples of the nation’, to use archaeologist Yannis Hamilakis’s apt description; in this case, however, the space used towards this purpose was itself a temple, with all the historical, cultural and semantic baggage that this signified. Hamilakis has pointed out the religious undertones in preserving antiquities in Greece as part of a wider sacralisation of the past,\textsuperscript{42} which makes the use of a former religious building towards that end in the case of Yeni Cami even more striking. This was a certain way to “hellenize” the monument by re-writing its basic function and therefore “cleansing” it from its past connotations, just like it

\textsuperscript{38} Howes, \textit{Sensual Relations}, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{41} Vokotopoulou, “Ta prota 50 chronia”, op.cit., p.6.
happened with other Ottoman buildings that changed function, such as the Dioikitirio, the Stratigeio and the Teloneio.

Following on that argument, one might argue that even though the choice of Yeni Cami as the building that would host Greek antiquities was an act of secularization within the context of the modernizing task of the Greek state, instead the original worship place was preserved but just changed ‘religious community’. The fact that Manolis Andronikos happened to operate in the museum, the foremost Greek archaeologist of the second half of the twentieth century and a figure that Hamilakis characteristically calls a “shaman” since he blurred enormously the boundaries between archaeology and the supernatural, adds to the validity of this argument. At the same time, one cannot but think that the decision to house the Pedagogical Academy or “Didaskaleion” in the former mansion of Mehmed Hayri Pasha, Ottoman Commander of the Third Army Corps with Dönme preferences, which happened to be across the street, was part of a wider project of “hellenization” of this particular quarter of the city that was acquiring a central cultural function. The fact that the city centre remained destroyed and relatively dead throughout the interwar period rendered the “hellenization” of the most bourgeois and Europeanized quarter almost imperative.

The 1926 refurbishment of the building constituted a signpost in its history. In the context of the transition from a religious building to a museum the refurbishment acted as rite of passage from one usage to the next. Just like a large variety of rituals this one included sound and silencing in a certain ceremonial catharsis that would render this monument compatible with the hegemonic national narrative, to paraphrase Yannis Hamilakis comment on the Acropolis. The detailed record of the refurbishment during the conversion of the Yeni Cami into the first Archaeological Museum of Salonica described among other works the ‘removal’ of the pulpit, the minbar, from where the imam of the mosque performed his sermons and its transfer to Hagia Sofia, one of the city’s most important orthodox churches. The significance of this document for

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43 Vokotopoulou, op.cit., 15, 17.
44 Hamilakis, The Nation in Ruins, op.cit.
45 Theologou, Χώρος και Μνήμη, op.cit.
46 Hamilakis, op.cit.
47 Ministry of Transport, Public Works Directorate, Budget for the restoration of the Yeni Cami mosque [Προϋπολογισμός της Απαιτούμενης Δαπάνης δια την Επισκευή του Τεμένους Γενί Τζαμί]
sketching the sound history of this particular building is far greater than the epilogue to the story of the Islamic praying practice in the city: it narrates the story of the major demographic shift that had taken place in the first quarter of the twentieth century in the city and consequently in this specific neighborhood, following a series of major political events. In other words, it tells the story of the major shift in the religious soundscape of the city.

In order to make sense, the document of the extraction of the minbar needs to be cross-read with other types of documents. One is the Convention of Athens, signed by Greece and the Ottoman Empire in 1913, defining the legal status of the Muslim community of Macedonia after the latter’s integration into the Greek Kingdom the previous year.\(^{48}\) This document describes the right of the Muslim community to exercise publicly its religious duties, as well as that of appointing its religious leaders, including the positions of the mufti and the imam. This legal document testifies to the survival of the sound-life of the minbar after 1913. Yet, in the same document this privilege was being regulated through the issuing of another article (protocol no. 3, article 1) that stated that the Ottoman state lost any right over mosques that had been converted to Orthodox churches. In Salonica this applied to the major mosques of the historical centre that right after the integration of the city to the Greek Kingdom were turned back to churches. Therefore, this legal document implemented the marginalization of Islamic ritual in the public space and consequently in the religious public soundscape of the city. Hence, the sound practices associated with the minbar should be considered as located in the margins.

Equally significant in order to understand the context of the extraction of the minbar are law number 2345 of 1920\(^{49}\) on the administration of the property of the Muslim communities of the Greek state, and the Treaty of Lausanne signed by Greece and Turkey in 1923, ending the Greco-Turkish war and proclaiming the population

\(^{48}\) Kingdom of Greece Gazette, 14 November 1913, nr 229.
\(^{49}\) Gazette of the Kingdom of Greece, Athens 3 July 1920, nr 148.
exchange between the two countries’ Christian and Muslim communities respectively.\textsuperscript{50} This put an end to the centuries-long presence of Muslims in Salonica and consequently to their public imprint in the public religious soundscape of the city.\textsuperscript{51} This cross-reading of administrative and legal documents facilitates the understanding of how a specific sound practice, which was politically regulated and implemented, left its trace on archived documents and written texts. As sound historians we felt challenged by the task of exploring that space in the full picture inhabited by those who did not necessarily have a voice in legal documents. This challenge relates to how the members of the Muslim, and/or Dönme, community of Salonica experienced this massive shift in their auditory world. This question takes more than legal documents in order to be answered. It takes for example the analysis of inscriptions. The powerful function of inscriptions stemming out of their transitional life-stories that extends far beyond their monumental status has been discussed in detail by Yannis Hamilakis with reference to the constitution of archaeology in modern Greece.\textsuperscript{52}

Among the epigraphic components of the Yeni Cami that have been preserved and could give pointers towards this direction, is an inscription of one of the two fountains from the courtyard of the mosque. The inscription consists of three lines and reads:

\begin{quote}
Wa min al-mâ kulla şa-i ha
Selânîk Telegraf ve Posta Baş-Müdürü
sabîki Sirozî El-Hac Agâh Beğin hayretidir.\textsuperscript{53}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{50} For a thorough overview of the relation and status of the Muslim communities of Greece and the state see Konstantinos Tsitselikis, \textit{Old and New Islam in Greece. From Historical Minorities to Immigrant Newcomers}. Leiden: Koninklijk Brill 2012.

\textsuperscript{51} The gradual exodus of the city’s Muslim population had already started after 1912-1913, with the Balkan Wars. See, in this respect, Mazower, \textit{Salonica. City of Ghosts}, op.cit.

\textsuperscript{52} Hamilakis points to the central role of the materiality of inscriptions in the process of the sacralization of the classical past in modern Greece. In this process, inscriptions come at the center of a ritual by archeologists and members of the national intelligentsia, invoking the multi-sensory and synaesthetic dimension of material culture (Hamilakis, \textit{The Nation and its Ruins}, op.cit., 9).

[We made everything from water
An endowment by the Salonica’s Telegraph and Post
ex-director Sirozî El-Hac Agâh Beg]

The centrality of water in the context of the fountain that the inscription underlines is something that is hard to ignore. Two foreign visitors in Salonica in 1921 in their description of mosques recorded the sound of the water in the fountain:

The ablution fountain, capacious and imposing, trickles with a refreshing sound and the wide open door shows the way to an interior which by its shade and cooler atmosphere affords a pleasing contrast to the glare and dust of the street.\(^{54}\)

To these two Englishmen the sound of the water of the fountain alluded to a specific sensation, expressed by the term ‘refreshing.’ This sensation carried on into their overall impression of the place. This particular inscription (in its rather short life-story) partook in another ritual; that of the conversion of the mosque into a museum. Among the works listed in the refurbishment of 1926 was also ‘the destruction of the two fountains’.

One could safely argue that the ritual destruction of the fountains equaled the ‘hiding’ or ‘deleting’ of the archive.\(^{55}\) An even more precise description would be the ‘silencing’ of the archive, or the decontextualization thereof.\(^{56}\) Despite all this, the inscription, was preserved - possibly in the premises of the museum-, in the form of a monumental plate, a relic of the Ottoman history of the building. Yet, even in its new displaced position ‘within the archive’, the inscription was subjected to all ‘nontextual’ or ‘antitextual’ acts that followed the turn to the archive as it has been examined, photographed, transcribed, published and disseminated, to mention but a few of its subsequent treatments and afterlives.\(^{57}\)

Nevertheless, the transformation of this site in terms of aural practices and collective memory did not only result of legal and administrative acts on an elite level.

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\(^{56}\) Hamilakis, *The Nation in Fragments*, op.cit.

\(^{57}\) Papailias, *Genres of Recollection*, p. 17.
The neighbourhood was itself highly transformed due to the landslide demographic changes brought about by the arrival of the refugees. The gradual exodus of a significant number of its Jewish population towards France, Italy and Switzerland during the 1920s intensified this transformation. Consequently, the Yeni Cami could hardly hold the same signifiers anymore. As Mark Mazower aptly put it “by 1930, only a small proportion of Salonica’s inhabitants could remember the city as it had existed in the days of [Sultan] Abdul Hamid” – and this applies to the inhabitants of the quarter surrounding the specific monument58 Mazower, Salónica. City of Ghosts, op.cit. and Bernard Pierron, Juifs et Chrétiens de la Grèce Moderne. Histoire des relations intercommunautaires de 1821 a 1945, Paris: Harmattan, 1996. Mazower, Salónica. City of Ghosts, op. cit., p. 331.
60 This does not imply, however, an entire eradication of the past since important survivals remained. The sheer fact that the monument retained both names in everyday parlance, namely is referred to interchangeably as Yeni Cami and Old Archeological Museum until the present, demonstrates that survivals of the Ottoman past had penetrated the everyday linguistic practices and the experience of the city.
62 Vokotopoulou, op.cit., p. 10.
63 Unknown newspaper, 11 January 1932, cited by Vokotopoulou, op.cit., p. 10.}
to a silent dead space – a “Kaiadas” – despite the aim of guarding part of the nation’s ‘symbolic capital’.  

In the 1940s another layer was added to the above-mentioned process of silencing that dominated the history of the building. The head of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Salonica Nikolaos Kotzias, as well as Charalabos Makaronas and other archaeologists were placed in charge of the task of securing the antiquities against possible damage or loss due to the outbreak of WWII. The majority of the antiquities were buried in the city of Salonica, only to see the light of day in 1951 and eventually 1953 when a large exhibition finally took place in the building under the direction of Makaronas and Andronikos.

While the shift in the usage of the Yeni Cami from refugee shelter to the city’s Archaeological Museum silenced a significant part of the recent social and cultural history of the building and the surrounding area, it also inaugurated a new sensory phase: namely, that produced by the new ‘inhabitants’ of the building. This new phase is interwoven with the life stories of the members of the Archaeological Ephorate and their paperwork, the archaeologists and the technicians who moved around and catalogued the antiquities, the porters of the building and all those who occupied for longer or shorter periods the additional premises in the courtyard. The new soundscape produced by this complex network of people is to be studied in relation to the institutional principles and ideology of the museum, as these were conceived and spelled out at the time. Such an approach has a lot to offer to the documentation and understanding of the sensory history of the antiquities hosted in the building and consequently of the history of archaeology and its relation to local and national politics in modern Greece in general. It was only ten years after the first exhibition, in 1962, that the new Archaeological Museum of the city was inaugurated – symbolically on the 50th anniversary of the city’s “liberation” - providing more space and less silence to a larger public, including a narrative regarding the past that was much more linear, more homogenous and less fragmented than that of the Yeni Cami and its various afterlives.

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65 Vokotopoulou, op.cit, pp. 12 -17.
This article tried to underline the importance of sound and of aural perception in the articulation of social, class and race identities as well as in processes of modernization and secularization is a recurring theme. In the words of ethnomusicologist Veit Erlmann: “Hearing Culture suggests that it is possible to conceptualize new ways of knowing a culture and of gaining a deepened understanding of how the members of a society know each other. It is not only by accumulating a body of interrelated texts, signifiers, and symbols that we get a sense of the relationships and tensions making up a society. The ways in which people relate to each other through the sense of hearing also provide important insights into a wide range of issues confronting societies around the world as they grapple with the massive changes wrought by modernization, technologization, and globalization.”

We have, therefore, tried to challenge the hegemonic narrative regarding the transition from Empire to the nation-state in Greece, demonstrating through the focus on soundscapes that multilingualism and cultural diversity not only survived but were often intensified, despite the official discourse regarding homogenization after 1922. The arrival of the refugees to the city did not necessarily denote its “Hellenization” in terms of the linguistic landscape since they brought with them Turkish, Pontic and various local dialects. Instead of the “Hellenization” of the soundscape, therefore, the result was a new form of “multiculturalism”, at least in as far as senses were concerned. Furthermore, parallel to our attempt to demonstrate through the historicization of the experience of sound the disjuncture that secularization and modernization brought about, we also tried to stress the importance of intersensorality – pointing to the crucial role of the relation between the senses in arriving to an alternative narration to the one of the image or the printed word. In terms of the studies of sound, this article confirmed, therefore, the usefulness of an intersensory or multisensory approach in historical and cultural inquiry, promoting the use of another theoretical, and so far understudied, tool for the study of the past.