



H.F.R.I.
Hellenic Foundation for
Research & Innovation

Description of the funded research project
2nd Call for H.F.R.I. Research Projects
to Support Post-Doctoral Researchers

Principal Investigator: Dimitra Vassiliadou

Title of the research project: Brutal intimacies. A history of rape in modern Greece, 1900s-1960s {Brintima}

Reader-friendly title: A history of rape in modern Greece

Scientific Area: History

Host Institution: Department Social Anthropology and History, University of the Aegean

Collaborating Institution: : Birkbeck College, London, UK



Budget: 135.000 €

Duration: 36 months

Research Project Synopsis

Proceeding from the assumption that sexual practices and ideologies are social and cultural constructs and, like anything else, are subject to change, the project explores rape in its historical specificity: as criminal act, court case, public scandal, offence against common morals, war crime and individual experience. Willing to integrate the unexplored Greek case into international history and the historiography of sexual violence, *Brintima* focuses on rape cases that provoked private and public discourses, and statutory reactions from the beginning of the twentieth century until the late 1960s in Greece.

The research team, composed of the PI, two postdoctoral fellows, two research assistants and one project assistant, will explore these objectives. Adopting a methodological strategy that enables a multifaceted exploration of sexual coercion, it will draw on a wide range of diverse and unexplored material (pretrial investigations, trial transcripts, press cuttings, legal manuals and treatises, military official documents and autobiographical accounts). These sources can reveal transformations in legal understandings and treatments of rape, as well as in the ways that important power dynamics of difference (gender, age, socioeconomic status, religion and ethnicity), act upon ideologies and practices of sexual violence. They can also underline shifts in the cultural meanings assigned to rape over time, privileging the voices of the individuals involved: policemen, jurists, reporters, perpetrators, victims, and witnesses.

The research project will produce a postgraduate history seminar on sexual violence, a collective volume, articles and papers, an international conference and other material. Furthermore, several actions are specifically designed to raise public awareness against rapes and other forms of sexual violence.

Project originality

There are four areas of originality and innovation in which *Brintima* builds upon, and contributes further to knowledge and the 'state of the art' of the field it falls under:

The **primary innovative element** of the project is that it explores a considerably understudied theme in Greek history, the history of rape. As the subject is practically absent from local academic literature, the present proposal attempts to trigger further research on this cutting-edge topic of escalated international academic and social interest.

A **second innovative element** of the project is that it tries to reconstruct as many perspectives of rape as possible, thus far studied almost independently of each other. It deals with rape incidents in times of peace and times of war, in urban and rural places, in middle-class, working-class and agricultural populations; it reflects on the victims: women and girls, but also men and boys; adults, minors and children. It explores, finally, the polarized figure of the rapist.

A **third innovative element** of the project is that it aims to make a thorough comparison of rapes in Greece with relevant cases from the international scholarship. This integration will allow similarities and differences to emerge, and will contribute to decentering the dominant historical paradigms.

A **fourth innovative element** of the project is that it intends to challenge still widespread sexist, harmful perceptions of rape and rape victims. *Brintima* will take history into the public realm, and draw attention to the ways historical research can be relevant to contemporary concerns on sexual attacks, gender and domestic violence, femicides, sexual harassment, rape culture, and the sexual abuse of children.

Expected results & Research Project Impact

The research results will be disseminated to both academic and non-academic, in order to impact the research community, and to open new channels of communication between the public and historians.

(a) Academic audiences | Scientific impact

The research team will open and keep a stable and fruitful dialogue with specialized historians on the topic of sexual violence from the first stages of the program up to the end. It will also create bonds with younger researchers and postgraduate students with an interest in the subject. The aim is to receive continuous feedback, regarding the procedure and the results of the research. Five actions have been planned to secure an open dialogue with the academic community and the dissemination of the research results: 1) Articles in peer-reviewed journals 2) A collective volume 3) Participation of team members in conferences, workshops and seminars in Greece and abroad, 4) A post-graduate seminar, entitled “Sexual crimes and violence: A history», 5) An international conference on the historical perspectives of rape.

(a) Non-academic audiences | Social impact

The recent global emergence of rape as a human rights issue, shows that sexual coercion is not merely a personal trauma; it is also a matter of politics, power relations, and public policy. The proposed project aims to underline how historical knowledge and practice can help provide inspiration for addressing modern problems. It has been specifically designed to raise awareness against rape and other forms of sexual violence. In fulfilling this objective for as wide an audience as possible, the project will have a firm public presence utilizing the postdoctoral researchers’ existing links to the press and media.

The importance of this funding

This funding gives to all research team members the opportunity to maintain their exposure to scholarly environments of high standard in order to reach a position of professional maturity.



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COMMUNICATION

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