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**Workshop 7**

***The Late Ottoman Port Cities and Their Inhabitants:  
Subjectivity, Urbanity, and Conflicting Orders***

**directed by**

**Malte Fuhrmann**

Center for Modern Oriental Studies  
Berlin, Germany

<mailto:maltefuh@gmx.net>

**Vangelis Kechriotis**

History Department  
Boğaziçi University  
Bebek, Istanbul, Turkey

<mailto:evangelos.kechriotis@boun.edu.tr>

***Workshop abstract***

This workshop does not intend to suggest a hierarchy of the already constructed images or even resolve these seemingly contradictory interpretations of the late Ottoman port cities. Instead, it intends to use this kaleidoscope as a point of departure to prepare the ground for a debate which will hopefully lead to a better insight of 19<sup>th</sup> century Eastern Mediterranean urbanity. The political, social, and economic culture of the Ottoman port cities was certainly multifaceted and contested. Rather than debating which discourse was predominant, we raise the question of how groups and individuals navigated between them and made their choices utilizing a range of possibilities. It is our thesis that the competing orders did not produce neatly divided camps among the city population, but rather a terrain permitting or even demanding individual interpretation and amendment.

By focusing on individual and collective subjectivity, we aim to attain a more composite understanding of the way various discourses were combined to shape social practice and create forms of urbanity. The panel aspires to bring together researchers who will present their work on port cities which were under Ottoman sovereignty for all or part of the period 1850-1922. Case studies might focus on socially or culturally defined groups within the city. Groups which have not been thoroughly studied as yet are of particular interest. But rather than just presenting micro-histories focusing on particular social practices, papers will be expected to demonstrate how these groups developed their respective varieties of urbanity in a social arena dominated by discourses on citizenship, civilization

and the Empire. Could they relate these constructs to their perceptions of the city and integrate them into their practices? Or did they form negative images of the other which would allow them to strengthen their own group cohesion? And how did such perceptions and reactions change over time? By raising these questions, we believe that we can build upon a historiographical tradition in order to successfully compare urban experiences between far-flung locations, various social strata, and cultural as well as ethno-religious groups. However, whereas usually this comparison exhausts itself in relating case studies to each other in a syntagmatic manner, this panel seeks to reconstruct the common political and cultural space of the late Ottoman Mediterranean urbanity which makes all these experiences meaningful.

### *Workshop description*

This workshop intends to use the kaleidoscope of seemingly contradictory interpretations of the late Ottoman port cities as a point of departure to open the ground for a debate which will hopefully lead to a better insight of 19<sup>th</sup> century Eastern Mediterranean urbanity. Rather than debating which discourse was predominant, we raise the question of how groups and individuals navigated between them, and made their choices utilizing a range of possibilities. It is our thesis that the competing orders did not produce neatly divided camps among the cities' populations, but rather a terrain permitting or even demanding individual interpretation and amendment. The panel aspires to bring together researchers who will present their work on port cities which were under Ottoman sovereignty for all or part of the period 1850-1922. Case studies might focus on socially or culturally defined groups within each city. Groups which have not been thoroughly studied as yet are of particular interest. But rather than just presenting micro-histories focusing on particular social practices, papers will be expected to demonstrate how these groups developed their respective varieties of urbanity in a social arena dominated by discourses on citizenship, civilization and the Empire. Could they relate these constructs to their perceptions of the city and integrate them into their practices? Or did they form negative images of the 'other' which would allow them to strengthen their own group cohesion? And how did such perceptions and reactions change over time? By raising these questions, we believe that we can build upon a historiographical tradition in order to successfully compare urban experiences between far flung locations, various social strata, and cultural as well as ethno-religious groups and reconstruct the common political and cultural space of the late Ottoman Mediterranean urbanity which makes all these experiences meaningful.

Life on the shores of the Levant during the 'Age of Imperialism' has often been described, both in contemporary and historiographic assessments, as an exceptional experience. Accordingly, within the past twenty years, the Mediterranean port cities under Ottoman sovereignty have been thoroughly researched and debated. In this respect, several approaches have been employed, with deviating results. Initially, port cities drew attention because of their pivotal position in the region's economy.<sup>1</sup> They appeared as gateways to a Eurocentric economic and social system and/or the integration of the Eastern Mediterranean into the world economy. When this research raised questions about social

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Berov, Ljuban, "The Course of Commodity Turnover at the Thessalonica Port and the West European Economic Cycle in 19 c. up to 1912", *Études Balkaniques* 4/1985, 72-88, Frangakis-Syrett, Elena, "Commerce in the Eastern Mediterranean from the Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries: The City-Port of Izmir and its hinterland", *International Journal of Maritime History*, Vol.X, No.2 (December 1998), 125-154 and 'Implementation of the 1838 Anglo-Turkish Convention on Izmir's trade: European and minority merchants,' *New Perspectives on Turkey*, No 7, 1992, 91-112.

issues, it tried to grasp the role of the port city inhabitants by tracing their structural position in between international trade and the local society. Most pronounced and most heavily contested was the claim that the middle class in these locations formed a ‘compradore bourgeoisie’. This interpretation was challenged on many grounds.<sup>2</sup> Some did not see the cities under discussion as sites oriented primarily towards European economic activities, but as the foremost centers of the Empire, indeed as privileged sites for the consolidation of Ottoman imperial hegemony.<sup>3</sup> Another strain of research dismissed both the stress on multi-national networks and on the degree of integration into the state, focusing instead on the role citizens took on in local institutions.<sup>4</sup> Some of these studies demonstrated a self-confident citizenry claiming its role in public affairs and even went so far as to pronounce the Levantine port cities ‘models of conviviality’. More importantly, they proposed a methodological configuration which takes advantage of the experience gained by the individual cases and proceeds not to a holistic approach, which eliminates differences and peculiarities, nor to one that derives from the perspective of the state, but to one that tackles the emerging heterodoxies, i.e. the ways in which communities and individuals develop through their interaction with each other.<sup>5</sup> These interpretations, while putting into perspective earlier structuralist views through an intense reading of local practices, in turn received criticism on the grounds that they painted too rosy a picture of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> This was after all the formation period of nationalism, where ethnic or religious communities practiced self-assertive ways of dealing both with other collectivities and the state, and port cities were no exception.<sup>7</sup> However, studies focussing primarily on the role of individuals and less on institutions have shown that city residents could navigate their social and political relations

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- 2 Fundamental in this respect is the critical account in Kasaba, Reşat, ‘Was there a comprador bourgeoisie in mid-19<sup>th</sup> c. western Anatolia?’ *Review*, v.XI, 2, Spring 1988, 215-230. Kasaba, being himself one of Immanuel Wallerstein’s disciples, together with the economic historian Şevket Pamuk and the sociologists Çağlar Keyder and Faruk Tabak, apart from their contributions to the *Review* of the Fernand Braudel Center, (see for instance Keyder, (ed.), “Ottoman Empire: Nineteenth-Century Transformations,” *Review*, Special Issue, XI, 2, 1988) later played a leading role in the ‘Research Working Group on the Ottoman Empire and the World Economy’ coordinated by Keyder and Wallerstein, see Kasaba, – Keyder, - Tabak, , “Eastern Mediterranean Port Cities and their Bourgeoisies: Merchants, Political Projects and Nation-States”, *Special Anniversary issue: The Work of the Fernand Braudel Center, Review*, X, 1, Summer 1986, 121-135. This Group later published the special issue, “Port-Cities of the Eastern Mediterranean, 1800-1914”, *Review*, V.XVI, 4, Fall 1993.
  - 3 See for instance Anastasiadou, Meropi, *Salonique 1830-1912, Une ville ottomane à l’ age de Réformes*, Leiden: Brill, 1997; Eldem, Edhem - Goffman, Daniel- Masters, Bruce (eds.), *The Ottoman City Between East and West, Aleppo-Izmir-Istanbul*, Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 1999; Hanssen, Jens,- Philipp, Thomas - Weber Stefan (eds.), *The empire in the city: Arab provincial capitals in the late Ottoman Empire*, Würzburg: Ergon in Kommission, 2002 and Raymond, André, *Arab cities in the Ottoman period: Cairo, Syria, and the Maghreb*, Aldershot : Ashgate/Variorum, 2002.
  - 4 In this respect, the debate was already initiated in Rosenthal, Steven, ‘Foreigners and municipality reform in Istanbul’, *IJMES*, v.11, n.2, April 1980, 277-245. For a more recent account see: Lafi, Nora, “Introduction: Municipalités méditerranéennes – pratique du comparatisme, lecture des changements institutionnels et analyse historique de l’évolution des pouvoirs urbains du XVIIIe au XXe siècle” in Lafi, (ed.), *Municipalités méditerranéennes: Les réformes urbaines ottomanes au miroir d’une histoire comparée (Moyen-Orient, Maghreb, Europe méridionale)*, Berlin: Klaus Schwarz 2005, 11-36.
  - 5 Among the older accounts see Abu-Lughod, Janet, “Urbanization and urbanism in Beirut: some preliminary results” in Brown, Carl L., *From madina to metropolis: heritage and change in the Near Eastern city*, Princeton, N.J., Darwin Press, 1973. Later on, however, the volumes Georgeon, François - Dumont, Paul (eds.), *Villes Ottomanes à la fin de l’ Empire*, Paris : L’Harmattan, 1992 and *Vivre dans l’Empire Ottoman, sociabilités et relations intercommunautaires (XVIIIe-XXe siècles)*, Paris: L’Harmattan, 1997, would set the state of the art even until today. See also Ilbert, Robert- Yannakakis, Ilios (eds.), *Alexandrie 1860–1960. Un modèle éphémère de convivialité. Communautés et identité cosmopolite*, Paris : Autrement, 1992.
  - 6 The criticism against an all-comprising notion of cosmopolitanism has already been articulated in Ilbert, Robert, “Alexandrie Cosmopolite?” in Georgeon - Dumont (dir.), 1992, *ibid*, 171-185. The author, however, does not consider ethnic nationalism as a parameter in the particular patterns of urban development. For a contemporary account regarding this issue see Freitag, Ulrike - Oppen, Achim v., “Translokaltät als ein Zugang zur Geschichte globaler Verflechtungen” in *geschichte.transnational*, [www.geschichte-transnational.clio-online.net/forum/2005-06-001](http://www.geschichte-transnational.clio-online.net/forum/2005-06-001).
  - 7 See for instance Keyder, Çağlar, “Peripheral Port-Cities and Politics on the Eve of the Great War,” *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 20, Spring 1998, Trimi-Kirou, Katerina, “Quel cosmopolitisme à l’ère des nationalismes? Le cas d’Alexandrie”, in: *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 67 (Dec. 2003); Georgelin, Hervé, *La fin du Smyrne. Du cosmopolitisme aux nationalismes*, Paris: CNRS, 2005.

fairly untouched by state identity politics.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, a historiographical trend in the methodology of urban history successfully appropriated cultural studies and conceptualises the city as an arena where cultural hegemony is contested.<sup>9</sup> On a different level, as an outcome of the increasing interest in this particular region, a series of volumes dealing with each city individually were published with the explicit purpose to target a broader audience<sup>10</sup>.

The wide spectrum of interpretations is partly due to the sources authors choose to privilege (even though almost all researchers combine different types of sources). While those who highlight the port cities' role in the world economy rely strongly on consular reports on trade activities, those focussing on the cities' relation to the Empire prefer sources produced and stored by the imperial center. Moreover, local archives have supplied rich material that allows us to rediscover the previously eclipsed role municipal institutions have played, whereas community archives inform us about communal activities. The focus on individuals would not be possible without marriage registers, newspapers, and court registers. But the realization that different assessments are partly based on different materials only proves that already in accounts contemporary to that period there was no monolithic image of late Ottoman Mediterranean urbanity.

Is there a way to meaningfully engage in a dialogue between these varied approaches that does not lead to the dead-end of simply valuing one perspective over another? One approach has been to trace the steps of individuals through a variety of archival materials and in this way try to reconstruct how they could tread between the different social arenas sketched above and how they would reconcile actions following contradictory logic.<sup>11</sup> Such individuals often proved astonishingly flexible when trying to live up to the expectations placed on them by such varying discourses as Europe, the Empire, the municipality, the community and personal ties. This approach is limited, however, by the fact that few of them have left significant traces along a wide spectrum of sources, and from these only very tentative generalizations concerning the heterogeneous port city population can be made. Therefore, a wider perspective is necessary, if we are to conduct a more meaningful investigation of the late Ottoman port city.

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- 8 Schmitt, Oliver, *Levantiner – Lebenswelten und Identitäten einer ethnokonfessionellen Gruppe im osmanischen Reich im "langen 19. Jahrhundert"*, Munich: Oldenbourg 2005; Panzac, Daniel (ed.), *Les Villes dans l'Empire Ottoman: activités et sociétés*, Paris: CNRS, 1991, Smyrnelis, Marie-Carmen, *Une société hors de soi. Identités et relations sociales à Smyrne aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles*, Paris: Peeters, 2005. The main points of the later can be found in Smyrnelis, "Colonies Européennes et Communautés Ethnico-confessionnelles à Smyrne, coexistence et réseaux de sociabilité (fin du XVIII- milieu du XIX siècle)" in Georgeon - Dumont (eds.), 1996, *ibid*, 173-194.
- 9 See for instance Zandi-Sayek, Sibel, "Orchestrating Difference, Performing Identity: Urban Space and Public Rituals in Nineteenth Century İzmir", in Sayyad, N. Al (ed.), *Hybrid Urbanism: On the Identity Discourse and the Built Environment*, Westport: Praeger, 2001, 42-66, Kendall, Elisabeth, "Between Politics and Literature: Journals in Alexandria and Istanbul at the end of the Nineteenth Century" in Tarazi Fawaz, Leyla, - Bayly, C.A. (eds.), *Modernity and Culture, From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, New York: Columbia U.P., 2002, and Exertzoglou, Haris, "The cultural uses of consumption: Negotiating class, gender and nation in the Ottoman urban centers during the 19<sup>th</sup> c.", *IJME S*, 35(2003), 77-101.
- 10 Veinstein Gilles (dir.), *Salonique, 1850-1918 : la "ville des Juifs" et le réveil des Balkans*, Paris: Autrement, 1992, Yerasimos Stefanos (dir.), *Istanbul, 1914-1923 : capitale d'un monde illusoire ou l'agonie des vieux empires*, Paris : Autrement, 1992, Smyrnelis Marie-Carmen (dir.), *Smyrne, la ville oubliée, 1830-1930 Mémoires d'un grand port ottoman*, Paris: Autrement, 2006.
- 11 Anastassiadou, Meropi (ed.), *Elites urbaines et savoir scientifique dans la société Ottomane (XIX-XX siècles)*, Paris: IFEA & Maisonneuve et Laroche, 2003. In this volume, a series of individual cases that cover the whole Ottoman dominion shed light to the role of the educated individual in the process of urban development and social emancipation, for instance Kechriotis, Vangelis, "Between professional duty and national fulfillment: the Smyrniot medical doctor Apostolos Psaltoff (1862-1923)", 331-348; See also Fuhrmann, Malte, "Cosmopolitan Imperialists and the Ottoman Port Cities. Conflicting Logics in the Urban Social Fabric", in: *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 67 (Dec. 2003).

### *Potential participants*

We wish to attract scholars who have recently engaged with research in Middle East studies, late Ottoman studies and Mediterranean studies with a particular interest in late Ottoman port cities' inhabitants, from any of the angles mentioned above. Inevitably, we reiterate the academic tradition of area studies, so popular in the United States between the 50s and the 80s, but so harshly and justifiably criticised in recent literature, whether from the point of view of economic history and social sciences or under the impact of postmodernist criticism. As it has been recently argued, however, in a volume which comprised articles from two different area studies, the Mediterranean-Middle East and the Indian Ocean-South Asian, we need to make the relevant literature "speak to contemporary concerns with globalisation and shifting identities"<sup>12</sup>. Conversely, we welcome contributions from the fields of urban history, cultural studies, political history, and social history, as long as they correspond to our research agenda. We are particularly interested in discovering young colleagues who, just like us, have recently completed their doctoral thesis or are in the final stage.

### *Directors' individual paper abstracts*

#### ***Protecting the city's interest:***

#### ***The conflict between Municipal and Vilayet authorities in Izmir in 1909***

#### **Vangelis Kechriotis**

In the atmosphere of political activism following the Young Turks Revolution, conflicting interests shook the *modus vivendi* not only among different ethno-religious groups but also among different centers of authority within the Ottoman administration itself. The Municipality of Izmir that had already been established in 1868 had paved the way for a broad participation in public affairs of the local middle and upper population, regardless of their ethnic origin. After the municipal elections of 1909, which were strictly controlled by the CUP, the office was occupied by Uşakizade Muammer bey who took many initiatives for the reorganization of the public spaces of the city. Despite his successful tenure, however, when Mahmud Muhtar Pasha was appointed *Vali*, the two came into conflict. The new *Vali* tried to gather all authority in his hands, thus subsuming the municipality. This was a more general political issue, as the municipality council members saw themselves as the 'city deputies' which had been elected by the city, whereas the *Vali* represented state authority which was imposed from outside. If we consider that Muammer bey was a fervent Young Turk, this attitude makes sense since it resonates with the discourse on representativity, modernization and social will. Two issues brought about the conflict. One regarded the opening of a large boulevard that would connect the Basmahane railway station with the dock and the customs office. The other regarded the division of the city into three municipalities. The view of the municipality was that if this took place, since the Muslim quarters were poor and the Christian ones were rich, the arrangement would be at the expense of the Muslim population. The paper aims to discuss the involvement of these political agencies, as well as the response of the Christian inhabitants of the city, not only in terms of a conflict

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12 'Introduction' in Tarazi Fawaz, Leyla, & Bayly C.A. (eds.), *ibid*, pp.6-7. The Mediterranean has been proved a particularly fertile ground for such an endeavor as demonstrated in the volume Linjakumpu, Aini, Virtanen, Kirsi (eds.), *Under the olive tree : reconsidering Mediterranean politics and culture*, Tampere [Finland] : Tampere Peace Research Institute, 1997.

between the municipality and the state administration, but also between particular localities and the center. By providing a brief description of the role of the municipality in the past, we seek to demonstrate how it had ended up promoting a national understanding of city affairs, according to which it was not the interest of the city but the interest of the Muslim population of the city that became the major concern.

### ***Down and Out on the Quays of Izmir?***

#### ***Subaltern Approaches towards East Mediterranean Urban History***

#### **Malte Fuhrmann**

The problematic and contradictory situation concerning the sources on late Ottoman port cities has long hindered scholars wishing to explore those historical agents which have so far not been at the center of historical investigation, such as groups marginalized because of their ethnic, social, or cultural background. However, a number of historians have set out to make such marginalized groups 'speak', using a wide range of approaches. These include various attempts to reinterpret the contemporary dominant discourses on the city following a Foucauldian methodology, as well as anthropological approaches based heavily on statistical material and on rather sparse interviews. Court and Police records are relied on by all historians, while a common complaint is the dearth of written sources in a first person narrative.

The paper intends to discuss the advantages and pitfalls involved in reconstructing a subaltern narrative in the context of late 19<sup>th</sup> century East Mediterranean port cities. It aims to do so by relating the general discussions on subaltern studies, counter-hegemonic narrative, and historical anthropology to the specific Mediterranean context and sources. For exemplification, it will draw on the presenter's original research on Central European and Balkan labor migrants in the port cities.