



# **EUI Working Papers**

**MWP 2008/29**

Compradors to Cosmopolitans?  
The Historiographical Fortunes of Merchants in  
Eastern Mediterranean Ports.

Athanasios Gekas



**EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE**  
**MAX WEBER PROGRAMME**

*Compradors to Cosmopolitans?*  
*The Historiographical Fortunes of Merchants in Eastern Mediterranean Ports.*

ATHANASIOS GEKAS

This text may be downloaded for personal research purposes only. Any additional reproduction for other purposes, whether in hard copy or electronically, requires the consent of the author(s), editor(s). If cited or quoted, reference should be made to the full name of the author(s), editor(s), the title, the working paper or other series, the year, and the publisher.

The author(s)/editor(s) should inform the Max Weber Programme of the EUI if the paper is to be published elsewhere, and should also assume responsibility for any consequent obligation(s).

ISSN 1830-7728

© 2008 Athanasios Gekas

Printed in Italy  
European University Institute  
Badia Fiesolana  
I – 50014 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)  
Italy

<http://www.eui.eu/>  
<http://cadmus.eui.eu/>

## **Abstract**

This paper examines a complex and occasionally much debated issue: whether class analysis is a suitable analytical tool when studying the history of the merchant groups that developed in Eastern Mediterranean ports in the second half of the nineteenth-century or whether historians, taking note of the ethnic composition of these merchant groups (primarily Greeks, Jews, and Armenians, but in some instances, also, both Muslim and Christian Arabs) should rely on the language and approaches of (what we can broadly define as ) communitarian studies. The paper aims both to provide a broad coverage of the historiographical debate on these issues and to offer some insights into avenues worth exploring in future research. The first part concentrates on a critical discussion of approaches that can broadly be considered as privileging the category of class; the second part addresses some of the issues of subjectivity, identity and values that have recently engaged the attention of historians. The paper concludes but does not resolve with the issue whether historians can accommodate in their interpretation both class and cosmopolitanism as analytical tools for studying the history of Eastern Mediterranean ports (assuming that cosmopolitanism is an analytical tool).

## **Keywords**

Class, bourgeoisie, cosmopolitanism, merchants, Eastern Mediterranean, port cities, nineteenth century.



*Compradors to Cosmopolitans?  
The Historiographical Fortunes of Merchants in Eastern Mediterranean Ports.*

ATHANASIOS GEKAS

Max Weber Post-Doctoral Fellow (2007-2008)  
European University Institute, Florence, Italy

From E.P. Thompson's influential writings on class as an experience to the more recent attention given to language and identity, historians of the middle-classes have adopted the same framework for the analysis of non-European societies, as economic historians had for the history of industrialization. By assuming a prototype model for the process of industrialization as it 'spread' in the English Midlands and Central and Western Europe, historians of countries in the 'periphery' looked for a bourgeoisie in ways that would correspond to a Western European pattern of social formation. The results have been diverse; some historians applied uncritically – if only constructively at the time – a process of bourgeoisification of societies 'peripheral' to Western Europe while others employed the categories of community and ethnicity and even more recently, the concept of cosmopolitanism. The historical and geographical space of these historiographical developments has been the ports of the Eastern Mediterranean that for more than twenty years now continue to attract the interests of many historians and will most likely continue to do so, albeit with fresh questions, new vocabularies, concepts and methodologies in mind.

This paper revisits the two analytical paths that have so far defined the research parameters of the history of Eastern Mediterranean ports during the long nineteenth-century: world-systems analysis and cosmopolitanism. At the heart of the discussion lies the following problematic: can historians accommodate in their interpretation the different analytical tools of class and cosmopolitanism? The question is particularly pertinent when we talk about Eastern Mediterranean ports because one particular class of these port societies, the bourgeoisie or middle-classes, has attracted historians' interests and will probably continue to do so, especially as historiography moves towards a more inclusive and at the same time broad framework and the calls for a global history of class become more frequent.<sup>1</sup> The group that many historians have held

---

<sup>1</sup> KENNETH POMERANZ, 'Social History and World History: From Daily Life to Patterns of Change', *Journal of World History*, 18, 1 (2007), 69-98.

‘responsible’ for the process of ‘incorporation’ of the Eastern Mediterranean into a world economy and have also been regarded as harbingers of modernity, promoters of national(ist) projects, leaders in municipal politics and examples of cosmopolitan conviviality are the merchants of Eastern Mediterranean ports.

In the highly influential and standard reference work on the middle-classes in Europe J. Kocka has stated that “at the Eastern and South-Eastern margins of Europe a coherent middle-class hardly existed”.<sup>2</sup> This declaration assumes that as far as class formation is concerned North-Western Europe constituted a centre while the parts of South-Eastern Europe were a peripheral space. The implicit influence of modernization theory and the now asserted lack of coherence of a European middle-class aside, what was peripheral for a perceived European centre was central to the large region of the Eastern Mediterranean and could be seen in its own right. Further more, there is no reason why developments in the social structure of the Eastern Mediterranean should have followed the same path as Western Europe, notwithstanding the increasing and multilayered connections between the two areas and also with areas further to the East.

Since the 1950s and 1960s historians dealing with non-European societies have been confronted with problems rooted in modernization theory, approaches that employ ‘indexes of modernization’ and assumptions of progress and gradual eradication of traditional elements in modernizing societies.<sup>3</sup> This teleological analysis presupposes *one* mode of development, namely the modernization that was promoted by and enveloped the more ‘progressive’ groups in Western European societies. While the paradigm was dominant in the 1960s, became heavily criticized in the 1970s and particularly in the 1980s, it has not entirely relieved studies of non-western societies from its fetters. Still, it seems that historians are finally developing new methodologies and research agendas for the study of Ottoman ports and their societies. This paper revisits the historiography of one aspect of the history of late Ottoman port cities, namely the historiography concerning the commercial groups of these cities, in contrast and comparison with non-Ottoman ports. In a nutshell, the ‘same’ individuals, or rather individuals belonging to the same groups, have been termed compradors in earlier times, and have been associated with western ‘penetration’ of the Ottoman Empire, while more recently some of them, particularly those belonging to the same ethnoreligious groups, such as Ottoman Greeks, Armenians and Jews, have been elevated to the status of cosmopolitan citizens of a multi-cultural empire. The shift is a most interesting one because it reflects general trends in historiography and the shift from economic and social to cultural (and to a lesser extent) political history. In these debates, class as a category of analysis and the middle-classes / bourgeoisie as a field of study have been abandoned in favour of studies that employ community as an analytical tool as an object of study.<sup>4</sup> What follows argues for both a re-consideration of the urban history of the Eastern Mediterranean by re-employing the category of class and for

---

<sup>2</sup> JÜRGEN KOCKA, ‘The Middle Classes in Europe’, *Journal of Modern History*, 67, 4, 1995: 783-806, 795.

<sup>3</sup> SCHMUEL N. EISENSTADT, ‘Convergence and Divergence of Modern and Modernizing Societies: Indication from the Analysis of the Structuring of Social Hierarchies in Middle Eastern Societies’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 8, 1, 1977: 1-27.

<sup>4</sup> The point is particularly pertinent for ‘Greek’ communities of the Ottoman Empire. For a discussion of the subtleties of the concept, a challenge to established notions of community and its historiography, see, VANGELIS KECHRITIS, *The Greeks of Izmir at the end of the Empire. A non-Muslim Ottoman community between autonomy and patriotism*, PhD thesis, Leiden, 2005, especially Introduction.



combining it with the concept of cosmopolitanism while keeping open the question of the usefulness of the concept as an analytical category.

The historiographical uses of class discussed in the paper demonstrate how historians of a particular ‘school’ have used the concept to analyse social change in different parts of the world, in our case the ports of the Eastern Mediterranean. The working hypothesis this research explores is whether a process of class formation did develop in the port cities in question in the late nineteenth-century and what forms did it take. This is done by considering the recent historiography on class, urban power relations and governance, a historiography that is mature enough to avoid deterministic conclusions based (only) on people’s position to the mode of production and careful enough not to succumb to relativism and particularism. In recent studies of social history, power is inseparable from resistance;<sup>5</sup> cases of urban conflict are hardly seen as possible manifestations of resistance and urban conflict cannot be reduced simply to structural and antagonistic class relations and as a product of modernity. The latter in the case of port cities took the form of commercialization, towards the end of the period industrialization and the adoption of ‘European’ cultural practices, but was also manifested in the spread of nationalism and the rise of xenophobia, of a fear or perhaps more accurately a distaste of the ‘other’ that did not only take the ‘traditional’ form of anti-Semitism but resulted in inter-communal conflicts including groups other than the Jews of these cities.

### ***The commercial bourgeoisie***

A specific branch of modernization theory, albeit a radical one, focused on the emergence of a bourgeoisie in the Eastern Mediterranean ports as a result of economic ‘penetration’ of the Ottoman Empire by Western European powers, that is France, Britain and towards the last decades of the nineteenth-century, Germany. The findings of the group that spearheaded research on the social and economic history of Eastern Mediterranean ports were significant and placed the region within a world-system historical analytical framework and inspired multifarious further research.<sup>6</sup> More recently, the ports of the region, including Odessa due to its connections with ports of the Eastern Mediterranean, have been seen under the rubric and concept of cosmopolitanism.<sup>7</sup> This analytical framework derives instead from the also recent but swiftly established field of diaspora studies and histories of entrepreneurship that tend to privilege ethno-religious groups dispersed in various geographical settings but connected due to traits of kinship, common origin and ethnicity. This historiographical shift has taken place at the expense of analyses of social stratification. It is in this context that with very few exceptions the concept of class has waned as an analytical category and tool not least under the influence of the linguistic turn, microhistory and

---

<sup>5</sup> PATRICK JOYCE, *The rule of freedom. Liberalism and the modern city*, London: Verso, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> RESAT KASABA, CAGLAR KEYDER, FARUK TABAK, ‘Eastern Mediterranean Port Cities and Their Bourgeoisies: Merchants, Political Projects and Nation-States’, *Review*, X, 1, 1986, 121-135 and CAĞŞAR KEYDER, Y. EYÜP ÖZVEREN & DONALD QUATAERT (eds.), ‘Port-Cities of the Eastern Mediterranean, 1800-1914’, *Review*, XVI, 4, 1993.

<sup>7</sup> EVRIDIKI SIFNEOS, ‘“Cosmopolitanism” as a Feature of the Greek Commercial Diaspora’, *History and Anthropology*, 16, 1, 2005, 97-111; especially, MALTE FUHRMAN, ‘Meeresanrainer – Weltenbürger? Zum Verhältnis von hafen-städtischen Gessellschaft und Kosmopolitismus’, in *Comparativ*, ‘Hafenstädte: Mobilität, Migration, Globalisierung’ 2, 17, 2007: 12-26.

aversion to grand narratives of social change.<sup>8</sup> For the Ottoman Empire specifically a most balanced definition of middle-class agency and identity can be found in an analysis of consumption and its cultural uses. For the author, the rise of middle-class / bourgeois groups was not “simply the outcome of economic factors but a complex process that was closely linked to new distributions of power, identities and discourses”. Even more specifically, “middle-class groups in the Ottoman Empire did not nurture strong class alliances because they were mainly involved in the politics and social life of the communities whose faith they shared” and “they appropriated common cultural patterns and developed comparable business strategies”.<sup>9</sup>

The emergence of new categories of social demarcation based not only on religion and ethnicity, as was the case in the Ottoman Empire for centuries, but also on education, worldview, wealth and status, can be seen in a number of ports under different administrative regimes. Corfu, Salonica, Smyrna, Odessa, Alexandria and Beirut were among the major ports of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea that experienced continuous (and some of them unprecedented) population and commercial growth. In the Ottoman ports these developments depended heavily on reforms but would have made little difference had they not been accompanied by changes in the port economies. In other ports, the state, it is argued here, in its varied forms as colonial authority (in Corfu and Alexandria), prioritised small merchant groups to facilitate its own colonial requirements while in other ports the state was important in its ‘absence’ as in the case of Odessa and Beirut.<sup>10</sup>

Geographically, extending from the port of Corfu in the Ionian Sea to the shores of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, in cities such as Salonica, Izmir, Odessa, Alexandria and Beirut, sociability, education, wealth and status became the defining characteristics of social groups that appropriated the fruits of the economic and political transformations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. Associational activity, sociability, the increasing – as decades progressed – appearance of women in the public sphere, were only a few of the novel manifestations of emerging groups and concomitantly the emergence of a new definition – and reality – of the social as a category and as a space. This new category of perception and agency among contemporaries was asserted as much as it was contested, most evidently in cases of urban conflicts that have been characterised as anti-semitic, anti-European and anti-foreign.

Some of the cities considered in this research have been recently called “classic hybrid Eurasian port cities of the nineteenth-century” without clarifying the roots and

---

<sup>8</sup> For such an exception on the Middle East and Aleppo specifically see the recent, KEITH DAVID WATENPAUGH, *Being Modern in the Middle East. Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> HARIS EXERTZOGLOU, ‘The Cultural Uses of Consumption: Negotiating Class, Gender and Nation in the Ottoman Urban Centres During the 19<sup>th</sup> Century’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 35, 2003: 77-101, 78.

<sup>10</sup> For Corfu and the Ionian Islands, see, ATHANASIOS (SAKIS) GEKAS, *The Commercial Bourgeoisie of the Ionian Islands under British rule, 1815-1864. Class formation in a semi-colonial society*, PhD, Essex, 2004. For Alexandria and its (Greek) bourgeoisie, see, ALEXANDER KITROEFF, *The Greeks in Egypt, 1919-1937. Ethnicity and Class*, London: Ithaca, 1989. The (early) colonial period 1882-1910s remains a by and large unexplored period, especially when it comes to issues of class formation under British colonial rule. Also for Egypt, but for the working class, see the innovative, ZACHARY LOCKMAN, ‘British Policy toward Egyptian Labour Activism, 1882-1936’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20, 1988: 265-285.

characteristics of this hybridity.<sup>11</sup> Port cities have also recently been identified as one of the most promising fields in the attempt to connect social history with global history.<sup>12</sup> Old but also new or less explored themes, such as trust and contract enforcement, the residence of large numbers in the male population for long periods and the particularities of this gender composition are suggested. Among these Pomeranz also suggests ‘cultural misunderstandings’ as a topic of research, an unusual expression for urban conflict, and proposes the study of particular groups, such as sailors, merchants, prostitutes in ‘citywide’ comparative cases that may yield interesting insights. Following on from this, the role of merchants during and immediately after periods or episodes of urban crisis can unfold layers of urban social structures through particular events. Such eruptions of violence include the anti-Semitic riots in Smyrna (1870s and 1880s), Odessa (1871, 1880s, 1905), and Corfu (1891) and the ‘anti-European’ riots of 1876 in Salonika and of 1881-1882 in Alexandria.<sup>13</sup>

The second half of the nineteenth-century also saw increasing interaction among the ports of the Eastern Mediterranean. This change was in degree as well as in kind, due to the expansion of steamer communication and the growth of trade. This however was not entirely a development of the nineteenth-century. At the end of the eighteenth-century there were already strong external links among Mediterranean ports.<sup>14</sup> Central to this development was the role of merchants, or rather ‘mercantile communities’ in local urban politics and the international economy; the sources of divisions among them can be illuminating for the different power relations that developed in a city such as Alexandria. At the end of the eighteenth-century, the merchant communities most prevalent were Turks, Maghrebis, Jews and Syrian Christians.<sup>15</sup> Religion and ethnicity are considered by historians as the most defining characteristics of a ‘community’ and a most common division is between Muslim and non-Muslim merchants. In eighteenth-century Alexandria, adverse international economic conditions and divisions and competition among non-Muslim merchants did considerable harm to the business of many Europeans and the town’s commerce as a whole. For the same period, Reimer has defined upper-class and social position, “not by its relationship to the means of production but rather the means of coercion and commerce”. The pre-industrial commercial economy of Alexandria determined its class relations; in Reimer’s Alexandria the upper-class maintained a degree of coercion that differentiated it from

<sup>11</sup> C. A. BAILY, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914*, Blackwell, 2004, 129.

<sup>12</sup> KENNETH POMERANZ, ‘Social History and World History: From Daily Life to Patterns of Change’, *Journal of World History*, 18, 1 (2007), 69-98.

<sup>13</sup> PAUL DUMONT, ‘Jewish Communities in Turkey during the Last Decades of the Nineteenth Century in the light of the Archives of the Alliance Israelite Universelle’, in BENJAMIN BRAUDE AND BERNARD LEWIS (eds), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, New York ; London : Holmes & Meier, 1980; EVRIDIKI SIFNEOS, ‘Rosiko sitemporio kai ellinikoi emporikoi oikoi’ [Russian grain trade and Greek commercial houses], *Istorika* 40, 2004, 53-96; SAKIS GEKAS, ‘The Port Jews of Corfu and the ‘Blood Libel’ of 1891: A Tale of Many Centuries and One Event’ in *Jewish Culture and History* 7, 1-2, 2005; MARK MAZOWER, *Salonika, City of Ghosts. Christians, Muslims and Jews, 1430-1950*, London: Harper Collins, 2004; MICHAEL J. REIMER, ‘Colonial Bridgehead: Social and Spatial Change in Alexandria, 1850-1882’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 20, 4, 1988, 531-553, and DANIEL PANZAC, ‘Alexandrie: Evolution d’ une ville cosmopolite aux XIXe siecle’, *Annales Islamologiques*, XIV, 1978, 195-215.

<sup>14</sup> MICHAEL J. REIMER, ‘Ottoman Alexandria: The paradox of decline and the reconfiguration of power in eighteenth-century Arab provinces’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 37 (1994), 107-146.

<sup>15</sup> REIMER, 1994, p. 128.

the lower classes. Instability and predatory economic policy directed towards merchants by local rulers led to the search for protection, occasionally the only solution for conducting commerce unhindered. Reimer concludes that there is no evidence of class formation of merchants from different ethnic groups, at least for the eighteenth-century. Merchants occasionally constructed interest groups that amount to a ‘community of interests’ but little more. Lack of unity against intervention from state and local authority rule was also another characteristic that compromised the position of merchants as a group in the city’s power relations and in the main conflict which took place between regional and local authority. Other criteria used to define social groups than commerce and the relationship to the means of coercion are lifestyle, housing, dress, property, language used and seclusion from public life and needs, a sign of affluence. No serious political unrest erupted in the city during the second half of the eighteenth-century until Cairo attempted to assert its authority in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century.<sup>16</sup>

During the nineteenth-century, especially its second half, most port cities in the Eastern Mediterranean experienced economic growth and urban development. Commercial and (later in the period) industrial output increased significantly, changing the outlook of these cities. Links with the hinterland were multiplied with the development of railway networks but economic growth did not lead to ‘equal’ urban development as social inequalities persisted and most likely intensified. Export of commodities produced in the hinterland accentuated the entrepôt character of the ports and combined with limited industrial growth. The enduring concentration of capital in the commercial sector and industrial investment by foreign companies and non-Muslim entrepreneurs led to the rise of financial and banking services. In these developments limited or no state investment in capital and labour-intensive projects (railways, industrial plants / factories) took place, although the state and especially municipal authorities were not absent from the financing of urban development and infrastructure projects.

Spectacular population growth was combined with the sustained rise of Jewish populations in cities such as Odessa and Salonica. The relationship between the rise of anti-semitism and nationalism, while it has been considered for city case-studies, also needs to be examined comparatively.<sup>17</sup> Contemporary meanings of the discourses of class and nation as they were produced in the late nineteenth-century Ottoman as well as non-Ottoman port cities are instrumental for such a task, although the sources through which this can be achieved will have to be carefully selected.<sup>18</sup> Examples of urban violence (or ‘cultural misunderstandings’ for Pomeranz) can provide an entry point into understanding how Ottoman and non-Ottoman residents of these port cities came to see themselves as belonging to different social, religious and ethnic groups. Urban development took the form of public services, port and city infrastructures, and urban dwelling; at the same time there was a socio-spatial bifurcation within cities and inequalities became more pronounced in Odessa, Alexandria and Smyrna while not

---

<sup>16</sup> REIMER, 1994, p. 131-33.

<sup>17</sup> ANGELO GEORGAKIS, ‘Ottoman Salonika and Greek Nationalism before 1908’, *Etudes Balkaniques*, 1, 2005: 111-138.

<sup>18</sup> For a relevant discussion, see, ATHANASIOS (SAKIS) GEKAS, ‘Class and national identities in the Ionian Islands under British rule’, in RODERICK BEATON (ed.), *The Making of Modern Greece: Nationalism, Romanticism, and the Uses of the Past (1797-1896)*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008 (forthcoming).

necessarily in Salonika and Corfu for reasons of different historical development and patterns of growth. Technological advance and the impact on transport is most evident in the construction of railways and hinterland-port connexions and the advent of steamships that further enhanced inter-ports connexions. Railway construction led to further integration of the hinterland into the urban system and by extension to the 'world economy'.

The findings of the 'first generation' of historians that examined the urban port economies and societies were mostly the result of the project on the port-cities of the Eastern Mediterranean carried out in the 1980s. This was a seminal work and provided a comparative point in the historiography of the Eastern Mediterranean bourgeoisies.<sup>19</sup> The historians involved envisaged Ottoman history in general and the history of port cities in particular through a world-systems analysis, integrating the Ottoman economy and society within a broader global framework and in a comparative dimension. Emphasis on the Ottoman economy and its incorporation into the world economy was omnipresent and determined the methodological preoccupations of those historians; nevertheless, their comparative dimension is invaluable and their project, especially in our times of the fragmentation of historical knowledge, practice and research specialization on localities and communities, continues to inspire.

The object of research for the group working in a world-systems framework was not the formation, role and characteristics of a bourgeois class in its different locations as such but rather the economic history of several port cities during the long nineteenth-century and within a comparative framework; the commonalities in each city in turn determined their class structure. The common denominator and the principal guiding theme of these studies was the integration of this part of the Mediterranean into the 'world-economy' and the role of the cities in the expansion of the world-system. In this context, ports were considered to be the loci of social transformation before the era of the nation-state and during a period of political as well as economic changes. Despite its significant breadth the comparative project presents the bourgeoisie as a by-product of economic changes, albeit with a significant political role to play, namely the expansion of British (primarily) influence on the Ottoman port economies. The class in question (*a* bourgeoisie) is presented as little more than the aggregate sum of different ethnoreligious groups (Greeks, Jews, Armenians), all merchants who enjoyed the protection of foreign commercial powers. Such a schema diminishes the agency of these groups under the overwhelming impact of the incorporation of each port to the world economy and system; in such a process the merchants in question were little more than 'intermediaries'. Kasaba, when posing the question of whether the process of incorporation of the port economies into a world economy generated a 'comprador' bourgeoisie among Ottoman minority merchants and in particular Greek merchants in Western Anatolia found that this was a bourgeoisie "in its own right" and occasionally in conflict and not in accordance with European interests.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, despite the distinct character of this bourgeoisie their emergence was a product of the process of incorporation of their city into the world economy.

Issues of shipping, trade, banking and other commercial activities are amply demonstrated and illustrate the economic rather than the social transformation that the

<sup>19</sup> CAĞŞAR KEYDER, Y. EYÜP ÖZVEREN & DONALD QUATAERT (eds.), 'Port-Cities of the Eastern Mediterranean, 1800-1914', *Review*, XVI, 4, 1993.

<sup>20</sup> RESAT KASABA, 'Was There a Compradore Bourgeoisie in Mid-Nineteenth Century Western Anatolia?', *Review*, XI, 2, 1988: 215:228.

cities in question underwent. Issues central in the debate on the formation of a bourgeoisie, such as the creation of voluntary associations of communal (or not) character, the circulation of newspapers and the creation of a 'proto'-civil society are barely discussed. An attempt to introduce the concept in the case of Izmir,<sup>21</sup> has not been entirely convincing although the term should not be discarded altogether as a concept to work with.<sup>22</sup>

Equally confusing in the existing literature is the use of the terms class or classes and community interchangeably, when referring to the group of merchants that were the intermediaries in the ports in question. The relationship of this occupational but also social group of merchants (organised in its own internal hierarchies of course) with other occupational and social groups received little or no attention. The rise of the professions for example, whose members have always been an integral part of any bourgeoisie, are not considered because of the causal link between the commercial expansion and the rise of a group of (non-Muslim) merchants to prominence. When cultural associations are considered (such as in the case of Beirut) they come at the end as a result or manifestation of an urban (bourgeois?) identity and not as a means through which the bourgeois experience was diffused and contributed to the formation of a port bourgeoisie.<sup>23</sup> In the above sense the papers constitute a body of work that is mostly concerned with the truly exceptional urban development of these ports. In this sense, trade and population figures are well-established and placed within a comparative framework while port infrastructure works recall the high levels of investment that occurred in these cities from the second half of the nineteenth-century onwards. In the case of Beirut, the municipal institutions and voluntary associations that catered for increased urban needs in other Mediterranean towns such as Marseilles also became important towards the end of the nineteenth-century. The initial steps were taken by merchants and businessmen who promoted a liberal reform project of modernization. While this holds for many other ports, Ottoman as well as non-Ottoman (such as Corfu and Odessa), we still lack studies that would demonstrate how these reforms were actually perceived by those who experienced the changes brought upon them. In any case, these reforms and especially the associations through which they were pursued, were regarded as "the first platform through which the merchant class could pursue social objectives", in both Beirut and Alexandria.<sup>24</sup>

In the concluding section the editors of the special issue of *Review* note that three identifiable approaches can be followed in the study of port cities: dependency, modernization and class. In their attempt to balance the importance assigned to 'culture' by studies following the modernization approach, the authors noted the importance of economic logic in the historical trajectory of these cities and perhaps overstressed it in the case studies. These shortcomings are amended by the dependency approach which stresses the relations of the port-city with its hinterland as it acquired its own small periphery. The class approach in the existing literature on port cities is the most

---

<sup>21</sup> RESAT KASABA, 'Economic foundations of a civil society: Greeks in the Trade of Western Anatolia, 1840-1876', in DIMITRI GONTICAS & CHARLES ISSAWI (eds.), *Ottoman Greeks in the age of nationalism : politics, economy, and society in the nineteenth century*, Princeton, N.J. : Darwin Press, 1999, 77-88.

<sup>22</sup> For a critique, see, KECHRITIS, 2005: 51. For a recent analysis of voluntary associational activity in the Ottoman Empire, see, NADIR OZBEK, 'Philanthropic Activity, Ottoman Patriotism, and the Hamidian Regime, 1876-1909', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 37, 2005: 59-81.

<sup>23</sup> Y. EYUP OZVEREN, 'Beirut', *Review*, XVI, 4, 1993: 467-497.

<sup>24</sup> OZVEREN, 'Beirut', 482.

interesting one; it is argued that the port city has to be seen as the site of class formation *par excellence*, where the two antagonistic classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat were created and where the class position of Ottoman officials can also be identified. The 'bourgeoisie' maintain their progressive role in history as the bearers of modernity and social change in general and fulfil their historical role, since "the development of capitalism and of a bourgeoisie were correlated with the evolution of port cities".<sup>25</sup> The issue of consciousness receives similar treatment. The port bourgeoisies come of age when they become political; by politics in this case the authors meant the bourgeois claims to independence from the old Ottoman authority; in this process the struggle with the 'ruling class', the 'bureaucratic elite' is crucial and it all culminated in a 'shared consciousness'. When it comes to further research, this is considered to be a key area: how was this shared consciousness gained and through which political and other channels it was achieved. The 'shared' consciousness will probably, if the suggestion is read correctly, become evident through further comparative research that will aim at showing how consciousness was shared not only among members of the commercial bourgeoisie of each port but perhaps (and this would be an interesting finding in itself) among members of the 'same' class resident in different ports. In this case a shared 'Levantine' bourgeois experience could emerge through a project of comparative cosmopolitanisms or rather of cosmopolitans located in different ports. Such an approach would avoid an economic determinism by not privileging a process of incorporation into a 'world-economy' (vaguely defined) and a methodological communitarianism (similar to the methodological nationalism) that would only examine different national projects and the role of respecting ethnic groups (Greeks, Jews, Armenians) in them. In conclusion, the *Review* issue editors underlined the decision of the bourgeoisies to gradually abandon liberalism (not cosmopolitanism) in favour of nationalist politics.<sup>26</sup> This last conclusion raises issues about the concepts historians use at different historiographical moments. While liberalism is a perfectly accurate and meaningful term, historians (and other social scientists) prefer the term cosmopolitanism largely because of the debates in sociology and cultural studies that have brought the term to the fore. What is less examined is the usefulness of cosmopolitanism as an analytical category, similar to the category of class that was very concretely employed by the historians of the world-systems 'school'; perhaps too concretely some might argue.

In most port cities ethnic and religious divisions of trade were more or less prominent depending on the city and the trade. Minority (Christians and Jews) merchants handled and controlled European imports and trade and the export of Ottoman agricultural commodities, while Muslim merchants prospered by controlling intra-Ottoman trade between regions of the empire and between the provinces and the capital.<sup>27</sup> According to Faruk Tabak's explanatory scheme, imperial rivalry facilitated a (primarily) economic conjuncture which in turn 'created' a social space for indigenous groups that were able to reformulate social relations to their advantage; this, in fact, was an anomaly of Ottoman society, compared to other regions in the 'periphery' during the same period of imperial expansion. The indebtedness of the Empire to, and dependence on, foreign capital and the ascendance of intermediate groups vis-à-vis foreign

---

<sup>25</sup> 'Port-Cities', pp. 523-4.

<sup>26</sup> 'Port-cities', 551.

<sup>27</sup> FARUK TABAK, 'Local Merchants in Peripheral Areas of the Empire: The Fertile Crescent during the Long Nineteenth Century', *Review*, XI, 2, 1988: 179-214.

merchants is perceived as directly benefiting ‘intermediaries’ and indigenous groups. Wealth was the source of their social power; but this was a power that should not be overestimated, as the Ottoman State remained powerful until its final days. The authors stressed the complexities concerning the transformation of the Ottoman economy during the world economic depression of the 1870s, while in the analysis the merchants and their social role remain firmly located in the mode of production of the Ottoman economy and the fluctuations that reverberated in the ports where the merchants resided. Towards the end of the chapter Tabak – in accordance with the logic of the argument - proposes a more global or rather less Ottoman view on the ‘demise of cosmopolitanism’ that would consider global developments; in this sense he is in tune with recent interpretations that aspire to a global historical perspective.<sup>28</sup> In this sort of macroscopic analysis of ports however, there is little scope allowed for considerations of urbanity, subjectivity and even conflicting orders.

### ***From Commerce to Cosmopolitics***

The ports of the Eastern Mediterranean have been termed cosmopolitan because of their diversity in terms of ethnic composition and continuous influx of migrants from other parts of the Mediterranean.<sup>29</sup> In a recent definition cosmopolitanism is situated primarily in the geographical extension of a network of people belonging to the same religious group.<sup>30</sup> This definition is drawn from (Mediterranean) diaspora studies, a field in which merchants have been the cosmopolitans *par excellence*. In both the older and the more recent interpretations of Eastern Mediterranean port history lies a conscious but not always successful attempt to avoid a reading and interpretation of history according to a European blueprint. It is for this reason that explanations of conviviality or cosmopolitanism have emerged; fruitful as they may be they are complementary rather than revisionist to the previous ‘school’ of thought and findings on Eastern Mediterranean port urbanity. The historiographical shift is evident in the concepts, the tools but also the scale of analysis; a focus on specific groups within specific cities – maritime or others – cannot afford to relegate historical explanation to particularism and beg the large and pertinent questions of social conflict that became evident in a number of urban riots over the course of the second half of the nineteenth-century. Such an analysis of urban conflict exposes the inherent inequalities in the port societies that probably intensified in a period of rapid transformation, most evident in urbanization, expansion of market activities and irredentist national projects. The latter included redrawing national borders in the Eastern Mediterranean throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth-century. From another point of view port cities in the period of late Empires became ‘modes of conviviality’ not by design, as it has been argued, but by default: “social conviviality and economic efflorescence were due neither to their cosmopolitan constitution nor to their ability to sanction tolerance and *bildung*...the reasons were not cultural, or societal but political and systemic.”<sup>31</sup> It is interesting and

<sup>28</sup> C.A. BAYLY, *The birth of the modern world, 1780-1914 : global connections and comparisons*, Malden, MA : Blackwell, 2004.

<sup>29</sup> Such was the case in Izmir, see, RESAT KASABA, ‘Izmir’ in the special issue, *Port-Cities of the Eastern Mediterranean, 1800-1914, Review*, V.XVI, 4, Fall 1993, 387 -410.

<sup>30</sup> MARC BAER, ‘Globalization, Cosmopolitanism, and the Donme in Ottoman Salonica and Turkish Istanbul’, *Journal of World History*, 18 2 (2007), 141-170.

<sup>31</sup> FARUK TABAK, ‘Imperial Rivalry and Port-Cities: a world-Historical Approach’, Paper presented at the Eight Mediterranean Social and Political Research Meeting, Florence & Montecatini Terme, 21-25 March 2007, 3.



most appropriately historical to see the perception of the ‘blossoming of port cities’ as an ‘anomaly’ that, by implication, was not destined to last. The analytical path that is followed to reach this conclusion is the imperial rivalry manifested in several ports between (primarily) Britain and Germany. Comparisons and connexions between events and developments among cities can add analytical value to a study on the formation of the Mediterranean middle-classes and provide new insights. While economic change has always been considered independent (or for that matter linked to the world economy), the social and political developments in the cities and the states in which they belonged in the era of imperialist expansion also need to be contextualised and compared.

In the most recent literature on diasporas - the Greek in particular - a focus on ‘cosmopolitan’ merchants is clear.<sup>32</sup> This ‘cosmopolitanism’ is contrasted to the nationalism that brought an end to the golden era, almost exclusively a characteristic of the elite of port cities, multi-lingual merchants with commercial and cultural connections with western metropolises and very successful in their business operations. In the literature the number of these ‘citizens of the Mediterranean world’ is very small and usually restricted to few well-known and extremely wealthy families. On the other hand there is no reason why cosmopolitanism should be the exclusive privilege of an elite group of merchants. Other groups, such as sailors but also itinerant workers were also part of a mobile population who migrated around cities in search for work and historians should perhaps not ignore them; in fact, it is already considered one-dimensional and therefore inadequate to do so.<sup>33</sup>

The above point lends doubt to the usefulness of the characterization of ports and whole cities as cosmopolitan (other than descriptive classifications) and relocates the meaning to individuals, in the sense that only individuals can be cosmopolitan and not whole cities. While it is obvious that some cities can be more clearly distinguished and more comfortably described as cosmopolitan it is not clear what the analytical or other value of such a statement would be. On the other hand, merchants above all other groups are considered to have been the real cosmopolitans.<sup>34</sup> Emphasis on associational activity in the histories of the ports in question, however, has ignored the one area of sociability, business practice and culture, convergence of interest and space of negotiation with central authorities that was of utmost importance to merchants: the commercial ‘intermediate’ - that is between business and government - institutions of the port cities. Merchants, whether compradors or cosmopolitans, formed commercial associations, Merchant Societies and Chambers of Commerce that advanced their cohesion as a group and one could argue their cosmopolitanism as individuals.<sup>35</sup> These associations were of course part and parcel of the intense associational activity and a product of modernity that has been noted by many historians;<sup>36</sup> in contrast to the

---

<sup>32</sup> EVRIDIKI SIFNEOS, ‘“Cosmopolitanism” as a Feature of the Greek Commercial Diaspora’, *History and Anthropology*, 16, 1, 2005: 97-111.

<sup>33</sup> MALTE FUHRMAN, ‘Meeresanrainer – Weltenbürger? Zum Verhältnis von hafen-städtischen Gesellschaft und Kosmopolitismus’, in *Comparativ*, ‘Hafenstädte: Mobilität, Migration, Globalisierung’ 2, 17, 2007: 12-26. For another critique, see, HENK DRIESSEN, ‘Mediterranean Port Cities: Cosmopolitanism Reconsidered’, *History and Anthropology*, 16, 1, 2005: 129-141.

<sup>34</sup> DRIESSEN, 138.

<sup>35</sup> For a discussion of these issues, see, SAKIS GEKAS, ‘Business Culture and Entrepreneurship in the Ionian islands under British rule, 1815-1864’, *LSE Working Papers in Economic History*, 89, 2005.

<sup>36</sup> For just one example, see, MEROPI, ANASTASSIADOU, ‘Sports d’ élite et élites sportives à Salonique au tournant du siècle’, in FRANÇOIS GEORGEON, PAUL DUMONT (eds.), *Vivre dans L’*

communal associations however, commercial ones were interethnic, operated under different rules and negotiated individual and collective interests with the state authorities as well as among the merchants that directed them. Most importantly, for a comparative project, commercial associations were a common feature of many Mediterranean (as well as non-Mediterranean) ports and encapsulate the new conditions of trade that required the formation and ‘institutionalization’ of a merchant group recorded in lists, stratified, with elected representatives and a meeting place. At the end this is the place (but of course not the only one) where ‘cosmopolitan’ merchants met, socialised, conducted business, read newspapers (local and international) in their numerous languages and addressed municipal and national issues. Any argument however that stresses the socialization and ‘cosmopoliticization’ of merchants through commercial associations will have to be empirically demonstrated by historical examples of cities and their histories. However, one has to see these cosmopolitan spaces by taking into account the dual Janus-like dimension of cosmopolitanism as inclusive and exclusive at the same time. If we look at the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, for instance, it has been described as a “British Chamber of Commerce, an openly avowed pressure group, which grew increasingly alarmed at the growth of the nationalist movement”, as of course it should have been.<sup>37</sup>

The relationship between class and cosmopolitanism as analytical tools then is not reduced to the substitution of economy with culture. At a more abstract level, this manifestation of cosmopolitan attitude can be perfectly compatible with a conceptualization of merchants as a class with a plural synthesis comprised of individuals willing to transcend (in the public sphere at least) their ethno-religious milieu. For some of them, commercial associations may have been as important as communal ones. This was the case more often in non-Ottoman ports, such as Odessa, Corfu and in other ports further west such as in Livorno and Marseilles, where the status of minority communities of course differed significantly from that of the Ottoman non-Muslim merchants;<sup>38</sup> still, it is surprising that little attention has been paid to the Chambers of Commerce and other commercial associations as spaces of negotiation between merchants and state/local authorities. This line of analysis can in fact bring the role of the state back into the social history of port cities, by focusing on one aspect of associational activity that perhaps encapsulates what was modern, efficient, conducive to business interests and at the same time cosmopolitan, stressing the role of states and different administrative regimes that were central in the emergence of cosmopolitan cities and more specifically the forging of cosmopolitan identities among some of the inhabitants of the ports in question.

Recent historiography thus hails cosmopolitanism as a condition (or as a product as well?) of conviviality; as such it certainly co-existed with tensions and occasionally conflicts among ethnic and religious groups in several of the ports in question. Some answers to questions of shared lived experience have been provided by studies investigating inter-communal relations. The complex character of Greek-Jewish relations in the cities of Salonica and Odessa has allowed historians to consider inter-

---

*Empire Ottoman. Sociabilités et relations intercommunautaires (XVIIIe-XXe siècles)* (Paris 1997), pp. 145-160.

<sup>37</sup> ROBERT L. TIGNOR, *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt, 1882-1914*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966, 276-77.

<sup>38</sup> For Livorno, see DESPOINA VLAME, ‘Business, Community and Ethnic Identity: the Greek Merchants of Livorno, 1700-1900’, PhD, European University Institute, 1996.

ethnic relations in the context of ‘cosmopolitan’ cities in ‘multicultural’ empires.<sup>39</sup> A stratified view of both communities in both cities reveals the whole repertoire of inter-communal relations ranging from co-operation, indifference and tolerance to hostility and pogrom. The comparison works well but does not acknowledge the role of the State authorities in each case. In the above study there is no ethnic / religious bifurcation but a division of social class, as workers and bourgeois merchants and businessmen seem to have been living together without a spatial bifurcation. ‘Modernity’ is most evident in the development of a Greek and Jewish middle-class, their association with the thousands of foreigners and their cultural exchanges, sociability and attitudes – and perhaps worldview? – which “challenged established cultural structures and created for many Greeks and Jews burning dilemmas over their ethnic identity”.<sup>40</sup> Here is a fine balance between the “enthusiastic adoption of a cosmopolitan life” that “was one side of the modernisation coin” and the institutional reforms of 1839 and 1856. It was the workings of these reforms and the authority that the communities maintained that cultivated national aspirations and created a space that was contested by Greek and Jewish merchants, lawyers and doctors – bourgeois liberal reformers.

Demographic balances have been important in the first ‘generation’ of histories of port cities, as well as in more recent ones, in both numerical and qualitative terms and not without reason. The big difference in Salonica, for example, compared to other ports was the majority of Jews among the other city groups. Still, this did not allow them to deviate from the ‘standard’ attitude of Jewish groups to avoid taking sides in political debates or in confrontations over social issues.<sup>41</sup> Or, rather, in the case of Salonica they did, but not before 1912, when they were forced to confront the claims of the Greek Kingdom over the city and its control. Izmir, on the other hand is often considered cosmopolitan merely because of the diversity and plurality of resident ethnic and religious groups which created a complex demographic picture.<sup>42</sup> The city merchants, from the mid nineteenth-century onwards, were seen as promoting a European culture of socialization in clubs, literary societies and reading habits; a culture that easily attributes to the city cosmopolitan characteristics, most evident in the ethnic diversity and activity of its population. However, both in the case of Salonica with its Jewish majority and in the case of Smyrna with its Greek majority, one should not assume that these ‘communities’ were not wrought with conflict; Kasaba provides a short but convincing case for the deep rivalries and division among the Greeks and their ‘community’ as early as 1819. Still, and because of the success of Greek intermediaries especially in controlling local networks, non-Muslim intermediaries became “constitutive of a genuine bourgeois class in the changing Ottoman Empire” and benefited from a “mercantilist policy as long as it was not imbued with the precepts of an exclusionary nationalism”, something that was to change rapidly and violently in the second decade of the twentieth century.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> MARIA VASSILIKOU, ‘Greeks and Jews in Salonika and Odessa: Inter-ethnic Relations in Cosmopolitan Port Cities’, in DAVID CESARANI (ed.), *Port Jews. Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550-1950*, London: Frank Cass, 2002: 155-172.

<sup>40</sup> VASSILIKOU, 159.

<sup>41</sup> RENA MOLHO, *Oi Evraioi tis Thessalonikis, 1856-1919. Mia idiaiteri koinotita* [The Jews of Thessaloniki. A particular community], Athens: Themelio, 2001.

<sup>42</sup> MARIE-CARMEN SMYRNELIS (ed.), *Smyrne, la ville oubliée? : mémoires d'un grand port ottoman, 1830-1930*, Paris : Autrement, 2006.

<sup>43</sup> KASABA, ‘Izmir’, 401, 407.

Similarly for Beirut, all studies emphasize the absence of large foreign communities, if not the absence of a local elite of merchants, the locality and subsequently urbanity of which ensured and perpetuated a close working relationship among them.<sup>44</sup> As a result, the Beirut merchants appear to have had probably the strongest sense of urban identity which was also unchecked by rivalries among them and generated a ‘united’ front against both the centralizing tendencies of Istanbul authority as well as the challenges posed by the Damascus elite of notables that sought to silence and forestall Beirut’s elevation to a provincial capital.<sup>45</sup> The role of state authority in both Beirut and Alexandria can also be located in the legacy of the Egyptian administration that promoted sanitary reforms such as the quarantine system, a reform first introduced in Alexandria.<sup>46</sup>

The Egyptian city’s colonial period begins in the wake of one of the most serious riots in the Eastern Mediterranean, the 1882 ‘anti-European’ so-called riot. The outlook of the city as cosmopolitan, with a cosmopolitanism that is limited to the wealthiest parts of a population is an elitism that prolongs the self-celebrating cosmopolitanism of contemporary Alexandrians - all of them foreigners - who dismissed Egyptians and their inferior or even repulsive characteristics.<sup>47</sup> While urban infrastructure and development are often used as examples of urban growth - with examples such as road and street networks linking the ports with the hinterland and different areas of the cities, gas lighting and water and drainage systems - was not without social baggage and connotations. Urban infrastructure concentrated on the wealthiest parts of the city, which in Alexandria were the ‘European’ parts of the city. The historiographical shift introduced by Patrick Joyce regarding the urban environment reverberates in the case of Alexandria too; power is exercised, but it is not discussed by whom, class tensions exist but the classes involved are not identified.<sup>48</sup>

Communal conflict, in Aleppo in 1850, for example, raises issues of definition, interpretation and appropriate context (Syrian or international political conditions). These riots and communal conflict have usually been portrayed as the result of religious fanaticism and under the binary opposition of Christian-victims / Muslims-victimizers.<sup>49</sup> Explanations have often prioritised the changing social positions of groups active in the urban riots and tend to simply extrapolate from the actors’ religions their participation in or absence from the riots. The position of Wallerstein, for example, that the further incorporation of the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean into the world economy during the nineteenth-century propelled to some extent urban conflict and sectarian violence manifested in many cities, is debatable precisely because of the occurrence of communal sectarian violence in other non-Ottoman cities, such as Corfu and Odessa. Masters has argued that the most convincing interpretation of the events of 1850 in Aleppo lies with the empire’s or rather more accurately the city’s incorporation into the

---

<sup>44</sup> OZVEREN, ‘Beirut’, 467: 497; LEILA TARAZI FAWAZ, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut*, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1983; HANSSSEN, *Fin De Siecle Beirut*, 2005.

<sup>45</sup> JENS HANSSSEN, *Fin De Siecle Beirut. The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

<sup>46</sup> OZVEREN, ‘Beirut’, 475.

<sup>47</sup> See, the chapter by ON BARAK in this volume.

<sup>48</sup> PATRICK JOCYE, *The rule of freedom. Liberalism and the modern city*, Verso, London 2002 and the chapter by ON BARAK in this volume.

<sup>49</sup> BRUCE MASTERS, “The 1850 Events in Aleppo: An Aftershock of Syria’s Incorporation into the World Capitalist System”, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 22, 1990: 3-20.

world system.<sup>50</sup> What will be important in any attempt to reconstruct and explain urban conflict in those port cities is the repertoire of violence documented in accounts of the events. The numbers, composition and reactions of protesters and the rituals of violence conducted are just as interesting as the alleged reasons behind their actions and explanations of the riots. Different sources, from consular reports to police records, may provide different insights into the writing of a social history of urban conflict in Eastern Mediterranean ports. The work by Masters on the riots of Aleppo and its local and international dimension as analysed by Maoz are examples that can be helpful in providing an analytical typology of urban riots in the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe in the late nineteenth-century can clearly be associated with eruptions of anti-Semitic violence in the region in order to elicit what was particular about the process of incorporation of cities, not only to the world economy but more directly to a nation-state.<sup>52</sup>

The issue that many historians have found themselves facing is who was responsible for these attacks. While the question is a serious one and historians have the responsibility to address important questions, the answer of placing the blame on one or more groups and / or individuals can hardly account for the causes of the events. Maoz has explained the Aleppo riots in a more structural way, seeing them as the reaction of the urban structures reacting to the Tanzimat changes introduced by Ottoman authorities.<sup>53</sup> One would have to look carefully at the implementation of reforms in relation to when the riots took place in order to establish any causal relationship. The provision of social services on which the poor relied, water supplies and medical care being but two, were important for both Alexandria and Odessa. The population growth these cities faced exerted pressures on the living conditions of the vast majority of the urban poor. At the same time the 'European community' took care of its members with hospitals organized along religious but also national lines. This process of creation of communal institutions was one of the most effective ways for diffusing social tension and alleviating intra-communal differences.

### ***Concluding comments***

The project of writing a history of the emergence of bourgeoisies in the European and colonized world or in parts of the world under direct and intense European influence is a timely one. For decades national histories have tended to privilege 'national communities' at the expense of social groups that probably had different perceptions of ethnic and national identity than those imposed upon them by historians striving to 'prove' continuities of nation and religion (a tendency that is out of historical fashion but not out of power in countries like Greece). More recently, Marxist narratives of class defined the bourgeoisie and its merchants as a product of economic activity (namely trade) and with specific national-political projects in mind. Up-to-date research produces narratives of sociability, identity, everyday life, as well as inter-communal conflict that 'culminated' – but not in such a teleological way as the word

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>51</sup> MOSHE MAOZ, 'Syrian Urban Politics in the Tanzimat Period between 1840 and 1861', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 29, 2, 1966: 277-301.

<sup>52</sup> For an 'early' example of anti-Semitic riots that were related to tensions occurring after the incorporation of Corfu to the Greek Kingdom, see SAKIS GEKAS, 'The Port Jews of Corfu', 2005.

<sup>53</sup> For the direct impact of political reforms on urban conflict, see, PAUL BRASS (ed.), *Riots and Pogroms*, New York: New York University Press, 1996.

may imply - in the destruction of social fabric of Izmir or Smyrna in 1922. This time though the issue at stake is how to write urban histories of the Eastern Mediterranean that are devoid of the sweeping generalizations of the previous historical / sociological works, are firmly grounded in the historical and geographical space of the Eastern Mediterranean and demonstrate the impact of changes that affected different parts of the world at more or less the same time. In other words, that incorporate the history of these cities within a Global History framework as well. These changes account for the historical development first of the cities of the Eastern Mediterranean shores and secondly of the countries that came to 'own' them. To a large extent the project of such a history is emancipatory; it reclaims the history of these cities from the confines of the nation-states in which they became part of, usually if not always as a result of intense conflicts in the region, state expansion and the dissolution of centuries-old empires. The merchants of these cities have been historical and historiographical protagonists; whether they formed a class or not and whether they were cosmopolitan enough is not as important as how they articulated their interests, and whether they managed to assert their hegemony as a group over other conflicting orders. Whether class as well as cosmopolitanism is the most appropriate analytical tool to address the issue remains to be seen; it is certainly an enduring one.

### References

- ANASTASSIADOU MEROPI, 'Sports d' élite et élites sportives à Salonique au tournant du siècle', in FRANÇOIS GEORGEON, PAUL DUMONT (eds.), *Vivre dans L' Empire Ottoman. Sociabilités et relations intercommunautaires (XVIIIe-XXe siècles)*, Paris 1997 : 145-160.
- BAER MARC, 'Globalization, Cosmopolitanism, and the Donme in Ottoman Salonica and Turkish Istanbul', *Journal of World History*, 18, 2, 2007: 141-170.
- BAYLY C.A., *The birth of the modern world, 1780-1914. Global connections and comparisons*, Malden, MA : Blackwell, 2004.
- BRASS PAUL (ed.), *Riots and Pogroms*, New York: New York University Press, 1996.
- DRIESSEN HENK, 'Mediterranean Port Cities: Cosmopolitanism Reconsidered', *History and Anthropology*, 16, 1, 2005: 129-141.
- DUMONT PAUL, "Jewish Communities in Turkey during the Last Decades of the Nineteenth Century in the light of the Archives of the Alliance Israélite Universelle", in BENJAMIN BRAUDE AND BERNARD LEWIS (eds), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, New York ; London : Holmes & Meier, 1980
- EISENSTADT SCHMUEL N., 'Convergence and Divergence of Modern and Modernizing Societies: Indication from the Analysis of the Structuring of Social Hierarchies in Middle Eastern Societies', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 8, 1, 1977: 1-27.
- EXERTZOGLU HARIS, 'The Cultural Uses of Consumption: Negotiating Class, Gender and Nation in the Ottoman Urban Centres During the 19<sup>th</sup> Century', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 35, 2003: 77-101.
- FAWAZ LEILA TARAZI, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut*, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1983.
- FUHRMAN MALTE, 'Meeresanrainer – Weltenbürger? Zum Verhältnis von hafensstädtischen Gessellschaft und Kosmopolitismus', in *Comparativ*, 'Hafenstädte: Mobilität, Migration, Globalisierung' 2, 17, 2007: 12-26.
- GEKAS ATHANASIOS (SAKIS), 'Class and national identities in the Ionian Islands under British rule', in RODERICK BEATON (ed.), *The Making of Modern Greece: Nationalism, Romanticism, and the Uses of the Past (1797-1896)*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008 (forthcoming).
- GEKAS SAKIS, 'Business Culture and Entrepreneurship in the Ionian islands under British rule, 1815-1864', *LSE Working Papers in Economic History*, 89, 2005.
- GEKAS SAKIS, 'The Port Jews of Corfu and the 'Blood Libel' of 1891: A Tale of Many Centuries and One Event' in *Jewish Culture and History* 7, 1-2, 2005: 171-196.
- GEORGAKIS ANGELO, 'Ottoman Salonika and Greek Nationalism before 1908', *Etudes Balkaniques*, 1, 2005: 111-138.
- HANSEN JENS, *Fin De Siecle Beirut. The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- JOYCE PATRICK, *The rule of freedom. Liberalism and the modern city*, London: Verso, 2002.
- KASABA RESAT, 'Economic foundations of a civil society: Greeks in the Trade of Western Anatolia, 1840-1876', in DIMITRI GONTICAS & CHARLES ISSAWI (eds.), *Ottoman Greeks in the age of nationalism : politics, economy,*

- and society in the nineteenth century*, Princeton, N.J. : Darwin Press, 1999, 77-88.
- KASABA RESAT, 'Izmir' in, *Port-Cities of the Eastern Mediterranean, 1800-1914, Review*, V.XVI, 4, Fall 1993: 387 -410.
- KASABA RESAT, 'Was There a Compradore Bourgeoisie in Mid-Nineteenth Century Western Anatolia?', *Review*, XI, 2, 1988: 215:228.
- KASABA RESAT, CAGLAR KEYDER, FARUK TABAK, 'Eastern Mediterranean Port Cities and Their Bourgeoisies: Merchants, Political Projects and Nation-States', *Review*, X, 1, 1986: 121-135.
- KECHRITIS VANGELIS, *The Greeks of Izmir at the end of the Empire. A non-Muslim Ottoman community between autonomy and patriotism*, PhD thesis, Leiden, 2005.
- KEYDER CAĞLAR, Y. EYÜP ÖZVEREN & DONALD QUATAERT (eds.), 'Port-Cities of the Eastern Mediterranean, 1800-1914', *Review*, XVI, 4, 1993.
- KITROEFF ALEXANDER, *The Greeks in Egypt, 1919-1937. Ethnicity and Class*, London: Ithaca, 1989.
- KOCKA JÜRGEN, 'The Middle Classes in Europe', *Journal of Modern History*, 67, 4, 1995: 783-806.
- LOCKMAN ZACHARY, 'British Policy toward Egyptian Labour Activism, 1882-1936', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20, 1988: 265-285.
- MAOZ MOSHE, 'Syrian Urban Politics in the Tanzimat Period between 1840 and 1861', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 29, 2, 1966: 277-301.
- MASTERS BRUCE, "The 1850 Events in Aleppo: An Aftershock of Syria's Incorporation into the World Capitalist System", *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 22, 1990: 3-20.
- MAZOWER MARK, *Salonika, City of Ghosts. Christians, Muslims and Jews, 1430-1950*, London: Harper Collins, 2004.
- MOLHO RENA, *Oi Evraioi tis Thessalonikis, 1856-1919. Mia idiaiteri koinotita* [The Jews of Thessaloniki. A particular community], Athens: Themelio, 2001.
- OZBEK NADIR, 'Philanthropic Activity, Ottoman Patriotism, and the Hamidian Regime, 1876-1909', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 37, 2005: 59-81.
- PANZAC DANIEL, 'Alexandrie: Evolution d' une ville cosmopolite aux XIXe siecle', *Annales Islamologiques*, XIV, 1978: 195-215.
- POMERANZ KENNETH, 'Social History and World History: From Daily Life to Patterns of Change', *Journal of World History*, 18, 1, 2007: 69-98.
- REIMER MICHAEL J., 'Ottoman Alexandria: The paradox of decline and the reconfiguration of power in eighteenth-century Arab provinces', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 37, 1994: 107-146.
- REINER MICHAEL J., 'Colonial Bridgehead: Social and Spatial Change in Alexandria, 1850-1882', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 20, 4, 1988: 531-553.
- SIFNEOS EVRIDIKI, "'Cosmopolitanism" as a Feature of the Greek Commercial Diaspora', *History and Anthropology*, 16, 1, 2005: 97-111.
- SIFNEOS EVRIDIKI, 'Rosiko sitemporio kai ellinikoi emporikoi oikoi' [Russian grain trade and Greek commercial houses], *Istorika* 40, 2004: 53-96.



- SMYRNELIS MARIE-CARMEN (ed.), *Smyrne, la ville oubliée? : mémoires d'un grand port ottoman, 1830-1930*, Paris : Autrement, 2006.
- TABAK FARUK, 'Local Merchants in Peripheral Areas of the Empire: The Fertile Crescent during the Long Nineteenth Century', *Review*, XI, 2, 1988: 179-214.
- TIGNOR ROBERT L., *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt, 1882-1914*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966.
- VASSILIKOU MARIA, 'Greeks and Jews in Salonika and Odessa: Inter-ethnic Relations in Cosmopolitan Port Cities', in DAVID CESARANI (ed.), *Port Jews. Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550-1950*, London: Frank Cass, 2002: 155-172.
- VLAME DESPOINA, 'Business, Community and Ethnic Identity: the Greek Merchants of Livorno, 1700-1900', PhD, European University Institute, 1996.
- WATENPAUGH KEITH DAVID, *Being Modern in the Middle East. Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006.