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Mediterranean port cities: Cosmopolitanism reconsidered

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Introduction

In a recent comparative study of Ottoman Aleppo, Istanbul and Izmir three historians claim that many of the citizens of Mediterranean port cities felt more affinity with each other than they did with the inhabitants of non-port cities in either the Christian or Islamic worlds (Eldem, Goffman & Masters 1999: 214). This is an intriguing yet sweeping statement neither elaborated nor substantiated. What does this 'affinity' consist of? Does it imply an awareness of a wider world beyond the microcosm? Perhaps an early form of 'cosmopolitanism'? One may assume that these authors had in mind a view of the Mediterranean sea as a medium of communication and the port city as a hub in dense networks of maritime connections through which people, goods, ideas and meanings flowed. In other words, a view of the port city as a site of cultural exchange where people from different parts of the Mediterranean world met, mixed and influenced one another. Eldem, Goffman and Masters could have mentioned the historical and anthropological fact that in many parts of the Mediterranean cultural, class and ethnic distinctions were and still are mapped onto divides between the countryside/interior and the town/coast. And although the coastal-interior dichotomy has been valued variously, it is a constant in Mediterranean history that the maritime city is a centre of cultural domination, albeit at times in conflictive opposition to power centres in the interior.

On the other hand, we have to be careful with too strong claims about the affinity of citizens of Mediterranean port cities because it smells of geographical determinism and anthropological reductionism. Not all people living in Mediterranean port cities have been affected by their proximity to the port and the sea to the same degree. Many coastdwellers in fact lived with their backs turned to the sea and had little experience with or knowledge of the wider world represented by the sea (Braudel 1976), whereas a substantial number of people in the interior managed to see a good deal of the wider world (the sea included) by taking part in transhumance and labour migration to the coastal plains and towns (McNeill 1992). Moreover, people can react very differently to similar circumstances and the fact that people have been deeply influenced by their place of residence does not mean that this has been the only, or even the main, influence on them (Stewart 1994: 78).

But even if we take these reminders into account, it seems worthwhile to pursue the assumed congeniality of port city dwellers around the Mediterranean as part of a seaward perspective.¹ A maritime view does not only hold a promise for a more dynamic approach but also directs our attention to underresearched localities and topics. Cases in point are precisely port cities as strategic sites for developing a comparative historical-anthropological view on the Mediterranean and pan-Mediterranean or even wider identifications as instances of proto-globalisation.

This paper will try to take the claim of affinity among port city dwellers a step further by considering the often assumed but rarely demonstrated link between the Mediterranean port city and 'cosmopolitanism' in the past and as a past evoked in the present. To phrase this issue in a different way: if there is an ecological dimension to the Mediterranean cosmopolitics of the last quarter of the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth century, the port city is one of its probable niches. I will briefly review the case of Izmir (ancient Smyrna) in the Eastern Mediterranean as an exemplar and compare it to Alexandria and Trieste. A disclaimer is also in order. Rather than presenting new, let alone conclusive empirical evidence, the main aim of this contribution is to elicit debate and suggest an agenda for further research.

Sea ports as windows on the wider world

The shore-inland opposition has played a dominant role in the social organization of space, power and culture around the Mediterranean (Braudel 1976). The roots of this dichotomy can be traced back to the work of classic moralists and philosophers. For some of these scholars, the sea represented a world of danger and its easy connections a threat to the integrity of the social order (Horden & Purcell 2000). Consequently, they constructed a moral geography and, in doing so, they tended to phrase the opposition between coastal town and inland village in terms of vice and corruption versus innocence and virtue (Caro Baroja 1963). For others, as in Homer's *Odysee*, the sea also stood for freedom and adventure, its connections yielding access to opportunities offered by the wider world. For them the coast-interior opposition was one between openness, sophistication and progress versus isolation, backwardness and stagnation. Such commonplaces gained wide currency in the Mediterranean world and still persist today, in spite of or rather because of the web of interdependencies between shore and interior, in which the seaport played a pivotal role. To be sure, not all coastdwellers faced the sea and not all inhabitants of the villages and the towns in the interior lived with their back turned on the wider world. But on the overall, coastdwellers, in particular lettered citizens of port cities, were more oriented toward the wider world in terms of awareness, knowledge, kinship and means of subsistence than the inhabitants of the mountains and inland plains.

The port town as a settlement form has received only scant attention in the humanities and social sciences. In the Mediterranean case this is the more surprising because its main ports have been hubs in networks with vital links to other regions for more than two thousand years, albeit to a degree that varies considerably over time. As far as anthropology is concerned, the main reason for this neglect of the port city may have been the discipline's emphasis on regularity, continuity and tradition, on the orderly and circumscribed, and on small scaleness. Port societies hardly fit these qualities. Passage, transience, openness and flux are among their most striking and, paradoxically, constant or structural qualities (Driessen 1995). While these are not exclusive to coastal towns, the seaside location reinforces such characteristics and adds a dimension of dynamics to them. Thus, maritime towns have functioned as hinges between empires, continents, trading blocs and nation states. Only few scholars seem to take into account the fact that seaports have been a major breeding ground of globalisation and that Mediterranean ports in particular have played an important role in the emergence of a 'world economic system'. For instance, in spite of his admiration for Braudel's opus magnum on the Mediterranean, the sociologist and historian Immanuel Wallerstein (1974-1989) only paid sparse attention to the role of Mediterranean ports in the emergence and consolidation of the European world-economy.²

Historically, there is a strong tendency towards concentration of people, power and social and cultural capital in seaports, a process that is still going on. Today, almost half of the population in the circum-Mediterranean region is living coagulated in the narrow, ecologically fragile, coastal strips (Dardis & Smith 1997). Port cities such as Istanbul, Izmir, Alexandria, Athens-Piraeus, Algiers, Beirut, Barcelona, Tel Aviv, Naples, Genua and Marseilles are agglomerations where landuse is very intense and dense regional, national and international communication networks are coming together. To be sure, this is also true for the megacities in the interior that are capitals, such as Cairo, Madrid, Ankara or Rome. But this does not alter the fact that the process of concentration tends to be intensified where capitals are located at the sea.

Until recently, Mediterranean port cities shared a number of family resemblances, although these were neither static nor entirely unique to the area. Among them a striking ethnic plurality stands out. This characteristic is an outcome of structural mobility in the

Mediterranean and predicated on the intricate network of shipping lanes, cabotage and land routes. The prototypical examples are the enclaved minorities of Jews, Greeks and Armenians who acted as middlemen in long-distance trade and who have been living for many generations in seaport towns around the Mediterranean.

Until the advance of modern means of communication ports were pre-eminent sites where external influences from far beyond the Mediterranean sea entered the societies bordering it. Porosity is an intrinsic quality of port cities and a *conditio sine qua non* for their survival. In this regard there have often been conflicts of interest between, on the one hand, the power centres in the interior which were keen to protect the integrity of their political and economic borders and, on the other hand, the port towns which thrive on openness and connectivity.

Over the last century technological innovations in maritime transport and logistics triggered a process of increasing separation between city and port. Mediterranean ports of the nineteenth century were still cityports -- a symbiosis of sea, port and urban space -- which employed basically the same technology as in early modern times for the loading and unloading of sailing ships such as nets, cranes, carts, animal and manpower. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the larger ports were reconstructed with linear quays to accommodate steamships, warehouses and railway stations. Commercial and industrial growth forced such ports to develop beyond the urban centres where space was scarce and compressed between sea and mountains. From the 1960s through the 1980s a further separation between port and city took place as new technologies, such as containers and ro-ro facilities, required more space and less labour. There was an enormous reduction of dockworkers and casual labourers. The vastly expanded port areas were closed to the general public. Since the 1970s there is a process going on of urban renewal of and around the old ports areas in the larger seaport cities of the Mediterranean.³ Housing near the harbours has been gentrified and the old port areas transformed into recreational and touristic spaces.

The case of Izmir

Most of the long-term developments depicted above hold true for the Turkish port city of Izmir (ancient Smyrna) in the Eastern Mediterranean. Between approximately 1550 and 1610 Izmir began to grow from a minor, predominantly Turko-Muslim port town, trading almost exclusively in foodstuffs, into an entrepôt of growing importance and scope. This fast expansion was predicated upon a number of factors. Located at the very end of Asia Minor, Izmir was closer to the Italian ports than Istanbul. The town boasted a spacious port within a well-protected Gulf. Moreover, the rise of Izmir followed decentralizing tendencies in the Ottoman empire and shifts in the commercial flows between Europe and the Far East. At this juncture local notables and entrepreneurs began to take affairs into their own hands in competition with the imperial bureaucracy in Istanbul.

In the first decades of the seventeenth century Venetian, Dutch, English and French merchants settled down in Izmir and mainly operated through Jewish, Greek, Armenian and Muslim intermediaries who were simultaneously settling down in western Anatolian port towns. The population of Izmir grew from fewer than 5,000 inhabitants in 1600 to 30,000 or 40,000 fifty years later (Goffman 1990: 48-49). Foreign trading factories and consulates were opened and a new European quarter, the famous 'Street of the Franks', emerged parallel to the wharf in the very heart of the town. In spite of official religious divides, Dutchmen, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Venetians and Ottomans socialized with each other and Calvinists, Catholics, Sephardic Jews, Muslim Turks, Orthodox Greeks and Armenians worshipped almost shoulder to shoulder (Goffman 1999: 95). The port, wharf,

and the Street of the Franks constituted Izmir's nexus with the wider Mediterranean and Atlantic worlds. Commercial relations became cultural ties and foreign consuls and factors tended to fraternize with Ottoman Christians and Jews (Goffman 1990: 154).

In the course of the eighteenth century Izmir became the leading port in the trade of the Ottoman empire with Western Europe (Frangakis-Syrett 1992: 11). The external commercial network of trade included the Italian ports of Livorno, Genua, Messina, Ancona, Trietste and Venice as well as major ports of Western Europe such as London, Marseilles and Amsterdam. Izmir was also connected with Russia, Austria, Scandinavia and North America. The town's cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, its porosity, openness and growing international trade -- under the combined auspices of the European Trading Companies, Armenian, Jewish and Greek brokers, and local notables -- constituted a breeding ground for the emergence of a relatively open society. Izmir blossomed during the late nineteenth century when free trade increased the stature of Mediterranean ports.

Travel accounts and consular reports testify to the tremendous wealth Izmir generated, its crowded streets, heavy traffic, huge bazars and its cultural plurality. In the 1870s the city boasted 18,750 houses, 6,250 storehouses, and 155,000 inhabitants, of whom 75,000 were Ottoman Greeks, 45,000 Turks, 15,000 Jews, 10,000 Catholics, 6,000 Armenians and 4,000 'foreigners' (Scherzer 1873). In 1872 more than 1,500 large ships, totalling 693,000 tons of goods (among them 595 steamboats loaded with 525,000 tons) called at the port of Izmir, apart from more than 3,600 small Greek and Turkish coasters, carrying 76,000 tons of cargo. In the same year almost 1,500 large ships left the port with more than 600,000 tons on board (ibid. 244-245). An Austrian diplomat reported that "European culture, Bildung and tolerance spread with big steps among all classes and layers of the population" (Scherzer 1873: 53). But several observers also claimed that Turks and the members of the other 'nationalities' did not socialize much apart from visits of protocol (Frangakis-Syrett 1992: 16). This lack of informal social intermingling between Christians and Muslims was mainly blamed on the custom of segregation of Turkish wives (Scherzer 1873: 48). Apparently, different notions of gender, body, religion, private and public constituted symbolic boundaries between the ethno-religious communities who lived together apart in the compact space of this port city.

At the turn of the century the population of Izmir had increased to 215,000 with substantial numbers of Italian, French, Austrian, English and American expatriates as well as small German, Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, Dutch and Swiss minorities. It was the seat of Catholic, Greek-Orthodox and Armenian archbishops and of numerous European consulates. It boasted a Bourse, banks, educational, religious and judicial institutions, a railway station, hospitals, a wharf, quays and mechanized factories devoted to food-processing, cotton spinning, cloth, carpet weaving and leather-working. Apart from cloth, carpets and leather wares, the port of Izmir exported copper, sponges, pottery, olive oil, dyes, rubber, wax, barley, wine, sesame, opium⁴ and gallnuts. Imports consisted of gold thread, weapons, mirrors and candles from Germany and Switzerland; coal and clothing from England; colonial wares from the Netherlands; and flour, rum and timber from the United States. There were regular steamboat connections with all major Mediterranean ports, particularly with Trieste and Marseilles.⁵

Izmir also flourished in a cultural sense, for instance as one of the world centres for publishing in many languages. The patisserie-café, owned and run by non-Muslim Ottomans and frequented by the members of the polycultural bourgeoisie, both men and women, was perhaps the key symbol of modernity. It reflected a European orientation and lifestyle.⁶ Until the First World War intercommunal relations were generally good and although there was a considerable degree of residential segregation, there was also intermixing of elite households of different religious communities and socializing not only

in the markets, factories, and labour unions but also in coffee houses and sport clubs. Linguistic and musical interpenetrations suggest that the different ethno-religious communities were in regular contact with one another. Although on the overall, there was no strict ethnic division of labour, in European companies employment and stratification along ethno-religious lines prevailed. Foreigners were in the top positions, Ottoman Christians (Greeks and Armenians) held most of the skilled jobs and Muslims filled the lowest ranking and paid jobs (Quataert 2000: 182-3).

The emergence of liberal nationalism altered the notion of a person and his or her social identities in this part of the Mediterranean world. People began to see themselves increasingly as citizens of mutually exclusive nations. The economic and political constraints of the Balkan Wars of 1912-3 and World War I fuelled nationalistic identifications and jeopardized Izmir's intercommunal tolerance, interaction and trade (Goffman 1999: 132-3). Between May 1919 -- when a Greek army under Allied protection made a disastrous incursion into Asia Minor to occupy the coastal zones of western Anatolia -- and September 1922 when Turkish forces crushed the Greek army, looted Izmir, slaughtering large numbers of Greeks and Armenians, a society built over three centuries perceived as cosmopolitan was ripped apart within only a few years. The city itself was largely destroyed by a huge fire and although Izmir was rebuilt and even expanded its commercial and industrial importance as part of the Republic of Turkey, it also lost its "creative heterogeneity" of the pre-1920s and never regained its aura of cosmopolitanism (ibid. 1999: 133-4). The foreign communities had been reduced to a fraction of their pre-1919 numbers and the erection of national borders seriously hampered communication and trade. Today, Izmir is an industrialized port and transport hub, Turkey's third largest city with a population of more than two million inhabitants. Apart from shipping, it depends on tourism, tobacco, silk, carpets, textiles, foodstuffs, petrochemicals, and cement as its major industries. Only a few narrow streets and mosques of old Izmir have survived.

It is worth while to consider briefly the lengthy aftermath of the destruction of old Izmir. Greece was faced with a stream of more than one million refugees from Asia Minor. During the peace negotiations it became apparent that there would be no place for ethnic and religious minorities in the new Turkish state. Another 200,000 Christians from Thrace and Asia Minor were forced to migrate to Greece, whereas 350,000 Muslims were expelled to Turkey (Hirschon 2003). Ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the 1970s in a neighbourhood of prefab housing in the port area of Piraeus, which was constructed in the 1920s to house Asia Minor refugees, shows that the past experienced as cosmopolitan deeply affected the lives of its inhabitants (Hirschon 1989). The refugees and their offspring considered themselves superior to the local population whom they saw as backward, ignorant, narrow-minded and parochial. The newcomers of the 1920s retained their identity as *prósphyges* (refugees) or *Mikrasiátes* (Minor Asians), which was still strongly felt and expressed by the third generation. Its core consisted of a rich oral and musical tradition that recreated a past defined as cosmopolitan. In their stories the refugees and their descendants tend to look back nostalgically to the pre-First World War period as a kind of Golden Age of peaceful cohabitation of Muslims, Jews and Christians. In such recollections they contrasted the towns of Asia Minor to the Greek towns in terms of openness, vitality, connectivity, centrality and diversity vis-à-vis closedness, stagnation, isolation, marginality and uniformity (Hirschon 1989: 34). For decades the Greek refugees managed to cope with a situation of chronic deprivation, political neglect and economic marginality by cherishing the pride, skills and cultural capital derived from a past in Asia Minor that was and still is defined as cosmopolitan. A similar nostalgia for a cosmopolitan past was common among Greek citizens of Istanbul who emigrated to Athens in the mid-

1950s, in 1964 and 1974. After having settled down in the Greek capital, they discovered that their new place of residence offered relatively little diversity in terms of opportunity, people and lifestyles. In their eyes, Athens contrasted sharply with Istanbul which in their recollections had been a cosmopolitan city "with a refined quality of life" (Örs 2002: 129-130).

'Cosmopolitanism' discussed

How to interpret the claim of cosmopolitanism made by former inhabitants of Izmir as well as later commentators and researchers? To put this question into a comparative framework: how to explicate the pretensions of citizens, past and present, of several other Mediterranean port cities that their local societies were and are cosmopolitan in nature? ⁷ Are such claims and pretensions merely nostalgic celebrations by elites of a world lost that never really existed? Does the evoked image of cosmopolitanism bear any relationship to a lived social practice? And, if so, can cosmopolitanism serve as a concept with which to describe and analyse phases in the history of port cities, a specific way of life and a collective identity?

In view of the present state of the evidence on the link between Mediterranean port city and cosmopolitanism, such questions are difficult if not impossible to answer. The main reason for this is that most intellectuals who have written on this seaport-cosmopolitanism relationship have taken and continue to take the notion of cosmopolitanism for granted, not only in the case of Izmir but also with regard to other Mediterranean port cities such as Alexandria where several thousands of Greek and Armenian refugees from Smyrna moved after the Turkish occupation of Asia Minor. For the sake of widening our scope, let me just briefly review some descriptions of Alexandria, a city which between 1860 and 1960 became, perhaps more than any other Mediterranean port city, a master symbol of an open Mediterranean world.

One of the major studies of the recent history of Alexandria that appeared during the last decade is Alexandria 1860-1960: the brief life of a cosmopolitan community, a historical-anthropological study edited by Robert Ilbert and Ilios Yannakakis. In the title of this book the status of the city is already defined in a matter-of-fact way as 'cosmopolitan'. The original French subtitle is even more outspoken and reads: "un modèle éphémère de convivialité: communautés et identité cosmopolite". This phrase suggests a link between the cohabitation of ethno-religious communities and a cosmopolitan identity. On further inspection, the editors differ considerably in the way they use cosmopolitanism in their individual contributions to the volume. Robert Ilbert is careful but also remains ambivalent in his use of cosmopolitanism by consistently putting it in quotation marks, an ambiguity that I tend to share with him. He argues that between 1890 and 1930 Alexandria was a pluralist society, a dynamic contiguity of groups rather than a melting pot, a society that functioned on the basis of the recognition of the autonomy of the different ethno-religious communities. These differences could be managed by a Municipal Council -- made up of the leaders of the main ethno-religious groups -- by emphasizing a community of interests and by fostering a local identity. As to the issue of a cosmopolitan identity Ilbert concludes that "any 'cosmopolitanism' was only a function of a 'free city' where the effective rulers knew each other personally, as much through business relations as through community or family solidarities" (1997: 30). As a Greek, born and raised in Egypt, co-editor Ilios Yannakakis seems to be more personally involved in the identity politics of Alexandria than Ilbert who remains more detached. Moreover, the latter is much more aware of the fluidity of identity than Yannakakis who uses 'cosmopolitanism' in an outright essentialist and nostalgic way. For him it "was essentially urban and traced its roots to the European

cultures which fed its spirit and its manifestation" (1997: 192). It "died" when Egypt became a nation state and Nasser implemented a policy of nationalisation not only of 'foreign' properties but also of identities.

It is clear from the Izmir and Alexandria cases that we do not only need a working definition of cosmopolitanism but also a way to avoid mistaking ideological claims about cosmopolitanism for factual descriptions. This task is complicated by the fact that cosmopolitanism is a Protean common sense term referring to a rather elusive set of historical, social and cultural phenomena. Numerous and diverse pre-modern antecedents of cosmopolitanism have been claimed for the Mediterranean area, ranging from the Stoics of Athens, Hellenism, medieval Al-Andalus, and the Norman kingdom of Sicily during the twelfth century to Renaissance Venice and Constantinople during the long reign of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (1520-1566). But it also refers to the more recent liberal cosmopolitanism, held among many others by the commercial, intellectual and political elites of port cities such as Izmir and Alexandria from the mid-nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century. And it is applied, in tandem with multiculturalism, to the ethos of post-modern metropolitan cities of the Western world with large immigrant minorities of widely diverse ethnic origins.

As an anthropological concept cosmopolitanism refers both to the ethos and practice of individuals and groups that are open to cultural difference and strife towards intercultural respect and coexistence.⁸ Cosmopolitans (claim to) have the capacity and sophistication to move about in different social and cultural arenas, to master several languages and draw on various cultural repertoires and life styles. To be sure, apart from its vagueness, there are at least four factors that complicate the use of cosmopolitanism as a comparative anthropological concept. First, ambiguity is inherent to cosmopolitanism as it aims to reconcile difference with equality and universal values with pluralism. Multiculturalism with its simultaneous celebration of diversity and a universalistic attitude is a case in point. Second, there is a problematic relationship between cosmopolitanism and power. It is mostly embraced by political, economic and cultural elites as part of their cultural domination. Third, as already pointed out above, there are several cosmopolitanisms each of them reflecting ideologies, forms of integration and ways of life from different historical periods. And fourth, tolerance of Otherness as a key cosmopolitan value, is double faced. It has a weaker or passive form in the sense of non-interference with difference and a stronger or active one in the sense of promoting sympathy for and empathy with different ways of life.⁹ The notion of political tolerance, which recently has gained renewed momentum as one of the pillars of democracy in the wake of accelerated globalization, evolved from the older idea of religious tolerance.¹⁰ This notion of tolerance of different religious beliefs and practices seems to have been current in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Izmir and Alexandria, at least among its multi-ethnic bourgeoisie. Any further discussion of cases of cosmopolitanism should take these four complexities into account.

Pamela Ballinger (2003, 2004) is a useful point of reference in starting this debate. In her anthropological-historical study of Istria and Trieste she initially did not question the substance of the much celebrated 'cosmopolitanism' of Habsburg Trieste. Admitting that she confused actual meanings of cosmopolitanism with the different realities of Austrian Trieste, she discovered that in spite of the seeming opposition between Italian irredentism and 'cosmopolitanism', both discourses intersected around a strong sense of local autonomy as expressed by local elites. Following the Italian historian Marina Cattaruzza, she suggests that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries "Trieste was economically and culturally controlled by a class-bound, politically restrictive bourgeois mercantile elite that was considerably less cosmopolitan than late-twentieth- and early-

twenty-first-century nostalgia would make out [...] Cosmopolitanism in this context signaled a validation of an imperial context that favored the fortunes of Trieste's elite rather than the universalistic outlook and celebration of diversity often implied by the term" (2003: 33). This may very well hold true. However, the problem with this reflection on the so-called Istrian cosmopolitanism is that it only addresses the level of identity discourse.¹¹ We hardly learn anything about the contexts in which Istrians evoke cosmopolitanism, the meanings they attach to it, and how understandings of cosmopolitanism are assimilated into their daily lives. To be sure, cosmopolitan discourses are easier to document and analyze than lifestyles for which direct evidence seems to be sparser and more difficult to access.

The cosmopolitics of the eastern Mediterranean port cities, involving multilingualism, religious plurality, openness, enterprising ethos, intercultural exchange and at least a weak form of tolerance, were rooted in the Ottoman millet system of non-Muslim communities which were granted protection and relative autonomy. It was fed by the fast economic growth of port cities in the second half of the nineteenth century. This economic boom attracted immigrants from all parts of the Mediterranean and beyond and enabled wealthy merchants of diverse ethno-religious backgrounds to contribute to the expansion of the infrastructure of these cities, for instance community schools and cultural institutions which fostered further interest in the wider world. These port cities were the product of a disintegrating Ottoman empire and an expanding imperialism of the Great Powers of Europe.

It would be wrong to define entire Mediterranean port cities as cosmopolitan on the following accounts. First, not all people living in port cities have been affected to the same degree by the port and the cultural flows across the Mediterranean sea. The cosmopolitanism label mainly applies to certain categories of people, particularly merchants, brokers, and seamen who played a key role in pan-Mediterranean and supra-Mediterranean networks. They mastered at least three or four languages, had a profound sense of the wider world and the skills to build enduring relations of trust across ethno-religious boundaries. Second, cosmopolitan orientations in port cities did not exclude other more parochial identifications. As seen from an anthropological point of view identifications are always multi-layered (Driessen & Otto 2000). And, finally, the so-called cosmopolitan lifestyles in Izmir seems to have been largely the result of the encounter between the non-Muslim Ottomans and the different communities of Western Europeans.

Conclusion

In his study of nationalism Eric Hobsbawm (1992: 25) claimed that: "The nineteenth-century world economy was international rather than cosmopolitan [...] During the lengthy period from the eighteenth century to the years following World War II, there seemed to be little space and scope in the global economy for those genuinely extra-territorial, transnational, or interstitial units which had played so large a part in the genesis of a capitalist world economy" (1992: 25). Hobsbawm could have mentioned the partly invented and mythical cosmopolitanism in the large Mediterranean port towns during the second half of the nineteenth century. This cosmopolitanism in the interstitial port towns was largely the result of the confrontation of Western European capitalism, colonialism and imperialism with the disintegrating Habsburg and Ottoman empires. The rise of nationalism marks the beginning of the rapid demise of cultural amalgamism in Mediterranean port cities: Salonica became thoroughly Greek, Trieste Italian, Izmir Turkish, Tangier Moroccan and Alexandria Egyptian. After the foundation of Israel, hundreds of thousands of Sephardic Jews, many of whom had been part of the

transcivilizational Mediterranean port societies, moved to their 'homeland'. The Lebanese civil war of the late 1970s and 1980s finally destroyed the remnants of 'cosmopolitanism' in the ethnically highly complex Beirut.

The question remains whether the renaissance of port cities and the recent re-emergence of cultural pluralism in parts of the Mediterranean area also implies a revival of cosmopolitics under changed political, economic and technological conditions. And how does the cultural pluralism of the past relate to the multiculturalism of the present? These large questions should be linked to a set of smaller ones such as how does the transformation of port-city relationships affect collective identifications in coastal towns? And is there any evidence to sustain the claim about the affinity among the citizens of port cities in different parts of the Mediterranean area, past and present? More concrete questions include changing conceptions of maritime urbanism, attitudes of seaport citizens towards the sea, the recent rediscovery of maritime heritage in the service of tourism, the revitalization of maritime and cosmopolitan identities and their relationship with ethnicity, nationality and transnationality.

Notes

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Abstract

This paper considers two intimately related claims about Mediterranean port cities. First, that their citizens felt more affinity with each other than they did with the inhabitants of non-port cities. Second, that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century they were the scene of liberal cosmopolitanism. It discusses the concept of cosmopolitanism and briefly reviews the case of Izmir as an exemplar and compares it to the cities of Alexandria and Trieste. The paper argues for a more careful and differential use of the notion of cosmopolitanism and suggests questions for further anthropological and historical research.

¹ Over the past few years there have been several attempts to rethink and revitalize area studies by probing a maritime perspective (see Lewis & Wigen 1999; Horden & Purcell 2000; Driessen 2002; Wink 2002).

² One of the exceptions is Cartier (1999).

³ See Hoyle, Pinder & Hussain (1988), Castejón Arqued (1996), Ridolfo (1996), Baudouin & Collin (1996), Priebes (1998) and Borruey (2001).

⁴ The Dutch played a major role in the opium trade (cf. Schmidt 1998).

⁵ See Ritters *Geografisch-Statistisches Lexikon*, part two. Leipzig: Verlag Otto Wigand, 1895. Ego documents such as diaries, letters and memoirs originating from the various communities and other literary representations of port cities are a very important source for reconstructing cultural life in the past.

⁶ See Örs (2002) on coffeehouses and cosmopolitanism in late nineteenth-century Istanbul.

⁷ For Alexandria see Ilbert & Yannakakis (1997), for Trieste Powell (1977), Morris (2002) and Ballinger (2003), and for Tangier Driessen (1995, 2002).

⁸ Particularly helpful for a discussion on cosmopolitanism is Ribeiro (2001). Also see Hannerz (1996), Clifford (1995) and Krupat (1992).

⁹ See Hayden (2002) on 'Antagonistic tolerance'.

¹⁰ See Hoffe (2002) on pluralism and toleration.

¹¹ Also see Baskar (1999).