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► **To cite this version:**

Angelos Dalachanis. Compte-rendu: "Sibel Zandi-Sayek, Ottoman Izmir: The Rise of a Cosmopolitan Port, 1840-1880, Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2014". ABE Journal - Architecture beyond Europe, 2014. hal-01429805

HAL Id: hal-01429805

<https://amu.hal.science/hal-01429805>

Submitted on 25 Jan 2017

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Electronic version

URL: <http://abe.revues.org/831>

ISSN: 2275-6639

Publisher

Institut national d'histoire de l'art

Brought to you by Aix Marseille Université



Electronic reference

Angelos Dalachanis, « Sibel Zandi-Sayek, *Ottoman Izmir: The Rise of a Cosmopolitan Port, 1840–1880* », *ABE Journal* [Online], 6 | 2014, Online since 30 January 2015, connection on 05 December 2016. URL : <http://abe.revues.org/831>

This text was automatically generated on 5 décembre 2016.

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- 1 Izmir is a somewhat privileged case, among the “cosmopolitan” port cities of the Ottoman Eastern Mediterranean, in terms of the number of studies devoted to it. However, although scholars dealing with Izmir’s history almost unanimously cite its cosmopolitan character, most of them examine the city from the perspective of individual ethnic and religious minorities. An obvious disadvantage of such an approach is that it ignores the relational dimension of group formation: minority communities coalesced in relation and opposition to one another. Another disadvantage is that it downgrades the multicultural character of the city’s diverse population—an aspect historians of such cities are careful to point out—and its interactions with the Ottoman administration. Usually, approaches tending to encompass all minorities focus on the end of the Ottoman era, namely the first two decades of the twentieth century and especially 1922, when the city was burned. In most Turkish, Greek, Armenian, or other national historiographies, the image of Izmir in flames has become a symbolic signpost, announcing the end of the city’s cosmopolitanism.
- 2 Sibel Zandi-Sayek’s study addresses the abovementioned issues with considerable success. She goes back to the time when Izmir’s cosmopolitanism was forged, providing a fresh view of the phenomenon. Her study, situated at the crossroads of urban, social, and

political history, discusses Izmir’s cosmopolitanism as an outcome of constant negotiation between its diverse population, the city’s institutions, and the multifaceted urban reality from the 1840s to the 1880s, a period of especially rapid political, social, and urban change. Unlike most historians of 19th century cities, Zandi-Sayek does not blindly accept institutionally defined ethnoreligious categories. Her contribution to the debate consists in interrogating the urban space for responses to issues concerning identity and belonging. The author argues that social categories, which were designed by Ottoman institutions, were reconfigured by the everyday use of the urban space and citizens’ routine behaviors. The author’s use of “the urban space and spatial practices as a lens,” shifting the focus to the porosity of institutional and group boundaries, enables her to capture a world in flux and “hinged on delicate balances”.

- 3 Indeed, nothing is static in Zandi-Sayek’s Izmir. Everything is dynamic, fluid, and in constant (re)negotiation: people, groups, urban practices and space as well as institutional policies. Being “the West of the East and the East of the West,” the city itself is part of a broader dynamic Levantine/Mediterranean universe. Izmir’s urban space is not only defined by its permanent residents but, to a great extent, by the mobility of its population. This mobility was a salient feature throughout the period under scrutiny, enhanced by the region’s history as a favorable setting for the transfer of resources, goods, and people. This fluidity inevitably etched itself into the urban landscape. The author manages to capture this permanent flux, the force behind continual urban transformations and the definition of new social, class, and ethnoreligious borders. Zandi-Sayek’s writing style, also fluid, contributes to highlighting the ever-changing urban and social environment and makes the book accessible to any reader, specialist or not. The structure of the historical narrative, divided into four chapters that follow on from a rich introduction and precede a strong and summative epilogue, is an ideal channel for this essential fluidity.
- 4 The first chapter, entitled “Defining Citizenship: Property, Taxation and Sovereignty,” deals with the articulation of the legal status of individuals and groups in relation to ownership rights and taxation. After presenting different aspects of Ottoman legal pluralism, the author turns our gaze to the tensions that arose when the Ottoman state tried to impose economic and legal control over individuals and groups, through legislative measures and the establishment of the *cadastre*. In a place where the foundations of citizenship and legal status were often shifting, language, religion, and culture constituted the main demarcation lines between different groups.
- 5 “Ordering the Streets: Public Space and Public Governance” is the title of the second chapter, which discusses the establishment of a modern institutional apparatus when Izmir expanded during the period under scrutiny. Here, citizenship matters most because foreign protection is of significant importance in the city’s streets, troubled as they were by fire, epidemics, and crime. Despite divisions between private and public interests, protected and unprotected individuals, Ottoman administrators and foreign consuls, Izmir is viewed as a whole. The author argues that in Izmir, “physical and administrative structures mutually inform one another,” a finding that offers, according to her, a model to be used to analyze modernization in different cities around the globe.
- 6 The title of the third chapter, “Shaping the Waterfront; Public Works and Public Good,” is highly evocative of its focus. The state-of-the-art design of the new port of Izmir, built between 1869 and 1875, symbolizes the city’s passage to modernity. The construction of such an infrastructure provides an interesting background to examine different views of

the city's diverse population regarding not only the question of public good and private interest but also the physical interaction of the different groups along the 3.2 kilometers of the new quay.

- 7 The final chapter of the book, “Performing Community: Rituals and Identity,” demonstrates how public rituals, feasts, and ceremonies contributed to the forging of a sense of urban community among Izmir’s diverse minorities. This form of *citadinité* constituted the cultural core of the cosmopolitan universe Zandi-Sayek discusses here. Within it, the urban landscape emerges as an additional actor in this story. Accordingly, the author aptly underlines the political dimension of the use of public space. In this perspective, she does not view the city as a static construction but as a system of multiple spaces, appropriated to different degrees by the local population, Muslim or non-Muslim.
- 8 Nevertheless, the use in the title of the rather ambiguous, if not problematic, term “cosmopolitan” should have been addressed in the introduction. This description has been often associated with an elitist, rosy image of the Eastern Mediterranean cities. The author could have employed the term, which has fuelled a nostalgic literature, more tactfully. Instead, she utilizes it as an umbrella term from above without much consideration as to precisely whom it may be referring to. The interrelatedness noted by the author—which could be considered to be a synonym of cosmopolitanism—seems to concern a particular part of the city’s population: that is, the most privileged social strata. In this respect, a more detailed discussion of the city’s social stratification might have clarified some blind spots and enriched the discussion with a view from below, which is sometimes missing.
- 9 Overall, this work provides a fascinating account of Izmir’s glorious cosmopolitan past. Zandi-Sayek astutely documents her study with a variety of Ottoman primary sources, French and British consular documents, and articles from the local press. The bibliography, which draws on works in Turkish, French, and English, is more than satisfying. Moreover, the book is illustrated with a valuable collection of maps, plans, engravings, printed advertisements, and pictures, which make for enjoyable reading and remind us of the author’s specialization as a historian of art and architecture.

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Keywords: cosmopolitanism, urban planning history

Palabras claves: cosmopolitismo, puerto, historia del urbanismo

Schlüsselwörter: Kosmopolitismus, Hafen, Stadtplanungsgeschichte

Mots-clés: port, histoire de l'urbanisme

Parole chiave: porto, storia dell'urbanismo

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