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Conclusion

Over the preceding argument, we have attempted to impose on the historical “double city” of Izmir a framework for inquiry that divides that city into its two ideal constituent parts – Eastern/Islamic/Ottoman on the one hand, and Western/Christian/European on the other – only to demonstrate how unworkable this division, tirelessly (though not necessarily consciously) maintained by contemporary and modern observers alike, really is. Not only because the sources for both parts are so disparate that comparison is impossible without major reinterpretation, but even more so because the real lives and activities of their denizens, over the centuries imagined and willed into their presumed identities and proper places from the outside, for a long time managed to challenge such neat divisions, until at last (in the late 19th and early 20th centuries) international aspirations and power politics managed to subdue and destroy their robust heritage of everyday crossculturalism.

If we are to attempt a genuine understanding of Izmir during its early modern boom, at the very time that the Ottoman world system is thought to have been pulled into the European world system through precisely that city and society, we should be acutely aware of the Ottoman and European discourses of segregation and opposition to which the vast majority of sources at our disposal were playing, the differences between them and the purposes they served. To be able to do this, it is not enough to take stock of economic indicators from a variety of disjointed sources. What is needed is a comparative analysis of the cultural, social and political-administrative context of these Ottoman and European sources and an exploration of cultural, social political and administrative realities on the ground, to see whether they indeed correspond to world systemic developments.

In working out the specifics and timing of Izmir’s role in the (semi)peripheralization of the Ottoman world system, world systems analysis has not lived up to its promise. For the most part, its proponents have dealt with the considerable problems arising from the crucial 17th-century’s repeated administrative reorganizations and the scattering of already inconsistent sources by throwing a tightrope across the disconcerting ravine the era can be, and edging across it from the “classical” 16th century to the transformed 18th century without looking down. The balancing act has forced them to glance over the haphazardly documented and purposefully hidden messiness of crosscultural relations as they were lived along 17th-century Izmir’s quays and streets, and in its markets, inns, and houses. In the process, they have neglected the agency of a resilient urban culture averse to ideological purity and always prone to opt for mutual benefit, such as had been formed by centuries of reaching across ethno-religious divisions in search of livelihoods.
We have sought to address this historiographical negligence by taking our eyes off economy for a moment, instead focusing on such other indicators of power in crosscultural relations as the sources will permit us to discern, i.e. legal-fiscal-administrative developments, changes in the distribution of the city’s populations (urban demography) and changes in the city’s built environment (urban geography). Let us retrace the long and winding argument that has been the result:

In the first chapter (“The Ottoman City – History”) we noted that Izmir’s history was one of oscillation between East and West, in response to which Izmir’s communities and overlords, invested in the continued flow of trade through the city as they were, developed an urban culture and infrastructure that downplayed and contained crosscultural antagonisms in favor of pragmatism. The civic culture that was the result was typical of the frontier: heterodox, tenaciously tolerant and sustained by dogged cultural resistance to the principles and designs of outside powers – all in the quest for riches. This unceasing tug between independence and incorporation left its marks on the city (as it did on the polities that attempted to subdue it), and incessantly played out among a peculiar urban economy, geography, demography and culture, shaped by centuries of reaching across religious, ethnic, linguistic, political, and economic frontiers.

The second chapter (“The Ottoman City – Demography”) focused on population and the divisions within it. We confirmed that the common practice of regarding early modern Ottoman communities as relatively isolated and self-sufficient is the result of unwarranted back projection from the late-nineteenth century millet-system. In reality, we argued, the universality and uniformity of that system was theoretical (as zimmet) before the 19th century (and perhaps even then?): the internal organization and external relations of zimmî-communities were determined first and foremost by local circumstances, and for purposes of everyday administration early modern Ottoman administrators did not regard the status of the empire’s minorities as fundamentally different from that of the other communities (taifês) under their jurisdiction. As a consequence, seemingly uniform legal and administrative principles, when confronted with reality on the ground, generated widely divergent outcomes; as categorical a refutation of the paradigm of “the Islamic city” as is possible.

Izmir’s history as a frontier, combined with the city’s meteoric early modern rise, particularly precludes the existence there of a fixed and non-negotiable order to govern all relations between Muslim, non-Muslim and the state. Far from causing an interpretative chaos or void, this recognition of administrative and social diversity (i.e. of local and personal agency) – not only where non-Muslims are concerned, but throughout Ottoman society – allows us to reinterpret the seemingly desperate archival predicament. This
predicament, which has kept historians away from the Ottoman 17th century, turns out to be a consequence of our limited understanding (sustained by a somewhat mechanical interpretation of world systems history) of the countless localized adjustments through which Ottoman administration absorbed the shocks of early modernity (instead of the Ottomans’ peculiarly limited understanding of the challenges of early modernity). If this history and its disjointed sources are approached on their own terms, from their own logic, and are made to relate to each other in a heavily contextualized historical interpretative environment, much more information might be gleaned from them than is often thought.

An important case in point is the notoriously difficult problem of family size, and the derived estimate of population size. Creative new use of sources and measured comparison across time, place and social setting indicate that the size of the average 17th-century Ottoman heartland family unit was far smaller than previously assumed: 3.65 in cities and 4.9 in rural environs. The evidence suggests that Izmir’s Turkish, Greek, Armenian and Jewish families were no exception. This brings the population of 1650s Izmir to c. 40,000, and of 1678 to c. 70,000 (from a mere 2,500 in 1575!), with immigration of non-Muslims (Jews especially) disproportionally contributing to the growth of the city and its economy.

The simultaneous boom in population and trade, both moving through the antiquated infrastructure of the city in increasing numbers and volumes, meant that crosscultural contact was pervasive – although well-hidden under a triple layer of ethno-religious, class and fiscal silencing. Because of this silencing, extra care should be taken to include the society’s full width and depth in examining the web of crosscultural relations at work in 17th-century Izmir. Yet, in the historiography of Ottoman absorption into the European world system through Izmir, the complicating and moderating agency of Izmir’s Europeans and Ottoman Turks, Christians and Jews, of servants, slaves, merchants, representatives and officials, has all too often been neglected. All the same, the historical narrative is predicated on many assumptions about their desires and daily interactions. These might well fit the teleology, but not Ottoman history, especially not Izmir’s. This teleological narrative of segregation has led to significant misunderstanding of the Ottoman social order as it existed on the ground in the preceding centuries (most particularly in Izmir, as the arguments in Chapter 1 underline) – and as a result, of the social and infrastructural structures and mechanisms (urban, regional, imperial and international) that, through their daily crosscultural goings-on, are thought to have more or less consistently facilitated the 16th-century beginnings and 17th-century consolidation of the process of Ottoman (semi)peripheralization.

The third chapter (“The Ottoman City – Geography”) traced the physical evolution of the city as it exploded onto the international stage, as well as the
development of Ottoman policies attempting to control and utilize the concomitant economic, social and fiscal challenges through infrastructural investment and fiscal-administrative regulation. It argued that the divided or double city of Izmir integrated under the *pax Ottomanica*, and that its primary urban features (commercial, political-religious and military) were redistributed over the unified city. The direction of growth and certain areas’ functional concentration, then, were the consequence of interaction between urban and regional geography (the three axes at the city’s heart) and the triple trends of Turkification, internationalization and the growth of the non-Muslim economy and population.

1660s Izmir was a focal point of rapid economic expansion and social change. Already underadministered and underfunded, its cultural pragmatism and commercial opportunities would surely end up eroding and challenging the Ottoman social and economic order if left to its own devices and European designs. Into this breach stepped Köprülüzađe Fazıl Ahmed Paşa and Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Paşa. Second and third scions of the Köprülü-line of grand-viziers, they followed their father’s policies of severe pacification and consolidation with incorporation and modernization. The upgrade they gave Izmir was at once classical and modernizing: they upgraded the city’s infrastructure through a major privately endowed program of public construction, but in so doing focused exclusively on bringing the city’s runaway economy under Ottoman control (incorporation), in the process trying to make sure that the booming city’s challenges to their updated version of the Ottoman social and fiscal order (i.e. its crossculturality and extraterritoriality) could be decisively dealt with. Their endowment act and the orders and conflicts accompanying its implementation, contain a wealth of information on the (otherwise unknown) 17th-century city’s spatial organization and ethno-religious composition.

From it emerges an Ottoman city that was rapidly losing its ethno-religious homogeneity under the strains of growth. In demographic, social and economic terms the center of the city had shifted downhill toward the seaside, degrading the southernmost parts of the city to a parochial Turkish backwater. The lower-lying other two-thirds of the city now had a professionally, ethnically and religiously diverse population. Socio-historical orthodoxy claimed that the pluralism of “the Ottoman city”, and of Izmir in particular, was superficial. In this view, its inhabitants led such deeply segregated lives that there could be no joint representation or responsibility, no civic spirit, and therefore no real city; only a group of centrally administered obedient ethno-religious communities. Even on the off-chance that this paradigm (of “the Islamic city”) might have been useful for framing the history of the 15th or 16th-century town, it is impossible to fit it around late-17th-century Izmir. This is precisely why the Köprülüüs invested so much in bringing it back under Ottoman, and (not to forget) their own, control.
Through their major investment the Köprülüs, by 1680, had managed to transform Izmir from a regional port and smugglers’ paradise, into a major Ottoman commercial center and a true focus of empire. The upgrade heralded a drive for increased Ottoman control which, if it was consistently followed up with matching legislation and administrative practices, would significantly curtail the uncommon liberty the European merchant communities of Izmir had become accustomed to, and ultimately even absorb them into the Ottoman order completely (as Ottoman taifes). Stabilization and incorporation on updated Ottoman terms were the Köprülüs’ answers to the challenges posed by the increasing pull of the emerging economic world-system. They were very successful, until their ambitions were thwarted by the triple blow of the failed siege of Vienna in 1683 (and the consequent execution of Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Paşa and the loss of Hungary), the deposition of sultan Mehmed IV (in 1678, after a reign of 39 years), and the 1688-earthquake (which destroyed significant portions of the Izmir endowment). From 1687, however, a restored line of Köprülüs would take up their cause in Izmir.

The fourth chapter (“The European City – History”) discussed the history of the northern, originally non-Muslim, part of the city – with particular attention to the interplay between religious differences and cultural prejudices on the one hand, and the developing capitulatory regime and its varying degrees of fiscal and legal exceptionalism on the other. Undeniably, it argued, many of “European Izmir’s” inhabitants and dependents set themselves apart from wider society and administration (and threatened to do the same with the region’s economy), but in the unified Ottoman 17th-century city the division was far less hard and far more mediated than they themselves, their neighbors, their overlords and their visitors insisted. This deliberately maintained zone of mediation, which we have here called the middle ground, is where the pressures of the European world system were transformed so they could be managed and absorbed to create a specifically Ottoman early modernity. And it was this middle ground and its economy that the Köprülüs worked to relocate and incorporate.

On the middle ground itself, meanwhile, the individual “subjects” (or “partners”) in question remained adept at slipping through any national or monopolistic nets European or Ottoman authorities imagined to tie them in. They avoided full incorporation and made sure they were maximally positioned to opt in or out of European or Ottoman legal and fiscal regimes whenever it suited them best – although they always did so as Ottoman subjects first and foremost. The mediation these Ottoman Greeks, Armenians and Jews provided relied heavily on the practice of strategic dissimulation (or, the managing of different parties’ prejudices and expectations of both the mediator and other parties) to navigate between the demands of the individuals, cultures and states they were bringing together. This independently-
minded dissimulative stance (White’s “creative misunderstanding”) is typical for frontier societies, for the early modern individual seeking a way from medieval obligations to modernity’s freedoms, and for the practice of international trade. In Izmir, its relevance made understanding and living up to its requirements instrumental for anyone wanting to achieve success, whether he or she be European, Ottoman non-Muslim, or Muslim (and failure to do so must have been the root cause of many a merchants’ bankruptcy and official’s or diplomat’s disgraceful recall).

After Europe’s Thirty Years’ War and the Ottoman “Time of Troubles”, both arguably reactions to the shocks of early modernity, the second half of the 17th century saw European and Ottoman drives to expand and intensify sovereignty and to enlarge the economic and fiscal basis of sovereign princes and states. Izmir’s once so helpful crosscultural freewheeling became a direct threat to their authority and a liability for their mercantilist policies of protectionism and expansion. The marshaling of assets, populations and religions in the service of monetary and territorial expansion not only required further fiscalization and centralization, but also a measure of allegiance and obeisance (a nationalization avant-la-lettre) that went against every grain of Izmir’s society, putting a heavy strain on its nations and nationals, and forcing them to hide their mediation from view even further. The only communities to keep their footing amidst these shifts and rifts were those of Izmir’s Jews (Portuguese and Middle Eastern), who had no desire to overly rely on fickle European protection and unequivocally preferred the status aparte the Ottomans granted them, and whose independence promptly made them the best, though often reviled, intermediary and buffer between European and Turk.

Meanwhile, the Köprülü viziers and their sultan (Mehmed IV) worked to reassert, codify and institutionalize their new-found stability and might, both internally and externally. In their relations with Europe they did so by reasserting the unilateral character of the capitulations, and by repeatedly enforcing it in diplomatic and mercantile traffic. The concretization of the tributary fiction in Ottoman relations with Europe for a while had the desired effect between 1666 and 1683, as practical relations were reconfigured and European merchants, diplomats, trade organizations and even states and sovereigns became increasingly circumspect in their dealings with Ottoman administration and in mercantile practice.

The fifth chapter (“The European City – Demography”) explored Izmir’s European communities, individually and as an group, the increasing pressures brought to bear on them by their home authorities and the Ottoman context, and how they responded to these. In the process, we argued that Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Paşa’s long series of interventions in Izmir’s and wider crosscultural relations (although increasingly represented in Europe as the actions of a crazed madman) was in fact part of a consistent dynastic policy to intensify control and to rebuild Ottoman-European relations from
the ground up by having formal and informal hierarchies coincide under their family’s control. A policy nevertheless, whose initial and, especially, ultimate success has gone unnoticed by many historians, blinded perhaps by the brilliant elegance of world systems theory (and sometimes also by their prejudices) amidst the darkness of the disjointed sources left us by all manners of decaying and newly-forming Ottoman bureaucracies.

We began by asking what it meant for Europeans to be living under the capitulations. Almost immediately, we concluded that the capitulations were not uniform, did not govern everyday life, and that the relations they informed must have varied greatly from place to place, from nation to nation, and from person to person – depending on the historical, social, economic, legal (and so on) dynamics steering the parties engaged in crosscultural relations, and on the specific dynamic that resulted from their relations. Among these crosscultural dynamics, we should note that of collusion in particular: transgressions against the capitulations were most often the result of agreements between the parties involved in a transaction (agreements for the making of which Izmir was uniquely suited, as we have seen), and only when they failed to maintain their agreement, did dealing in contravention of the capitulations become relevant and punishable.

We should take care to distinguish the reality of Izmir’s Ottoman-European affairs from the capitulatory fiction all parties relied upon in their relations with outsiders. The hidden space afforded by Izmir’s benignly administered middle ground, made the city all the more attractive to libertarian (or simply unscrupulous) Europeans, who could create a life of far greater freedom than back home, under full protection of the Ottoman state, but with few obligations for them to fulfill in return – as long as they managed to keep shipping and tax expenses to a minimum.

Izmir’s mediative capability had always held great economic promise and would continue to do so, but the degree of collusion it invited as the city’s economy and population ballooned, was threatening to undermine the empire’s international affairs and to erode its fiscal basis. This threat was registered by the Köprülü, who responded by seizing control of the entire chain of authorities involved in the administration of Izmir and its international commerce, by constructing a new physical middle ground under their control, and by retracing and policing the divide between European and Ottoman Greek, Jew and Armenian. In their Izmir, there would still be a middle ground, but it was to be physically, fiscally, legally, socially and politically internal to the Ottoman system. From the understanding that Izmir was a place that could both mirror and propell Istanbul’s relations with Europe on a practical and daily basis, the Köprülü worked to include it in their international politics. All the while, they unfailingly asserted the unilateral character of Ottoman relations with Europe and the pertinence of Ottoman laws and customs in this arena.
The Köprülü’s decades-long policies and their success in dictating the terms on which Izmir’s international commerce, society and politics would proceed, begs the question how they were able to do so after a prolonged existential crisis, against staunch resistance by European states and merchant communities alike, with an economy that had allegedly been attuning to European demand since the mid-16th century (i.e. that had a century of peripheralization behind it)? Our answer has been that, even if the process of peripheralization was indeed at work in 16th-century Izmir, it should not follow on the basis of a clearly limited understanding of the problematic 17th-century context and sources that the 18th or 19th-century process was the direct incarnation of that discerned in the 16th century. If this would have been the case, the power relations implied in prolonged and intensifying peripheralization would have dominated not only 17th-century Izmir’s economy, but would have permeated its entire administration, politics, culture, and society. In fact, we see the opposite happening, if we forget the model for a moment and start from an Ottoman perspective.

The Ottoman 17th century saw a shift from hierarchical authority to fiscal efficiency and maximization. Many of the roles and functions of classical Ottoman administration were taken over by more effective, if more arbitrary, forms of management. This happened first and foremost in lands reserved for the crown and high officials (havass), which already had a tradition of government delegated (i.e. farmed-out) to clients of the patron and his household. Izmir might appear to have been left to its own and Europe’s devices because it did not receive an administrative or infrastructural upgrade in the classical sense. But as bass-land, within the context of the specifically early modern form of Ottoman administration that was congealing, its new exclusively commercial facilities and the attention lavished on it by emissaries from the Köprülü household were assertions of new Ottoman interests and powers. Indeed, its being under both formal and informal control of the empire’s most powerful political household meant that the bonds of power connecting court, central government and Izmir’s local administration and middlemen were exceptionally enduring, strong and deep. If anything, there was now so much Ottoman political and economic coordination and pressure in Izmir that European diplomats and their merchant communities were worried that they themselves would one day wake up to find themselves Ottoman subjects.

The economic and political changes in Europe, in the Ottoman Empire, and in the relations between the two, naturally also had its effects upon the make-up of Izmir’s European communities; effects that shed still more light on how systemic developments played out locally. What becomes clear from the development and correspondence of Izmir’s Genoese, Venetian, French, English and Dutch communities is that there was a historical tendency towards professionalization. Broad village-like communities of individual merchants, artisans and their families creating a livelihood (Genoese, Venetian
and French) were replaced by, or morphed into, much smaller predominantly male communities of merchants and assistants making careers and seeking fortunes (and pleasures) before moving back home (French, Dutch and English). These communities of merchants depended heavily on their privileges as foreigners, and perceived it to be in their best interest not only to be well-connected to Ottoman society as merchants, but also to maintain considerable distance from it as Europeans.

Before thinking too much of this group’s economic, political and social power, it would be wise to remember that they served as factors to principals back home, worked on commission, and were heavily dependent on the goodwill and acumen of a small group of Ottoman wholesalers and financiers. But still more sobering is the fact that these 400 to 500 European nationals (about a 135 of whom were diplomatic staff, factors or merchants for their own accounts) made up less than one percent of Izmir’s 1678 population. Although this is not a precise reflection of their influence, and Izmir’s European population enjoyed influence far beyond its number, the political and social aspects of that power did lag significantly behind the economic aspect. In short, it was impossible for this community to dictate the terms of any Ottoman-European transaction or case.

The sixth and last chapter (“The European City – Geography”) explored what can be known about the physical presence and distribution of Izmir’s European communities in the Köprülü period. Contrary to what one would expect considering the wealth of European consular correspondence from Izmir, all these archival meters actually reveal curiously little about daily life there, about the physical layout of the European quarter, and about its relations with the adjoining Ottoman quarters and its inhabitants. What is revealed to us is mostly the public outer shell of the consular institutions – in much the same manner as these dominated the view of the city from the harbor.

At the same time, we know how dependent Izmir’s Europeans were on the resources, services and contacts of their Ottoman connections in these quarters. A dependency that only increased when, between 1675 and 1678 the Köprülüs decisively moved to gain administrative and even physical control over European trade by having it flow through the administrative and commercial institutions of their endowment. The city’s French, English and Dutch nevertheless continued, and even intensified their displays of wealth, status and power vis-à-vis their competitors and their Ottoman hosts, consuming conspicuously along the upscale seafront to mark the honors of their offices, their princes, their states, their religion and their culture. The suspicion lingers that these and other displays and affirmations of boisterous independence and moral uprightness, were mostly disingenuous – that, beyond, on the modest side of Frank Street and in the even lowlier Ottoman quarters beyond, these same Europeans were firmly ensconced in Oriental
lives. The occasional violent crack in the hard narrative façade of European independence (caused by commercial or private conflicts spinning out of consular or national control), after all offers many a glimpse of merchants taking up alaturca lifestyles complete with Turkish dress, concubines and slave girls, and houses beyond Frank Street.

Accepted as such transcultural freedoms might have been within Izmir society, it counted as a double degradation in the Ottoman and European capitals. The boundary between European and Ottoman Izmir is obscured by the politics of race and religion, further amplified by the politics of class. Given all the circumstantial evidence, however, there appears to have been no firm boundary between Frank Street and the Greek quarter beyond it, meaning that Europeans could and would freely mingle and reside there, especially if considerations of class mattered little to them.

It has been my aim to attain a better understanding than was until now afforded of how 17th-century Izmir’s several parts related to each other, how they depended on each other for their mutual survival and progress, what kind of specific urban history and culture produced that interdependence and was reproduced through their actions, how Ottoman administration in turn sought to control and shape this culture of interdependence, and to what purpose and with what results it did so. I have attempted to identify the mechanisms that are responsible for our sources’ overwhelming silence on crosscultural contact, to demonstrate their politics, and to counter the (often nationalist or eurocentrist) historiography that has sprung from them.

The strategy used for this involved the bringing together a number of accidental references to European crosscultural contact with an analysis of wider early modern and late-17th-century European and Ottoman historical developments, and showing how they interacted and resulted in concrete developments in Izmir. In this way, I hope to have demonstrated that the narrative of segregation and guarded animosity that still dominates descriptions of 17th-century Izmir and its various communities is unrealistic, and to have put in its stead the foundations of a narrative that more realistically assesses the strengths and weaknesses of an urban culture of interdependence typical to Izmir, and the ways in which its resident Ottoman and European participants and individual, as well as institutional, Ottoman and European stakeholders on the outside consciously and methodically attempted to change it to their advantage in the 1670s, in the process severely testing the very urban culture that had brought them the wealth and power to do so.

I hope that the resulting survey has managed to pioneer a fresh and challenging historiographical path that will bring us closer to the lived cross- and even transcultural civic realities of this key city during this crucial period. One that, if taken up by researchers with different strengths and insights, may significantly adjust the received wisdom about Ottoman peripheralization and Izmir’s role in it.