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Networking and Spatial Allocation around the Mediterranean, Seventeenth-Nineteenth Centuries



### Preface

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# *Special Issue / Numéro Spécial*

NETWORKING AND SPATIAL ALLOCATION AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN,  
SEVENTEENTH-NINETEENTH CENTURIES

## Preface

This volume of *The Historical Review / La Revue Historique* is the outcome of two components, both based on the work of the Section of Economic and Social History at the Institute for Neohellenic Research (INR), National Hellenic Research Foundation.

The first of these components consists of the papers from a workshop held at the INR in Athens, 4-5 April 2008, entitled “Social Groups and Practices of Trading in the Mediterranean, 17th-19th centuries”, organized by Dr Evrydiki Sifneos and myself. The organizing partners of the workshop were: the INR; the Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Europei e Mediterranei, Università di Trieste; the Istituto di Studi sulle Società del Mediterraneo of the CNR, Naples; the Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche, Università di Bari; and the Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l’Homme (MMSH), TELEMME, Université de Provence (Aix-Marseille).

The meeting was realized within the framework of the European programme “Citizens and Governance in Knowledge Based Society”, RAMSES2 Network of Excellence (2006-2010). During its five-year time span, the RAMSES2 programme on the Mediterranean gave the opportunity to a vast number of scholars from different academic and cultural institutions to meet and exchange ideas on three thematic axes: “Memories”, “Conflicts” and “Exchanges”. Having coordinated, on behalf of the MMSH, such a valuable think tank from various disciplines for all these years, special credit must be conferred on Professors Robert Ilbert, Thierry Fabre and Brigitte Marin. In the Athens workshop – an integral part of the “Exchanges” axis of the programme – seventeen historians from Greek, Italian, French and British academic and cultural institutions participated as speakers and convenors; aside from those whose papers are published here, Helen Beneki (Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation), Professor Tullia Catalan (Università di Trieste), Professor Paolo Malanima (ISSM-CNR), Professor Biagio Salvemini

(Università di Bari) and Dr Biagio Passaro (Università dell'Abruzzo "Gabriele d'Annunzio", Pescara) were also in attendance.

The second component of this volume is the outcome of research done by some of the members of the Section of Economic and Social History at the INR: Dr Dimitris Dimitropoulos, Dr Eftychia Liata and Dr Ioli Vingopoulou. The research projects of this Section focus on mapping out people – as individuals, communities, groups – in society. These projects cover the period of the Ottoman occupation of Greek lands up to the creation of the Modern Greek State (sixteenth-nineteenth centuries). The objectives are to examine developments in the economy and in demographics (population growth and urbanization), and to consider economic changes and the interactions of those changes.

What is the main link that joins the Athens workshop papers to the three in-house papers? All contributors build on solid and extensive documentation. They trace the networking of people and places around the Mediterranean. The authors propose that the spatial allocation of economic activities in the Mediterranean presents particular features based on geographical characteristics and on mutual contacts between individuals and groups. Sites and spaces are here understood as having been constructed by social agents and at the same time conditioned by political upheavals and crises.

The subject explored in the Athens workshop was the social and economic world of merchants in the Mediterranean. This was a world that evolved from business organization and the formation of networks beyond the limits of imperial or national boundaries. From early modern times up to the industrial era, a "unified economic world" had been created in Europe through commercial transactions, currencies and the ethics of business transactions. Far from claiming a Braudelian unity, the Mediterranean was a place of exchange of goods, commercial and technical practices and migrations. Cross-Mediterranean and intra-Mediterranean trade was halted in many cases due to political upheavals, the creation of new nation-states and the slow dissolution of the great empires. The main thematic units of the workshop were:

a) Merchants under foreign dominion and as foreign dominion; the role of merchants who operated in markets that had different ethnic, national and political structures than their own, for example the world of commerce under the dominance of the Ottomans, Venetians, Genoese, Hapsburgs and Greeks (sixteenth-twentieth centuries), as well as merchants as a dominant élite in various markets.

b) Networking as a systematic organization pattern for exchanging information, and the assessment of forms of collaboration and competition among various religious and ethnic minorities and groups; the scrutiny of the transformations and adaptations of mercantile firms, and of ethnic networks through individual strategies and collective economic behaviour; merchants as social agents in a comparative perspective creating and affecting institutional and network hierarchies from the old regime to modern times.

c) Crises (economic, natural) as a decisive factor in the course of trade in the Mediterranean: causes and effects; the investigation of entrepreneurship through individual or collective reactions and adaptations to these crises. For this theme a vast variety of sources and bibliography – merchants' archives, commercial and consular correspondence, manuals of commerce, geography books, port archives and more – has been exploited in order to investigate merchant activities in the Mediterranean from within, forming a kaleidoscope of empirical work.

In an attempt to combine the papers of this volume, we discover an interesting outcome: the familiarity of certain issues among them. Merchant houses and firms were the wheel for the rise of merchant capitalism and were represented in merchants from nation-states and merchants from Mediterranean regions that were in the throes of state formation. The development of merchant capitalism around the Mediterranean connected ports, cities, merchants, and agricultural and industrial regions based on networks and on the evolution of the market economy. This procedure contributed to the picture of unity of space so familiar from the Braudelian tradition. Economic geography, on the other hand, thinks of space as heterogeneous and tries to understand interdependencies between places and individuals and different processes. The spatial allocation papers herein offer the canvas to build on such interdependencies.

The rise of the modern merchant in the Mediterranean evolves in Tonia Kioussopoulou's argument for the emergence of a potent social group based on economic power and social relations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, on the eve of the fall of Byzantine Constantinople. Gilbert Buti explores the strategies used to overcome and cope with external crises by French merchants – a dominant group *par excellence* – in the eighteenth-century Mediterranean. In search of an indispensable, ethical way to conduct commercial activities to avoid economic crash, Sébastien Lupo goes to the heart of business in order to examine the expansion from Marseille to Smyrna of the potent Roux merchant house. Michèle Janin-Thivos examines

business correspondence in the minority language of a former seaborne empire, analyzing the linguistic abilities of Portuguese merchants involved in Mediterranean networks and their evolution throughout the eighteenth century. Giovanni Lombardi portrays Naples as a cosmopolitan port-city in the modern era, presenting its banking, notarial and ecclesiastical archival sources and focusing on the seventeenth-century international merchant house of Raillard. Annastella Carrino describes the role of the eighteenth-century petty merchants from the coastal area of Liguria, trading and competing among great merchant dynasties, from local trade to large-scale trade. Eftychia Liata has created a meticulous study of an early eighteenth-century Venice-based merchant of silk and colonial goods, a man of Greek-Spanish origin who adopted short-term commercial ventures and commission trade across the Mediterranean to control risk; in the course of his years in Venice, he made use of his Greek identity to support his trade activities.

Networking and ethnic business prevail in the papers that bring to light the importance of business groups in foreign markets. Katerina Galani tracks the emergence of newcomers – Greek and American merchants – in the port of Livorno in the turbulent years of the Napoleonic Wars. Marco Dogo indicates religious tolerance on the part of the Hapsburg Empire as an important factor for stabilizing Greek merchants in eighteenth-century Trieste as part of a trade colonies' network in the Balkan area, helping to overcome external threats in the course of trade. My own paper explores the economic migration of Greek merchants in the Mediterranean in response to international trade, taking advantage of their Ottoman past and their trade experience in the Italian Peninsula to establish themselves in England in the nineteenth century. Evrydiki Sifneos examines Greeks as a foreign economic dominion in South Russia and elsewhere through the business history of a family firm, analyzing the flexibility of the firm in order to adapt to changing environments from the nineteenth century well into the twentieth.

The combination of spatial allocation and economic activities in the Mediterranean prevails in the last group of papers. Idamaria Fusco analyses silk throwing in the region of Calabria in the nineteenth century, its expansion and the technological renovation that favoured the arrival of foreign entrepreneurs in the area. Katerina Papakonstantinou investigates the rise and fall of a small Greek port, Messolonghi, in the course of the eighteenth century in relation to Western Mediterranean demand, introducing spatial allocation in local maritime activity.

Ioli Vingopoulou highlights the connectivity in the region of Thrace across the Roman roads of the *Via Militaris* and the *Via Egnatia* from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century through the different types of lodgings used by travellers. Dimitris Dimitropoulos gives a detailed analysis of a settlement complex, as well as spatial allocation of Christian and Muslim settlements, in the heart of the Greek mainland in the early nineteenth century.

From the publication of Fernand Braudel's massive work on the Mediterranean, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (1949) and his *Civilization and Capitalism* (1967) to Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell's *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (2000), two exemplary orientations about the Mediterranean world, there is a time gap of approximately half a century. From the absolute praise and sovereignty of the Mediterranean to the "The End of the Mediterranean" – to quote a title from Horden and Purcell referring to the apparent fading of influence of Braudel's *Méditerranée* – to the decline of interest, on the part of historians and geographers, in *The Corrupting Sea*, during this half century a massive quantity of documentation, interpretation and criticism regarding the Mediterranean has accumulated. There is no way to disregard it, but to elaborate and elucidate it, and that is a key point of this volume.

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