Interaction and boundary work: Western merchant colonies in the Levant and the Eastern Churches, 1650–1800

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Abstract

European merchants in their factories ('nations') in the Eastern Mediterranean under Ottoman rule were not really colonizers; in early modern times, they were somehow privileged guests. However, they deserve an important part in a long-term history of types of 'close distance' and forms of segregational coexistence. Different from recent studies that stress a strong overall interaction, understanding, sharing, and exchange between Europeans and Ottoman subjects, it is proposed to distinguish three levels: (1) The daily commercial interaction of Western Europeans with their Ottoman counterparts; (2) the stronger involvement in some politico-religious struggles (the 1724 schism in the patriarchate of Antioch serves as example): also here, one has still to distinguish between real interest in the religious cause and other activities as credit lending; (3) the care for and maintenance by the Europeans of their own Western national culture abroad: these cultural activities served more to (eventually unconsciously) perform 'boundary work' and to close up the 'nation'. These early modern forms of close distance and segregation were only isomorphic but not homologous with later highly conscious colonial and modern imperial forms of contact between 'West' and 'East' as in the nineteenth-century European settlements in Istanbul.

Before 1830, Western merchant 'colonies' in the Mediterranean were never really colonial settlements, as they remained at all times under Ottoman overlordship. However, taking into account their embeddedness in the local foreign environment of the Mediterranean cities, and the antiquity and quantity of their roots, the Western merchant settlements in the Mediterranean were one of the most important fields, if not *the* pioneering one, for which the Europeans acquired institutional and administrative know-how for the establishment of a proto-imperial network of representatives and formally regulated living conditions abroad. From the entry of Northern

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merchants around 1580 until at least 1750, Mediterranean commerce surpassed the slowly growing Atlantic and Asian trade, even thereafter equalizing it, if we count the French, British, and Dutch balances.[1] Only Spain and Portugal had earlier redirected their trade primarily towards the Americas.[2] If we conceive of Early Modern trading 'Empires' at all, the Mediterranean was evidently a strong part of any such 'Empire' for all three of the above major Northern countries.

Within the context of a long-term history of types of 'close distance' and forms of segregational coexistence, these merchant colonies are of particular interest—all the more so as, from the perspective of the nineteenth century and the European settlements of companies, banks, and insurance agencies in these same cities, such as Galata/Pera in Istanbul for example, there is no doubt that these merchant colonies are quite comparable to the British and European quarters in cities such as Bombay or Calcutta. Strongly similar perceptions of ethno-racial distinction and segregation would *later* be adopted for these quarters during the Tanzimat period and during the later emulation of Haussmannian's reshaping of the city.[3] Considering scholarly research continually asks for continuities and discontinuities between the early 'company times' and high colonial forms of British colonial cities on a global scale,[4] it is striking that such questions concerning a history of 'proto-segregation' are seldom discussed for the Mediterranean contexts— or, vice versa, a simple continuity of realities between the eighteenth and nineteenth century is rather implicitly suggested than really questioned and proven.[5] Yet those nineteenth-century (British, as well as other European) merchants were living physically in the same areas as the Levant Company or the Colbertian Marseille merchants had done, and they themselves often encountered traditions or constructed them for earlier times—though the dimensions, forms, and qualities of continuity between early modern and nineteenth-century realities remain often unclear.[6] This lack of research is perhaps due to the fact that today the Mediterranean has become a region in large parts integrated into 'European history' and less so into imperial and extra-European

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1. See C. Zwierlein, *Imperial Unknowns. The French and the British in the Mediterranean*, Cambridge 2016, 29 n. 25 (England—following the analysis of the custom records by Ralph Davis and Christopher French); for France, the data for the proportional share of the Mediterranean trade compared with all national foreign trade are less consistent: in absolute numbers, it is usually estimated at around 20–22 million livres by the middle of the eighteenth century (ibid., 25–35—after Bergasse, Rambert, Masson, Carrière, who, however, all concentrate on Marseille).

2. The famous 'entry of the Northern Merchants' into the Mediterranean around 1580 also marked to some extent the end of a larger Iberian intra-Mediterranean trade: for discussion on this, see C. Heywood, 'The English in the Mediterranean, 1600–1630. A Post-Braudelian Perspective on the "Northern Invasion"', in: M. Fusaro / C. Heywood / M.-S. Omri (eds), *Cultural Exchange in the Early Modern Mediterranean. Braudel's Maritime Legacy*, London, New York 2010, 23–44; M. Greene, 'Beyond the Northern Invasion: the Mediterranean in the Seventeenth Century', in: *Past and Present* 174 (2003), 42–71.

3. See Z. Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul: Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century*, Berkeley 1993; C. K. Neumann, 'Modernitäten im Konflikt: Der sechste Munizipal-Bezirk von Istanbul, 1857–1912', in: *Istanbul: Vom imperialen Herrschersitz zur Megapolis*, Munich 2006, 351–375; for a case study, see C. Zwierlein, 'The Burning of a Modern City? Istanbul as Perceived by the Agents of the Sun Fire Office, 1865–1870', in: G. Bankoff et al. (eds), *Flammable Cities. Urban Conflagration and the Making of the Modern World*, Madison 2012, 82–102.

4. For example, P. J. Marshall, 'The White Town of Calcutta under the Rule of the East India Company', in: *Modern Asian Studies* 34 (2000) 2, 307–331 who certainly covers the eighteenth *and* nineteenth century alike.

5. For nineteenth-century realities and for some more sensible contributions, see, for instance, T. Riis, 'Der Krieg der Konsuln oder Prestige in Aleppo im 19. Jahrhundert', in: S. Conermann / J. Kusber (eds.), *Studia Eurasiatica*, Schenefeld 2003, 391–410; S. Knost, 'The Christian Communities in Ottoman Aleppo and the Role of Religious Endowments (*waqf*) in the Construction of Translocal Spaces', in: H. Kuroki (ed.), *Human Mobility and Multiethnic Coexistence in Middle Eastern Urban Societies 1*, Tokyo 2015, 41–57; O. J. Schmitt, *Levantiner. Lebenswelten und Identitäten einer ethnokonfessionellen Gruppe im Osmanischen Reich im 'langen 19. Jahrhundert'*, Munich 2005.

6. Many central organizers of the new age of commerce (in the British case, for example, after the dissolution of the old company in 1824 and the 1838 treaty with the Porte) were in fact old members of the Levant company, such as Charles Simpson Hanson (1803–1874), LMA CLC/B/192/019/31522/263, 115.

colonial history. If, however, we adopt the mind-set of the early modern agents of trade and mercantilist outreach (if not imperialism), all this seems quite comparable to any other pre-1750 Western merchant colony abroad—given that the terms of settlement, government, and relationship with any possible pre-existing powers (such as the Ottomans or the Mughal in India) in any case always differ and have to be taken into account.

1. What was a Western merchant 'nation' in the Mediterranean?

What exactly *was* a merchant 'nation' at this time?[7] French sources from the late-seventeenth century provide regular reports and statistical overviews about 'the state of the nation' (*état de la nation*), enumerating all merchants as heads of a household, with consulate staff and others under the protection of the consul, if they were Ottoman subjects who held a *barāt* (or *berath or berāt*) delivered by the consul by permission of the Porte.[8] Sometimes the effective number of persons (not only of houses) is also given.
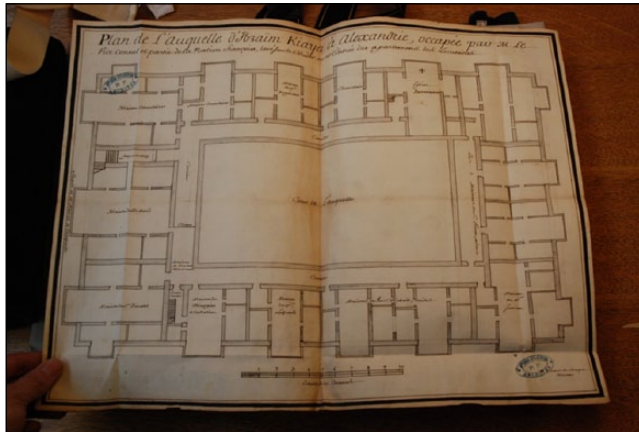
The khan of the French consul and nation at Alexandria, AN AE B I 102, after f. 309. © Archives nationales de France, reproduction with kind permission.

7. In all Western languages, the term was frequently used by the merchants themselves (*nazione, natie, nation*) to denote the small community of those merchants, their apprentices, families, and others who were under the protection of the consul. The Ottomans emulated this during the seventeenth century increasingly by denoting all Europeans not anymore just as 'Franks', but by distinguishing them likewise as *Efrenk i Ingiliz* or *Efrenik-i Filemenk* (B. Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East. Mercantilism and the Islamic Economy in Aleppo, 1600–1750*, New York, London 1988, 77). For the English, A. C. Wood, *A History of the Levant Company* [1st edn 1935], New York 1964, 59–79 and 229–249; G. P. Ambrose, 'The Levant Company Mainly from 1640–1753', PhD typescript 1932 [Guildhall Library London SL 66/2], 147–199; J. Mather, *Pashas. Traders and Travellers in the Islamic World*, New Haven, London 2011; R. Davis, *Aleppo and Devonshire Square*, London, New York 1967, 75–95; and S. P. Anderson, *An English Consul in Turkey. Paul Rycaut at Smyrna, 1667–1678*, Oxford 1989, 66–116 (Smyrna/Izmir). For the French, more studies on several *échelles* exist but for the questions of the composition and structure of a 'nation', see still Y. Debbasch, *La nation française en Tunisie (1577–1835)*, Paris 1957; E. Frangakis-Syrett, *The Commerce of Smyrna in the Eighteenth Century (1700–1820)*, Athens 1992, 75–118; N. G. Svoronos, *Le commerce de Salonique au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris 1956, 141–202; M.-C. Smyrnelis, *Une société hors de soi Identités et relations sociales à Smyrne aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles*, Paris 2005, 30–97; Zwierlein, *Imperial Unknowns*, 60–72. With regard to the Dutch in the Mediterranean, cf. M.-C. Engels, *Merchants, Interlopers, Seamen and Corsairs: The 'Flemish' Community in Livorno and Genoa (1615–1635)*, Hilversum 1997; G. van Krieken, *Corsaires et Marchands. Les relations entre Alger et les Pays-Bas, 1604–1830*, Paris 2002.
8. M. H. van den Boogert, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System. Qadis, Consuls and Beraths in the 18th Century*, Leiden, Boston 2005, 24–26, 63–115; M. Talbot, *British-Ottoman Relations, 1661–1807. Commerce and Diplomatic Practice in Eighteenth-Century Istanbul*, Norfolk 2017, 97–99.

The centre of the nation was often a large building, a *khan*,[9] usually rented from an Ottoman subject or a *waqf* foundation.[10] It is here that the consul was based, together with his chapel and the friar(s) serving as his chaplain; some rooms were devoted to him and to the community, some had their separate living rooms and areas for families of the nation.[11] Depending on how large the nation was, a *khan* could be big enough to accommodate the whole nation. In other cases, the nation possessed several houses or even almost a quarter of a whole city. In 1730, the French nation in Cairo, often at times the largest in the Levant, consisted of 11 houses directed by 17 merchants, which meant that all in all perhaps some 200 people might attend mass at its chapel.[12] Sidon, the fifth largest nation in the Levant, consisted of 38 men acting as merchants and 6 religious members of the orders.[13] A tiny nation like Rosette in Egypt consisted in 1728 only of the vice-consul, a chaplain, a chancellor who functioned at the same time as a dragoman, three merchants, and four other people under French protection (interestingly, among them was also the Italian Lodovico Brunachi, an agent of the British consul in Cairo).[14] If one compares these numbers with the exactly contemporaneous accounts of 'souls' which the custody of the Holy Land recognized it was responsible for, the number of Catholics was evidently far larger in that region. In 1730–1731, the *custos* of the Holy Land all in all counted 3353 'Oriental and European' souls under his custody— already here distinguishing somehow loosely ethnically between 'Orientals' and 'Europeans'. In these lists, the French (and other 'Western') merchant nations were very clearly distinguished from the other groups who were recognized as more or less 'catholic' by Rome. For Sidon, for example, one reads that of 'the Souls of this *cura*—French merchants and their scribes constitute 59—the Maronites have their own priests—The Catholic Greeks in this City are 560 [. . .]'; for Aleppo,

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9. A *khan* was originally a large building thought to be used for hosting poor travellers, eventually pilgrims; later the Ottoman owners rented, leased, or sold them partially or as a whole to (groups of) merchants; J.-C. David / T. Grandin, 'L'habitat permanent des grands commerçants dans les khans d'Alep à l'époque ottomane', in: D. Panzac (ed.), *Les villes dans l'empire ottoman: activités et sociétés*, vol. II, Paris 1994, 85–124 (the occupied *khan* as 'lieu de vie "extraterritorial" des étrangers à Alep', ibid., 88); J. Starkey, *The Scottish Enlightenment Abroad. The Russells of Braidshaw in Aleppo and on the Coast of Coromandel*, Leiden, Boston 2018, 48–57; Mather, *Pashas*, 72–85 for descriptions of the *khans* in Aleppo.

10. In general, it was the rule that Christians were not allowed to buy property in Muslim lands and that the foreign merchants were obliged to live in these buildings. There were private, *waqf*-run, and more or less state-run *khans*. In Aleppo, the *khans* for the foreigners were usually owned by *waqf* foundations still administrated by the 'executors of the pious endowment, who was usually a descendant of the endower' (Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance*, 125). For Algiers' state-run *pendants*, cf. S. Missoum, *Alger à l'époque ottomane. La médina et la maison traditionelle*, Aix-en-Provence 2003, 48, 167–177. In Tunis, the khans or funduks were property first of the administration of customs then of the Diwan; the Europeans' rights on it (a form of lease) was considered to be close to property (Debbasch, *La nation*, 120–126). However, *khans* were also owned by private persons as was the case in Alexandria owned by an Ibraim Kiaya, there is no mention of a *waqf* endowment in the records: AN AE B I 102 f. 295–310 (1730). A. Raymond, *Grandes villes arabes à l'époque ottomane*, Paris 1985, 115–116, 251, 319–325.

11. At least later in the eighteenth century, the house of a consul could be 'owned' by him or rather by the king of France due to the development of international law and the acceptance of the public state character of the consul: 'la maison consulaire, qu'il exposa *appartenir*, non seulement a M. Dedaux Consul de France qui l'auoit *achetté* toute detruitte de Moustaffa Bey d'Oran, et ensuitte faite battir; mais bien *au Roy de France* son maitre; puisque cette maison n'auoit estée *achettée* que pour seruir de logement au Consulat de France'. (*Relation de ce qui est passé a Poran au sujet de la possession de la maison consulaire de France en ladite ville d'Oran* [. . .] [1734], AN AE B I 98, f. 44r, my emphasis). In the early nineteenth century, the *Levantines* knew to bypass the prohibition of ownership of houses by foreigners (Schmitt, *Levantiner*, 243). J. Cras, 'Une approche archivistique des consulats de la Nation française: Les actes de chancellerie consulaire sous l'Ancien Régime', in: J. Ulbert / G. Le Bouëdec (eds.), *La fonction consulaire à l'époque moderne. L'Affirmation d'une institution économique et politique (1500–1800)*, Rennes: PU Rennes 2006, 51–84, 61.

12. AN AE B I 320, f. 324r–333r, here 324r-v (Pignon to the Secretary of State, Cairo, Sept. 11, 1730).

13. AN AE B I 1023, f. 21r–27v (Benoît de Maillet, Sidon, 12 January 1730).

14. *État de la nation françoise d'Egipte, en Mars 1728*, AN AE B I 968 [no pag.].

> The national French souls in this *cura* are 103 in number; the national souls under the French protection are 20; the Latin Persians attracted to this place by the Dominicans in Armenia 25—all in all in this *cura* 143 [plus 20 converted Armenians and 8 converted Greeks].[15]

These both lists were certainly somehow 'state' or 'church simplifications'.[16] Reality was often more complex, as fluctuations existed and there were cases where the 'borders' of the nations were fluid and should better be understood as grey zones. Nevertheless, consuls and guardians of the Holy Land had knowledge of who they counted to be included and excluded at least to a quite high degree of certainty: when a question arose about whether a person was to be protected or not, they knew quite well who was 'on the list' and who was not. Still, these names, numbers, and lists do not say much about the individuals, their knowledge, and their forms of perceptions while living together in those places.

It is not the argument here that the Western merchants were completely separated from and out of contact with the Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Nestorians, Jacobites, and Muslim subjects. This would be a ridiculous claim considering they were settling in those places precisely to trade with these people. Even in religious matters, interaction between the groups was pluriform and extended so far that the 'Orientals' even used the infrastructure of the chanceries of the Western merchant colonies as a replacement for non-existing archives or as a complementary archive to those of the Patriarchate or Metropolitan See: the Western chanceries enjoyed better protection and preserved documents concerning alms, as well as matrimonial and other religious affairs from the patriarchs down to individual subjects.[17] Sometimes those documents had little or nothing to do with the Western merchant colonies themselves.[18] The Chancellor served as a state officer, adding institutional infrastructure for notification, sealing, and affirmation of correct translations, as the documents dealt with communication—for instance, in the French case, between the Congregation of Propaganda Fide and the Eastern Churches.[19]

The picture that the majority of these sources paint therefore suggests a significant amount of interaction on all epistemic levels, including interaction in cultural and religious affairs, not only affairs concerning trade. A Levant merchant seems to have known all the other ethnic groups in the city well and their religion too, and was well acquainted with the culture of the city he lived in and the people of his neighbourhood. This would confirm the picture of the early modern Mediterranean that has been drawn by recent literature, which sees it as a tremendous producer of hybrid identities and trans-imperial subjects, of a 'shared world' of Muslims and Christians despite all the conflicts. This is a world which seemingly consisted only of multilingual brokers—whose translating and

15. *Relazione dello stato della santa Custodia delle Missioni di terra Santa sotto il regime del P. Andrea di Mont'Oro* (1 March 1730 to 31 January 1731), SCPF, SOCG 670a, f. 367r–373r, here f. 370r, 371r.

16. J. C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven, London 1998, 25–33.

17. See, for instance, how Zacharias di Dimitri Dallal, dragoman [i.e. translator] to the Dutch consul in Aleppo, asked the British consul Alexander Drummond and its chancery to formally testify in the British chancery records the 'entire & perpetual separation' between him and his wife and the stipulations concerning the children (Oct 24, 1752, TNA Kew PRO SP 110/73-2, f. 178–179, in Arabic and Italian).

18. Among many other examples, SCPF SC—Greci Melchiti 3, f. 367–374, 620–624 (documents of the monks of Mount Athos concerning transfers of alms testified by the French chancery in Saloniki and copied to the Propaganda) — many cases are also to be found in the AN Paris and AE Nantes.

19. On the consuls and chanceries, see A. Bartolomei et al. (eds.), *De l'utilité commerciale des consuls. L'institution consulaire et les marchands dans le monde méditerranéen (XVIIe-XXe siècle)*, Rome 2017; special issue on the chanceries in Mélanges de l'École française de Rome IMedMC 128, 2 (2016); A. Mézin, *Les consuls de France au siècle des Lumières (1715–1792)*, Paris 1995.

brokerage was perhaps even not necessary (?)—as the whole world was a *métissage* and mix of cultures understanding each other in an admittedly sometimes problematic, yet nonetheless epistemically functioning and well-ordered coexistence.[20] Without denying the serious research underlying all those studies, I consciously somewhat overemphasize here the interpretative framework and tendencies of several studies of recent years, because I want to point out a problem we are running into which becomes evident especially in contexts like this one, which ask for a long-term history of segregation and distanced coexistence: the Middle East and the southern Mediterranean evidently belonged during the nineteenth century to the laboratories of Orientalist perception on the Western side,[21] to the laboratories of a Western civilization conceiving of itself as superior, and therefore also to the laboratories of ethnical, religious, and then racial segregational thoughts and practices. Would this have simply emerged from nothing? My suggestion is that in our comprehension of that past world, we need to integrate *both*: this dense interaction, which indeed is *also* somehow found in cultural and religious affairs, as I will demonstrate in what follows through a case study of the 1724 schism in the patriarchate of Antioch (section 2); but also a fine-tuned comprehension of gaps of understanding, of conscious as well as unconscious performances of cultural distance (section 3): this might be understood as the long-term effective 'boundary work' of these colonies.

2. A case of seemingly strong Western–Eastern interaction: the schism in the patriarchate of Antioch, 1724

In 1722, a small council of the three Greek[22] patriarchs of Constantinople, Antioch, and Jerusalem commenced a new offensive against Roman influences in the region, restating doctrinal differences

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20. M. Greene, *A Shared World: Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Princeton 2000; N. E. Rothman, *Brokering Empire. Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul*, Ithaca, London 2012; D. Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 2002; G. Maclean (ed.), *Re-Orienting the Renaissance. Cultural Exchanges with the East*, Houndmills 2005; C. Dauverd, 'Cultivating Differences: Genoese Trade Identity in the Constantinople of Sultan Mehmed II, 1453–81', in: *Mediterranean Studies* 23 (2015) 2, 94–124, 96; S. D. Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean. The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa*, Berkeley 2011. 'Commonality of culture' versus 'the region's ethno-culturally fractured nature' sets the tone for B. Catlos / S. Kinoshita (eds.), *Can We Talk Mediterranean? Conversations on an Emerging Field in Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, Basingstoke 2017, 5.

21. E. Said, *Orientalism* [1st edn 1979], with new preface, New York 2003; M. Curtis, *European Thinkers on Oriental Despotism in the Middle East and India*, Cambridge 2009—even Nabil Matar rather stresses the tendencies towards a 'centrifugal and oppositional' relationship at the end of the seventeenth century (N. Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishman in the Age of Discovery*, New York 1999, ix). W. Kaiser / J. Dakhlia, 'Introduction—Une Méditerranée entre deux mondes, ou des mondes continus', in: ibid. (eds), *Les musulmans dans l'histoire de l'Europe. II. Passages et contacts en Méditerranée*, Paris 2013, 7–31, 8, have coined these complex relationships as 'interaction en contexte global d'adversité'—however, I do not concentrate here on the Muslim–Christian divide, which is only *one* of the ethno-civilizational borders in the Mediterranean. For the opposite case of Eastern Christian diaspora communities in Western cities, M. Grenet, *La fabrique communautaire. Les Grecs à Venise, Livourne et Marseille, 1770–1840*, Rome 2016, 129–130, has recently stressed competition and distancing over collaboration among each of those communities abroad.

22. It is noteworthy that in the following, 'Greek' is not always denoting someone to be defined as ethnically Greek or (necessarily) speaking or even understanding Greek. The usual language of theological controversy in Syria was certainly Arab and the orthodox Christians had adopted Arab there since the eighth century. However, they described themselves as 'rūm' and were described by Western observers either as 'catholic / melkite' or as 'schismatic / orthodox' *Greeks*. A. Girard, *Le christianisme oriental (XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles). Essor de l'orientalisme catholique en Europe et construction des identités confessionnelles au Proche-Orient*, thèse de doctorat E.P.H.E. (472) Paris, 2011, 618–739 resolves the problem of how to write about them today—given also the problem that the term 'melkite' itself was just starting to get disambiguified in those decades—with the terms *grecs-catholiques* and *grecs-orthodoxes*, always

and strongly denying any supremacy of the pope. With the help of the Ottoman Porte, all contact between Roman missionaries and Greek Orthodox should have been forbidden.[23] When the Patriarch of Antioch Athanasios died in July 1724 in Aleppo, he had designated a Greek Orthodox monk Silvester as his successor. Although Athanasios had been trained by a Jesuit, the designation of a true Greek Orthodox as his replacement was a clear sign of the choice to strengthen the Orthodox tradition against Roman–Latin influence, which was represented by the Melkites who closely collaborated with the traditionally Catholic Maronites in Mount Liban. Silvester was consecrated later that year in Constantinople by the synod and received his *barāt* from the Ottoman Sultan. In so doing, the Porte recognized him as the sole leader of the Patriarchate of Antioch with its (Arabo-)Greek Ottoman subjects. But the faction in Aleppo leaning towards Rome and elsewhere instead promoted Cyril VI, who was consecrated by a minority of three bishops as a Catholic anti-Patriarch, and he increasingly enjoyed support from Rome.[24]

The schism had its origin much earlier in 1708, when the metropolite of Tyr and Sidon, Euthymios, had formed a union with Rome with regard to doctrine and acceptance of the pope as supreme head of the church. However, the real schismatic situation exploded only after Athanasios' death and it persisted from then onwards, especially after the Congregation in Rome had done its work of controlling Cyril's confessions and the pope had confirmed him as the patriarch recognized by Rome. Cyril consecrated seven bishops in a short period, so the two sides of the schism gradually congealed into two distinct churches.[25] Silvester had lost Aleppo, the former principal city, and retreated to Damascus. In many cities with Melkite presence—such as in Sidon, the city most important for the protection of the Holy Land and its sites, and in Damascus—schismatic micro-conflicts ignited: when Silvester entered Damascus in 1733, Melkites and Catholic missionaries were persecuted together. He imprisoned Melkite opponents with the help of the Ottoman governor and even tortured them, as organized by his representative Mikhail ibn Tuma. The Ottomans were bribed from both sides with considerable sums which led, within a brief period, to shifts of power back and forth. Three days before Christmas, the Ottoman governor, at the request of Silvester, besieged the hospice of the Holy Land in Damascus with 70 soldiers and about 120 Melkites and Catholics were brought into the Ottoman governor's palace. There the *barāt* of Silvester was explained to these captives, as meaning that everyone was obliged to follow him in his religion and authority according to the old Orthodox traditions. Although the prisoners were freed after living through some cruel days, again with the help of considerable sums given to the Ottomans, the Melkites were obliged to start including Silvester as their Patriarch in the ritual prayers of the

using them within inverted commas for reminding about this somehow unclear and floating semantico-semasiological situation. I decided here not to do so, as it would burden and complexify the text even more. I thank Aurélien Girard for giving me access to his unpublished thesis.

23. Letters by Father Fromage S. J. and by the provincial general of the Capuchins, April 1723, summarized by Giuseppe Assemani, BAV Vat.lat. 7262, f. 214r-v.

24. J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, vol. 46, Paris 1911, 1–272; A. Rabbath, *Documents inédits pour servir à l'Histoire du Christianisme en Orient*, 2 vol., Paris, Leipzig 1910, 327–408; the best narrative of the schism remains R. M. Haddad, 'The Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and the Origins of the Melkite Schism', PhD thesis, Harvard University, January 1965 [Harvard University Archives 90.8765A], 148–187; in his published work, the schism is only shortly touched upon: idem, *Syrian Christians in a Muslim Society*, Princeton 1970, 55–57. A contemporary synthesis of the events from 1722 to 1725 had been digested by Giuseppe Simone Assemani, the leading expert for Oriental affairs of the *Propaganda fide*: BAV Vat.lat. 7262, f. 214–219 (*Spoglio di Lettere concernenti l'affare de' Melchiti*). The fundamental work of B. Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la Réforme catholique*, Rome 1994, passim, and Girard, *Le christianisme oriental*, 648–701 presuppose the schism as a condition for the later development in the region.

25. SCPF SC Greci Melchiti 3, f. 375.

service liturgy. Although they obeyed, they continued to dissimulate, always murmuring 'demissa voce'—the name of Cyril—during Mass at that particular moment.

In such situations, the French consul closest to the given city—in this case, Joseph Martin from Sidon—was usually asked for help, and he sent his dragoman interpreter Lenoir to negotiate between the parties and to secure French protection for Catholicism.[26]

We see, therefore, the local Ottoman authorities profiting economically from religious dissent among the Christian subjects; we also see that the *Congregatio de Propaganda fide* exercised considerable influence through its network of missionaries and by addressing the Catholic powers in the region, foremost the French, beyond the Ottoman leadership. Cyril himself summarized this in a letter written from Constantinople: the Orthodox followers of Silvester would charge the Melkites of Cyril with having committed the political crime of *crimen laesae maiestatis* against the Sultan through their disobedience to Silvester.[27] In fact, the Catholic agents at the Porte noted that Cyril was recognized as a subject of the Pope, being registered as such in the Ottoman chancery.[28]

This implies that the expansion of French protection in this case, as well as the micropolitical lobbying of the *Congregatio de Propaganda fide*, was in some way harming and subverting Ottoman sovereignty. For several years, the French ambassador and consuls hesitated to follow Rome's direction because of the problematic juxtaposition of double obedience, as d'Andrezel explained in 1726: every Catholic had to obey the pope on one hand but, on the other hand, he also had to obey the Ottoman sultan—even though he was a heretic—as the secular magistrate, empowered by God, of the territory he was currently living in (clear reference to Rm 13:1).[29] However, the Roman alliance with the Melkites was not a stable homogeneous situation. Roman concepts of order in the East differed from the Easterners' interests themselves. Cyril VI, for instance, was in many ways opposed to the Maronite Giuseppe Assemani, who had a strong family network in the Lebanon but who was also the leading consultor to the Propaganda for Eastern Christian questions at the time.[30] Rome therefore acted in conjunction with and in relation to the Catholic candidate for the Patriarchate of Antioch without concerning itself too much with Cyril's personal fate.[31] On a different level, the other Western Europeans in the area became active. If Rome was lobbying for the Melkites, the Protestants—that is, the Anglican Levant merchants, mostly in Aleppo—supported the Greek Orthodox Silvester. 'Neo-Christian-Arab literary historians', as Georg Graf and then

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26. Charles de Fougères, OPF prov. Bretagne, custos of his order's Mission to Syria and Palestina to the Propaganda, Sidon, May 8, 1734; June 20, 1735; the chevalier Mansur to the Propaganda, Damascus, March 20, 1734: SCPF SC Greci Melchiti 3, f. 38r-v, 53–54, 237–239.

27. Cyril VI Tanas to the Congregation, Constantinople, June 25, 1728, SCPF SC Greci Melchiti 3, f. 356.

28. 'Il sudetto Mons.r Cirillo è prescritto appresso li Turchi per franco, cioè Latino, allieuo di Roma, e suddito del Papa, e come tale è reggistrato nella loro Cancellaria' (Vicar patriarchal of Constantinople to the Congregazione, s.l. (1734), ibid., f. 74r).

29. 'Tous ceux qui sont véritablement chrétiens honorent et révèrent le Pape. Nous sommes tous obligés de respecter les puissances séculières auxquelles il a plu à la divine providence de nous soumettre, et pour parler de moi en particulier, quoique je sois sous la domination d'un prince infidèle, dont le joug est dur et pesant, je me ferais un grand scrupule de m'éloigner en rien du respect que je lui dois, parce qu'il est mon souverain [sic!]' (Andrezel to the Secretary of State, Constantinople, June 26, 1726, Rabbath, *Documents*, II, 359; See also Haddad, *The Orthodox Patriarchate*, 155, 158–161).

30. On Assemani, see, for example, P. Mahfoud, *Joseph Simon Assimani et la célébration du Concile libanais maronite de 1736*, Rome 1965; B. Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens*, passim; J.-P. Ghobrial, 'The Life and Hard Times of Solomon Negri: An Arabic Teacher in Early Modern Europe', in: J. Loop (ed.), *The Teaching and Learning of Arabic in Early Modern Europe*, Boston, Leiden 2017, 310–331, at 323–325. An article on Assemani's vision of ecclesiastical history in controversial dialogue with Mathurin Veyssière La Croze is currently under review.

31. 'per il che sono stato stupefatto fuor di misura o Il.mo Padre, come mai in riguardo d'una sola Persona, qual'è Mons. Assemani (per li Strattagemmi del quale infin'ora già da tanti anni è vissuta questa mia Nazione in non piccoli disturbi con danno spirituale della S. Fede, e de i Fedeli) non si faccia conto di rouinare Nazioni intiere alla S. Romana Sede Apostolica soggette [. . .]'(Cyril VI Tanas to the Congregation, SCPF SC Greci Melchiti 4, f. 390–391).

Nasrallah once catalogued a whole group of Arabic-Christian polemical works, most of which were never printed,[32] circulated widely at the time and formed something of a schismatic-confessional semi-public sphere in Aleppo and elsewhere in Syria and Palestine.

First of all, the conservative episcopalist wing of the Anglican Church had since the late seventeenth century cherished plans of exchange, if not union, with (parts of) the Orthodox Church.[33] After 1688, this was the case too for the so-called non-jurors (those not taking the oath of allegiance which all clerics were required by William to swear, as instead they remained obedient in spiritual matters only to the deposed Stuart *king de jure*). Since Cyril Lukaris' time, the Protestants had maintained the idea that Eastern theological traditions were on several points, if not originally completely, equal to, or in chosen affinity with, Protestant traditions—a position which had necessitated the Orthodox to eventually define their theology in opposition to Protestants *as well as* to Rome. In a schismatic situation like that of the 1730s, Melkite controversialists like Abdel Zacher had as opponents not only Orthodox writers such as the repeated convert Elias Ibn Fakhr, who worked as dragoman for the English consul at Aleppo,[34] but they also were opposed by English merchants like Rowland Sherman who, as the Propaganda knew very well from the many letters which came to Rome,[35] was a member of the Protestant Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge in Foreign Parts.[36] Sherman financed many Orthodox endeavours, for example, the printing of Orthodox works such as that of Gabriel Severos (Archbishop of Philadelphia, then residing in Venice)[37] or potentially Greek Protestantizing works. The juxtaposed Western confessions and intra-confessional denominations were therefore again entangled with the inner-Eastern Christian conflicts, sharpening politico-theological language as well as replicating or transferring to some extent the inner-European conflicts onto Eastern grounds.[38] And these entanglements, relationships, and positions were continuously

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32. A contemporary list of such works which were looked upon with suspicion by Rome and the Congregatio de Propaganda fide was given by Giuseppe Assemani in a *Ristretto* for the Congregazione particolare on Melkite affairs in 1729—SCPF CP 75, f. 1–96, 89v: 'XVII. Punto De libri sparsi degli'Eretici, e delle loro Confutazioni'=BAV Vat.lat. 7262, f. 239–242=Mansi 46, 80–83. A further, unpublished explanation of the point by Assemani is in BAV Vat.lat. 7262, f. 253r–257r, f. 253v: 'non cessarono però di tempo in tempo d'insinuare il veleno di Lutero e Caluino per mezzo de' libri stampati in Inghilterra e sparsi ultimamente dal Charmel in Aleppo, de' quali il più pernicioso è quello, che s'intitola *Liturgiae ecclesiae Anglicanae partes praecipuae—Oxonij 1674* e contiene tutte le eresie della praetesa Chiesa Anglicana in compendio a forma di Catechismo'. See J. Nasrallah, *Histoire du mouvement littéraire dans l'église melchite du Ve au XXe siècle*, vol. IV/2: 1724–1800, Louvain, Paris 1989, 108–138, 202–233; Girard, *Le christianisme oriental*, 644–647 (the English merchant always called 'Chairman' by Nasrallah and Heyberger is Rowland Sherman).

33. C. Zwierlein, 'Non-Juror Patristic Studies and International Diplomacy: Cyprianic Exchange with the Greek Orthodox Church', in: *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 27 (2020) https://doi.org./10.1007/s12138-019-00553-z.

34. On Ibn Fakhr, see Nasrallah, *Histoire*, IV/2, 202–216; B. Heyberger, 'Sécurité et insécurité: les chrétiens de Syrie dans l'Espace Méditerranéen (XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles)', in: M. Anastassiadou / B. Heyberger (eds.), *Figures anonymes, figures d'élite: pour une anatomie de l'Homo ottomanicus*, Istanbul 1999, 154–163.

35. Mansi 46, 7, 14f., 81; SCPF CP 75, f. 89v, 90r, 399–408 (Pierre Petitqueux, S.J.: *Relatione della Persecutione de Cattolici nella Soria*, Tripoli, 27 April 1713); 'l'autore di tal persecutione è un tel Charmen mercante Inglese, che pieno di diabolico zelo con denari, e con libri arabici stampati in Londra cercaua d'estirpare la religione cattolica Romana dei Leuante' (letter of the Aleppo missionaries to the pope 28 July 1722, BAV Vat.lat. 7262 f. 215r).

36. What remains of his activities in the archives of the SPCK in Cambridge UL has now been studied by S. Mills, *A Commerce of Knowledge. Trade, Religion, and Scholarship between England and the Ottoman Empire*, Oxford 2019, 224–248.

37. According to the information of Giuseppe Assemani, Sherman had translated the treatise *Contro il Primato del Romano Pontefice* from Greek into Arabic to oppose the book *Concordia utriusque Ecclesiae*: SCPF, CP 75, f. 89v: The Ἔκθεσις of Gabriel Severos is a three-part work directed against Bellarmin and Possevino, of which only the first part was printed in 1627, translated then by Sherman eventually with the help of Ibn Fakhr (Nasrallah, *Histoire*, IV/2, 224f.; Rabbath, *Documents*, 387).

38. Zwierlein, *Imperial Unknowns*, 118–142; C. Zwierlein, ''Konfessionalisierung' europäisch, global als epistemischer Prozess. Zu den Folgen der Reformation und zur Methodendiskussion', in: C. Strohm (ed.), *Reformation und Recht. Ein Beitrag zur Kontroverse um die Kulturwirkungen der Reformation*, Tübingen 2017, 1–52, 23–31.

changing. Zacher, for instance, was not simply perceived as a faithful ally to Cyril. Rather, Cyril's secretary Ruma even stressed the counterproductive effects of his noisy participation in the turmoil and quarrels. Like the cook Demosthenes of the Roman Emperor Valens, who dared to bring his own ideas into the emperor's debate with Saint Basil without being authorized to do so, Zacher was similarly heating up the atmosphere instead of calming it down.[39]

All parties in this conflict needed a great deal of money, as we have seen, first of all, in order to pay the Ottomans to grant them the necessary executory power, which was counted out in wallets (*bourses, borse*) of money.[40] To some extent, it seems here that the whole schism was orchestrated by foreign money provided by the Western merchants in the region, and to a lesser extent by later collections. Some missionary letters already attribute to the English Levant merchants the initiative of the 1722 *conciliabulum*, without further detail. Silvester had obtained his *barāt* for a payment of 15.000 *reali*, which he had borrowed from the English merchants,[41] and he obtained support through payment each time he needed it. When Rowland Sherman died, one of the most active English merchants in terms of missionary activities, a probatory record of his household, library, and also of the promissory notes concerning debts by some 50 debtors paid or outstanding were registered in the British factory's chancery. Not only patriarch Silvester was listed with three *tescars*[42] of 612 Aleppo Dollars (1726), 1600, and 5220 Dollars later, but also the Armenian bishop Mikhail of Aleppo, several Armenian priests, and the Armenian nation: somehow, this very special merchant was investing also in church affairs and serving as creditor for purposes of religious politics.[43] Likewise, the supporters of Cyril required and collected money to 'buy' the necessary *firman* at the Porte which would abrogate Silvester's *barāt* and therefore bring the Roman confirmation of Cyril in line with Ottoman privileging politics. Fragments of European-wide collections in support of the Melkite patriarch can be found in the archives: Cyril sent out envoys for this purpose to Italy and elsewhere, while his emissary Abdallah Fahd attempted in Vienna to negotiate political support in all the Habsburg possessions, from Belgium to the Austrias. Permission patents for alms collections by the respective cardinals and bishops bear witness to these European-wide activities.[44] Over several years, Giovanni Aminione collected money for this precise purpose for Cyril, who was eager to stress that this was his money and not that of the Holy See or the Sacred Congregation.[45] This is a special case of the general customs of the *Propaganda Fide*, who usually collected money from Melkite Greek merchants for the Missions in the region and for the Greek College in Rome, which was also often deposited and channelled through the French chancery at Constantinople.[46] In this place, in the

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39. Ruma on Zacher, SCPF, SC Greci Melchiti 3, f. 659r. This refers to Gregorius Nyssenus, *Contra Eunomium libri pars prior liber I et II*, ed. W. Jaeger, Berlin 1921, I, 64 l. 27–65 l. 9.

40. One wallet of money (*kese*) usually contained 10,000 gold coins, though from our sources here the exact value meant (the ratio between gold coins, Akçe and *kese*) cannot be derived.

41. BAV Vat.lat. 7262, f. 214v and f. 217v (letter of M. Mauri, Roman Patriarchal bishop of Constantinople to the Propaganda, 12 October 1724: 'Ha presi ad interesse dagl'Inglesi mercanti 15.m reali per spedire il Comandamento della Porta').

42. Teskeré, tedkere: A formal bill or receipt on a sum of debt paid by a debtor; the British chancellors used 'tescar' as transliteration.

43. TNA Kew PRO SP 110/73-2, f. 65v–66r (Probatory record, Aleppo 1 February 1747–1748).

44. SCPF, SC Greci Melchiti 2 (1724–1733), f. 199r-v: examples from Vienna and Trier.

45. Ibid., f. 195r.

46. See, for example, the Melkite merchant Rafael Antonio Moughilas of Sidon who deposited parts of his heritage in the French chancery of Sidon for the use of the Congregation, 6 May 1738: translation by dragoman Claude Galland, Pignon was chancellor, Joseph Martin consul, SCPF, SC Greci Melchiti 3, f. 620–624. On the Greek College, see A. Fyrigos, *Il Collegio Greco di Roma. Ricerche sugli alunni, la direzione, l'attività*, Rome 1983; C. Santus, 'Tra la chiesa di Sant'Atanasio e il Sant'Uffizio: note sulla presenza greca a Roma in età moderna', in: A. Molnár / G.

Levant, it was the Melkite, the Orthodox, and the European merchants who were the first who could lend money and who did so. This whole history of the financial dimension of the schism, as well as its wider European entanglements, has barely been studied. Not all desired sources for this have survived, but it is evidently a strong element of Western–Eastern collaboration. Rome, the French, and the British evidently attempted to influence inner-Ottoman confessional politics through all means at their disposal. In 1734, the Catholics still thought that a payment to the provincial governor of Damascus might be sufficient to instal Cyril on the throne of the Patriarchate and to depose Silvester, a project for which only 2000 piastres were lacking.[47] And in 1744, when Cyril became confirmed by Rome after having been accepted since at least 1729 (but already immediately after 1724 by correspondence), his secretary Ruma was still working to collect the necessary 20 wallets for the *firman*, for which the French chancery served as deposit bank. The price of the firman had increased the more decisive the schism revealed itself to be, as more and more conflicts and shifts of power would come to be connected with it.[48]

In the end, the Ottomans always preferred the Orthodox Greeks while Rome and Paris favoured the Melkites, whose networks became a sphere of influence and the exertion of power under, but partially evidently even beyond, the Ottoman umbrella of overlordship.

This article here cannot present more than a very abbreviated sketch of the complex situation created by the Melkite-Orthodox schism of the early eighteenth century, which had repercussions on all local as well as on international levels. It has to be taken perhaps as one of the strongest cases in which the French and British merchant nations in Aleppo, Smyrna, Sidon, and Constantinople, together with their consuls, staff of the consulate, and ambassadors, were so deeply immersed, on different levels of protection and intercession, of finance and even—in some exceptional cases such as Rowland Sherman—of participation in a manuscript culture of a confessionalizing Eastern public sphere: certainly this is *one* arena, *one* world with conflicting parties, where Western and Eastern actors were not living in Leibnizian *monades* or Luhmannian closed systems, but where they negotiated with each other daily—not only concerning trade but also in those explosive and scandalous religious affairs which could not be ignored by anyone dwelling in those cities.

All the sources from which this is drawn, however, are descriptive (usually third-person) narratives.[49] All ambassadors, consuls, and Western merchants had words and definitions to distinguish between the different strands and denominations; most of them had an idea where they should stand. They needed to know this, to some degree, in order to do efficient business within the Levant and between the Levant and Europe. However, there is still a question to what extent the average merchant was involved in and 'understood' culture and religions around him: to what extent and on what epistemic levels were the merchant nations conceived as 'open' cultural entities, strongly steeped in the Orient's cultures, believes, and languages, or to what extent they were also performing, efficiently and necessarily, closure. When the consuls and the Propaganda knew exactly who belonged to 'them' and who did not, when the mechanisms to control the membership, average age, marriage rules, duration of stay abroad were constantly sharpened (though certainly

Pizzorusso / M. Sanfilippo (eds.), *Chiese e nationes a Roma: dalla Scandinavia ai Balcani. Secoli XV–XVIII*, Rome 2017, 193–223.

47.   SCPF, SC Greci Melchiti 3, f. 74.

48.   SCPF, SC Greci Melchiti 4, f. 438 and 440–441.

49.   I am aware of exceptions, of first-person narratives, travel literature written from the point of view of the traveller or a group of travellers and similar texts. A collection of about 125 printed narratives is now digitized in the Zefyros project led by Julia Chatzipanagioti on Cyprus, https://www.sylviaioannoufoundation.org/project/books.html (accessed 1 October 2019). But travel accounts and texts of the genre '*present-state-of-the-Greek-church . . . of-Turkey . . .*' tend to freeze the situation abroad and to avoid details concerning recent events and struggles. Ecclesiastical Histories of the Eastern churches in Western languages with regard to modern (eighteenth century) events were rare or non-existent.

also broken), with the obvious purpose to maintain a distinction between those 'nations' and the rest, how then should we conceive of the average member of such a nation? Especially as the narratives of decade-long turmoil and succession of events like the schism suggest a deep interwovenness of people from the West and from the East. Where are the limits of immersion in the Levantine culture, how can we make visible that invisible frontier which was kept stable for centuries? To answer this, our perspective, the sources, and their use, all have to be altered. Instead of searching for dispatches, letters, and reports, we have to look instead at the merchants' own relics and their own production.

3. Levels of knowledge or of ignorance? 'Average' merchant minds in the Levant

Far less is known, and has been written, about the culture of the merchants abroad than about their economic achievements. The most extensive studies so far have examined Rowland Sherman—one of the most, or perhaps even *the* most, exceptional merchants in the Levant in the whole eighteenth century.[50] Most information on him comes from correspondence files and from his probatory inventory after his death.[51] For other merchants, probatory inventories, letters, and sometimes family memory books or diaries can lend insights. With regard to the French and English consuls, chaplains, chancellors, and dragomen, far more information is at times available, as among these we frequently find rather illustrious and learned men. I could here list some examples, but it is more helpful to concentrate first on the 'average' man (if an 'average' ever exists). For this, the Boddington papers belonging to a dynasty of Levant merchants trading between London, Smyrna, and Aleppo are helpful as they contain rare merchant diaries and memory books which also include information on their religious beliefs.[52] I will keep this brief here, but important to note is the fact that these diaries and memory books, sometimes in the form of chronological entries, sometimes of shorter narratives, contain nearly no reference to the politico-confessional turmoil and troubles abroad. Rather, the authors concentrated on events in the mother country, mostly in London, and on travels to and from

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50. There are not many other Western merchants or even consuls named in Nasrallah's or Graf's survey of Eastern Christian manuscript literature. See B. White, "'Brothers of the String': Henry Purcell and the Letter-Books of Rowland Sherman', in: *Music & Letters* 92 (2011) 4, 519–572; on Sherman's library, see C. Zwierlein, 'Coexistence and Ignorance: What Europeans in the Levant did not Read (ca. 1620–1750)', in: idem (ed.), *The Dark Side of Knowledge. Histories of Ignorance, 1400 to 1800*, Boston, Leiden 2016, 225–265, 250–254; Wood, *Levant Company*, 229–249; Mather, *Pashas;* Starkey, *The Scottish Enlightenment*; M. van den Boogert, *Aleppo Observed. Ottoman Syria through the Eyes of two Scottish Doctors, Alexander and Patrick Russel*, Oxford 2010.

51. TNA Kew PRO SP 110-73/2 (7), f. 66r–72v.

52. One of the manuscripts, George Boddington's diary, has been used by P. Gauci, *The Politics of Trade. The Overseas Merchant in State and Society, 1660–1720*, Oxford 2001, 36; idem, *Emporium of the World. The Merchants of London 1660–1800*, London 2007, 116. Otherwise, from Brenner to similarly Z. W. Schulz, 'The English in the Levant: Commerce, Diplomacy and the English Nation in the Ottoman Empire, 1672–1691', PhD Purdue University, West Lafayette 2018, 69–72, not much research is done on private and religious convictions of the merchants. Some is gathered in C. Laidlaw, *The British in the Levant. Trade and Perceptions of the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century*, London, New York 2010, 163–216. The Boddington papers can be understood as being close to English *libri di famiglia or ricordanze* as we are familiar with from the Renaissance Florentine merchants, but which was a genre not much followed even in other Italian cities until 1500 and which has attracted less systematic scholarship for later Western and Northern European contexts. See J. S. Grubb, 'Memory and Identity: Why Venetians Didn't Keep *ricordanze*', in: *Renaissance Studies* 8 (1994) 4, 375–387; E. Katelaar, 'The Genealogical Gaze: Family Identities and Family Archives in the Fourteenth to Seventeenth Centuries', in: *Libraries & the Cultural Record* 44 (2009) 1, 9–28, 16–17; D. Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture, 1500–1730*, Oxford 2003, 99–137.

Aleppo. For the years in Aleppo, the authors drew only on issues concerning the trade itself, while with regard to the English part, there is indeed some information about education, daily life, and other elements. Only the prayers of one member of the family, Benjamin I, seem to have originated from his 13 years in Aleppo. If one adds to this evidence also surviving merchant letters between the Levant and Europe—of which we possess more for the English case than for the French—it is evident that the issues of trade and commerce normally supersede all other matters almost completely.[53]

Father George Boddington's biographical note for his son written in a memory book runs in a few lines from birth through to the major events in his life, including the journey to Aleppo.

> My Son Benjamin was borne the 26th of October 1692 and was baptized the 4th of December 1692 by M. Nath. Mather. After my wiffe decease [*sic*] which was in February 1699 keept [*sic*] him at schole and a stewarde put him out to board in all which times he behaved himselfe dutifull & dilligent and the 16 of December 1706 tooke him into my Counting house & gave him the Cash in the keeping of which he was very exact and the 17 of October 1712 he went from my house to the Downes in order to embarke on the ship Onslow [. . . he] got into Aleppo the 25 of January [sc. 1712] when he went out I consigned my Adventures to Thom. Bird, Benjamin Boddington & Compagny.[54]

Quite similar is the autobiographical entry in Benjamin's own diary: he left his 'honored fathers house to proceed for Aleppo' on 17 October 1712 on the ship Onslow together with his brother George II under Captain James Peacock. He notes exactly the names of all nine merchant ships and four convoy ships, and describes quite precisely the way they travelled from Britain to Turkey and the dangers they encountered (large storms, no piracy at this point). After having passed Sardinia, Sicily, and Malta on 3 January, 15 leagues east of Crete, the fleet divided according to their destination ports. They stopped at Cyprus where Boddington met up with consul Treadway in Larnaca. Arriving in Alexandretta, he travelled further with servants and horses *en route* to Aleppo. After this detailed first-person-description, the 13 years of business in Aleppo are just noted in one sentence, before he then restarts his diary in order to describe in detail his journey back to London in 1725,[55] just a year after the schism has broken out among the Melkites and the Orthodox, which is not even mentioned.

This brings us to look at the beliefs, religious practices, and also book possession of the merchants, which might then lend the only insight in terms of references to the neighbourhood and environment of Aleppo. The father, George Boddington, obviously belonged in London to the quite 'individualized' Protestants of early modern England.[56] He noted, with trembling and fear,

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53. Besides the Aleppo series in TNA Kew SP 110 used, for example, by Davis, *Aleppo*, other bundles of Levant merchant letters are scattered among the court records: for example, TNA Kew C 113/11; C 113/12; C 113/2; a whole letter book by Thomas Palmer (in Galata/Constantinople in the 1670s) in C 114; C 104/44 I and others; C 108/144. The richest collection are the Radcliffe papers in Hertford (Radcl), divided in a large series of Business and Private letters—however, many of the 'private' letters do contain likewise rather those on business; their overall character remains very much concentrated on the business itself between Smyrna, Aleppo, Cyprus, Constantinople, and England, with only very small bits and bites of references to their Levantine living environment, with some exceptions in Radcl.

54. LMA CLC 426/MS 10.823/1.

55. LMA CLC 426/MS 10.823/2, f. 17–27. Benjamin noted on the first page 'This Book, I made & bound myself 26. October 1708'—so, it was indeed a notebook taken to Aleppo and back to London.

56. K. von Greyerz, *Vorsehungsglaube und Kosmologie. Studien zu englischen Selbstzeugnissen des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen, Zürich 1990, tried to relativize Christopher Hill's thesis of the birth of 'modern individualism' within the Puritan culture of account-taking of one owns sins and merits (ibid., 26). However, in comparison to the textuality of late medieval Latin-Tuscan or rare Venetian *libri di famiglia*, the texts he analyses for seventeenth-century England betray a high degree of individual religious expression. Only one merchant diary from 1692 is frequently quoted

how he became aware of the Catholic tendencies, or true Catholicism, of the Restoration Stuarts.[57] He had a close relationship with the pastor of his first Presbyterian church, and described in quite some detail how in 1678 he changed church and parish through conscious selection and decision, having grown uncomfortable with the first church after the pastor's death, and judging his new church to be more in accordance with the apostles' own traditions and practices in the times of the early Christians.[58] The prayer book belonging to his son Benjamin, a carefully written and bound *sedicesimo* book, small enough to fit in any shirt pocket, which was obviously kept as a precious original item of devotion within the family,[59] betrays an inwardly directed form of piety and devotion with some wording which might point to Deist influences.

> Most great & glorious Lord, God, thou art an infinite & eternal spirit, infinite in wisdom power & goodness, ye Fountain of being & of all perfections, ye great Creation of heaven & Earth, & of all things therein, & ye absolute ruler & governor of ye world.[60]

God is never addressed as punisher, but instead as creator, first principle, and keeper of providence. For our research question, however, the most telling—or deceiving—element is the lack of any direct references to the outside world, be it London or Aleppo, to daily affairs of business, or anything else one might expect to find in a private prayer book, as one could expect in homiletic texts too. Such texts were used for prayer by eighteenth-century Englishmen everywhere around the globe.[61] This is in consonance with similar observations made in many of the surviving sermons by chaplains of the Levant Company which can be definitively assigned to the time they spent abroad, which I have consulted so far. The chaplain Bernard Mould, for example, who served in Smyrna from 1717 to 1723, preached apparently identical sermons both before and after his stay in the Levant.[62] Here, however, as also in Thomas Smith's sermons, a few references remain to the space and reality in which the merchants lived. Smith, the famous Oriental scholar and later non-juror, lamented the relationship between slavery, oppression, and liberty in his sermon on Rom

(Gervase Disney, 1692: 17, 21, 99 107). Compare J. S. Grubb, *Family Memories from Verona and Vicenza*, Padua 2002; C. Weiand, *'Libri di famiglia' und Autobiographie in Italien zwischen Tre- und Cinquecento*, Tübingen 1993; G. Ciappelli (ed.), *Memoria, famiglia, identità tra Italia ed Europa nell'età moderna*, Bologna 2009.

57. In a dialogue with a befriended Antwerp merchant: '[entry for 1664] [Abraham] Legouch said you take your King for a Protestant, he [George's father] replyed yes who dare say to the contrary he answered I dare for while at my Fathers in Antwerp the House wheire the king & Duke of Yorke lived being just against his I ffollowed yem on yeir goeing out when they went to the Great Church to Mass & I saw the Priest give each of them the Sacramentall Waffel into yeir Mouthes on which my Father was in a great rage, but with in <h>ym was fully convinced they were Papists' (LMA CLC 426/MS 10.823/1, f. 20r).

58. His choice in 1678 was for a new church 'that I conceived [had] walked most according to ye Practis of the Churches planted by the Appostles'; he proposed himself to Mr Innocent Collins for admittance there—'who on discourse with me of the hope I had that theire was a worke of Grace on my heart propounded me to the Church and the 28th of February delivered him in wrighting the Reasons of my hope the 13th of March it was comunicated to the whole church and approved & after haveing a Testimony of my Conversation the 23th of March I was received into full Communion with them and so continue' (ibid., f. 23v).

59. LMA CLC 426/MS 10.823/3.

60. Ibid., f. 1.

61. The only exception might eventually be the term 'nations' in this passage: 'Extend thy mercy O God to all mankind, in a more particular manner wee pray thee to be graceful to these sinful nations to which wee belong, to pardon our great and crying sins, to avert ye judgements which wee have most justly deserv'd & to put away from us ye spirit of profaneness & infidelity of malice & uncharitableness that thou mayst delight to dwell among us & that thou mayst be our God & wee thy People' (*Evening prayer*, LMA CLC 426/MS 10.823/3, unfol.). But 'nations' here could also mean the political modern nation, not the older merchant nation.

62. LMA CLC/270/MS00530/001 and 002.

6:17 in 1669 in Constantinople, commenting on the meaning of 'servants of sin'. He noted how the different nations under Ottoman rule, but most of all, the Greek nation, had become 'degenerate from the prowess of their Ancestor'. It was now no longer the ancient heroes of classical Greece or of crusader times who were admired; nowadays these would not dare to join a 'Christian army'.[63] But *a discourse concerning the invalidity and ill success of worldly policy employed against the interests of true religion*, first preached in the form of a sermon in the ambassador's chapel at Constantinople in 1670, does not contain many similar sentences or sentiments,[64] though Smith— with his treatise on the present state of the Greek church, was held to be one of the leading experts on Greek Orthodoxy in Europe.[65] Mould, preaching on Mt 21:33 and commenting on the cities of Corinth, the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Thessalonians to whom the Pauline letters were addressed, remembered likewise that

> Greece, which was once so renowned for its arms & learning, & politeness, & a generous sense of Liberty, is now as notorious for its cowardice, ignorance, rudeness, & most abject slavery: That very Church, wherein the disciples were first called Christians, is now in subjection to the Turk.[66]

However, of all the sermons he preached in Smyrna between 1717 and 1723, this topical reference which presents a Western perception of Greece common until the Enlightenment and the early nineteenth-century discourses of re-emerging Greek liberty[67] remains the only concrete reference to the *spiritus loci*; otherwise, Mould drew upon Biblical history, general moral and theological homiletics and interpretation, and some classical ancient quotes—but very rarely is a modern author named.

Another type of source that might lend insight into the world of the Western merchants abroad is the inventories of deceased or bankrupt merchants. Many Ottoman, Jewish, Armenian, and other non-European documents were to be found in the house, belongings and port storage of a Levant merchant when he died—as was the case, for instance, for Thomas Savage in Galata/Constantinople (9 February 1708–1709).[68] Aside from artefacts, goods, and furniture, items written in 'Turkis' are, nearly without exception, trade documents ('Hoggiets [i.e. *hüccets*]', 'Temesuk [*temessük*]', contracts, credit obligations, loan documents, invoices). Nearly all of the 'bundles of letters', account ledgers, memoranda, and other merchant books listed in such an inventory are in a Western language, usually either English or Italian. Seldom does one find, in the usual inventories, notes about significant possessions of works in Ottoman or Arabic, Syriac or any other Eastern language, and usually, one does not find nearly anything in the probate records that would point to such an immersion into the Eastern Christian schismatic struggles that we have seen to have partially happened. However, merchants were not doing business 24 hours a day in the Levant, and we find very telling indications about their culture and religion. As the British vice-consul in Alexandretta (= today İskenderun; later he was in Aleppo), Alexander Drummond, was reminding some years later to a younger fellow-merchant Josiah Chitty,

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63.   Bodl. Ms. Smith 128, f. 35r
64.   Ibid., 181–197.
65.   A. Pippidi, 'Knowledge of the Ottoman Empire in Late Seventeenth-Century England: Thomas Smith and some of his Friends', PhD thesis, Oxford, Wolfson College 1983.
66.   LMA CLC/270/MS00530/001, f. 3v.
67.   W. St. Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free. The Philhellenes in the War of Independence*, Oxford 1972; D. Dakin, *The Greek Struggle for Independence 1821–1833*, London 1973, 107–120; D. Barau, *La Cause des Grecs. Une histoire du mouvement philhellène (1821–1829)*, Paris 2009.
68.   TNA Kew SP 105/178, f. 92r–102r.

[I]t is very certain that one in your situation at Aleppo must have vastly more time to dispose of than his business necessarily requires. And that time rightly employ'd by one of your years may be of infinite advantage to you in future life no way you can be more improved, or more delightfully amus'd than by books.[69]

This is part of a pedagogical letter (like a humanist *eisagoge*) by an experienced tutor to an apprentice in matters of learning and Drummond points in it to several classical, Western authors, moral philosophy, and other elements of education to be improved in Syria by Chitty—but neither a special form of theology to be worshipped is mentioned nor any reference to 'Oriental' learning, religion, book, or manuscript culture is to be found—it could be an advise of someone writing from Birmingham to London, not from Alexandretta to Aleppo—And this is important: it is some decades later, but in terms of internal struggles within the Eastern Christian churches, the region was far from being completely pacified or free from conflict. But the bookshelves of the Western merchants, eventually even financially active in those conflicts, were typically filled just by Western books, not by manuscripts of Zacher or Fakhr, letters of Cyril or Silvester. In Savage's case, the book list starts like this:

Hammons Annotations upon the New Testament

Roberts map of Commerce

The Bible in Quarto

The Life of William the 3rd King of Great Britain &

The Guide of Infant Devotion by Jeremy Taylor

Torriano's Proverbs or Piazza universale de' Proverbij Italiani

Feltam's Resolves

Histoire memorabili di Zeliolo

Marcum's Master piece

Plutark's lives 1 vol.

Howell's letters

Melanchtons Grammar

Heilin's Cosmography

Seneca's Morals [. . . etc.][70]

These libraries are of themselves of strong interest: further analysis of them is required for each merchant and for each generation; in order to study the development between the early seventeenth

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69. Alexander Drummond to Josiah Chitty, October 17, 1747, BL Add Ms. 45932, f. 22 a similar letter of advice: Radcl DE/R/F/148, papers of Ralph Radcliffe Jr. [1738–1760] from the Aleppo and Cyprus merchant family.

70. Ibid., f. 100r. The editions or books referred to can be identified or narrowed down to several possible editions according to the British Short Title Catalogue (http://estc.bl.uk/): R11194 to T94427 (possible Hammond editions), S122012 to R1436 (Roberts), T40987 (David Jones' *The life of William III.*), R226636 to T84348 (Jeremy Taylor), R12572 (Torriano), S101841 to R3420 (Owen Felltham's *Resolves*), R42157 to T90960 (Gervase Markham), R30108 to R217666 (Plutarch), R200142 to T76052 (James Howell); R5447 to T107951 (Peter Heylyn); R27570 to T121413 (Seneca); and for the Italian VIAE/002321 to CFIE021480 (Alessandro Zilioli, www.sbn.it), while of Melanchthon's *Grammar* too many editions exist.

and the late eighteenth century, the regional differences, for instance, on the kinds of theological stances taken, and what types of literature are represented. However, for this context, it is enough to state that these libraries rarely contained even one book in a non-Western language.

Given all this, I know of no other type of source other than those briefly discussed here with which to approach the 'mental mind-set' of European Levant merchants abroad. This already amounts to a significant quantity of material, but in all those thousands of pages and documents, a clear difference emerges between—indeed!—multilingual efficient interaction with Ottomans, Greeks, Armenians, and others for reasons of contracting and trading on one hand, and the level of religious and cultural expression, reading and performance for the average merchant, on the other. Even in the 1727 inventory of the deceased French ambassador in Constantinople d'Andrezel— who was greatly involved in the schism affair[71]—drafted by the interim representative Fontenu, we find just one assemblage of documents, 'Contentant plusieurs papiers sur les Missions et les Missionnaires' and two bundles concerning the 'affaires de Salonique', but no special reference to the schism. Most of these state papers also seem to have only been in French.[72] His private library, again, contains only Western, mostly French, books with an interesting profile,[73] but one could not guess from this list that d'Andrezel was the French key man of politics in the beginning of the 1724 schism (which he was), nor is it evident that he had any collection of liturgical, theological, or historical manuscripts concerning Oriental Eastern churches at his disposal—as was possible, if one compares his list for instance with the catalogues of the college of Maronites in Rome or of the *Propaganda fide*.[74] The argument is certainly *e silentio*, and it is possible that d'Andrezel was, nevertheless, engaged in oral conversation with such matters, highly knowledgeable about the content and the arguments exchanged within the Arabic-Christian and Greek manuscript public sphere that had emerged in Aleppo, and well-informed about all the arguments 'in the air'—yet no trace of this lingers in most of the surviving merchant or 'normal' political and consular archives. This seems to suggest an only loosely connected coexistence, rather than a large merging, or any deep semantical and epistemic intersection and overlap of these worlds of papers and cultures in the same cities and regions: people lived and communicated with each other, but not on all levels with the same degree of intensity.

One can approach this from one angle or another: either by focusing on the exceptional cases of brokers, dragomen, and figures like Rowland Sherman, or by taking the groups as collective social units and by trying to examine their average collective memory and culture. The latter must be the approach if one asks for the long-term performances and functions of those groups and their cultural production abroad within a likewise long-term history of segregation. Sherman's exceptionality was partly also due to the extremely long time he stayed abroad, from 1688 to 1747–1748: he really became a settler in Aleppo. Normally, however, merchants remained abroad only for an intermediate period of a few years. In the case of the English, this was not strictly regulated, whereas in the case of the French, the duration of the stay became a matter of precise

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71. AE Nantes 167 PO 1A 136bis.

72. On Andrezel's role in the schism, see Haddad, *The Orthodox Patriarchate*, 158–161.

73. AE Nantes 167 PO 1A 136bis, f. 20–23.

74. SCPF Miscellanee Varie 32: *Inventari diversi del secolo XVII: Indice dei libri che si ritrovano nella libraria del collegio di propaganda fide (1650)*; but see simply the book production of the Propaganda which betrays its superior know-how in comparison even to state representatives on the spot such as d'Andrezel: SCPF, SC Stamperia—I; W. Henkel, *Die Druckerei der Propaganda Fide: Eine Dokumentation*, Munich 1977; for a recent bibliography on the printing press of the *Propaganda*, see A. Girard / G. Pizzorusso, 'The Maronite College in Early Modern Rome: Between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Letters', in: L. Chambers / T. O'Connor (eds.), *College Communities Abroad. Education, Migration and Catholicism in Early Modern Europe*, Manchester 2018, 174–197, 184 with n. 69 to 74.

supervision and discussion between the Chamber of Commerce in Marseille and Paris: the ideal situation was an unmarried merchant older than 25 who should stay no longer than 10 years in the Levant, subsequently returning to Marseille.[75] The main reason for this was the mercantilist logic—displayed both by the French state and the regulated companies—of preventing the dispersion of European property abroad: the merchants were considered to trade abroad, but not to extract for forever their capital and possessions from the home country. Reality was certainly different: it appears the Marseille merchants always put pressure on the *Chambre de commerce* itself and also through them pressured Paris/Versailles for permission to stay longer. The repeated edicts pronounced against mixed marriages evidently also show that there *were* mixed marriages. Again, also the descendants of these mixed marriages do not seem to have left many records of higher sophisticated writings, confessions, treatises, or manuscript collections *in* the Levant itself—with the exception of several well-known and learned consuls and chaplains.

4. Conclusion: from synchronical analysis to the diachrony of Merchant colonies

Despite being settled, defined, and stabilized as a corporate collective sometimes for centuries in Ottoman cities, these 'nations' abroad always consisted of short- or medium-time inhabitants, in terms of their contemporary populations. This explains to a good degree the epistemic specificities of the merchant colonies as 'units' only in partial communication and exchange with their environment, despite their extreme physical proximity to their neighbours; and this suggests that we might distinguish at least three levels and forms of interaction:

1. The daily commercial interaction of Western Europeans with their Ottoman counterparts,
2. The involvement at particular points in politico-religious struggles such as the 1724 schism;
3. The care for and maintenance of their own Western national culture abroad.

The extent of interaction on the first two levels, as studied by historians and specialists of these regions, often seduces us to conceive of the Merchant colonies as deeply immersed in the Eastern world, as somehow transformed into hybrid parts and elements of it. However, what might be true for some individuals seems not to hold true for the collective in a long-term perspective—and it would leave us with many open questions about when and how strict high-modern segregational forms of coexistence in these same places emerged—suddenly, *ex nihilo*?

As I tried to show here, in rare cases, the involvement of the merchants went far. But investment of money in a party felt to be closer in terms of denomination and theology within an intra-orthodox struggle by English or French merchants does not always mean that those merchants were profoundly understanding of the other's religions and theology. Events, revolts, government changes, religious conflicts, and other events could happen some hundred metres or a few miles away, and yet all we might find in merchant documents and letters back home are sober reactions, a report that the 'next revolution' was going on and how that affected communication, shipping, and trade, without much involvement of the nation in the events themselves. A special moment like the 1724 schism could change this up to a certain point, when and insofar the Western merchants acted also as politico-confessional agents of their countries and their beliefs entangled with the Greeks themselves: but in 'normal' post-schism inventories, letters, and other ego-documents, this did not leave many

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75. I tried to sketch this 'ideal' state of the merchant nations for the French case in Zwierlein, *Imperial Unknowns*, 60–62, very much conscious of reality's many forms of derivations from the ideal.

traces. Viewed across decades and even two centuries, it seems sometimes as if those slowly revolving merchant colonies became cellules with their own life cycle and culture abroad.

I am not ignoring the fact that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were, without doubt, also the centuries of the emerging modern Oriental studies—Erpenius, Pococke, Galland, Maracci, and other such scholars were always in close contact with the merchants who lent them their infrastructure of ships, letter communication, and access to caravans.[76] Many of those scholars served the consular and ambassadorial network in the Levant for a period of time: the strongest available form of understanding 'the other' in that time, despite all hermeneutical biases, meant relying on the merchant network. The *Propaganda* and the Missionaries developed their own linguistic and cultural know-how to interact with and accommodate potential subjects of conversion.[77]

However, all this should not prevent us from also acknowledging a historical phenomenon of its own interest: the rather efficient functional specialization of and fixation on commercial content and own 'national' culture within overwhelmingly large parts of merchant communication, in particular, the letters exchanged between the Levant and the Western centres. The inventories show that the merchants were to a good extent performing English, French, and Dutch proto-national culture abroad and were not easily adopting and absorbing all kinds of eventual readings and cultural practices from their environment. This seems to have operated as a form of 'boundary work', as Gieryn has coined it.[78] The visible and—more so—invisible boundaries drawn by this in the streets of Aleppo, Sidon, Smyrna, and Constantinople were not really governed by early racial theories of civilizational theory which would put them in a simple genealogy with nineteenth-century practices of urban segregation: nothing of this kind is found in the Western–Eastern interaction concerning the 1724 schism, for instance—with the exception of some fairly undoctrinal points about the 'decline of virtue' of the Greeks, as briefly shown. While 'race' and ethnic differences were at the same time an important category in the Atlantic colonies and their slave societies,[79] this was less the case in the Mediterranean.

The third level of performing own national culture, the boundary work of the merchant colonies, might lead us to conceive of the colonies as epistemic units: economists who today analyse the character and structure of what 'a firm' *is* have moved away from conceiving of culture and knowledge as just one resource or part of the firm's capital, to a more holistic view of the firm as exactly an epistemic unit as such.[80] We cannot simply transfer this to pre-modern realities, as pre-modern merchant colonies were not only part of a functional system of economics and commercial

76.   A selective bibliography: G. J. Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom and Learning. The Study of Arabic in Seventeenth-century England*, Oxford 1996; of the lifelong studies of Alastair Hamilton one might quote just the last contribution: *Johann Michael Wansleben's Travels in the Levant, 1671–1672*, Leiden, Boston 2018, Zwierlein, *Imperial Unknowns*, 185–230; A. Bevilacqua, *The Republic of Arabic Letters. Islam and the European Enlightenment*, Cambridge, MA 2018.

77.   G. Pizzorusso, 'Agli antipodi di Babele: Propaganda Fide tra immagine cosmopolita e orizzonti romani (XVII–XIX secolo)', in: L. Fiorani / A. Prosperi (eds.), *Storia d'Italia. Annali 16: Roma, la città del papa*, Torino 2000, 477–518; Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient*; N. Gemayel, *Les échanges culturels entre les Maronites et l'Europe*, 2 vol., Beyrouth 1984.

78.   T. F. Gieryn, 'Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists', in: *American Sociological Review* 48 (1983) 6, 781–795; M. Lamont / V. Molnár, 'The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences', in: *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002), 167–195.

79.   See for this, the contribution of Remco Raben in this issue.

80.   J. A. Nickerson / T. R. Zenger, 'A Knowledge-Based Theory of the Firm: The Problem-Solving Perspective', in: *Organization Science* 15 (2004) 6, 617–632; F. M. Santos / K. M. Eisenhardt, 'Organizational Boundaries and Theories of Organization', in: *Organization Science* 16 (2005) 5, 491–508; S. Brusoni / A. Prencipe / K. Pavitt, 'Knowledge Specialization, Organizational Coupling, and the Boundaries of the Firm: Why Do Firms Know More than They Make?' in: *Administrative Science Quarterly* 46 (2001), 597–621.

communication as in a post-industrial world; rather, they represented a complex mixture of state, commercial, and even—as we have seen—cultural and religious interests and preoccupations, performing also *praeter*-colonial forms of settlement abroad. But perhaps exactly because of this high degree of inter-mixed character and varied tasks of the pre-modern merchant colony, it makes even more sense to conceive of it as such an epistemic unit, the merchants communicating and using at the same time these different channels of communication and knowledge, and not only that of trade.

This contribution was concentrated on the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century realities. The task for research remains in future to identify the continuities and differences between this setting and the nineteenth century as studied for instance by Schmitt: On one hand, the Ottoman Empire presents a framework of a (fragile) continuity in comparison to the clashes and transformation of the states in the West due to the French Revolution; the rupture with the *Ancien Régime*—to use the metaphor of one of the most precise observers of the French colonial conquest of Algeria in 1830, Tocqueville—might seem to have been less decisive. However, Napoleon's expedition to Egypt, the struggle for Greek independence with the Western allied forces' intrusion into Ottoman affairs, and the *Tanzimat* period were changing very much the situation. The Levant Company becomes dissolved in 1825; Western merchants, now organized differently in forms of individual firms, still lived in the same or similar quarters of the Ottoman cities, but mass migration phenomena and changing social, legal, and religious conditions on both sides (of Ottoman and Western merchants) forbid to treat even groups like the 'French nation' under consular or ambassadorial protection as being still the *same* with early modern merchant colonies. One must suspect a huge degree of seductive isomorphy while there is little homology. When, around 1900, a special group like the 'Levantines' is using the modern form of Western citizenship and the possession of passports to distinguish themselves within an urban environment where Ottoman subjects were emulating similarly Western lifestyle and *habitus*, and when those *Levantines* felt enforced to use forms of 'extraterritoriality' for each of their houses,[81] this seems to reproduce as well as to atomize completely and to redefine the pre-modern situation, not to speak of the huge difference in quantities of the foreign 'colonies' or protected groups—which were now far less defined as merchant colonies (700 members of the French nation in Constantinople around 1750, 15,000 around the end of the nineteenth century, with a large part of catholic Greeks from the islands). Processes of equalizing between the groups as well as of individualization within them seem to have transformed former practices of older segregational behaviour into performative acts with the function of purely maintaining a given status and a social position within the cities; on the other hand, ethnic and racial concepts and perceptions were penetrating the country (the Armenian question). At least for the genealogy of the primarily non-racist forms of behaviour, a careful comparison with the early modern realities seems very important and helpful.

For this question of a history of long-term proto-segregational coexistence, this pushes us all the more to refine the sensibility beyond that which we use to associate with the term 'segregation' today: it brings us back to the question of the epistemic hidden core of social distance and separation. The epistemically semi-open and semi-closed character of the merchant colonies as implantations abroad was indeed performing practices of 'close distance' and of proto-segregation. It was based more on unconscious forms of ignoring and of some degree of indifference, with important effects and results in the long run, and the *strata* of epistemic levels of intercourse were probably far clearer yet invisibly separated than in the more equalized (somehow bourgeois) nineteenth century.[82] The findings suggest that the peculiar semi-open and semi-closed characteristics of these

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81. Schmitt, *Levantiner*, 204.
82. For a review of the sociology of ignorance and an essay to turn it into a wider form of historical heuristics, see C. Zwierlein, 'Towards a History of Ignorance', in: idem (ed.), *The Dark Side of Knowledge*, 1–57.

merchant communities were shaped intentionally by a seventeenth/eighteenth-century mercantilist logic—such as the closing up of property, heritage, prohibition of intermarriage—and this produced, as unintended consequences and in the long run, a stabilized form of distance between the Western and the Eastern habitants of the Ottoman cities on the cultural and civilizational level. Before and during the mercantilist period, this was more or less an unconsciously reproduced invisible border in everyday intercourse, not necessarily or not at all spatially defined. But in the later transformations to modernity, these isomorphic forms of distance could serve as the foundations for what would then become a highly conscious colonial and modern imperial form of contact between 'West' and 'East', they could also be used, quoted, and performed as cyphers while their semantics was slowly changing behind a seemingly identical surface. Modern orientalist and later even racial concepts of distinction and segregation could build upon what had been present but invisible before—less ideologized forms of othering and distancing.

Similarly, the largest cities of the world with the strongest form of segregational structures would be built upon old merchant colonies (Bombay, Calcutta), or successive conglomerates with strong contributions to the modern faces of cities from such older European settlements abroad: The power of long-term *unconsciously (and partially) ignoring the other* by *average and many (merchant) minds*, beyond the most learned and culturally most sensible brokers and Oriental scholars, therefore has a place in history and in a historical explanation of the emergence of social segregational forms, forms of living-yes-and-not-together.

Abbreviations

SCP: Archives of the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide; SOCG: Scritture originali riferite nelle congragazioni generali; SC: Scritture Riferite nei Congressi; CP: Congregazioni particulari; AN: Archives nationales Paris; AE: Archives étrangères; TNA: The National Archives; PRO: Public Record Office; SP: State Papers; LMA: London Metropolitan Archives; Radcl: Hertford, Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, Radcliffe papers; BAV: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana; Vat. lat.: Mss. Vaticani latini.

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