

IZMIR: LIGHT ON THE EAST... THE AFTERMATH OF A NEGLECTED CITY

Konstantinos Chatzifragkios Makridakis

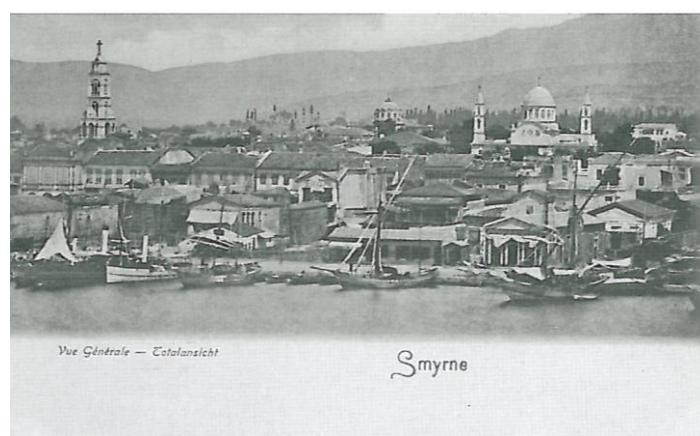
PhD Urban Planning, N.T.U.A.

conhatzi@gmail.com

Abstract

Izmir was primarily a city-port, the most important one of the Ottoman Empire and the Eastern Mediterranean region and at the same time the centre of the International Trade, a crossroad where the caravans of the East met the Aegean Sea roads for the West. Throughout the 19th century it was as a non-Muslim city, regarding the majority of its inhabitants, which ascribes to the characterization of the most tolerant Islamic city. Izmir was pluralistic and complex, a clearly cosmopolitan city, its inhabitants, although they belonged to multiple and different ethnic and religious groups were able to form a coherent whole in a coexistence mode, that formed a common culture and common interests. Living in differentiated and extended areas, apart from the place of residence or even their place of origin in were named citizens of the world. A city beyond trade and cosmopolitanism, became prominent with the artistic, cultural and spiritual radiation as "little Paris of the East" or "Paris of Levante". Port city and also exchange materials and cultural city, a spiritual and cultural centre of the Mediterranean, both due to its geographical location and the relations it maintained with the rest of the world, especially with the West, and because of the diverse composition of the population and the particular social dynamics that could develop. All these resulted to a city in which the modernity was met not only in culture, artistic and intellectual production, but also in urban planning and architecture "of the beautiful port of Levante" (Deschamps G., 1990).

Key Words: Izmir, Levantiniki, collaborative architecture.



...in the depth of the Blue Bay we saw a State of stone. Was the Smyrna ...It is distant and admirer. ...in front of our eyes modern and brutal, new, and old, Greek, French, Italian and Turkish, bizarre complex, cosmopolitan and multilingual; with the minarets of the era of Muhammad,¹ the Muslim cemetery, with the veil of cypress trees, white steeples and green domes of

¹ Mehmed IV (1642-1692). Nineteenth Ottoman Sultan on his reign (1648-1987) captured Crete.

Orthodox churches, the grey herd of ottoman houses that had fled very far to the wild hills of ice,² and along the Sea this proud facade of European houses on which waved flags of consular Powers, as though the West was installed sovereign in the most beautiful and coveted by the stairs³ of the Middle East.

«Izmir», says an old Arabic song, «eye of Izmir, Levante, Pearl of Anatolia ...»

Deschamps G. «The roads of Asia minor. Travelogue 1890»



Introduction/Might

There are few areas in the world with so much history condensed into such a small space. Nor were many areas where osmosis of different cultures contributed to shaping a tolerant and even more cosmopolitan physiognomy, which showed such duration, but also such an appalling and relentless disruption.

Ninety years after the catastrophe the documentary "Izmir the destruction of a cosmopolitan city, 1900-1922" is viewed by Maria Iliou. A magical city *with innumerable crossroads on which civilizations, religions, mysteries were met* (Batidou, 1965), the elaborate Izmir, which was lost in the ashes of the great fire, attempted to be traced backwards by the Director. As she says, *"Since the early years of my life Smyrna was haunting me". It was there, in words, in dreams and in our nightmares. Acceptance of the different, new ideas, music, laughter and nostalgia for the magical way my father was describing there were in any way in their daily routine. No other City on Earth was so unique. "*

For the realization of the documentary an investigation was carried out, which lasted four years, in collaboration with the historical Advisor Alexander Kitroef. The non-profit organization Proteas pioneered to the discovery and preservation of film and photographs of the forgotten city. Unpublished photos were found in the archives of the Universities of Princeton and Harvard, the library of the Congress, the US Red Cross, on the Imperial War Museum of London and collectors

² Ice. height 190 metres Hill, which dominates the Smyrna. located in to the edge of town and is the seaward edge of the mountain Koukloutza.

³ Stairs were small piers which served commercial and passenger traffic of Izmir before they become configuration of waterfront projects (1867-1874) that expelled. But their names features were retained as toponyms in the corresponding points of the new waterfront.

as the Frenchman Pierre de Zigkor, who in his entire life was gathering photographic material from the history of Ottoman Empire.

The creation of this academic press's documentary was the result of collective effort, which relied on historical scholars from the U.S.A. and Europe, as well as testimonials of first, second and third generation inhabitants of Smyrni. Through their personal stories the Greek, Armenian, Turkish and narration was unfolded in connection with events, from the years of cosmopolitanism to those of destruction. Eyewitness is the elderly Armenian Jack Nalbandian, while from the Greek side the narration is developed by Helen Mpastea and from the Turkey's side by Leila Neizi, who chronicles the personal story of Irene Gkoulfem, a member of one of the great Muslim families of Smyrna. "We left the city burn" she says in a rare testimony about who set the fire that destroyed the legendary city.⁴ the main part of the story is unfolded through the cynical and detached attitude to the events narrated in American historian, author of the book "Lost Paradise – Smyrna 1922", Jails Milton, the historians Thanos Veremis, Alexander Kitroef and Victoria Solomonidou also speak. The music of Nikos Platyrachos has nothing to do with the rebetika songs of refugees. "We hear what they heard in Izmir the cosmopolitan years: canzonettas, French and Italian songs. Of course Oriental motifs existed as well, but the other was dominating, " clarifies the filmmaker and continues: " we talk about cosmopolitan Izmir and the destruction honouring our families and the people who was lost and the science of history. On the one hand we are bringing back the forgotten images in closed closets from European and American archives and on the other we take a new look at the history of Smyrna. A look that keeps its distance from both the excessively nationalistic narration and the newest attempts hushing up the tragic events of destructions so as to distort the truth. The Izmir is still an idea, a way of life that has to do with the cosmopolitanism, joy of life and lamentations. Smyrna may always be with you ".

"This city shall follow you"⁵ the great K. P. Kavafis has written for his own city. This happens even when you talk for Izmir without to refer at its name, as Kosmas Politis in the novel «At Chatzifragkou's» does, where he regenerates Smyrna without to mention even once its name. Because, as he explains in the first edition of the book in C. P. Savvidis: «For his beloved dead ones often somebody speaks without their names, feeling that it would be disrespectful in their memory to pronounce their name».

Izmir, the city



⁴ The great fire of 1922 quashed and a large part of the cultural and urban heritage of Smyrna, 2.600.000 m² habitable zone and 25,000 buildings were completely destroyed, while, according to the Statistics Office report in March 1923, from the 14,000 homes destroyed 42.945.

⁵ K. P. Kavafis's poem "polis" 1910.

Izmir was primarily a city-port, the most important of the Ottoman Empire and the Eastern Mediterranean region and at the same time an International Trade Centre, a crossroad where the caravans of the East met the Aegean Sea roads for the West. Throughout the 19th century it was as a non-Muslim city, regarding to the majority of its inhabitants, which ascribes the characterization of the most tolerant Islamic City. Was the pluralistic and complex Izmir, a clearly cosmopolitan city, its inhabitants, although belonged to multiple and different ethnic and religious groups were able to form a coherent whole in a coexistence mode, that formed a common culture and common interests, living in diversified and extensive areas beyond their residence or even place of origin were called citizens of the world. A city beyond trade and cosmopolitanism, became prominent with the artistic, cultural and spiritual radiation as "little Paris of the East" or "Paris of Levante". Port city and also exchange materials and cultural city, a spiritual and cultural centre of the Mediterranean, both due to its geographical location and the relations it maintained with the rest of the world, especially with the West, and because of the diverse composition of the population and the particular social dynamics that could develop. Those result on a city in which the modernity could be seen not only in culture, artistic⁶ and intellectual production, but also in urban planning and architecture "*of the beautiful port of Levante*". (Deschamps G., 1990)

The above features are those that composed its physiognomy and identified it mainly from the 19th century until the beginning of the 20th century, allowing the city to exist, but also to establish the specificity of the most tolerant Islamic City until its delivery in flames in 1922, despite the fact that the final period of its existence as such a City, was spent in time "borrowed" beyond the historical narration, as the documentary searching for the "lost" time mentions, which allowed it to eventually mutate into an unforgettable memory and way of life.

The city of Smyrna was situated on the western coast of Anatolia and became a cultural crossroad, and for many years it was the most important commercial centre in Asia Minor. Already in the 16th century, the era of mercantilism and the development of European colonial trade caravans and goods of all kinds flooded its port arriving from the depths of the Far East.

The Hill of ice

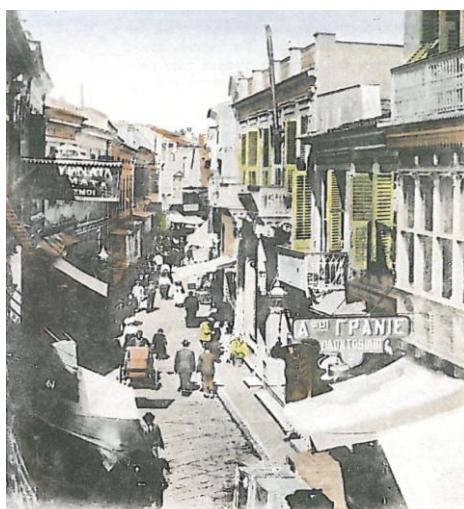


⁶ It is characteristic that as early as 1896 the first cinema opened in Izmir. it should be noted that the "birth" of the art of film is placed on 28 December 1895, the Lumière brothers made when the first public showing of films in Paris.

The initial Assembly of the town is placed at the foot of the Hill of ice – with the Acropolis and the ancient theatre at the top – where you are commenting on the historical Greek districts of "Epano Machala" and "Ai Boukla" ("Saint Boukolou"). Then the Turkish machalades down to the seashore to the old commercial centre, created early in the 18th century with Bezesteni the inns mosques and Turkish bath. At the end of the 18th to early 19th century, season of the social-economic development of the Ottoman Empire, the town with the National heterogeneous population was the main port of the Eastern Mediterranean and changed in a particular very-cultural centre, which lived from and for trade. Until the mid-19th century next to Turkish side machalades were Jewish and the Armenian quarter, followed by the urban core of the later large Greek neighbourhoods of Agia Fotini, St. George, New Machala and Servatadikon.

At the same time Europeans traders from France, Venice, Austria, but also Genovese descendants of traders from Chios, settled in the area and formed the community of Levantinon, population of Western origin inhabitants of the East that over time had acclimatized and partly assimilated. Out of the city and along the sea spread the oblong, a block depth suburb of Fragkomahala⁷, demarcation of the street of frances and Rose Street. The creation goes back to the 16th century and was the European district of Izmir with commercial and cosmopolitan "...a corner of Levante that was not entirely East and that looked like Europe". For Levantinians the Izmir is the heir of the ancient Ionian city and also an Oriental city, which attracts them with its exotic and natural beauty, lying in the depth of a bay and is placed on two hills, amphitheatrically built on the slopes, with its bazaars and the abundance of goods, the mosques, the synagogues and the churches, coexisting in a minimum distance between them – characteristic is the spectacle of minarets and domes that one first rests upon entering the harbor – narrow and serpentine alleys and the various districts, with the origin determination of each residents, that characterizes the urban area, forming a mosaic of ethnicities and a pluralistic population composition with language diversity and costumes. European traders, but also wealthy Greeks lived in idiotypes verchanedes of Fragkomahala, in the ground floors of which were stores and warehouses, while from their coastal stairs the commerce of Smyrna was taking place.

The Occidental district



⁷ The Occidental Izmir district was the largest and most notorious of the Frank districts of East was a single city block built entire houses with Frankish (verchanedes), which was concentrated the whole spiritual, artistic, political and commercial life.

From the second half of the 19th century to the Asia Minor disaster of 1922 and the great fire that completely destroys the Armenian and Greek district, the town of Smyrna meets its rapid commercial and economic development that affects the planning of its formation and architectural character. With the imperial edict of Gkioulchane (1839) the equality among all Ottoman nationals was announced, while the proclamation of Tanzimat reforms (1848) spurred a period of intense reorganization and economic penetration of the West to the East, attracting wealthy Europeans merchants and entrepreneurs, culminating in the publication of the first Ottoman Constitution in 1876 provided the Ottoman empire parliamentary polity equivalent of Western countries Simultaneously the Treaty of Kanlitzas (1855) by which the Porte ceded to the Greek Kingdom clause the most favoured nation, contributes to the massive arrival of the Greeks, leading to the end of the century the Greek element of the city touching half of the total population , which also included the Turks, who constantly readily declined, Armenians, Jews and Europeans (Levantines). It's the Giaour Izmir, Smyrni of the infidels as the Turks now named it.

From the second half of the 18th century, Izmir was the second city of the Ottoman Empire with a population of one hundred thousand inhabitants. A century later the population ranged between one hundred and fifty and two hundred thousand inhabitants, only to reach the two hundred thirty thousand in the early years of the 20th century.

The second half of the 19th century extensive infrastructure projects were constructed by European businessmen, such as gas and water supply network, while the railway network was expanded and completed in 1885, uniting the Baghdad with Smyrna and giving added value as a commercial city. The most important project, which made Smyrna a commercial centre of the East, is the creation of the new port (1874) with extensive alluvial deposits that added two new building blocks in front of the coastal front Fragkomahala with the famous streets Kai and Parallel. Plus the jewel of Izmir's waterfront stretches 3,325 meters creating a zone of 28 m width.

The quay of Izmir



As far as the industrial units in the city are concerned, following the reverse path, were extended to the surrounding villages of Bournova, Boutza, Gkoztepe and Karsigiaka, where remarkably large installations were constructed, following western morphological rules and reminding English houses of the province and French Tower.

The bridge of caravans

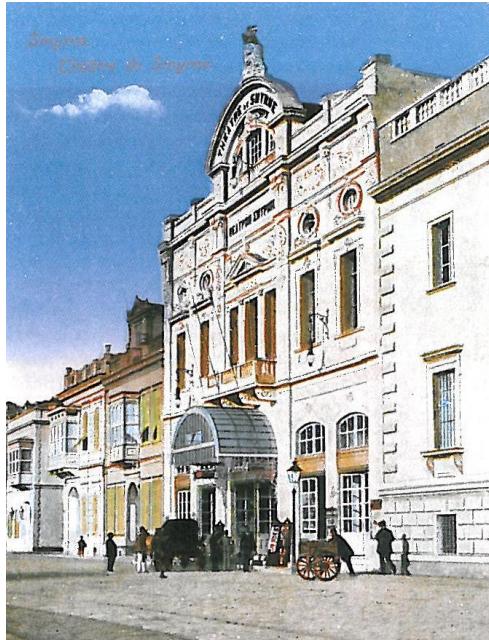


The last quarter of the 19th century the Fragkomahala loses its importance as a cosmopolitan centre of Izmir with the gradual abandonment by European residents, who move to the new landscaped street of Kai regions and districts of Punta and Bella Vista. But it retains its glamour as a commercial and financial centre of the city, focusing on the Frankish Street, as it is transferred mainly to Greeks and Armenians merchants. The Greek neighbourhoods, who present particular significant population growth, are now expanding and are united with Fragkomahala. They are almost unmixed and were developed in the salt meadow of Smyrna and on both sides of the central roads of Roses and Major Tavern that united by the old days Fragkomahala with the Bridge of the caravans.⁸ But also in the neighbourhoods created and developed with the construction of the new port of the city and bounded over the Fragkomahala and to the inmost of Smyrna mainly Levantines with Greeks inhabited. Especially Punta is considered as the new Fragkomahala because of the large number of wealthy Europeans, but also Greeks who reside there. The new cosmopolitan city centre is now the coastal road and the theatre of Smyrna (miniature of the French Chatelet Theatre, project of Ignatian Vafiadis) cinema Pathé, the Sporting Club (work of Rockou Vitali, who is the architect of the Turkish Government House as well), hotels Huck and Krammer, Bank of the Anatolia (project of Ignatian Vafiadis) and luxury residences and in the purely Greek neighbourhoods as well, important buildings were constructed. Charitable institutions of the Greek community such as the Evangelical School⁹ the Central school for Girls (by P. Karathanasopoulos) the Greek Hospital etc. The social common course of Europeans and Greeks appears during this period and is certified by the construction on the Greek neighbourhoods of Catholic churches like New Katentrala of St. John, and hospital chapels and schools.

⁸ Historic bridge that they described and lauded almost all foreign travellers, who visited the Izmir. Completion time of the 2nd century BC., according to tradition, but also with the more historical people and sightseers, the bridge being built over the river Melita. "The bridge" as they called the Smyrnioi, was the major transportation hub, since it was the only bridge that could withstand heavy loads.

⁹ The evangelical school Izmir attended: Adamantios Korais, major figure of the Greek enlightenment, the national martyr Patriarch Gregory v, Patriarch of Constantinople, the poet Elias Tantalidis, the historian Paul Karolidis, the Commander-in-Chief Leonidas Paraskevopoulos, the speech writer Stephen Stranger, the poet Stelios Sperantzas, the notorious shipowner Aristotle Onassis, the musician and Manolis Kalomiris academician.

The theatre of Izmir



Pathé cinema



The Lebantiniki Architecture of Izmir

In the architecture creation the last fifty years before the Asia Minor catastrophe a combination of European eclectic architecture and local traditions of the East was developed. The form that prevailed was neoclassicism, adjusted to the wishes of a growing cosmopolitan society in the form of an eclectic eclecticism with references to the general embossed of the Baroque repertoire.

Besides the public buildings and residential buildings the influence of western culture is obvious. By the late 19th century the urban content of Smyrna was constituted by typical Turkish houses of Anatolia, but also by a large number of Levantine and European residences which reflected a cultural mosaic of architectural trends. Which was not only due to the mixing of different national communities but to the architects who were responsible for their construction, many of whom had studied in the West? Indicative is the case of Xenophon Latris (1825-1914), who studied architecture in Bavaria and referred as chief engineer in shaping the new waterfront of Smyrna while other important projects of his were the bell tower of Agia Fotini - the highest and

most prestigious landmark of the city - the church of St. Catherine and the Homeric Parthenagogeio.

The belfry of Agia Fotini



In the aftermath of the verchanedes of Fragkomahala and opposed to oriental Turkish house, a new type of long, narrow housing appeared, the Makrinas (10m x 20m approx) which included in depth garden enclosed with high pen. On the other side there was a large hall for the family, but the living room and the living room (the dining room) that opened for guests only as well. In depth and in a wing there were everyday utility room of the family, the kitchen, the dining room a cupboard and the laundry room. In the middle floor and above the ward there was the room of the personnel, the ironer and over the roof, which was used for spreading out of clothes. In the second floor there were the bedrooms of the family. In front of the largest room there was the famous balcony of Smyrna called the sachnisi a masterpiece of woodcarving and meeting place of the family, the in the evenings. Case by case and in variations the specific type of house appeared in one-storey house, two and three storey buildings constructed with symmetrical organization on the facades, with a closed wooden balcony and often arranged in series showing similar architectural elements in various styles. This type of residences in Smyrna experienced such acceptance so as to be referred to the French architectural magazine of the era «La Construction Monderne» (9th November 1901), while an exact copy exists today in Mitilini indicating the enormous influence Smyrna exerted in regional centres. There survive four more houses of the architect of the Theatre of Smyrna Ignatius Vafiadis that remain as precious witnesses of the cosmopolitan identity of the forgotten city.

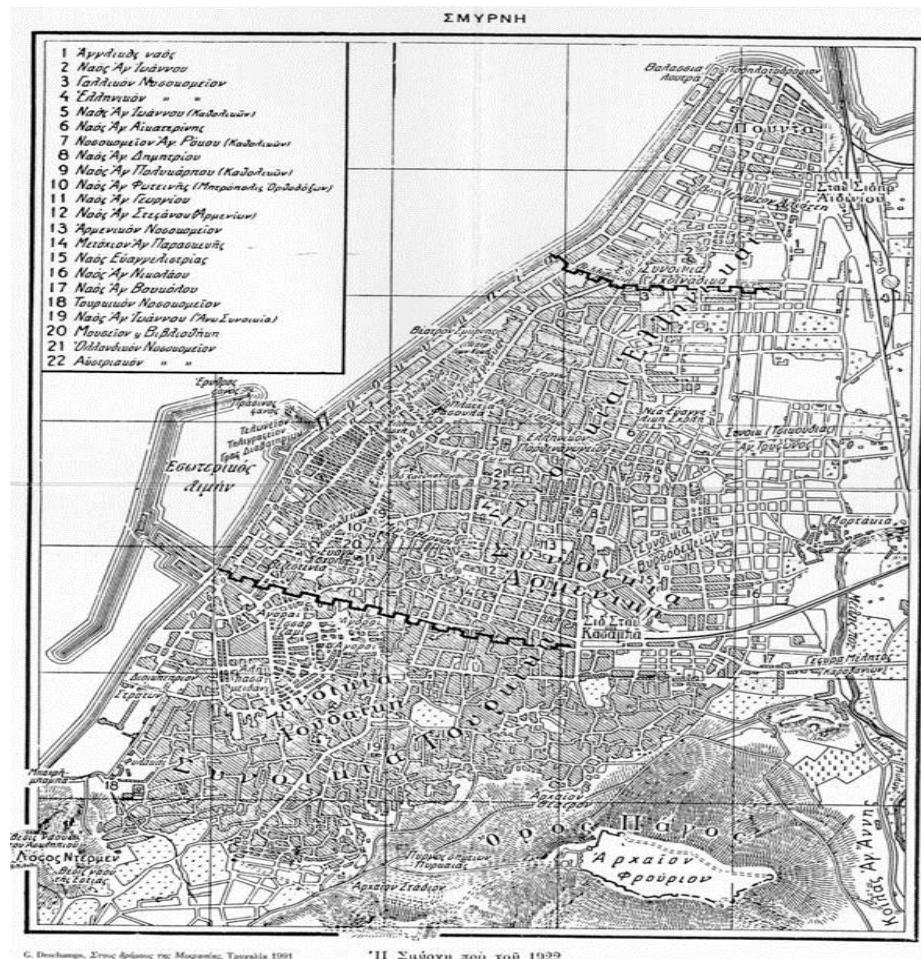
Conclusion

Izmir represented a place of material and cultural exchanges, which was described as by a very special dynamism, a place where native and foreign structures met and merged into the hopper of the composition and contradictions. The Levantine architecture, as described, was essentially an amalgam of trends from the baroque to neo-classicism, also incorporating decorative elements derived from Art Nouveau. The result of such a memorable combination of forms allows us to talk about a peculiar eclecticism with reference to neoclassical forms, which can be observed even today in Smyrna. Indeed 1,702 Levantine architecture houses, are preserved in areas from the Alsantsak

up to Kantife Kale and the Konakia up to the Chiotika¹⁰, standing as lighthouses that disseminate in the modern era the deep economic and humanitarian crisis, a cosmopolitan "Light from the East", as it was once written in the inscription of Ionion University of the utterly neglected city, in response to any kind of threat of racism, intolerance and xenophobia.

References

- Batidou O., (1965) "Romnakia and old Izmir", Athens.
- Deschamps G., (1990) "The streets of Asia Minor. Travelogue 1890 Chios – Izmir – Ephesus – Aidini – Caria – Pisidia", Versions Trochalia, Athens.
- Kanetaki E., Agiannidis V., "Levantine Architecture in Smyrne / Izmir: Tracing the architectural Classification of its residential Buildings", the 20th Symposium of the International Committee of Ottoman and pre-Ottoman studies (Comité International des Etudes Pre-Ottomanes et Ottomanes), Rethymnon from 27 June to 1 July 2012.
- Politis K., (2013) "At Chatzifragkou's", Version Dimosiografikos Organisms Labraki, Athens



¹⁰ According to the report, the architect engineer Dr Helen Kanetaki and maintainer of 3st Basil Agiannidi, E.B.A. titled « *Levantine Architecture in Smyrne/ Izmir: Tracing the architectural Classification of its residential Buildings* », presented at the 20th Symposium of the International Committee of Ottoman and pre-Ottoman studies (Comité International Ottomanes Etudes et des Pre-Ottomanes), organized by the Department of history and Archaeology of the University of Crete and the Institute of Mediterranean Studies-Forth, Rethymnon from 27 June to 1 July 2012.

- Scherzer de C., (1995) "*Izmir. Geographical, economic and cultural visa*", Katoptro Versions, Athens.
- Sillogiko (2008), "*Izmir, the neglected city? 1830-1930 Memories of a great Mediterranean Harbor*", curate by Maria-Carmen Smyrneli, Metechmio Editions, Athens.
- Sotiriou D., (2012) "*The destruction and the strategy of imperialism in the Eastern Mediterranean*", Editions Kedros, 16th edition, Athens.
- Sotiriou – Dorobini I., (3/5/1998) "*Urban planning and architecture. The residential establishment of Izmir in the heyday*", the newspaper Kathimerini, Athens.
- Hemingway E., (2008) "*In our time*", Kastanioti Editions, Athens.

Picture Sources

- Deschamps G., (1990) "*The streets of Asia minor. Travelogue 1890 Chios – Izmir – Ephesus – Aidini – Caria – Pisidia*", Versions Trochalia, Athens.
- Sillogiko (2008), "*Izmir, the neglected city? 1830-1930 Memories of a great Mediterranean Harbor*", curate by Maria-Carmen Smyrneli, Metechmio Editions, Athens.

Source Map

- Deschamps G., (1990) "*The streets of Asia Minor. Travelogue 1890 Chios – Izmir – Ephesus – Aidini – Caria – Pisidia*", Versions Trochalia, Athens.