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## Citizenship after orientalism: Ottoman citizenship

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# 1 Citizenship after orientalism

## Ottoman citizenship

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### Introduction

This chapter offers some thoughts about investigating citizenship after orientalism and reflects on the possibilities of exploring “Ottoman citizenship” under different terms as neither an oriental nor occidental institution. I address three distinct but interrelated issues. First, I discuss the relationship between orientalism and citizenship. While orientalism has received considerable attention in the last three decades, the debate has remained focused on representations of the Orient in occidental art and literature. The focus has been much less on how orientalism mobilized both imperial and local groups to organize political and legal practices. As I have argued elsewhere (Işın 2002a; 2002b) and will briefly discuss below, one of the building blocks of orientalism has been making an ontological difference between the orient and occident on the question of the political in general and citizenship in particular. In a nutshell, the occidental tradition has constituted the Orient as those times and places where peoples have been unable to constitute themselves as political precisely because they have been unable to invent that identity the occident named as the citizen. The figure of the citizen that dominated the occidental tradition is the figure of that sovereign man (and much later woman) who is capable of judgment and being judged, transcending his (and much later her) tribal, kinship, and other primordial loyalties and belongingness. The figure represents an unencumbered and sovereign self in a direct contractual relationship with the city (and much later the state). By contrast, the Orient never invented that figure and mimetically reproduced it with only limited success. I critique this particular variant of orientalism – political orientalism – as a condition for rethinking citizenship.

Second, I explore the theoretical and intellectual options available after the critique of political orientalism and its claims to occidental uniqueness for citizenship. I address the question of possibilities for rethinking citizenship after illustrating what orientalism has mobilized and justified. There have been roughly two approaches to address that question, both of which I am critical and skeptical. There has been a tendency to reverse arguments of political orientalism to demonstrate that indeed those things that it deemed

as lacking in the Orient were actually present. As I will illustrate, for example, if political orientalism claimed that corporate organization of the city was lacking in the Orient, the tendency has been to demonstrate that indeed it was not lacking and that various oriental cities were organized as corporations. There are several difficulties with this approach, which we might call “reverse orientalism.” The most obvious is, of course, that using the definition by political orientalism as given and trying to demonstrate that there is some veridical deficit in orientalism misses its strategic orientation: in its effects, orientalism is less about the Orient and more about provoking various assemblages of meaning that make possible various actions upon the Orient. Understood this way, orientalism as an assemblage of claims always operates dynamically and relationally rather than remaining static. In other words, before the ink dries on those arguments that attempt to illustrate the existence of occidental institutions in the Orient, new claims are assembled to illustrate the inferiority of oriental ways of being and the absence there of various political and legal institutions. The veridical rectification of political orientalism is a losing battle. In the truth game that produces the Occident and Orient as ontologically distinct blocs, the Orient can never win because it is already socially constituted to demonstrate the superiority of the Occident.

Perhaps as a result of the difficulties arising from rethinking citizenship without orientalism, some scholars abandon making comparisons altogether and refute the existence of citizenship practices in the Orient. The difficulty with this approach, which might be called “occidentalism,” is that the interpenetration and intertwining of the Orient and Occident has gone on for too long to assume that a practice that exists in one will not exist in the other. Moreover, such categorical denials reinforce an ostensible ontological difference between Occident and Orient by leaving the constitution of citizenship to occidental claims.

This leads me to my third discussion, which I call “Ottoman citizenship.” It should be clear by now that when I use the term “Ottoman citizenship,” I do not have in mind a citizenship practice in the way in which the occidental tradition has organized it during the last two centuries by reference to a cluster of absences or presences in the Orient. If that were the case, Ottoman citizenship would be a contradiction in terms since the Ottoman politics and government as instances of oriental culture would be defined precisely by their lack of citizenship. According to this view, Ottomans were imperial subjects and Turks were republican citizens. The history of citizenship, however, cannot only begin with the self-conscious Westernization of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century and culminate in the Turkish Republic in the twentieth. Yet, following the argument outlined earlier, it also does not mean to make claims about the existence of citizenship in the Ottoman Empire defined by a series of presences. In other words, I do not have in mind a nostalgic Ottoman citizenship that through its millet system “accommodated” and “recognized” minorities and enabled certain

autonomous institutions as an example of tolerance, etc. As important as it is to understand Ottoman institutions in those terms, it is both anachronistic and dangerous to create an Ottoman Empire that is somehow more authentic and originary than Europe by using the contemporary language of European sociology and thought. What Ottoman citizenship might possibly mean, therefore, can neither be constituted by references to absences nor presences, whether these be defined as corporate cities, tolerance, accommodation, or recognition. Exploring Ottoman citizenship after orientalism is indeed a very complicated task and I do not wish to simplify it. This chapter is, then, more an invitation to explore this complicated issue than a conclusive set of arguments.

I wish to conclude these opening remarks by reflecting on the importance of reconsidering or even constituting an object called “Ottoman citizenship.” The immediate political question is of course the new wave of Europeanization or Westernization of the Turkish Republic occasioned by its theoretically imminent accession to the European Union. Arguably, this wave began much earlier, going back to the 1830s and the final decades of the Ottoman Empire (Timur 1998). But there is certainly a new sense of urgency brought on by broader geopolitical shifts and realignments as well as institutional transformations associated with the enlargement of the European Union. As is well known, the difficulties of accepting the Turkish Republic into the European Union have centered upon a small set of claims which, while phrased in different ways, one may call the question of compatibility between the European tradition of citizenship rights – civil, political and economic – and Turkish republicanism. This has exacerbated the question of Turkish modernity, which has been a fundamental question since at least the 1830s. As other chapters in this volume illustrate, the debate over the formation of the Turkish Republic and the extent to which it converged toward or diverged from the European civic republican tradition is currently in full swing (İçduygu *et al.* 1999; Keyman 2000). As is the question of whether Turkish citizenship approximated or distorted European citizenship by attempting to create an ethnicized and racialized Turkish nation (Yeğen 2002). These questions of convergence, divergence, approximation, and distortion as a relationship and compatibility between Turkish and European citizenship rights need to be considered within a canvas of the relationship between orientalism and citizenship that I attempt to sketch in this chapter.

### **Orientalism and citizenship**

The relationship between orientalism and citizenship has not received the attention it deserves in either postcolonial or citizenship studies. It is well known that orientalism involves dividing the world into two “civilizational” blocs, one having rationalized and secularized and hence modernized, the other having remained “irrational,” religious and traditional. Some scholars

demonstrated how the Orient has been produced as representation in especially occidental art and literature. Others have argued that what was produced was not only representation but also the Orient itself, materializing through orientalizing discourses. Some scholars have argued that indeed Said (1978) was ambiguous on the difference between the Orient as representation and the Orient as real, sometimes assuming that the Orient was simply the former, sometimes assuming that it was a distorted version of the latter (Yeğenoğlu 1998: 15–20). What concerns me is that for orientalizing discourses the ostensible ontological difference between the Occident and the Orient can be directly attributed to citizenship understood as a contractual arrangement amongst unencumbered and sovereign citizens, associated with each other and capable of acting collectively. In other words, I am not concerned with how the Orient was “merely” represented, but how it was produced through orientalizing practices involving both occidental and oriental subjects and spaces. It is this relationship that has not occasioned a sustained discussion. That Said did not concern himself with orientalism in the social sciences may have contributed to this (Turner 2000: 6). Be that as it may, the images of citizenship that dominated occidental thought essentially invoked citizenship as a contract. The contractual images of citizenship are not merely representations but toward which subjects either align or are constantly provoked to align their thoughts and organize practices about the political. An occidental tradition where the origins of “city,” “democracy” and “citizenship” are etymologically traced to the “Greek,” “Roman” and “medieval” cities and affinities between “their” and “our” practices are established not only orient toward but also assemble and reproduce such practices. An entire tradition reminds us that polis, politics and polity, civitas, citizenship and civility, and demos and democracy have “common roots.” We are always provided with images of virtuous Greek citizens debating in the Agora or the Pnyx, austere Roman citizens deliberating in the republican senate, and “European” citizens receiving their charter as a symbol of contract in front of the guildhall. Moreover, the modern European nation-state claimed inheritance of this invented tradition. As Weber would claim, “the modern state is the first to have the concept of the *citizen of the state*” according to which “the individual, for once, is *not*, as he is everywhere else, considered in terms of the particular professional and family position he occupies, not in relation to differences of material and social situation, but purely and simply *as a citizen*” (Weber 1917: 103, original emphases). This is, of course, a normative ideal as Weber saw the meaning and purpose of modern citizenship as a “counterbalance to the social *inequalities* which are *neither* rooted in natural differences nor created by natural qualities but are produced, rather, by social conditions (which are often severely at variance with nature) and above all, inevitably, by the *purse*” (Weber 1917: 103, original emphases). But this universal ideal of citizenship has been effectively and widely critiqued (Işın and Wood 1999; Young 1989; Yuval-Davis 1997).

What these images mobilize and provoke is an invented tradition: that the West is somehow an *inheritor* of a tradition that is different and superior from an oriental tradition. As we shall see below, when Weber says “everywhere else,” he has in mind a very specific space than that broad term may suggest: the Orient. These images, then, do not just invent one but two traditions: a superior way of being political as “simple and pure citizen” and an inferior tradition that never sorted out the contractual state or the citizen. All the same, these images provoke and assemble “natural” ways of seeing and perceiving the political. For the occidental imagination some images are now such ways of seeing: that democracy was invented in the Greek polis; that Roman republican tradition bequeathed its legacy to Europe and that Europe Christianized and civilized these traditions. The image of the virtuous citizen is ineluctably linked with the occidental tradition, whether it is told through canonical thinkers such as Aristotle, Cicero, St Augustine, Locke and Rousseau, or through narrating epic battles where citizenship virtues were discovered. While in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries this narrative was told as a seamless web, constituting an occidental tradition of citizenship, for much of the twentieth century its seamlessness was called into question, liberalism, republicanism or communitarianism claiming different strands as their own. Yet, until the present, this narrative has held its sway: liberalism, republicanism and communitarianism are really different ways of telling the same occidental narrative. Many representations of orientalism either rely upon or reproduce this one essential difference between the Occident and the Orient.

I would like to return to Weber to highlight the way in which he emphasized citizenship as *the* unique foundation of occidental tradition. I have provided closer readings of his argument elsewhere, so here I will limit myself to essentials (Işın 2002a; 2002b). The return to Weber is for two crucial reasons. Weber elaborated upon citizenship as a unique occidental invention with more insistence than any other twentieth-century scholar. His influence has been extraordinary. At the outset, what concerns me is that the overemphasis on Weber’s interpretation of the origins of capitalism in the Protestant ethic has impeded what, in my view, is his more significant and broader interpretation that citizenship made capitalism possible. For Weber capitalism was uniquely an occidental phenomenon precisely because citizenship was an occidental invention. That for Weber the absence of autonomous cities and citizenship was decisive for the failure of oriental societies to develop capitalism, and that this was connected with “synoecism,” is the connection to which I wish to draw attention. For Weber, what made the occidental city unique was that it arose from the establishment of a confraternity, a brotherhood-in-arms for mutual aid and protection, and the usurpation of political power (Weber 1927b: 319). In this regard, Weber always drew parallels between the medieval “communes” and ancient “synoecism.” Thus for Weber

The polis is always the product of such a confraternity or synoecism, not always an actual settlement in proximity but a definite oath of brotherhood which signified that a common ritualistic meal is established and a ritualistic union formed and that only those had a part in this ritualistic group who buried their dead on the acropolis and had their dwellings in the city.

(Weber 1927b: 320)

While Weber consistently emphasized that some of these characteristics emerged in China, Japan, the Near East, India and Egypt, he insisted that it was only in the occident that all were present and appeared regularly. From this he concluded that “Most importantly, the associational character of the city and the concept of a burgher (as contrasted to the man from the countryside) never developed [in the Orient] at all and existed only in rudiments” (Weber 1921: 1227). Therefore “a special status of the town dweller as a ‘citizen’, in the ancient medieval sense, did not exist and a corporate character of the city was unknown” (Weber 1921: 1227). He was convinced that

in strong contrast to the medieval and ancient Occident, we never find the phenomenon in the Orient that the autonomy and the participation of the inhabitants in the affairs of local administration would be more strongly developed in the city ... than in the countryside. In fact, as a rule the very opposite would be true.

(Weber 1921: 1228)

For him this difference was decisive:

All safely founded information about Asian and oriental settlements which had the economic characteristics of “cities” seems to indicate that normally only the clan associations, and sometimes also the occupational associations, were the vehicle of organized action, but never the collective of urban citizens as such.

(Weber 1921: 1233)

Above all, for Weber only “in the Occident is found the concept of *citizen* (*civis Romanus*, *citoyens*, *bourgeois*) because only in the Occident does the *city* exist in the specific sense of the word” (Weber 1927b: 232). For Weber, citizenship was crucial in explaining why capitalism emerged only in the occident precisely because the city existed as such and that the citizen as a special status stood above any other identity. It was this combination that made possible the contractual man, the foundation of capitalism (Holton 1986).

Broadly speaking, Weber provided two reasons why the city as confraternity (a contractual organization) arose only in the occident. First, since the occidental city originally emerged as a war machine, the group that owned

the means of warfare dominated the city. For Weber, whether a group owned the means of warfare or was furnished by an overlord was as fundamental as whether the means of production were the property of the worker or the capitalist (Weber 1927a: 320). Everywhere in the Orient the development of the city as brotherhood-in-arms was prevented by the fact that the army of the prince or overlord dominated the city from outside (Weber 1918: 280). Why? That was because the question of irrigation was crucial for India, China, the Near East, Egypt and Asia. "The water question conditioned the existence of the bureaucracy, the compulsory service of the dependent classes, and the dependence of subject classes upon the functioning of the bureaucracy of the king" (Weber 1927a: 321). That the king exercised his power in the form of a military monopoly was the basis of the distinction between the Orient and the Occident. "The forms of religious brotherhood and self equipment for war made possible the origin and existence of the city" (Weber 1927a: 321). While elements of analogous developments occur in India, China, Mesopotamia and Egypt, the necessity of water regulation, which led to the formation of kingship monopoly over the means of warfare, stifled these beginnings. The reader will recognize the well-known "oriental despotism" thesis here that can be traced back to Montesquieu (1721) and forward to Wittfogel (1957). The second obstacle which prevented the development of the city in the Orient, was the persistence of magic in oriental religions. These religions did not allow the formation of "rational" communities and hence the city. By contrast, the magical barriers between clans, tribes, and peoples, which were still known in the ancient polis, were eventually abolished and so the establishment of the occidental city was made possible (Weber 1927a: 322–3). What makes the occidental city unique is that it allowed the association or formation of groups based on bonds and ties other than lineage or kinship, the basis of which were contract and secularism.

As Springborg (1987) convincingly argued, this contractual and secularist interpretation of the superiority of the occident has older and deeper roots than Weber. What Weber accomplished, in my view, was his essential linking of contractualism and citizenship. Springborg (1987: 402) sees the formation of the theories of oriental despotism and the articulation of contractualism as civic republicanism in two historical phases: a classical phase that coincides with the period in which the polis was the dominant political formation, and an early modern phase, coincident with the formation of the modern European state. I am skeptical whether the first moment should be considered as a moment at all, since our understanding of the Greeks is so much more intertwined with and influenced by the later moment that it is doubtful if the Greeks are accessible to us in a way that enables us to make that kind of claim. I would also suggest breaking her more homogeneous moment "early modern" into an earlier civic humanist moment and a later absolutist moment. Moreover, I would also add the nineteenth-century modern appropriation of both the Greco-Romans and civic humanists as



part of an occidental tradition. Nonetheless, the significance of Springborg's argument is her insistence on interpreting this tradition as a gradual and fitful invention. I would therefore agree that the formation of this occidental tradition has achieved two strategic aims. First, it has created a seamless web between the Greek polis and the modern state as one history, including the absolutist European monarchies. Second, it has created an ontological difference between the Occident and the Orient, the latter being constituted as its despotic other. Springborg (1986; 1987), however, goes even further and argues that the formation of an occidental tradition has also masked the fact that the polis may well have derived from earlier "oriental" civilizations, and that this latter achievement is an extraordinary inversion, rendering monarchical, absolutist regimes of the early modern Europe essentially democratic and oriental regimes as essentially despotic. This argument has considerable merit, and is useful in understanding some of the outstanding gaps in Weber's work concerning the early modern monarchies and absolutist states.

Yet, ultimately, I suggest that Springborg falls into a trap of reverse orientalism in the sense that she takes Weber's argument as given and attempts to demonstrate that the features of citizenship and contractualism were not lacking in the Orient but were present. She, for example, argues that

A preponderance of the evidence from ancient and medieval Iraq, Persia, Syria and Egypt over a long period and under successive empires, Babylonian, Assyrian, Achaemenid, Parthian, Sasanian, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Umayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid, Mamluk and Ottoman, suggests that these were societies based on a loose federation of autocephalous communities enjoying a fair degree of autonomy, within which unusually democratic conditions prevailed, and between which conditions of religious toleration and economic co-operation were typical.

(Springborg 1987: 401)

What Springborg argues here is that oriental societies exhibited features of citizenship and contractualism but they were either willfully or unintentionally omitted from orientalist scholarship. Thus,

Far from being the victims of oriental despotism, the average citizens in these communities enjoyed a degree of legal and economic freedom, personal and corporate rights and immunities, which compares favorably with those of the citizen in the modern "democratic" state. It is fair to claim that the contours of the classical polis are far more faithfully reflected in the cities of the medieval and modern oriental world than in the structures and institutions of the Northern European nation states, so widely assumed to be its legitimate heir.

(Springborg 1987: 401)

Throughout her argument a resistance to overcome negative representations of oriental cities lacking citizenship is accompanied by positive attempts to transform oriental cities into cities just like their occidental counterparts: that “ancient society was explicitly contractual” (398); that “recent scholarship has shown a considerable degree of corporate autonomy on the part of Mesopotamian cities vis-à-vis the royal authority, at a time at which the Germanic and Celtic tribes were still in the bush, so to speak” (411); that

Citizenship in Mesopotamian cities, like that of Athens, depended on the twin criteria of birth to free parents and ownership of municipal land. Citizenship brought with it rights and duties: economic, social, legal and religious privileges, but [also] the duties of taxation and military service.

(Springborg 1987, 412)

and that “the legal definition of relations between citizens in contractual terms does not belong to the Western historical tradition to anything like the extent that it belongs to that of the East” (1987: 421).

As relevant and significant as it is, there are two problems with her argument. First, of course, it is problematic to take the Weberian theses on the uniqueness and superiority of ostensibly occidental contractualism and citizenship and attempt to demonstrate that indeed oriental cities were more occidental than occidental cities, when these categories of the political were originally produced by reference to a lack or absence in oriental cities in the first place. This is more than a logical problem where the referent is missing from the reference. It results in a theoretical problem of having to always demonstrate the presence of citizenship in oriental cities with reference to occidental cities. Second, while this argument intends to call into question an ontological difference between the occidental and oriental cities, it in fact contributes to creating even a deeper wedge between them by making them essential terms of discourse. Either way, and this is generally true for critics of orientalism as representation, the will to truth underlying this view to correct orientalism misses the fact that orientalism operates as a strategic orientation that mobilizes and organizes various practices.

Springborg is not alone in falling in the trap of reverse orientalism. Throughout the twentieth century a veritable discourse on oriental cities emerged, taking Weberian theses as their starting point and attempting to either falsify or corroborate them. Whether it was about the generic notion of the Islamic city (Goldberg 1991; Hourani 1970; Lapidus 1969; Stern 1970) or studies of specific Muslim cities (Auld *et al.* 2000; Çelik 1999; Goitein 1969; Inalcık 1990; Lebon 1970; Leeuwen 1999; Ze’evi 1996), or the Ottoman city (Eldem *et al.* 1999; Faroqhi 1984; 1994), historical scholarship developed under the shadow of an orientalist Weber in attempts to refute, corroborate, modify or at least to respond to his theses. I suggest that since

Weber drew his conclusions on contractualism and citizenship from his interpretations of oriental cities, to explore the possibilities of rethinking citizenship after (or without) orientalism, the literature on the Islamic city or the Ottoman city as a genus in that species, while indispensable, poses considerable challenges and imposes perhaps insurmountable limits.

### **Citizenship after orientalism**

The question that this analysis raises is how one might approach citizenship without orientalism. Approaching citizenship without orientalism will require overcoming fundamental assumptions about synoecism and an ontological difference between Occident and Orient mobilized by presences and absences (Işın 2002a). Moreover, it will require abandoning teleological, historicist and presentist ways of interpreting histories of citizenship (Işın 1995; 1997). I have suggested a way of investigating citizenship historically as a generalized problem of otherness (Işın 2002a; 2002b; 2002c). Appropriating various strands of thought that range from legal and sociological thought to psychoanalysis and social psychology, I have argued that it is possible to rethink occidental citizenship from the perspective of an analysis of the formation of groups as a generalized question of otherness and of the ways of being political without any appeal to an ontological difference between the Occident and the Orient. Such an analysis requires critically transforming some of the fundamental categories of occidental social and political thought. Briefly, this analysis regards the formation of groups as fundamental but dynamic processes through which beings articulate themselves. Through *orientations*, *strategies* and *technologies* as forms of being political, beings develop *solidaristic*, *agonistic* and *alienating* relationships. I maintain that these *forms* and *modes* constitute ontological ways of being political in the sense that being thrown into them is not *necessarily* a matter of conscious choice or contract (Işın 2002c: 13). It is through these forms and modes that beings articulate themselves as *citizens*, *strangers*, *outsiders* and *aliens* as possible ways of being rather than identities or differences. It is therefore impossible to investigate “citizenship,” as that name that citizens – as distinguished from strangers, outsiders and aliens – have given themselves, without investigating the specific constellation or figuration of orientations, strategies and technologies that are available for deployment in producing solidaristic, agonistic and alienating multiplicities.

I maintain that each figuration is a moment that should not be understood as merely a temporal unit but as a spatio-temporal way of being political. Each moment is constituted as a consequence of analysis and does not exist as such, but only through this analysis. Each moment crystallizes itself as that space which is called the city. I have argued that the city should not be imagined as merely a material or physical place, but as a force field that works as a difference machine. The city is not just simply a place or space but a figuration. I have called this figuration a “difference machine.”

The city is a difference machine because the groups are not formed outside the machine and encounter each within the city, but the city assembles, generates, distributes, and differentiates these differences, incorporates them within strategies and technologies, and elicits, interpellates, adjures, and incites them.

The city is not a container where differences encounter each other; the city generates differences and assembles identities. The city is a difference machine insofar as it is understood as that space which is constituted by the dialogical encounter of groups formed and generated immanently in the process of taking up positions, orienting themselves for and against each other, inventing and assembling strategies and technologies, mobilizing various forms of capital, and making claims to that space that is objectified as “the city.” The city is a crucial condition of citizenship in the sense that being a citizen is inextricably associated with being *of* the city.

(Işın 2002a: 283)

Therefore I maintain that

The city is neither a background to these struggles *against which* groups wage, nor is it a foreground *for which* groups struggle for hegemony. Rather, the city is the battleground *through which* groups define their identity, stake their claims, wage their battles, and articulate citizenship rights, obligations, and principles.

(Işın 2002a: 283–4)

Admittedly, this summary is indeed very condensed. But it aims to highlight two issues regarding theorizing the city and citizenship relationship. First, while many critics of Weber emphasized lacunae in his interpretation of the oriental city, the astounding assumption is that his account of the occidental city is fundamentally correct. I argue that the unification that Weber attributes to the occidental city and its ostensible expression, citizenship, is questionable. I called this “synoecism” and argued that we must begin interpreting the history of occidental citizenship itself differently, and accept that that history itself was articulated as an invented tradition that needs to be interrupted. Second, the constitution of the occidental city has not been without reference to the ostensible features of the oriental city. That “orientalism” is not merely a representation but a strategic orientation that has mobilized various practices as a result of which some cities have been constituted as the bedrock of citizenship and some cities with their lack, should be an object of critical analysis. I doubt that remaining within the terms of discourse that dominated our senses of being political on the basis of an orientalist – if not imperialist, racist and colonialist – difference between cultures and nations for at least two centuries, will we be capable of

articulating new understandings of the ways in which humans become political beings. Whether we like it or not, citizenship has institutionalized specific ways of being political in world history, and leaving its investigations to either occidentalist or orientalist forms of thought is not an attractive option.

### **Ottoman citizenship**

Approaching citizenship without orientalism potentially opens up new ways of investigating the ways in which at various moments in world history distinct groups articulated themselves by mobilizing distinct orientations, assembling strategies and technologies and producing different forms of otherness through which different ways of being political are rendered possible. Approaching citizenship this way interrupts the burden of comparing and contrasting various cultures or civilizations with a view to establishing the superiority or inferiority of one over the other. Weber focused incessantly on Judea, China, India and Islam to compare corporate organization, contractualism, and so forth with the ostensibly occidental institutions. As I have argued, the aim of approaching citizenship without orientalism is not to abandon a difference between and amongst various world historical moments, but to refuse to reduce them to fundamental ontological differences along the axis of inferiority or superiority (İşin 2002a: 22ff). Nor is it simply about abandoning occidental ways of thought. Rather, it is about revealing the multiple and critical traditions of both occidental and oriental thoughts and appropriating them for alternative and critical interpretations.

Without these caveats, the notion of “Ottoman citizenship” would be an apparent oxymoron. When citizenship is defined by its arbitrary designation in a given moment, as was articulated during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe, perhaps the only moment that one can claim that Ottoman citizenship can be legitimately named would be during and after the reform period in the 1830s known as the *Tanzimat*. It can further be argued, specifically until the promulgation of the 1869 “citizenship” law, and 1876, when a new Ottoman constitution was drawn up, that citizenship had not been institutionalized in the imperial governing order (Ünsal 1998). One may even further argue that these were proto-moments of citizenship and that properly modern citizenship did not emerge until the new Turkish Republic was formed in the 1920s, and clearly adopted and articulated citizenship laws (Aybay 1998). Clearly, I would reject these arguments. To limit the analysis of citizenship in the Ottoman Empire to only those moments when “it” was imported from Europe during Westernization and Europeanization is to accept political orientalism. Whatever reasons one gives to limit analysis of Ottoman citizenship to its Western incarnations, one should not approach it with an always already-defined and understood notion of citizenship and look for its traces, development and emergence.

This clearly converges toward either orientalist or reverse orientalist modes of thought that grant the existence of citizenship only on condition of being found in a particular form in the occident. Besides, when this approach is followed faithfully, one can argue, as the recent European Union documents have done, that even Turkish citizenship can be said not to have arrived yet since it still does not conform to its European counterpart (CEC 2002a, 2002b).

Yet, the constitution of the Turkish republican citizenship began much earlier than the 1920s and was indeed a European project. It is well known that a Turkish identity and citizenship founded on a racialized and ethnified Turkishness became prevalent in the late Ottoman Empire and the early Turkish Republic (Deringil 1993; Kadioğlu 1998; Yeğen 2002). This must, however, be understood in the context of a broader movement toward Westernization that incorporated the racist and nationalist discourse in the West on the purity of Aryan races and their ostensible superiority (Davison 1973; 1990; Timur 1994: 121–43). The European discourse on race began in the late eighteenth century and continued well into the 1940s, which was a crucial moment of transformation of the Ottoman Empire into the Turkish Republic. The discourse itself was not only implicated in various European projects of imperialism, colonialism and orientalism, but also provided direct justification for them. It is often argued that the Ottomans did not use race or nation as operative concepts with which to organize their practices of belonging, identity and difference (Makdisi 2002; Mardin 1962; Timur 1994). But when the Ottomans were faced with the new question of national identities in the nineteenth century, they were implicated in Western theories of race, identity and nation. Western anthropology, archeology, philology, and psychology were not only the sources the Ottoman intellectuals and intelligentsia drew upon but also became ways of seeing and thinking that enabled Ottomans to conceive themselves as modernizing and Westernizing forces (Timur 1994: 139–40). Just as many European intellectuals and intelligentsia constituted European nations as *sui generis* and authentic polities with racial and ethnic purity and homogeneity, so did their Ottoman counterparts in their quest to define a nation emerging from the fragments of an empire. While the intellectuals and intelligentsia of the early republic attempted to differentiate themselves from the Ottoman legacies, they nonetheless inherited the fundamental assumptions of the late Ottoman search for Turkish origins and, in some ways, intensified and deepened it (Timur 1994: 144–8). Thus it would be a mistake to consider the birth of republican citizenship without a broader context in which orientalism and nationalism played a crucial role. To take orientalist and nationalist assumptions about citizenship as given and deploy them in analyses in interpreting various ways in which citizenship was used in republican institutions leads to orientalism and reverse orientalism.

An opposite danger is to find in Ottoman institutions more progressive and developed conceptions of “the art of living together” that avoided the

racism of modern European citizenship. In recent years there has been a development in this direction, which interprets certain Ottoman institutions from the point of view of tolerance and difference (Armağan 2000). The well-known system by which the Ottomans allocated certain rights to minorities – the millet system – has now increasingly been interpreted as a sign of Ottoman tolerance and accommodation for difference (Braude and Lewis 1980; Reppetto 1970; Stefanov 1997). The problem with these arguments is not their plausibility or implausibility. It may well be that Ottoman institutions that were overlooked by orientalist interpreters did indeed involve certain forms of tolerance and accommodation that were alien to the emerging nineteenth-century nationalist and racist forms of constituting modern otherness. Yet, discovering forms of tolerance, pluralism and accommodation in the Ottoman Empire in terms understood in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries generates more problems than it solves. First, it serves as yet another form of orientalism where Ottoman institutions once again are justified by using ostensibly European standards, albeit from its contemporary rather than historical figurations. Second, it also serves as an apologetic yet irredentist Islamization that finds justification in ostensibly progressive Ottoman institutions, which becomes mired in occidentalism.

I suggest that investigating Ottoman citizenship must avoid orientalist, reverse orientalist and occidentalist approaches. Understanding citizenship as a generalized problem of otherness would generate more useful theses by which to evaluate citizenship and to rethink its contemporary figurations. The question that these suggestions raise is what kinds of investigation can one undertake concerning Ottoman citizenship without orientalism? There is a cluster of problems that suggest themselves for investigation. The first is, of course, the formation of Turkish citizenship during the long nineteenth century between the 1830s and 1920s. The debate over Westernization of the Ottoman Empire in that period and the role of military-intellectual cadres known as Young Ottomans and later Young Turks is extensive. But the limited debate over the formation of citizenship during this period embodies various orientalist assumptions. Often citizenship is taken to mean how modern republican citizenship is defined in Europe. The hegemonic ideal replaces its contested and dissident versions, and it is that ideal that is searched for in the Ottoman Empire, thus further reinforcing its hegemony. A second cluster of problems concerns the formation and treatment of minorities in the Ottoman Empire, especially during the period of its expansion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The debate over the “millet system” has dominated investigations of this question and, as far as I know, the question of minorities has not been interpreted from the perspective of Ottoman citizenship. The question of the status and practices of non-Muslim groups in Ottoman Empire has so far extensively focused on quintessential occidental categories such as autonomy, tolerance, recognition and accommodation (Armağan 2000; Braude and Lewis 1980). Analyses of

these practices without relying upon these categories have revealed remarkably rich interpretations, but this work is just beginning to emerge (Ercan 2001; Soykan 2000).

But, more significantly, the question of Ottoman citizenship arises in connection with the Ottoman city. As I mentioned earlier, there has been a debate about the Islamic city that was conducted very much under the shadow of Weberian theorizing about the city. I also mentioned that many of his critics took Weber's description of the occidental city as given and attempted to prove or disprove its applicability to the Islamic city. I would like now to return to this debate briefly to illustrate the ways in which Weberian theses were considered. To return to this debate is important because, as Eldem *et al.* (1999: 1–3) have shown, it was conducted under the shadow of the constitution of the Islamic city. Since Eldem *et al.* provide a succinct summary of this debate, I will avoid repeating their concerns.

From my point of view, this literature raises two points. First, Weber has been uncritically accepted as providing an adequate account of the occidental city. In the entire literature on the Islamic city, I have not encountered an author who questions Weber's theorization of the occidental city. It is simply accepted that the occidental city was a politically and legally unified, autonomous and autocephalous entity with a corresponding spatial form. The subtle and nuanced analyses enabled Albert Hourani and Ira Lapidus, for example, to work through their material assuming that Weberian analysis of the rise of the patricians as a unifying dominant group is essentially an adequate account of the occidental city. Lapidus (1969: 49) argues that merchant or craft guilds in the Islamic city were weak and professional groups never managed to establish hegemony. He assumes that the occidental city was a spatially unified entity with a corresponding unified political organization. He then notes that in the Islamic city there were various fraternities, but these were not urban but rural on account of being located in smaller villages. Similarly, he argues that many political bodies that emerged in the Islamic city were more regional than urban on account of being dispersed throughout the surrounding areas of the city. Of the four groups that Lapidus notes as being dominant in the Islamic city (neighborhood bodies, fraternities, religious groups, and state and imperial authorities), none was an urban group for him except insofar as the city was a natural headquarters for them (Lapidus 1969: 60). For Lapidus, therefore, Muslim cities had no unity. As I have argued against Weber, neither did occidental cities. Had Lapidus been critical of the Weberian occidental city, would his conclusions have been different? Similarly, Hourani argued that Weber's "definition [did] more or less correspond to what Europeans would think of as a city, and if we accept it then we must also accept his conclusion that Near Eastern cities are not cities in the full sense" (Hourani 1970: 13). Yet, Hourani was sympathetic to but critical of Louis Massignon (1931; 1935), who had argued that Islamic cities had developed a corporate organization through their guilds. For Hourani the paradox was how the Islamic



city maintained its power of collective action without municipal institutions (Hourani 1970: 14). The critique by Stern (1970), directly on Massignon and implicitly on Lapidus and Hourani, reproduces Weberian theses and elevates them into unassailable truths about the occidental city. The literature on the Islamic city has not, therefore, only been conducted under the shadow of Weber but also took his interpretation of the occidental city, his synoecism, as given.

The second question that this literature raises is that it responds to an idealized and simplified Weber who argues about the differences between the occidental and oriental city on the basis of “common features.” Throughout this literature the Weber it is concerned with is the Weber who wrote *The City* and, in fact, its first section that develops a typology of the European city on the basis of five common features. But, as I have argued earlier, Weber advanced his theses on the relationship between cities and citizenship over an extensive body of work that belies the simple typology that has been attributed to him on the basis of five characteristics of the European city. In fact, Weber’s argument is not that the occidental city had a corporate organization, a dominant patrician group, and that it was autonomous and autocephalous. In his studies of China, Judaism, India, Islam and Near Eastern civilizations, he repeatedly stressed that some of these elements were present. For Weber what failed to happen in these civilizations was all elements coming together and producing the citizen as a special status. It is worth repeating here that for Weber

The polis is always the product of such a confraternity or synoecism, not always an actual settlement in proximity but a definite oath of brotherhood which signified that a common ritualistic meal is established and a ritualistic union formed and that only those had a part in this ritualistic group who buried their dead on the acropolis and had their dwellings in the city.

(Weber 1927b: 320)

The emphasis is on brotherhood and the associational character of the city that produced the citizen. His conclusion was that “the associational character of the city and the concept of a burgher (as contrasted to the man from the countryside) never developed [in the Orient] at all and existed only in rudiments” (Weber 1921: 1227). Therefore “a special status of the town dweller as a ‘citizen’, in the ancient medieval sense, did not exist and a corporate character of the city was unknown” (Weber 1921: 1227). In the literature on the Islamic city, only von Grunebaum, and only tangentially, stressed the importance of this connection made by Weber on cities and citizenship when he argued that “In the ancient town, to become a citizen a recent settler had to obtain admission into the register of the citizenry; in Islam there existed no impediment of this kind to participation in urban

life" (1961: 154). Yet, von Grunebaum does not further discuss the potential importance of this.

The debate over the Ottoman city, therefore, runs into these two difficulties: it takes Weber's interpretation of the occidental city as given and responds to an idealized Weber on the common attributes of the city. While Eldem *et al.* note, for example, that Weber's interpretation is akin to Marx's "oriental despotism," they assume that Weber's account of the occidental city was more or less adequate (1999: 9). They argue that studies of different identities in Ottoman cities have just begun and "the resourceful use of kadi court records are beginning to yield portraits of the beliefs, actions, and social roles of men, women, and children, guildsmen, tradesmen, and apprentices, Christians, Jews, and Muslims in Ottoman Anatolian cities" (1999: 11). There arises a possibility here that may well be worth exploring: if we call into question Weber's theses on the relationship between cities and citizenship, should we not ask whether these groups in the Ottoman city were organized around citizens, strangers, outsiders and aliens, producing strategies and technologies of otherness that are specific to certain times and spaces of the Ottoman city? Along these lines, for example, would it not be fruitful to revisit the Weberian thesis on the importance of military organization for citizenship, and compare and contrast the Ottoman janissaries and the Greek hoplites as organizing principles of identity? Similarly, differences between *waqf* and *euergetism* as technologies of citizenship formation could also yield significant insights (Springborg 1986: 190–1; 1987: 400, 413; Veyne 1976). The formation of notables in Ottoman cities as dominant groups, and various arrangements concerning consumption and production, could also yield different interpretations from perspectives mobilized by synoecism and orientalism (Faroqhi 2002a; 2002b; 2002c; Meeker, 2002). In all these investigations, the focus would be on the constellation of groups in a given moment, solidaristic, agonistic and alienating orientations, strategies and technologies in which they were implicated or thrown into, and the forms of citizenship and otherness that each constellation produced. Eldem *et al.* conclude that the

profound differences in the relationships between aliens and subjects in the three cities of Istanbul, Izmir, and Aleppo suggest something that perhaps should always have been obvious, there simply never has been such a thing as a normative "Ottoman," "Arab," or "Islamic" city, any more than there has ever been a typical "French," "English," or "Christian" metropolis.

(Eldem *et al.* 1999: 213)

Yet, this view is also problematic in that it overlooks the fact that a fundamental purpose of undertaking historical analysis is to develop these typologies. If each city is so irreducibly unique, what is the purpose of historical analysis of *the* city? (Işın 2003).

## Conclusion

What these kinds of investigation may provide is a challenge to the hegemony of orientalism and synoecism in interpreting oriental cities in general and Ottoman and Islamic cities in particular. What is at stake is nothing less than rethinking citizenship in both the Occident and the Orient. Avoiding orientalism and synoecism in investigating Ottoman citizenship, and even constituting the Ottoman city as an object of analysis, cannot guarantee productive or effective results at the outset. To my mind, there is no doubt that investigating Ottoman citizenship without orientalism and synoecism has a contemporary significance in the context of the debate over the accession of Turkey to the European Union. Thinking about Turkish citizenship took place under the shadow of the occident for so long that it may well be imperative to articulate certain principles of Turkish citizenship based upon its trajectories and specificities rather than the shadows of European modernities that constantly change. That way, it may also enable European scholars to think critically about “occidental citizenship” itself.

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