
In Lieu of an Introduction

Meltem: Journal of the Izmir Mediterranean Academy is getting ready for publication. The Mediterranean is a geography that has a distinctive climate, undercurrents, and winds. The Mediterranean world thrives on them and is partially determined by their impact. Izmir is one of its oldest cities. *Meltem* is a journal dedicated to the Mediterranean and Izmir in particular. The journal will attempt to understand anew this geography through various disciplines such as history, anthropology, political science, philosophy, and interdisciplinary studies, and to reach new narratives concerning the Mediterranean. In addition to these, the journal aims to share in Turkish and English, the ideas, texts, and works on Izmir and the broad Mediterranean basin produced in contemporary political, artistic, cultural fields with a global readership.

Today, there are quite a number of Mediterranean research centers established in different countries. The growing number of monographic studies about its cities, particularly regarding the port cities, nature, and the environment of the Mediterranean region that are being conducted are expanding our knowledge of the Mediterranean – even more so than they did in previous years. However, approaches and studies considering the Mediterranean in its entirety, which relate the relationship between the parts and the whole of the Mediterranean world are quite limited compared to the past. *Meltem* is an effort to address this shortcoming. The journal will attempt to undertake this task not only with a perspective of broad historical geography, but at the same time by looking into the fragments and everyday dynamics or by delving into distant corners of the Mediterranean.

Historically, the Mediterranean acts as a conduit for its extended basin beyond the peoples that share its shores. Although written with respect to movements and interactions of the communities and commodities traveling and intertwining on the sea, on the shores, and behind the hills, this past may probably be best understood through linguistic pathways. Words connect societies in the conductive space of the Mediterranean. Beyond smooth flows of commerce, language leaves its mark on what the peoples eat and drink, and on the plants, the fish, the sea, the wind, the geography and everything else.

Part of the research to define and understand the Mediterranean basin at the present time naturally falls under the weight of the region's long history. The history of this "Old World" written in terms of the empires, wars, crusades, conquests, borders, races and nations frequently fails to help us understand our modern day. Such historiography often renders invisible the fluidity and transitivity of cultures and ideas while serving the discourses of fleeting politics. The Mediterranean beyond

(and before) nations and nationalism, on the other hand, is always at risk of becoming a nostalgic mimesis of a distant utopia of shared cultures and coexistence. *Meltem* wishes to reveal this fluidity and transitivity without yielding to such a mimesis. Furthermore, today's Mediterranean is again the stage for a great turmoil. The east and the south of the Mediterranean are on the world agenda with revolutions, counter-revolutions, wars, civil wars, and mass migrations they have caused. *Meltem* intends to discuss these contemporary dynamics that are transforming the Mediterranean.

Meltem's raison d'être bears a series of questions that we seek answers to. What is the Mediterranean as an idea? How can we define the Mediterranean in a historical perspective? Is it possible to think of the Mediterranean as a whole that embraces plurality and diversity? Can we speak of a shared Mediterranean culture or politics and sociology today? Where do we see the Mediterranean of the past in our day? Where does the Mediterranean fall into in today's globalized world? What were the sociological, political, economic, and cultural dynamics that shaped the Mediterranean in the past? How did they change over time? What are its local dynamics and stories? What do they tell us about the Mediterranean today? And what about the cities of the Mediterranean? Do they exhibit common characteristics? For instance, how do they differ along east-west and north-south axes? How do they become partners? Where does Izmir stand within the Mediterranean world? How does it position itself? What were the sociological, political, economic, and cultural dynamics underpinning Izmir historically? How did they change in time? What can be told regarding the Mediterranean from Izmir's point of vantage, from the perspective of its distinctive stories?

We set sail with a dream of a new Mediterranean voyage in order to search for answers to these questions, and to the new questions that we hope to ask together with our authors.

Izmir Mediterranean Academy