

Three Families of Levantine Merchants from Constantinople

in the Late Sixteenth Century International Maritime Trade in the Northwestern Black Sea and Lower Danube Areas

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THE LEVANTINE merchants from Constantinople, often referred to in contemporary sources as “Peroti” (inhabitants of Galata–Pera), were involved in various professional fields. They are well known as interpreters and clerks working for Western embassies in the Ottoman capital, but also as merchants involved in international maritime ventures. They enjoyed an easier access to the Black Sea, as subjects of the Porte, they were associated with Muslim merchants or used the commercial vessels of Ottoman ship-owners in order to reach the ports of maritime Danube, transit centers for goods sent for sale to the Polish market. The Venetian merchants were bound, by mutual economic interests, with the Levantine Constantinopolitan traders, and were often associated with them in transactions with raw materials or with Cretan wine exported to the Polish market¹. The Levantine merchants Pietro Galante, Pietro Panzani, and Edoardo (Odoardo) da Gagliano were among the most important merchants who controlled the maritime trade routes between Constantinople and the ports at the mouths of the Danube in the second half of the sixteenth century. This contribution will briefly highlight their professional activity, as they were part of the community of Levantine merchants from Pera who chose the business environment, unlike other of the Levantine families who continued to serve the Western diplomatic embassies in Constantinople.

The Galantes

PIETRO GALANTE hailed from Cyprus, as the son of Lorenzo Galante and of a local woman whose name is unknown². The fact that, in the sources from the last decades of the sixteenth century, he is constantly referred to as a “Perotto” allows us to assert that he had long been a member of the community of the former Genoese colony of Pera, incorporated by Constantinople after the Ottoman conquest in 1453³. Galante

was a Catholic and an esteemed member of the *Magnifica Comunità*⁴, the self-government body of the Catholic community of Pera⁵. He was one of the wealthiest merchants of this community which, starting with Mehmet II the Conqueror, had been granted by the Ottoman sultans the rights to manage the Catholic churches of Pera through their representatives and to internally arbitrate the litigations between the members of the community. Pietro Galante's activity is known from primary sources which refer to his trading activities⁶. He owned a house and a warehouse for storing goods in Pera⁷:

[18 June 1590] [...] *Dalla supplicatione hora letta, presentata da S(igno)r Zorzi Episcopulo [Georgios Episkopoulos], questo Magnifico Consi(g)lio [Council of Twelve] ha inteso la istanza ch'egli fa per che sia terminato quello che sarà stimato più ispediente sopra le 68 botte de' vini caricati alla Canea di ragione di Messer Zorzi Manolussi [Georgios Manolousis], con ordine di andare con essi a Reni, dove per le proibitioni che si sono intese non si possono condurre. L'anderà parte che le sopradette botte 68 de' vini, con le 38 caricate da Messer Tòdarin di Rossi, siano scaricate qui [Constantinople] et poste in un magazzino, dove habbiano a stare fino a tanto che venga ordine dalli patroni di essi di ciò che si doverà fare [...]*⁸.

[23 September 1591] *havendo Messer Piero Galante sudetto ricevuto li doi mille cuori libretti d'esso Messer Antonio et quelli messe [mise] in un suo magazzino in Pera [...]; il magazzino di esso Messer Piero Galante, dove se attrovano li doi mille cuori libretti di ragion del detto Messer Antonio Padarotta, [...] [è] situato vicino alla Chiesa di Santo Francesco di Pera*⁹.

[25 September 1591] [...] *si dubita che Messer Antonio Pandarotta dalla Canea si possa haver sommerso per viaggio, venendo da Reni, porto di Bogdania [Moldavia], con un vassello de' convogliati [?] a Constantinopoli, et perché il detto Messer Antonio con un altro vassello mandò doi mille cuori libretti qui in Pera in mano di Messer Piero Galante Peroto, respondente suo, però ho fatto bollar per questa Cancellaria il magazzino nel quale si trovano essi cuori, e tenirò fermo il bollo fin che si habbia nuova più certa della vita o della morte del sodetto Messer Antonio [...]*¹⁰.

Pietro Galante's main investment concerned trading in Cretan wine, which he sold in Poland, especially in Lviv (Polish: Lwów; German: Lemberg; Latin: Leopolis), and purchasing raw materials—untanned cattle hides, raw beeswax—and foodstuffs—Danube salted fish and pressed caviar—from the Romanian Principalities, which he sold wholesale in Venice or Ancona. Pietro Galante would also credit, with due interest, of course, his business partners and other merchants of Constantinople¹¹ and would even take upon himself, in exchange for a commission, the responsibility to reclaim sums of money or goods owed by debtors to other merchants¹².

Pietro Galante was engaged, in association with Battista Vevelli, who owned a merchant ship, in trading Cretan wine which he then sent to Poland for sale; for example, in just one transport, in April 1589, Galante traded 20 barrels of Rethymno wine, out of which 18 containing various Malvasia wines and two dessert wines¹³.

In July 1587, the Greek Levantine Andronikos Andronikopoulos¹⁴ and the Catholic Levantine Ambrosio Panzani challenged Pietro Galante for the amount of 27,848 Ottoman

akçes (silver coins called *aspers*), in cash and goods, which his associate, the Cretan merchant Antonio Pandarota, had reclaimed from Moldavia's prince Peter the Lame, debtor of the two merchants of Constantinople¹⁵. In September 1590, Galante acted as representative for the Cretan Gabriele Achielli to reclaim 397 sequins from the latter's debtor, Antonios Perdicaris from Rethymno¹⁶.

On 5 September 1591, the abovementioned merchant Antonio Pandarota loaded on an Ottoman ship in Reni, a port in southern Moldavia, 2,000 tanned cattle hides, and shipped them to his associate in Constantinople, "*in Pera in mano di Messer Piero Galante Peroto*"¹⁷. The same Pandarota had shipped to Galante, from Moldavia's harbour of Galați, also in September of same year, using the services of an Ottoman merchant ship, a cargo consisting of 1,710 untanned cattle hides¹⁸. Pietro Galante was well-known at the Embassy of Venice in Constantinople, and he would often go to the headquarters of the *Serenissima's* diplomatic mission to sort out his businesses through notarial documents issued by the bailo's secretary, who served as notary for both Venetians and Levantines. Thus, in September 1594 Galante signed at the Venetian Embassy in Constantinople a notarized document by which he declared that, on 1 July 1592, he had received 21,000 Ottoman *akçes* from Giacomo from Corfu, an amount handed to him in the name of the heirs to his late business partner Antonio Pandarota¹⁹. It is also from the notarized documents issued by the Venetian bailo's secretary that we find out that, on 6 May 1602, Pietro Galante authorized his son-in-law, Michalis Kavakos from Chios, to request from the diplomatic representative of the *Serenissima* the translation from Greek into Italian of two documents in which the former prince of Moldavia, Peter the Lame, admitted his debts to third parties in the amount of 33,000 and respectively 93,000 Ottoman *akçes*²⁰. It is highly probable that Pietro Galante had bought the loan agreements from the creditors of the late Moldavian prince and that he intended to require the payment of these amounts, with due interest, by resorting to a Venetian court. The only living legitimate heiress of Peter the Lame, Princess Maria, had relocated to Venice, where she had wed the wealthy and powerful Venetian nobleman Polo Minio²¹.

We do not know whether Pietro Galante was married or not, nor do we know how many heirs he might have had. We only know that he had a daughter, either from a possible marriage or from an out-of-wedlock affair, who wed the merchant Michalis Kavakos²². Taking into account the fact that he had, in the early years of the seventeenth century, co-opted his son-in-law in the management of his business, it is highly likely that Pietro Galante was already old at that time. We could not yet identify any information regarding the Levantine merchant's death in the archival sources consulted, but we don't know a primary source issued after 1607²³ to mention anymore Pietro Galante, either alive or passed away. Bartolomeo Galante, *procuratore* of *Magnifica Comunità* in 1626, was probably Pietro Galante's younger brother, but it is uncertain if he was his full brother or they were brothers born by different mothers²⁴.

The Panzani

LITTLE IS known about the Panzani, a merchant family from Pera, probably descending from old Genoese colonists before the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans, a Catholic family of the *Magnifica Comunità*²⁵. From primary sources, preserved in a Florentine manuscripts collection, emerge the names of Battista Panzani and Lazzaro Panzani, both merchants resident in Pera of Constantinople²⁶. In all likelihood, they are not Florentines, but descendants of the Genoese colonists of Pera. Ambrosio Panzani²⁷ was, in October 1587, a business partner of Andronikos Andronikopoulos, and they both traded in Cretan wine sent for sale on the Polish market²⁸. Panzani would purchase untanned cattle hides from the Romanian Principalities, sending them afterwards to Ancona using merchant ships belonging to either Ragusans or Ottoman Christian subjects²⁹. Ambrosio Panzani's relationship with "Messer Pantaleone, son of the late Pietro Panzano Perotto," renders the hypothesis of their kinship highly plausible. From the sources of the time, it results that the two were, probably, cousins. Pantaleone Panzani was definitely a brother of "Antonio Panzan(i), q(uondam) Piero perotto," who was also engaged in trade activities³⁰. Pantaleone Panzani also traded in Cretan wine which transited through Moldavia towards Lviv and in the exports of raw materials from the Romanian Principalities to the markets of the Italian Peninsula³¹:

[22 September 1588] *Messer Pantaleo(ne), quondam Pietro Panzano Perotto, fa, ordina et constituise suoi veri, certi, legittimi et indubitati procuratori et commessi Messer Giulio Maffetti et Quintilio Gentili, habitanti in Ancona, a poter, così uniti come separati, ricever et ricuperare da Messer Paulo et da Messer Bartolomeo di Zorzi, mercanti Anconitani, ovvero da altri in mano de' quali si trovassero cuori [cuoi] doi mille segnati de questo segno Po, caricati da lui et per conto suo in questo porto di Constantinopoli sopra la nave ragusea nominata Santa Maria delle Grazie, patrone S(igno)r Nicolò di Vito, et cuori di Proilavo [Bn̄ila/Ibrail/Bpóila] mille et di Moncastro [Cetatea Albă/Akkerman] 440, segnati del medesimo soprascritto segno et contrassegnati con ferro nella coda di quest'altro segno 2, caricati pur da lui et per conto suo in questo porto sopra la nave ragusea nominata Santa Maria Maddalena, patrone Signor Marino di Nicolò di Stagno, tutti per Ancona si come disse apparer per le polizze di cargo di 8 et 12 gennaio 1588. Item detto Messer Pantaleo(ne) Panzano dà la medesima piena et libera autorità alli sopradetti Maffetti et Quintili di poter dimandar, ricevere et ricuperare dalli suddetti Messer Paulo et Messer Bartolomeo di Zorzi, ovvero qual si voglia altra prova in mano di chi fusse, la sua portione di XI botti di caviaro caricati per Ancona, segnati del soprascritto primo segno, sopra la saetia patignotta nominata San Giovanni Apocalipssi, patrone Signor Marino di Giorgio, come parimenti disse apparer per la polizza di cargo di 15 dicembre 1587, et dell'havuto et ricevuto far le debite quietanze et chiarezze, et comparer bisognando, per la ricuperatione di tutte le cose, presente dinanzi ogni Magistrato, Cancelleria et Ufficio, et far et operare tutte et cadauna di quelle cose intorno a quanto è sopradetto che potrebbe fare esso medesimo Messer Pantaleo(ne), se ivi fusse personalmente presente [...]*³².

In 1631 a certain Camozza Panzani is mentioned in a report of Apostolic Vicar Giovanni Mauro della Fratta³³.

The Gaglianos

IF THE primary sources are especially scarce and not truly conclusive in what the Panzani family is concerned, we have a lot more genealogical and socio-economic details about the Gagliano/da Gagliano family, one of the wealthiest and most influential Levantine families from Pera. The da Gaglianos were a high-ranking family hailing from Ragusa, descending from bankers and wealthy merchants³⁴. Brothers Domenico³⁵ and Benedetto³⁶ da Gagliano made a significant fortune from the maritime trade between Venice and Constantinople, but also between Ragusa and the Ottoman Empire or the Moldavian and Wallachian markets. Domenico da Gagliano had no direct offspring, while his brother, Benedetto da Gagliano, had two sons, Domenico and Edoardo (Odoardo), and a daughter, Caterina³⁷. Domenico da Gagliano took over the business of his homonymous uncle and established in Venice, where he was granted *de intus et extra* citizenship³⁸. As stated by Eric R. Dursteler, to whom we owe the only biographical profiles of the da Gagliano brothers in existence so far, Domenico da Gagliano became a wealthy and respectable Venetian merchant, one of the referents of the institutions of the Serenissima in regard to the trade relations between the city of St. Mark and the Ottoman Empire³⁹. Caterina da Gagliano wed “Matheca Salvago Dragomanno della Serenissima Signoria di Venetia” in Constantinople and had four sons: Ganesino, Zulian (Giuliano), Benedetto and Giovanni Battista⁴⁰.

Edoardo (Odoardo) da Gagliano (1557?–†1629?) settled in Constantinople around the early 1570s⁴¹. In the Ottoman capital city, he quickly rose to the leadership of the local Catholic Levantine community, distinguishing himself through impressive economic activism and ending up “among the most active and successful merchants in the late sixteenth century”⁴² Pera. Having left Ragusa for Constantinople, Edoardo da Gagliano remained a Latin-rite Ottoman subject until the end of his life, reaching the highest offices in the Catholic community of Constantinople: he was *priore* of *Magnifica Comunità* (1605, 1614, 1623)⁴³, *procuratore* of San Francesco Monastery (1584), and *procuratore* of the Holy Land (1603)⁴⁴. Edoardo was “an important landholder with numerous properties in both Galata and Vigne di Pera, including houses, shops, vineyards, and garden plots, which he rented to other Venetian merchants and locals”⁴⁵. Some of these “case, botteghe, vigne, terreni et stabili”⁴⁶ that he owned “in Pera et in queste parti di Costantinopoli” were part of his paternal bequest⁴⁷. Da Gagliano brothers also split between them the heritage of their uncle Domenico, who had died in Venice without heirs; the “estate, valued at 680,000 *akçes*, was divided with twenty percent going to Caterina, and the remainder split evenly between her two brothers”⁴⁸, Domenico and Edoardo.

The status of a merchant subject to the Serenissima was recognized for Edoardo da Gagliano—although he remained a subject of the Porte until his death—and, subsequently, he was elected member of the ruling bodies of the Venetian community of Constantinople:

as a member of the Council of Twelve⁴⁹, in “1598 he was elected to one of the most important offices in the merchant nation, *sindico* (assistant) to the *capo dei mercanti*”⁵⁰.

[13 April 1595, meeting of the Council of Twelve] [...] *il Consiglio di XII, a instantia delli deputati, per il naufragio della nave nominata San Giovanni Battista, fu letta l'infrascritta scrittura da essi deputati presentata:*

Illustrissimo Signor Baylo,

*dopo il naufragio della nave nominata San Giovanni Battista, patron Soffianò Meletti [Meletios Sofianos], sono state ricuperate molte lane, cuori et altre mercantie, coi danari che da noi, Edoardo da Gagliano et Francesco de Nicolò, come soprintendenti a quella ricuperatione sono stati previsti, le quali condotte in Gallipoli sono state ascuite et governate, e poste sotto la custodia del Reverendo Padre fra Zuanne [Giovanni] da Spalato, Console a quella Scalla, et perché si è nuovamente levato il Signor Camusa Chiaus, in compagnia del Signor Pietro D'Alba, adimandando imperiosamente che da noi, come soprintendenti a detta ricuperatione, li siano pagati li suoi nollì delle robbe ricuperate et altre loro domande, et desiderando noi, per beneficio delli interessati, dar fine a tali loro pretensioni in quella miglior maniera che sarà possibile, compariamo inanzi Vostra Signoria Illustrissima supplicandoLa che con l'autorità di questo Magnifico Consiglio ci sia data facoltà et indrizzo col quale habbiamo a terminar queste differentie, in quella maniera che sarà conosciuta migliore, a beneficio et malefficio di chi aspetta, et alla Sua buona gratia humilmente ci raccomandiamo [...]*⁵¹.

Edoardo da Gagliano, a respected “citizen of Pera,” resided in a house in the Galata *Sarayı* area⁵², a district inhabited by other Catholic Levantine families⁵³. Probably born in the 1550s, Edoardo da Gagliano wed in Constantinople Zoe Rallis, daughter of the merchant Diamantes Rallis, a Latin-rite Ottoman subject of Greek ancestry⁵⁴. They had three daughters, Isabetta, Libania, and Assanina, and a son, Domenico⁵⁵. The last two died at an early age, Assanina at the age of 7 and Domenico around the age of 10⁵⁶. Isabetta [Elisabetta] (c. 1590?–†?) “was married off by her father”⁵⁷ to Tommaso Navon, “a Latin-rite, Ottoman subject of Genoese ancestry who was a dragoman”⁵⁸ of the Venetian *bailaggio* in Constantinople. In an arranged marriage settled by Edoardo da Gagliano, Libania (c. 1597?–†?) wed an Orthodox Greek “gentleman” of Constantinople⁵⁹. Both Isabetta, who became a widow before 1640, and Libania had several children whose identities, however, remain unknown to us⁶⁰.

Maritime trading was the main economic activity pursued by Edoardo da Gagliano, who imported finished goods and luxury goods from the Italian Peninsula in order to sell them in Constantinople, while exporting raw materials and food products from Eastern Europe for the Italian markets. He also had a safe and fairly significant income from renting dwellings and shops, and also from lending money at interest to merchants or the staff of the Western embassies in Constantinople. In 1591 he had credited the Imperial diplomatic envoy Friedrich von Kragwitz (Khrekwiz)⁶¹ with an unknown sum of money. As the latter had not repaid him, more than twenty years later, in 1614, Gagliano felt it necessary to appoint dragoman Gaspar Graziani his representative in view of reclaiming his debt either amiably or by resorting to a court of justice⁶².

Edoardo da Gagliano was both a merchant and a ship-owner, owning ships used for the transportation of his own cargo or of that of his fellow merchants⁶³. One of these merchant ships was shipwrecked near the Dalmatian coast, close to the coastal town of Biograd na Moru (Croatia)⁶⁴. Known as the shipwreck of Gnalić, it was a Venetian merchant ship with a rounded hull (*nave tonda*) captured in the Mediterranean Sea by the Ottoman corsairs in 1571, and sold to Edoardo da Gagliano in Pera in 1581⁶⁵. The ship sunk at Gnalić in early November 1583, with all of its valuable cargo, which mostly consisted of luxury goods (glassware, silk, brocade, etc.)⁶⁶ which had to be offered to Murad III and to the Sultan's mother, Nûr Banû⁶⁷.

The division of the estate of Domenico da Gagliano, uncle of Edoardo, Domenico and Caterina Gagliano, led to dissent between the three siblings, but after the intervention of *bailo* Girolamo Cappello, they settled for the following agreement, i. e. to allot 20% of the goods to Caterina, and the remainder, in equal parts, to the other two siblings. The documents which set the details of the heritage were drafted at the chancery of the Venetian Embassy in Constantinople:

[28 January 1592] *Accordo fra Messer Matheca Selvago et Messer Edoardo Gagliano suo cognato [...] Essendo che Madonna Catherina, figliola del quondam Messer Bene(de)tto da Gagliano et moglie di Messer Matheca Selvago [Salvago], Dragomano della Serenissima Signoria di Venetia, si ritrova da certo tempo in qua in difficoltà con Messer Odoardo et Domenego da Gagliano suoi fratelli, per occasione della heredità del Messer Domenego da Gagliano loro cio [sic!] [zio], et l'una et l'altra parte desidera metter perpetuo fine ad ogni litigio, per conservar fra loro quell'amore ch'è debito alla congiuntione del sangue. De qui è che per dar conto a questa ottima loro dispositione, Messer Matheca Selvago, come commesso et procurator general della predetta Madonna Catherina sua moglie, [...] et Messer Odoardo da Gagliano, facendo per se et per Messer Domenego suo fratello [...], esistente in Venetia, [...] dà, cede et liberamente renuncia a Messer Matheca Selvago suo cognato, come commesso di Madonna Catherina sua consorte et loro sorella, tutte le case, botteghe, vigne, terreni et stabili che possiedono in Pera et in queste parti di Costantinopoli et sue pertinentie, così di ragione che furono del quondam Messer Domenego da Gagliano loro cio [sic!], della heredità del quale si tratta al presente, come di ragione del quondam Messer Benetto fu padre di loro Signori Gagliani, de i beni del quale non si tratta, ma loro fratelli si contentano di ciedergli volontariamente come cosa loro propria, i qual beni sono gli infra scritti vi detti: una bottega con la sua volta, posta nella strada della loggia appresso il Besesten [sic!] [Bedesten] nuovo di Pera; la casa grande di Pera, posta in contrada di S. Piero, nella qual habita il detto Messer Odoardo; un'altra casa posta nella detta contrà de San Piero, nella qual habita al presente il medico Ferrarese Hebreo; una casa nella contrà di S. Francesco di Pera, [dove] habita Giovanni Battista Tavegio Milanese; una vigna con due case appresso il Serraglio di Pera, et una vigna senza casa, posta presso la villa di S. Dimitri [...]. Di più, detto Messer Odoardo cede et liberamente renuncia et rimette al detto Messer Matheca, come commesso ut sopra, aspri dugento mille che hanno essi fratelli contato et esborsato in più partite a lui Messer Matheca, a Madonna Catherina sua consorte et a Messer Zanesino [Gianesino] et fratelli loro figlioli. De'*

*quali aspri 200 mila detto Messer Odoardo per li heredi et successori suoi, et così di Messer Domenego suo fratello, li fa fine et perpetua quitatione [...]. Oltre di ciò esso Messer Odoardo promette esborsar di contadi, in termine di anni doi prossimi, aspri ottanta mille di aspri centovinti per cec(c)hino, da esser dati alli figlioli di Messer Matheca per negociar a beneficio loro [...]. Dichiarando che il presente accordo debba esser ratificato qui da Madonna Catherina, moglie di Messer Matheca, et da' Messeri Zanesin et Zulian [Giuliano] loro figlioli, et in Venetia da Messer Bene(de)tto l'altro figliolo et fratello d'essi Messeri Zanesin et Zulian, per una parte, et per l'altra da Messer Domenego, fratello di Messer Odoardo, habitante in Venetia [...]*⁶⁸.

These are significant sources which illustrate the sizable bequest the siblings benefited of, the type of heritage they split, the allotment and the value of the goods and estates. The written agreements signed by Matheca Salvago, Caterina's husband, and his brothers-in-law, Edoardo da Gagliano and Domenico da Gagliano, as well as those signed by Ganesino, Giuliano and Benedetto Salvago and their uncle, Edoardo, indicate the high social rank and influence of the Gaglianos after their becoming members of the Catholic Levantine community of Constantinople, and the profitability of the maritime trading they conducted in a capitalist-type entrepreneurial system.

Conclusions

THESE THREE Levantine Constantinopolitan families, whose members resided in Pera, are illustrative examples of the economic dynamism and versatility of their professional milieu. Galante, Panzani, and da Gagliano were able merchants who took advantage of their connections with transportation networks and commercial agents that allowed for a quick management of information flows and provided them with direct access to the Ottoman market, as well as to the Romanian Principalities and to Poland. Their access to the Black Sea and to the ports of the maritime Danube permitted these Catholic-Levantines, who were Ottoman subjects, to transport their cargoes, mainly barrels of Cretan wine, close to their final destination, the Polish market, by transiting Moldavia on the land routes going from the area of the mouths of the Danube to Lviv. This way of reducing shipping costs, by favoring the sea routes, was the key to the success of these Levantine merchants, who after the late sixteenth century, when the Porte limited the entry of foreign ships in the Black Sea, continued to have access, along maritime routes, to the raw materials and the foodstuffs of Eastern Europe. By their involvement in commercial ventures, these three families became more prosperous than the Constantinopolitan Catholic families whose members were employed as interpreters or clerks at the Western embassies from the Ottoman capital. The Greek and the Italian Levantines played a major role in connecting the foreign trade of Eastern Europe to the medium and long distance maritime trade, acting, during the sixteenth century, but especially in the next two centuries, as the dynamic, capable and professional human factor who managed to overcome the Porte's barriers in the way of free trade in the Black Sea and on the Lower Danube. At the same time,

they also contributed to introduce capitalist instruments in the local economy of this part of Europe, representing that part of the bourgeoisie who promoted institutional modernization, economic and social progress. □

Notes

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2. Fani Mavroidi, *Πρόσωπα και δραστηριότητες τό β ' μισό τοῦ 16^{ου} αιώνα*, in *Δωδώνη. Ιστορία και Αρχαιολογία*, 1, 1998, p. 100, 144.
3. Louis Mitler, *The Genoese in Galata: 1453–1682*, in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1979, p. 71-91; Geo Pitarino, *The Genoese in Pera – Turkish Galata*, in *Mediterranean Historical Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1986, p. 63-85.
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Abstract

Three Families of Levantine Merchants from Constantinople in the Late Sixteenth Century International Maritime Trade in the Northwestern Black Sea and Lower Danube Areas

The Levantine merchants from Constantinople, well known as interpreters and clerks working for the Western embassies in the Ottoman capital, were also as merchants involved in international maritime ventures. They enjoyed an easier access to the Black Sea, as a Latin-rite Ottoman subject of the Porte, associated with Muslim merchants or used the vessels of Ottoman ship-owners in order to reach the ports of the maritime Danube, transit centers for goods sent for sale to the Polish market. The Galantes, Panzanis, and Gaglianos were among the most important Levantine merchants who controlled the maritime trade routes between Constantinople and the ports of the mouths of the Danube in the second half of the sixteenth century. This study therefore aims to outline their professional activity, as they were part of the community of Levantine merchants from Pera who chose the business environment, unlike other Levantine families who continued to serve the Western embassies in Constantinople.

Keywords

Levantines, Constantinople, trade, Black Sea, 16th century, early modern economy