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# OTTOMANS IN ITALY. OTTOMAN COMMUNITIES AND DIPLOMATIC-CONSULAR NETWORKS IN SOUTHERN ITALY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

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ABSTRACT: *This article analyses Ottoman mobility in the Italian peninsula through the development of the imperial consular network and the transformation of migrant communities in the second half of the nineteenth century. Through an analysis of Italian and Ottoman diplomatic and consular reports, this article demonstrates the increase of the Italo-Ottoman cross-migrations and the transformation of that cross-migration and the Ottoman communities in the Italian peninsula over the course of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Studying Ottoman and Italian diplomatic and consular sources concerning the existence of Ottoman communities and consuls, particularly in southern Italy, allows for a fresh perspective on the relations between these two states, and the conditions of Ottoman migrants, filling a hitherto little-studied period of Italo-Ottoman relations.*

KEYWORDS: *Diplomatic-consular networks, Migrants, Ottoman Empire, Italian peninsula, nineteenth century.*

OTTOMANI IN ITALIA. COMUNITÀ OTTOMANE E RETI DIPLOMATICO-CONSOLARI NELL'ITALIA MERIDIONALE DEL XIX SECOLO

SOMMARIO: *Questo articolo analizza la mobilità sociale ottomana nella penisola italiana attraverso lo sviluppo della rete consolare imperiale e la trasformazione delle comunità migranti nella seconda metà del XIX secolo. Attraverso l'analisi di rapporti diplomatici e consolari italiani e ottomani, l'articolo evidenzia l'aumento delle migrazioni incrociate italo-ottomane e la trasformazione sia di questi flussi migratori sia delle comunità ottomane nella penisola italiana tra il XVIII e l'inizio del XIX secolo. Lo studio delle fonti diplomatiche e consolari ottomane e italiane, in particolare riguardo alla presenza di comunità e consoli ottomani nel Mezzogiorno, offre una nuova prospettiva sulle relazioni tra i due stati e sulle condizioni dei migranti ottomani, colmando una lacuna in un periodo finora poco studiato delle relazioni italo-ottomane.*

PAROLE CHIAVE: *Reti diplomatico-consolari, Migranti, Impero ottomano, Penisola italiana, XIX secolo.*

## Introduction

In his 1868 painting titled *Eleonora Pimentel Fonseca condotta al patibolo*[1], the Neapolitan painter Giuseppe Boschetto portrays the execution of the patriot and journalist Eleonora Fonseca Pimentel in

* The introduction and the first section (Expanding the Ottoman consular network in Italy) are by Giorgio Ennas. The second section (Consuls without community? The Calabrian Case) and the conclusion are by Consuelo Emilj Malara.

** Abbreviations used: Asto (Archivio di Stato di Torino - Sezione Corte); Asdmae (Archivio Storico-Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri - Roma); Boa (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi - Istanbul).

[1] G. Boschetto, *La Pimentel Conducted to the Gallows*, Napoli, 1868.


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1799[2]. In this canvas, Boschetto also included an element that he considered typical of the Neapolitan cityscape in the mid-nineteenth century, a man in Ottoman dress, presumably a sailor, walking away from the execution scene. Although the common vulgate often does not consider the Ottomans among the communities that frequented Italian ports in the nineteenth century, nowadays the work of numerous historians such as Mathieu Grenet, Maria Pia Pedani, and Francesca Trivellato, have highlighted the multi-ethnic demographic that characterised Mediterranean ports throughout the Early and Late Modern Age[3].

While between the Middle and the Early Modern ages communities of Christian states such as those of the Italian maritime republics had long been established in the main coastal centres along the Mediterranean shores, Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of Islamic political entities, such as the Ottoman Empire and the Sultanate of Morocco, had also moved toward Christian empires, principalities, and kingdoms[4]. These voluntary or forced migratory movements were largely limited to commerce, diplomatic missions, military conquest, colonisation, and enslavement through piracy, captivity, conversion, and slave manumission[5]. These populations from Islamic to Christian political entities and vice-versa contributed to the formation of groups that differed from the host and origin communities in religion, language, and culture, until the beginning of the nineteenth century,

[2] A. Barricelli, *Giuseppe Boschetto*, in Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani, Vol. 13 (1971) «https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giuseppe-boschetto_(Dizionario-Biografico)».

[3] G. Calafat, M. Grenet, *Méditerranées: Une histoire des mobilités humaines (1492-1750)*, Editions Points, Paris, 2023; M.P. Pedani, *Venezia Porta d'Oriente*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2010; F. Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2012.

[4] K. Bekkaoui, *Moroccans in Europe Fassi Merchants come to Manchester*, The Moroccan Cultural Studies Centre, Fez, 2016.

[5] See N. Zemon Davis, *La doppia vita di Leone l'Africano*, Editori Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2008; E.L. Menchinger, *The First of the Modern Ottomans: The Intellectual History of Ahmed Vasif*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2017; G. Casale, *Prisoner of the Infedels. The Memoir of an Ottoman Muslim in Seventeenth-Century Europe*, University of California Press, Oakland, 2021; L. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993; S. Bono, *Schiavi. Una storia mediterranea (XVI-XIX secolo)*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2016; J. Dakhlia, *Les Musulmans dans l'histoire dell'Europe*, 2 vol., Albin Michel, Paris, 2011-2013; G. Ricci, *«Populi la più parte circonciso», Ariosto in Ferrara and the Muslim World of his Time*, in M. Casari, M. Preti, M. Wyatt (eds.), *Ariosto and the Arabs. Contexts for the Orlando Furioso*, I Tatti – The Harvard University Centre for Italian Renaissance Studies, Florence, 2022, pp. 215-231.


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when the rise of nation states turned them into national communities abroad.

One of the more interesting and best-studied cases is that of the Greek-Orthodox communities from Ottoman territories, which began to move from the time of the conquest of Constantinople (1453) and continued to be enriched with new members throughout the Early Modern Age, creating heterogeneous and stratified communities in the coastal areas of the Mediterranean[6]. Due to their status as Ottoman subjects, that in many cases «constitute a resource, if not an opportunity», placing them outside European local conflicts and enjoying their «precious "neutral" status», these communities settled and lived in major and minor Mediterranean city-ports, such as Venice, Civitavecchia, Naples, Livorno, Trieste, Marseilles, and Ancona, in order to manage the Empire's trade with their countries of residence[7].

Thus, it is possible to say that, at least until the first half of the nineteenth century, Ottoman communities in Europe were predominantly made up of non-Muslims, although there were always examples of Muslim traders, sailors, and merchants, particularly in important commercial cities, like Livorno and Marseilles. A significant change on the Ottoman side came with the *Tanzimat*, or period of reforms, which led to an increasing number of Muslims and non-Muslims either migrating or travelling to and through Europe. Since the reigns of Sultan Selim III (1789-1807) and Mahmud II (1808-39), young Muslims, like the future statesman Mustafa Reşid Pasha, began to regularly travel to major European capitals as students, secretaries, or diplomats[8]. However, the intense migration of Ottoman Muslim citizens only occurred following the reforms promoted by Sultan Abdülmecid I (1839-61) between the 1840s and 1850s. These early examples of a new type of Muslim migrant were often scions of the privileged classes who, with government support, travelled to major European capitals, such as Paris, London, and Berlin, where they learned the local languages, becoming intermediaries between the Sublime Porte and European governments. With the reforms,

[6] D. Abulafia, *The Great Sea. A Human History of the Mediterranean*, Penguin Books, London-New York, 2012; M. Grenet, *Entangled allegiances: Ottoman Greeks in Marseille and the shifting ethos of Greek-ness (c. 1790 - c. 1820)*, «Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies», 36/1 (2012), p. 58; M. Dogo, *Merchants Between Two Empires. The Ottoman Colonies of Trieste in the XVIII Century*, «Études balkaniques», 32-33/3-4 (1996-7), p. 200.

[7] M. Grenet, *Entangled allegiances* cit., p. 60.

[8] R. Kaynar, *Mustafa Reşit Paşa ve Tanzimat* [Mustafa Reşit Paşa and the Tanzimat], Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara, 2010; O. Ozavci, *Dangerous Gifts. Imperialism, Security, and Civil Wars in the Levant, 1798-1864*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2021.


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however, the number of labour migrants with little or no income also saw an increase. Nevertheless, the majority of Ottoman migrants to Europe continued to be Orthodox, Catholics, Jews, as well as Armenians who travelled because of their family and religious ties, mainly to take care of their trade with Europe.

These migrants typically came from centres like İzmir, Kotor, and the Ionian Islands, but «also came from every corner of [the Ottoman Empire]-in-Europe and [the Ottoman Empire]-in-Asia, from "Seraj in [Ottoman] Bosnia", as well as from Trebinje in Herzegovina, from the Ragusa tributary vassal of the Ottomans, from Epirus and the Peloponnese, from Crete and the Archipelago, from [Constantinople] and even from Anatolian Brussa»[9]. Although a rich historiography concerning European communities in the Ottoman Empire and vice versa had already existed[10], in recent years the subject of Ottoman communities in Europe has become highly productive and of growing importance in historiography, as it was one of the phenomena behind the great diplomatic-consular expansion of the Empire between the 1830s and 1890s. Although historians such as Grenet have emphasised the importance of Livorno and Trieste as case studies, archival research has revealed how other centres of the Italian peninsula were popular destinations for Ottoman communities and trade in the Mediterranean, both because of the centrality of their ports and the well-established communities that these migrants found in the Peninsula's main port-centres. And it is partly due to this special bond that the development of the Ottoman diplomatic-consular network in the states of the Peninsula and, later, in the Kingdom of Italy emerged.

For these reasons, this article analyses the development of imperial diplomatic and consular networks in the Italian peninsula between the first and the second half of the nineteenth century. Simultaneously, it describes the nature and composition of Ottoman communities in different regions of the Italian peninsula, especially in the south, where a well-structured consular network served different types of Ottoman citizens as well as the interests of the imperial state. This article will focus in particular on the consuls and Ottoman communities of Naples and Cagliari, and on the peculiar case of the

[9] M. Dogo, *Merchants Between Two Empires* cit., p. 204.

[10] See A. Yumul, F. Dikkaya, *Avrupa Mı Levanten Mi?* [Europe or Levantine?], Bağlam Yayıncılık, Istanbul, 2006; A. De Gasperis, R. Ferrazza (eds.), *Gli Italiani di Istanbul. Figure, Comunità e Istituzioni dalle Riforme alla Repubblica 1839-1923*, Edizioni della Fondazione Agnelli, Turin, 2007; A. D'Alessandri, *Il Quarantotto e l'attività consolare del Regno di Sardegna nei porti danubiani e del Mediterraneo orientale*, in M. Aglietti, M. Grenet, F. Jesné (eds.), *Consoli e consolati italiani dagli stati preunitari al fascismo (1802-1945)*, École française de Rome, Rome, 2020, pp. 117-31.


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imperial consular network in Calabria. In doing so, this article will highlight the extension and specialisation achieved by the imperial consular system in different areas of southern Italy, the nature of the local Ottoman communities, and their ability to adapt to very different geographical and social scenarios.

## Expanding the Ottoman Consular Network in Italy

Prior to the eighteenth century, the Ottomans generally sent extraordinary ambassadors, known as *sefir* or *elçi*, to Europe with particular missions[11]. From the sixteenth century, as highlighted by Mehmet A. Yalçınkaya, Ottoman ambassadors were classified as *büyük elçi* (ambassador) or *orta elçi* (envoys extraordinary or plenipotentiary minister) depending on the importance of their mission[12]. The *nameres* were other officials whose duty essentially consisted of carrying special letters named *name-i hümayun*. In addition, if envoys carried a message of secondary importance, they were given the title of *çavus*. For a figure like that of the European consul, however, we will have to wait until the eighteenth century to see its emergence in Ottoman diplomacy.

Mirroring the consular systems of the Early Modern Age, Ottoman consuls could be divided between those appointed by the Porte and following specific orders and instructions to govern and protect Ottoman communities abroad, and those elected by local communities of merchants to protect their interests. In return, these consuls were paid through consular fees according to the importance of the local port and the need to maintain an apparatus and demeanour commensurate with the courts with which they had to establish and maintain relations[13].

[11] Regarding the existence and expansion of the Ottoman consular network see also: C.V. Findley, *The Foundation of the Ottoman Foreign Ministry: The Beginning of Bureaucratic Reform under Selim III and Mahmud II*, «International Journal of Middle East Studies» 3/4 (1972), pp. 388-416; A.I. Bağış, *Osmanlı ticaretinde gayri müslimler: kapitülasyonlar, avrupa tüccarları, beratlı tüccarlar, hayriye tüccarları, (1750-1839)* [Non-Muslims in Ottoman trade: capitulations, European merchants, merchants with certificates, Muslims merchants (1750-1839)], Turhan Kitabevi, Ankara, 1983; G. Işiksel, *Les méandres d'une pratique peu institutionnalisée: la diplomatie ottomane, XVe-XVIIIe siècle*, «Monde(s). Histoire espaces relations», 5 (2014), pp. 43-55.

[12] M.A. Yalçınkaya, *The First Permanent Ottoman Embassy in Europe. The Embassy of Yusuf Agah Efendi to London (1793-1797)*, The Isis Press, Istanbul, 2010, p. 22.

[13] M. Aglietti, *Lo Stato oltreconfine. L'intermediazione dei consoli all'estero tra rappresentanza e amministrazione*, in L. Antonielli, A. Buono, S. Levati (eds.), *Intermediari. Modi, figure e istituti del collegamento tra autorità centrale e comunità locali*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, forthcoming in 2025.


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As aptly pointed out by Grenet, even if the institution of Ottoman consuls in Trieste and Vienna between 1726 and 1732 are generally well-known to historians, the effective origins and nature of this institution in the time of Selim III are not entirely clear, and only recently has begun to be studied in more details. Carter V. Findley notes how Selim III developed a «system of permanent diplomatic representation in response to both the needs of his own reform program and the larger international situation»[14]. The new permanent ambassadors were appointed for a period of three years and would employ a staff that included a chief secretary (*sır katibi*), a first and second interpreter (*tercüman-ı evvel ve sanı*), an attaché (*ateşe*), a treasurer (*hazinedar*), and some «young men [*kişizadeleri*] whose duties would include the learning of languages and other subjects useful in the service of the State»[15]. In addition, Selim III's reign also saw the establishment of a consular corps «to attend to the commercial interests of his subjects abroad»[16]. While ambassadors and *chargès d'affaires* (from 1800) would be sent to the main European capitals, such as Berlin, Paris, London, and Vienna, *konsolos* would be appointed in cities «in which Orthodox Christian subjects of the sultan» were already known to have been active in trade, such as Malta, Messina, Naples, Genoa, Marseille, and Alicante[17].

Not much is known, however, about the first decade of Ottoman consular history because consular positions only began to be regularly recorded around the year 1802, and the specific titles and jurisdictions of offices like *konsolos* or *şehbender* remain a matter of some debate[18]. From the sources emerge the «Mediterranean dimension» of the imperial consular system; its composition of mainly «merchants, usually Greeks, already resident in the places of their jurisdiction»; its «almost exclusively mercantile profile»; and «its recruitment from the [E]mpire's minorities», especially within the Greek-speaking communities[19].

Between 1792 and 1807, numerous viceconsulates and consulates were inaugurated in Mediterranean ports, including Trieste, Marseille,

[14] C.V. Findley, *The Foundation of the Ottoman Foreign Ministry* cit., p. 396. See also M. Grenet, *La fabrique communautaire. Les Grecs de Venise, Livourne et Marseille, 1770-1840*, École française de Rome, Rome, 2016, pp. 387-481.

[15] Ibidem; M.A. Yalçınkaya, *The First Permanent* cit., p. 26. See also M.A. Yalçınkaya, *Osmanlı zihniyetindeki değişimin göstergesi olarak sefaretnamelerin kaynak defteri* [The source register of sefâretnâmes as an indicator of the change in Ottoman mentality] «Otam» sayı 7 (1996), pp. 319-38.

[16] C.V. Findley, *The Foundation of the Ottoman Foreign Ministry* cit., p. 396.

[17] Ivi, p. 397; *M.A. Yalçınkaya, The First Permanent* cit., p. 27.

[18] M. Grenet, *La fabrique communautaire* cit., p. 451.

[19] Ivi, pp. 451-2. See also M. Grenet, *Al servizio del Gran Signore? Niccolò Petrococchino e Angelo Cazzaiti, consoli ottomani a Livorno, c. 1807-1824*, in A. Addobbati, M. Aglietti (eds.), *La città delle nazioni: Livorno e i limiti del cosmopolitismo (1566-1834)*, Pisa University Press, Pisa, 2016, p. 376.


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Malta, Alicante, Lisbon, Barcelona, and particularly in the Italian peninsula and islands, such as Palermo, Messina, Otranto, Naples, Livorno, Genoa, Venice, and Ancona[20]. One consulate general in Messina, a consulate in Palermo and viceconsulates in Trapani, Agrigento, Gela, Siracusa, Augusta, Messina, Milazzo, Palermo, and in the Lipari Island[21]. Selected for their strategic location for trade or due to the presence of significative Ottoman communities, these consulates were expected to guarantee the protection of resident subjects, assist those passing through, facilitate the conduct of their affairs, and obtain official recognition by local authorities[22]. They were also responsible for the accounting for Ottoman-flagged ships and their crews, and were responsible for issuing passports to imperial subjects, as well as defending the interests of the Ottoman state[23].

For Grenet, the importance of this early imperial consular network should not be overemphasised, since the establishment of such consulates seemed to respond to the short-term necessities of the Ottoman merchants and captains in each locality. In any case, the existence of this consular network testifies to the importance of the Italian peninsula for Ottoman communities and the imperial government, and the origins of diplomatic-consular relations in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In fact, the offices of Trieste, Livorno, and Genoa played a particularly relevant role in the activities and careers of early Ottoman consuls such as Nikolaos Petrokokkinos, also known as Nicola Pietrococchino, and Aggelos Katsaïtis, as Angelo Cazzaiti, who between 1807 and 1847 had a career typical of the profile of a modern European-style consular corps[24]. These cities were not only important centres of trade and home to Ottoman communities, but were also close to important political centres such as Turin and Florence.

In theory, these figures would lend their experience and time to the protection of Ottoman communities present in the Peninsula, and, in

[20] Regarding the Italian case, see F. Buonocore, *Consoli e procuratori di Tripoli e di Tunisi nelle Due Sicilie (e cenni ad altri Consoli o Agenti di Paesi musulmani nell'epoca precoloniale*, «Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto Italo-Africano», 31/2 (1976), pp. 257-76; A. Silvestro, *Notizie sui consolati esteri nelle Marche pontificie nell'800*, «Quaderni dell'Archivio storico arcivescovile di Fermo», Vol. 13 (1992), pp. 71-93, e Vol. 15 (1993), pp. 66-110; M. Grenet, *Al servizio del Gran Signore?* cit., pp. 373-93.

[21] Id., *La fabrique communautaire* cit., p. 452.

[22] Id., *Al servizio del Gran Signore?* cit., p. 377.

[23] Id., *La fabrique communautaire* cit., pp. 451-2.

[24] Ivi, pp. 456-64. See also M. Grenet, *Al servizio del Gran Signore?* cit., p. 374; R.S. Giachino, G. Mola di Nomaglio, *La legazione sarda presso la Sublime Porta dal 1815 al 1849*, in A. De Gasperis, R. Ferrazza (eds.), *Gli Italiani di Istanbul. Figure, Comunità e Istituzioni dalle Riforme alla Repubblica 1839-1923*, Edizioni della Fondazione Agnelli, Turin, 2007, p. 298.


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addition, seek to maintain positive diplomatic ties between the imperial government and the various Italian states. At the same time, however, these figures devoted their efforts to a career «driven by profit and honours»[25], typical of modern consular corps. As noted by Marcella Aglietti regarding Italian and Spanish cases, Ottoman consuls were still essentially hybrid and controversial figures «long undefined in terms of competences and prerogatives, heterogeneous in scope, legitimacy and effectiveness»[26]. Despite the professionalism showed by figures like Nicola Allegretti in Genoa or William James Smith in Livorno, sources suggest that the imperial consular corps in Italy remained predominantly made up of figures similar to those of the honorary consuls of the Early Modern Age.

Despite the creation of a new and professional diplomatic corps by the Porte in the Italian peninsula between the 1830s and 1840s by providing new diplomatic personnel an education in centres such as the *Tercüme Odası*, or Chamber of Translation, Ottoman consuls in the Peninsula remained members of the local notabilities who lent their services to the Porte in exchange for a salary and tax privileges. In this, they did not follow the trend taking place in a number of European countries, where «it was no longer the needs of mercantile nations that determined priorities and the perimeter of the consular role, […] [but] the perspective […] shifted to that of the nation-state as a whole, approaching in this sense the ambassadorial scope that had always characterised ambassadors»[27]. In summary, despite professional diplomatic figures such as Jean Konstantin Alexandre Othon Karaca Bey, who were for longer or shorter periods appointed as consuls or consuls general in cities like Venice and Brindisi, from the documents analysed so far, the professionalisation process of the Ottoman consular career seems to have been rather limited[28].

The 1850s saw the Ottoman diplomatic corps in the Italian peninsula developed remarkably, due to international events that would revolutionize the importance of the Sardinian-Italian state for the Porte. In fact, the Crimean War (1853-6) and the Italian wars of independence (1848/9-1859-1866) strengthened diplomatic and commercial relations between the Ottoman and Sardinian-Italian governments[29].

[25] Ivi, pp. 461-2.
[26] M. Aglietti, *Lo Stato oltreconfine* cit., (forthcoming).
[27] Ibidem.
[28] M. Aglietti, *Le gouvernement des informations. L'évolution du rapport entre état et institution consulaire au milieu du XVIII^e siècle*, «Cahiers de la Méditerranée», 83 (2011), pp. 297-307.
[29] G. Ennas, *Global Criminal Networks in the Eastern Mediterranean. Illicit connections between Constantinople, the Italian peninsula and New York (1855-1861)*, in E. Blackthorne-O'Barr, B. Çağlar (eds.), *Levantines of the Ottoman World: Communities, Identities, and Cultures*, Ibn Khaldun University Press, Adapazarı, 2024, p. 67.


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Prior to 1857, communication between the Savoyard monarchy and the Porte primarily took place through the Royal Legation of Constantinople and the Consulate General of Genoa. However, following the Crimean War and Sardinia's new position as one of the guarantor powers of the integrity of the Ottoman state, in 1857 a resident minister, Mehmed Cemil Pasha, was sent to Turin for the first time, with the task of establishing more stable relations between the two allies[30].

The Crimean War marked a significant increase in diplomatic relations between the Porte and the Kingdom of Sardinia. Despite Cemil Pasha's brief tenure as resident minister in Turin, after a short interim period under Jean Musurus, the role of *chargé d'affaires* and plenipotentiary minister in Turin was conferred on Count Luciano Antonio Chimelli di Marina, known by his Ottoman name of Rüstem Bey[31]. The son of an Italian father and a Greek mother, Rüstem Bey held the position of *chargé d'affaires* and plenipotentiary minister in the Kingdom of Sardinia-Italy from 1857 to 1870. From this position, he not only maintained relations between the Kingdom of Sardinia-Italy and both the Vatican and the Sublime Porte, but also strengthened the Ottoman consular network in the Italian peninsula[32].

In fact, it was through Rüstem Bey's direct intervention that the Ottoman consular network in Italy developed a well-structured and diversified system. At its peak, it included one legation-embassy in Turin, Florence, and finally Rome, which guided and coordinated diplomatic and consular activities on Italian soil. Moreover, approximately a dozen consulates general and around thirty honorary and viceconsulates were created in the main, intermediate and minor city-ports of the Italian peninsula and the major islands. These consulates and vice-consulates were located in the following Italian centres: Alghero, Ancona, Augusta, Bari, Barletta, Bologna, Bordighera, Bosa, Brindisi, Cagliari, Carloforte, Castellamare di Stabia, Catania, Catanzaro, Civitavecchia, Crotone, Florence, Genoa, Girgenti, Licata, Livorno, Marsala, Messina, Milan, Milazzo, Naples, Pachino, Palermo, Pizzo, Portoferraio, Ravenna, Reggio Calabria, Sanremo, Sassari, Savona, Sciacca, Siracusa, La Spezia, Terranova, Torre Annunziata, Trapani, Venice, and Ventimiglia[33]. In many of these centres,

[30] Asto, Lettere Ministri Esteri, Porta Ottomana, 1843-1859, dispatch without number, the plenipotentiary minister, Mehmed Cemil Pasha, to the minister of foreign affairs, Luigi Cibrario, Turin, 6 February 1856.

[31] C. Morel des Boullets, *From an Eastern Embassy: Memories of London, Berlin and the East*, Cornell University Press, New York 2018, Kindle edition, pos. 1200.

[32] Asto, Lettere Ministri Esteri, Porta Ottomana, 1843-1859, dispatch 1, the *chargé d'affaires* ad interim, Edhem Pasha, to the minister of foreign affairs, Camillo Benso Conte di Cavour, Turin, 23 February 1857.

[33] Asdmae, Moscati VI, Archivio Personale Turchia, Dossier 43.


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Ottoman consuls shared a space with consuls representing the interests of other European states such as Great Britain and France[34]. The majority of these consulates and viceconsulates were led by agents loyal to the imperial government and paid for this position. These officials could be Europeans, like the British William J. Smith, who worked in Livorno and Florence; Ottoman subjects appointed to this duty, like Seraphine Menassé in Milan; and Italian citizens, like Giuseppe Sanjust in Cagliari.


Fig. 1 - Map of the Italian peninsula showing the Italian cities where there was an Ottoman consulate. The map also shows Turin, the first capital of the Kingdom of Italy and the seat of the first Ottoman Embassy in the Kingdom of Italy[35].

[34] L. Müller, *Consuls, Corsairs, and Commerce. The Swedish Consular Service and Long-distance Shipping, 1720-1815*, Uppsala Universitet, Uppsala, 2024.

[35] This article and the map do not include the consular networks of Ottoman semi-autonomous entities, such as the Beylicate of Tunis, whose informal networks were not officially recognised by the Porte and would merit a separate discussion and possible comparison with the Ottoman one.


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## The Ottoman Communities and the Southern "Choice"

For centuries, the Adriatic coast and the southern part of the Italian peninsula were two of the main settlement locations for populations from the territories of the western Balkans conquered by the Ottoman Empire[36]. Generally, these communities were typically composed of individuals and families of Orthodox Christians involved in the military or in trade. As successive waves of migration overlapped, these groups became increasingly broader and more stratified, creating groups with complex identities that, until the Greek War of Independence (1821-32), were divided between those who considered themselves natives and Ottoman subjects. Nevertheless, Ottoman documents give us an idea of the changes that occurred in the first half of the nineteenth century in the nature of the communities living in the Peninsula, and in particular in the Kingdom of Sardinia, and then Italy.

With the Greek War of Independence, the members of these communities were further divided between the natives, the Ottomans, and those who chose to identify with the new Greek nationality[37]. In this way, internal tensions within these communities grew. This shift in identity was not the only significant change during this period. A number of non-Christian communities, such as those of Ottoman Muslims and Jews migrating to the Italian states, also saw a rise. It was no longer only Orthodox commercial communities in strategic city-ports, but also Muslims, Jews, and Armenians. Some of the members of these communities were not included in the ancient resident groups and, in some cases, were so «destitute» that they required a subsidy from the Porte to survive or faced being repatriated.

For example, in 1851 Ottoman subjects arrived in Genoa from various centres, such as Vincent Chaurvilli, Ahmed ibn Abdullah Efendi, Bahaz Moldahaz Jacob, and Bezco Isaac from Constantinople; Judas Lichi, Jean Neuhertz, Abdullah Ben Nouzi, and Saul Nissim from İzmir; Mathieu Pipperi and Demetrius Isai from Scio, and many

[36] Regarding Ottoman-Muslim communities in Europe, see B. Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, W.W. Norton & Co., New York-London, 1982; B. Lewis, *Legal and Historical Reflections on the Position of Muslim Populations under Non-Muslim Rule*, in B. Lewis, D. Schnapper (eds.), *Muslims in Europe*, Pinter, London-New York, 1994, pp. 1-18; J. Dakhlia, *Les Musulmans dans l'histoire de l'Europe*, 2 vol., Paris, Albin Michel, 2011-13; L. Valensi, *Stranieri Familiari. Musulmani in Europa (XVI-XVIII secolo)*, Einaudi, Turin, 2013.

[37] Regarding the Ottoman identity of these communities, see M. Dogo, *Merchants Between Two Empires* cit., pp. 85-96; M. Grenet, *Entangled allegiances* cit., pp. 56-71.


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others[38]. In addition to their different ethnic-religious affiliations, this renewed Ottoman migration to the Italian states seems characterised by very heterogeneous working activities, including servants, painters, merchants, sailors, tailors, and labourers. In any case, not all Italian ports and provinces where imperial consuls or viceconsuls were present appear to have had a substantial or, indeed, any Ottoman community, presenting a significant diversification of activities according to the consul's area of residence.

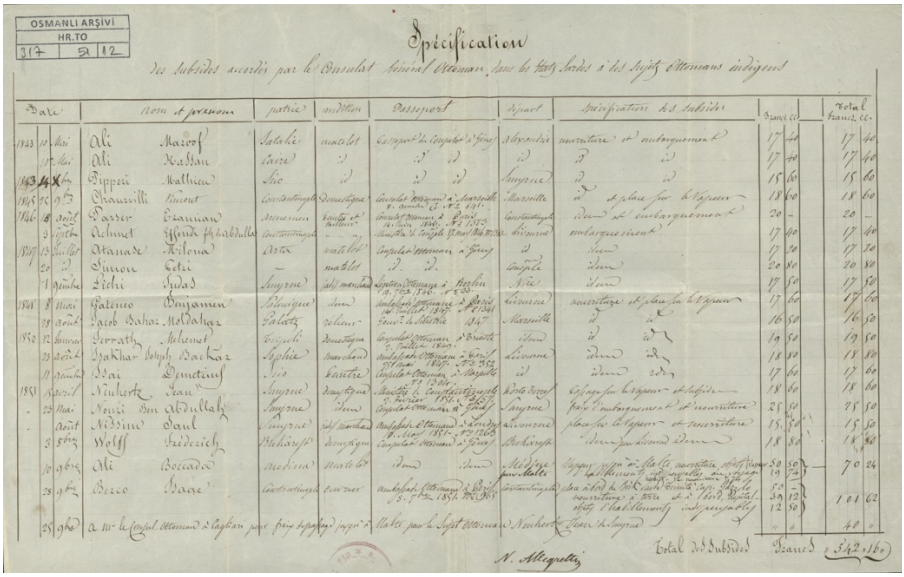


Fig. 2 - Specification of subsidies granted by the Ottoman Consulate General in the Sardinian states to indigenous Ottoman subjects.
Source: Boa, Hariciye Nezareti, Tercüme Odası, 317, 51, 12.

In comparison with the northern provinces, the southern Italian provinces such as Campania, Calabria, Puglia, and Sicily presented an extensive Ottoman consular network. It included both ports involved in large-scale Mediterranean trade like Naples, Messina, Palermo, and those focused on local traffic, such as Augusta, Bari, Barletta, Brindisi, Castellamare di Stabia, Catania, Catanzaro, Crotone, Gir-

[38] Boa, Hariciye Nezareti, Tercüme Odası, 317, 51, 12, 1, Specification of subsidies granted by the Ottoman Consulate General in the Sardinian states to indigenous Ottoman subjects, annexed dispatch without number, the consul general, Nicola Allegretti, to the minister of foreign affairs, Emin Âli Pasha, Genoa, 10 December 1851.


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genti, Licata, Marsala, Milazzo, Pachino, Pizzo, Reggio Calabria, Sciacca, Siracusa, La Spezia, Terranova, Torre Annunziata, and Trapani. This extension was probably due to a number of varying factors, such as: their commercial importance for maritime traffic between the eastern and western Mediterranean; the presence of Ottoman citizens or communities that had migrated through the Adriatic and Aegean seas; and, finally, the difficult practicability of roads in some of these provinces, and the consequent importance of cabotage navigation between these different city-ports, which made the presence of consuls and viceconsuls essential for imperial vessels.

Stable diplomatic relations between southern Italy and the Ottoman Empire date back to 1740 with the signature of a Treaty of Commerce and Friendship between Sultan Mahmud I (1730-54) and King Charles VII (1734-59 as king of Naples, and 1759-88 as Charles III of Spain)[39]. Negotiated and signed in Constantinople, this treaty consisted of 21 articles and a conclusion, that aimed to establish peace and free trade between the two Mediterranean states. The Spanish-Neapolitan king sought to protect the coasts of the Kingdom of Naples against raids from the Barbary corsairs[40], and to increase trade between his Italian provinces and the Ottoman Empire. Meanwhile, Sultan Mahmud I wished to expand existing trade with such an important partner in the Mediterranean and guarantee imperial protection to the well-established Ottoman community residing in Naples. As reported in article 3 of the Treaty, Charles VII obtained the right to establish consuls in the ports of the Ottoman Empire. Accordingly, article 7 stated that the Sublime Porte may appoint a *chargés d'affaires* in Naples and an honorary consul, or *şehbender*, in the city of Messina to protect the rights of Ottoman citizens and merchants. As Vasco Fronzoni noted, in the end the Treaty allowed for more peaceful relations between the two countries, through the Ottoman legitimation of the status of the Kingdom of Naples as a maritime power and the protection of Neapolitan ships from raids by the Barbary regencies.

Between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, relations between Constantinople and Naples grew. In this period, the almost 25-years old diplomatic activity of the Plenipotentiary Minister in Constantinople Guglielmo Costantino Rudolf was fundamental in increasing and protecting trade and good relations between the Kingdom of Naples in the Ottoman Empire. As plenipo-

[39] On the Ottoman diplomatic «Gradual tendency towards peaceful coexistence», see G. Işiksel, *Les méandres d'une pratique* cit., p. 48.

[40] V. Fronzoni, *Trattato di pace, commercio e navigazione tra la Sublime Porta ed il Regno delle Due Sicilie (Costantinopoli, 7 aprile 1740)*, «Studi Magrebini», Vol. 5 (2007), p. 141.


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tentiary minister, in 1799 Rudolf signed a defensive alliance between King Ferdinando IV (1759-1806 as king of Naples, and 1816-25 as Ferdinando I, king of the Two Sicilies) and Sultan Selim III aimed to defend the peace and security of their territories and citizens during the conflicts between the European monarchical coalitions and the French revolutionary state[41]. A new treaty was signed in Constantinople on 16 October 1827 (Rebi-ul-Evvel 1243), regulating the navigation and trade of the ships of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in the Black Sea.

As a result, the traffic of Neapolitan ships in the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea further increased, reaching as far as the Russian port of Odessa[42]. A major city-port during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the city of Naples played a fundamental role in the activities of the Ottoman pre-1857 diplomatic and consular system in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Naples importance was due not only to the presence of an imperial *chargé d'affaires*, such as the Austrian physician Sigmund Spitzer Efendi, or İspiçel Bey[43], and the ancient diplomatic relations between the Neapolitan monarchy and the Sublime Porte[44], but also due to the presence of a consistent Ottoman community in the royal capital as well.

The long-time presence of Orthodox-Greeks and the Ottomans in Naples is confirmed in a number of different sources. In a document written just after the dissolution of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy, the plenipotentiary minister in Turin, Rüstem Bey expressed the need to re-open a consulate general in Naples. The Ottoman diplomat asked the Italian *presidente del Consiglio* and minister of foreign affairs, Bettino Ricasoli, that his request be accepted as soon as possible to ensure that Ottoman citizens are not left without consular protection[45]. Although the role of consul general had already been conferred on the diplomat Blacque Bey in 1861 (who occupied this position until his relocation in

[41] M. Grenet, *Al servizio del Gran Signore?* cit., p. 374.

[42] Convention with the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies regarding the navigation of the Neapolitan pavilion in the Black Sea. Signed in Constantinople on 16 October 1827 (Rebi-ul-Evvel), in G.E. Noradounghian, *Recueil d'Actes Internationaux de l'Empire Ottoman Tome II 1789-1856*, Librairie Cotillon, Paris, 1897, p. 140.

[43] S. Akkin, D. Gülten, *A Glimpse into the Process of Gaining Permission for the Educational Dissection of Human Cadavers in the Ottoman Empire*, «Clinical anatomy» (2014), pp. 964-71.

[44] F. Jesnè, *La face cachée de l'empire. L'Italie et les Balkans, 1861-1915*, Ecole Française de Rome, Rome, 2021, p. 37.

[45] Asdmae, Moscati VI, Folder 787, dispatch 1234, the *chargé d'affaires*, Rüstem Bey to the *presidente del Consiglio* and minister of foreign affairs, Bettino Ricasoli, Turin, 9 November 1861.


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Washington as ambassador in 1867), the plenipotentiary minister continued to show a special interest in the affairs of the Ottoman community in Naples, acting in person as an intermediary with the Italian authorities. In another document written by Rüstem Bey in Florence in July 1865 to the new *presidente del Consiglio* and minister of foreign affairs, Alfonso La Marmora, the Ottoman *chargé d'affaires* and plenipotentiary minister described a delicate situation regarding the special status of the *Chiesa dei Santi Pietro e Paolo* in Naples, dedicated to the United Orthodox Greek cult[46].

As reported by Stopani, this church was founded in the sixteenth century by a man named Tommaso Hassan Paleologus as a small chapel dedicated to the Holy Apostles[47], becoming in the following years an important place of aggregation for the *Greci Coronei*, refugees from the city of Korone[48]. This military community received *mercedez*, or income, from the imperial treasure becoming a separate group within the Neapolitan social body. Through imperial support, in 1544 the *Coronei* received the Chapel to celebrate masses there «according to the Orthodox rite under vice-royal protection». The papal bulls of 1536 and 1544 reaffirmed the privilege to celebrate the liturgy *more graecorum* by Greek and Albanian migrants and its special status[49].

In the Early Modern Age, the constant immigration of Orthodox and Greek-speaking communities from the Balkans gradually modified the structure of the original community and divided it into two factions: the *Greci Coronei* or *Veneti*, subjects of the Spanish Crown or the Republic of Venice, and the *Greci Ottomani*, who considered themselves to be subjects of the Sublime Porte[50]. The Chapel, and, by

[46] Asdmae, Moscati VI, Folder 787, dispatch without number, the *chargé d'affaires*, Rüstem Bey, to the *presidente del Consiglio* and minister of foreign affairs, Alfonso La Marmora, Florence, 22 July 1865. For a history of the Orthodox community of Naples, see A. Stopani, *Processi di appartenenza, etnicità e istituzioni. Confraternite e chiesa dei Santi Pietro e Paolo di Napoli (1530-1620)*, «Quaderni Storici», 154 (2017), pp. 41-71.

[47] The historian Stopani is sceptical about the imperial origin of Tommaso Assan Paleologus. He considers it more likely that he was a descendant of an aristocratic family from Morea or Albania enlisted by the Aragonese against the French in the wars that from the fifteenth century onwards made the Italian peninsula a battleground for European monarchies. A. Stopani, *Processi di appartenenza* cit., p. 89.

[48] «By virtue of their loyalty to the emperor and the loss of their property, Charles V granted the exiles a series of privileges: alongside a large number of people destined to repopulate the lands of the southern aristocracy and who were exempt from ordinary and extraordinary taxes, a smaller group of people were rewarded with a provision of 7,000 ducats to be distributed annually among the entitled». Ivi, p. 87.

[49] Ivi, p. 91.

[50] M. Grenet, *Entangled allegiances* cit., p. 58.


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the end of the sixteenth century, the Church, became a place of aggregation for these different Greek-Orthodox communities of Naples. Its special status was confirmed again by a royal decree of King Francesco I (1825-30) in March 1829, «for the exclusive use of the Latins residing in Naples and of all the Eastern Catholics passing through the city»[51].

Nevertheless, the situation changed as a result of the Greek War of Independence and the tension between Greeks and Ottomans within the Neapolitan community. In fact, as underscored by Rüstem Bey, in the 1860s on several occasions «Greeks belonging to the schismatic religion», probably Greek subjects, «tried to enter the congregations and even claimed ownership of the Church and the temporal goods, the incomes from which provides the sums necessary for its maintenance». As requested by the Ottomans, the Italian *Ministero di Grazia e Giustizia e dei Culti* examined the case and, through advice received from the Council of State, «refused to admit [the schismatic Greeks] and referred the claimants to the courts, if they deemed it appropriate».

Rüstem Bey observed that, despite this legal decision, non-Ottoman subjects persisted in taking over the Church and its revenues and «introduced some of their representatives into the Latin congregation by means of intrigues and fraudulent means», asking for their admission «to the community and to the board of directors». Apparently, the prefect of Naples, «probably taken in haste and on the basis of insufficient information», sanctioned this «derogation from ancient customs»[52]. Consequently, Rüstem Bey requested the direct intervention of the ministry of foreign affairs to solve this complex case, because, in his opinion, the congregation was «almost entirely composed of Ottoman subjects».

## Ottoman Consuls and Residents in Southern Italy: The Sardinian Case

Although not comparable to the Campanian, Calabrian or Sicilian consular networks in terms of its extension, the Ottoman consular network in Sardinia presented a well-structured system ready to assist imperial vessels, merchants, and citizens. Prior to 1857 these consulates were directed by the consulate general of Genoa; however,

[51] Asdmae, Moscati VI, Folder 787, dispatch without number, the *chargé d'affaires*, Rüstem Bey, to the *presidente del Consiglio* and minister of foreign affairs, Alfonso La Marmora, Florence, 22 July 1865.

[52] Ibidem.


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after the creation of the imperial legation of Turin they were placed under the *chargé d'affaires*' direction with the consulates of the Italian peninsula.

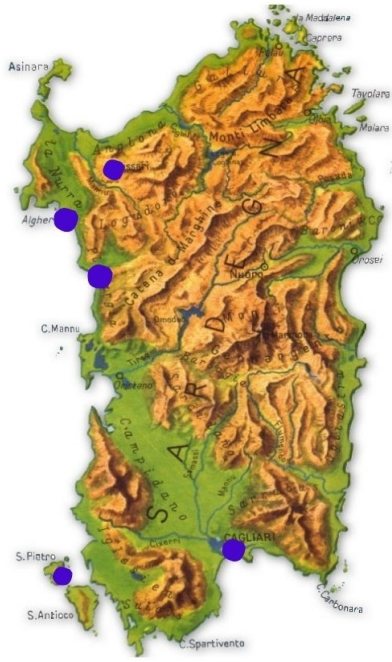


Fig. 3 - Physical map of Sardinia showing the Sardinian centres where there was an Ottoman consulate.

A preliminary analysis of the Ottoman and Italian consular documents confirmed the existence of a consul general in the city-port of Cagliari, the main political and economic centre of Sardinia and a home to a small resident Ottoman community. This community appears to have been a well-established Ottoman one, probably composed of first- and second-generation Levantine or Orthodox Greek-speaking merchants and artisans, engaged in mercantile and craft activities, as in other Italian centres such as the important city of Sassari. Even though they presumably lacked a consistent Ottoman community, other minor centres like Alghero, Bosa, and Carloforte were also monitored by imperial honorary and viceconsuls chosen among the local community and ready to intervene in the event of an emergency, such as the shipwreck of the brigantine *Gioanni* in 1853. Following the shipwreck of the brig near the Acqua Dolce beach, near the town of Bosa, some local sailors assisted by the Ottoman vice-


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consul Ibba, managed to save part of the crew «who were in […] danger of being lost»[53].

During the 1840s and 1850s, the Parisian merchant Louis Rogier held the office of Ottoman honorary consul in Cagliari, as well as those of Danish and Belgian consuls. From this position he protected the local interests of the Empire and the security of the subjects of the sultan who passed through or resided in the Sardinian city[54]. As reported in an official document, «just as the subjects and traders of the […] [a]llied Powers of [the imperial government were] on all occasions the object of effective protection in [sultan's] states, and all the means suitable for ensuring their tranquillity and security [would be] put into effect, so the established principles [of international law] require that reciprocity be observed with regard to the traders and subjects of [the Ottoman] Empire» in Sardinia[55].

As in the rest of Italy, in Sardinia the Ottoman use of honorary consuls seems to have continued beyond the mid-nineteenth century. In fact, at the end of August 1861 Rüstem Bey sent the imperial *firman* to Ricasoli which, after the resignation of Rogier, announced the Baron of Teulada, Giuseppe Sanjust, who belonged «to a distinguished family of Sardinia», as the new Ottoman consul in Cagliari, where was expected to «protect the interests of the [s]ubjects and merchants of [the imperial government] passing through the said port»[56].

The appointments of a member of the European international merchant class and of the Sardinian urban aristocracy-notary class of Catalan origin, seem to confirm the idea that, in this period the Ottomans tended to entrust the role of consul or viceconsul to illustrious members of local notabilities in Italian southern provinces, capable of providing for a large part of their livelihood by various kinds of incomes or commercial activities to supplement the limited consular fees offered by Constantinople as a salary. Moreover, in this way the

[53] Boa, Hariciye Nezareti, Tercüme Odası, 317, 84, 2, 1, copy, dispatch 2686, the secretary minister of State, Alfonso La Marmora, to the consul of the maritime directorate of Cagliari, 7 March 1853, Turin, annexed to dispatch without number, the consul general, Nicola Allegretti, to the minister of foreign affairs, Mustafa Reşid Pasha, Genoa, 30 March 1853.

[54] Boa, Hariciye Nezareti, Tercüme Odası, 317, 51, 2, 1, dispatch 5, Jean Neuhertz to the consul general, Luigi Rogier, Cagliari, 5 October 1851.

[55] Asdmae, Moscati VI, Folder 787, Translation of imperial *firman*, annexed to dispatch 1158, the *chargé d'affaires*, Rüstem Bey, to the *presidente del Consiglio* and minister of foreign affairs, Bettino Ricasoli, Turin, 29 August 1861. See also Asdmae, Moscati VI, Folder 787, dispatch 1214, the *chargé d'affaires*, Rüstem Bey, to the *presidente del Consiglio* and minister of foreign affairs, Bettino Ricasoli, Turin, 23 October 1861.

[56] Ibidem.


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Sublime Porte saw its affairs transiting through southern Italian ports protected by well-established, educated, and conservative members of the local ruling classes. This would be confirmed by the appointment of the physician Efisio Valle as viceconsul in Sassari following the dismissal of Ventura in 1879[57]. The documents concerning Valle's appointment emphasises not only his career as a military physician, but also his «affluent condition» and the fact that he was «highly regarded and respected» in the Sardinian city[58].

From the Italian and Ottoman documents analysed so far, it appears that Cagliari constituted a port of considerable value for trade and the refuelling of the imperial fleet in the western Mediterranean. In August 1865, Rüstem Bey expressed the thanks of the Sublime Porte to the Italian government for the friendly behaviour of Cagliari's authorities towards the squadron of the imperial fleet commanded by the Vice-Admiral Edhem Pasha[59]. According to the terms addressed by the British tenderer of coal, in Cagliari it would deliver «800 tons of first quality English earth coal», in «restitution» for an equal quantity of coal, which Italian maritime authorities had been «kind enough to lend, towards the end of the month of March» to the Ottoman squadron[60].

There were, however, not only consuls and trade hubs in Sardinia, but also Ottoman citizens living there under consular protection and control. Ottoman subjects like Caterina Gunner, her husband Cristoforo Cimi, and their heirs, had long resided in the city of Cagliari. As in the Neapolitan case, the documents mirrored the complex situation created by the foundation of the Kingdom of Greece and the consequent separation between the Greek and the Ottoman communities and governments in the 1830s. In fact, this created numerous disputes within Mediterranean Greek-speaking communities regarding the properties, status, and citizenship of their members, which were to be resolved by negotiations between the Ottoman and Greek consuls, and local administrations[61]. From a preliminary analysis the

[57] Asdmae, Moscati VI, Archivio Personale Turchia, Dossier 43-Sassari, dispatch 11072, the ambassador, Turhan Pasha, to the *presidente del Consiglio* and minister of foreign affairs ad interim, Agostino Depretis, Rome, 2 July 1879.

[58] Asdmae, Moscati VI, Archivio Personale Turchia, Dossier 43-Sassari, dispatch 35, the prefect of Sassari, Gaetano Del Serro, to the *presidente del Consiglio* and minister of foreign affairs, Benedetto Cairoli, Sassari, 3 February 1880.

[59] Asdmae, Moscati VI, Folder 787, dispatch without number, the *chargé d'affaires*, Rüstem Bey, to the *presidente del Consiglio* and minister of foreign affairs, Alfonso La Marmora, Florence, 1 August 1865.

[60] Ibidem.

[61] Asto, Lettere Ministri Esteri, Porta Ottomana, 1843-1859, dispatch 410, the *chargé d'affaires*, Rüstem Bey, to the *presidente del Consiglio* and minister of foreign affairs, Camillo Benso Conte di Cavour, Turin, 29 January 1859. Regarding the Greek-Ottoman identity see M. Grenet, *Entangled allegiances* cit., pp. 56-71.


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community in Cagliari appears to have been largely composed of artisans and merchants, as descendants of citizens, who could also constitute a public order problem for both the Sardinian and Ottoman governments. As pointed out by Grenet, «they were nonetheless regarded as Ottoman subjects by the local authorities of the cities they lived in», as was the case of the Souliotaki brothers[62].

In November 1857, Rüstem Bey reported a conversation with Cavour concerning the subversive activities of two brothers named Soulioti or Souliotaki[63]. Cavour informed the imperial representative that in Cagliari these two brothers, born in Sardinia to Ottoman parents, wrote a violent and subversive article against the Sardinian government in a local newspaper, employing language that was «subversive of all social order and incite to revolt and disorder». Cavour added that «if the thing happened in Turin there would be less danger because these incendiary excitements would fall on less fertile soil». However, in a «backward and ignorant country» like Sardinia, with the «foolish and inflammatory character of its inhabitants» such an article could prove to be far more volatile and, for this reason, orders were transmitted to the local authorities to give these two brothers an ultimatum: if they persisted, they would be expelled from the country[64]. The Ottoman *chargé d'affaires* confirmed the collaboration of the imperial government on this issue, as it would not permit imperial subjects to «cause embarrassment to the Sardinian [g]overnment or to commit disorders» in that country. Rüstem Bey also suggested to the minister of foreign affairs, Emin Âli Pasha, that «the [i]mperial [e]mbassy should obtain from all the consular agents under its jurisdiction» copies of all the registers of Ottoman subjects in the Kingdom of Sardinia, «as well as of the documents on which their right of nationality is based», as he believed that there were many more individuals «who improperly enjoy Ottoman protection»[65].

By the end of the nineteenth century large communities of Ottoman citizens existed in the south of the Italian peninsula in centres such as Naples and Cagliari. Just as in other Mediterranean centres these communities appear to have been mainly, but not entirely, composed of members of the Greek-speaking lower-middle classes of Orthodox or Eastern Latin churches supported by diplomatic and consular networks that both monitored and protected them. Indeed, these communities appear to have brought with them not only their

[62] M. Grenet, *Entangled allegiances* cit., p. 58.

[63] S. Kuneralp, *L'Empire Ottoman et l'Europe II, Documents diplomatiques ottomans sur l'unification italienne*, vol. I, The Isis Press, Istanbul, 2010, pp. 21-2.

[64] Ibidem.

[65] Ibidem.


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crafts and their culture, but also the nationality questions that in the nineteenth century permeated Ottoman and ex-Ottoman populations. At the same time, the case of the city of Cagliari highlights the close commercial and cross-community ties that bound the ports of southern Italy and the Ottomans together, suggesting the need to further explore this topic in future studies.

## Consuls without Community? The Calabrian Case

From the documents analysed so far, the southern continental provinces of the Kingdom of Italy can also be seen to possess an extensive Ottoman consular network. It may be that the existence of a widespread consular network was also possible despite the absence of local Ottoman communities or without any important traffic, like in the case of Calabria, the southern province of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

Calabria in the nineteenth century was rather isolated from Naples in comparison to other southern provinces. This isolation was due to several factors including the high and largely inaccessible mountainous area surrounding it to the north, the inadequate infrastructure connecting the hinterland with the coast; and the inadequacy of the sharecropping agricultural system. These factors prevented the province from investing in industry and acquiring the levels of wealth of the northern provinces[66]. Up until 1860 Calabria had only one major road, the *Carrozzabile delle Calabrie*, that from Campotenese connects to Reggio Calabria. The Ionic railway was built between 1866 and 1875, but it was only in 1906 that the road network was increased to 3,432 km[67]. Despite the construction and implementation of these new road and railway networks, the economy continued to lag behind that of other Italian provinces.

As highlighted by the botanist Giuseppe Antonio Pasquale in his 1863 report on the physical-economic-agrarian state of Calabria, many kilometres of Ionian coast, especially the southern part of Calabria, known as Calabria *Ulteriore*, lacked both a natural and artificial harbour despite the long coastline available for the landing of the ships. Calabrian ports were mainly used for small coastal

[66] Cfr. A. Placanica, *Storia della Calabria dall'antichità ai nostri giorni,* Donzelli Editore, Roma, 1994; G. Isnardi, R. Corso, G. Bertoni, et al, *Calabria* (A. T. 27-28-29), in Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani, (1930) «https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/calabria_%28Enciclopedia-Italiana%29/».

[67] Ibidem.


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navigation[68]. Indeed, the main commercial activities instead took place through the nearby port of Messina, the capacity of which was significantly reduced following the 1783 earthquake that struck southern Calabria and the city of Messina. In his report Pasquale referred to trade taking place between Calabria and foreign and domestic cities, notably with the Ionian Islands, Malta, Marseille, Amsterdam, Saint Pietersburg, Trieste, and the Italian ports of Genoa and Livorno. Products passing through the port of Messina included dried fruit, olive oil, oranges, essences, including bergamot as well as silk[69]. From the early years of the nineteenth century, the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies trade lost its strength and began a long period of stagnation. As historian Pietro Bevilacqua notes, silk and wheat, important products for the kingdom, no longer played a significant role in the regional exports; however, products such as olive oil did become important exports, especially to Marseille[70]. By the mid-nineteenth century, exports from the Kingdom were predominantly agricultural[71].

The region's isolation and remoteness from Naples caused Calabria, like other neighbouring territories, to have less central authority in the region. The restricted local market did not provide the necessary volume of trade, and like the rest of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, Calabria also needed a commercial outlet with foreign countries. However, from documents analysed it is possible to theorise that the Ottoman consuls and viceconsuls to Calabria were primarily linked to the necessity to support maritime trade. Maritime trade was cheaper and more viable than land trade. The muddled customary system, the delay in establishing a trade network with the Levant and the lack of interest in trade on the part of local notability combined with the fear and mistrust of the local populations towards the Ottomans, still seeing them as pirates and infidels, had negatively impacted the development of an efficient transport system and trade by sea[72].

[68] G.A. Pasquale, *Relazione sullo stato fisico-economico-agrario della prima Calabria Ulteriore*, Tipografia nel R. Albergo de' Poveri, Napoli, 1863, p. 66.

[69] Ivi, p. 68.

[70] P. Bevilacqua, *Il Mezzogiorno nel mercato internazionale (secoli XVIII-XX)*, «Meridiana» N.1 (1987), pp. 22-3.

[71] Ivi, pp. 27 and 31.

[72] See M. Costanza, *I porti italiani e le rotte a Levante tra la crisi del '600 e l'apertura del canale di Suez*, in G. Ennas, C.E. Malara, M. Toprak (eds.), *Conversazioni Italo - Ottomane atti della conferenza*, İtalya Dostluk Derneği, Ankara, 2023, pp. 174-9.


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## Ottoman Consulates in Calabria


Fig. 4 - Physical map of Calabria showing the Calabrian centres where there was an Ottoman consulate.

Despite the state of the Calabrian economy, in the mid-nineteenth century several honorary consuls were appointed to address trade in local city-ports like Catanzaro, Crotone, Pizzo, and Reggio Calabria. Merve Cemile Sönmez argues that these honorary consulates were probably opened after 1870 to focus on maritime commercial tasks. Moreover, the lists of honorary consuls' names in these city-ports show that most of them were members of the commercial and mercantile upper middle class, as was also the case in Sardinia[73]. We can assume that these men, interested in trade, aimed to obtain facilities for their own business and, at the same time, hold a prestigious office. In addition, it is possible to theorise that the geographic position and

[73] M.C. Sönmez, *Osmanlı Devleti ve İtalya arasındaki Diplomatik İlişkileri* [Diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Empire and Italy] Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Ankara, Ankara, 2023, pp. 475 and 575-9.


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the scarcity of infrastructures and road networks between the Calabrian towns and cities could be reasons for the presence of four consulates. Placed in the centre of the Mediterranean, close to Sicily and not far from the North African coast, Calabria would have guaranteed a safe harbour to Ottoman ships travelling across the Mediterranean.

From the documents analysed we can hypothesise something about the effective role of these consuls[74]. For example, the documents describe how the consulate, or *şehbenderliği*, of Catanzaro has been active between 1876 and 1891, managed by the viceconsul, or *şehbender vekili*, Pietro Pugliese[75]. In 1891, Pugliese had to resign due to illness, and was replaced by Giuseppe Rossi, who in December 1891 officially received the office of viceconsul of Catanzaro[76]. One document dated 3 October 1908, reports the news that the mail addressed to the consulate had not been collected and that the viceconsul Rossi was no longer present. It also added that there was no longer a "need" for this consular service in Catanzaro. Consequently, it would be necessary to close and discuss its closure with the Ottoman ambassador in Rome, Ziya Pasha[77].

With regards to the consulate at Crotone, no further information could be found in the documents. Sönmez notes that it was active from 1886 to 1907 and managed during these years by the viceconsul Luigi Bruno[78]. At present, only one document regarding the port of Crotone has been found. Dated 3 April 1851, it is a memorandum that concerns the rights of Ottoman ships entering and stationed in the port of Crotone. This document contains a request addressed to the Neapolitan government by the Sublime Porte, following the denunciation of Captain Hassan Alussi and Sali Mehmed. The document was signed by the Neapolitan consul in Constantinople Edoardo Targioni and addressed to the Foreign Minister Emin Âli Pasha[79]. Its contents concerned the charges levied by the port of Crotone on

[74] Many of the documents on *şehbender* and *şehbenderlik* have not yet been made public in the online system and those digitalized, made public and available for consultation have required a long searching work. I would like to thank the archivist and scholar Mehmet Kaycıoğlu and Mr. Yavuz Selimhan Kaycıoğlu for helping me during my research in the Ottoman Archive in Istanbul.

[75] M.C. Sönmez, *Osmanlı Devleti ve İtalya* cit., p. 486.

[76] Ibidem.

[77] Boa, Hariciye Nezareti, Tahrirât-ı Hariciye Odası, 368, 32, 1, dispatch 350, from the Umur-ı şehbenderi müdürü to the Nezâret-i Umûr-ı Hâriciye, Constantinople, Ramazan 1326 (3 October 1908).

[78] M.C. Sönmez, *Osmanlı Devleti ve İtalya* cit., p. 488.

[79] Boa, Hariciye Nezareti, Siyasî Kısım Evrakı, dispatch 1956. A. 35, 1, the consul, Edoardo Targioni, to the foreign minister, Emin Âli Pasha, Constantinople, April 1851.


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Ottoman ships. The Neapolitan consul underscored that the collected rights had been fixed on the Treaty of Navigation and Commerce of 1826. Through this document, it is possible to theorise how Crotone was considered a relatively important trade centre by the Ottomans in the lands of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

In the centre of the Gulf of Sant'Eufemia, more specifically in the town of Pizzo, an area characterised by strong winds that can lead to navigational difficulties, the Ottomans opened another viceconsulate. It was presumably opened to support ships that practiced coastal navigation. A resident of the town named Domenico Musolino was appointed as Ottoman viceconsul[80].

In comparison to other towns in Calabria, the consulate of Reggio Calabria appears to have been a centre of great activity in the region between 1876 and 1885. Although characterised by relative economic prosperity and population high-density, the port of Reggio Calabria never fully developed, and the port of Messina continued to be preferred location for international trade in the region. Nevertheless, Reggio Calabria was home to several important honorary consulates such as those of France and Spain. Calabria and its cities were noted by the Almanac of Gotha in a list of cities with an Ottoman representative in 1884. In this period, the Calabrian Antonio Scudieri was appointed as the Ottoman viceconsul[81]. In the following years, the office passed to the banker Luigi Sorbo. Sorbo was born in the Sicilian city of Termini and was educated in a private school and could write and speak fluently[82]. This suggests the Ottoman consul in Calabria, just like his other European colleagues, was expected to be well educated and fluent in a number of European languages.

Like the report prepared by Sorbo in 1888, the budget for the years 1886-7 can provide a general framework of the activities of the Ottoman consul general in Reggio Calabria. Stamps can represent an important part of consular activity by validating documents. In the document analysed, the value of the stamps that were applied on each document issued or signed by the consul was listed[83]. For example,

[80] M.C. Sönmez, *Osmanlı Devleti ve İtalya* cit., p. 498.

[81] Ibidem.

[82] Boa, Hariciye Nezareti, İrade, 303, dispatch 19257, 3, 5, Nezâret-i umûr-ı hâriciye Sicil-i ahvâl-i müdüriyeti, Constantinople, Zi'l-hicce sene 1303 (4 September 1886).

[83] It was compulsory for each consul to apply the stamps on the documents since the stamp co-assigned the value of the tax required and then sent to the ministry of foreign affairs, or *Hariciye Nezâreti*. The stamps were sent by the ministry of foreign affairs and unused ones were returned. See M. Akpınar, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Şehbenderlik müessesi* [The Institution of Consulship in the Ottoman


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the value of the stamps received from 2 December 1886 to 1 September 1887 was 3,875 piasters. However, in the year 1886 no stamps appear to have been recorded, while, on 1 June 1887, four stamps, each of 50 piastres, were used for a total of 200 piastres. On 1 September 1887, four stamps of 50 piastres each were used for a total of 200 piastres. The final bill was 400 piastres[84]. This allows us to calculate that the value of transits to or from the Ottoman "East" showed little activity.

While we have not yet been provided direct access to many documents regarding Ottoman consulates in the Italian peninsula, from a preliminary analysis of the catalogues it is apparent that the deputy consulate of Reggio Calabria was active between 1884 and 1887. Luigi Sorbo held the office of imperial consul in Reggio Calabria until 1905, when, after his death, a man named Vincenzo (his surname remains unclear) was appointed as honorary viceconsul[85]. From the documents analysed it remains unclear how important Reggio Calabria was for the Ottomans. The fact that the consulate remained open for more than a quarter of a century does, however, suggest that the imperial authorities considered the Calabrian centre worthy of hosting at least one honorary or viceconsul.

## Conclusion

This article highlights the development of the imperial consular network and the existence of Ottoman communities, in the southern part of the Italian peninsula, in the second half of the nineteenth century. While the work on this topic is still in its infancy, it is possible to make some noteworthy conclusions. While the southern Italian peninsular and main islands were still largely made up of honorary consuls at the turn of the twentieth century, the Ottoman consular network showed considerable complexity, covering numerous points on the Italian coast. It appears that the Ottoman communities transformed over the centuries in their internal composition and became a composite part of the local Italian societies. From the eighteenth century, they were generally protected by diplomats and consuls as in the case of the ancient community of Naples. However, these diplo-

State], Unpublished Master Thesis, Sivas Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi, Sivas, 2001, p. 58.

[84] Boa, Hariciye Nezareti, Tahrirât-ı Hariciye Odası, 80,10, 1, dispatch 25024, the viceconsul, Luigi Sorbo, to the foreign minister, E. Said Pasha, Reggio Calabria, 27 April 1888.

[85] M.C. Sönmez, *Osmanlı Devleti ve İtalya* cit., p. 499.


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mats and consuls were appointed not only to protect their own communities, but also to monitor their activities abroad, like in the case of the Solioutaki brothers in Cagliari, and to support migrants, traders and merchants in their work and travels even without the presence of an effective local community, as in the case of Calabria.

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Kingdom of Sardinia-Italy expanded its influence in Ottoman controlled lands through the consular network of the ancient Republic of Genoa. This led to the reform and enlargement of new modern diplomatic and consular corps, no longer made up of commercial agents but of professional salaried officials. The same need was felt by the Ottomans who, after the unification of Italy, promoted the opening of numerous honorary consulates and viceconsulates, managed by local personalities, at first, with purely commercial purposes, but these were slowly replaced with salaried officials in the second part of the "long" century. This was the case in the most important centres such as Ancona, Palermo, or Genoa, while, as the Calabrian case illustrates, members of the local notability continued to be used in other city-ports. This applies particularly to the Calabria and Sardinia's cases. Both strategically located within the Mediterranean, Calabria in the extreme south, close to Sicily and North Africa, Sardinia close to Corsica, and halfway between Italy and Tunisia, had long been used as important midway points. Moreover, while Calabria may not have played host to Ottoman communities and the presence of consulates in the region was primarily to oversee trade, cities such as Naples and Cagliari were home to notable Ottoman communities.

The absence of Ottoman communities in Calabria may be due to several factors, such as the regions lack of economic development, the agrarian nature of the region which in the nineteenth century still characterised the vast majority of the population, and the lack of infrastructure that could connect the hinterland, coastal areas, and major cities of the Italian peninsula. The city of Naples presents a different case. The Neapolitan and Ottoman dynasties pursued the development of commercial and diplomatic relations, and a well-established Ottoman community had existed there since the sixteenth century.

It is possible to say that until the eighteenth century the Ottoman communities in Italy were primarily, but not exclusively, composed of Orthodox and Greek-speaking merchants who, since the Early Modern Age, made up for the withdrawal of Venetian merchants from Ottoman ports and serviced the trade of the Ottoman Empire in the Aegean, and between the eastern and western Mediterranean[86]. From

[86] D. Abulafia, *The Great Sea* cit., p. 459.


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the end of the eighteenth century, Ottoman migrations toward the Italian peninsula began to include Muslims, Jews, and Armenians as well, who came from all the provinces of the Empire, from the Balkans to Tripoli of Libya, and who came from all manner of social classes to perform different kinds of work in the Italian peninsula. It appears that these migrants were mostly made up of single males seeking their fortune in Italy, in the same way as their Italian counterparts did in Ottoman cities, and who formed larger and more integrated communities with the ancient Levantine groups. This article serves as a starting point from which other studies can explore the nature of Ottoman communities in the Italian peninsula and the diplomatic and consular networks established in these regions.


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