



THE CREATION OF LEVANTINE LITERATURE THROUGH THE PERSPECTIVE OF LAST LEVANTINS

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Abstract

The Levantines, descendants of the Latins of Constantinople, integrated into the Ottoman Empire after the 1453 conquest, by forming a hybrid community of Western and Eastern influences. These families, often Genoese, benefited from diplomatic protection and tax exemptions thanks to their diplomatic position in Western embassies in Constantinople. As they were speaking several languages, their culture reflected their international mobility and their adaptation to a multi-religious and multi-cultural community. Although geopolitically located at the crossroads of exchanges between East and West, they developed a distinct identity, influenced by trade, religious missions and diplomatic relations, while contributing to a unique travel literature and an affirmed cultural richness. Travel writing reflects the varied opinions of individuals in society and contributes to the emergence of a new literature. Travel diaries of diplomats, drogman, tradesman, priests/priestesses reveal the social and cultural impact of interactions within the Ottoman Empire, where diplomatic events such as Venetian receptions strengthened bilateral relations and the prestige of nations. In the 19th and 20th centuries, French, which became the *lingua franca* of the Eastern Mediterranean, fostered cultural and commercial exchanges. Through Franco-Ottoman newspapers, French as a language of communication united diverse communities, creating a neutral and strategic bridge between East and West.

Keywords

Levantine, Constantinople, Latin families, *lingua franca*

Introduction

The people who came from Western Europe to the Eastern Mediterranean district and engaged in commercial, diplomatic and religious activities are named “Levantines”. It is significant to know how to distinguish between the Ottoman Latins and the Levantines before, during and after the Ottoman Empire. The Latins have already been the inhabitants of Constantinople since the 9th century. Majority of them came from present-day Italy. They practiced their trade and religious applications without any obstacles. However, there was always a competition between Venetian and Genoese communities in Constantinople until 1453 which is the date of conquest.

In the 13th century, the Genoese and the Venetians sought to control the Black Sea and the Mediterranean for commercial reasons. Although the Treaty of Milan was signed in 1299 between them to end hostilities, this situation did not last long. Wars restarted in the 14th century. As the Genoese developed closer ties with the Ottoman Empire in the 15th century, reciprocal agreements were signed and embassies were opened (Fleet, 1999, 9-12).

In this article, based on the book titled “The Levantines” by Rinaldo Marmara, it is aimed to investigate the answer to the following question: How does the presentation of the history of Levantine families contribute to the birth of a Levantine literature? For this, documentary content analysis methodology is utilized, and the content is ranged chronologically. Document analysis, like other analytical methods, is one of the methods of qualitative research which seeks an understanding, deduce meaning and improve empirical knowledge through systematically evaluating printed or electronic materials (Bowen, 2009, 27). In this study 8 examples of quotes cited by Rinaldo Marmara, one of representatives of the last Levantines, is analysed in the perspective of Levantine literature in connection with voyage literature. It is essential to show the reader that a historical text can enrich literary studies in the Orient where all cultures are gathered and lived peacefully. First, we will approach a summary of the Levantines. Then, we will present a new form of a Levantine literature. Finally, we will conclude this article with a literary analysis through a global vision around social structures.

1 The Levantines

The Latin families in Constantinople immigrated to islands like Chios, Tinos and Paros during and after the conquest of Constantinople. However, some families did not migrate and stayed in Constantinople. Among these



families, the Genoese stayed in Galata, they adopted a neutral position in the war and they remained as a Latin community subject to the Ottoman Empire. Those people became Ottoman citizens and they were protected from other Western powers. They spoke Italian, French, Ottoman Turkish and their common language was Greek (Dursteler, 2004, 291). Working in the embassies of Western states also offered these families the opportunity to benefit from diplomatic protection and they were also exempted from paying taxes to the Ottoman state. Alexandre Barthélemy Etienne Pisani and his brother worked in diplomatic positions in Constantinople and this can be considered as an example (Castiglione, 2014, 169-195). He was born in Constantinople and he is part of a family of Italian origin. His brother Etienne Pisani worked at the British embassy and Nicolas Pisani was also in the service of the Russian embassy in Constantinople.

After the conquest, until the end of the 19th century, Latins from Europe settled in the Ottoman lands. It would be more appropriate to call these people Levantines. Our goal in this research is not to seek an answer to the historical question. On the contrary, to find an answer to the question of how the genesis of Levantine literature is formed through the history of the Levantine families of Constantinople. On the one hand, some can define it as a literary reality, on the other hand, others can create a certain awareness to represent a multifaceted otherness well affirmed and assumed in the imagination. In both cases, we can gain an insight into the darkness of the view of Levantine literature in the East by emphasizing that these Latins were in all international mobility towards the East. They found a refuge there and they were warmly welcomed by the natives of those lands. Ultimately, they created their own culture which resembled neither the Western nor the Eastern.

Geopolitically, the Ottoman territories were at the heart of the trade routes between East and West, so the desire of Western European countries to establish a Levantine presence in these lands was based on commercial, political and cultural interests. In addition, products from the East, that is, from the Mediterranean and the Ottoman Empire, also influenced the societies of these Western countries (Grenet, 2013, 38).

The Latin Catholic community in Constantinople consisted of Ottoman subjects of European origin, European foreigners, and non-Ottoman Muslims, called protégés, who enjoyed diplomatic protection from European powers. Their presence increased as trade and diplomatic relations with Europe strengthened in the 17th and 18th centuries, but their patronage remained primarily subjects of the Ottoman Empire. Another important but marginalized group was that of slaves and prisoners of war, whose numbers fluctuated in response to Ottoman military campaigns and they did not participate in community life (Binz, 2013, 15-33).

Europeans in the Levant were initially referred to as “Franks” by authors such as Antoine Galland, and were differentiated by nationality rather than being considered as a homogeneous group. Over time, the term “Levantine” was used to describe a hybrid identity shaped by the Ottoman cultural and multi-religious context that fostered social and economic exchange. This transformation, marked by the influence of religious missions and religious structures, shows how European Catholics integrated their environment, creating a unique identity through the combination of diverse cultural influences (Tagliaferri, 2016, 87-95).

2 The genesis of Levantine Literature

Roland le Huenen emphasizes that travel writing emerges as a response to different opinions of individuals in a society (Le Huenen, 1987, 46). They are able to write texts in the form of letters using very specific and varied vocabularies to embellish their text. Without forgetting the advantage hidden behind their words, it is essential to understand the vision reflected by these people and this situation contributes to the genesis of Levantine literature which is another form of voyage literature. The journey diaries of Jacques Testa an Ottoman Latin who is part of a Catholic family established in Pera in the 18th century, also contributed to the emergence of Levantine literature. Testa described his voyage from Constantinople to Aleppo in his diary (De Testa and Gautier, 2003, 365).

If we analyze events organized by diplomatic missions in the respective Empire beyond the strictly diplomatic context and from a social and political point of view, we can see that receptions were regularly organized by various embassies within the Ottoman territories. The most important examples are the receptions organized by the Venetian embassy in honor of important personalities. These events not only favored the development of bilateral relations, but also enhanced the prestige of the Venetian Republic due to their strategic nature and splendor (Dursteler, 2013, 171).

During the 19th and 20th centuries, French emerged as the language of communication in cities such as Constantinople, Salonika, Smyrna, Beirut, and many other cities in the Eastern Mediterranean where trade and commerce flourished. The language became embedded in the new institutions created by the Reformation, uniting French, Levantine, and Ottoman francophone communities. Gustave Couturier, owner of the *Journal de Constantinople*, described French as a neutral space, a sort of "common currency" that facilitated the exchange of



knowledge between East and West. Periodicals published by Ottomans, French, or other nationalities in Paris, Istanbul, or elsewhere in the Empire are grouped under the term "Franco-Ottoman newspapers." This demonstrates a time when French was the lingua franca of a vast territory (Baruh, 2017, 305).

3 Literary analysis

In the literary analysis part, the quotes which are cited in Rinaldo Marmara's book named *Les Levantins, Communauté méconnue de l'Empire ottoman, Des origines à nos jours* will be analysed in cultural, economic and social perspectives within the framework of Levantine literature.

Example 1

The following passages can be analyzed from different angles within the framework of Levantine literature, highlighting elements that reflect the cultural exchanges, economic dynamics and social structure of the place represented.

Le quartier ou foundouk « formé d'entrepôts pour les marchandises, de boutiques et d'échoppes, de logements pour les hommes d'affaires de passage », était, avec l'église, le bâtiment principal de toute communauté italienne en Orient. « Chaque nationalité, en obtenant des empereurs des localités distinctes pour leurs intérêts temporels, acquièrent en même temps la faculté d'avoir des églises ou mieux des chapelles, ainsi que des lieux de sépulture et autres, pour le culte ou l'exercice de la charité. (Belin, 1894, cité dans Marmara, 2024, 20)

The district or foundouk "formed of warehouses for goods, shops and stalls, lodgings for passing businessmen", was, with the church, the principal building of any Italian community in the East. "Each nationality, by obtaining from the emperors distinct localities for their temporal interests, acquired at the same time the faculty of having churches or better chapels, as well as places of burial and others, for worship or the exercise of charity. (Belin, 1894, as cited in Marmara, 2024, 20)

The word foundouk, as a space of economic and cultural exchange, is described as multifunctional places combining warehouses, shops, food stalls and housing, embodying a small-scale infrastructure dedicated to interaction. In Levantine literature, these places are often represented as living spaces where different cultures, languages and traditions meet. In this text, the word foundouk represents more than just an economic center. This place becomes a symbol of globalization, a true crossroads of commercial and cultural exchanges, and also attracted the attention of travel writers.

Regarding the centrality of the church in structuring communities, the role of churches and chapels as centres of Italian communities in the East highlights another important feature of Levantine literature: the observation of the social and spiritual composition of foreigners. For writers, these places of worship are often the starting point for an exploration of the particularities of the diaspora and its relations with the host country. Here, the Church appears as a pillar of the identity of the Italian community, allowing it to preserve its culture and respond to its spiritual and social needs.

For territoriality and community organization, the creation of separate places based on temporal interests reflects organized territoriality, as often seen in literature on foreign settlements and neighborhoods in port cities and trading centers. This is a recorded feature. This organization allows foreign communities to govern themselves while building bridges with local communities. Reports can explore the tensions and cooperation that arise from these territorial arrangements. Visual or architectural aspects of these places, such as places of worship, cemeteries, and houses that make up the urban landscape, can also be highlighted.

In view of a perspective on otherness and charity, the text also mentions places for "practicing worship and acts of charity," an aspect that emphasizes the importance of community values and solidarity. These elements are often used in stories to explain differences in the cultural and religious practices of the different civilizations with which people come into contact. For example, authors may demonstrate curiosity and a critical perspective on extraterrestrial ways of life by describing rituals, ceremonies, or human interactions that they have observed in these places.

Finally, to adequately address the theme of reflection on fluid identities, this quote illustrates a key aspect of Levantine literature: the fluidity of identities in spaces of encounter and exchange. The foundations and churches of the Italian community are not only markers of identity in remote areas, but also places where assimilation and adaptation to local conditions take place. The tension between rootedness and mobility, belonging and otherness,



is expressed in the chronicles of travelers who seek to understand how these small communities survive and thrive in conditions that are foreign to them. It is a recurring theme.

This text accurately describes the essential structure of the Italian community in the medieval East, a theme often used by authors of Levantine literature to analyze cultural, lifestyle, and economic exchanges in the contact zone. Foundations, churches, and charities are all main points for understanding the richness and complexity of the world depicted. For Levantine literature, these elements act as a prism through which to explore ideas of community, otherness, and universality in constantly changing spaces.

Example 2

The following passage describes the emergence and spatial organization of the Levantine community in Constantinople, emphasizing the strategic and economic importance of its location.

La communauté levantine de Constantinople vit le jour sur la rive droite de la Corne d'Or, autour des murailles byzantines, dans les environs du port, sur le parcours compris entre les portes Néorion (Bahçekapı), Peramatis (Balıkpazarı Kapısı) et Droungarion (Zindankapı). « Chacune des colonies franques, qui en avait obtenu la concession des empereurs, posséda sur le parcours compris entre ces trois portes, un établissement central sis dans l'enceinte de la ville, intra muros avec une échelle ou débarcadère, placée plus ou moins en prolongation de ces établissements, sur le rivage pour les opérations commerciales. (Belin, 1894, cité dans Marmara, 2024, 21)

The Levantine community of Constantinople was born on the right bank of the Golden Horn, around the Byzantine walls, in the vicinity of the port, on the route between the Neorion (Bahçekapı), Peramatis (Balıkpazarı Kapısı) and Droungarion (Zindankapı) gates. "Each of the Frankish colonies, which had obtained a concession from the emperors, had on the route between these three gates, a central establishment located within the city walls, intra muros with a ladder or landing stage, placed more or less as an extension of these establishments, on the shore for commercial operations. (Belin, 1894, as cited in Marmara, 2024, 21)

The role of geography in Levantine literature is significant because the descriptions of these places highlight the strategic location of Levantine communities around the Golden Horn, an important site of commercial and cultural exchange for Constantinople. In literature, these geographical details often serve to anchor a story in an identifiable space and to explore how a foreign community interacts with its local environment. The authors were certainly aware of the importance of the gates cited as passages and access points for commercial and cultural connections between the Byzantine and Latin worlds.

Through the French colonies as cultural microcosms, this passage specifies that each Frankish colony had obtained an imperial concession and had a central establishment within the walls. This structure shows how the colonies were organized autonomously while integrating into the urban nature of Constantinople. In literature, these establishments become privileged spaces of observation, where travelers describe the daily life of merchants, their interactions with the local population, their traditions and their architecture. These accounts often provide detailed insights into the cultural and economic particularities of foreign colonies.

The ladder or landing stage, described as an extension of the settlements on the shore, symbolizes the direct connection between land and sea, between Constantinople and the rest of the Mediterranean world. In travel narratives, these transition points are often seen as centers of commercial activity, but also as spaces of encounter and cultural mixing. Travelers could relate the excitement of these landing stages: the ships loaded with exotic goods, the diverse languages spoken by the merchants, and the energy that characterizes these spaces in perpetual activity.

The fact that the settlements were within the city walls, shows their integration into the heart of Constantinople while preserving their specificity. This proximity to the Byzantine centres of power while maintaining a relative autonomy is a balance that travelers would have found fascinating. These accounts could have included comparisons between the lifestyles of the Byzantines and the French merchants, highlighting cultural similarities and differences within a shared urban setting.

The text highlights the importance of the colonies' commercial activities. In travel literature, these economic aspects are often linked to observations on the wealth of the markets, the diversity of the goods exchanged and local commercial practices. Travelers would have described the goods arriving at these landing stages: spices, silks, wines, precious metals, etc. These details allow us to understand the impact of the colonies on regional trade and their role in the economic dynamism of Constantinople.



The passage illustrates how the Levantine community was integrated into the economic and urban nature of Constantinople. It also reveals central themes of travel literature: strategic geography, cultural dynamics, commercial exchanges, and the organization of foreign communities. These elements, often observed and described by travelers, allow us to better understand the complex interactions between different civilizations at a time when trade and intercultural contact were essential.

Example 3

The following passage describes the rise and importance of an Italian family, the Amalfis, in the Levantine community of Constantinople.

La première grande famille d'hommes d'affaires italiens que l'on connaisse à Constantinople était amalfitaine. Le personnage s'appelait Mauro. Sa fortune, acquise par des exportations vers l'Occident de soieries et d'objets précieux, lui donna la première place dans la colonie, et l'empereur l'honora de la dignité d'Hypatos. Son fils, Pantaleone di Mauro, lui succéda. Honoré lui aussi du titre d'Hypatos, il poursuivit la politique de « pieuse générosité de son père ». (Renouard, 1969, cité dans Marmara, 2024, 22)

The first great family of Italian businessmen known in Constantinople was Amalfi. The man was called Mauro. His fortune, acquired by exporting silks and precious objects to the West, gave him the first place in the colony, and the emperor honored him with the dignity of Hypatos. His son, Pantaleone di Mauro, succeeded him. Also honored with the title of Hypatos, he continued his father's policy of "pious generosity." (Renouard, 1969, as cited in Marmara, 2024, 22)

The Amalfi family, represented by Mauro and his son Pantaleone di Mauro, illustrates the dominant role of Italian merchants in trade between the East and the West. Their fortune, built on the trade in silks and precious objects, testifies to the wealth of the merchant networks active in Constantinople. In Levantine literature, these stories are frequent and often admired: travelers describe these characters as emblematic figures of entrepreneurship and prosperity in the great port cities. The mention of luxury products (silks, precious objects) adds a prestigious dimension to the story.

The title of Hypatos, granted to Mauro by the emperor, reflects the integration of Italian merchants into the political and social sphere of Constantinople. This title, of Byzantine origin, symbolizes not only imperial recognition but also the strategic importance of relations between the Byzantines and foreign merchants. Accounts often highlight these honorific distinctions, as they show how foreigners could climb the social ladder in multicultural contexts. For travelers, these figures sometimes served as models of success or embodied harmony between different cultures.

The text also evokes the moral virtues of Mauro and his son Pantaleone, in particular their policy of "pious generosity". This expression suggests philanthropic activities or donations to religious and social institutions, reinforcing their prestige in the colony. In Levantine literature, these character traits are often emphasized to give an ideal image of the protagonists. "Pious generosity" can also reflect the religious and cultural values that structured Italian merchant communities.

The mention of Mauro and his son Pantaleone highlights the importance of family dynasties in the sustainability of trade and relations between East and West. These families, often mentioned, symbolize continuity and stability in a constantly changing world. The stories could include descriptions of family relationships, the transmission of know-how, and the networks of influence of these dynasties.

This passage contextualizes Constantinople's central place as a crossroads of civilizations where foreign figures could thrive and integrate. Travelers fascinated by this cosmopolitan city would likely have described Mauro and his family as examples of this cultural and economic diversity. The text illustrates not only the Amalfis' economic success, but also their role in the social and cultural dynamics of Constantinople. For literature, these stories enrich understanding of the interactions between East and West, while celebrating individual achievements that transcend cultural boundaries.

Example 4

The following passage highlights the exceptional privileges granted by Alexios I Comnenus to the Venetians in exchange for their military and political support in the Byzantine Empire.

Alexis I^{er} Commène assura à ses alliés vénitiens d'énormes avantages commerciaux dans tout son Empire, sauf en mer Noire. En plus d'une rente annuelle pour le doge et le patriache de Grado, d'un don annuel



aux églises de Venise, l'empereur octroyait « un quartier » à Constantinople, sur la Corne d'Or, entre la Porte Hébraïque et la Porte de Vigla, autrement dit dans l'Embolon, avec trois échelles et un four de 20 besants de rente, près de l'église Saint-Akindynos, sans compter l'église de Saint-André à Dyrrhachion, avec les maisons attenantes et la rente qu'elle rapportait ». (Ducellier, 1986, cité dans Marmara, 2024, 23)

Alexios I Comnenos secured for his Venetian allies enormous commercial advantages throughout his Empire, except in the Black Sea. In addition to an annual annuity for the Doge and Patriarch of Grado, an annual gift to the churches of Venice, the emperor granted "a district" in Constantinople, on the Golden Horn, between the Hebrew Gate and the Vigla Gate, in other words in the Embolon, with three ladders and an oven of 20 bezants of annuity, near the church of Saint Akindynos, not counting the church of Saint Andrew in Dyrrhachion, with the adjoining houses and the annuity it brought." (Ducellier, 1986, as cited in Marmara, 2024, 23)

Alexios I, Byzantine emperor, guaranteed the Venetians a privileged status in his empire, offering them extensive commercial advantages, except in the Black Sea. This last point underlines the Byzantine desire to preserve certain strategic monopolies. Travel literature, particularly related with trade, often emphasizes the political and economic agreements that shaped the interactions between different powers. These commercial privileges included an annual annuity for the Doge of Venice and the Patriarch of Grado, donations to the churches of Venice, strengthening the religious ties between the two powers, a strategic "quarter" in Constantinople, at the heart of the Empire's commercial activities. These details illustrate the Venetian influence in the Byzantine capital and highlight Constantinople's position as an economic and diplomatic center.

The district granted to the Venetians, located on the Golden Horn between the Hebrew Gate and the Vigla Gate, is in the Embolon, a strategic area for maritime trade. This location allowed direct access to the port facilities and facilitated trade. The port infrastructure (mentioned as "three ladders") symbolises the importance of maritime trade for the Venetians. The allocation of an "oven of 20 bezants" of income indicates an economic advantage for the Venetians in managing their food needs and their local trade. In the stories, this type of privilege is often seen as a marker of the prosperity and influence of a foreign community in a large city.

In addition to economic benefits, Alexios I also granted religious and cultural assets. The Church of Saint Akindynos in Constantinople and the Church of Saint Andrew in Dyrrhachion and their rents. These gifts show how the Byzantine power used religious resources to strengthen alliances. The churches and religious monuments granted to foreigners are often described as spaces of encounter between cultures, while affirming their specific identity.

By offering these privileges to the Venetians, Alexios I consolidated a valuable alliance. This policy reflects the precarious situation of the Byzantine Empire at the time, particularly in the face of Norman and Seljuk threats. Levantine literature frequently highlights these relationships of mutual dependence between the powers, emphasizing the importance of commercial and territorial concessions in maintaining balances. This passage offers an insight into the way in which trade and politics were intertwined. The precise description of places, rents, and privileges highlights the complex organization of the Byzantine Empire, while illustrating the central role of Venice in Mediterranean trade. The text shows how Alexios I skillfully used commercial and religious privileges to secure a strategic alliance with Venice. For travelers and writers of narratives, this type of alliance illustrates the interdependence of the great powers of the time and highlights the importance of Constantinople as a commercial, political, and cultural crossroads.

This passage describes a period of transition and decline for the Pisan community in Constantinople, eclipsed by Florence in the early 15th century. It sheds light on the social, religious and economic organization of the Pisans in the Byzantine capital, while situating their neighborhood in a specific urban context.

Au début de XVe siècle, cette colonie fut éclipsée par Florence. Les Pisans possédaient à Constantinople deux églises : Saint-Nicolas et Saint-Pierre. Ces églises avaient un prieur commun et possédaient un hôpital, un cimetière et des maisons de rapport. Le docteur Mordtmann situe le quartier des Pisans de la porte de Saint Marc ou de l'Icanatisse jusqu'à la porte de Neorium qui séparait leur quartier de celui des Génois. (Mordtmann, 1892, cité dans Marmara, 2024, 25)

At the beginning of the 15th century, this colony was eclipsed by Florence. The Pisans had two churches in Constantinople: St. Nicholas and St. Peter. These churches had a common prior and had a hospital, a cemetery and tenement houses. Dr. Mordtmann locates the Pisans' quarter from the gate of St. Mark or the Icanatisse to the gate of Neorium which separated their quarter from that of the Genoese. (Mordtmann, 1892, as cited in Marmara, 2024, 25)



The Pisans had established a well-organized colony in Constantinople, including two churches, St. Nicholas and St. Peter, reflecting the importance of religion in structuring foreign communities. There was a common prior. They emphasized a centralized management of spiritual and administrative affairs. Infrastructures such as a hospital and a cemetery show that the community was self-sufficient and able to meet the needs of its members, including in the areas of health and funerary rites. In the narratives, such descriptions illustrate the autonomy and organizational complexity of the foreign colonies in Constantinople.

By the early 15th century, Florence's commercial and political dominance was in decline for the Pisans. This event reflected the changing dynamics between the Italian powers and their influence in the Byzantine Empire. This change embodied the commercial rivalries and the shifting of power centers within Mediterranean trade.

The mention of the separation of the Pisan and Genoese quarters highlights the tensions and competition between these two Italian communities. These rivalries were often linked to the commercial privileges, resources, and political influence granted by the Byzantine Empire. These rivalries add a dramatic and dynamic aspect to the description of foreign colonies.

This text illustrates Constantinople as a multicultural crossroads where various communities coexisted and structured their spaces in distinct ways. This diversity enriched the narratives, making the city fascinating not only for its monuments but also for its varied inhabitants.

This passage shows both the decline of the Pisans and their rich architectural and organizational legacy in Constantinople. It highlights Italian rivalries and the complexity of urban life in the Byzantine capital. Such descriptions are essential to convey the historical and cultural richness of a city that was a true crossroads of civilisations.

Example 6

This text offers an overview of the urban and strategic evolution of a specific space in Constantinople before the installation of the Genoese.

L'emplacement était à cette date, libre de constructions. « Le rivage en était autrefois défendu par un ouvrage fortifié auquel était fixé une des extrémités de la chaîne qui pouvait barrer l'entrée du port, mais, par surcroît de précaution, ce château avait été démoli avant l'installation des Génois, et il ne s'élevait plus dans les environs que quelques chapelles disséminées dans les vergers. (Sauvaget, 1934, cité dans Marmara, 2024, 29)

The site was at that time free of buildings. "The shore was formerly defended by a fortified structure to which was fixed one of the ends of the chain that could block the entrance to the port, but, as an added precaution, this castle had been demolished before the Genoese settled, and only a few chapels scattered in the orchards remained in the area. (Sauvaget, 1934, as cited in Marmara, 2024, 29)

The mention of a fortified work, intended to control the entrance to the port with a chain, underlines the strategic importance of this location. The chain is a symbol of power and maritime control, often mentioned in historical and travel accounts to represent the defense of the city. The demolition before the installation of the Genoese, this precaution indicates an effort to limit the military or defensive ambitions of the new foreign communities, such as the Genoese. In Levantine literature, this type of detail reflects the political tensions and the management of urban spaces by the Byzantine Empire.

The absence of fortifications or important buildings at this time contrasts with the previous military structures. This transformation illustrates the change in function and perception of this space, from a strategic area to a more open and civil space. Chapels scattered in the orchards, the poetic description evokes a peaceful and rural landscape. For a traveler, these elements offer a striking contrast to the usual image of the densely built and fortified Constantinople. This enriches the vision of the city as a mixture of urbanity and nature.

The chapels testify to the persistence of religious life in this area despite the dismantling of the military infrastructure. These small sacred structures reflect the attachment of the inhabitants to their faith, even in less densely populated spaces. The orchards bring a lively and organic dimension to this landscape. The combination of orchards and chapels offers a bucolic vision that can surprise travelers, accustomed to stories of urban grandeur and political tensions.

For Levantine narratives, this passage presents a lesser-known and less glorified aspect of Constantinople. A city in transformation, that is, the transition from a defensive space to an open place with chapels and orchards, reflects the constant changes in the use of urban spaces. The absence of fortifications and the presence of religious and



natural elements symbolize a relative appeasement, or at least a new function of the place, far from military concerns. We note a key moment in the urban and strategic transition of Constantinople, marked by the dismantling of defenses and the reappropriation of space by religious and natural elements. For literature, it offers a different perspective of the city, oscillating between its historical grandeur and its more modest and peaceful landscapes.

Example 7

This passage discusses the dress regulations imposed on zimmi (non-Muslims under the protection of the Islamic state, often subject to a special tax, the *jizya*) in the Ottoman Empire. These dress rules, enshrined in social and legal codes, reflect both social hierarchies and the desire to assert a clear distinction between communities.

Il était défendu au zimmi de porter le costume de musulman et le turban, surtout celui des gens de loi. Dans les bains publics, les femmes des sujets tributaires devaient se servir de tabliers (peştemal) de couleur différente de ceux des musulmanes. Pour mieux éviter qu'elles soient confondues avec les musulmanes, il fallait qu'elles portent un collier d'un métal ordinaire. Les sujets tributaires portaient des habits simples de couleur foncée, avec un bonnet de peau de mouton noire, et des bottes noires, bleues ou violettes, celles de couleur jaune leur étant interdites. (D'Ohsson, 1787, cité dans Marmara, 2024, 92)

The zimmi was forbidden to wear the Muslim costume and the turban, especially that of the lawyers. In the public baths, the women of the tributary subjects had to use aprons (peştemal) of a different color from those of the Muslim women. To better avoid being confused with the Muslim women, they had to wear a necklace of ordinary metal. The tributary subjects wore simple dark-colored clothes, with a black sheepskin cap, and black, blue or purple boots, those of yellow color being forbidden to them. (D'Ohsson, 1787, as cited in Marmara, 2024, 92)

Zimmi were not allowed to wear the turban or the costumes of Muslims, especially those of lawyers. This restriction was intended to visibly mark the difference between Muslims and non-Muslims in public spaces. It also symbolised a hierarchy in which Muslims held a privileged position. In public baths, women of tributary subjects had to wear aprons of a different colour and a necklace made of ordinary metal. These elements reinforced the physical and symbolic separation between communities, while making the religious and social affiliation of individuals visible.

Tributary subjects were required to wear dark-coloured clothing, which contrasted with the often richer and more colourful clothing of Muslims. This choice was intended to emphasise the modesty and submission of non-Muslims in the social order. The colour yellow, considered prestigious and often associated with specific religious and cultural symbols, was reserved for Muslims. Zimmi were required to make do with colours such as black, blue or purple, which were less symbolically marked.

By imposing distinct dress, the Ottoman authorities ensured that each individual was immediately identifiable, thus avoiding confusion between Muslims and non-Muslims. These restrictions reflected a system in which religious identity was at the heart of social and legal organization. They reaffirmed the dominance of Muslims and the subordination of other groups.

Descriptions of distinctive costumes and regulations would have reinforced the image of a codified and hierarchical Orient, fascinating for its complex rules. These practices could also be interpreted as revealing religious and social tensions in the Ottoman Empire. This text illustrates how clothing practices were instrumentalized to assert a clear distinction between the different religious communities of the Ottoman Empire. These dress codes went well beyond simple social norms, playing a crucial role in maintaining social and political order. For a traveler or an observer, they would have represented a central element in the organization of Ottoman society.

Example 8

This text about Galata district, illustrates the dynamics of movement and integration of Genoese communities in Constantinople after the Ottoman conquest, highlighting their migration, their initial settlement, and the urban and religious reorganization that followed.

À ce premier fond de population génoise, relate Dalleggio d'Alessio, « vint s'ajouter celle de Caffa (en Crimée), transportée à Constantinople à la suite de la conquête de cette colonie par les Turcs en 1475. » Les Génois de Caffa furent installés au quartier désert de Salmatomruk, près d'Edirnekapi, qui prit le nom de Keçe Mahallesi (quartier de Caffa), deux églises leur furent accordées. Plus tard cette colonie déserta ce quartier isolé de Caffa pour celui de Galata. Les Eglises Saint-Nicolas et Sainte-Marie furent transformées



en mosquées, « cette dernière précisément sous le prétexte qu'il n'y avait plus que deux familles catholiques dans cette partie de la ville ». (Dalleggio d'Alessio, 1937, cité dans Marmara, 2024, 105-106)

To this first Genoese population, relates Dalleggio d'Alessio, "was added that of Caffa (in Crimea), transported to Constantinople following the conquest of this colony by the Turks in 1475." The Genoese of Caffa were settled in the deserted district of Salmatomruk, near Edirnekapi, which took the name of Kefe Mahallesi (district of Caffa), two churches were granted to them. Later this colony deserted this isolated district of Caffa for that of Galata. The Churches of Saint Nicholas and Saint Mary were transformed into mosques, "the latter precisely under the pretext that there were only two Catholic families left in this part of the city." (Dalleggio d'Alessio, 1937, as cited in Marmara, 2024, 105-106)

Regarding the historical context, after the conquest of Caffa in Crimea by the Turks in 1475, its Genoese inhabitants were moved to Constantinople, marking a major change in the composition of the city's foreign communities. The Genoese of Caffa were settled in the deserted Salmatomruk district, near Edirnekapi, which became known as Kefe Mahallesi (Caffa Quarter). This location reflected an effort of regroupment and control by the Ottoman authorities.

For the reconfiguration of the urban space, this isolated neighborhood did not attract the Genoese in the long term, who deserted it to settle in Galata, a more dynamic neighborhood better integrated into commerce and urban life. Analyzing religious consequences, two churches granted to the Genoese in Salmatomruk, Saint Nicholas and Saint Mary, were later transformed into mosques. This reflects not only a decrease in the Catholic population in the area, with an administrative justification: "there were only two Catholic families left.", but also an Ottoman policy of reallocating religious spaces according to needs and demographic transformations.

The conversion of churches into mosques marks an important cultural and symbolic change in the city. It highlights the adaptation of religious infrastructure to meet the growing needs of the Muslim community. The progressive marginalization of Catholic minorities in certain areas of Constantinople.

The displacement of the Genoese from Caffa and the initial allocation of the Salmatomruk district testify to the Ottoman policy of integrating conquered populations while controlling their movements. The reduction of Catholic families and the conversion of churches into mosques would illustrate the cultural and religious domination of the Ottomans over foreign populations. Galata became a place of resettlement, highlighting the attractiveness of this district for merchant populations.

The above text highlights the forced migration of the Genoese from Caffa, their initial resettlement in a deserted neighborhood, and then their relocation to a neighborhood more appropriate for their activities. The conversion of churches into mosques illustrates a significant socio-cultural transition, where demographic and religious transformations redrew the map of Constantinople. These stories enrich the understanding of the evolution of foreign communities under the Ottoman Empire and offer a unique perspective for travel literature, which immortalizes these transformations in a narrative framework.

Conclusion

This article underscores the significance of differentiating between Ottoman Latins and Levantines to foster a deeper understanding of the historical, cultural, and literary dynamics of the Orient. Through an exploration of the histories of Levantine families and their invaluable contributions to a distinctive literary tradition, we have demonstrated how the commercial, cultural, and social experiences of these communities have collectively shaped the emergence of a unique literary identity. This investigation sheds light on the intricate nature of interactions that define the Levantine experience.

Drawing on Rinaldo Marmara's book, this retrospective approach emphasizes the profound ways in which historical analysis enhances literary studies. By unravelling the complex interplay between Eastern and Western influences, we not only enrich our comprehension of Levantine literature but also offer insights into the broader cultural exchanges that have defined this region's history. Such analysis provides a framework for understanding how the convergence of diverse social, cultural, and economic factors contributed to the creation of a literary identity that is distinctly Levantine.

Moreover, this article adopts a global lens to examine social structures, offering a renewed perspective on the cultural evolution of Levantines. By doing so, it not only contributes to a better appreciation of their rich heritage but also situates Levantine literature within the broader context of global cultural and literary history. This multidimensional approach highlights the importance of the Levantines' legacy, fostering an appreciation for their



role in bridging the divisions between East and West, and contributing to the ongoing dialogue between diverse cultural and literary traditions.

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