



42nd Levantine Heritage Foundation Zoom lecture with guest speaker Dr. Mehmet Doğar
10 March 2026, 6.00 pm (UK time)

Networks of Influence: Levantine Agency and Italian Business in the Early Turkish Republic (1923–1939)

This paper explores the role of Italian Levantines and residents in shaping Turkish–Italian economic relations during the formative years of the Turkish Republic. Far from passive actors, these intermediaries, often connected to power at varying levels and through intricate networks, played a decisive role in opening the door for Italian capital, particularly in the 1920s, at a time when Ankara urgently sought foreign investment. By tracing their strategies and private interests, this study argues that Italian capital secured a foothold in Turkey not merely through official diplomacy, but thanks to the efforts of Levantines on the ground. Leveraging their deep understanding of Anatolia’s shifting political and socioeconomic landscape and their personal connections, they advanced their own agendas while collectively serving the ambitions of various Italian business groups such as Milan’s *Società Commerciale d’Oriente* (COMOR). Drawing on extensive Turkish and Italian archival sources and contemporary publications, this paper thus offers fresh insight into how Levantines shaped bilateral economic ties between two Mediterranean countries and, in so doing, contributed to building the foundations of Turkey’s early Republican economy.

Booking essential: <https://mehmet-dogar-presentation.eventbrite.co.uk>

Contact: contact@levantineheritage.com



Alberti, Alfred. <https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/>



Mehmet Doğar earned his PhD in History from the University of Cambridge, where his dissertation examined Turkish–Italian economic relations during the interwar period. His research focuses on the diplomatic and socioeconomic history of the late Ottoman Empire and the early Turkish Republic, with particular emphasis on their interactions within Europe and the Mediterranean. He is currently a BIRI Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the British Institute at Ankara, working on the Ottoman Mobilities and Interactions project. In addition, he is a Bye-Fellow at Homerton College, Cambridge, and a Tutor in History at the University of Cambridge Professional and Continuing Education. His work has appeared in journals such as *Middle Eastern Studies* and *Turkish Historical Review*.