



LEVANTINE ENTERPRISE IN TRANSITION:
THE FOSCOLO FAMILY
IN 19TH-CENTURY ISTANBUL

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This presentation explores the economic transformation of nineteenth-century Istanbul through the story of the Levantine Foscolo family, with particular emphasis on the districts of Galata and Pera. Originally members of the Venetian aristocracy, the Foscolos became deeply integrated into Ottoman society and played an active role in the evolving commercial, legal, and social landscape of the empire.

Drawing on the family's migration history, professional activities, and business ventures, the presentation examines how they adapted to the profound economic changes brought about by industrialization, the expansion of foreign capital, and new forms of corporate organization. Particular attention is given to the family's involvement in trade, finance, shipping, and coal enterprises, which positioned them among the influential actors of Istanbul's Levantine business community.

Through the experience of the Foscolo family, this study offers a broader perspective on how Istanbul emerged as a dynamic cosmopolitan centre where Eastern and Western economic networks, cultures, and identities intersected during the nineteenth century.

**ISTANBUL AS A
COSMOPOLITAN HUB
"GALATA-PERA"**



Istanbul was distinguished within the Ottoman Empire by its multicultural identity, symbolizing central authority after the 1453 conquest. Although significantly transformed into an Islamic capital, districts such as Galata and Pera retained their distinct foreign, non-Muslim, and European character, influenced primarily by longstanding Genoese autonomy and cultural diversity including Greek, Jewish, Turkish, and Italian communities.

Initially shaped by Ottoman architecture, these districts underwent substantial changes after 1535 with the establishment of the French embassy, followed by those of England, Venice, the Netherlands, Poland, and Denmark due to diplomatic restrictions within the walled city. This led to a concentration of Levantine, European, and non-Muslim populations, creating a distinctly European urban and architectural landscape by the late 19th century. Italian merchant families, primarily of Genoese origin, played key roles in the economic vitality of Galata and Pera, especially in maritime trade linking the Mediterranean and Black Sea.



Pera
(Late 19th Century)



Constantinople.

L'église Ste. Trinité, Pera.

Editeur Max Fruchtmann, Constantinople. 1867.

Photogr. Sébah & Joaillier.

Pera
(Late 19th Century)



Pera
(Late 19th Century)

In the 19th century, increased migration from Italy reshaped social dynamics, with affluent residences coexisting alongside crowded tenements. Galata developed into a major hub for international trade and finance, attracting European merchants, industrialists, and bankers. Between 1840 and 1900, roughly 100,000 non-Muslims settled in these districts, significantly influencing their cultural, economic, and architectural evolution. Consequently, Galata emerged as a vital financial center, and Pera's theaters, cafés, and arcades mirrored European urban culture, symbolizing Istanbul's synthesis of Eastern and Western influences.



Pera
(Late 19th Century)



Pera
(Late 19th Century)



Pera
(Late 19th Century)

The Foscolo family was a prominent Venetian noble lineage whose influence spanned maritime trade, diplomacy, and military affairs from the medieval period through the early modern era. Over centuries, family members played significant roles in Venetian relations with Byzantium and the Ottoman Empire, establishing branches across the eastern Mediterranean, including Crete, Corfu, İzmir, and Istanbul. Although their political prominence declined after the fall of the Venetian Republic in 1797, the Foscolos remained an important Levantine family and later became part of Istanbul's cosmopolitan elite.



Pera
(Late 19th Century)



Pera
(Late 19th Century)



Pera
(Late 19th Century)

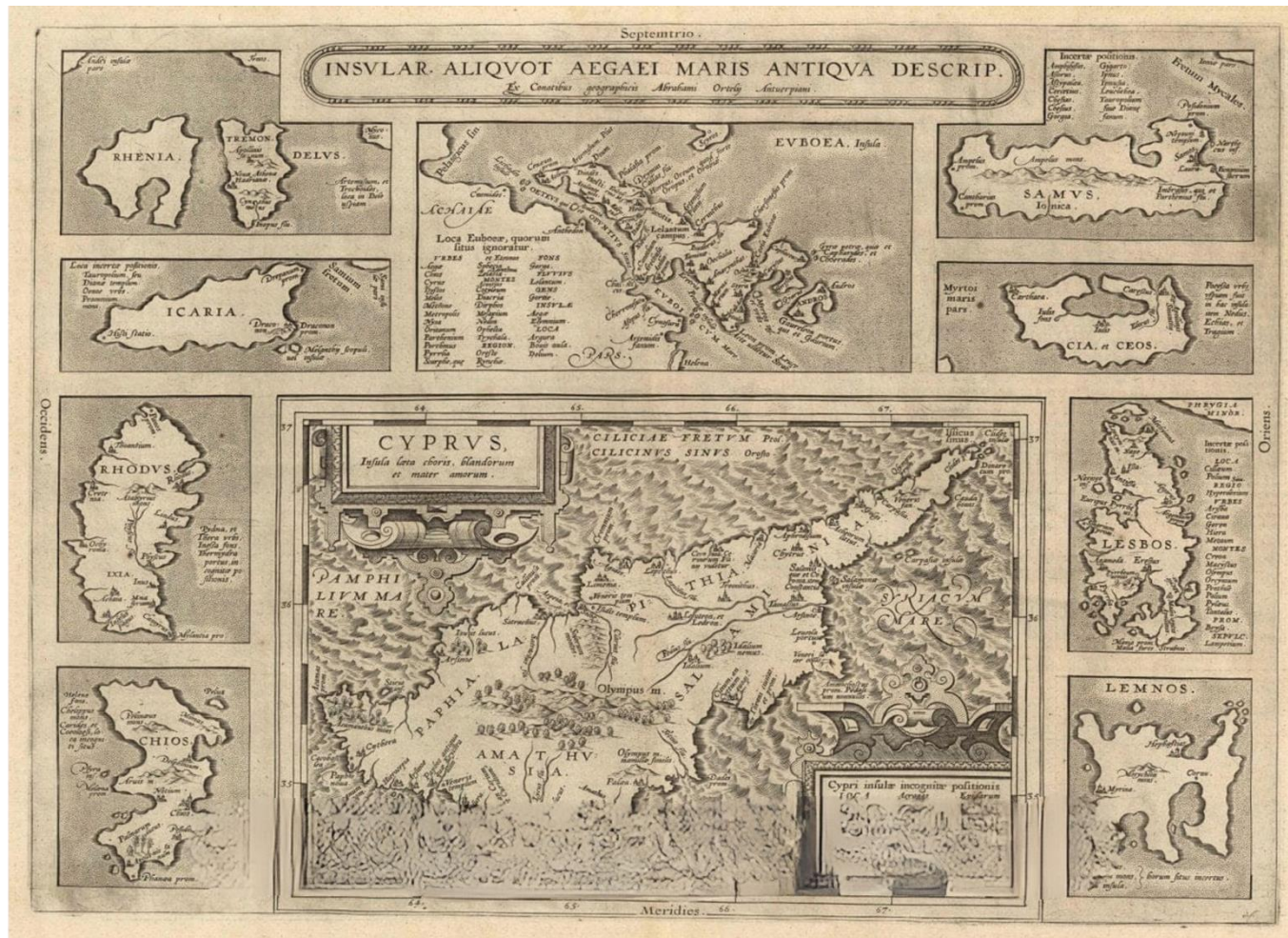
SETTLEMENT OF THE
FOSCOLO FAMILY IN
OTTOMAN LANDS



In the 18th and 19th centuries, a significant number of Latin families from the Aegean islands of Tinos, Syra, Chio, Naxos and Santorini settled in Istanbul and İzmir. These individuals were either Catholics residing on the Aegean islands or the descendants of Italian settlers who had undergone a process of Hellenization. Notably, the population included a small number of Orthodox converts to Catholicism. The majority of the population spoke Greek, while Italian was no longer widely spoken on the islands. It is evident that, due to the historical legal privilege accorded to Catholics over Orthodox Christians, a negative attitude towards the Franks had been perpetuated among the Greek populace for centuries. This conflict frequently escalated into overt hostility during the 19th century. The economic difficulties experienced on the island, in addition to the prevailing hostility amongst the Orthodox majority, resulted in a significant number of Catholics being compelled to seek exile in the major port cities. The migration movement that began in the 18th century reached its peak with the Greek uprising of 1821, during which the major ports of İzmir and Istanbul emerged as key hubs for Catholic islanders. For instance, an analysis of the death records of the Latin church of Sainte-Marie Draperis in Constantinople from 1800 to 1855 reveals that 17.48% of the deceased originated from Tinos, 13.43% from Syra, and 2.18% from Chio, amounting to a total of 33.09% from these three islands.



Insulae Maris Aegaei
Islands of the Aegean Sea



Aegean Islands
Abraham Ortelius, Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1584.



Leonardo Foscolo
M. Merian, Theatrum Europaeum

Rinaldo Marmara, who revealed the baptismal records of the church on the island of Tinos between the years 1750-1850, also identified members of the Foscolo family. He identified members of the Foscolo family in the following villages: Agapi, Cazzarado, Xinara, Ktikado, Spilea. From the second half of the 19th century, the name Foscolo began to appear in the baptismal records of the Latin churches in Istanbul. Following the end of Venetian rule in 1797, Leonardo Foscolo (1765–1829), a member of the San Stefano branch of the Foscolo family, relocated to İzmir. Over time, the family became one of the city's most prominent foreign households. In 1878, Leonardo's son Nicolo Foscolo (1818–1878), together with his eldest son Antonio and in partnership with Anthony Mango, established the Foscolo-Mango Steamship Company in Istanbul. Nicolo's other son, Giovanni Foscolo (1839–1900), was employed by the family business in İzmir. Meanwhile, Paolo Foscolo (1840–1918), another son, inherited a substantial estate in Seydiköy, south of İzmir. The entire family eventually settled in Seydiköy.



Seydiköy

VENICE ROOTS



pre-1750

1 TINOS ISLAND settlement (Aegean Islands)

- Tinos Baptismal Records (1750-1850)
Revealed by Rinaldo Marmara
- identified members of Foscolo family in villages: **Agapi, Cazzeredo, Xinara, Ktikado, Spilea**



Family acquiring Austrian nationality

- Father of patriarch **Petro Foscolo** born on Tinos

2 MIGRATION TO KAVALA

- Petro Foscolo (patriarch)
born in Kavala

3 RELOCATION TO IZMIR (post-1797)

- **Leonardo Foscolo** (1765-1829)
relocation
- family becomes city's prominent
foreign household
- **Giovanni Foscolo** (1839-1900)
employed in family business
- Estate in Seydiköy inherited by
Paolo Foscolo (1840-1918)



Entire family eventually
settles in Seydiköy

1878

4 ESTABLISHMENT IN İSTANBUL (1878)

- Foscolo-Mango
Steamship Company
established by
Nicolo Foscolo (1818-
1878) and
son **Antonio**, in
partnership with
Anthony Mango

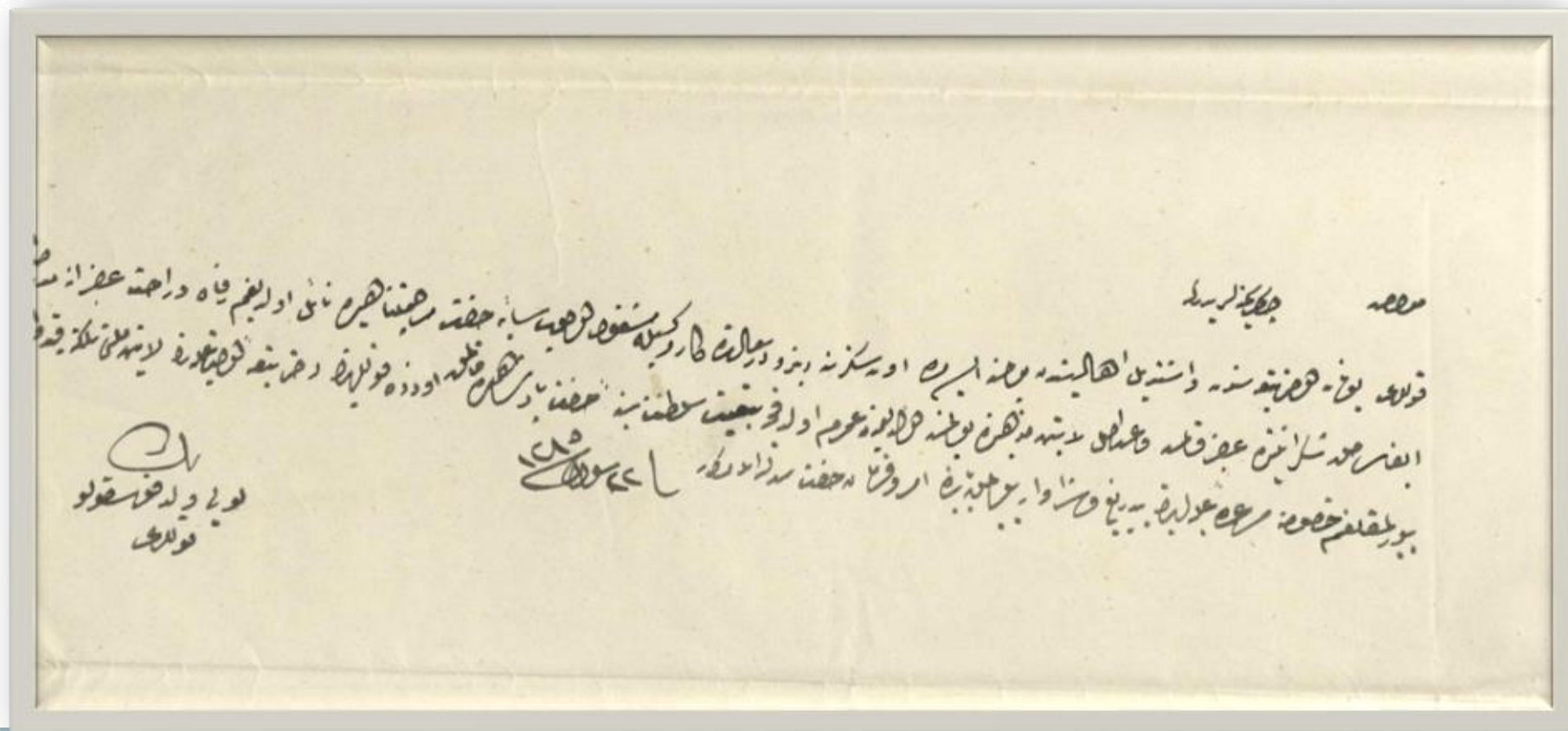
The Foscolo family's roots lie in Venice, with one branch settling in the Aegean Islands before eventually migrating to Kavala. The family patriarch, Petro Foscolo, was born in Kavala, while his father had been born on the island of Tinos. During their time on Tinos the family acquired Austrian nationality. Later, following the incorporation of Venice into Italy in 1866, they also sought Italian citizenship. Claiming that their commercial activities had been disrupted by the political changes, they appealed to the Italian Embassy for assistance. On the other hand, not all members of the family chose the same citizenship. For example, Luigi Foscolo, who had been residing in Istanbul since 1857 and was also from the island of Tinos, was a Greek citizen. Anna Foscolo, Carmella Antoinette Foscolo, Jeanne Foscolo and Virginie Foscolo were French citizens.

THEIR CAREERS IN ISTANBUL



In the final quarter of the 19th century, the Foscolo family became active in several sectors of Istanbul's business world. The first family member known to have entered the city's commercial life was Luigi Foscolo. Born in Kavala, he moved to Istanbul in 1857, where he began engaging in various business ventures.

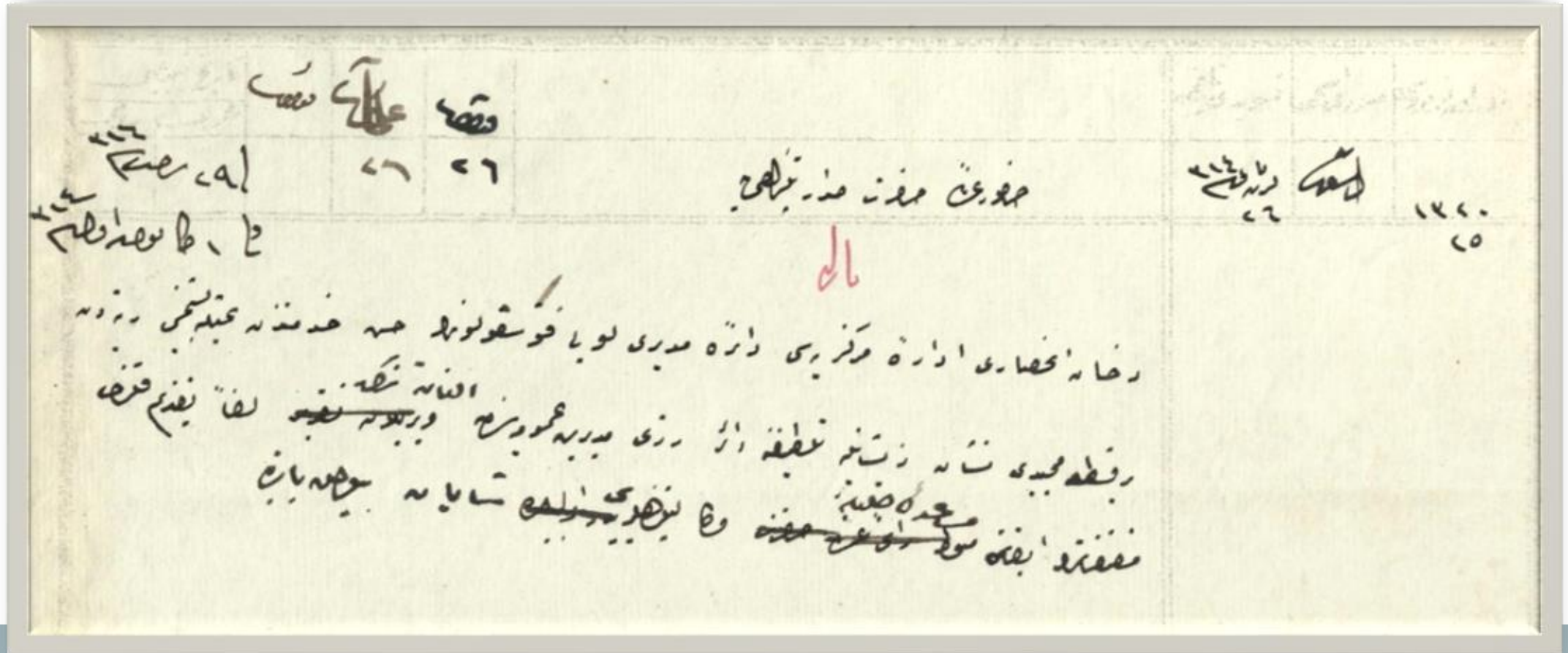
The *Annuaire Oriental* provides insight into the occupations of the Foscolo family in Istanbul beginning in 1868. That year, François Foscolo is listed as a music teacher, while Nicolas Foscolo appears as a blacksmith—the earliest known records of the family's professional presence in the city.



The Petition submitted by Luigi Foscolo, a Greek citizen,
to acquire Ottoman citizenship.

05.02.1869

(Ottoman Archives)



Luigi Foscolo was awarded the order of Mecidi, fifth class, in recognition of his distinguished service in the civil service.

13.12.1898

(Ottoman Archives)



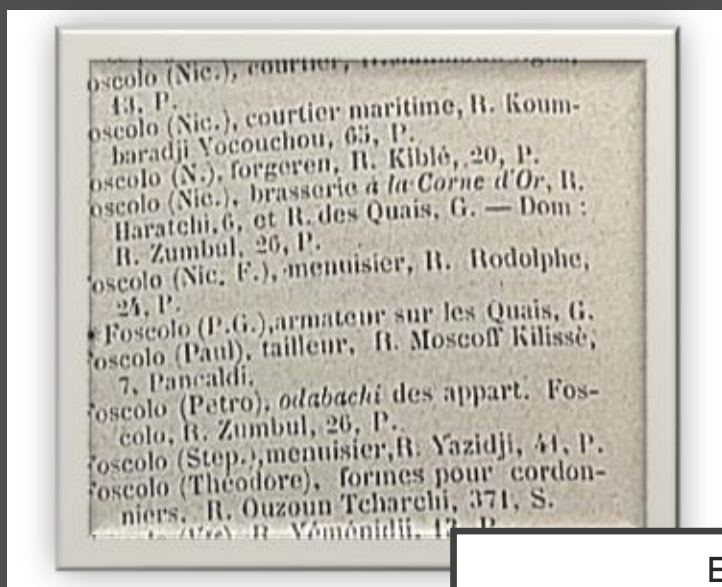
File concerning Nicola Foscolo, who changed his
nationality from Greek to Turkish.

30.03.1927

(Ottoman Archives)



Foscolo Mango et C^o, (anglaises),
 et négociants en charbon de terre,
 (Voir annonce page 89), Sandalgi
 Han, 6 à 10, G.
 Hill (A. A.), (The Glamorgan Coal Co
 Limited), Halagian Han, 9, 10, G.
 Hoffmann (S. et W.), 10, G.

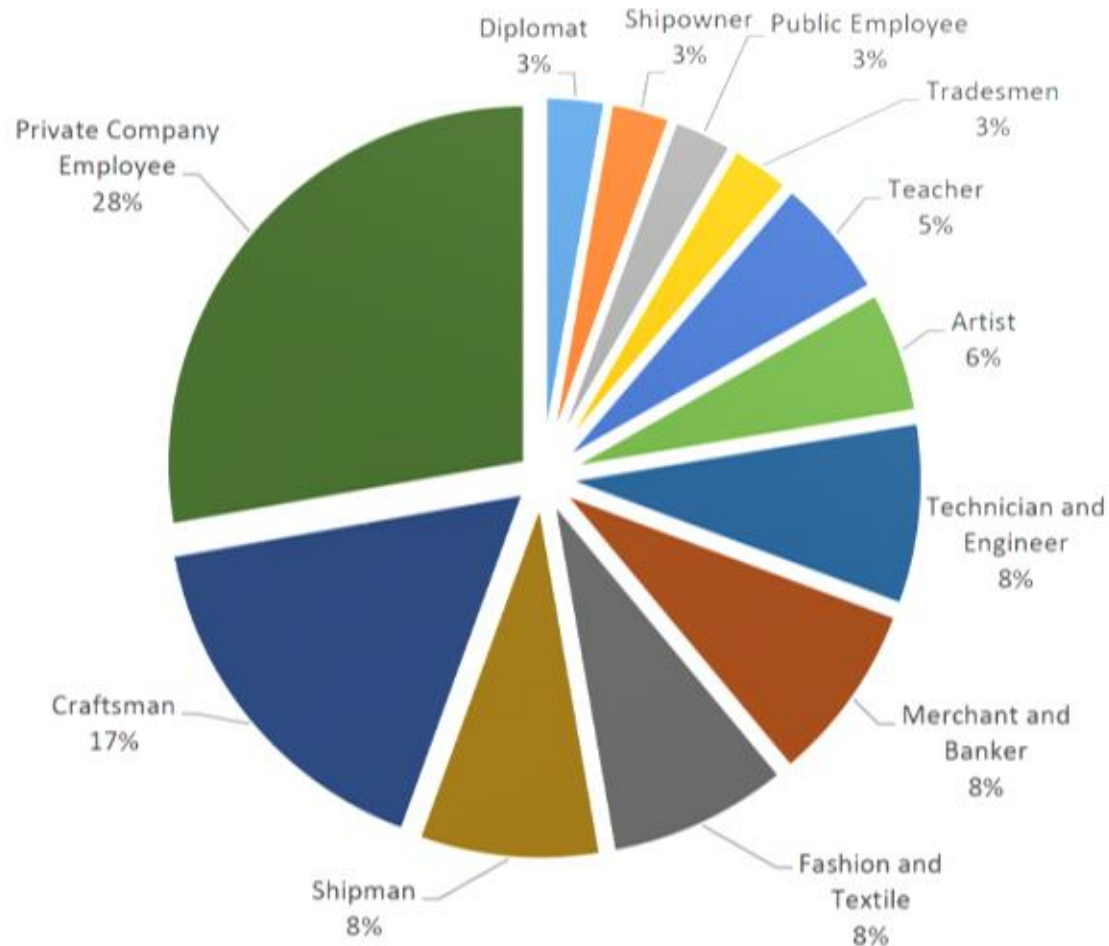


Foscolo François, (de piano et d'orgue) Grand'Rue 378, P.
 فوسكولو فرانسوا (من البيانو والارغنة) ٣٧٠

Examples from the "Annuaire Oriental" series

Occupational Distribution

The graph shows the occupational distribution of Foscolo family members in Istanbul's business and economic life starting from 1868 until 1921.

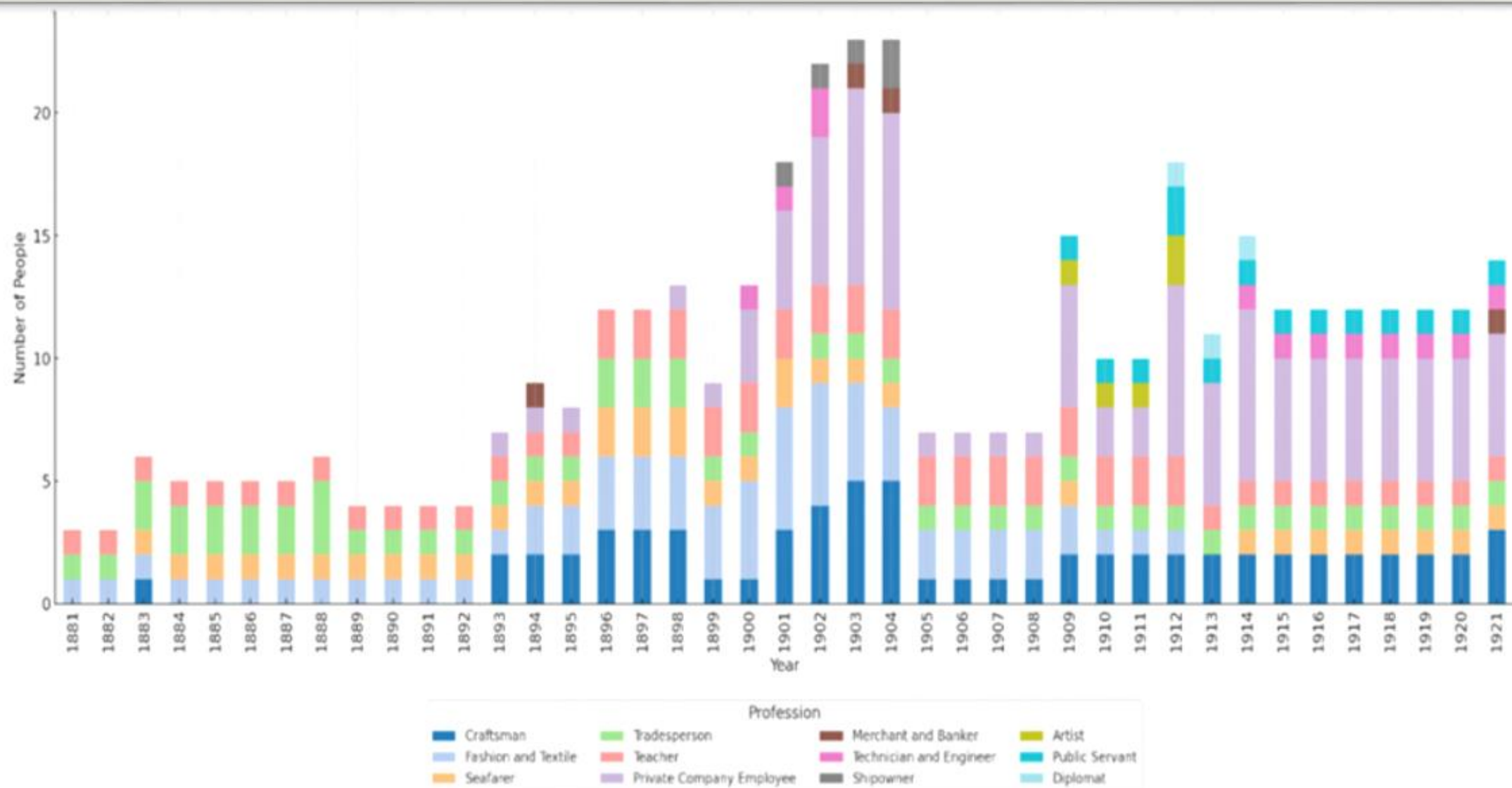


This pie chart illustrating the occupational distribution within the Foscolo family demonstrates a marked predominance of employment in the private sector, particularly in the domains of craftsmanship, trade, and banking. This distribution underscores the family's strong economic orientation towards commercial and financial enterprises, which is reflective of broader historical trends observed in the Levantine community during this era. The notable presence of artisans within the Foscolo family underscores a long-standing commitment to traditional manufacturing and handicrafts, suggesting a profound and sustained transmission of skills and expertise across generations.

This phenomenon aligns with the Levantine economic tradition, where familial networks have been identified as a facilitator of both the preservation and advancement of specialised trades and crafts. Furthermore, the notable representation of merchants and bankers within the family is indicative of the Foscolos' active participation in the broader financial networks established in Pera, Galata, and other economic hubs. The integration of these networks is indicative of the family's adaptive strategies in response to evolving market demands and their influential role in the commercial transformation of Istanbul into a vibrant, cosmopolitan trade centre.

In contrast, artistic, educational and fashion-related professions appear to be underrepresented, suggesting either a deliberate or coincidental limitation of investment in these sectors. Nevertheless, the mere presence of such professions within the family suggests an acknowledgment and appreciation for cultural and intellectual pursuits, albeit secondary to economic priorities driven by commercial pragmatism.

Distribution of Professions by Years



The chronological distribution of occupational roles among the Foscolo family provides an insightful narrative of adaptive economic strategies and occupational specialisation aligned with broader historical developments. A marked increase in roles such as private company employees, artisans, and merchants/bankers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries can be closely linked to Istanbul's broader economic transformation, marked by rapid industrialisation, increased corporatisation, and intensified integration into global commercial networks.

This transition is indicative of the Foscolo family's strategic alignment with emerging economic opportunities, as well as their responsiveness to market transformations resulting from industrial and commercial growth in the Ottoman capital. The sporadic appearance of occupations such as sailor and artist suggests a more episodic, situational engagement, reflecting short-term economic opportunities or personal interests rather than a sustained family commitment. For instance, maritime occupations, though infrequent, underscore the family's direct engagement in shipping enterprises, notably through the establishment and operation of the influential Foscolo & Mango Steamship Company. The company's significance within the international maritime trade network is indisputable, and it is evident that the Foscolo family played a pivotal role in establishing connections between Ottoman ports and European trade hubs.

Nello Foscolo



Marc Foscolo



Matheo Foscolo



Some Members of the Family
(Salt Archives)

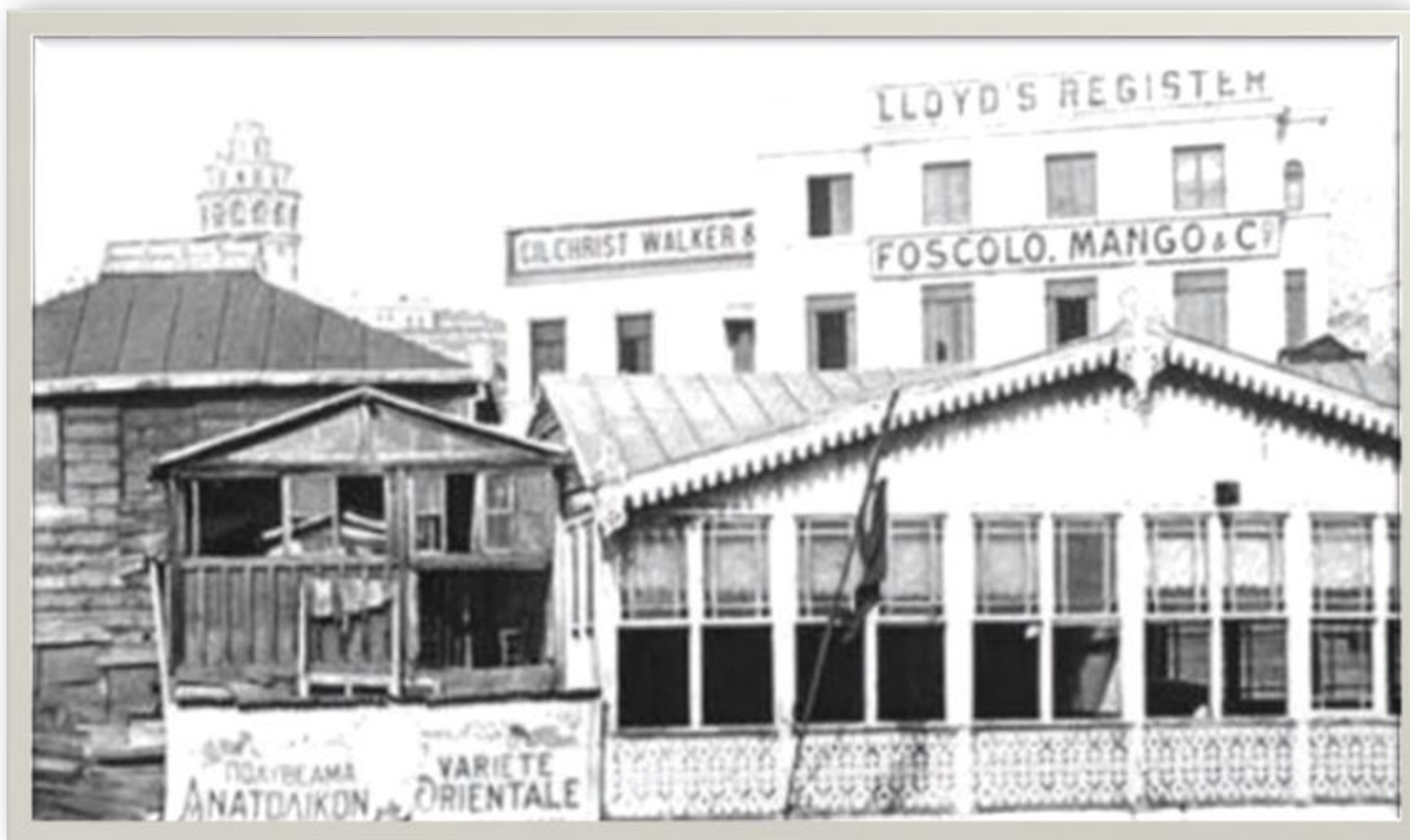
The disruptions caused by macro-level historical events, such as the First World War, had a notable impact on the family's occupational patterns, introducing fluctuations and uncertainties within their traditional commercial activities. While some family members successfully navigated these disruptions by leveraging their inherited expertise and robust familial networks, other occupations experienced a decline, demonstrating vulnerability to broader geopolitical and economic instabilities. Professions with a strong foundation in family tradition, such as merchants, bankers and craftsmen, exhibited greater resilience compared to more transient occupations like artists and sailors. In summary, the occupational data encapsulated in the figures provide a nuanced perspective of the Foscolo family's economic and social adaptation strategies within the rapidly transforming economic landscape of late Ottoman Istanbul. The integration of these visuals with a historical context provides a vivid illustration of how the Foscolo family's occupational decisions were shaped not only by their entrepreneurial acumen but also by external economic pressures and opportunities. This ultimately contributed to their enduring legacy within the Levantine economic community.



FOSCOLO & MANGO STEAMSHIP COMPANY

In the second half of the 19th century, members of the Foscolo family were actively involved in the establishment and management of various companies in Istanbul. In addition to small-scale businesses such as the İzmir Joint Stock Ice Company and the Foscolo Beer House. The Korendor Beer House on Haraççı Street in Galata was run by Nicolo Foscolo. This brewery was one of the most famous places in Istanbul. But the family gained wider recognition through the Foscolo & Mango Steamship Company. This enterprise, in particular, positioned the Foscolos as notable figures within both European and Istanbul business communities.

The initial maritime enterprise of the Foscolo family began in 1858 in Kalas (modern day Galați, Romania). The Peter Foscolo Shipping Company, established in Austria by Peter Foscolo, experienced a short period of operation. In 1860, a new partnership was established, this time under the name of Sgouta & Foscolo Shipping Company, which similarly failed to achieve long-term viability. The Foscolo & Neeser Shipping Company was established in 1862 and remained operational until 1865. Despite the limited lifespan of these early ventures, Peter Foscolo's maritime activities in Kalas clearly extended beyond 1865. It is evident that Foscolo and Company at Galatz, a company also owned by Peter Foscolo, continued its transportation business on the Danube. The company known as Foscolo and Company at Galatz, also under his ownership, continued commercial transport operations along the Danube. However, during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, one of the company's freight vessels sustained damage, resulting in significant financial losses.



Foscolo Mango Company Building in Pera



Foskolo Mango Coal Storage in Istanbul

The Foscolo family's commercial pursuits, particularly in the maritime sector, expanded considerably after their relocation to Istanbul. Nicolo Foscolo (1818–1878), son of Leonardo Foscolo (1765–1829)—who had moved the family to İzmir following the collapse of Venetian rule in 1797—founded the Foscolo-Mango Steamship Company in collaboration with Anthony Mango and his eldest son, Antonio. This partnership led to the establishment of Foscolo, Mango & Co. Steamship Agents in 1878, reflecting the emergence of a new professional class within the major maritime hubs of the time. Notably, the firm's branches in London and Piraeus remained active, underscoring its sustained presence in key international shipping circuits.

Since its inception, the company operated under the designation “Steamship and Coal Agents and Ship Brokers”. As of 1881, the company had centers in the cities of Galatz, Braila and Sulina. By 1887, the company had significantly expanded its portfolio, evolving into a firm capable of providing transportation services along the key route from London to Istanbul. During this period, the Foscolo and Mango Steamship Company's vessels also operated regular routes between Istanbul and Crete, facilitating both passenger travel and cargo transport. The company functioned as the agent in Istanbul for several leading European steamship companies, shipping and coal companies. From 1893 onwards, the shipping, agency and brokerage firm Foscolo & Mango served as the general agent for the Cie Royale Neerlandaise de Navigation a Vapeur in Amsterdam.

Company Documents

TELEGRAPHIC NAME: MANGO, DORESA & CO.
1335, NATIONAL CARDIFF.
SHIPPING, NATURAL GAS, AND OTHERS USES.

THE ANGLO-GRECIAN STEAMSHIP COMPANY LIMITED.

MANGO, DORESA & CO.
SHIPPING & INSURANCE
BROKERS,
COAL CONTRACTORS & EXPORTERS, &c.
FOSCOLO, MANGO & CO.
LONDON & LIVERPOOL.
MANGO, SOUS & CO.
PARIS.
TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESSES:
MANGODRESA LONDON.
MANGODRESA LONDON.
FOSCOLO LONDON.
MANGODRESA LONDON.

60, St. Mary Ave.
London.
E.C.

December, 1909.

AND AT ATLANTIC BUILDINGS
IMPORT STUART SQUARE,
CARDIFF.

Dear Sirs,

COALING 1909

We now have pleasure in submitting you our form of contract for next year, giving the prices at which we are prepared to contract for the ports which we work, and we shall esteem it a favour if you can see your way clear to pass us your signature for a good number of the ports.

Thanking you for past favors, and assuring you of our very best attention to any business you can pass our way,

Yours faithfully,

Mango, Dorea & Co.

[illegible]

The company experienced rapid growth, leading to the establishment of two additional branch offices. The first, managed by Mango & Sons, was founded in Piraeus in 1898, while the second, overseen by Mango, Doresa & Company, was established in London in 1899. The company's core activities included ship brokering, coal trading, and acting as an agency for steamship lines, steamship owners, shipowners, and insurance companies.

The company's agencies underwent significant changes following the First World War, marking a period of transition that lasted until the mid-20th century. During this time, the company took on the role of agent for the French Société de Navigation and Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Limited.

By 1913, the total capital of the company was £40,000. The company was still in partnership with Mangos. Another area of the company's operations was the transportation of coal from Hamburg to Odessa and various Mediterranean ports, such as Piraeus, Istanbul, and Novorossisk.

Some Newspaper Articles About the Company



**COMPAGNIE ROYALE
NEERLANDAISE
De Navigation a vapeur**

1^{re} Lignes régulières entre la Hollande et Ham-
bourg, la Baltique, la France, tout le littoral de la
Méditerranée, l'Égypte, la Syrie et la Mer-Noir
Transport rapide et avantageux de marchandises
de la Hollande, l'Allemagne Occidentale, la Belgique
et la Scandinavie en destination du Midi et du
Nord et vice-versa.

Service spécial de vapeurs de la Compagnie sur
le Rhin coïncidant avec le service maritime.

Service accéléré et recommandé pour sa régula-
rité et les soins tout spéciaux apportés aux opéra-
tions de l'embarquement et du débarquement des
marchandises.

Départs réguliers tous les 15 jours d'Amster-
dam et Rotterdam pour Alger, le Pirée, Salonique,
Constantinople, Bourges, Varna et Odessa, avec
escale à Patras, une fois par mois; durée de la
traversée 20 jours environ.

Le bateau MERCURIUS est arrivé.

Le bateau CLIO est attendu vers le 23 fév.

Pour frais et autres renseignements s'adresser
à la Direction de la Compagnie; à Amsterdam
ou aux Agences de notre ville.

FOSCOLO MANGO & C^e

La Turquie, 17.02.1911, No.41

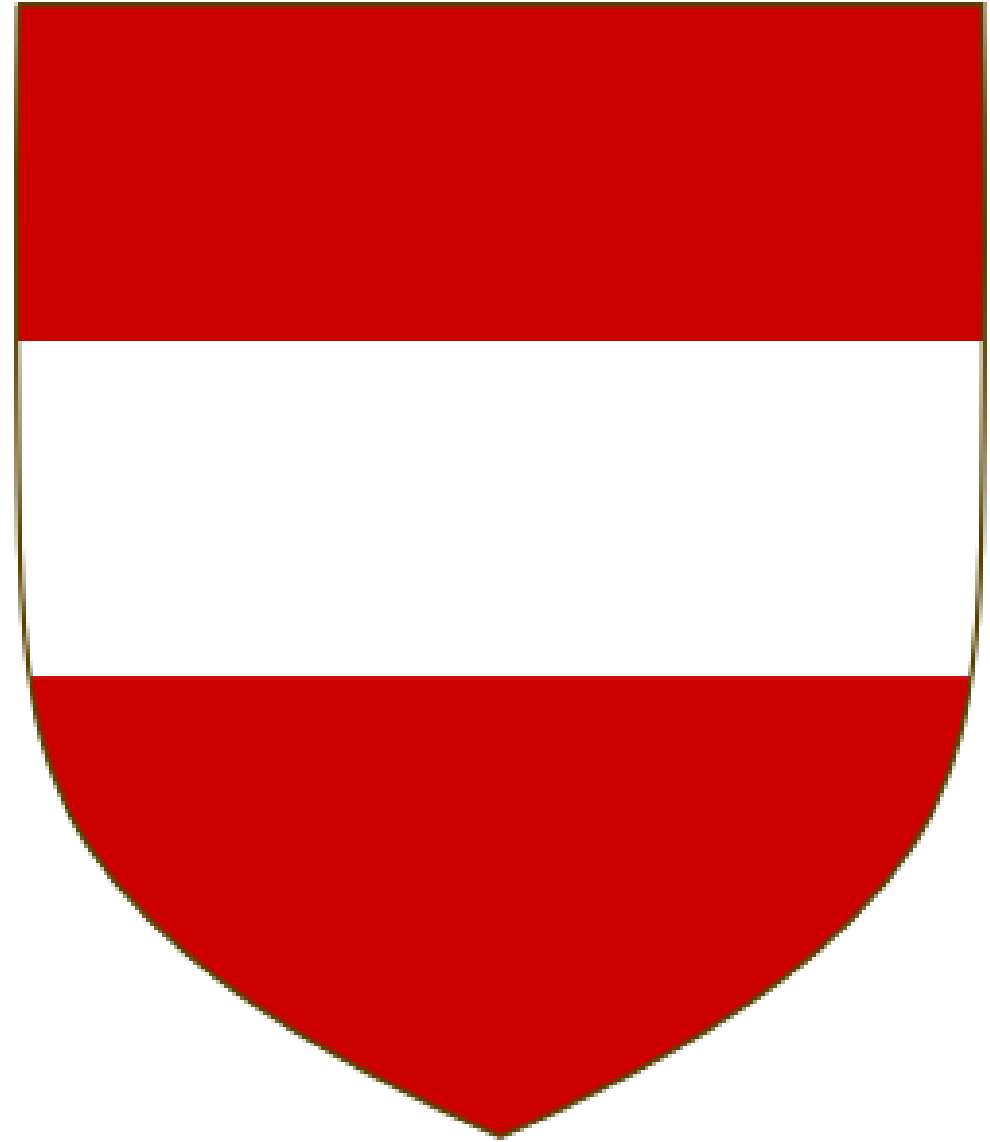
فوسقولو مانقو شرقي مفسره تنظيم قلمه
مهمه مصر قرد

تجارت وكالتی تجارت مدیریت عمومیه سندن:
بالعموم مؤسسه مناسبه تأمین صورتيه معاملات
تجاريه ده بولمق اوزره نظامنامه اساسی قوانین
محایه سته توفیقاً تنظیم قلمان قرقیک افکار لیراسی
سرمایه مرکزی لوندرد شهرنده کات و انکیتر
تأیینی حائر « فوسقولو مانقو » قومیا نه سئک امور
ومعاملاتی مدیران شرکت طرفندن رؤیت ایدلکده
اولوب نورکیه ده شرکت نامته بالعموم مؤسسه
تجاریه وصناعیه ایله تأسیس مناسبه ایدرک معاملات
تجاریه ده بولمق و بمعاملاتدن متولد اختلافات و دعاوی
ایچون درجات محاکمه کافه سنده مدعی و مدعی علیه
و شخص ناک سفتیله حاضر بولمق اوزره جنلی
خائده دائره مخصوصه سنده مقیم دیمقري مانقولو و لدا
آندوناکی افندی وکیل نصب و تعیین ایدلش اولمق
قانون مخصوصک یدنجی ماده سته توفیقاً اعلان اولتور.

۱۰۹-۱

Cumhuriyet, 9.9.1924, No. 123

CONCLUSION



The Foscolo Family Coat of Arms

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the economic and social transformations in the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century, with a particular focus on the Foscolo family, a prominent example of the Levantine community. The historical trajectory of the Foscolo family is characterised by significant geographical mobility, commencing from the Venetian aristocracy, continuing to the Aegean Islands, Izmir, and culminating in Istanbul. The case of this family provides striking insights into the migratory movements, economic activities, and integration of Levantine communities into global trade networks in Ottoman port cities.

The family's migratory trajectory and subsequent settlements offer a micro-level perspective on the processes of integration within the Ottoman Empire, particularly in major port cities such as Izmir and Istanbul, into the global economic system. During the 19th century, the industrial revolution and the spread of the capitalist economic order in Western Europe had a profound impact on the Ottoman economy, paving the way for the establishment of an institutional and legal infrastructure through the reforms of the Tanzimat period. In this process, there was an acceleration in the inflow of foreign capital into Ottoman markets, and the Ottoman economy underwent gradual integration into the global economic system. It is evident that regions such as Pera and Galata emerged as the epicentre of these transformations. The Foscolo family occupied a central position in the economic and social transformations of the period, through their active commercial ventures, financial activities and social relations in these regions.

The establishment and subsequent expansion of the Foscolo & Mango Steamship Company provides evidence of the family's role in this transformation process. The company played a pivotal role in establishing connections between Ottoman ports and global trade networks, thereby significantly contributing to Istanbul's transformation into a major maritime trade hub. The findings of the study demonstrate the diversity of the Foscolo family's commercial ventures. The family's economic activities in pivotal sectors such as banking, shipping, and coal trade are indicative of the significant role played by Levantines in the Ottoman economy.

The distribution of Foscolo family members across a diversity of professions is indicative of the social and economic flexibility of Levantine families and their contribution to the cosmopolitan commercial culture of the Ottoman capital. This diversity provides a significant dimension for understanding the position of Levantine communities within socio-economic structures. Furthermore, the fact that the Foscolo family was not confined to economic activities, but was also active in cultural domains such as education, art, and fashion, points to the multidimensional role that Levantines played in shaping the urban identity of Istanbul. This multifaceted participation underscores the fluidity of identity and belonging in the late Ottoman period, highlighting the existence of a complex network of relations that transcends the conventional definitions of minority and majority.

The contributions of the Levantines to the urban culture of Istanbul merit rigorous examination, particularly in terms of their economic impact, as well as their role in shaping the cultural and social fabric of the city. This study also demonstrates the methodological importance of microhistory. The detailed examination of the historical experiences of one family enables a more profound comprehension of the broader economic, political and social transformations in Ottoman society. The analysis of the individual experiences of the Foscolo family is valuable in demonstrating the complex dynamics and multi-layered effects of Ottoman modernization processes. In this context, it is concluded that the micro historical approach has the potential to enrich grand historical narratives and offers a fruitful method for future research.