The "Séminaire Pontifical Saint Louis de Péra" and the Making of Catholic Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Constantinople: Recovering Institutional Memory through a Previously Unconsulted Archive*

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Abstract

This article examines the institutional history and function of the Saint Louis Seminary, located in the garden of the French Embassy in Pera and belonging to the French Capuchin Fathers who operated in Nineteenth and Twentieth-century Constantinople. It focuses on the seminary's dual role in serving both French diplomatic objectives and the Roman Catholic missionary vision. Drawing on previously unused archival documents, the study reveals how the seminary supported France's claim of protection over Eastern Christians and the Vatican's vision of church unity through the education of clerical candidates belonging to different rites.

Key Words: Catholics, Ottoman minorities, Religious protectorates, Vatican, Church diplomacy

Özet

Bu makale, on dokuzuncu ve yirminci yüzyıl Konstantinopolisi'nde faaliyet göstermiş olan Fransız Kapüsen Pederlere ait olan, Pera'da, Fransız Büyükelçiliği'nin bahçesinde yer alan Saint Louis Papaz Okulunun kurumsal tarihini ve işlevini incelerken, kurumun hem Fransız diplomatik hedeflerine hem de Roma Katolik misyonerlik vizyonuna hizmet eden ikili rolüne odaklanmaktadır. Daha önce kullanılmamış arşiv belgelerine dayanarak, seminerin Fransa'nın Doğu Hristiyanları üzerindeki koruyuculuk iddiasını ve Vatikan'ın kilise birliği vizyonunu, farklı törensel geleneklere (ritlere) mensup ruhban adaylarının eğitimi yoluyla nasıl desteklediğini ortaya koyar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Katolikler, Osmanlı azınlıkları, Dini himayecilik, Vatikan, Kilise diplomasisi

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Introduction

The Saint Louis Pontifical and Inter-ritual Seminary is an institution I encountered during previous research, notably in my master's thesis on France's role as the protector of Eastern Catholics and in studies focusing on the migration of Eastern Catholic communities such as the Chaldeans. In those works, I had the opportunity to consult the archives of the Apostolic Vicariate of Istanbul, which have already been partially examined by other scholars. To the best of my knowledge, however, the documents from the Seminary's own archives that I discuss below have hitherto remained unknown and have not been the object of scholarly analysis. These documents were contained in a light blue metal case, likely brought to the archive by Frère Aloys Bailly,[1] the last French Capuchin to remain in Turkey and the last rector of the Saint Louis Seminary, prior to his death in Istanbul in 2013.

The archive comprises a substantial body of correspondence with the Holy See, as well as with priests and bishops affiliated with diverse geographical regions and ecclesiastical rites. Among its holdings are several summary documents that provide an overview of the seminary's institutional history, along with material detailing its daily routines and internal regulations. Through this archive, it is possible to trace the history of a French Catholic institution that serves as an exemplary case study regarding France's involvement with Eastern Christianity—an involvement that at times claimed the role of protector of all Eastern Catholics and even sought to extend its influence across Eastern Christianity. This study focuses on the history of the institution itself and aims to make a novel contribution to the existing literature, presenting an archive composed predominantly of French documents, but also containing substantial material in Italian and Latin, which collectively shed light on the seminary's historical operations and its wider significance.

Of particular significance are the seminarian registration books, which span the period from 1882 to 1988 and are preserved across seven bound volumes. The diverse student body of Saint Louis Seminary thus stood at the intersection of multiple tensions: between Rome and the Sublime Porte, between Latinization and the preservation of Eastern rites, and between France's *mission civilisatrice* and the Ottoman state's cautious pluralism. Each group—Armenian, Greek, Syriac, Chaldean, Levantine, and French—represented not only a community of learners but also a set of ecclesiological and diplomatic expectations projected onto them by their families, teachers and bishops.

Fr. Aloys Bailly continued to receive news about former seminarians until his death and carefully annotated the original registration books with handwritten marginal notes.

1 Born on July 24, 1922, in Vincennes (Val de Marne), Jacques Bailly, the only child in his family, lost his mother at a very young age. He entered the novitiate in Le Mans (Province of Paris) in 1943, under the name Frère Aloys, and made his profession on September 8, 1944. He continued his training in Nantes, where he was ordained a priest on June 29, 1949. He taught Church history in Tours from 1950 to 1957, then at the seminary in Crest (1957-58), before being sent to Turkey in July 1959 as a teacher at St. Louis Seminary. He was also involved in catechesis at the French high school, in Turkish and French, and later in the catechumenate. He served several chapels, notably that of Bebek on the Bosphorus (linked to a house run by the Daughters of Charity). In July 1999, when the French Capuchin fraternity was closed, Frère Aloys became a member of the new Custody of Turkey and joined the fraternity of Yesilköy. He died in Istanbul on May 2, 2013, at the age of 91. Source: http://www.freres-capucins.fr/Saint-Louis-d-Istanbul-funerailles.html [Accessed: 27 august 2018]

These brief remarks, which record essential biographical information—such as marriages, ordinations to diaconate or higher ecclesiastical offices, migrations, professional or pastoral assignments, and deaths—extend in some cases as late as 2010.[2]

The Establishment and Purpose of the Saint Louis Seminary

The concept of a "France in the Levant" was the manifestation of a long-standing French foreign policy, a protectorate over Ottoman Catholics that persisted through monarchies, empires, and republics. As articulated by the Republican statesman Léon Gambetta in a famous dictum, "anticlericalism is not an export product," a secularizing France saw immense strategic value in supporting the very religious orders it often suppressed at home. This paradox fueled what historian Claude Prudhomme[3] terms the "long French period" of Catholic missions, a veritable hegemony lasting until the Second World War. By the turn of the twentieth century, French missionary preponderance was undeniable: French congregations supplied approximately one-third of the world's male missionaries and a staggering two-thirds of its female missionaries. This vast enterprise was sustained by a powerful domestic network of spiritual and material support, mobilized through publications like the widely-read *Annales de la propagation de la foi*, which fused pious devotion with a fascination for the exotic. The Saint-Louis Seminary was thus a local node in this extensive global network, an embodiment of France's perceived civilizing mission and a vehicle for its cultural and political influence.

Simultaneously, the seminary was a bastion of "Rome in the Levant." In a historical turn following the French Revolution, French Catholicism developed a fervent loyalty to the papacy, a movement known as ultramontanism, which reconciled service to the French nation with profound obedience to the Holy See. The seminary's internal life was a clear reflection of this Roman-centric vision. Particularly after its reconstitution as a Pontifical Seminary in 1933, through its rigorous regimen of spiritual formation rooted in Neo-Thomistic philosophy, exacting academic instruction in Latin and liturgy, and strict moral discipline was designed to forge a specific type of cleric. The supervisory measures instituted by the Apostolic Delegate in 1932, while restrictive, were intended to ensure a high degree of accountability and conformity with Roman standards, insulating the seminarians from perceived theological deviations. This model, demanding as it was for those within its walls, proved effective, ensuring the institution's longevity and its resilience in the face of wartime disruption and geopolitical turmoil.

In the late Ottoman period, the French Republic pursued an intricate and highly calculated strategy to extend its influence over Eastern Christian communities. [4]

Central to this project was the deployment of Catholic educational institutions, particularly those operated by missionary congregations such as the Jesuits, Lazarists, and Assumptionists. These schools were never mere centers of learning; they served as key

2 Antoni Yalap, Documentary film : « *Père Aloÿs.* » Paris : Ninway Magazine & Académie Assyrienne, 2016.

3 Claude Prudhomme, *Dopo la Rivoluzione ci fu il Boom dei missionari. http://www.vatican.va/news_services/or/or_quo/cultura/2009/203q04a1.html.* (Archive of the Osservatore Romano newspaper of the Vatican) Accessed on: 1 June 2025.

4 Rinaldo Marmara, *Vatikan Gizli Arşiv Belgeleri Işığında Türkiye ile Vatikan Diplomatik İlişkilere Doğru*. Translated by Buğra Poyraz. (İstanbul: Bahçeşehir Üniversitesi, 2012), 72-108.

vehicles for advancing French political interests and propagating a vision of Catholic universalism tailored to the complex religious dynamics of the Ottoman East.[5] The Franciscans, on the other hand, were particularly active in the East through seminaries and theological colleges. The Franciscan institutions in Buca, İzmir, and Yeşilköy, Istanbul, were among the most prominent in the Middle East. At both sites, Italian missionaries and the Italian language predominated. The Saint-Louis Seminary, however, was to be placed under the administration of the French Franciscans.

This educational vision was often justified in terms of safeguarding the religious freedoms of Eastern Christians under Ottoman rule, yet its ambitions extended far beyond this rationale. Missionaries were consistently urged to conduct their work with discretion and cultural sensitivity, fully cognizant that overt attempts at conversion or Latinization could provoke resistance from Orthodox patriarchates and local authorities. Nevertheless, the ultimate goal remained clear: to bring the Eastern Churches into closer communion with Rome,[6] while ensuring that France—not rival powers like Russia or Britain—retained spiritual and political leadership in the region. French missionaries were instructed not only to teach but to observe, report, and strategize—acting effectively as diplomatic agents whose loyalties lay as much with the Quai d'Orsay as with the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. This dual role was particularly apparent in regions such as Mount Lebanon, where educational networks operated in tandem with political alliances and ecclesiastical appointments.[7]

One cannot understand the success of this policy without noting the receptivity among segments of the local population. Many Christian families, particularly among the urban bourgeoisie, viewed French education as a pathway to social mobility, international opportunity, and protection under a powerful European patron. The prestige of the French language and the promise of access to higher education in France created a strong incentive to enroll children in Catholic schools—even among communities with no formal allegiance to the Roman Church. This appeal extended to the Muslim Turkish elite, for whom French-language education offered a means of acquiring cultural capital, accessing administrative and commercial networks, and demonstrating cosmopolitan sophistication. Mastery of French and familiarity with European social and professional norms increasingly became essential tools for maintaining influence within the rapidly modernizing Ottoman socio-political context. As a result, French schools emerged as sites of cross-religious social aspiration, where the convergence of educational prestige and potential economic advancement motivated families from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds to invest in their children's instruction.[8]

In this sense, French schools did not simply disseminate Catholic doctrine; they re-

5 Bozkurt, Abdurrahman. 2011. "Fransa'nın Osmanlı Devleti'ndeki Katolikleri Himaye Hakkı ve Bunun Sona Ermesi." *Tarih Dergisi* no. 52 (2010/2):123-150.

6 Eric Dursteler, "Education and Identity in Constantinople's Latin Rite Community, c. 1600," *Renaissance Studies* 18, no. 2 (2004): 287–303.

7 Serkan Gül, *The French Catholic Missionaries in Lebanon between 1860 and 1914.* PhD diss., Middle East Technical University, Department of History. (https://etd.lib.metu.edu.tr/upload/12618780/index.pdf) (2015): 59,116-136.

8 Ercan Uyanık, "Yabancı Okullarda Eğitim Gören Osmanlı'nın Müslüman Çocukları (1865-1908)." *Diyalektolog - Ulusal Hakemli Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 8, no. 14 (2017): 1–29. https://doi.org/10.22464/diyalektolog.133

oriented entire cultural landscapes. Graduates of these institutions frequently rose to prominent positions in religious, legal, and commercial spheres. They formed the backbone of a Francophone Christian elite that was deeply embedded in the socio-political fabric of the Eastern Mediterranean. Through their writings, sermons, and civic engagement, these individuals perpetuated a vision of modernity closely tied to Catholic values and French political ideals.[9]

The re-establishment of the Saint-Louis convent in Pera during the late nineteenth century represents a fascinating case study in the intersection of geopolitics, ecclesiastical strategy, and the practical realities of missionary life. Although the Capuchin presence at this site dates back to the seventeenth century, its revival in 1881 was far from a straightforward administrative restoration.[10] This revival followed a significant hiatus caused by the French Revolution,[11] during which the convent came under Italian stewardship.[12] Instead, its re-emergence was carefully orchestrated, driven by a convergence of interests emanating from both the secular corridors of French diplomacy and the offices of the Roman Curia. This meticulous planning culminated in the official commencement of the convent's public and educational activities in 1882. The College received formal consent from Pope Leo XIII on May 16, 1882, and the "*Collège apostolique oriental*" officially opened its doors on September 4, 1882,[13] with just two students: a Greek convert from Constantinople and a fourteen-year-old boy from Smyrna. Growth was steady; within two years, the student body numbered twelve, and by the following year, sixteen (comprising ten boarders and six day-boarders, among whom were Latins from Smyrna and Constantinople). Until 1885, even seminarians primarily attended as day-boarders.[14]

The reinstatement was jointly sponsored by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (the Quai d'Orsay) and the Vatican's Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Both institutions perceived the revival as a strategic tool to advance their respective—and at times overlapping—interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. From an analytical standpoint, it can be argued that the key implication of this development is the French state's deliberate use of Saint-Louis, which had traditionally functioned as the chapel for its embassy to the Sublime Porte, as a means to assert both political influence and ecclesiastical presence in the region. It served to tangibly reaffirm and consolidate France's long-held, if often contested, claim to be the preeminent protector of all Catholic interests within the Ottoman sphere. At the same time, this Franco-centric strategic maneuver unfolded alongside the Vatican's own ambitions for the convent. The pontifical government in Rome intended to transform Saint-Louis into a specialized inter-ritual college. This initiative was a cornerstone of Pope Leo XIII's broader project of achieving a "union of the Churches," demonstrating that the revival of Saint-Louis simultaneously

9 Mathew Burrows, "'Mission Civilisatrice': French Cultural Policy in the Middle East, 1860–1914," *The Historical Journal* 29, no. 1 (1986): 109–35.

10 See Annex 2.

11 Prudhomme, ibid.

12 Vittorio Del Giorno, *Chroniques de la Basilique Cathédrale du Saint-Esprit*, Vol. I., p. 43.

13 Sezim Sezer Darnault, *Latin Catholic Buildings in Istanbul: A Historical Perspective, 1839–1923*, trans. Çelen Birkan (Istanbul: Isis, 2004), 122.

14 Del Giorno, Vol. II., p. 720.

advanced both French diplomatic objectives and papal ecclesiastical strategies.[15]

At the beginning of the twentieth century, marked by the end of Pope Leo XIII's pontificate, several questions remained unresolved, and a significant legacy was handed down to his successor. This legacy was composed, in a complex and intertwined manner, of a new openness toward the Orthodox world and a resolutely favorable stance toward the Eastern Churches. In the apostolic letter *Orientalium dignitas* (1894), Leo XIII explicitly sought to curb Latinizing tendencies and limit the role of European missionaries. The strengthening of the Eastern component within Catholicism was directly tied to affirming the universality of the Roman Church. In this way, efforts to Latinize—long opposed by Eastern Christians—were checked, even though the Latin Church continued to serve as the representative of Rome and the Pope within the Ottoman Empire.

This strategy was predicated on restoring the dignity and liturgical traditions of the various Eastern Catholic Churches, with the ultimate goal of creating an appealing model of ecclesial life that might persuade Eastern Orthodox communities to enter into communion with Rome. Thus, the missionaries of Saint-Louis were envisioned not merely as chaplains but as key agents in a grand theological and diplomatic enterprise.[16]

However, the realization of these ambitious programs, conceived in the political and religious capitals of the West, faced considerable friction when confronted with the complex realities on the ground in Istanbul. The internal dynamics of the Capuchin Order itself added another layer of complexity. The project was not merely a top-down directive; it was also the maturation of a long-standing ambition within the Capuchin province of Paris. This internal drive gained significant momentum from domestic pressures, particularly the 1880 expulsion of unauthorized religious congregations from France, which created an urgent need to establish external bases to preserve the order's institutional vitality. This urgency fueled a bitter and protracted struggle with the Italian branch of the Capuchin Order, which had controlled the convent during the interim and was hostile to its return to French hands, revealing the stark national rivalries that could exist within a single international religious congregation during an era of burgeoning imperialism.[17]

While archival documents present a minor discrepancy regarding the exact founding date, this can be resolved by distinguishing between the internal canonical establishment and the formal operational launch. The formative work of the seminary during this period was carried by nineteen religious staff (sixteen priests and three lay brothers). Foremost among them was Father Marcel de Montaillé (whose civil name was Alphonse

15 Pope Leo XIII's broader project of achieving a "union of the Churches" was articulated in several key papal documents during his pontificate. Notably, in his 1894 apostolic letter *Praeclara gratulationis publicae*, he called for the reunion of Eastern and Western churches into the "Unity of the Faith," emphasizing the importance of ecclesiastical unity and condemning divisions within Christianity. Additionally, in the 1896 encyclical *Satis cognitum*, Leo XIII reaffirmed the necessity of the Church's unity and the role of the papacy in preserving that unity, inviting separated Christian communities to return to full communion with the Catholic Church. (Pope Leo XIII. *Praeclara gratulationis publicae*. Apostolic letter, June 20, 1894.)

16 Giorgio Del Zanna and Jean-Marc Ticchi, "L'Église latine dans l'Empire ottoman," *Relations Internationales*, no. 173 (2018): 40-41.

17 Vittorio Del Giorno, *Esquisses sur la latinité de Constantinople: Latins à Byzance et dans l'Empire ottoman, (Istanbul: 1983)* 210.

Plais, in service from 1881 until 1901), the primary founder and an erudite, courageous, and strong-willed preacher who arrived in Constantinople in 1880. He authored several influential works, including responses to the Greek Patriarch's encyclical regarding Leo XIII, and was known for his unwavering principles, even in dealings with French ambassadors. He was succeeded by Father Laurent du Mans (1901- 1905), then Father Bruno de Paris (1905-1925), an eloquent orator, followed by Father Hervé Camlez de Calais (1925-1934), and subsequently, around 1933, by Father Gautier de Tonnerre (whose civil name was Pierre Dubois), who would later become Apostolic Vicar of Istanbul. Other key figures included Father Bonaventure de Lyon, who taught French and Greek for twenty-three years, Father Luc du Mans, director of the Grand Séminaire and professor of theology and canon law, and Father Emilien de Bretagne, director of the Petit Séminaire and professor of ecclesiastical history and liturgy.

In Rome, the ecclesiastical authorities aimed to repurpose the convent into a college for Eastern rites, where Eastern Catholic clergy would be educated to help advance Leo XIII's vision of Church unity. This initiative sought to elevate the standing of the Eastern Catholic Churches, using them as a bridge to attract Eastern Orthodox communities into communion with Rome. Despite these ambitious goals, such plans were more prominent in Western discourse—particularly in political and diplomatic rhetoric—than in the Eastern regions themselves, where their tangible effects were often minimal. An examination of Saint-Louis's mission reveals how these objectives were translated into practice, highlighting the challenges missionaries faced in aligning institutional strategies with local conditions and their personal convictions.[18]

The institution initially began its operations within six houses belonging to the adjacent convent. However, a rapid increase in student enrollment soon rendered these facilities inadequate, necessitating the allocation of two additional large houses to accommodate the growing student body. This expansion supported the institution's distinctive dual mission: it functioned simultaneously as a major seminary for resident students (interns) training to become Catholic priests for the Latin, Chaldean, Greek, Assyrian, and Armenian rites, while also serving as a college that provided French-language education to non-resident day students (*externs*) from the local French and Levantine communities.[19]

In late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Istanbul, the student body of Catholic institutions like the Saint Louis Seminary represented a complex mosaic of identities shaped by religious affiliation, ethnic origin, and geopolitical entanglements. The presence of Armenian, Greek, Chaldean, Syriac and Latin-rite Catholic students within such schools was not incidental but reflected the broader ambitions of both the Vatican and the French Republic to assert spiritual and cultural influence in the Ottoman East. These students did not form a homogeneous body; instead, they represented distinct sociological communities that were variably situated within the religious and political hierarchies of the empire. The Syriacs, Chaldeans and Armenians, for instance, often arrived from peripheral provinces where Catholic missions had targeted Eastern rite populations for incorporation into Rome's universal church. Their presence in Istan-

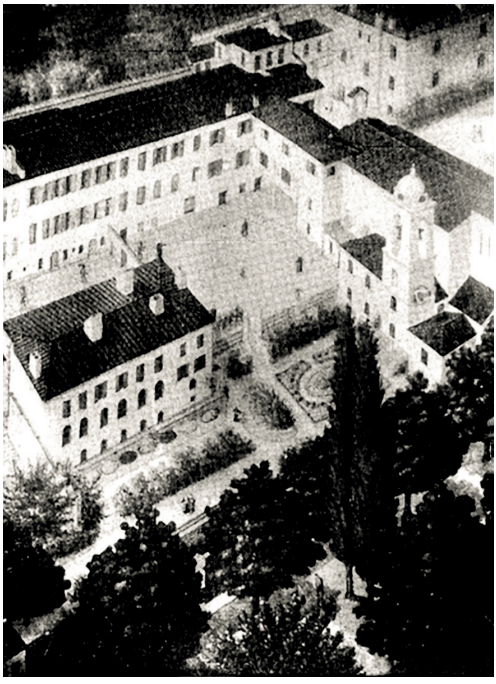
18 "Le Séminaire interrituel St. Louis d'Istanbul," typescript historical account, unsigned, 10 pages, covering the period from its foundation until 1960, Archives of the Apostolic Vicariate of Istanbul.

19 Aloys Bailly, *Les Capucins français à Saint Louis* (Istanbul, 2001), 2.

bul's seminaries thus symbolized both the fruits of missionary outreach and the Vatican's commitment to an inter-ritual clergy.

The Levantine seminarians, by contrast, typically came from long-established Latin-rite Catholic families in Smyrna, Constantinople, and the Aegean islands. These students were particularly receptive to the seminary's "French model" of religious formation, which emphasized not only theological instruction but also linguistic fluency, refined manners, and loyalty to Rome. In many respects, they acted as cultural intermediaries, bridging local Catholic traditions with the broader aspirations of the French protectorate system. Unlike the Syriacs, Chaldeans or Armenians, whose presence in Pera often reflected displacement or religious marginality, the Levantines inhabited a world of cosmopolitan privilege, making them key figures in the perpetuation of Francophone Catholicism in the Ottoman metropolis.

Several milestones marked the seminary's early development. On October 17, 1885, it received a visit from the Capuchin Minister General, Father Bernard d'Andermatt. A significant step occurred on June 25, 1886, when Paul Julik and Ernest Mirzan received the tonsure, and courses in philosophy and theology were formally organized. Father Luc was appointed director of the newly established *Grand Séminaire*. The academic prowess of the students was demonstrated in 1887 when they participated in the concours of the prestigious Collège Stanislas in Paris, ranking among the top ten in Latin (out of 117) and top four in French (out of 37).



A Photograph of the Church of Saint Louis des Français and the buildings of the *Collège Apostolique*[20]

20 P. Bruno de Paris, *Création et Débuts d'un Séminaire Oriental à Constantinople* (Paris : 1907), 26., as published in Sezim Sezer Darnault, *Latin Catholic Buildings in Istanbul: A Historical Perspective, 1839–1923*, trans. Çelen Birkan (Istanbul: Isis, 2004), 123.

Charles Edouard Goad, Plan d'assurance de Constantinople. Vol. II - Péra & Galata. No: 37. (1905)

An unfortunate fire in 1888 destroyed a rented house used by Saint Louis. However, this setback paved the way for progress, as a dedicated building for the *Grand Séminaire* was erected on the same site, largely thanks to the efforts of the dragoman M. de Longeville, and inaugurated on December 7, 1889. That same year, the first clergy retreat at Saint Louis was held, presided over by Monsignor Bonetti. Instruction in the Chaldean language was provided by notable figures such as Monsignor Gharib, the patriarchal vicar, and later S.E. Zade-abdal Karim Paşa. The seminary celebrated its first priestly ordination in 1892 with Ernest Mirzan, who would later serve as chancellor of the diocese of Smyrna.[21]

21 Del Giorno, Vol. II., p. 720.

Between 1882 and 1907, Saint Louis enrolled 214 students, with approximately one-third progressing to the *Grand Séminaire*. The student body was remarkably diverse, drawing Latins from across the Ottoman Empire and Greece (Constantinople, Smyrna, Athens, Tinos, Syra, Corfu, Santorini, Naxos, Roustchouk); Armenians from a vast swathe of Anatolia and beyond (Constantinople, Maraş, Malatya, Adana, Mardin, Bursa, Kayseri, Diyarbakir, Erzerum, Aleppo, Karput, Sivas, Tokat, Van, Saratov); Chaldeans from Mesopotamia (Mosul, Diyarbakır, Baghdad, Siirt, Urfa); Syrians from Mosul and Homs; as well as Bulgarians from Adrianople, Maronites from Baalbek and Cyprus, Melchites, and Georgians. By 1907, forty-four priests had graduated from Saint Louis, including some who had only spent a few years there. The 25th anniversary in 1907 was attended by several dignitaries, including Mgr. Privileggio, Mgr. Delenda, Mgr. Marengo, and Mgr. Polito, Bishop of Corfu.

The *Collège Apostolique Orientale de Saint-Louis* operated in two stages: the *Petit Séminaire* and the *Grand Séminaire*. In the former, students shared classrooms and activity spaces, whereas in the latter, each seminarian preparing for the priesthood was given his own private room. A dedicated courtyard was reserved for those in the *Petit Séminaire*, while those in the *Grand Séminaire*, along with the priests, had access to the gardens of the French Palace. Despite this extended use of surrounding grounds, the need for a specifically designed facility became clear. As a result, a new structure was erected in 1889 on the site of the former convent. Completed on December 7 of that year, the new college building formed a U-shaped layout around a central courtyard, with its four-storey façades arranged in a straightforward architectural style.[22]

Beyond its academic and spiritual curriculum, Saint Louis aimed to cultivate a particular "French style" among its students. This was seen as a vital component of their formation, contributing to the prestige of future missionaries as much as their intellectual and spiritual depth. Daily life at the Saint-Louis Seminary was deeply embedded in a regimen that combined religious instruction with cultural assimilation. The seminary functioned not merely as a site for theological education, but also as an institution where French cultural norms were inculcated, reflecting an implicit belief in their value for enhancing the future prestige of missionaries. Social refinement and adherence to French etiquette were regarded as complements to spiritual and intellectual rigor. This acculturation process was further reinforced by the presence of a select group of day students from the elite families of Pera, whose integration into the seminary environment served as a conduit for transmitting bourgeois French manners.[23] The presence of *externs* (day students) from prominent Pera families, admitted in small numbers to the college, facilitated this cultural immersion. The structured, disciplined environment, akin to convent life, was fundamental to this pedagogical approach, emphasizing order, respect, and refined manners.

The period after World War I saw Saint Louis lose some of its "former splendor". The *Grand Séminaire* section continued until 1941, but the *Petit Séminaire* persisted. Consequently, many seminarians completing their secondary studies had to travel to Rome (to the *Propaganda Fide college*, or the Armenian or Greek colleges) or other European centers for their philosophical and theological training.

22 Darnault, 122,123.

23 Charles A. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans: The Church and the Ottoman Empire, 1453–1923*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 229

The new Turkish Republic's laws mandating Turkish language instruction for some courses in foreign schools impacted Saint Louis, leading to a decline in student numbers, particularly from Greece. By 1926, the seminary housed only about fifty students in total, of whom fourteen were Latin, Armenian, or Greek seminarians from Turkey. In response to these changes, Father Gautier de Tonnerre decided for seminarians to attend the Lazarist-run St. Benoît school and later the Frères' St. Michel school in Feriköy for their secondary education, while Turkish nationals attended Turkish elementary schools. Recruitment during this era became almost exclusively focused on Catholic communities within Turkey, especially the Latin, Chaldean, and Assyrian communities of Anatolia.[24]

During World War II, travel difficulties for foreign seminarians led Father Emilien de Smyrne, then director, to organize philosophy and theology courses directly at Saint Louis. Most priests ordained during this time, such as Father Georges Marovitch, had completed their secondary studies at St. Benoît, while others, including Chaldean fathers of families like Süleyman Şen, Markos Adlun, Aziz Yalap and Sabri Anar received preparation at Saint Louis to ensure religious assistance to Anatolian Catholic communities lacking clergy.[25]

Under Abdülhamid II, Latin Catholics—often tied to French or Italian diplomatic networks—benefited from a relatively protected position, especially in urban centers like Pera and Smyrna. The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and the subsequent war years introduced a harsher climate. As the Committee of Union and Progress moved toward centralization, Catholic institutions—especially those affiliated with foreign powers—faced growing scrutiny. During World War I, both Latin and Eastern Catholic communities suffered, although the former, due to their visible association with enemy nations, were disproportionately targeted. The Allied occupation of Istanbul offered temporary respite, allowing Latin institutions to resume operations. However, the rise of the Kemalist republic imposed an entirely new framework. The abolition of capitulations, the suppression of foreign schools, and the secularization of public life led to a sharp contraction of Latin Catholic activity. Eastern Catholics, less institutionally reliant on foreign support, often adapted more discreetly, but their ecclesial presence was likewise diminished under the nationalizing policies of the new regime.

This period of rupture did not erase the distinction between Latin and Eastern Catholics, but it profoundly altered their institutional landscapes. Whereas Latin communities once operated as extensions of European ecclesiastical and diplomatic networks, they now had to renegotiate their presence within a strictly secular, nationalist state. Eastern Catholics, while less politically exposed, saw their liturgical autonomy challenged by the loss of institutional support and the narrowing of public religious space. In this shifting context, both groups were compelled to redefine their identities—not only in relation to Rome, but also in relation to a rapidly transforming Turkish society.

24 *Registers of Seminarians of the "Petit Séminaire,"* vol. 6 (1929–1956) and vol. 7 (1957–1990), Archives of the Apostolic Vicariate of Istanbul.

25 Ibid., vol. 7. (See Annex 5.)

Religiosity

The 1930s marked a new chapter for Saint Louis. Under the directorship of Father Gautier de Tonnerre, Monsignor Margotti, the Apostolic Delegate, declared Saint Louis a "pontifical seminary" on December 29, 1932. This was followed by an Apostolic Visitation led by Msgr. Margotti himself, aimed at aligning the seminary's operations more closely with the Code of Canon Law.[26] This elevated status placed it under the direct authority of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches (*Sacra Congregatio "Pro Ecclesia Orientali"*) and subsequently prompted a comprehensive revision of its regulations in 1934 to align with the new Code of Canon Law, marking a new chapter in its institutional identity.[27] The seminary was now under direct hierarchical control, with Monsignor Margotti granted full authority equivalent to that of an ordinary over his own seminary. He demanded comprehensive financial disclosures—including income from property, diocesan contributions, subsidies from the Holy See, and extraordinary gifts—as well as an itemized account of all expenditures.

Communication with the outside world was tightly controlled. Students could write to their parents only once a month, and all outgoing letters had to be submitted unsealed for review by the Rector. Incoming mail was likewise inspected before delivery. Exceptions were made for correspondence with bishops or the Apostolic Delegate, which could be exchanged privately and under seal. No object could be brought into or taken out of the seminary without prior approval.

Parental visits were permitted only once a month, restricted to recreation hours and limited to half an hour. Siblings or other relatives were prohibited from visiting unless accompanied by a parent. Day students, who attended classes from 7:55 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., were subject to many of the same regulations, though with slight modifications. They were not permitted to bring unrelated items into the seminary or run errands for boarding students.

The seminarians followed a daily devotional schedule that began with morning prayers and meditation in their private chapel, followed by daily Mass. At midday, they were to make a short visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and a longer "*Grande Visite*" was observed in the afternoon. Evening spiritual reading and communal prayers concluded the day. Confession practices were liberalized under the new regime: while the Rector ensured weekly confession for each student, individuals could choose freely between two designated confessors. If a seminarian wished to confess to a different priest for reasons of conscience, the Rector was obliged to facilitate this request.

Comprehensive decrees were issued, formalizing and often intensifying the existing disciplined structure:

- **Admission**: Stricter criteria were enforced, demanding legitimate birth, Catholic parentage, prior reception of sacraments, completion of primary studies, a demonstrable desire for ecclesiastical life for at least two years under priestly guidance, and a formal recommendation from the candidate's bishop. The Apostolic Delegate's written permission became mandatory.

26 See Annex 3.

27 Darnault, 2004:122.

• **Spiritual Regimen**: A dedicated private chapel for seminarians was established, with a demanding schedule of daily Mass, meditation, and prayers. Emphasis was placed on Eucharistic piety, devotion to the Virgin Mary and the Pope. Confession practices were regularized, ensuring freedom of choice of confessor but requiring weekly attendance.
• **Daily Conduct and Attire**: Once invested, the black cassock was to be worn at all times. Leave and family visits were strictly curtailed and supervised.
• **Correspondence**: All mail, except to high ecclesiastical authorities, was subject to the Rector's censorship.
• **Curriculum**: Continued importance was given to Catechism, Latin, and languages pertinent to future ministry, with formal liturgy classes.
• **Governance**: The Rector was to provide monthly reports to the Apostolic Delegate, who retained final say on admissions and dismissals.

The Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches formally established statutes for the Pontifical Seminary of Saint Louis on May 18, 1934. These statutes, signed by Cardinal Sincero, stipulated a seven-year experimental period during which the rector and professors, though presented by the Minister General of the Capuchin Order, would be appointed by the Sacred Congregation and remain under the authority of the Apostolic Delegate.

The decrees emphasized a deep Eucharistic piety and a sustained devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Instruction was to foster a filial love for the Pope, and February 12th—marking the papal anniversary of Pius XI—was designated a seminary feast day.

Outcomes, Broader Impact, and Limitations

The seminary's output was significant. Between 1882 and 1907 alone, it produced 44 priests. Over its longer history, as noted in previous analyses, around thirty seminarians were ordained directly from Saint-Louis, with many others joining Latin or Oriental religious orders. These numbers were considered encouraging when compared to other Oriental institutes and French seminaries.

Amidst challenges that prompted considerations for its closure in 1937, the continuation of the seminary was strongly defended in a letter from the *Congregation for the Oriental Churches* to Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, who was then the Apostolic Delegate to Turkey and would later become Pope John XXIII. The letter argued that rather than shutting down, the Paris Capuchins should be persuaded to adopt a model where the seminarians would attend the nearby Saint Benoît French school, run by the Lazarist fathers.[28]

The seminary's graduate profile offers a revealing lens on the interplay between local needs and transnational ambitions. A significant proportion of ordinations went to Levantine young men from established Latinrite families in Istanbul, Smyrna and the Aegean islands. These students came from environments that already valued the French language and Roman liturgy, making them particularly receptive to the seminary's curriculum. As a result, SaintLouis often functioned as a diocesan seminary for the Apostolic Delegate in Constantinople and for the Latin bishops of Smyrna and the Archipelago. This localization was reinforced by practical considerations. Once ordained, many Levantine priests

28 See Annex 4.

remained in their home dioceses rather than pursuing the distant, uncertain missionary assignments originally envisioned by Rome or the French protectorate. Their familiarity with the cultural and linguistic context of the eastern Mediterranean made them indispensable to bishops who sought to maintain pastoral services and educational institutions in rapidly changing times. Moreover, the seminary's curriculum matched the expectations of local parishes tied to French diplomatic networks and reflected the broader predominance of French orders in the Ottoman Empire after the midnineteenth century.

At the same time, SaintLouis played a crucial interritual role. Its relatively small but steady supply of graduates for the Armenian, Chaldean and Assyrian rites filled gaps in dioceses that struggled to cultivate indigenous clergy. By offering instruction in Eastern liturgical languages alongside Latin and by encouraging seminarians to maintain their own ritual traditions, the seminary responded to Rome's desire to strengthen Eastern Catholic churches and to local bishops' need for welltrained pastors.[29]

Admission and Composition of the Student Body

The primary mission of the seminary was to cultivate a clergy capable of ministering to the Catholic populations of the region and, ideally, to act as instruments of ecclesiastical reconciliation through their moral example and theological acumen.[30] Admission policies were therefore stringent, shaped both by canonical requirements and by the directives issued under the Apostolic Visitation. Candidates were generally expected to be the legitimate children of Catholic parents, regardless of rite, and to have received both Baptism and Confirmation. A minimum age of twelve was customary, and aspirants had to demonstrate both intellectual aptitude and signs of a sincere ecclesiastical vocation—such as a marked inclination toward prayer, reverence for the Church hierarchy, and an expressed desire to serve as priests over a sustained period of at least two years.[31]

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29 Annex 5 includes selected pages from the final seminarian register (7th volume) of the Saint Louis Seminary, documenting student records from 1957 to 1990. Among these entries are the records of several notable clerics: Monsignor Orhan Çanlı, currently the Patriarchal Vicar of the Syriac Catholic Church in Turkey and Chorbishop; Monsignor Sabri Anar, Archbishop of the Chaldean Catholic Church of Turkey; and Archpriest Father Apraham Fırat of the Armenian Catholic Church. Father Fırat, who currently serves as the rector of the Armenian Catholic Cathedral, was the last student officially registered at the seminary. While the former two went on to become bishop and chorbishop, all three represent the diverse Catholic rites that the seminary served. These records offer clear evidence that the seminary continued to train seminarians from various Eastern Catholic rites until the very end of its operation.

30 It is important to note that the Capuchins operated two Italianlanguage institutes at Buca in İzmir and Yeşilköy in Istanbul; these institutions admitted adult students and did not function as minor seminaries. These places were exclusively for training Capuchin friars. According to Capuchin sources, the history of the *Istituto Apostolico d'Oriente* shows that the Capuchin superior of Smyrna acquired property at Buca to establish a novitiate, where candidates from Italian, Bulgarian, Austrian and Armenian backgrounds were admitted in 1883 and continued their philosophy and theology studies after their first vows. As the community outgrew the Buca facility, the novitiate itself moved to San Stefano (Yeşilköy) near Istanbul, leaving Buca as the center for higher studies; from then on, the institute operated two complementary houses and formed a significant number of friars and priests. The Buca house, long used for philosophical and theological instruction, closed only when there were no longer enough friars to run it. Associazione Eteria, "I cappuccini a Costantinopoli" ("The Capuchins in Constantinople"), *Associazione Eteria* (31 March 2015), accessed [29/08/2025], available at https://www.eteria.it/i-cappuccini-a-costantinopoli/

31 "Petit Séminaire Saint Louis – Règlement des Séminaristes," a bilingual (French–Turkish) code of conduct comprising 65 articles, dated October 1965 (Annex 1)

Applications required formal endorsement from the candidate's bishop, written testimony from a priest attesting to the aspirant's vocation, and the consent of the parents. The Father Rector held the initial authority to assess applications, but no student could be admitted without the explicit written approval of the Apostolic Delegate. Upon acceptance, the first two years of formation were considered a probationary period, with investiture in the clerical habit (the cassock) typically occurring only in the third year.

The seminary admitted not only residential seminarians preparing for ordination but also a small number of *externes* (day students) and *demi-pensionnaires* (half-boarders), who, while not destined for priesthood, were required to be practicing Catholics and were expected to adhere to many of the institution's strict regulations.[32]

Educational Program and Clerical Formation

The academic structure of the seminary was bifurcated into two successive levels. The *Petit Séminaire*, or junior seminary, comprised a six-year curriculum conducted in French, incorporating a full classical education alongside catechetical instruction and liturgical music. Students at this stage wore lay uniforms and were introduced to the rhythms of communal and religious life.

Following this, the *Grand Séminaire* offered a six-year program that included two years of Philosophy and four years of Dogmatic and Moral Theology. This was supplemented by specialized courses in Canon Law, Sacred Scripture, Ecclesiastical History, and Liturgy. Upon entry into the senior division, all seminarians—regardless of their particular rite—were vested in the black cassock and other Latin-rite ecclesiastical garments, marking their transition into the clerical state.

The discipline of the seminary was defined by a strict code of silence, obedience, and hierarchical deference. Silence was always mandatory and, in all spaces, except during designated periods of recreation. Greater rigor was demanded in the chapel and dormitory. Movement within the seminary was choreographed: students were required to walk in pairs, silently and with arms crossed, never dragging their feet. Entering classrooms or dormitories outside of assigned times necessitated special permission.

Once invested, seminarians were never to remove their cassock. When venturing outside the seminary, they were to don a black *douillette* (clerical overcoat) and a Roman-style black hat. Vacations were generally not permitted. Summer holidays were spent at the seminary, with rare exceptions for local students who had earned such privileges. These brief visits required ecclesiastical supervision and return from leave mandated a formal certificate attesting to the student's good religious and moral conduct, signed by the supervising priest and endorsed by the bishop.[33]

32 Ibid. (Annex 1)

33 Ibid. (Annex 1)

Apostolic Vicar, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli (the future Pope John XXIII) and seminarians in October1939[34]

Although the ideal of ecclesial union—an early aspiration of the seminary's mission—lost momentum by the early twentieth century, particularly under the more conservative papacy of Pius X, the institution nonetheless played a significant role in consolidating Catholic presence in the Constantinopolitan region. The seminary produced several bishops, thereby reinforcing the ecclesiastical infrastructure. Its continued operation until 1990, and the fact that its final cohort was shaped by the aggiornamento of the Second Vatican Council, attests to both the durability of its founding principles and the adaptability of its pedagogy. The Capuchins, adhering consistently to the guidelines originally set forth by Father Marcel, ensured the continuity of a formation model that, beyond its original ecumenical ambitions, effectively contributed to shaping a locally embedded yet culturally French-tinged model of priesthood. However, the eventual cessation of its activities cannot be understood in isolation. It was a local symptom of a global crisis that dismantled the entire 19th-century missionary edifice. As Prudhomme outlines,[35] French Catholicism, like the wider Church, was confronted by a series of destabilizing experiences: the cultural and moral challenge of decolonization, particularly the traumatic Algerian War, which shattered the myth of the "*mission civilisatrice*"; the intellectual and political attraction of Marxism and Third-Worldism for a new generation of activists; and a deep theological shift. The very notion of mission was re-evaluated, moving away from a theology of saving souls from "pagan darkness" towards a theology of liberation, inculturation, and dialogue. Ultimately, the seminary's most enduring monument was not built of stone but was inscribed upon the ecclesiastical identity of the Levant, it so carefully molded.

34 From "Kitantik" online auduction site: https://www.kitantik.com/product/1939-ST-LOUIS-PAPAZ-OKULU-KARTI_1br9qfwlmuygm1e1f1e Accessed: 13th June 2025

35 Prudhomme, ibid.

Conclusion

This article has retraced the institutional journey of the Saint-Louis Seminary of Pera, illuminating its significance as a unique religious and cultural outpost in Constantinople/Istanbul from its reestablishment in 1882 through the twentieth century. Throughout this period, the seminary stood at the intersection of international ambition and local Christian life. It functioned simultaneously as a "French" and a "Roman" project in the Ottoman Levant – a joint venture that married the geopolitical aims of France's protectorate policy with the ecclesiastical vision of the Holy See. In doing so, Saint-Louis Seminary became more than a clerical training center: it was a geopolitical instrument, a religious institution, and a conduit of culture. By recapitulating the seminary's development and roles, the article underscores how this single institution encapsulated broader dynamics of empire, church, and society in the modern Middle East.

One of the central arguments of the article is that Saint-Louis Seminary embodied the dual aspirations of France and the Vatican in the Orient. From the outset, its revival was backed by the French Third Republic's diplomacy in tandem with the Roman Curia's missionary authorities. France saw in Saint-Louis a tangible extension of its long-standing protectorate over Eastern Christians – a means to project influence and safeguard its cultural presence in the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, the Vatican embraced the seminary as part of its effort to support Eastern Catholic Churches and extend Roman Catholic educational standards abroad. This dual patronage meant the seminary served two masters in harmony: it propagated a vision of Catholicism loyal to Rome while cultivating a distinctly French ethos among its staff and students. The seminary's very rhythms of life – from the teaching of Latin and Thomistic theology to the inculcation of French language and manners – reflected this fusion of ultramontane Catholic piety and French cultural prestige. By highlighting this dual character, the article shows that Saint-Louis was not an isolated local school, but rather a deliberate product of transnational collaboration, blending the secular imperial reach of France with the spiritual authority of Rome.

Crucially, the Seminary of Saint-Louis served a truly interritual and multi-ethnic clientele, which the article details as a hallmark of its inclusive mission. Unlike most seminaries bound to a single rite or nationality, Saint-Louis educated aspiring clergy from across the mosaic of Eastern Catholic communities in the region. Armenian Catholics, Chaldeans, Syriac Catholics, Maronites, Melkites, and others – alongside Latin-rite Levantine Catholics – all studied under its roof. This diversity meant that the seminary was a rare melting pot of Eastern Christian traditions operating under one educational system. It provided a common formation for young men of different rites, instilling in them a shared Catholic identity and often a Francophone, cosmopolitan outlook, even as they would go on to serve in disparate local churches. By recapitulating the seminary's student body and curriculum, the article emphasizes that Saint-Louis functioned as a bridge between East and West: it respected the liturgical and cultural particularities of Eastern Catholics while simultaneously offering the uniform training and discipline typical of Roman seminaries in Europe. In doing so, it played a pivotal religious role – supplying clergy to multiple Eastern Catholic dioceses – and a cultural one, spreading French language and educational standards among the Eastern Christian elite. This broad service to many communities under one institutional umbrella underscores the seminary's significance as a unifying force in a divided ecclesial landscape.

The article also underscores how the seminary evolved in response to shifting political and ecclesiastical landscapes. Across the late Ottoman period and into the era of the Turkish Republic, Saint-Louis Seminary had to continuously adapt its strategies and operations to survive. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – the zenith of European influence – the seminary thrived under French protection and enjoyed a steady influx of students from across the Ottoman world. However, the ruptures of the First World War and the subsequent dissolution of the Ottoman Empire profoundly altered its circumstances. As the article recounts, the abolition of the capitulatory system and the rise of a sovereign, secular Turkish Republic in 1923 dismantled the old framework that had sheltered Catholic institutions. Foreign-run schools faced new restrictions, including requirements to teach in Turkish and the loss of diplomatic privileges. Saint-Louis Seminary saw its enrollment and resources ebb in the 1920s as regional turmoil and nationalist policies took hold. The article notes that by the interwar period the seminary had to scale back some of its activities – for instance, the major seminary program (Grand Séminaire) ceased by the early 1940s, forcing students to pursue advanced theological training abroad in Rome or elsewhere. Yet, rather than marking a simple decline, these challenges prompted flexibility. Saint-Louis adjusted by cooperating with other local Catholic schools for general education, focusing recruitment on the remaining Catholic communities in Turkey, and even temporarily reinstituting philosophy and theology courses in-house during World War II when travel was impossible. Such measures exemplify the seminary's resilience. They show that even as the tides of politics turned against foreign influence, the seminary found ways to persevere and continue its educational mission on a more modest scale.

A key insight of the article is the agency and pragmatism of the missionaries and clergy who ran Saint-Louis, especially as the grand frameworks of French and Vatican support began to wane. Far from acting merely as obedient instruments of Paris or Rome, the directors and faculty on the ground often took creative initiatives to sustain the seminary's purpose. The narrative highlights how these missionary-educators balanced loyalty to their patrons with responsiveness to local realities. For example, when official French backing diminished after World War I, the seminary's leaders pragmatically aligned more closely with the Vatican, culminating in its elevation to a Pontifical Seminary in 1933. This shift brought Saint-Louis under direct Roman oversight (through the Congregation for the Oriental Churches), reaffirming its Catholic credentials and securing new patronage just as France's political influence in Turkey evaporated. The missionaries accepted stricter rules and ecclesiastical supervision as the price of continuity, demonstrating adaptability. Likewise, in their day-to-day operations, they exercised judgment in navigating between cultures: maintaining a French-style curriculum and discipline yet avoiding overt cultural insensitivity that might alarm the local Ottoman (and later Turkish) authorities or provoke Orthodox neighbors. When faced with drastically reduced foreign presence, they doubled down on serving the needs of the local Eastern Catholic flock, even if that meant humbler circumstances. In sum, the article argues that the history of Saint-Louis Seminary is not just a tale of imperial and papal designs, but also a story of missionaries acting as astute managers and bridge-builders. Their pragmatic stewardship ensured the seminary could survive turbulent times and continue forming clergy, long after the heyday of French missionary dominance had passed.

In synthesizing the findings of the article, it becomes clear that the Saint-Louis Seminary of Pera offers a rich case study in the complex interplay between colonial ambition,

church policy, and local faith communities. This conclusion draws together the threads of the seminary's geopolitical, religious, and cultural roles. Geopolitically, Saint-Louis exemplified how a Great Power's influence could be exerted through educational and religious institutions, embedding France's presence in the very fabric of Levantine Christian society. Religiously, it was an instrument of Catholic consolidation – a training ground that bolstered Eastern Catholic hierarchies and tightened their communion with Rome during a period of intense ecclesiastical centralization. Culturally, the seminary stood as a beacon of French language and norms in the East, shaping generations of clergy who often became community leaders and conduits of European ideas in their native lands. Yet the seminary's story also illustrates the limits of external influence and the importance of local adaptation. Over the decades, global forces like diplomatic policy and Vatican directives set the stage, but it was ultimately the local actors – the bishops, rectors, friars, and students – who negotiated the daily reality of the institution. They ensured that the seminary not only advanced foreign agendas but also genuinely served the pastoral and educational needs of Middle Eastern Catholics. Thus, the narrative of Saint-Louis Seminary demonstrates that missionary institutions were not static outposts of external powers; they were dynamic entities shaped equally by top-down vision and bottom-up resilience.

In conclusion, the Saint-Louis Seminary in Pera emerges from this study as a microcosm of the wider historical currents that defined the late Ottoman and early Republican eras for the Catholic Church in the Near East. By recapitulating its trajectory from a bold reestablishment in 1882 to its adjustments in the mid-twentieth century, the article shows how one seminary could be at once a tool of international politics and a humble local school for priests. Its century-long saga reveals how France's "protective" zeal and Rome's spiritual objectives converged in a single institution, and how that institution in turn molded a generation of Eastern Catholic clergy who carried forward a hybrid legacy of Eastern Christian tradition imbued with Western (often French) education. The Seminary's history is a testament to the enduring interconnectedness of global and local forces: it underscores that the fate of Catholic missions in the Levant depended on large political and ecclesiastical frameworks, but equally on adaptability, cultural negotiation, and the pragmatic faith of those on the ground. In the final analysis, the significance of Saint-Louis lies in its dual nature and adaptive endurance. It stood as a living bridge between France and the Orient, and between the Vatican and the Eastern churches, navigating the sweeping changes of the twentieth century with a blend of fidelity and flexibility.

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Annex 1- "Petit Séminaire Saint Louis – Règlement des Séminaristes," a bilingual (French–Turkish) code of conduct comprising 65 articles, dated October 1965 (Summary in English)

1. Admission and Student Body

The primary mission of the seminary was to train priests for different Catholic rites, intended to serve their bishops and positively influence dissidents through their virtue and knowledge.

Admission Criteria: To be considered for admission, candidates generally had to meet the following conditions:

- Be of legitimate birth to Catholic parents of any rite.
- Have received the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.
- Typically be at least twelve years old.
- Demonstrate intellectual capacity and a desire for ecclesiastical life, showing signs of a vocation such as a love for prayer and church ceremonies.

Admission required presentation by the candidate's bishop and parental consent. The final decision rested with the Father Rector, who would refer the candidate to the Apostolic Delegate.

The student body also included day students (*externes*) and half-boarders (*demi-pensionnaires*) who were not necessarily pursuing priesthood but were required to be Catholic.

2. General Discipline and Conduct

The regulations enforced a highly structured and controlled environment, emphasizing silence, obedience, and respect as core tenets of formation.

- **Silence (Le Silence):** Silence was mandatory at all times and in all places, except during designated recreation periods and in recreation areas. It was to be observed with even greater rigor in the Church and the dormitory.
- **Permissions (Des Permissions):** No student could be absent from a common exercise without permission from the religious authority in charge. It was forbidden to go to the dormitory during the day or enter study halls or classrooms during recreation without special permission from the Father Supervisor. Students were never permitted to enter the rooms of the Father professors without authorization from the Regular Superior. All requests for permission had to be made with politeness and respect.
- **Movement and Order (Les Rangs):** When moving from one activity to another, all students had to form two lines and walk in silence with their arms crossed, without dragging their feet.
- **Politeness (Politesse):** Students were required to show respect to all religious figures at all times. If seated, they had to stand up when a Father spoke to them. They also had to stand to receive a reprimand or when being questioned. Overly familiar manners were forbidden. When answering, students were instructed to say «yes, my

Father» or «no, my Father» instead of a simple «yes» or «no». It was strictly forbidden to murmur when reprimanded or to show discontent with a punishment.

3. Communication and External Contact

Contact with the outside world was strictly regulated to maintain the insular environment of the seminary.

• **Correspondence:** Students were generally allowed to write to their parents only once a month. These letters had to be given open to the Father Rector, who would also deliver incoming mail to students opened. Special permission was required to write more frequently. However, students could correspond freely and privately with their own Bishops and the Apostolic Delegate; letters to and from these authorities, identifiable by an official seal or letterhead, were to be delivered sealed. Nothing could be brought into or taken out of the seminary without prior permission.
• **Visits (Parloir):** Parents of seminarians could visit once a month on a Friday or Sunday, for a duration not exceeding half an hour. Visits took place during recreation hours. Students were not authorized to start conversations with the religious members of the house and were forbidden from speaking with servants or any other person external to the seminary.

4. Academic and Religious Life

The educational program was divided into two distinct stages:

• **Junior Seminary (Petit Séminaire):** A six-year course of study where the instruction was given in French. The curriculum included the full program of classical education, in addition to religious instruction and church singing. Students in the junior seminary wore a uniform lay habit.
• **Senior Seminary (Grand Séminaire):** A six-year course consisting of two years of Philosophy and four years of Dogmatic and Moral Theology. This was supplemented with courses in Canon Law, Ecclesiastical History, Holy Scripture, and Liturgy. All students in the senior seminary, regardless of their rite, wore the black cassock and other Latin-rite ecclesiastical garments.

5. Rules for Day Students (Externes)

Day students and half-boarders followed the general regulations with some modifications.

• Day students had to arrive by 7:55 AM and leave at noon, returning by 1:25 PM and leaving for the evening at 7:00 PM.
• Half-boarders remained for the entire day until 7:00 PM.
• They were forbidden from bringing any objects unrelated to their studies into the seminary without permission and were not allowed to run errands for their boarding classmates.

Annex 2: The 2nd page of the document entitled "Le Séminaire interrituel St. Louis d'Istanbul." Unsigned typescript historical account, 10 pages, covering the period from its foundation until 1960.

fréquentant la maison, et il ne semble pas non plus qu'on ait visé à en diriger vers le sacerdoce.

Telle quelle, la mission fut brisée par la Révolution. Les Capucins italiens s'efforcèrent au XIXe siècle, sur une échelle bien moindre, de prendre la relève de leurs confrères dans toutes leurs activités, y compris le service de l'ambassade et une modeste école. L'actuelle église St.Louis date de Louis-Philippe.

Le Séminaire St.Louis.-

L'histoire proprement dite du Séminaire se divise assez nettement en deux périodes, de part et d'autre de la Guerre de 1914-1918.

La Province des Capucins de Paris est reconstituée officiellement en 1870. En 1880, elle subit une période d'expulsions.

Le T.R.P.Arsène du Châtel, Provincial, pense à des maisons de refuge. Or, depuis quelque temps la paroisse française et les ambassadeurs, LL.EE.Mrs. Bourgoin et Fournier, réclament le retour de religieux français.

En février 1881, le R.R.P.Marcel de Montaillé, Définiteur, est envoyé avec le P.Laurent du Mans. A St.Louis, les Pères italiens leur cèdent la place et vont s'installer à San Stefano (Yécil-Keuy); ils laissent en héritage une petite école de quartier, qu'il faudra rénover de fond en comble. La nouvelle fondation, érigée en mai, compte alors trois Pères et trois Frères lais, sous la direction du P.Marcel, vice-préfet. Mgr. Vanutelli, vicaire apostolique patriarcal, les accueille avec une bienveillance qu'on voudrait voir mieux partagée par certains milieux du clergé et des fidèles. La maison est aménagée pour une communauté régulière.

A cette époque, le grand souci de Léon XIII est l'Union des Eglises. Pour y travailler, deux méthodes d'adaptation se proposent qui ont toutes deux leurs partisans, sur place et à Rome: ou bien spécialiser des religieux et prêtres latins et les faire passer aux rites orientaux, ou bien former par la base un clergé indigène. Les deux solutions ne s'excluent pas nécessairement, mais à St.Louis on choisit la seconde, malgré les difficultés prévisibles et [illegible]

Annex 3: Correspondence attesting to the elevation of the seminary in 1933 to the status of a "Pontifical Seminary." The letter is sent from the Minister General of the Capuchin order in Rome to Fr. Herve de Camlez, the rector of the seminary.

Curia Generalis FF. Minorum Capuccinorum
Via Boncompagni, 71
ROMA (125)

Rome , le 24 Janvier 1933.

T.R.P.HERVE de CAMLEZ
Supérieur
du Séminaire Saint Louis
Constantinople.

Très Révérend Père,

Nous sommes en mesure de pouvoir porter à votre connaissance que le Séminaire St Louis de Péra a été érigé en Séminaire Pontifical et que Son Excellence Mgr le Délégué Apostolique a été nommé pro tempore Ordinaire - et le seul Ordinaire - pour ce Séminaire malgré son caractère inter-diocésain et même inter-rituél .

D'autre part en ce qui concerne le Règlement du Séminaire, il sera proposé et approuvé par la S.Congrégation Orientale de commun accord avec les Supérieurs de l'Ordre ; en conséquence Nous serions très obligé à Votre très Révérende Paternité de bien vouloir rédiger et Nous faire parvenir dans le plus bref délai possible les motifs qui ont suggéré ses remarques au projet de Mgr le Délégué.

Veuillez agréer , Très Révérend Père , l'assurance de Nos sentiments tout paternellement dévoués en N.S. et St Fr.

Fr. Vigile de Valstagna
Min. Gen. OM. Cap.

Translation:

Rome, 24 January 1933

To the Reverend Father HERVÉ de CAULEZ
Superior of the Seminary of Saint Louis, Constantinople

Very Reverend Father,

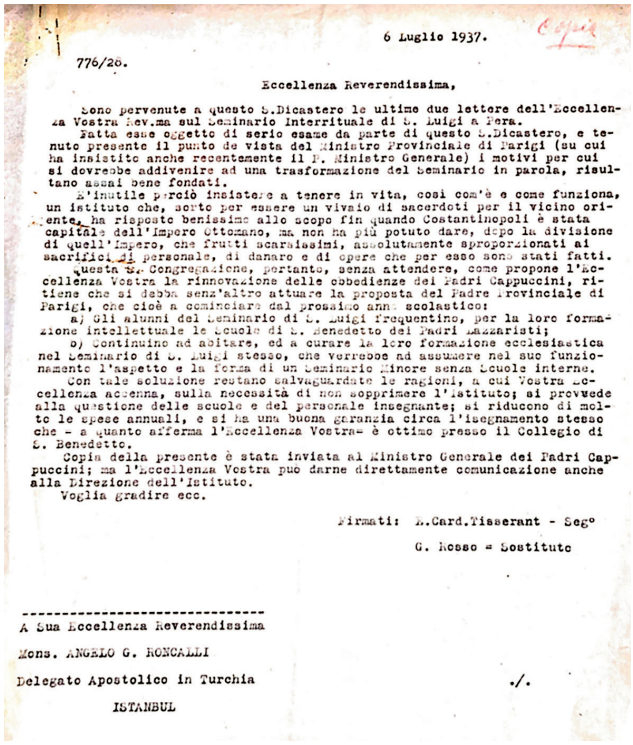
We are in a position to inform you that the Seminary of St. Louis of Pera has been elevated to a *Pontifical Seminary* and that His Excellency the Apostolic Delegate has been appointed (pro tempore) Ordinary—and the sole Ordinary—for this Seminary, given its inter-diocesan and inter-ritual character.

Consequently, as regards the Seminary Rule, it will be submitted to and approved by the Sacred Congregation for Seminaries, and it must be observed by the Superiors of the Order; we would therefore be much obliged if Your Reverence would kindly send us, as soon as possible, the reasons which prompted your remarks on the draft prepared by Monsignor the Apostolic Delegate.

Please accept, Very Reverend Father, the assurance of our most devoted sentiments in Our Lord and St. Francis.

(signature)
Fr. Vigilio da Valstagna (Vigilio Federico Dalla Zuanna)
Minister General, O.F.M. Cap.

Annex 4: Letter from Cardinal Tisserant in the Vatican to the Papal representative in Istanbul, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, dated 6 July 1937.



6 Luglio 1937.

776/26.

Eccellenza Reverendissima,

Sono pervenute a questo S.Dicastero le ultime due lettere dell'Eccellenza Vostra Rev.ma sul Seminario Interrituale di S. Luigi a Pera.

Fatta esse oggetto di serio esame da parte di questo S.Dicastero, e tenuto presente il punto de vista del Ministro Provinciale di Parigi (su cui ha insistito anche recentemente il P. Ministro Generale) i motivi per cui si dovrebbe addivenire ad una trasformazione del Seminario in parola, risultano assai bene fondati.

E'inutile perciò insistere a tenere in vita, così com'è e come funziona, un istituto che, sorto per essere un vivaio di sacerdoti per il vicino oriente, ha risposto benissimo allo scopo fin quando Costantinopoli è stata capitale dell'Impero ottomano, ma non ha più potuto dare, dopo la divisione di quell'Impero, che frutti scarsissimi, assolutamente sproporzionati ai sacrifici di personale, di danaro e di opere che per esso sono stati fatti.

Questa S.a Congregazione, pertanto, senza attendere, come propone l'Eccellenza Vostra la rinnovazione delle obbedienze dei Padri Cappuccini, ritiene che si debba senz'altro attuare la proposta del Padre Provinciale di Parigi, che cioè a cominciare dal prossimo anno scolastico:

a) Gli alunni del Seminario di S. Luigi frequentino, per la loro formazione intellettuale le scuole di S. Benedetto dei Padri Lazzaristi;

b) Continuino ad abitare, ed a curare la loro formazione ecclesiastica nel Seminario di S. Luigi stesso, che verrebbe ad assumere nel suo funzionamento l'aspetto e la forma di un Seminario Minore senza Scuole interne.

Con tale soluzione restano salvaguardate le ragioni, a cui Vostra Eccellenza accenna, sulla necessità di non sopprimere l'Istituto; si provvede alla questione delle scuole e del personale insegnante; si riducono di molte le spese annuali, e si ha una buona garanzia circa l'insegnamento stesso che - a quanto afferma l'Eccellenza Vostra- è ottimo presso il Collegio di S. Benedetto.

Copia della presente è stata inviata al Ministro Generale dei Padri Cappuccini; ma l'Eccellenza Vostra può darne direttamente comunicazione anche alla Direzione dell'Istituto.

Voglia gradire ecc.

Firmati: E.Card.Tisserant - Segº

G. Rosso = Sostituto

A Sua Eccellenza Reverendissima

Mons. ANGELO G. RONCALLI

Delegato Apostolico in Turchia

ISTANBUL

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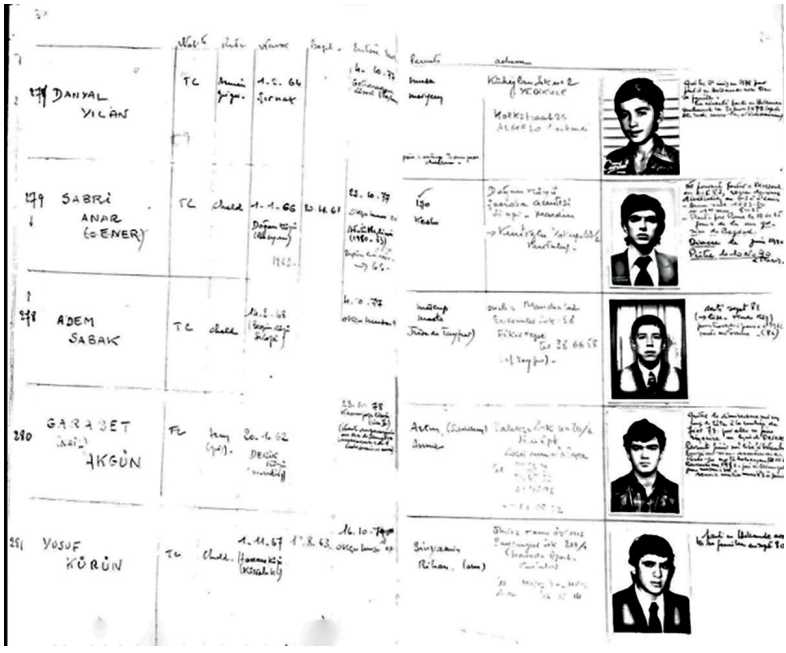
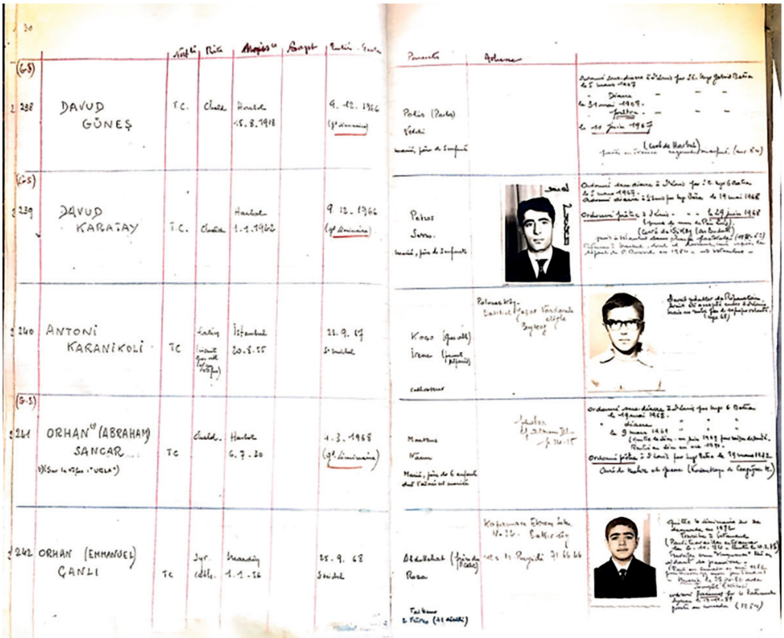
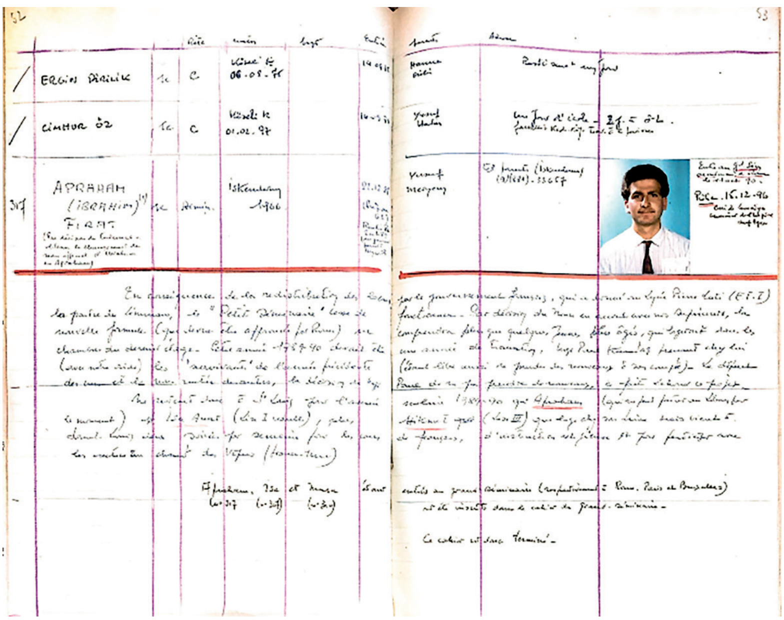
Annex 5:





DAVUD GÜNEŞ
DAVUD KARATAY
ANTONİ KARANİKOLİ
ORHAN (ABRAHAM) SANCAR
ORHAN (EMMANUEL) ÇANLI



ERGİN PİRİLİK
CİMHUR ÖZ
APRAHAM (İBRAHİM) FIRAT