

**“Tous ces consuls de bazar”:
French consulates and Greek staff in the early modern Mediterranean
(17th-18th centuries)**

For long in the shadow of ambassadors and other high-ranking diplomats, consuls and consular systems have only recently become the focus of historical studies, most of them dealing with the early modern Mediterranean. More than the mere “rediscovery” of seemingly minor players in issues of international trade and cross-cultural contacts, this new interest has led to a broader reassessment of their role in both the implementation of early modern trading policies, the social and political life of foreign “nations” abroad, and the process of “bureaucratization” of *Ancien Régime* state institutions. France is a case in point, as the standard narrative has it that by the end of the 17th century, Colbert had turned the medieval, Marseille-operated, consular system, into a modern, state-run, and national institution. Evidence however suggests that this process was in fact more complex and nuanced than is often assumed: hence, the role of Greek *reyas* in some of the more remote consular posts in the Eastern Mediterranean. My talk therefore aims to investigate the recruitment policies, career strategies and administrative practices of these ‘non-national’ staff. I will seek to understand what prompted them to enter the French consular service (sometimes alongside that of other European powers), against the backdrop of 17th- and 18th-century policy reforms that sought to give preference to French nationals for the exercise of consular duties. At a time when consular services became part of a complex process of definition of state sovereignty, the way these multiple, allegedly exclusive loyalties were articulated, sheds new light on issues of ‘foreign’ and ‘national’ in the making of the modern state.

Mathieu Grenet
assistant professor in Early modern history
INU Champollion, Albi (France) / UMR 5136 FRAMESPA / IUF