



34th Levantine Heritage Foundation Zoom lecture gathering with guest speaker Vjeran Kursar  
16 July 2024, 6.00 pm (UK time)

### Multiple Identities and Shifting Allegiances in a Levantine Diplomat Family in Ottoman Istanbul: the Case of the House of Chirico

The house of Chirico was established in Istanbul by Luca Chirico (1688-1749), the consul of the Republic of Dubrovnik, the first dragoman of England, the knight of Saint Sepulcher of Jesus, a well-known person in Constantinopolitan Levantine social life and an affluent merchant and entrepreneur. Following the example of other foreigners in the Istanbul's "European" quarters of Galata and Pera, members of the house of Chirico married with members of other immigrant Western European communities and long-settled Levantine families. In this manner, the Chiricos swiftly assimilated into Levantine society, and became one of the most influential family in this non-national, or supranational, cosmopolitan community of people of the same, Roman Catholic faith and culture. Marital ties with members of Levantine dragoman families who served Western European embassies and consulates, provided the house of Chirico, as a hereditary dynasty of the Ragusan consuls, with a useful diplomatic network of information, as well. Unable to preserve its own Ragusan political identity after the abolition of the Republic of Dubrovnik, the nineteenth-century dragomans from the house of Chirico separately entered service of Sardinian and Russian consulates. Service and allegiance to different foreign states determined citizenships of now stateless members of the house of Chirico, eventually leading to division between the family branches into Italian and Russian citizens. The First World War brought a definite end to the age of the empires, which was succeeded by an era of national states inhabited by one nation with one language. Little space was left for people of complex multinational, multicultural, and multilingual background such as the Chiricos, who had to be classified and labelled according to rather random and arbitrary national criteria.

Booking essential: <https://vjeran-kursar-lecture.eventbrite.co.uk>



Vjeran Kursar (b. 1975, Zagreb) graduated with a double major in History and Turkish Studies at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb. He got his MA in Ottoman History from Bilkent University, Ankara (2007). In 2010 he graduated with a PhD thesis entitled "Non-Muslims and the functioning of a premodern multi-confessional society in Ottoman Bosnia (1463 – ca. 1750)" at the Department of History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb. He is working as an Associate Professor at the Department of Turkish Studies and Department of History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, where he teaches classes on Ottoman history. His main fields of interest are Early Modern History of the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire, Legal and Cultural History of the Ottoman Empire, Islamic Law, Islamic Studies, and Ethnic and Confessional Relations in the Balkans. He is the author of "Croatian Levantines in Ottoman Istanbul" (2021) and the co-editor, with Nenad Moačanin and Kornelija Jurin Starčević, of "Evliya Çelebi in the Borderlands: New Insights and Novel Approaches to the Seyahatname (Western Balkans and Iran Sections)" (2021).