



16th Levantine Heritage Foundation Zoom lecture gathering with guest speaker Dr Vjeran Kursar
8 December 2021, 6pm (UK time)

Croatian Levantines in Ottoman Istanbul

In the early modern period, the most numerous of Croatian immigrants in Istanbul were the Ragusans, i.e., the citizens of the Republic of Dubrovnik (Ragusa). As a friendly and faithful vassal state, the mercantile republic and its citizens enjoyed privileges that stimulated migration to the Ottoman Empire in general, and Istanbul as the greatest economic centre of the empire in particular. In addition to trade, the Ragusans played a vital role for Catholicism in the Ottoman capital, whether through consular support, or, occasionally, even personally, as the highest Roman Catholic dignitaries in Istanbul. The skilful Ragusan diplomats sometimes provided their services to other foreign embassies as well, and thus played an important role behind the scenes in European diplomacy in Istanbul. At the same time, often they figured as the leaders not only of the Ragusan community, but of the local Roman Catholics in general.

In the long nineteenth century, however, the majority of the Croatian - Dalmatian immigrants represented the physical work force and proletariat. Some individuals, on the other hand, were entrepreneurs themselves or held important positions in European-led or inspired projects that played an important role in the transfer of technology to the Ottoman Empire, and thus were valued newcomers. These positions included middle to high ranking positions in mining, steamship and railway companies, printing, the tobacco industry, and cartography. Their activities often went beyond the technical aspects of production and gained importance for the social and cultural life of Istanbul, especially in regard to its then significant Levantine community, into which the Croatian immigrants assimilated soon after arrival.

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



Vjeran Kursar (PhD, University of Zagreb) is Associate Professor of History and Hungarian, Turkish and Judaic Studies at the University of Zagreb. He has published on topics of Ottoman ethno-confessional, legal, and social history, mainly related to Bosnia, the Balkans, and Istanbul. He is the author of *Croatian Levantines in Ottoman Istanbul* (2021) and 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).

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