



29th Levantine Heritage Foundation Zoom lecture gathering with guest speaker Chloe Metz
25 July 2023, 6pm (UK time)

“A Thoroughly Mongrel Race” in a “Faraway, Gaslit World”: Levantine Liminality and Legacy in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Port Cities

This talk paints a fine-grained portrait of the “lost” Levantine community through their naturalization requests, passports, diplomatic correspondences, trading logs, newspapers, and postcards from the ruins of Ephesus. The talk imagines the Levantines as agents of translation—being both literal translators as dragomans at the ports and in European consulates throughout the Ottoman Empire, as well as figurative translators: mediating consumption patterns, cultural attitudes, and knowledge between Europe and the Middle East. As merchants, they held agency in the kinds of products, airs, and aesthetics they imported and exported. Through migration and intermarriage, the Levantines accumulated ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity to form a liminal, cosmopolitanist merchant community. Betwixt and between European and Ottoman categories of belonging, the Levantines sought to exist and operate on their own terms. The rise of nationalism pushed the Levantines into an identity crisis, as they were forced to neaten up and “regularize” their multi-hyphenated identities. This talk ultimately grapples with how to remember a pre-nationalist people in a post-nationalist world, as well as how to reconcile two opposing perspectives of the Levantines: 1) a quasi-colonial European influence in Ottoman port cities versus 2) a golden age of diversity and tolerance that Turkey and other former Ottoman countries now nostalgically yearn for.

Booking essential: <https://chloe-metz-presentation.eventbrite.co.uk>



Chloe Metz is a recent graduate of Amherst College, graduating in the top one percent of her class and Summa Cum Laude with distinction in History and French. Her research on nineteenth-century francophone Levantines took her to the Diplomatic Archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs in La Courneuve and Nantes. Her discoveries there as well as discoveries made about Levantine Amherst alumnus Henry Van Lennep in the Amherst College Archives & Special Collections culminated in her honors thesis (the subject of this talk), winning the European Studies Prize. She is an incoming law student at the University of Virginia School of Law and is interested in pursuing a dual degree in law and a masters in history.

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