



3rd joint event Levantine Heritage Foundation with the Royal Asiatic Society gathering in London with guest speaker Dr Gemma Masson



Upstairs, Downstairs: British Diplomatic Travellers in 18th Century Istanbul

The eighteenth century in the Ottoman Empire was marked by a shift in the methods of international interaction. A very definite change from warfare and aggression towards trade and diplomacy has been observed by historians. While such interactions existed and are well documented in the earlier centuries it was in the 1700s that such exchanges became the primary currency of internal relations. This brought a great number of Europeans to Istanbul in a diplomatic role, as opposed to one of leisure or business, and has led to some extensive collections of primary literature detailing the experiences and observations of these travellers. There is a temptation to be very rigid in our classification of who constitutes a diplomatic traveller and, as such, to limit ourselves as historians to only the official despatches, personal correspondence and diaries of the official ambassadors. However, in my opinion, the definition of a diplomatic traveller can and should be extended to include the family, staff and whole retinue of the ambassadors and it is this wider classification that I will be applying in this paper. With that in mind I have chosen to present three, very different travellers here all of whom came to Istanbul in the eighteenth century as part of three different diplomatic households. My aim here is to try and show that members of the diplomatic household still had an experience solely dictated by their diplomatic status and so do not qualify to be classified as any other kind of traveller. Secondly, I hope to illustrate that information on diplomatic life in Istanbul can be gathered from other members of the household aside from the ambassador as, the experiences of others can show different facets of the diplomatic experience which may not be considered obvious or noteworthy to the ambassadors themselves.



An oil painting by Lucjan Wędrychowski (1854-1934) - Audience of a Polish envoy before the Ottoman Sultan.



Dr Gemma Louise Masson is an Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, a PhD graduate from the Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies. She currently works as the Assistant Editor of the *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations Journal* with the University of Birmingham. She has diverse research interests including Ottoman History, Imperial and Global History, History in Popular Culture, Dracula History, Supernatural History/Mythology/Folklore, and Death. Her institutional affiliations include the British Institute at Ankara, the Transylvanian Society of Dracula, British Society for Middle Eastern Studies, Ottoman Turkish Studies Association, British Association for Turkish Area Studies, Anglo-Turkish Society, British Association for Islamic Studies, The Folklore Society and Travellers in Ottoman Lands.

28 March 2023, 6.30pm

Royal Asiatic Society, 14 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2HD

Talks are free for LHF & Royal Asiatic Society members but booking essential:

Booking essential: <https://gemma-masson-presentation.eventbrite.co.uk>

For Zoom link Matty Bradley by e-mail: mb@royalasiaticsociety.org

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