



40th Levantine Heritage Foundation Zoom lecture with guest speaker Dr. Lucia Patrizio Gunning - 29 September 2025, 6.00 pm (UK time)

Continuity and change in the British diplomatic service in the Levant: The 'Levantine' question and the lure of antiquities

This talk will examine the organization of the British diplomatic service in the Ottoman Empire and analyse its transition from a prestigious, privately financed, highly individualized public office to a state-funded, but fragmented and poorly paid body. In 1825 the Foreign Office replaced the Levant Company officers with public servants who had no ties or affinities with Levantine society. However, to obtain antiquities for the British Museum, the Foreign Office had to turn once again to British Levantines. Based on our earlier published work, as well as recent unpublished archival research, this talk will explain how the collecting of antiquities in the Ottoman Empire relied entirely on the British diplomatic service and its Levantine connection.

Booking essential: <https://lucia-gunning-presentation.eventbrite.co.uk>

Contact: contact@levantineheritage.com



A British Official [probably the Ambassador Stratford Canning] dining with the Kaymakam of Istanbul, Anonymous, about 1809 – [further info:](#)



Dr. Lucia Patrizio Gunning is an honorary Senior Research Fellow at University College London. She is a contemporary historian specialising in cultural and diplomatic history, particularly the relationship between cultural heritage, disasters, and recovery. Her expertise encompasses museum formation, state involvement in antiquities collection during the 19th century, and its implications for contemporary issues of collecting and restitution. Additionally, she has extensive experience on the protection of heritage at risk, particularly post-earthquakes, utilising information technology to empower communities and facilitate their reconnection with their cultural heritage.

Following the devastating 2009 earthquake in her hometown of L'Aquila, Lucia has dedicated herself to effecting change in reconstruction and disaster preparedness approaches across Europe and Japan. She is the author of *The British Consular Service in the Aegean and the Collection of Antiquities for the British Museum* (2009 & 2018), and 'Cultural diplomacy in the acquisition of the head of the Satala Aphrodite for the British Museum' (2021), *Journal of the History of Collections*. She was the co-editor with Paola Rizzi of "Invisible Reconstruction Volume 1" (UCL Press, 2022); this volume presented cross-disciplinary responses to natural, biological, and man-made disasters.

Lucia serves on the board of the ICOM IC-Ethics committee and was a member of the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Cultural Heritage Bill which enacted ratification of the 1954 Hague Convention.

Currently, Lucia is collaborating with UCL Press on a second edited volume titled "Charles Thomas Newton Beyond Archaeology: Networks of Collecting Greek and Roman Antiquities," co-authored with Dr. Debbie Challis (Portico Library) and Dr. Thomas Kiely (British Museum). Additionally, she continues to work with Dr. Despina Vlami on the impact of the Levant Company and Foreign Office officials on the acquisition of antiquities for the British Museum.