



27th Levantine Heritage Foundation dinner gathering in London, with guest speakers Dr Philipp Wirtz (SOAS) 'Rave reviews in Pera: German Residents in late Ottoman Istanbul as Observers of Ottoman Cultural Life, 1908 - 1918' & Taylan Güngör (SOAS) 'The late-Medieval Italian community in Pera'



Philipp Wirtz received my PhD from SOAS in 2013 after studies and research in Germany, Iran, Turkey and the UK. His research areas include the modern history of the Middle East, particularly of the Ottoman Empire and its successor states, especially contemporary Turkey. He is interested in "ego documents" and personal narratives, contacts between the Ottomans and the world around them as well as questions of cultural change and cultural politics.

Ottoman-German relationships have usually been looked at in the context of great-power politics, imperialism both hard and soft, or the military and economic spheres. This paper presents a part of a new research project focusing on personal networks and experiences of German residents in the late Ottoman Empire and early Turkish Republic. This paper analyses ways in which Germans living in late Ottoman Istanbul commented on and participated in aspects of Ottoman cultural life, such as publishing, journalism and literary production. It focuses on two German expatriates, the journalist Friedrich Schrader (1865-1921) and the academic Martin Hartmann (1851-1918). As researchers, theatre-goers, buyers of books and writers of literary reviews, both were not only "visitors", but took an active part in the cultural scene of the Ottoman capital in the early 20th century. Using their local knowledge and fluency in Ottoman Turkish, both were able to gain unique insights at odds with the popular portrayal of Ottoman affairs in the German press. On the other hand, neither of these authors was immune to the biases of their times, constantly questioning the extent to which Ottoman literary expression, and in particular the emerging "Turkish national literature" were "original" or "civilised."



The former German merchant seamen's guest house in Galata, one of the various national institutions of this country in the capital, including post offices, schools etc.



[Taylan Güngör](#) (SOAS): The late-Medieval Italian community in Pera

After the conquest of Istanbul in 1453, the *Djeneziz bāzīrgānları* (Genoese merchants) of Pera were granted the special status and identity of the *muste'min* allowing them the freedom to trade in Ottoman territories. There existed a complex pluralist legal framework in early Ottoman Istanbul, in which the invaluable role of merchant foreigners, whether transient, the *Frenjis* (Franks), or the previously settled, the *dhimmīs*, was recognised and codified. By looking at Ottoman court and Italian notary documents, this privileged status will be examined from the experience of both the merchant foreigner in Pera and their Ottoman rulers on the other side of the Golden Horn. As such, by reviewing their ordinary interactions, the practical value placed upon the merchant foreigner's pre-existing primacy over the established trade routes of out of Pera will be assessed.



World map by Martellus at the British Library



In addition there will be a short presentation by Tom Young on 'Lost Levantine Houses of Beirut'. Tom Young is a full time artist from England. He has painted and exhibited in the Middle East, India, America and Europe. He is passionate about painting the changing nature of the city which has been his home since 2009: Beirut. Through painting, he explores themes of transience, memory, transformation and contradiction. Whilst expressing the vulnerability of urban heritage in the face of rampant modern development, he creates a transcendent feeling of light and space.

He combines his painting practice with architectural activism- transforming disused heritage buildings into living centers of creativity and education. His most notable projects in Lebanon include Villa Paradiso (2013-17), The Rose House (2014-15) and Beit Boustani (2016-17). He is planning to transform Sofar Grand Hotel and Casino into a cultural venue next year, in collaboration with the Cochrane/Sursock family. – [gallery](#):

18 January 2018, 5.45pm start, talks start 6.15 pm, dinner 8pm

Royal Thames Yacht Club, Knightsbridge, London

Talks are free but booking essential: <https://27th-lhf-gathering.eventbrite.co.uk>

Please support these events by becoming a sponsor. We provide these talks for free as part of our mission to preserve and promote the research and public understanding of Levantine heritage. Sponsoring the talks helps cover the LHF's costs in arranging these talks in central London. For sponsorship packages, please contact chairman@levantineheritage.com. All sponsors will be recognised at events and on our website.