



SEMINAR

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Swedish travellers between Europe, Asia and Africa: The continents and the making of geographical knowledge in the early modern world

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Istanbul is commonly described as the crossroads between east and west. The Bosphorus is said to be the boundary line between Asia and Europe, and a place where regions and civilizations meet and clash. This is of course a simplification. For one, during most of its history, Istanbul has been a centre rather than border of empires. The idea that this is a place where continents or civilizations meet needs to be historicized. I discuss this question through a discussion about how a group of 17th-century Swedish travellers made sense of their journeys through the Eastern Mediterranean. Did the travellers perceive themselves to be at the meeting point of civilizations? What geographic and cultural regions did they say that they travelled through? In particular, what roles did 'Africa,' 'Asia' and 'Europe' play in their narratives?