

Seminar Series at Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul 2016-2017



*Rethinking Global Histories for the Present:
The Land and Maritime Silk Road in Central Eurasia and the Indian Ocean*

Organisers

Prof. Birgit Schlyter

Stockholm University, The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities,
Visiting Scholar, Asian Studies Center, Boğaziçi University

Dr. Fernando Rosa

Stellenbosch University, Visiting Scholar, Asian Studies Center, Boğaziçi University

Our second seminar will take place on
February 13, 2017, at 15:30, in the Auditorium

The theme of our discussion this time is

***Reform Movements and Ideas in the Mediterranean and Eurasia
in the Late-Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries***

Presenters

Edgar Melgar, Ph.D. Cand., Princeton University, Visiting Researcher,
Asian Studies Centre, Boğaziçi University

Zaur Gasimov, Ph.D., Research Fellow, Orient-Institut Istanbul

Abstracts

Rebels, Spies, and Traders: The Global Paths of Ottoman Positivism (Edgar Melgar)

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Positivism, a project of scientific, cultural and political reform derived from the works of Auguste Comte, spread around the world, gaining the attention of intellectuals in the Ottoman Empire, Brazil, Mexico, and India. To facilitate the diffusion of Comte's ideas throughout the world, a group of dedicated followers established an International Positivist Society, based out of Paris, and with branches in the UK, Germany, Hungary, Sweden, India, Mexico, Chile, and Brazil. The global Positivist Society offered both a channel for the exchange of ideas, and a social network, facilitating interaction between writers from a variety of geographic and cultural backgrounds. This paper focuses on the history of three Ottoman members of the International Positivist

Society: Ahmed Riza, leader of the Young Turks; Youssuf Fehmi, a Syrian pamphleteer expelled from France for allegedly spying for the German Army at the break of the First World War; and Joseph Schemonti, a Syrian trader who migrated to Mexico and sought to become the first Ottoman Consul in Latin America. I explore not only how these three authors espoused ideas derived from Comte on an ideological level, using them to formulate political programs of secular and anti-imperialist reform, but also the ways in which they leveraged their membership in the global Positivist movement to create social opportunities that would allow them to advance their political and personal interests. In doing so, I aim to emphasize the importance of exploring cross-regional intellectual sociabilities when reconstructing the intellectual history of the late Ottoman Empire in a global framework.

Russian-Turkish Intellectual Flows and Entanglements in the Twentieth Century (Zaur Gasimov)

Geographically located in Europe and Asia and sharing a common border in the Black Sea and Caspian region, Russia and Turkey have been neighbouring countries for centuries with a long history of mutual interactions. Yet, researching the political history of Ottoman-Tsarist and Turkish-Russian relations and transfers between Russia and Turkey, not only requires a consideration of ‘between-peripheries’ contacts, but also the recognition of the inter- and intra-borderlands. During the 1920s, numerous emigrants, mostly from the Azerbaijani, Crimean and Kazan Tatar, and Turkestanian communities, left for Turkey following the Bolshevik conquest of Central Asia and the Caucasus. These individuals embodied the process of cultural, scientific, and knowledge transfer from the former Russian Empire to Turkey.

If you want to attend and are not yet on our list, please, send a message to <https://www.facebook.com/sipcats/> for further information from the organizers,
Fernando Rosa and Birgit Schlyter.

Welcome!