

# Kalabalik!

*Bulletin of the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul*



## Awakenings

Olof Heilo, SRII director

Through the winter of 2022 Istanbul was repeatedly embedded in thick, soft layers of snow. The first blizzard struck in late January, the last one in the middle of March. For the short periods that the snow remained lying on hills and domes from Çamlıca to Eyüp, it transformed the city on the Bosphorus into an unreal, dreamlike landscape. Schools closed, deliveries were stopped and flights cancelled, while videos went viral showing people all across Istanbul devoting their energy to frolicking snowball fights in the streets.

The whole year had started in a similar interstage of sleep and wake. After an autumn semester when it had received visitors but kept arrangements virtual, our institute was hoping to resume pre-pandemic activities

in the winter. Yet January and February did not bode well: new peaks in the numbers of infected, both in Turkey and Europe at large, led visitors to cancel their reservations, and the first lecture of the spring semester, “The Splendor Far Away: Assembling Popular Images of Constantinople” with Emir Alışık, had to be moved to Zoom. Instead, the first real-life event after the pandemic was scheduled for February 22.

The spring came late. But long before the roses on the front lawn of the palace began to bloom and the turtles in the garden resumed patrolling the compound after hibernation, the institute had shaken off its last signs of sleep. Looking back upon the last months and trying to recall everything that has happened is slightly dizzying: it feels like trying to recapitulate everything that was happening on the same time in the famous fairy tale where the sleeping castle was waking up.

### Talks and publications in the sign of the city

*The City* was the theme of the spring’s lectures, devoted to Istanbul both as a real and imaginary place. Suggested by our previous director Ingela Nilsson, the theme connected back with a podcast on Byzantium and science fiction that she had taken part in just before she left Istanbul in December. Hosted by the Istanbul Research Center in connection with the Pera Museum’s new exhibition *What is This Byzantinism in Istanbul!*, it had brought together Ingela with the award-winning author Arkady Martine under the moderation of the exhibition curator Emir Alışık. It felt natural to pick up the thread, return the invitation, and give the first talk of the semester to Emir, who presented our online audience with some fascinating glimpses of Byzantine Constantinople in digital imagination.

When we moved from the virtual stage to the real one, the theme also shifted to the physical world. As the first speaker in our auditorium after two years, Kerim Altuğ from the Istanbul Technical University, offered a precious talk on the Great Palace complex of Late Antique Constantinople in the long transitional period from an Eastern Roman to Byzantine Empire. Çiğdem Kafesçioğlu from Boğaziçi University similarly shared her profound knowledge on the slow, gradual transition from a Byzantine to an Ottoman city. The latter theme in particular was further elaborated on by Aslıhan Akışık (Istanbul Medeniyet University) and Siren Çelik (Marmara University) in two brilliant lectures in April and May, whereas Eylül Yalçınkaya from Üsküdar University gave not only a talk on the modernization of Istanbul in the eyes of the Sufi *sheykh* Kenan Rifai (1867–1950), but even performed some of his beautiful poems and songs with her professional ensemble of musicians.

*The City* was a befitting lecture theme not least for a semester during which the institute stood as publisher for two books on the topic, as reported on in the previous issue of *Kalabalık!*. The twenty-fourth *Transactions* volume *Transformations of Public Space* (ed. Ipek Akpınar, Elâ Güngören, Johan Mårtelius and Gertrud Olsson) had appeared in 2021, but the release was constantly delayed because of the pandemic. When it at last took place in June, Ipek Akpınar (Izmir Institute of Technology) got to conclude the spring lectures with a talk on the transformation of Taksim square after 1950. The volume with all the contributions can be bought as a physical book, but is also available for free through our homepage – as are, since this spring, all *Transactions* volumes the whole way back to 1988!

In March, an independent publication of ours, *In the Search for Constantinople in Istanbul: A Guidebook through Byzantine Istanbul and Its Surroundings* by Sergey Ivanov also arrived from the print. This guidebook, which has previously appeared in Russian, Bulgarian and Turkish, is a first of its kind: a detailed guide to the Byzantine topography of the city written by a professional Byzantinist with a deep and thorough knowledge of the source material. A joint collaboration with Kitap Yayınevi, who had already published a Turkish version of the guidebook – and which the institute has co-published with several times in the past – the English publication was made possible thanks to the relentless efforts of David Hendrix from [www.thebyzantinelegacy.com](http://www.thebyzantinelegacy.com).





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### Guests and seminars in the shadow of a war

Two days after Kerim Altuğ's talk, and just as it seemed as if a two-year state of fear would be over, we were rudely awakened in a different way as it stood clear that Russia had attacked Ukraine. At first, the Montreux agreement and the closure of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles for war ships put Istanbul and Turkey in the spotlight of international media. Later, focus shifted to the Swedish and Finnish decision to join the NATO. For analysts fond of historical parallels and antecedents, the spring offered endless opportunities to meditate on the intertwined fates of Swedish, Russian and Turkish geopolitical struggles since the days of Ivan the Terrible, but in Istanbul, as so often, abstractions quickly became unenjoyably tangible. In March and April, we received several visits from Russian scholars on their way into exile.

We had decided to postpone until the late spring the expiry date for the scholarships that had been interrupted by the pandemic, and so it came that both Mihaly Pokorni and Igor Torbakov, who had been with us during the dramatic sortie in March 2020, returned in 2022. We had already met Igor in the autumn, but this time his research into the 1919–23 Russian exiles in Constantinople had gained an uncannily contemporary relevance. Of the long-term fellows of Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, we were happy to welcome back not only Jonas Svensson and Pernilla Myrne, who had been with us in the autumn, but also Helena Bodin, who had last left the institute with the others in March 2020. Seeing both Helena, Mihaly and Igor in Istanbul again was a great comfort in a troubled time. In April we got to hear Helena present her research on "Constantinople around 1900 as a multilingual literary world" at one of our internal seminars.

From time to time, our guest house was fully booked. This was not least due to the fact that many scholars came on their own and reserved rooms for a longer or shorter period to conduct research. Four of them generously shared their research within the framework of the spring seminars: Dunya Habash and Mohammed I. Ahmed, both from the University of Cambridge, on, respectively, “Do like you did in Aleppo: Negotiating Space and Place Among Syrian Musicians in Istanbul” and “The literary role of Jews in early Islamic texts”; Mehek Muftee (Uppsala University) on “Expressions of Muslim subjectivities through spoken word poetry in Sweden” and András Handl (KU Leuven) on “Migrating Relics: Dynamics of Long-Distance Relic Relocation in Late Antiquity”. Further adding to the international flavor, we were also pleased to have Monica Hellström and Alexandra Vukovic, both from Oxford, and Benjamin Raffield from Uppsala as staying guests. Other staying guests were Katerina Dalacoura (London) and Joacim Seger (Lund), not to mention all the guests who came to take part in conferences and workshops. From our own collegium, we were happy to welcome back Åsa Eldén and Patrick Hällzon.

“From time to time, our guest house was fully booked. This was not least due to the fact that many scholars came on their own and reserved rooms for a longer or shorter period to conduct research.”

Alexandra Vukovic and Benjamin Raffield are experts on the history of the early “Rus” states in current Ukraine, and we were reminded several times during the spring of how the present stands in the shadow of the past. This also became clear during our work with the digital exhibition *Nordic Tales, Byzantine Paths*, a collaboration with Koç University devoted to contacts between the Viking world and Byzantium. Originally conceived as a physical exhibition at the Yapi Kredi Kültür Merkezi at Galatasaray, it was decided during the pandemic to adapt it for an online format. For assistance in the preparations we shared a scholarship holder with Koç University, Čedomila Marinkovic from Belgrade, who turned out to be not only an art historian but also a professional cobbler, singer and baker, who provided exquisite pastries for our Friday coffees. The exhibition will hopefully make it clear once more how intertwined the histories of Scandinavia and the Eastern Mediterranean are with the lands of current-day Russia and Ukraine.

### Academic and cultural events between literary and knowledge production

Another circle was closed in early March, when we hosted the first workshop in two years that took place entirely *in situ* and without any hybrid elements: *Empire of Babel: Ottoman Literary Modernities and their Afterlives, 1850–1950*. Part of the “Arabicities” initiative, a joint collaboration between scholars from the SRII, the IFEA, Koç and Boğaziçi University, it was a follow-up from the very last workshop that had taken place in the auditorium two years before. A number of other events, all devoted to aspects of Arab-Turkish relations during and after the Ottomans, had taken place on Zoom during the pandemic.

Copenhagen University was present with two workshops during the spring: *Negotiating Relevant Islamic Knowledge for European Muslims* in March, and *Non-Muslim Islam* in May. Although they explored different fields of Islamic studies, they both concerned questions of self-conception and othering among European Muslims. In June, Oslo University arranged a workshop at the institute called *Dialogues with the Past*, which thematized cultural heritage and identity from a diachronic perspective.



On two occasions, we co-organised events with the cultural section at the consulate. In early April, we hosted sapmi author Elin Anna Labba and the German-Turkish-Kurdish journalist Burcu Karakas for a talk as part of the *Belongings* project, organized by our recurrent partner Alev Karaduman. In early May, we hosted an author talk, led by Firat Ceweri, with Magnus Bårtås and Fredrik Ekman about their book from travels in the lands of the Yezidis, which has just appeared in Kurdish.



Author Elin Anna Labba and the German-Turkish-Kurdish journalist Burcu Karakas together with Alev Karaduman

The *Rememberings* project, which had received a shaky start in 2020 just as the pandemic broke out, finally got a chance to arrange real-life events. Financed by the Swedish Institute with the purpose of helping and encouraging young Turkish academics, it was conceived as a development from the earlier summer schools *Human Rights – A Recurrent History*, which had been given in 2013–15 and 2017–18. Sadly, the ambitious plan to arrange study visits to Sarajevo and Beirut for young Turkish scholars, as well as workshops on cultural pluralism and heritage in different parts of Turkey, never got a chance to materialize. But in May this year we could assemble 18 PhD students or early postdocs for a physical “writeshop” at the institute, followed by a four-day excursion to Kavala, where they got a unique chance to acquaint the cultural heritage of an Ottoman city in Greece, visit the museum of Cappadocian Greeks at Nea Karvali, do writing prompts at the Swedish House, and get feedback from senior mentors on their own drafts for peer-reviewed papers on related topics. You can read more about it in this issue of *Kalabalık!*.

In June, finally, Master and early PhD students got the chance to take part in a two-week summer school at the institute in Istanbul, with some of the writeshop participants as well as earlier summer school participants as mentors. Thanks to the relentless efforts of the project coordinators Murat Devres and Gül Hür, the *Rememberings* project here came to an end that it well deserved. We hope, of course, to keep returning to the themes of cultural pluralism and memory in the Eastern Mediterranean and maybe even issue a printed publication based on the various talks and panels that was the main outcome of the project during the pandemic.

## The SRII at 60 – in Istanbul and Sweden

Under less formal circumstances than the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary ten years ago, the institute celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> birthday on March 15 with a dinner with the staff, the guests, and the deployed staff at the Consulate General. But although it has existed as a legal entity only since 1962, the institute can in many ways look back on a much longer history. This spring it is in fact a hundred years since the Swedish Orient Society, with the financial support of Professor Pontus Fahlbeck in Lund and the practical assistance of the dragoman Johannes Kolmodin at the legation in Istanbul, rented a small villa in Moda from the archaeologist Ernest Mamboury, in the hope that it would be used by Swedish scholars in Turkey. The timing was not optimal: the Ottoman Empire was just about to collapse and Mustafa Kemal was fighting with the Greeks over the suzerainty of Asia Minor. When Fahlbeck died in 1923, the enterprise had to be given up on financial grounds.

The story of the first Swedish institute was the topic of an online seminar with our collegium member Frederick Whitling in May, “The ‘Non-Institute’ in the Ex-Capital. The Swedish Institute in Constantinople (1922–1924)”. Further seminars arranged by the collegium in Sweden have taken place online with Maria Småberg, Lund University (“Humanitarian Handicrafts as (Dis)empowerment of Women Left Behind”) and Leif Stenberg, Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (“Sport and Nation Building along the Silk Road Football and Identity Politics”). During the annual meeting of the collegium at Tensta Konsthall in April, our former director Elisabeth Özdalga presented her and Simon Stjernholm’s newly published study on Muslim Friday sermons through the republic.



During the spring old any new friends visited SRII. Here former Director Karin Ådahl and Professor Leif Stenberg together with Olof Heilo.



In Sweden, our association of friends has also been active, with one book presentation in Lund (*Drömmen om Armenien. Armenier och svenskar under 1 000 år* with Ann Grönhammar) and one in Stockholm (*Kosovo och FN. Ögonblicksbilder från en dagbok* with Karin Rudebeck, former chairman of both the SRII and its association of friends). Our cultural attaché in Istanbul, Mike Bode, has also been invited to the association to talk about his earlier publication *Två eller tre saker jag vet om Turkiet*. In March, the association took part in a joint event with the friends of the other Mediterranean institutes, devoted to the memory of the renowned Swedish scholar and entertainer Hatte Furuhausen (1930–2021).

The institute itself has also been involved in arranging an event in Sweden. Together with the Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, it hosted a workshop in Stockholm in the beginning of May, entitled *The Ottoman Empire and the North in the eighteenth century*, devoted to travel and knowledge production in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Sweden, particularly with regards to the Ottoman Empire and Islamic world. In connection with it, the Association of Friends hosted a public event at Nationalmuseum with three of the speakers: Karin Ådahl, who presented the book on Cornelius Loos, which the SRII had the pleasure of presenting just before the pandemic; Catharina Raudvere, who introduced her and her team of colleagues' beautiful new book on Jacob Jonas Björnsthål, and myself, who presented the latest issue of *Dragomanen* (2021), on the topic of Nordic travelers to the Middle East 1730–1930.

As all three talks showed, the fact that today's institute exists as an infrastructure within the Consulate General on the Istiklal Caddesi is, in many ways, a solution anticipated by the long history of Swedish-Turkish relations and its intimate connections between scholarship and diplomacy. For followers of our Facebook and Instagram pages we have offered stories and images of this and the institute's history on Fridays throughout the spring semester and we are planning to resume them in the autumn.

### Some reflections at the beginning of the summer closure

Many people have asked me what I think about my first six months as a director, and I find the question difficult to answer. Obviously, as a historian I prefer a much larger distance when I am looking upon things, but it also feels increasingly difficult to draw a balance under the volatile circumstances that we are living. The institute has been blessed with a few very good months, but the same cannot be said for the land in which it is operating. After the dramatic drop of the Turkish lira in November last year, Turkey has seen constantly rising prices on base commodities, and the rents are hitting levels that force many people out of their homes. Some estimated fifteen million people in Turkey are currently malnourished. There are several reasons which do not need to be mentioned here to why the last few months have been anything but good, and little indicates that things are going to change for the better – neither in Turkey, nor internationally.

The comfort of Istanbul lies in that it has already been through so much. Being able to lose oneself once again in its streets and alleys, standing struck by curiosity and fascination in front of a forgotten çeşme or hagiaσμα, or looking for someone to open the door to a lonesome church or sufis tomb, trying to imagine a long-lost garden under a concrete parking lot, or retrieve the names of people who once inhabited a building that is falling to pieces, at least helps to forget and resist the monsters of the present. Throughout the spring I have been privileged to lead a number of institute guests and visitors through areas that I know, and even more grateful to be led on by them to areas that I did not know. We have made excursions to Emirgan on the Bosphorus, where the Sakip Sabanci Museum exhibited the art of the last Caliph Abdülmecid II; we have spent the Orthodox Easter on Prinkipo or Büyükdada; we have explored Üsküdar in the footsteps of long gone Armenian and Dönme communities; we have visited the cemeteries around the Fatih Camii and the old book market at Beyazıt; we have strolled through Kumkapı and Yeldeğirmeni.

Last but not least, I find myself the incredibly lucky member of a fantastic work team. If I have not mentioned Helin or Anders in the above it is because they have been present in everything we have been doing and played a crucial role in everything from the technical to the social, from the economic to the academic part of what it means to run a research institute. The same goes for Havva and Hüseyin, who perhaps more than any else of us “are” the institute – as our social media followers will have noted, Havva was even awarded a medal in May for her long service. Someone else who has served us long, and who went into a well-deserved retirement this spring, was Lena at the office in Stockholm; in her place, we have been fortunate to find Johnny, who I hope will be with us for many years to come.

As we shut the blinds and pull the curtains in front of the windows of the Dragoman house in expectation of a long, hot summer, I already find myself thinking about the autumn.



Havva was awarded a medal in May for her long service at SRIL.



## Internship Report: GSSNeareast Project

It's quite remarkable how the sounds of Istanbul are so constant. Not in a disturbing way but on the contrary; music, people, traffic, cats and restaurants. The city is alive, day and night. From the calm surroundings of the Swedish Institute you can not only hear scholars typing on their computer, but also the horns of the Bosphorus boats, the birds and whatever sound the wind carries around.

Here we find ourselves, two undergraduate students doing assistant research as interns for Dr. Gülşah Şenkol's post-doc project *Gender and Sexuality Studies in the Near East* (GSSNeareast). The Institute enabled this internship by granting us accommodation for three weeks beyond a scholarship we received from FSIV (Föreningen Svenska Istanbulinstitutets Vänner). Our part of the GSS project involves GIS-mapping and tracking scholars in the field by indexing them geographically and by areas of expertise. At this point we have mapped approximately 500 scholars who academically lie in the intersection of Gender Studies and Near Eastern Studies. During our stay we have come to understand the importance of



It has been interesting, then, to have Istanbul Pride coincide with our stay (Pride has been forbidden in Turkey since 2015) and we learnt how incredibly quiet a megacity like Istanbul can get (except for the sound of sirens and helicopters). For this year's Pride, the city's landscape changed quite drastically overnight; the tourist-packed Istiklal street became mostly inhabited by police and blockades. Since we shared our first two weeks at the Institute alongside the participants of the SRII Summer School program, we had the opportunity to acquire a deeper understanding of the politics surrounding Pride.

We were glad to get acquainted with the participants and learn from their knowledge and experiences. We are grateful for the opportunity not only to work on this very important project, but being able to do so in such a dynamic environment as the Institute provides. Through meetings and exchanges with other budding- and senior scholars we feel very hopeful for our future in academia.

## What is GSSNeareast?

*GSSNeareast* is a state-of-the-art website designed by and for researchers in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies in the Near East spearheaded by Gülşah Şenkol. This new research and networking platform will promote accessible, innovative scholarship, and foster global interaction and cooperation among scholars and institutions engaged in women's, gender, and sexuality studies across disciplinary lines in the Near East.

The complete version of the website will launch, with all of the features and sections, in September 2022. More info: <https://gssneareast.org/>.



Ambrose and Sofia are two undergraduate students in religion at Södertörns University in Stockholm, where Sofia is doing a double-major in literature and Ambrose is doing a minor in gender studies. They are in Istanbul for one month conducting their internship on the GSSNeareast project.

Read more about Föreningen Svenska Istanbulinstitutets Vänner (FSIV) and become a member on our homepage:

<https://srii.org/pages/vanforening>



## Fellowship report: Researching Istanbul's "Russian Moment" – Hundred Years After

Every morning I drink coffee at a cozy terrace of Café Nero – across the street from the palatial gate of the Palais de Suede. Between 9 and 10 am the place is not very crowded: some hipster-looking young Turks, several sharply dressed Istanbulu businessmen, and a sprinkling of ubiquitous tourists. And almost every day throughout my month and a half stay in Istanbul this spring I would see the Russians sitting next to me at the terrace's tables. Sipping their Cappuccino and Latte macchiato, their laptops and smartphones next to their cups, they share latest news, compare notes, discuss politics, call real estate agents, and inquire about job vacancies. It's a young crowd: folks in their late 20s –early 30s, most of them sophisticated urbanites representing all walks of life in a modern metropolis: IT specialists, bloggers, journalists, musicians, academics, actors, artists, designers. They are not regular tourists but part of what appears to be an unprecedented exodus: I hear that there are tens of thousands of them in this sprawling Babylon on the Bosphorus. All of them fled Russia after the Kremlin took a fateful decision to invade Ukraine and Putin's authoritarian regime turned into a totalitarian dictatorship. It is May 2022.



Former Russian Consulate in Constantinople across the street from SR11.

For a historian of Russia's late imperial period, all this seems eerily familiar. Exactly a hundred years ago, Istanbul was literally flooded by the Russians fleeing political turmoil and economic dislocation in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution and civil war. At one moment in 1921-22, of one million residents of the Ottoman capital, more than one hundred thousand were the former subjects of the Romanov Empire. These *Beyaz Ruslar* as the locals called them very soon became permanent fixtures on what was known as

Pera (contemporary Beyoğlu). A neoclassical building where Café Nero is today housed the Russian Consulate and, during the Allied Occupation of Istanbul, the Russian Red Cross Committee in Constantinople. Immediately around the corner, in Tünel Square, there was the Russian Press Bureau. Down the Grand Rue de Pera (contemporary İstiklal) there were scores of popular Russians bars and restaurants, bookshops and libraries, ateliers and stores, cafes and cabarets.

Among the Russians who frequented these newly established institutions were some truly fascinating characters. I am particularly interested in two prominent figures of the Russian pre-revolutionary artistic avant-garde -- Aleksei Grishchenko and Ilia Zdanevich. While their brief sojourn on the Bosphorus is significant, it has been poorly researched so far. The significance lies in the fascinating intermingling of the artistic and the political in their high-quality literary works devoted to their stay in postwar Constantinople.

These works, ranging from travel journal to autobiographic prose to literary fiction, and until very recently being largely unknown to the broader public, have creatively addressed both the past and the present of this city, so richly endowed by history and living through turbulent times in the immediate aftermath of the Ottoman Empire's defeat in World War I. They portray Constantinople/Istanbul as both a principal cultural locus inspiring "modernist Byzantinism" (a desire to revive contemporary arts through the reevaluation of Byzantine tradition) and a wounded Ottoman metropolis that was "living dangerously" – a demoralized capital of the defeated empire, a bone of contention in the international arena, and a target of multiple political conspiracies. As a result, a fascinating image of Constantinople/Istanbul emerges whereby the city acts as a source of both artistic and geopolitical imagination.



Alexei Grishchenko, *Constantinople skyline*, 1921



The project I currently pursue at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul intends to address at least two significant historiographic gaps. Focusing on the artistic imagination of two outstanding (yet under-researched) figures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde and on their engagement with Constantinople/Istanbul, past and present, it will fill a lacuna in the study of Byzantium's reception and deployment in the modernist cultural production and discourse. The study will also contribute to better understanding of the intricate geopolitical intrigue around Constantinople/Istanbul in the early 1920s. It will be demonstrated that a complex (if not downright phantasmagoric) imaginary world emerging on the pages of the Russian emigres' autobiographic prose was in fact a reflection of no less phantasmagoric political reality.

Although both Grishchenko and Zdanevich used Istanbul – not unlike many other refugees – as a halfway house to move further north to the capitals of Western Europe, they differed markedly from the bulk of their fellow-exiles in that, despite all the misery and hardship of exilic existence, they were genuinely thrilled by their Istanbul sojourn. An eloquent evidence of their esthetic excitement about the Byzantine and “Oriental” antiquities of the fabled Constantinople can be found in the important texts they produced after they left the Bosphorus shores for France in the end of 1921. These are Zdanevich's unfinished autobiographical essay *Letters to Morgan Philips Price* and the novel *Philosophy* as well as Grishchenko's diary, first published in French in 1930 as *Deux ans à Constantinople. Journal d'un peintre*. I intend to contextualize Grishchenko's and Zdanevich's Istanbul texts and investigate the intriguing parallels between fiction's narrative lines and real historical developments “on the ground.” The result of this endeavor could be quite striking as it might well demonstrate that in literary portrayals of early 1920s Istanbul some of the boldest flights of imagination were anchored in real facts.



Conversation near Tsargrad, Russian wartime poster, 1915



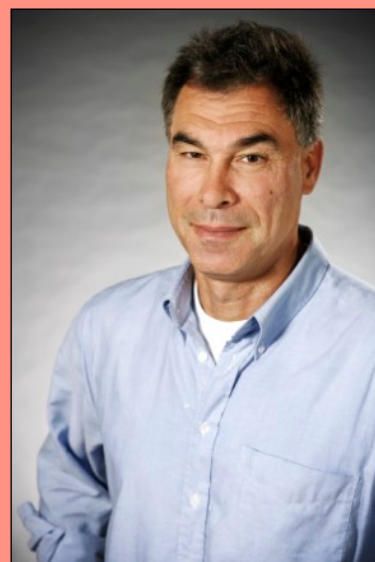
In 1920-21 Istanbul was an extremely exciting place. The capital of a disappearing empire that had lost the war, occupied by the Allied Powers, and swarmed with the multitudes of refugees from the lands of the Ottomans' erstwhile imperial rival – Russia – Istanbul was a virtual Babylon, a moniker favored in those years by a number of memoirists. At the same time the city was perceived by many domestic and external political actors as an exceptionally attractive geopolitical prize whose fate was still hanging in the air. Notably, one of Russia's main strategic objectives in World War I was the seizure of *Tsargrad* (the Tsar City, to borrow an archaic Slavonic name for Constantinople so much loved by Russian patriotic writers) and the establishment of control over the Straits.

Now, with Russia's dropping out of the ranks of the Great War's belligerents following the 1917 Revolution and the ensuing civil war, the Russian dreams of *Tsargrad* appeared to have become history. Thus, the centerpiece of the story line in Zdanevich's *Philosophy* – a mysterious conspiracy to seize Constantinople in the fall of 1921 involving both the Bolsheviks and Baron Petr Wrangel's White Guard troops that fled to Turkey -- does look like a nicely crafted piece of fiction. Yet the documents from the former Soviet Communist Party archives declassified in the early 1990s indicate that as early as 1920 the Bolshevik leadership took a decision to "shift the center of gravity of Soviet Russia's 'eastern policy' to Turkey," and that Moscow did indeed toy with the idea of taking control over Istanbul using the Wrangel army soldiers who felt disgruntled and bored in the Turkish internment camps.

It would appear that Grishchenko's and Zdanevich's artistic and literary works have neatly encapsulated some aspects of the Russian longing for *Tsargrad* characteristic of that turbulent age: a keen esthetic interest reflected in the modernist re-imaginings of Byzantium as well as the persistence of the grand geopolitical designs with a long historical pedigree.

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He holds an MA in History from Moscow State University and a PhD from the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. He is the author, most recently, of *After Empire* (Stuttgart: ibidem Verlag, 2018).



## Fellowship report: Migration and Religion in (Late) Antiquity

Religion is frequently seen as an important identity marker for both, migrants, and host societies. It often serves as an interface for distinction between 'them' and 'us'. In populist discourse, such distinctions are routinely negatively connoted, sometimes with hostile undertones even. But was there an analogous distinction (and hostility) towards 'foreigners' and their religions in the Roman antiquity? And what role did play religion for migrants and hosts in the Roman world? These questions are situated at the very heart of my research activities.

During my stay in the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul (SRII), I focused on one particularly puzzling phenomenon: the long-distance relocation of relics in late antiquity. At the first sight, this topic hardly seems to be relevant for studying migration and religion. A closer look, however, reveals that 'migrating bones' had enormous impact at both ends of the migration process and shaped religious and social life, economy, and sacred landscape in various ways.

Whether human remains were considered as polluting in classical antiquity is widely debated. The rigorous separation of the world of the living (polis) and the world of the dead (necropolis) was, however, a fact. Serious efforts were made to please the dead and keep them outside the sphere of living. This classical reservation begun to fade away in the mid-fourth century. The driving force behind the shift was the popular Christian belief that martyrs mortal remains share the same divine powers which empowered martyrs to face death when witnessing Christ. This belief in the spiritual agency turned impure pieces of corporeal remains into powerful relics (from Latin *reliquiae*, "remains"), to highly portable tokens of salvation, source of sacredness, and therefore of immense (symbolic) value.

The first cults and shrines emerged where the martyrs were buried: in the necropolises outside the city walls. Especially in the Greek speaking Eastern part of the Roman Empire, Christians begun to exhume and relocate martyrs' bodies within the walls. For whatever reasons they decided to move the remains, this practice seriously influenced the local community in many ways. The relocation facilitated access to the miracle working powers of the relics and ensured ecclesial control over the cult and shrine. By replacing old deities, the new heroes of faith reinforced Christian identity as well. Considering the importance of relics for the life of the local population it is hardly surprising that the vast majority of relic relocations took place regionally, in the close geographic vicinity to the tomb.

This was, however, not always the case. Sometimes crossed bodies or body parts the Empire and traveled thousands of kilometers before they found their (supposedly) final resting places. Such relocations are remarkable particularly considering the above-mentioned functions of relics for the local community and raise many questions: Why 'abandoned' the local community the relic and let it 'simply' go? Why were martyrs' bodies moved across the Empire in the first place? Which actors and mechanisms played a role in these long-distance displacements? How did the local community react to the relocation, and what happened after the removal of the sacred bodies? How were these tokens moved? Which narratives, customs and traditions moved together with the mortal remains?

Preliminary results show three distinct patterns, one of which has a notable constantinopolitan ‘flavor’. It seems, the capital of the Eastern Empire was one of largest ‘importers’ of relics. What is more, the imperial family sponsored these imports and graduated quickly to the most important acuter of relic relocations before the rise of the relic trade in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. This result is not particularly surprising. Since (re-)founded in 324, the city and its church could neither claim apostolic origins, nor host mortal remains of heroes of the early Christian era: apostles, martyrs, evangelists, or alike. Despite all splendor, ‘second Rome’ was indeed ‘second’ in this respect. The city was ill-equipped to compete with ‘old’ Rome’s rich apostolic and martyr tradition, which was also largely disadvantageous in the rivalry for the universal authority over the church. Truly symptomatic for this problem is the Church of the Holy Apostles erected by emperor Constantine the Great (306–337): even though the church was dedicated to the twelve apostles, it housed either their cenotaphs (honorary empty tombs) or markers only.

Constantine II (337–361) seems to be the first emperor who made serious attempts to polish up the spiritual glory of the ‘new Rome’ by ‘importing’ some powerful relics. He ordered imperial officers to acquire—or closer to the reality, to harvest—relics of illustrious figures such as the Apostle Andrew or Paul’s disciple Timothy. It is probably needless to say that the imperial shopping tour was a ‘great’ success. What could possibly undertake a provincial bishop when facing the imperial order? He could hardly do more than to show the way to the tomb and to watch its *de facto* plunder.

While ancient historians do usually not bother to reflect about the (desperate) situation of the looted communities, they developed remarkably creative strategies to mitigate the loss. For the spiritual reconfiguration of the cult, for instance, they relied on the notion of ‘contact relic’. This notion assumes that an object absorbs the divine powers of sacred bodies if in physical contact. Since the tomb housed the mortal remains for centuries in closest physical contact, the relic’s presence turned the grave naturally into a contact relic. Although such contact relics were considered as substitutes, their spiritual powers were beyond any doubt. Indeed, empty tombs begun to work miracles soon after the removal of the bodies.

Migrating relics had not only impacted the community of departure, but also the city of arrival. A sermon of the cherished patriarch of Constantinople, John Chrysostom (ca. 347–407) draws for instance a vivid picture of the pompous festivities which were celebrated on the arrival of Phocas’ relic in the capital:

“Yesterday our city was splendid, splendid, and glorious, not because it had columns, but because it had a martyr coming to us in procession from Pontus. [...] Let no one miss out from this holy festival! [...] For even the emperors are dancing together with us. What excuse then does a commoner have when the emperors give up their royal courts? Such is indeed the power of the martyrs that it captures not only the commoners, but also those wearing the crowns!” (Trans. E. Rizos).

Apparently, the Constantinopleans rolled out the red carpet for the arrival of human remains. In fact, it was received with the highest possible honours in presence of the imperial couple. This shows the importance, significance, and highly symbolic value of relics for both, state, and the church. The local population was, however, less enthusiastic and stayed away in large numbers, as the complaining tone of the sermon indicates. Chrysostom therefore exhorted his audience to join the celebrations for their own souls’ sake. We do not know whether his exhortation was successful. But obviously, some things don’t change.



Admittedly, my choice to stay and to conduct this research at SRII was primarily driven by practical considerations. Located in the heart of Istanbul, it offers lodging and library access all day and night. In short, perfect working conditions for focused work. It became soon after arrival clear, SRII is much more than that. The disciplinary diversity of residents was a continuous source of inspiration in countless occasions. Some kitchen-table-discussions turned out to be more stimulating than days long reading. Seminars, excursions, site visits combined with Olof's enthusiasm and intimate knowledge of Istanbul's past and present made this stay to an eye-opener and to an unforgettable adventure in search for the city's largely scattered Byzantine and antique past. The time I spent at the SRII was one of the most inspiring research stays I ever had, especially after two years of pandemic-related intellectual isolation.

Ett stort tack till alla på institutet!



András Handl is a historian of ancient Christianity and FWO senior postdoctoral fellow at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, KU Leuven, Belgium. András is specialized in the religious aspects of migration and mobility in Late Antiquity, the reception of biblical texts, institutional and social history of the church of Rome, as well as religious material culture. He is also the PI of an international research consortium (re)examining the Hippolytos-statue, the earliest known Christian(ised) free-standing three-dimensional sculpture in cooperation with the Vatican Library. He has successfully acquired a number of prestigious fellowships (FWO, Marie Curie) and conducted research at several renowned institutions in Europe (CEU, Hungarian Academy in Rome, Svenska Institutet i Rom, Institute of Classical Studies in London).

## The Gunnar Jarring Central Eurasia Collection in Istanbul and the Legacy of Uyghur Culture

Patrick Hällzon and Rabigül Hajimuhammed

Early spring of 2012, a truck passed through the gates of the Swedish consulate in Istanbul and slowly continued its journey down the slope leading to the Dragoman House located behind the consulate building. In honor of the day, most of the Swedish Research Institute's (SRII) staff had gathered to watch the car unload a number of heavy boxes. What was in the boxes? It was the late Turkologist and diplomat Gunnar Jarring's (1907–2002) private collection of Central Asian publications that had made its way to Istanbul. For more than a decade this collection had been owned by the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities and deposited at Stockholm University. Finally, in time for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of SRII, it was donated by the Academy to the Institute.

"During a long time Gunnar Jarring was personally involved in the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul."

During a long time Gunnar Jarring was personally involved in the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul. After his term as President of the Board of Trustees (1974–1978), he remained a board member for several years and together with professors Christopher Toll and Ulla Ehrensverd he was co-editor of the first 20 volumes of the yearbook *Meddelanden* 'Messages' – later renamed *Dragomanen*.

At the very beginning of his career, Jarring was faced with the choice between traveling to Istanbul or to Kashgar to pursue field studies. After some deliberation, the choice fell on Eastern Turkestan and Kashgar. It was on one hand closer and more convenient to travel from Sweden to Istanbul, but on the other hand the cost of living was lower in Eastern Turkestan. In addition, Jarring's mentor Gustaf Raquette had arranged for Gunnar to stay at the Swedish missionary station there.

Between the years 1892–1938, the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden set up four stations in Eastern Turkestan, and Jarring set off to Kashgar in 1929. The journey began by train through the Soviet Union before arriving to the city of Andijan (in present-day Uzbekistan). After that, Jarring reached the town of Osh (present-day Kyrgyzstan) from where he joined one of the caravans traveling across the high mountain passes of the Pamirs that marked the border between the Soviet Union and China.

Once in Kashgar, the young Gunnar Jarring quickly accommodated himself and began to investigate the local language and culture. He only stayed for less than a year (1929–1930) but the impressions from his stay were so great that he would later devote his academic career to Eastern Turki, or Uyghur, as both the language and people are referred to nowadays. A few years later, in 1933, he would receive his doctoral title with the dissertation *Studien zu einer osttürkischen Lautlehre*.

Jarring attempted to travel back to East Turkestan later on in the 1930s, but the border was closed for political reasons. He thus decided to stay in Srinagar, Kashmir for a few months and kept himself occupied interviewing caravan men who traveled over the mountains from East Turkestan to Kashmir in order to exchange miscellaneous goods. On the way down from Eastern Turkestan the caravans brought carpets, silk and drugs, while on the way back they carried a variety of products from India such as spices, fabrics and color pigments. During the short time Jarring was in Srinagar, he recorded a huge material of oral testimonies, which he later published in the four separate writings entitled *Materials to the knowledge of Eastern Turki: tales, poetry, proverbs, riddles, ethnological and historical texts from the southern parts of Eastern Turkestan*.

As Jarring's title suggests, these writings contain riddles, folklore, poetry, etc. and are extremely important publications for understanding various aspects of Uyghur culture and outlook on life during this time. As an example, we have the epic tale *Hamrah and Hurliqa*, which also appears in one of the manuscripts in the Gunnar Jarring collection at Lund (Prov 33).<sup>1</sup> According to Gunnar Jarring's handwritten catalog at Lund University Library, a local person in Kashgar by the name Yusuf Akhond bin Muhammad Ibrahim copied the manuscript in question for the Swedish missionary Gustaf Ahlbert in the early 1930's. Later, the MS was brought to Sweden.

In *Materials to the knowledge of Eastern Turki* (1946), Gunnar Jarring penned down a version of this story.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, the events in the two sources differ significantly and so does the language. While the story compiled by Jarring is rather short, the epic in the manuscript at Lund consists of both long epic stories and poems. Another interesting feature is that while the manuscript (Prov 33) more closely reflects the language features of the Kashgar and Artush regions to the west, the story compiled by Jarring in *Materials for the Knowledge of Eastern Turki* (1946) reflects the spoken dialect of the Khotan region farther east. As such, Jarring's publication is a very important source for research into the various spoken dialects of Eastern Turki (Uyghur) during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. By combining various sources such as Eastern Turki manuscripts as well as collections based on oral accounts such as those of Jarring, we may find important clues for further research on the development of modern Uyghur.<sup>3</sup>

### "These rare artifacts are now accessible at the Library at SRIL"

Gunnar Jarring would not make any more trips to Eastern Turkestan or Xinjiang until the late 1970s. There is a time gap of almost 50 years between Jarring's two stays in the Uyghur homeland 1929–1930 and 1978. His final trip to Xinjiang as well as memoirs from his first encounter with Kashgar and the surrounding areas is documented in the book *Return to Kashgar*. Despite the time span between these travels, Jarring never lost interest for the region. On the contrary, he continuously published, not least in the years following his diplomatic career, in journals such as *Scripta minora* and other publications. Among many places, he was stationed as a diplomat in Moscow, Tehran and Addis Ababa. Later, he also worked for the UN as a peace broker in the Middle East and in Kashmir. During these periods as a diplomat, and especially during his long period in Moscow in the 1960s, he collected an extensive library comprising newspapers, offprints and many books written in a variety of languages such as Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Russian and Uyghur. These rare artifacts are now accessible at the Library at SRIL.



While the Gunnar Jarring collection is an important resource for scholars researching matters concerning the Uyghurs, it is also so for those engaged in the field of Turcology and other academic disciplines. The collection contains several rare books, offprints along with journals and newspapers. Many of the books in the collection consisting of up to 5,000 volumes and over 3,000 offprints are unique or only available in a few libraries across the world – often countries where it currently is difficult or impossible to access the material in question.

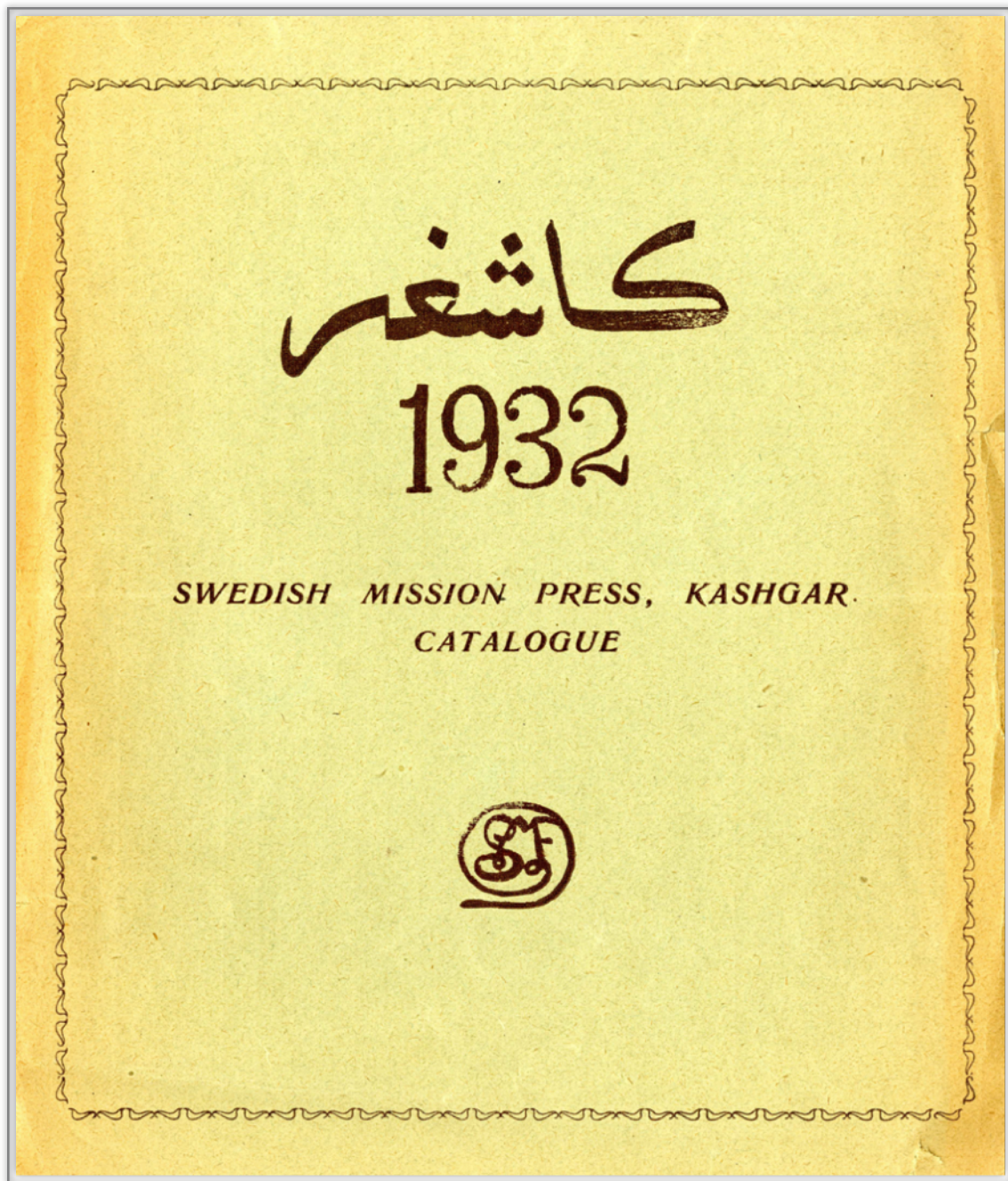
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*"Digitization was an intensive and time-consuming work, which nevertheless has received positive feedback from researchers from around the world, not least from Uyghur intellectuals in the diaspora."*

The same year as Jarring's book collection arrived in Istanbul, preparations began for the establishment of a Gunnar Jarring Digital Library under the supervision of the then SRII Director, Professor Birgit Schlyter, and with funding from Riksbankens Jubileumsfond of the Swedish Central Bank. Between 2012–15, three categories of publications considered especially difficult to obtain elsewhere were scanned and made available online. Among them we find the so-called Kashgar prints (printed by the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden's printing house in Kashgar), travelogues and maps.

Digitization was an intensive and time-consuming work, which nevertheless has received positive feedback from researchers from around the world, not least from Uyghur intellectuals in the diaspora. In recent years, the Uyghurs who live in exactly the same area that Jarring visited are experiencing extreme hardship. In addition to the documented widespread repression in the form of mass arrests of over a million Uyghurs in so-called re-education camps, the Chinese state has severely circumvented Uyghur culture and language. Uyghur books are in principle banned in their homeland and most of the most prominent Uyghur researchers have been imprisoned. In this harsh reality, the digitization of old books has taken on new meaning where it is no longer is a matter of merely providing hard-to-access material but preserving Uyghur cultural heritage for coming generations. Not least *the Kashgar prints* have proven to be important here. Among other things, these publications provide important information on how the Uyghur language developed from the early 20th century and onwards.

The material is of extremely varied character and contains Bible translations, religious tracts as well as Eastern Turki translations of Swedish literature. A telling example is an excerpt from Selma Lagerlöf's *I Templet* 'In the Temple', which was published in 1931 at the printing house of the Swedish mission in Kashgar. Other books that reflect the Swedish mission's educational activities are for instance textbooks in geography, mathematics and spelling. During the politically turbulent period of the 1930s, the printing-office was also obliged to print materials for the local authorities in Kashgar (see pages 19-24 in *Prints from Kashgar*). For a detailed account of the mission's printing house's activities, the Gunnar Jarring's book *Prints from Kashgar* is recommended.



Cover page from a catalog printed by the Swedish Mission in Kashgar in 1932.



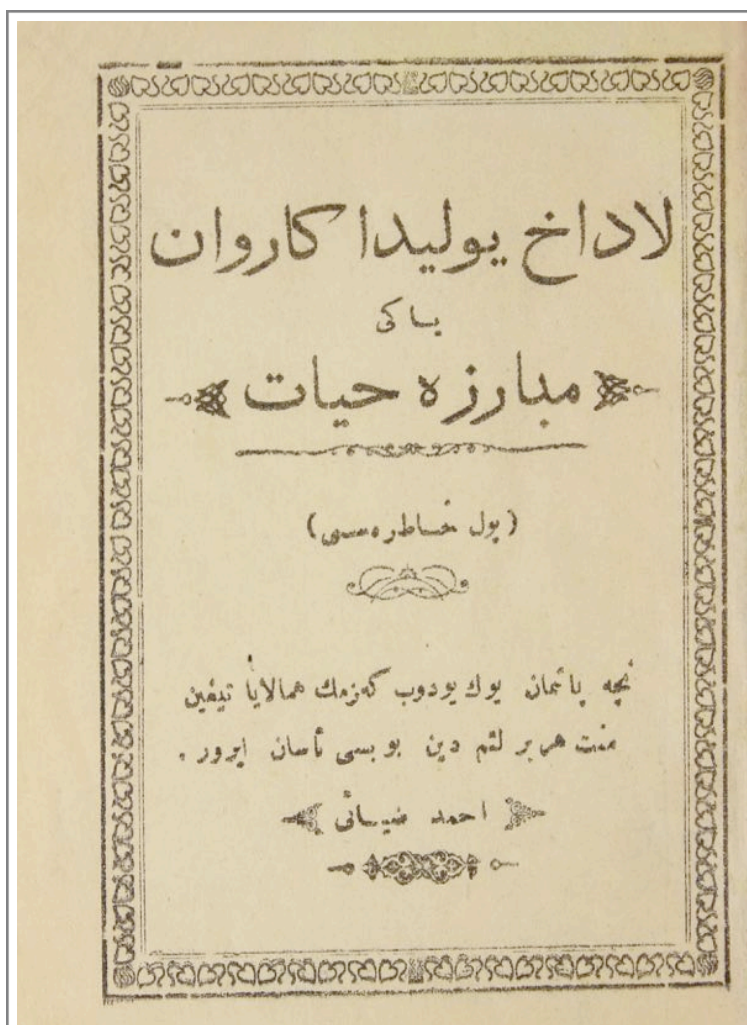
Missionaries were not the only Europeans who visited Eastern Turkestan in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This was the era of travelogues and several Westerners such as Aurel Stein, Albert von Le Coq, Sven Hedin and others visited the area. Most of these travel accounts are available in the Jarring collection in Istanbul and those that are most difficult to obtain elsewhere have already been digitized. For those interested in history, these publications provide detailed insight into phenomena like the area's historical, social, religious, cultural and economic issues.

In contrast to the various travel accounts written by Westerners available in the library, one book stands out from the rest. It is the very first Uyghur travelogue *Ladakh yolida karwan* 'A Caravan on its way to Ladakh' by the author Ähmäd Ziya'i. The book provides a detailed account of the local language, culture, religion, folklore and everyday life. The renowned Uyghur author, journalist and researcher Äsäd Sulayman, currently based in the United States writes:

"Today, it is very difficult to obtain a copy of this book in Xinjiang, but fortunately enough, late Gunnar Jarring preserved a copy of it in his private library. Among scholars of Uyghur literature, *Ladakh yolida karwan* is generally considered to be the first travelogue written in modern Uyghur."<sup>4</sup>

According to Äsäd Sulayman's summary of the book, Ähmäd Ziya'i explains that during a period of 552 days between 1945–1946 he was imprisoned in the city of Urumchi by the Kuomintang. After his imprisonment, he returned to Kashgar where he engaged in trade between Kashgar and India. In December 1946, the author travelled to Ladakh in the Indian Kashmir Mountains and eventually arrived in Srinagar where he gives the following description of the customs and culture of the locals:

"Religion and tradition. The local religion of this place is the same as the people of Lhasa, and reverence towards the Lama is very strong among them. When one looks around the country as well as around the city, one sees towers as tall as people everywhere that are made with round heads. Inside of these, there is a place to light a fire. These are their idols, which they call Mani." (page 46–47)



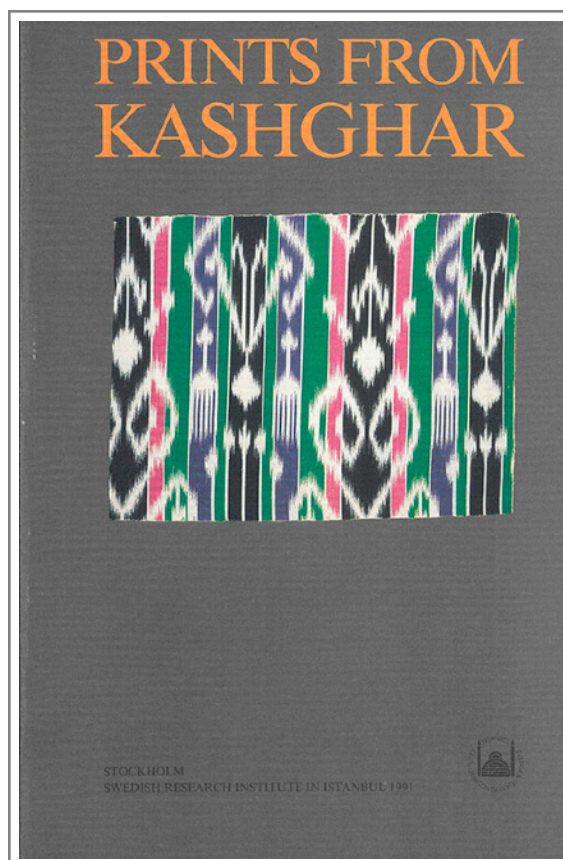
*Ladakh yolida karwan* 'A Caravan on its way to Ladakh' by Ähmäd Ziya'i.



## Final remarks

Regarding the Gunnar Jarring Digital Library, we would like to announce that there are plans to make more of Gunnar Jarring's writings available digitally, including *Return to Kashgar*, which is available in a Uyghur edition. The institute has already digitized all editions of *Transactions*, including Jarring's important publication *Prints from Kashgar* about the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden's printing operations.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the books that have already been scanned and are in place in Istanbul, another important project should be mentioned: In 1964, Jarring published an Eastern Turki (i.e. Uyghur) – English dictionary. Until his death in 2002, he continued to work on the sequel to this publication. He could not have it finished during his lifetime but left behind an extensive handwritten manuscript, which was later completed and edited by the previously mentioned former director of the Swedish Research Institute, Prof. Birgit Schlyter. The new dictionary, which soon will be published, contains all of the Uyghur words from the 1964 version and everything compiled by Jarring after that.<sup>6</sup> As such, it will be an invaluable resource for anyone interested in topics concerning Central Asia and in particular Uyghur cultural history and language.



## Iz - Tracks

(Abdurehim Ötkür, famous Uyghur poet b.1923-d.1995.)

If the sand blows hard,  
Even if the dunes shift,  
They will scarcely bury our trace.  
From the route of the ceaseless caravan,  
Although the horses grow terribly thin,  
Our grandchildren, our great grandchildren  
Will most assuredly find  
This trace one day,  
Without question.<sup>7</sup>

## A Selected List of Works by Gunnar Jarring

**Jarring, Gunnar. 1933.** *Studien zu einer osttürkischen Lautlehre*. Diss. Lund: Univ., 1933.

**Jarring, Gunnar. 1936.** *The contest of the fruits: an Eastern Turki allegory*. Lund: Gleerup.

**Jarring, Gunnar (ed.). 1946.** *Materials to the knowledge of Eastern Turki: tales, poetry, proverbs, riddles, ethnological and historical texts from the southern parts of Eastern Turkestan. II. Texts from Khotan and Yarkand*. Lund: Gleerup.

**Jarring, Gunnar (ed.). 1948.** *Materials to the knowledge of Eastern Turki: tales, poetry, proverbs, riddles, ethnological and historical texts from the southern parts of Eastern Turkestan. II. Texts from Kashghar, Tashmaliq and Kucha*. Lund: Gleerup.

**Jarring, Gunnar (ed.). 1951.** *Materials to the knowledge of Eastern Turki: tales, poetry, proverbs, riddles, ethnological and historical texts from the southern parts of Eastern Turkestan. III. Folk-Lore from Guma*. Lund: Gleerup.

**Jarring, Gunnar (ed.) 1951.** *Materials to the knowledge of Eastern Turki: tales, poetry, proverbs, riddles, ethnological and historical texts from the southern parts of Eastern Turkestan. IV. Ethnological texts from Guma*. Lund: Gleerup.

**Jarring, Gunnar. 1964.** *An Eastern Turki-English dialect dictionary*. Lund: Gleerup.

**Jarring, Gunnar. 1975.** *Gustaf Raquette and Qasim Akhun's Letters to Kamil Efendi: Ethnological and Folkloristic Materials from Southern Sinkiang*. Scripta Minora Regiae Societatis Humaniorum Litterarum Lundensis 1975/76:1. Lund: CWK Gleerup.

**Jarring, Gunnar. 1979.** *Åter till Kashgar: memoarer i nuet*. Stockholm: Bonnier.

**Jarring, Gunnar. 1979.** *Matters of ethnological interest in Swedish missionary reports from southern Sinkiang*. Lund: Liber Läromedel / Gleerup.

**Jarring, Gunnar. 1986.** *Return to Kashgar: Central Asian memoirs in the present*. Translated from the Swedish by Eva Claeson. Durham, N.C.: Duke.

**Jarring, Gunnar (ed.). 1987.** *Dervish and qalandar: text from Kashghar*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International.

**Jarring, Gunnar. 1991.** "Culture clash in central Asia: Islamic views on Chinese theatre: Eastern Turki texts", In: Jarring, Gunnar (ed.), *Scripta minora Regiae Societatis humaniorum litterarum Lundensis*, 1990/1991:3. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International.

**Jarring, Gunnar. 1991.** *Prints from Kashghar: The Printing-office of the Swedish Mission in Eastern Turkestan: History and Production with an Attempt at a Bibliography*. Stockholm: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul (Svenska forskningsinstitutet i Istanbul).

**Jarring, Gunnar. 1992.** "Garments from Top to Toe: Eastern Turki Texts Relating to Articles of Clothing Edited with Translation, Notes and Glossary", In: *Scripta minora Regiae Societatis Humaniorum Litterarum Lundensis*.

**Jarring, Gunnar (ed.). 1993.** *Stimulants among the Turks of Eastern Turkestan: an Eastern Turki text*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International.

**Jarring, Gunnar. 1998.** *Agriculture and horticulture in Central Asia in the early years of the twentieth century with an excursus on fishing: Eastern Turki texts with transcription, translation, notes and glossary*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International.

## Footnotes

1. For the manuscript in question see, Alvin. <https://www.alvin-portal.org/alvin/view.jsf?pid=alvin-record%3A29947&dswid=-5337>.
2. Jarring 1946: 73–104.
3. In one version of the story, the Egyptian Sultan Hüsrev reaches the age of 60 without having any children. He prays to God that he may be granted children and eventually receives three sons. His youngest son Hamrah is very clever and loyal. One day the Sultan has a dream in which he sees a bird, which actually is not a bird but a fairy. The Sultan wakes up from his dream and searches for the bird but is unable to find it anywhere. The Sultan's three sons set out to find the bird for their father's sake. The youngest son Hamrah meets with Melike Hurliqa and they fall in love. Hamrah wants to fulfill the promise he has given his father to find the bird and tells Hurliqa about it. This bird actually belongs to Hurliqa's elder sister Huri Zafer and order to get hold of the bird, Hurliqa fights with her older sister and then presents it to Hamrah. However, while Hamrah is returning to his country he is thrown into a well by his two brothers. While the Sultan Hüsrev finally gets the bird that he has seen in his dream, he is unable to see his beloved son. Finally, the bird starts to talk and tells the Sultan what has happened to his son. The Sultan thus sets out to save Hamrah and also Melike Hurilika comes to his rescue. Finally, before he dies, the Sultan declares his son Hamrah as a new Sultan. From that day onwards, Hamrah and Hurliqa live a long life together.
4. <http://www.jarringcollection.se/travel/ladakh-yolida-karwan/>
5. <https://www.srii.org/transaction/vol03>
6. Schlyter, Birgit N. (ed.), forthcoming, *An Eastern Turki–English Dictionary*, 2nd edition, compiled by Gunnar Jarring (1907–2002).
7. Rudelson 1997: 173. Rudelson, Justin Jon. 1997. *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along China's Silk Road*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Digitized editions of Transactions, including Jarring's publication "Prints from Kashgar" are available at:  
<https://srii.org/publications/transaction.aspx>



## Impressions on “Pluralism in the Present”

Murat Devres, Project Coordinator

### A very personal introduction on *Rememberings*

*Rememberings*, that's the name of our two-year long project that is coming to a close at the end of this month of June 2022. We had started out with zoom meetings during the height of the COVID19 pandemic. There was a tiering interview process, I really wanted the position of academic coordinator in this project, simply because of the themes mentioned in the name; “Historical Trauma”, “Human Rights” and the future of “Pluralism” in Türkiye and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Born in Istanbul, I had studied high school in a Catholic school in Brussels, Belgium. Over seventy percent of our school was foreign born, coming from all parts of Africa such as Congo, Morocco, Togo, and Benin, as well as from parts of Asia such as Korea, Pakistan, Philippines and Vietnam, and of course other people like me coming from the Eastern Mediterranean; Greece, Lebanon, Armenia, Kurdistan and Türkiye. We all had different facial features and various accents relative to our white catholic French speaking friends. Heck, I didn't even speak French for the first six months and used English to fraternize with my Polish and Indonesian friends while playing Pokémon on our Gameboys during class breaks. So, I knew all about pluralism growing up, at least I thought I did. It was at senior year that our History professor gave us a class assignment on the Armenian and Assyrian genocide. I was shocked. I grew up crying over sensitive Holocaust films such as Schindler's List and the Pianist. Now at seventeen, a well Americanized secular Turk sympathetic to the Jewish cause, I was finding out that my own history was directly related to Historical Trauma. Having deeply suffered psychologically from Tätertrauma, I decided to study contemporary History at the ULB.

I went on to graduate in 2011, having completed my master's thesis on a tentative critique of Erik Jan Zürcher's Young Turk periodization based on the Belgian Foreign Office's diplomatic correspondence, because I still could not bring myself to accept the continuity between the Party of Union and Progress and the Republican People's Party. My advisers were unimpressed. Thinking that I had no place in European Academia, and amidst an atmosphere of freedom wherein the Alevi and Kurdish issues were beginning to be openly addressed in my homeland, I decided to return to Türkiye.

On my return I would go on to work in various NGO's working on the environment and the protection of cultural pluralism in Turkey in general and the Princes' Islands in particular. It was around this time that both my maternal grandfather and paternal grandmother passed away, and I started to learn more about my own family's non-Turkish and non-Muslim roots. This personal discovery now made me even more sensible to the sufferings of the victims of nationalism in our geography. I finally decided to pursue a PhD in contemporary Turkish history, and I was accepted into the Atatürk Institute in Boğaziçi University just as the Gezi protests were taking off. I became even more aware of the importance of Human Rights in our geography's road to progress.

It was an arduous seven years during which I progressively chose to focus on the region of Dersim and the reports of my great-grandfather Necmeddin Sahir Silan following the Tertele in Bingöl and Tunceli. I was not Kurdish nor Alevi, but I still felt a personal connection to this land, which was confirmed when I went to Ovacık in 2018.

This place, and the people I met felt more real to me than all my years and encounters in the cities where I had lived. I finally finished my dissertation on the “Turkish Civilizing Mission” during the first internal colonial period (1927-1952) by the end of 2020, when I was working at a public opinion research center, unfortunately close to the ruling party.

It was there, in a dimly lit office building, surrounded by unhappy nine-to-fivers, that one day I saw a call for applications by the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul. I had previously gone to Sweden within the context of an exchange program that the Museum of the Princes’ Islands had with the Swedish authorities. So, I had a pleasant memory of this land and its people. Furthermore, the CfA had all the elements that I had hitherto encountered in my experience. Historical Trauma: this was the first time that I ever heard about it, I researched it online and was interested, this term could potentially unite both the descendants of perpetrators and victims of genocide. Human Rights: ever since Gezi and the failed coup attempt of 2016 this concept was clearly under threat. The future of pluralism; depended on our own words and actions. I was hooked, this seemed like an application specifically designed for me. I thought, I wrote, and I even prayed so that I could finally work within a project that matched with my own convictions.

What will follow are only three narratives from our trip to Kavala from three of our participants to the writing workshop “Pluralism in the present”. But what did it mean? What was it for? And what is the future of pluralism in Turkey and the Eastern Mediterranean?

Me and my project teammate Gül Hür were chosen as the two coordinators that would work with our two project leaders Andrea Karlsson and Olof Heilo. We started out with intense zoom sessions during the summer of 2020. As I had experience in working with social media and the internet, we speedily set up a WordPress website as well as pages on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Our purpose was to create a network where young academics and civil society actors could meet and collaborate within the context of our three general topics. The idea was to get them in the same room and get to know each other and their work. But this was easier said than done in the inhumane conditions of the pandemic. Therefore, we thought of adopting an online format for our public conferences, which turned into our series “Türkçe Sohbetler” on YouTube, and for our workshops, which gave us the “Unspoken memories, unwritten histories,” an online workshop series dedicated to cultural pluralism in major Eastern Mediterranean cities. We even had to convert our Summer School, the main antecedent and inspiration behind our project, into an online event.

As the public gathering restrictions were slowly lifted, we went on to a hybrid format during the last quarter of 2021, and in 2022 we had the distinct pleasure of organizing actual physical events. The writing workshop “Pluralism in the Present” that we organized last month in Istanbul and Kavala happened within this grand scheme of things. 18 participants, 6 mentors, one day in Istanbul, two days on the road to and from Kavala, and two full days of visits in Mehmet Ali Pasha’s hometown. What did it mean? What was it for?

What will follow are only three narratives from our trip to Kavala from three of our participants to the writing workshop “Pluralism in the present”. But what did it mean? What was it for? And what is the future of pluralism in Turkey and the Eastern Mediterranean?

We all share geographies in this world, separated only by almost arbitrary lines drawn on the map by the shared political will of imagined communities. The Eastern Mediterranean is a central geography in the development of both community-based monotheistic religions and the creation of large multi-ethnic empires. In contrast the Western Mediterranean has another story, one of adapting both these anthropological developments within an exclusionary perspective. In the ancient world the East had colonized the West, and in the modern world the West has colonized the East. In this last instance of colonialism an ideology of nation-statehood created in the West, based on the unity of language, race and religion, had to be violently adapted to the East, which had been hitherto used to the coexistence of a myriad of cultures and religions.

There was pluralism in the Eastern Mediterranean until the recent past. Therefore, the work of young historians working on pluralism is really important in this geography and must be continuously supported. Because the recent history of pluralism in the Eastern Mediterranean has an important story to tell the whole postcolonial world.

Türkiye is a post-imperial state, but it still has a pluralistic present. This culturally pluralistic heritage needs to be studied, because the future of our whole planet, as its past, is pluralistic. Young academics working on pluralism in the Eastern Mediterranean are the light that shine in a dark atmosphere of unfaced historical traumas and disrespect of Human Rights. Therefore, they need to be supported, and therefore they need to collaborate with each other. Our workshop contributed to this ideal because we can only strengthen pluralism by remembering the past.



**The participants of the Kavala "writeshop".**



Eda Yiğit, Mimar Sinan University

I think that I am crossing the land border between Greece and Turkey for the fourth time. Crossing the border has different meanings. To cross a border between two states, to switch places between two neighbors, to let go of both sides for a certain period of time during a trip... My first feeling is that at the border of your homeland (homeland, not fatherland; as if it relates more to home), you have more freedom just as you are about to leave it. It's as if your body is about to become more agile and your thoughts freer. Being stopped while crossing the border... Welcome to your neighbor. Another country, not yours – even though yours does not belong to you either-! The first boundary line where you feel that you are both very close and familiar and foreign. In the past there were uniforms, checks, and papers. Now we are freed from the procedures as we pass as a group with only our passports. They think that they define us using their tools... I thought, facing the state agents who fix our identity and manage it under their control. These micro-encounters on the journey are like proof of our transformation from a citizen to a foreign tourist.



The politicians who have spoken in the past resonate in my mind. On one side, Süleyman Demirel's famous speech in which he said that the Aegean is not a lake, and the slogan of Greek Prime Minister Tsipras, allegedly used by anarchists and radical leftists in Greece since the 1990s, that "The Aegean Sea belongs to the fish" is on the other side of my mind. Let's hope that the Aegean, a piece of water that exists between two countries that know each other so closely, have a common history and are neighbors, this home to the lives of so many creatures, can be shared. Because the language of fish is the closest to a language of peace.

Crossing the border, I think of Berivan, who should have been with us but was blocked. Why did we have to leave her behind? Questions we know the answer to, like our names. Although it is not difficult to name discrimination or violence, it is getting harder to admit and accept. It's downright unfair.

I'm sure we'll have a cheerful time, thinking about the suitcase next to me as we move towards an environment of work and reflection. Every time I cross this border, I try to think about how the Greeks who were deported in 1964 might have felt as they squeezed their life into 20 kilos. Every time I cross this border, 1964 does come to my mind. Can you imagine? If only the rulers of the two neighbors, who had traumas in their past, had an agenda to make peace with time or to face it... Despite this, the past seeps into everyday life. The culture of those who hold on to peace and live together has power. It can be found in a diary from the past, in the memory of a Beyoğlu tavern, on the face of a neighbor in Tatavla, or in a photograph you come across at the flea market.

How quickly do the words of a whole established order collapse to the ground, when you have a Greek friend. Cultures live in the mind, people simply smile at each other. When the wicked history is dropped and spilled on the ground, the truth appears, and the suffering is relieved.

There are immigrants who have been abandoned to the waves of the Aegean, displaced from their homes and unable to cross the border. Those who make speeches that talk about negotiations and disregard human dignity are on television again. The drama between two neighbors, the unrest of humanity and the lives drowning in a sea of interests. Disasters are not only carried from the past to the present, but they are also repeated in the present, they accumulate and are tacked and knotted.

I'm on the other side of the border now that all this is going through my mind. I immerse myself in another topos, mountains, people, the landscape flowing through the bus window. Miniature memorial monuments on the roadside, Eksilakis catch my eye every time I come. I feel that there are structures that make life beautiful and calm people down by reminding them of death. Manos Hacıdakis is playing. While borders separate geographies, music, food, people, games, narratives, and the past connect them. I'm thinking about the pleasure of singing the same song as the neighbor in a tavern in our own languages and enjoying it by drinking ouzo. Two countries, same world, common past.

Önder Uçar, Boğaziçi University

I am in a period where I am more curious than ever on how the egos of the people of the country, who "does not let anything else to be thought than itself", have changed after they crossed the threshold of "I want out now". For this reason, I seem to be looking around with another filter in this excursion. After having passed through the "door", the feeling of having had enough of what we left behind, is felt immediately in the changing atmosphere in the bus, and this weighs heavily on one's conscience.

As soon as I came here, I started to feel once again how much simplicity we deserve. I cannot accept this. On the other hand, despite everything, being together with people who try to carry a drop of water to the fire so that we or those who will come after us can reach calm waters, serenity, and all that peace of mind right here, is a consolation for me.

"I can never forget what I said to my friends, "it will never be this beautiful", while trying to walk on the empty beer cans on Mis Street in the evening of our first day of the trip. The reason for that beauty was, I don't know, that black and white looked completely different, like in Spain of 1936. Among all the disappointments, it was the emergence of the "gray areas" that made one feel more aware and present. Maybe it happened later, or maybe there were always these gray areas and I had just noticed it later, I don't know. But from time to time, in moments like now, that togetherness brings back that feeling of Gezi. Maybe these ebbs and flows are our collective destiny, but let it be, coexistence like our current togetherness does not put an end to these tides, although it lessens their violence. I think that this possibility is the solid ground on which we stand. Together ...



Firuzan Melike Sümertaş, Brandenburg Technology University



Every visit to Greece is another journey towards myself. It almost coincided with the end of my early teenage years when I first met with a geography and culture, which I had started to wonder about since my childhood. I had already started my architectural education when I first directed my curiosity towards Lesbos, which always seemed curious but could not be visited for various reasons and focused instead on the 'Greek' stone houses of Cunda. In order to be actually in touch with this culture, which I always felt beside me but also outside of me, a few more years had to pass, and I had to search for myself in other geographies and cultures. But it had finally happened. The focus of my research was centered on my studies on the Greeks of Istanbul, but I also had to travel to Greece many times for other reasons. Sometimes I found myself "across the pond" to learn the language of this geography whose culture I tried to understand, sometimes to access publications about Istanbul that I could not even find in Istanbul, and sometimes just to enjoy being

in the Aegean. In this country, which has become a meeting place with friends over time, my list of my favorite towns, cities, taverns that I recommend to everyone, restaurants, must-see islands, and beaches has swelled up.

When I started this article, I was on a trip to Greece again. Unlike my travels, which I usually go on alone, this time we were quite crowded. A group of "young" academics, which might even mean that their hair has started to turn gray at the academy, who set out from Istanbul to spend the weekend in Kavala, to get to know each other better, to learn a little more about Greece, and to talk about our writings and writing practices whenever we had time. We had arrived in Kavala, hosted by the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul. Kavala was one of the few large settlements that I have never stayed in, except for the short transits by bus in Greece, where I have visited dozens of times. That's why I was excited. Moreover, the trip we took with my researcher friends, whom I had just met briefly in Istanbul, was a unique opportunity for people like me who always find it very exciting to be on the road. In fact, I had passed through the Ipsala border gate many times. But the excitement of the friends who had never done this before also gripped me. What do you think, would it be a problem? Border crossings were always adventurous locations, as our dear guide Serhat said, who accompanied us throughout our entire journey and tolerated us from time to time. Having passed once is no guarantee that we will easily pass every time, and sometimes, as this time, we may find ourselves passing without even realizing it. I was so surprised. It didn't even take twenty minutes. Here we were in Greece.



It wasn't just our phone networks that we could no longer connect to when we crossed the border. We had left behind the language we spoke and the alphabet we were accustomed to. But if you asked what was different other than language, it would not be so easy to answer. Even the experience of the two-colored bridges crossing the Meriç River along the land border, where the geography cannot be cut with a bang, in fact gives us the feeling of "different color but the same", and the artificiality of the east and west separation of ancient Thrace caught our eye once again.

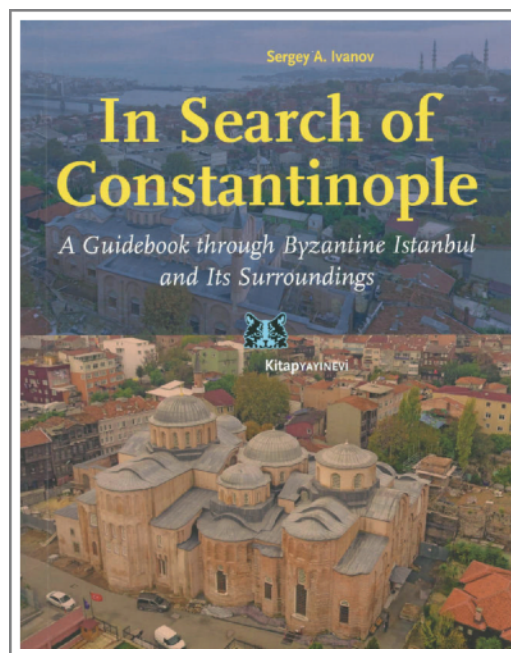
Geography, climate, sun, and wind had followed us across the border and came with us as far as Kavala. Of course, there were also differences in many aspects, from language to religion to life culture. But it took some time to discover them. We clung to the similarities at first. We tried to read the nets stretching from our starting point, Istanbul, to our last stop, Kavala, and the people and objects who had traveled this road like us. The Tobacco Museum, which we visited on our first full day in the city, gave us many clues in this regard. The journey of tobacco in Anatolia, Istanbul and Greece has opened our horizons. We visited the embroidery exhibition in Mehmet Ali Pasha House with similar feelings. We got to know Kavala in the Swedish House in Kavala, in the Castle, in the Imaret, and at every stop we could find. While talking about Kavala, we realized from time to time that these were journeys that we made to each other. Separately, each of us built our collective Kavala experience through our comrades. We wrote, read, and interpreted what we wrote whenever we had the chance. Our spatial experiences were integrated with sound and text. This must be the reason why every time I look at my notebook where I scribbled the first paragraph of the article you are reading, the terrace of the Kavala Swedish House with a magnificent view of the city and the Aegean Sea comes to my mind.



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## In Search of Constantinople – A Guidebook through Byzantine Istanbul and its Surroundings (By Sergej Ivanov)

"The conspirators were dressed as priests. Daggers under their arms, they blended into the crowd of clergymen who gathered in front of the Ivory Gate after dark. During the third watch of the night, they made their way into the Great Palace with the rest. Papias, the official in charge of searching visitors, was himself in the plot, so it all went according to plan... On that day, December 26, 820, the murderers entered the palace's Church of the Virgin of Pharos where an early service was about to begin... The sovereign was present at the liturgy and sang standing next to the choir - and his murderers. They jumped on him when he began singing "By longing for the Almighty did they spurn..." The emperor rushed to the altar and grabbed a chain attached to a censer to defend himself. He was a brave warrior, but the murderers were, as it turned out, more skilful.



So, then, where exactly did the Ivory Gate stand? Where was the Church of Pharos? We cannot answer either question with any degree of certainty... This level of uncertainty is commonplace when it comes to our knowledge of the city. There are numerous palaces, fountains, squares, inns, statues, avenues, hospitals, and obelisks mentioned in various sources, often more than once, but no one really knows where they were located... This should not come as a surprise; after all the capital of the Byzantines has disappeared from the face of the earth...

Another city took its place, the capital of another country, a new culture, and a different civilization. All that is left today are, some peaks of the submerged Byzantine "Atlantis" emerging here and there from the waves of the Ottoman sea. There are around one hundred Byzantine structures in modern Istanbul. Most frustrating of all, many of these buildings, including spectacular monuments have yet to be identified... I find these particularly piteous; they have managed to survive the ravages of time, but their stories have not.

<https://srii.bokorder.se/en-US/article/4521/in-search-of-constantinople> (Sweden)

<https://www.homerbooks.com/urun/in-search-of-constantinople-a-guidebook-through-byzantine-istanbul-and-its-surroundings> (Türkiye)

## The SRII Curates a Virtual Exhibition

# NORDIC TALES BYZANTINE PATHS



Come and visit the virtual exhibition *Nordic Tales, Byzantine Paths*! This is a collection of objects, sources, and essays about contacts and interactions between Northern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean c. 800–1200 AD. The exhibition is a collaboration between the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul (SRII) and the Koç University Stavros Niarchos Foundation Center for Late Antique and Byzantine Studies (GABAM) together with Per Demervall and Patric Nyström, authors of *Siri and the Vikings*. The exhibition explores the interactions between the Byzantine and Scandinavian lands and highlights the specific traces left in the visual, literary and material culture.

Long-distance trade between western Europe, the Byzantine Empire, and the Islamic East inevitably became an international issue in the new political context from the seventh century onwards, and the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire frequently found itself in the position of intermediary between the West and the East. Trade became important in the lands north of the Black

Sea—what is now Ukraine and Russia—only in the eighth century, when the Byzantine Empire established close contacts with the Khazars, a semi-nomadic Turkic people who had settled in the region. The route from Constantinople to the Khazars was mostly traveled via Cherson, the Byzantine outpost on the southern coast of the Crimea.

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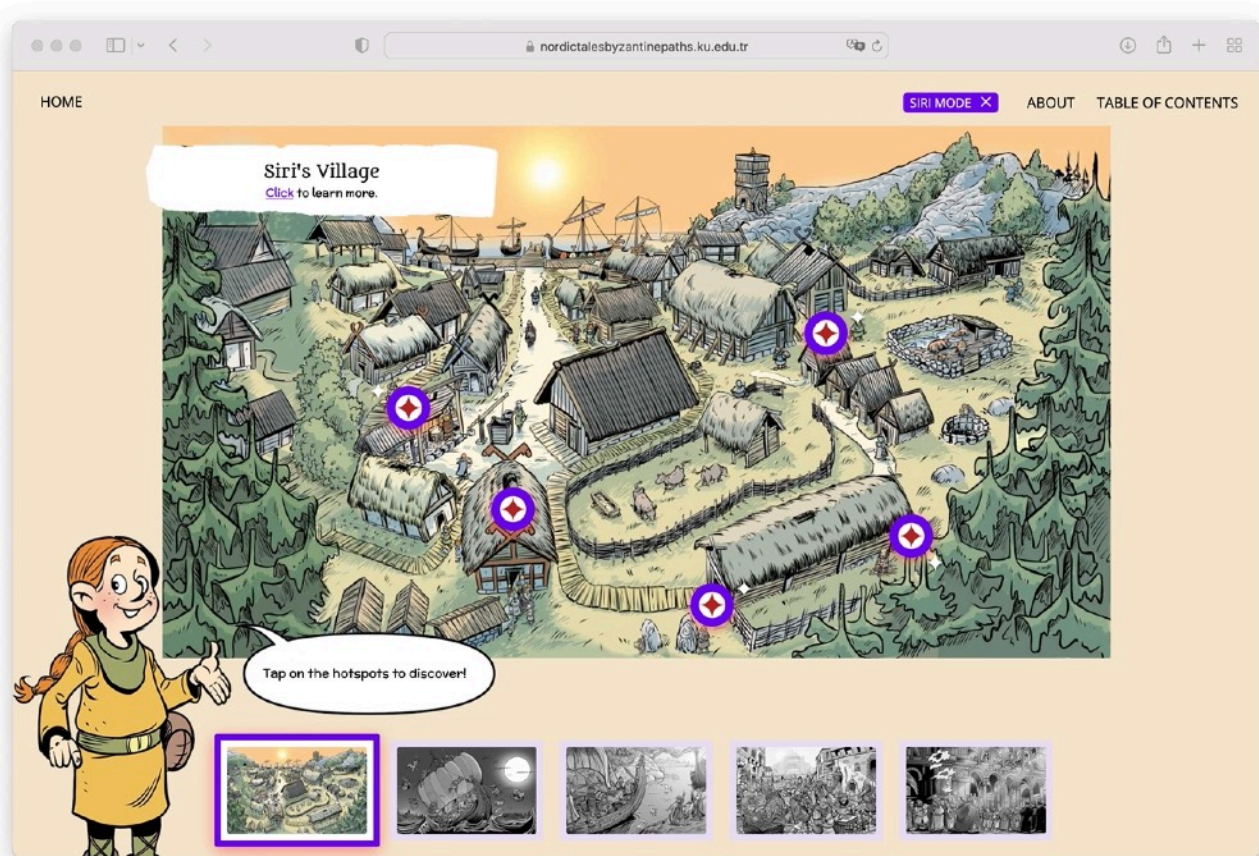
From the mid-ninth century onward, the so-called Varangians from present-day Sweden moved into Slavic lands and founded a state that quickly expanded south, with its center first in Novgorod and later in Kiev/Kyiv. The Varangians, or Ros, as they were called in Byzantine sources, soon reached the Black Sea coasts of Bulgaria and Byzantium, conducting raids and establishing trade.

The first known contact between the Varangians and the Byzantines happened in 838, when an envoy came to Constantinople and subsequently tried to return to Scandinavia via Germany, as the direct route back was blocked. Shortly after, the first mentions of people with Nordic names appeared in Byzantine sources, and the first Varangians were baptized.

For centuries, the Byzantine emperors had a Varangian guard, a special troop of bodyguards consisting of fierce northerners who had traveled to Constantinople via major eastern European rivers like the Dnieper. The memories of such journeys and interactions with the Byzantine Empire have been preserved in various sources in Scandinavia and will be shared in this exhibition along with the material remains of ships, weaponry, precious objects (reliquary crosses, silks, jewelry, coins), artworks (fresco paintings, baptismal fonts), and stories (sagas).

All these different objects, as well as inscriptions on Swedish runestones and on the so-called Piraeus Lion from the Venice Arsenal and narrative elements in Icelandic sagas, stand as evidence of the strong material and intangible intercultural exchange between these regions over several centuries.

The stories told by these various sources will provide a context for visitors to explore the rich heritage and historical significance of the artifacts and the importance of mutual contacts and exchanges between the Nordic and Byzantine worlds.



Please visit the exhibition at:  
<https://nordictalesbyzantinepaths.ku.edu.tr/en>

# Searching for the Sacred

## Fall lectures 2022 at the SRII

### 7 September

Prof. Barry Strauss & Philippe Boström  
In Search of Troy: Between Myth and History

### 15 September

Dr. Ipek Dagli  
The Sacred Landscape of Ancient Asia Minor

### 29 September

Dr. Thomas Arentzen  
Religious Plant Behavior – or What Did Christian Trees Do in Byzantium?

### 11 October

Prof. Jonas Svensson  
“We have Avenged the Prophet!”

### 8 November

Dr. Buket Kitapçı  
Whets Ones Appetite, Increases Sexual Potency: A Comparative Look at the Sacredness of Food in Late Medieval Byzantine and Muslim Tradition

### 29 November

Dr. Olof Heilo  
Sojourning with Sufis, Prospecting for the Palladium: Carl Vett (1871 – 1956), Esotericism and Archaeology in 1920s Istanbul

Venue: The Andrén Auditorium  
The Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul  
İstiklal Caddesi 247 (Beyoğlu – Tünel)