Kalabalik!
Bulletin of the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul

On the Walkway and the Road

Olof Heilo, SRII director

If the SRII were to follow a philosophical school, it would probably be the one of the Peripatetics, named after the walkways of the ancient Lyceum in Athens, where Aristotle made it a habit to give his lectures while walking. Apart from seminars, where our visiting scholars sometimes get to acquaint research topics far off their own, nothing is bringing people together more efficiently than a walking excursion – and Istanbul offers endless possibilities in that concern. Even if we cannot claim to possess the brilliance of the great philosophers of Antiquity, we certainly do have access to one of the most versatile cities in the world.

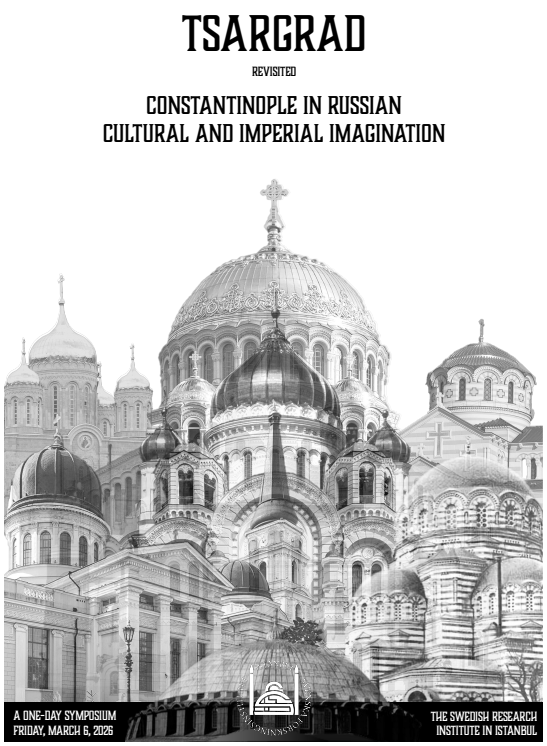
Since last summer, I have also been traveling a lot. This has been partly related to our ongoing effort to bring Nordic institutes of the Middle East closer together. In mid-October, Anders and I visited Beirut and met our colleagues

from the Finnish (FIME) and German (OIB) institutes, and in mid-December, I visited the Danish studio in Cairo. The Orient Institut in Beirut had already planned to assemble all international institutes in the region for a major convention in March this year, but for obvious reasons, nothing has come out of that. Instead, we hope to gather the Nordic institutes in the Middle East later in the spring.

The year 2025 marked the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, a crucial event in early Christian history, and not only the pope Leo XIV set out to visit the current-day city of Iznik for the occasion. In early November we hosted a course about religion by Turku Academy which included an excursion to Iznik, led by one the most faithful companions of the institute, David Hendrix. The year also marks a very different anniversary – sixty years of Turkish workers' migration to Sweden. This in turn has inspired a scholarly study visit to the small city of Kulu in Konya province, which you can read about later in this issue. I have been fortunate to follow along to both Iznik and Kulu, as well as other places.

For our friends at the French Institute of Anatolian Studies (IFEA), the last seven months have been a period of migration, but for other reasons: as their main building inside the French general consulate undergoes necessary repairs, they have been forced to partly relocate. We have been happy to host some of their staff and even some of their events, especially during the fall of 2025. Thus it came that we housed a conference on *Global Bergsonism*, devoted to the great French philosopher of the early 20th century, in early October.

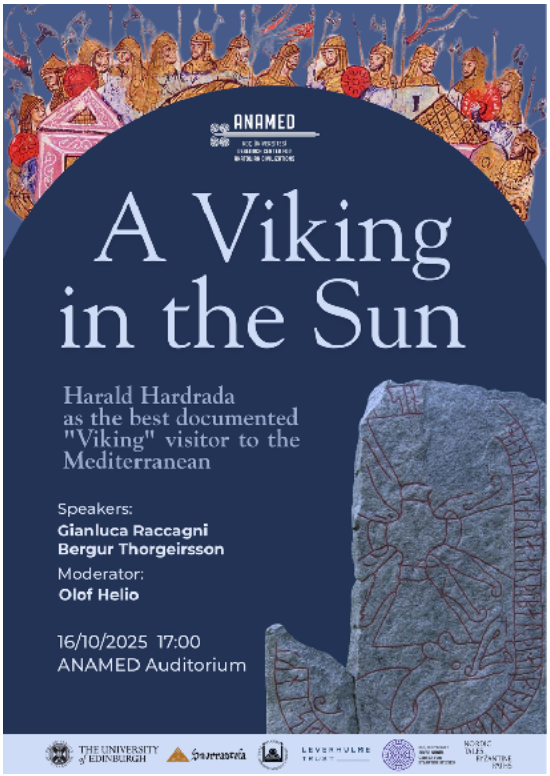
Other conferences which have taken place in our auditorium over the same period of time are *Legacies of Muslim Rule in South-East Europe* in early September, *Materializing the Sacred: A Comparative Perspective on Relics in Christian and Islamic Traditions* in late November, and *Plague in southwestern Eurasia and the Mediterranean: Burrows, reservoirs, trade, demographics and epidemiology* in early February. The universities of Stockholm, Oslo, and Oxford have been involved, among many other international partners. We hope that the conference on relics will materialize into a volume in our *Transactions* series in late 2026 or early 2027.



Two symposiums have followed up on earlier conferences at the SRII and with the aim of producing academic volumes. *The Ottoman Empire of Guillaume Berggren* was arranged with support from the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in mid-December, whereas *Tsargrad Revisited: Constantinople in Russian Cultural and Imperial Imagination* came about as an informal coming-together of a handful of scholars, some of which had taken part in the earlier "Tsargrad" conference in the fall of 2024. You can read a few of my reflections on it later in this issue.

Together with our friends from the Hungarian Liszt Institute and the Pera Museum, the SRII also supported a conference in late November devoted to orientalism in 19th century architecture and entertainment culture: *Reinvented as a Theme Park: Istanbul in the Imagination of Nineteenth-Century Europe*. The Gustav Karlsson lecture of 2025, *Once and Future Ruins: Constantinopolitan Afterlives in the Fifteenth-Century Italian Imagination* was held by Emir Alışık from ANAMED, an excerpt from the dissertation he had defended at the Istanbul University earlier the same year.

Still after three years, the digital exhibition and online resource on Vikings in the Eastern Mediterranean, *Nordic Tales, Byzantine Paths*, keeps growing. In early October, we presented the latest addition at a co-arrangement with Koç University and ANAMED – *A Viking in the Sun: Harald Hardrada as the best documented "Viking" visitor to the Mediterranean*. Gianluca Raccagni from Edinburgh University and Bergur Thorgeirsson from the Snorrastofa Institute on Iceland presented their ongoing project about the 11th century Norwegian king, which we currently hope may result in a live performance event in Istanbul in the spring!



In July, the exhibition *Karanlik Dünya* (Dark World) opened at Galata SALT. Conceived and curated by the former cultural councillor at the Swedish Consulate General, Mike Bode, it told the story of a film made by one of the foremost Turkish film directors of the mid-20th century, based on the life of one of the country's most beloved folk singers, and how it ended up in real and figurative stitches at the hands of 1950s censorship – with scenes added, removed and altered.

A project which had been begun under Mike's time as cultural councillor also came to fruition this autumn, as Åsa Jungnelius' solo exhibition *A Verse Written with Earth, Fire, Water and Air* opened at the Pera Museum in mid-September. The SRII proudly supported Åsa's repeated stays in Istanbul as she came to collaborate with Turkish glassworkers from Denizli and visit obsidian fields in Eastern Turkey, as documented by photographer Peo Olsson.

Other cultural collaborations with the Consulate General and its new Consul General Karin Hernmarck have been no less fruitful. In late September, we co-arranged an event on Swedish literary classics in Turkish, highlighting the recent Turkish translations of Selma Lagerlöf and Hjalmar Bergman by Berkan Başören (Everest Yayinlari), who took part in a panel discussion in our auditorium with professors Helena Bodin from Stockholm University and Anna Bohlin from the University of Bergen, moderated by Ahmet Çagatay Bayraktar. Two days later, Helena and Anna took part in another panel discussion in connection with a live musical performance by the duo YoJuliet – Yohanna Eek Björnulfsson and Julia Sandwall – of music composed specifically for Mauritz Stiller's silent movie *Gunnar Hedes Saga* (1923), based on Selma Lagerlöf's *En herrgårdssägen*. In between the two events, we even managed to commemorate another Swedish author who died in Istanbul in 1925, as you can read about later on in this issue of *Kalabalık!*

A joint project which had been going on between the SRII, the Consulate General, and Mike Bode for almost six years was finally concluded this autumn, as the book *Sweden & Istanbul / Isveç & Istanbul / Sverige & Istanbul* arrived from the print. A free-standing complement to Frederick Whitling's scholarly study *Palais de Suéde: from Ottoman Constantinople to Modern Istanbul* (Transactions of the SRII no. 25) and an artistic endeavor by the book designer Jonas Williamsson, it is a gift first and foremost and will not be commercially available, but serve as a basis for an exhibition on Swedish-Turkish relations that is set to open in Istanbul later in the spring of 2026.

In this context, I take the opportunity to highlight a book which has just appeared in Swedish with Makadam publishers, *Elden är lös! Janghen var!* by Helena Bodin, a study of Istanbul/Constantinople as a multilingual world in European literature between 1880 and 1930. Helena is one of our most recurrent and appraised scholars, and some of her research for the book took place at the SRII on one of the fellowships that Riksbankens Jubileumsfond had awarded shortly before the pandemic. In March, she presented the book to our society of friends in Stockholm, in a talk with professor Catharina Raudvere from Copenhagen.

The traditional presentation of our yearbook *Dragomanen* with the theme "Speglingar av Svarta havet" ("reflections on the Black Sea," ed. Daniel Henningsson and Simon Stjernholm) took place at Rönnells antiquarian bookshop in Stockholm in early February. Based on a joint event with the other Mediterranean institutes in Athens and Rome at the Military Museum in Stockholm last spring, it features nine essays on Black Sea history from antiquity until today, by researchers from all three institutes. It is available on our website and bookshop, srii.bokorder.se.

In addition to our regular scholarship holders, some reports of whom you can read in this issue of *Kalabalık!,* we have hosted two so-called minor field studies researchers during the autumn: Serdar Potelli and Natalia Kalyva, both from Stockholm university. The former investigated political expressions in contemporary Turkish theatre, whereas the latter studied varieties of Pontic Greek. They were a much appreciated addition to the institute environment and we hope for more visits of the kind.

There are two people I especially want to thank by the end of this newsletter. The first one is our former intern Lovisa Jakobsson. She first came to us in the spring of 2024 to assist with the ongoing reorganization of the library, but returned to help with the completion of the *Sweden & Istanbul* book, and has since then provided important findings for the study of Guillaume Berggren, his family and networks. The second one is Gustaf Almenberg, the grandson of Cosswa (1865–1953) and Maude (1880–1949) Anckarswärd. I first got in touch with him in 2022 as we made research for what became the *Sweden & Istanbul* book and it became clear that he had a treasure trove of photos and documents from his mother's and grandparents' years in Constantinople 1908–20, when Cosswa Anckarswärd was the Swedish envoy and resident of the Palais de Suéde.

In 2023, Gustaf's mother's diary from the last months in Constantinople was published, together with two lectures on life in the Ottoman Empire which his grandmother later gave in Sweden, in the series *Memoria* of the German Orient Institut in Istanbul. But new findings keep turning up. At the end of the summer, I sat down together with Gustaf and went through several documents before they were given over to the national archives in Stockholm. Lovisa has also lent a hand with the material while mapping out connections between the Anckarswärd family, the Berggren photo atelier, and other Swedish expats in the Ottoman Empire at the time – some of which turn up in Helena's book. I hope we can return to these fascinating interactions in future publications by the institute.

Gustaf has gifted the institute three so-called *berat* documents that were once bestowed upon his grandparents by the sultans Abdülhamid II (r. 1878–1909) and Mehmed VI Vahidettin (r. 1918–22). The beautiful calligraphies with the official *tughras* of the sultans have found their place over the Carl Malmsten sofa in the library room where Gunnar Jarring's lexicons are kept – testifying to the enduring symbiosis of diplomacy and scholarship.

The Origins of Cyclopean Masonry

Yannick de Raaff, University of Gothenburg

> The wall, which is the only part of the ruins still remaining, is a work of the Cyclopes made of unwrought stones, each stone being so big that a pair of mules could not move the smallest from its place to the slightest degree.
>
> Pausanias 2.25.8

The 'Cyclopean' fortifications of famous Late Bronze Age sites like Mycenae, Tiryns, and Dendra are some of the hallmarks of the Mycenaean world. These massive walls protected the state elites residing inside them and controlled access to the political, economic and administrative centres of Mycenaean Greece. The ancient traveller Pausanias (2nd century AD) found the walls so imposing that he believed only Cyclopes, the mythological one-eyed giants, could have put such enormous blocks in position.

Today, 'Cyclopean' refers to a specific masonry style that uses rather enormous, heavy, unworked stones stacked on top of one another with smaller 'chinking' stones filling the gaps. The technique was also used in roads, bridges, dams and terraces. The enchanting effect of these walls extends also to modern scholars, drawing many to explore them across the years.

Despite this long-standing interest, an enduring scholarly problem remains unsolved – *what are the origins of Cyclopean masonry?* This is the question that I set out to tackle during my scholarship at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul in September 2025, and I am pleased to have made significant progress. The wonderfully equipped and dedicated library of the Swedish Institute, hidden in the calm gardens of the embassy, provided the best possible location. My aim was to take a small break from my doctoral thesis and use the month to prepare a larger project, so that once the thesis is completed, I can quickly move into another topic. This worked: I now have a solid grasp of the scholarly debate, the various arguments proposed over the years and how my approach can contribute to solving this puzzle.

So why is this interesting? Because the Cyclopean masonry is something of an anomaly in Greece. Viewed in a long-term perspective, the most common type of fortification wall consists of a stone socle topped with a mudbrick superstructure. Both before and after the Late Bronze Age, this was a standard combination. In fact, the Cyclopean style was used during only a short span of time, with most examples dating from the LH IIIB period between ca 1300-1200 BCE, and is has not been possible to identify a clear architectural development. As a result, opinions differ on how the style originated. Some suggest that it was an indigenous development, and others that inspiration was found in the Cycladic islands. It has even been proposed that the Hittites of Anatolia played a role. The Hittites had been using large, unwrought limestone blocks for several centuries before the style appeared in Greece. The sudden adoption could therefore be explained through royal gift exchange, where the Hittite king of Hattusa sent expert stoneworkers and architects to Mycenaean courts in the Argolid. Hittite craftsmen were tightly tied to the palace and were frequently dispatched abroad to serve other kings. Moreover, specific building elements like the corbelled vault were invented by the Hittites and seem to have travelled from East to West, and the famous Lion Gate also bears traces of Hittite craftsmanship.

But could there be a more practical explanation? In this project, I am exploring whether it may have been cheaper to build and maintain Cyclopean walls than walls built (partly) with mudbrick. This idea was first proposed by Spyros Iakovidis, who argued that Cyclopean masonry was invented for economic reasons. He suggested that working with large blocks was simply less costly than producing innumerable bricks. This may well be true. A recent study on Iron Age Germany showed that the labour rate for mudbrick production increases with the size of a building. Perhaps these Mycenaean structures were simply so colossal that using massive blocks became the more efficient option. And while building a fortification wall is expensive in any case, the demands of long-term maintenance should not be overlooked, either. A mudbrick wall requires a fresh coat of plaster every year, whereas a Cyclopean wall may have needed replastering only in the small gaps between its enormous stones. Whether one method of construction, and the corresponding maintenance was really more economical than the other remains to be tested, or better yet, calculated. This is the work I have begun and hope to continue once my doctoral thesis is completed.

It was partly for this reason that I also visited the famous archaeological site of Troy, since no Bronze Age scholar's education is complete without having seen it firsthand. The site has an undeniably important position in the history of the discipline, but its Late Bronze Age fortification wall is also fascinating in its own right. It differs from those on the other side of the Aegean, with its 'sawtooth' pattern, the sloping limestone base, and the mudbrick superstructure. Troy was inhabited for thousands of years, with many successive cities built one atop another. Seeing it in person gave me a far clearer sense of its position in the wider landscape and its dimensions.

The Late Bronze Age fortification wall of Troy, with a large tower at the centre.

In a city like Istanbul, it would be irresponsible to spend all one's time in a library. It demands to be explored. And so I spent considerable time getting to know the city, filled as it is with evidence of its long, rich, and layered history. I visited many landmarks, including the Hagia Sophia, the Blue Mosque (both twice), the Topkapi Palace, the underground cistern, the Galata Tower, and of course the Istanbul Archaeological Museums. I spent many hours closely studying artefacts and taking notes, especially in the excellent exhibition on Troy. The museum is modern, beautifully designed, and decorated with large reconstruction paintings that bring each room to life. The Museum of the Ancient Orient, which houses a substantial collection of Hittite artefacts, was being renovated – giving me excellent reason to return as soon as it reopens.

My stay has also resulted in valuable new connections. A colleague from Sweden, for example, has given a wonderful guest lecture in a course I taught and will contribute a chapter to an edited volume about social change in Bronze and Iron Age Europe that I am preparing with several others. It was equally enjoyable to meet several countrymen working at the Dutch institute just around the corner from the Swedish one. In short, I am deeply grateful to the Swedish Institute for offering me this opportunity. My time in Istanbul has given me new perspectives and fresh ideas about Mycenaean-Hittite interactions. I very much hope to return in the near future.

Detail of the Late Bronze Age fortification wall of Troy.

Yannick de Raaff is a doctoral student in Classical Archaeology and Ancient History at the University of Gothenburg, after completing studies in both Archaeology and History at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. He is particularly interested in Bronze Age architecture, social complexity, and ancient warfare, and has participated in excavation in amongst others Germany, Italy and Greece. His doctoral thesis is about the settlement architecture of early Mycenaean Greece and covers themes like water management and monumentality. Theoretical concepts like community coalescence and collective action aid in understanding the increasing labour requirements and linking those to social changes.

Transnational Memories in Post-Violence Contexts: An Analysis of Circassian Cultural Memory in Russia, Türkiye, and Germany

Gülnur Demirci, Malmö University and University of Groningen

In examining how Circassian cultural memory is articulated in a transnational context and remediated across diverse sociopolitical settings, Türkiye emerges as a key site due to its historical and contemporary significance in memorialization, ethnic revival, and cross-border activism related to the Circassian case. Circassians, the indigenous people of the North Caucasus, faced a large-scale massacre in 1864 when they lost 101 years of war against the tsarist Russia. The majority of the surviving population was expelled to the Ottoman lands, later on, to find themselves in nation states such as Türkiye, Jordan, and Syria. Today, Türkiye hosts the largest Circassian population, surpassing even that of the homeland, and Circassians in Türkiye maintain strong transnational ties with their kins both in the homeland and in diaspora. Türkiye, in particular Istanbul, has historically served as a center for Circassian organizational, intellectual, and political activities since the late Ottoman period.

Thus, my one-month research stay at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul (SRII) made a substantial contribution to my project, not only by facilitating fieldwork in Istanbul but also by providing access to connections at other research sites. During this period, I conducted eleven in-depth interviews, attended three commemoration events-- one of which involved a 24-hour round trip by bus to Samsun-- and regularly visited a cultural organization several times a week, along with visits to several other organizations. During this period, I also engaged with participants informally outside these organizations and attended various activities, such as dance rehearsals and cultural events.

Gülnur Demirci is a PhD candidate in International Migration and Ethnic Relations at Malmö University and the Graduate School of Humanities at the University of Groningen. Her interdisciplinary project investigates how contemporary Circassian communities in Türkiye, Russia, and Germany have developed and deployed memory practices across the boundaries of nations. Drawing on ethnographic methods, including qualitative interviews and participant observation, and approaches from memory studies, migration studies, political science, and genocide studies, she explores Circassians' transnational memory work and its manifestations at local and national levels.

Therefore, my ethnographic fieldwork in Istanbul has constituted a crucial step in mapping the trajectories and remediations of Circassian cultural memory, providing insights into the complex entanglements of global memory discourses, local mediations, and the power imbalances inherent in transnational memory work. The empirical material obtained in Istanbul enriches my analysis by enabling a comparison between memory practices in a metropolitan center, with its distinct political, financial, and social dynamics, and those in other local or urban settings. The participatory observation enabled me to explore various memory practices and sites, including monuments and commemorative spaces, as well as varying types of activism and organizational stances. Istanbul, home to more than fifteen Caucasian associations, provided access to organizations with diverse orientations, ideologies, and activities, offering insights into the internal dynamics of how cultural memory is articulated and circulated across physical and political boundaries. It has helped me capture diverse dynamics concerning memorialization and broader ethnic-cultural movements within Circassian communities.

During my stay at the SRII, I had the opportunity to present my project at a research seminar on 20 May 2025. The feedback and discussion at the seminar were extremely beneficial, offering important insights that I continue to incorporate in my ongoing research. It is also worth noting that the SRII library provided an inviting and productive environment, allowing me to engage with different sources, particularly on the political history of Türkiye and its politics concerning minorities.

Overall, my one-month research stay at the SRII proved to be far more valuable than the time itself might suggest. Both the fieldwork and engagement at the Institute helped me anchor my research and develop its direction. I am grateful to the SRII, and particularly to its director, Olof Heilo, for providing a rich research environment, academic resources, engaging activities, and warm hospitality.

Notes from an *At-Home* Researcher: Navigating Spirituality and Resistance in Turkey

Zeynep Kuyumcu, University of Gothenburg

One of the most enduring moments that has stayed with me from my stay at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul (SRII) is the fresh spring breeze flowing through the balcony window of my room, carrying the distant voices of high school students from the school nearby. It is a place where the familiar crowds of Istiklal Street meet the quiet, leafy refuge of the Institute's compound, creating an isolated yet welcoming atmosphere that a researcher always seeks during fieldwork.

Having spent most of my life in Istanbul, from my birth through my young adult years, I can definitely say that my stay at the SRII gave me countless opportunities beyond simply granting me a three-month research fellowship. To start with the unexpected ones, I was able to see and experience a different vision of Istanbul that I had not had the chance to encounter before. The thin lines between my position as a local Istanbulite and an early-career researcher (trying to grasp how the field can be portrayed to readers who are unfamiliar with the context) pushed me to take slower steps and take notes on surroundings that I had taken for granted throughout my everyday life before becoming a PhD student. Even for this reason alone, the stay at the SRII helped me to shift my vision and habits, allowing me to consider my position as an *at-home* researcher (Narayan, 1993).

On the other hand, as a research fellow, I took the first steps toward conducting the fieldwork for my doctoral studies. My PhD project seeks to navigate how LGBTIQ+ Muslims in Turkey are affected by discourses, politics, and movements surrounded by anti-gender and anti-LGBTIQ+ rhetoric, as well as the convergence of orthodox and mainstream views of Islam that perceive being LGBTIQ+ as incompatible with faith. I consider that the profoundly hostile and populist-charged atmosphere of anti-gender and anti-LGBTIQ+ movements reveals the instrumentalization of Islam and gender and sexuality politics in the context of Turkey. This form of anti-genderism illustrates the promotion of a homogenous cis-heteronormative Islamic national identity while creating deep polarizations, discursively and politically, around "good heterosexual Muslim citizens" versus "evil non-Muslim 'LGBT' terrorists". By approaching LGBTIQ+ Muslims' diverse experiences as a case study, I look at, first, the self-makings of a queer-Muslim identity in contemporary Turkey, and secondly, a newly emerging site of resistance where Islam and non-normative sexualities and desires become a resource to develop a political and spiritual subjectivity. This allows me to investigate and contribute postcolonial perspectives on how anti-genderism, as well as illiberal democracy, can manifest in Turkey, whereas relevant scholarship mostly focuses on the Global North. Therefore, my PhD research aims to offer critical new perspectives on anti-gender literature, as well as on individuals whose subjectivity has been under-researched within the history of LGBTIQ+ movements.

During my three-month stay in Turkey, I started conducting interviews for my PhD research in addition to attending ongoing PhD courses remotely. With my fieldwork located in four different cities in Turkey, I traveled to Ankara (several times), Mersin, and Diyarbakır in order to grasp how different contexts and local dynamics shape not only the LGBTIQ+ movement in Turkey but also the experiences of spirituality and *queerness* among LGBTIQ+ Muslims. In this first stage of fieldwork, I conducted twenty-three semi-structured in-depth interviews, attended the meetings of the Istanbul Pride Committee to conduct participant observation, took an active part in the organization and moderation of one digital and one physical workshop within the Istanbul Pride events, and wrote fieldwork and reflection notes gathered from all of these works. As most ethnographers plan their fieldwork ahead of time, I, once again, witnessed how important it was to come to Turkey at this time of year, as well as the value of having an extended amount of time where I could dedicate my efforts to following where my field led me.

Zeynep Kuyumcu (she/her) is a PhD candidate in Gender Studies at the Department of Cultural Sciences, University of Gothenburg. Her doctoral work explores the intersections of religious authoritarianism and anti-genderism, focusing specifically on the sexual and spiritual experiences of LGBTIQ+ Muslims in Turkey. In addition to her PhD, she is a member of the Swedish national research school *The Future of Democracy (FUDEM)*. Zeynep's academic background includes a BA in Sociology from Istanbul Sehir University and an MA in Cultural Studies from Sabanci University.

Initial insights from my research illustrate that spirituality plays at least two distinct roles in the lives of LGBTIQ+ Muslims in relation to contemporary discourses on anti-genderism and Islam. First, spirituality emerges as a border-making mechanism used to distinguish oneself from the state-led, mainstream understanding of Islam produced by the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet). Secondly, by reclaiming spirituality, LGBTIQ+ Muslims transform a religio-cultural code, that does not include non-normative sexual subjects, into a vital tool for survival. Consequently, spirituality functions as a form of *disidentification*, a strategy that "works on and against"

survival. Consequently, spirituality functions as a form of *disidentification*, a strategy that "works on and against" dominant ideology (Muñoz 1999, 97) to constantly negotiate resistance against a conception of power as a fixed discourse.

I approach spirituality in this research as a form of resistance not only against religious authoritarianism but also against the insufficiency of existing "secular" and "religious" vocabularies in Turkey. These categories, constructed historically and politically, often fail to capture the nuances of my participants' everyday lives. Therefore, the orientation toward spirituality among LGBTIQ+ Muslims should be understood not merely as a search for recognition under existing Islamic terms, but as a struggle to alter the terms themselves so that recognition becomes possible for their intersectional experiences (Butler 2004), at least in the eyes of the LGBTIQ+ movement. More fundamentally, by examining spirituality, we see how tools of faith validate "queer-Muslim experiences" while offering a powerful critique of the polarized meanings of secularism and religion in the Turkish context.

Ethnographic research often unfolds amid unpredictability, yet no preparation can fully anticipate how external events will shape the field. One of the most striking and unpredictable aspects of my fieldwork was the immense generosity of my participants, regardless of their location. Since my project addresses deeply personal experiences and requires a high degree of privacy and trust, I was moved by their willingness to open up. I perceive that this openness was not just a contribution to my research, but a profound act of sharing that highlighted the solidarity within LGBTIQ+ Muslim networks and their allies. As an *at-home* researcher, I had not prepared for such a profound level of openness, yet it remains one of the most rewarding ways in which the field took me by surprise.

As a local, each return to Istanbul after relocating to Sweden feels both familiar and strange. This visit, however, leaned toward the unfamiliar, coinciding with a busy academic term, long-planned fieldwork, and the tense aftermath of anti-government protests. Yet, my fellowship and stay at the SRII facilitated a seamless environment in which to experience and observe the city, my fieldwork, and these shifting dynamics as an early-career researcher. My stay overlapped with the organization of May 1st Labor Day demonstrations and the lingering impact of protests, which underscored the importance of security and safety measures for both my participants and the research process. Living and working in such proximity to these events deepened my understanding of the dynamic relationship between urban space, socio-political life, and the everyday intimacies within these realms.

My stay at the SRII also offered opportunities that I will forever look back on with gratitude. Foremost among these was the chance to meet exceptional researchers, interns, and the institute staff. Our joyful and stimulating conversations reminded me of the vital importance of a supportive, friendly academic environment. Another significant highlight was meeting Sara Ahmed during her visit to Istanbul; she has long inspired me, not only through her writings but also through her humble and bold character. Lastly, I want to thank Olof and Anders for their hospitality and generous encouragement. Thanks to them and the excellent facilities at the SRII, my research fieldwork has had an extraordinary start!

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Two Untimely Modernists and a City Where Time Stood Still

Olof Heilo, SRII director

"We understood, my comrade and I
that the little car had taken us into a new era
And even if we were two grown men
it was as if we had just been born."

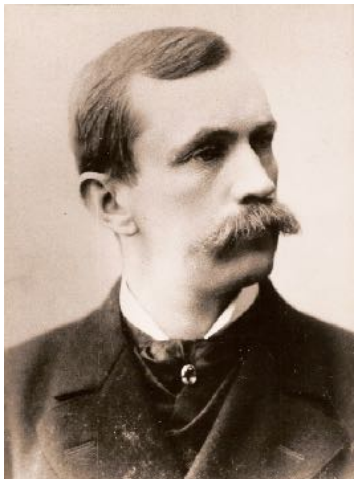
This is how Guillaume Apollinaire (1880–1918) concluded his famous calligram "The little car" ("La petite auto") about the night between July 31 and August 1, 1914, when general mobilization was proclaimed all over Paris. The First World War was the first main crisis of the Modern age – the first of many to follow. Much has been written on how it affected the Western world as we know it and how it was perceived in its major cities.

But the First World War was, in many ways, also a side show in a much larger crisis that had been looming over the Balkans for at least a century and which came to heads over the end of the Ottoman Empire in the years 1908–1923. Although the Young Turks did not join the war on the side of the Central powers until late in 1914, once they did so it was clear that it would be fought about the future of Istanbul itself. Russian artists and intellectuals found themselves closer than ever to the centuries-old dream of conquering "Tsargrad," as they called it, and began to express increasingly extatic hopes to put the cross back on the Hagia Sophia.

The guns fell silent on the Western front in November 1918. On the eastern front, however, the crisis never really came to a rest: the downfall of the old regimes – the Habsburgs, the Romanovs, and the Ottomans – left behind a void where things kept "turning and turning in the widening gyre" to quote another famous poem of and about the time, "The Second Coming" (1919) by William Yeats (1865–1939). Yeats had his Irish homeland in mind, but his description of how "things fall apart; the center cannot hold" would ring as true on the other end of Europe.

Nowhere was the uncertainty about the future so confusing, so overwhelming and full of contrasts as in Istanbul. The Ottoman Empire still existed, and the sultan Mehmed VI (and after him, the caliph Abdülmecid II) resided in the Dolmabahçe Palace; but the city was under British, French and Italian occupation, while Greece was pushing into Anatolia, hoping to conquer Constantinople, and Mustafa Kemal, the later Atatürk, was pushing back from his new capital of Ankara, hoping to replace both the Greeks and the sultan with his new Turkish republic. Russia had withdrawn from the war after the Bolshevik revolution and turned to civil war, as a result of which hundreds of thousands of Tsarist loyalists arrived as refugees in the city they had hoped to conquer just a few years before.

In these years, as impoverished Russian aristocrats offered dancing lessons to women from the new Turkish elites, local Greeks dreamt of joining the fight for a restored Byzantine Empire and British politicians worried about what to do with the Caliphate, Istanbul lay open to jazz, spiritism, gymnastics, and the first attempt to create a Swedish research institute. The Danish anthroposophist Carl Vett (1871–1956) studied life in the Sufi monasteries before they were closed and dug for the remains of the ancient Palladium under the Column of Constantine; the young Swedish film star Greta Garbo (1905–1990) came to shoot a silent movie by Mauritz Stiller (1883–1928) about a Russian aristocratic lady who ends up in an Ottoman harem, but had to give it up after the German producer went bankrupt. Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar (1901–1962) later raised a monument to a place simultaneously in and out of time in *The Time Regulation Institute* (*Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*, 1954).



Two literary visitors to Istanbul in these years have recently been the object of particular attention at the SRII. At first sight, they have little in common. Ola Hansson (1860–1925) was born in the southernmost part of the southernmost landscape of Sweden, Scania, in a very small village with the somewhat ludicrous name Hönsinge. Like his relative from the same deeply agrarian region, the later philosopher Hans Larsson (1862–1944), he received his schooling and higher education in Lund. As a young man he made himself a name in the literary circles that spanned across south Sweden and Denmark, but caused a scandal with a collection of short stories called *Sensitiva amorosa* (1887). Two years later, he left Sweden together with his wife, the Baltic German author Laura Mohr (1854–1928), with whom he would spend most of his remaining life on the move all over Europe.

Hansson was an early Scandinavian exponent both for the decadence and symbolism that had become fashionable with Joris Karl Huysmans (1848–1907) and for the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900). A generally favorable reception of his and his wife's works in Germany in the 1890s and early 1900s was complicated by their increasingly paranoid and irrational behavior, which forced them to move to France in 1905 and from there to Switzerland in 1916. In 1924, Hansson found himself in Büyükdere, the elegant little resort north of Istanbul on the Bosphorus. He died there on September 26, 1925, just as his works were receiving renewed attention back in Sweden. His remains were brought to Lund and laid to rest on the northern cemetery there in 1926.

Before the 100th anniversary of Hansson's passing, I had been in touch with two friends and colleagues from Lund and Copenhagen, Catharina Raudvere and Björn Magnusson Staaf. We had decided that Hansson deserved to be commemorated in Istanbul, if possible in a somewhat more permanent way. As visitors to the institute will know, there is already a monument in our garden to Gunnar Ekelöf (1907–1968), a later Swedish modernist poet whose ashes were scattered in Turkey; his bronze relief was made by Turkish admirers in Istanbul, as our readers can learn more about from the last spring issue of *Kalabalık!* (No. 17). There is a link between Hansson and Ekelöf that goes through yet another poet, Hjalmar Gullberg (1898–1961), who visited Istanbul a few years after Hansson's passing. Gullberg had been a pallbearer at Hansson's funeral in Lund, and Ekelöf later wrote a poem about Gullberg in Istanbul, in which he likens the Bosphorus to Øresund, the strait that separates southern Sweden from Denmark.

By the end, we decided to get a stone from Hansson's birthplace and bring it to Istanbul. Catharina and I drove to Hönsinge and picked up – with kind permission of the current owners – a small boulder from the courtyard of the former estate. On September 26, 2025, it was placed in the flowerbed outside the auditorium, under a newly planted apricot tree. I hope it will balance the Ekelöf relief without vying for attention.

The Hönsinge stone, the apricot tree, and the wall with the Ekelöf relief.

Earlier the same day, Catharina, Björn, and I, together with Helena Bodin and Anna Bohlin (who were in Istanbul for two other events on Swedish literature, as mentioned earlier in this issue) took a boat to Büyükdere where we were met by the local historian Cenker Sarıkaya. We do not know exactly where in Büyükdere Hansson lived and died; in his last writings, he makes reference to a "Hotel de Paris," near the summer house of the Spanish legation. Apparently it protruded a bit into the Bosphorus; we assume it has fallen victim to the autostrada that now runs along the quai. We did find a convenient spot, however, by one of the remaining railings overlooking a piece of the shore where the waves of the Bosphorus are lapping against a wooden *yalı*. We read three of Hansson's poems aloud, including one written in Büyükdere – quoted below in the Turkish translation of Berkan Başören and the English translation of Karen Swartz, originally made for the *Sweden & Istanbul* book – and threw a wreath from Lund in the water. It stayed afloat, and as we walked away it was slowly carried into open waters.

I ramen av glasdörren till
balkongen står därute
landskapsbilden i färger och linjer
av en klar och kall kvällsskymning:
en vik av Bosporen, ljus och blank;
strandåsen som ett tjockt svart
streck; och däruppe en
ungträdsallé med tunt penslade
stammar och kvistnätet som en lätt
rök mot den ljusa blanka himlen.

Jag fylles plötsligt och helt av ett
minnes ymniga smärta,
beklämmande och lösande tillika.

Minne? Kan man kalla känslan
utan bilden ett minne?

(Ur Ola Hansson, *Valda dikter*.
Tidens förlag, Stockholm 1943)

Balkona açılan cam kapının
çerçevesinde, soğuk ve duru bir
akşam alacakaranlığının renklerini
ve çizgilerini taşıyan bir manzara
duruyor: Boğaz'ın ışıl ışıl parlayan
bir koyu; kalın siyah bir çizgi
halinde kıyı yamacı; ve yukarıda
ince fırça darbeleriyle çizilmiş
gövdeleri ve parlak gökyüzünde
hafif bir duman gibi görünen
salkım saçak dallarıyla, körpe
ağaçlarla çevrili bir sokak.

Birdenbire, bunaltıcı, fakat bir
yandan da ferahlatıcı bir anının
muazzam acısıyla doluyorum.

Anı mı? Görüntüsü olmayan bir
hise anı denebilir mi?

Çeviri: Berkan Başören

In the frame of the glass door to
the balcony, the landscape stands
outside, painted in the hues and
contours of a clear and cold
evening twilight: a bay of the
Bosphorus, bright and smooth; the
ridge of the shore like a thick black
line; and above, an alley lined with
young trees with trunks as if
painted with thin brushstrokes and
a lattice of twigs like a light haze of
smoke against the bright, clear sky.

I am suddenly and completely
filled with the abundant pain of a
memory that is both oppressive
and liberating.

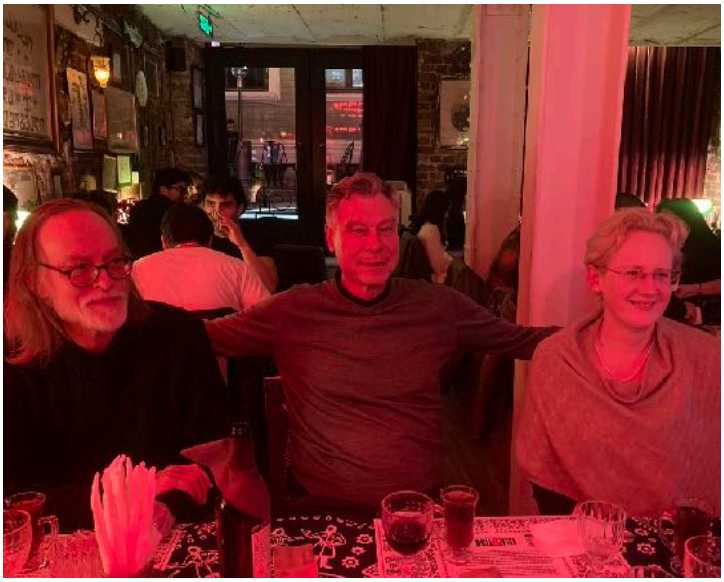
Memory? Can one call the
sensation without the image a
memory?

Translation: Karen Swartz

Half a century after Ola Hansson, on December 25, 1975, a very different author passed away in Paris, where he had spent most of his life since he left his native Georgia in 1920. Ilia Zdanevich was born in Tbilisi in 1894, in what was then a province in the vast Russian Empire. Although he identified as Georgian throughout his life, his main language of writing and expressing himself was Russian, and he is considered one of the pioneers of Russian Futurism. Under the first and short-lived Georgian republic (1918–21), he set up a publishing house in Tbilisi which experimented with printing in the so-called Zaoum style, reminiscent of Guillaume Apollinaire's calligrams or the dadaist sound poems of Tristan Tzara (1896–1963) and Hugo Ball (1886–1927). His typographic skills brought him fame in the artistic circles of 1920s Paris, where he established himself under the nom de plum Iliazd (a contraction of his first and last names).

Like hundreds of thousands of refugees from Tsarist Russia at the time, Zdanevich alias Iliazd left his homeland via Istanbul, where he spent almost a year in 1921 waiting for the approval of his visa to France. He complained of a lost year, a time when nothing really happened; but as later research has shown, this was not really the case. On the contrary, his stay in the polynymous city became the basis for an extraordinary work of autofiction, *PhiloSophia*, which is now under translation by one of the foremost scholars of Iliazd's life and work, Thomas J. Kitson. As the title indicates, the Hagia Sophia plays a central role in the book, and Zdanevich did indeed show a special interest in the building. Avoiding Pera/Beyoğlu and the other international parts of the city where most of the Russian emigrés were dwelling, he went to the Hagia Sophia, in the mainly Muslim quarters of the old city, and asked one of the shop owners right next to the south-eastern minaret if he had a spare room to rent out. Zdanevich would live there for several months – working and sleeping as physically close to the Justinianic edifice as it was possible – and the upstairs vaulted chamber became an important setting in *PhiloSophia.*

Zdanevich alias Iliazd had already been a focal point in the conference *Tsargrad: Constantinople and the Black Sea in Russian Imperial Imagination,* which took place at the SRII in October 2024. When two of the participants in that conference, Igor Torbakov and Julie Hansen, both from Uppsala, told me that Thomas Kitson would be in Paris this spring, we made the decision to assemble at the Institute for an informal follow-up symposium and invite him as a speaker. On the same occasion, Pınar Üre spoke about a guide for Russian visitors to Istanbul that was written by the legendary Byzantinist Nikodim Kondakov (1844–1925) in 1915, showing how it fitted into a wider context of Russian publications about the Byzantine heritage of Istanbul just as the Ottoman entry into the First World War seemed to make the Tsarist dream of conquering Constantinople and "putting the Cross back on the Hagia Sophia" tantalizingly real. Zdanevich did not support any such ambitions, but it is against the backdrop of an imperial Russian war rhetoric which had stated "Tsargrad" as its ultimate goal that his own fascination with the Hagia Sophia – arriving as a refugee from the collapsing Tsarist project – takes on such a unique intimacy.



Thomas J. Kitson, Igor Torbakov, Julie Hansen at the Georgian restaurant "Galaktion."

Iliazd's chamber actually still exists. During an earlier visit to Istanbul, Igor had followed the description provided by the author and identified the former "shop of Hadji Baba" as the current Café Minared. On the last day of the symposium, we went there and climbed the stairs to sit down under the high brick vaults, drinking hot sahlep while Igor read one of the *PhilosSophia* chapters in Russian and Thomas read it in his own English translation, from which he has kindly allowed us to include an excerpt below. The book ends in the most provocatively modern way imaginable, a Russian echo of the Italian futurism: the Red Army takes Istanbul, thus fulfilling the Russian dream of conquering Constantinople, but because they are now Communists, they decide to blow up the Hagia Sophia with dynamite and rename the city Leningrad. When *PhiloSophia* was written in 1930, the name Leningrad had just been bestowed on the former imperial capital of Petrograd alias St. Petersburg, whereas Constantinople was now formally named Istanbul. A year later, the Communists dynamited imperial Russia's own answer to the Hagia Sophia, the cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow, reducing the largest Orthodox Church in the world to ash and rubbles. It was a new era indeed.

"Let's go upstairs to my room, I need to pack."

Iliazd let Applekin go first, never taking his eyes off him. There was so much ineffable charm in this incredible being, Iliazd found it bitter when he thought his new friend wasn't entirely to his taste. But what could he do? He had to accept fate as it came. [...]

Applekin took to looking at the books lying on the floor.

"Who wrote this one?"

"I did."

"You're a poet, too?" [...]

"And this one—this is Tyutchev."

Applekin's face first beamed, then blazed. He jumped up, trembling all over, stretching his hands out, spluttering in joy and wonder.

"Tyutchev, Tyutchev, father of us all, give it to me, give it here! And you'll try and tell me after this that you're living here by accident, you don't share my views? But what do we have here? Isn't this glaring proof? Maybe *this* is an accident, too, such a well-thumbed, well-read, overread book?" [...] and he lofted the book towards the ceiling, where it struck and scattered his balloons, hit the rafters, and came back down in clouds of soot and spiderweb.

Excerpt from Iliazd, *PhiloSophia*, Chapter 8,
in the translation by Thomas J. Kitson

Letter from the Swedish Town in Anatolia

Jörgen Löwenfeldt, The Nordic Museum, Stockholm

Did you know that there is a town in Anatolia where 70 per cent of the population left for Sweden in the 1960s and 1970s? You may already be familiar with the story of Kulu, but we believe it deserves to be brought forward again and examined in depth. Not least because the first bus of labour migrants marked the beginning of a new era in Swedish migration history.

They constituted the first larger group of non-European immigrants in a country that at the time lacked an immigration policy, yet simultaneously demanded labour, which even led to an employment office being opened in Ankara.

In mid-March, three researchers from Södertörns Högskola, Simon Sorgenfrei, Martin Englund and Douglas Mattsson, together with Olof Heilo, Director of the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, and myself, Jörgen Löwenfeldt, Project Lead, Digital Collecting Projects at Nordiska museet, travelled to Kulu to explore the possibilities for a joint research and documentation project.

None of us had previously visited the town, so it was with some surprise that we were met by familiar markers almost immediately. At the airport in Ankara, we encountered Swedish-speaking travellers with roots in Kulu, and once we arrived, it became clear that Swedish functioned almost as a second everyday language. At the hotel reception, the clocks showed the time in the following order: Kulu, Mecca, Stockholm, London. In restaurants, "welcome" appeared in three languages, Swedish among them, alongside Turkish and English.

We met people who had worked in Akalla, Botkyrka, Flemingsberg Solna, Stockholm and Uppsala, some on holiday, others who had moved back, and still others who had picked up Swedish phrases during visits to relatives. Conversations often revolved around how the relationship to place had shifted over generations, both here and there.

Our visit was marked by overwhelming hospitality, not least thanks to our guides, the Swedish Turks Ahmet Gül and Şemsettin Tütüncü. We were received by the mayor, Abdurrahim Sertdemir, were shown photographs from the town's migration history, and were passed from people to villages to contexts at a pace that meant the work of identifying potential interviewees largely took care of itself. At a funeral in a village south of Kulu, it turned out that half of the attendees had come from Sweden. On the main street, it was often enough for us to speak Swedish for someone to stop and ask what we were doing there.

Perhaps the strongest impression was precisely this: that migration has not only affected Sweden, but has also, to a great extent, shaped Kulu. Empty villas owned by those who have moved away now define large areas. In July, we were told, many return, and the town transforms, somewhat like a Swedish summer town. Migration and return across generations have thus created a piece of the Nordic history that is also deeply rooted in Turkey.

The project is now entering its next phase, with a planned witness seminar with Swedish Turks from different generations at Södertörs Högskola, and applications for external funding to carry out the research and collection project on a larger scale. At the same time, we are already planning our next journey.

The Swedish delegation was kindly received by the city mayor of Kulu, Abdurrahim Sertdemir.

The Oasis on *Istiklal*

Patrick Hällzon, Uppsala University

Many people visiting the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul will remark that the consulate garden is like an oasis. This is not merely an exaggeration referring to the sharp contrast of commerce, bustle and noise that one finds on Istiklal Caddesi and its adjoining side streets. The Swedish consulate garden and its buildings are isolated from the city while simultaneously forming an integral part of the megapolis' cityscape and its history. In a way the compound can be looked upon as a sort of ecosystem within the city.

Many of my memories from staying at the institute concern the garden. Unlike human visitors, the sparrows, seagulls, pigeons, cats and insects are not required to identify themselves when entering the consulate compound. They come and go as they wish. This is especially true of the cats. Anyone visiting the research institute cannot have missed the signs put up in the annex telling visitors not to feed them – in the past, guests who made it a habit to do so, quickly attracted so many neighborhood cats that the entire area in front of the annex caused distress to people suffering from cat allergy. Regarding other mammals such as rats and mice that one finds in most cities, I haven't observed them here. Perhaps they keep away due to the garden's felines.

Besides cats and birds, some species have their permanent living quarters in the consulate compound's ecosystem. For instance, a clear sign of that spring has arrived to Istanbul is the first annual sighting of the turtles of the species *Testudo Graeca* living in the garden. In winter they hibernate somewhere in the garden – it not exactly clear where. The first times I visited the research institute in the early 2010s there was only one turtle around. It would walk aimlessly around the consulate compound and behaved rather aggressively. Sometimes it would even approach people and try to bite their shoes. I was told that the reason for this was its loneliness; apparently, there had existed more turtles in the garden in the past. Unfortunately, an attempt to provide it with companions did not make it less aggressive, but instead there are now three turtles in the garden which tend to bite people's shoes. One reason for this could be that they are all males.

Besides the cooing of the pigeons and the seagulls' constant wailing, the garden has other visitors as well. Some of these are not native to Turkey's fauna. I am here referring to the Rose-ringed parakeet, a green parrot originally from South Asia, which is considered invasive in Turkey.[1] In autumn it feeds

on the ripe fruits of the pomegranate tree located right across the front entrance of the annex.

With regard to flora, the garden has palm trees, linden, old European nettle trees, a large magnolia tree, a walnut tree, an oleander, European horse-chestnut, and a wide selection of fruit trees such as loquat, quince, the aforementioned pomegranate and more. The garden also hosts a number of bushes and flowers which attract insects of many sorts. In spring and summer, the garden buzzes with flies, bees, wasps, beetles, butterflies and other species. Obviously, the garden is home to many critters. A few years ago, I was surprised to find a black scorpion on the stones of the courtyard in front of the annex. It was quite immobile, and most probably, it had been brought there by a cat, who had played a bit with it. However, mammals do not only include cats. During early evenings in summer, it is common to see bats in the sky fluttering their wings. According to recent estimates there currently exists 39 bat species in Turkey.[2] Some of these occur in urban areas. Probably the bats observed in the garden have their homes in crevices, roofs and attics in the many buildings found in and outside the compound. Circling and sick-sacking back and forth, up and down, the insectivores fly through the air in search for food.

While summer is full of colorful flora, critters and other animals, autumn also has its share of wildlife. With the arrival of the rainy season, the walking paths often become full of snails. Therefore, in order to not hurt the shells of the small creatures, one should look out where one treads. Previously, a reoccurring sign of autumn was also the caterpillar-like worms seen everywhere. Frequently they would even try to enter the annex. As suddenly as they appeared they would disappear with the coming of winter and would not return until a year later. Most probably, the garden is home to more species than mentioned here. If you as a reader recall any other sightings from previous stays at the institute, it would be interesting to let me know![3]

[1] For more information see, https://yetkinreport.com/en/2022/06/17/are-turkeys-parrots-invasive/ (last accessed 2025-03-31).

[2] Yorulmaz, Tarkan & Nurhan Arslan. 2020. "Current Status of the Bats in Turkey with their Ecogeographic Distributions and Recommendations for National Conservation Status (Mammalia: Chiroptera)", in *Fresenius Environmental Bulletin*, Volume 29 – No. 08/2020, pages 6691–6706.

[3] I want to thank Ingvar Svanberg (Uppsala) and Nicklas Jansson (Linköping) for constructive feedback regarding the flora and fauna mentioned in this text. Both of these researchers have published in SRII's publications. For those interested in reading more about the flora and fauna of Anatolia, I recommend the following essays: Ingvar Svanberg. 2020. "Sällskapsdjur i Anatolien", in *Dragomanen* 22/2020. 83–94; Nicklas Jansson, "The unknown Turkish oak landscapes – a threatened biological culture heritage," *Kalabalık!* 9, Winter/Spring 2021, 3–18.

A few quick questions …

… to our new consul general, Karin Hernmarck:

Where have you served before you came to Istanbul?

I have spent quite a lot of time in the Western Balkans, but also some time in Africa. My latest foreign posting was as ambassador of Sweden to Pristina, Kosovo.

So far, what have you come to appreciate here most?

The rich history and culture of Istanbul are fascinating. The privilege to be at the beautiful Swedish Palace every day. The generosity and professionalism of the Turkish people I engage with.

You are not the first one in your family to work with Swedish-Turkish relations! Would you like to say a few words about your ancestry and its relations to Istanbul?

I must confess I am a bit hazy on the details of exactly how, but I do have family ties to the first Swedish envoy to Constantinople Claes Rålamb in 1657. So I was delighted to see the paintings commissioned by him from that visit as a prominent feature in the recently launched book Sweden & Istanbul.

Somehow related to that: how useful is history, in your experience, for building relations?

History is important, it shapes the understanding of viewpoints and positions, and the culture in the particular country you work in. Sometimes history is used in an unconstructive way as well and can be weaponized in conflicts or crises between or within countries. As a diplomat you still need to know it in order to navigate in that landscape.

Do you see more synergies between what we are doing at the institute and what you are doing at the consulate?

Of course. We are trying to build new and expand existing connections between Sweden and Türkiye in the broadest sense. The work of the institute is an important part of that.

Are you reading a particular book (or several) at the moment?

I recently received a biography of the Swedish power-house couple from the turn of the last century Elsa and Nataniel Beskow, that has received great reviews. I look forward to reading that soon

We also understand that you like knitting! Do you think the world would be a better place if more people did the same?

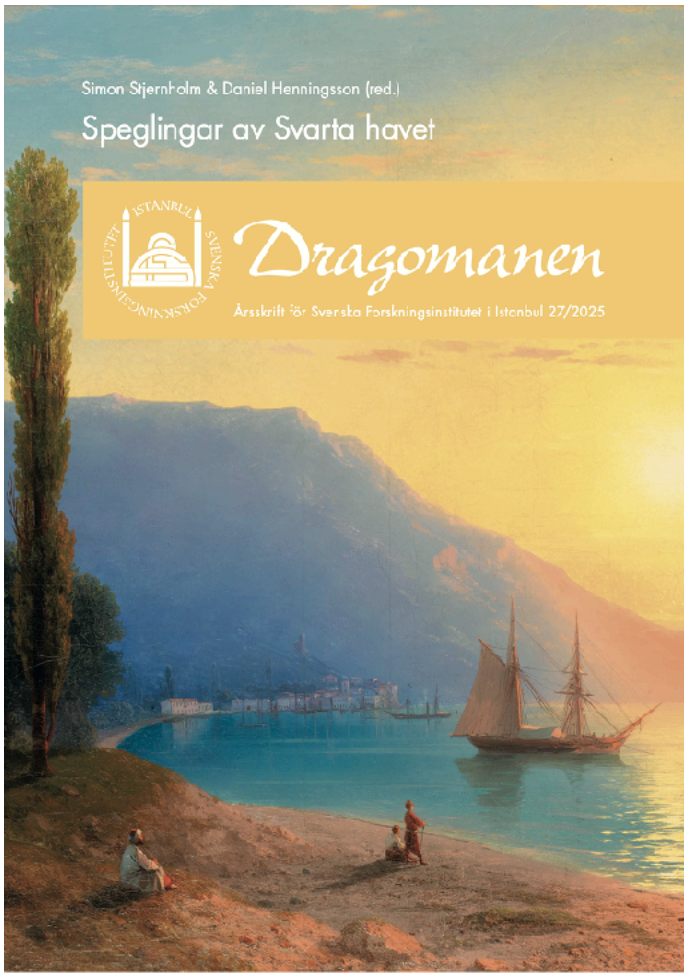
Yes! But it doesn't have to be knitting. I believe we as humans benefit from creating concrete things with our hands, be it painting, pottery, crocheting or cooking. For me that has turned out to be knitting, and I find both pleasure and calm in the intentionality of it.

From a historical point of view, fiber arts have often been overlooked despite the importance of textiles for human life as we know it. No Viking ships would have sailed anywhere if they hadn't figured out a way to grow, harvest, prepare and weave the linen for the actual sails.

(Interview: Olof Heilo)

Speglingar av Svarta havet

Simon Stjernholm & Daniel Henningsson (red.)



Svarta havet, en fristående och ofta bortglömd del av Medelhavet, har alltid spelat en viktig roll som förmedlare mellan norr och söder, öst och väst. Vid Svarta Havet föddes den grekiska dikotomin mellan barbari och civilisation. De folkvandringar som skapade våra föreställningar om Europa och Asien tog form kring dess kuster. Det genererade myter om det gyllene skinnet och syndafloden. Det tjänade som förvisningsort för Ovidius och inspirerade poeter och författare till storslagen litteratur. Romare, bysantinare, osmaner och ryssar kämpade om att dominera det; än idag är det en aktuell krigszon. Städer som Odessa, Trapezunt, Constanta och Batumi, Samsun och Sebastopol spelar allihop en central roll i de historiska och kulturella skedena runt Svarta Havet.

Årets nummer av *Dragomanen* har tillkommit i ett samarbete mellan vänföreningarna för de tre Medelhavsinstituten i Athen, Istanbul och Rom. Bidragen presenterades till stor del vid en temadag på Armémuseum i Stockholm i mars 2025, i samband med utställningen *Korsvägar: Sverige–Ukraina genom 1000 år*.

Stöd Istanbulinstitutet och få *Dragomanen* gratis genom att gå med i vår vänförening: srii.org/pages/vanforening