

Kalabalik!

Bulletin of the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul



Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Diogenes in his Jar* (1860). Walters Art Museum, Wikimedia Commons.

Between the Basket and the Jar

In Aristophanes comedy *The Clouds*, which premiered in 423 BC, the philosopher Socrates is presented as the leader of a school known as the Thinkery, where spoiled brats are being taught to cover their lack of useful skills by speaking learned gibberish. When Socrates first appears on stage, he is sitting high up in a basket, greeting people as “ephemeral beings.” Scholars have speculated whether the satirical depiction played a role in the philosophers’ conviction some twenty years later. Unfortunately, the *Dialogues* of his pupil Plato do not exactly dispel the impression of Socrates as a smug chatterbox living in an intellectual echo chamber: “Of course, Socrates” – “Certainly, Socrates” – “You are absolutely right, Socrates” – “Yes,

Socrates, that is indeed how it is” is sometimes all they put in the words of his opponents. The way Plato writes his *Apology* makes one wonder if the philosopher deliberately tried to provoke the judges to his sentence of death for blasphemy.^[1]

Communicating knowledge has never been easy; it comes with a claim to authority. The French anthropologist Bruno Latour, who died last year, took a special interest in the way scientific truths are conveyed from the laboratory to the social space. For a long time, it seemed that this was mainly a problem for the humanities and social sciences to consider, who are themselves dependent on the whims of a human material. Who could question the hard, empiric findings of physicists, chemists, and biologists? And yet recent years have seen exactly that happening when it comes to everything from vaccines to carbon emissions, from evolution to the roundness of the earth. As our former scholarship holder Nalan Azak pointed out in an earlier issue of this bulletin ([10/11:2021](#)), even medical workers cannot perform their job if patients do not trust them. Knowledge is more than information; it is part of a delicate – and today increasingly digital – web of human relations.

Formally established in the same year as the Cuban crisis threatened to unleash a nuclear Armageddon, the SRII has worked within the premises of the Swedish Consulate General in Istanbul throughout military coups and economic crises, international and domestic tensions and unrest, and a global pandemic. It acts as a “Thinkery” in its own right, but also as a place of meeting and building relations. Decades of Nordic scholars have come to use our guest facilities and library as a basis for exploring archives and monuments or interacting with colleagues and locals in Istanbul and Turkey; generations of students have been introduced to Eastern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern history, culture, politics and religion through field schools and courses led by scholars who have been motivated by the enjoyment of conveying knowledge about and inducing love for a part of the world that is historically connected to Sweden even if it is geographically remote.

The institute is a non-profit association. Staff, board members, colleagues and partners at home and abroad invest years, sometimes careers or entire lifetimes of ardent and painstaking work to search for funding, build infrastructures, establish networks and plan enterprises that ultimately serve to connect Sweden with Turkey and its neighbors. As the years have gone by and the world has entered a digital age, communicating these activities has been stressed as a major priority for the staff of the institute. One result of the efforts to do so is this bulletin, where we are presenting recent and ongoing research and other activities at the institute. But the institute administration is involved in many more projects, collaborations and efforts with the aim of increasing the visibility of the institute and its researchers, as can be seen in the following:

[1] Swedish readers can learn more about this in the last issue of our yearbook *Dragomanen* ([24:2022](#)).

The hundreds of scholarly articles from almost five decades of our scientific series *Transactions*, the yearbook *Dragomanen* and its predecessor *Meddelanden*, all of which are now, thanks to our deputy director, fully digitalized and accessible for free on our homepage, srii.org.



The guidebook *In Search of Constantinople in Istanbul* by Sergey Ivanov, which appeared last spring and has already sold out in Turkey, but remains available internationally through our distributor eddy.se

The digital exhibition *Nordic Tales, Byzantine Paths*, which was developed in collaboration with Koç University and the Per Demervall Art Studio, and where a collection of scholarly essays on Vikings in the East are presented in a playful way: nordictalesbyzantinepaths.ku.edu.tr

Also, this spring Per Demervall and Patric Nyström have just published the fourth album in the Siri series, called *Kalabalik i Konstantinopel*!



A series of archaeological talks with – among others – the French institute of Anatolian studies in Istanbul, Bilkent University in Ankara, and the Louvre Museum in Paris, called *Black Sea Crossings*. Following an initial panel in March this year, a two-day workshop is planned for the end of November.

A seminar on contemporary challenges of migration at the IstanPol centre in Kadiköy in April, where we managed to assemble not only a number of our own researchers and scholarship holders but also could invite interested scholars from elsewhere in Istanbul.



A public event at Södertörn University in April, devoted to five centuries of Swedish-Turkish relations, featuring panel discussions on past and present as well as a presentation of the latest book on Turkey by renowned journalist and frequent guest at the SRII, Bitte Hammargren.



A presentation of the institute and Swedish consulate general with an ensuing city walk, led by the deputy director and the research officer, for a group of Norwegian students in Istanbul at the beginning of May.



The participation in two episodes of *Människor och Tro* on Swedish radio in May, where the director commented the upcoming Turkish elections and the research officer interpreted at a visit of the new Syrian church in Istanbul.

A public event at the Özgen Berkol Doğan Library of Science Fiction Literature in Moda, Istanbul, where one Turkish, one Czech and one Norwegian scholar came together to discuss depictions of the Orient and Byzantium in computer games. It can be watched on [YouTube](#).



Two podcasts within the series *Vad Vi Vet: Perspektiv* with Per Granqvist. In the first one, the institute's director is taking the listeners on a walk through Istanbul; the second one features a discussion about the Mediterranean.



Another podcast with the Viking Museum in Stockholm, yet to be published, in which the institute director and the institute's former writer in residence Agneta Westerdahl talk about Vikings in the Byzantine world.

Also, the fourth book in Agneta Westerdahl's Viking series, *Miklagård*, came out this spring. It is dedicated to the SRII!

The participation of several SRII scholars both at *Forskartorget* and in the showcase of eddy.se at the book fair in Gothenburg at the end of September, where we will also present the newest addition to the Transactions series (see below).



A collaboration with the journal *Ord & Bild*, whose editors visited the institute last year and participated in a seminar with some of our scholars in Gothenburg in May, and who are just now about to publish a special issue of the journal, entirely devoted to Istanbul.

Ord & Bild



An exhibition at the Tütün Deposu in Tophane, Istanbul, as part of the ongoing project in Uppsala, retracingconnections.org. The opening of the exhibition will be accompanied by a series of physical and online talks that can be found listed at the end of this issue.

Many more endeavors that our researchers are involved in, including the new EU project on migration, GAPs, will be presented on the next few pages. You will further be able to read about the thorough invention of the institute library that took place in June, reported by Katharina de Burger who took part in the preliminary work last year. Thanks to Catta Torhell, who oversaw this year's work, we have been able to sign a mutual agreement with Lund University Library which ensures that new books in our collections will be catalogued in a professional way.

The autumn offers two special causes of celebration: the 25th volume of our series *Transactions* appears at the beginning of September, and the 25th volume of our other series *Dragomanen* appears at the end of November. The former is a monograph by Frederick Whitling entitled *Palais de Suède: from Ottoman Constantinople to Modern Istanbul*, the first scholarly study to explore the entire history of the Swedish presence in Istanbul and Turkey from the 18th century until 2023. The latter is a special issue devoted to the 100th anniversary of the Turkish Republic, edited by Simon Stjernholm and Elisabeth Özdalga.

The year 2023 ought to have offered many more opportunities to celebrate, Sweden counting 500 years since Gustav Vasa became king, and Turkey commemorating 100 years since Atatürk proclaimed the Republic. Instead, we have seen a horrendous earthquake laying Antakya and its environs in dust and ash, and once again a summer of uncontrollable heat waves devastating large areas of Turkey and the Mediterranean. Sweden, on the other hand, has suffered a rapid loss of international goodwill and standing following a series of provocative actions that began in front of the Turkish embassy in Stockholm in January. These actions have severely obstructed work at the institute: no public lectures have taken place in the auditorium this year, and the habit is unlikely to be resumed in the near future. Several requests to use our auditorium and meeting rooms during the spring have had to be turned down, and an international conference financed by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, which should have taken place at the institute in June, had to be relocated to our sister institute in Athens.

The guest house has sometimes been full, but for other and unusual reasons: the Swedish Palace has received a new copper roof this spring, laid with great care and skill by a team from Sweden which we have been happy to both host in the annex. This badly needed repair also marked the end of Peter Ericson's four-year tenure as Consul General in Istanbul. Peter has showed great care for the historical heritage on the Consulate compound, and we are sorry that his time in Istanbul did not end on a happier note, and that his successor Johanna Strömquist will have to begin hers under such challenging circumstances.

Building is difficult, destroying is easy: this is a wisdom that comes with the toddler's first set of toy building blocks. Some people grow with the realization and devote their lives to keep building even if – or because – it keeps challenging them. Others stay at the age of three, spending their lives destroying what others have built or having their toys banned. Readers familiar with psychology may recall how transactional analysis identifies three roles in the social game: there are the adults, who want to follow the rules; there are the parents, who want to write the rules, and there are the children, who want to break the rules. The two latter are alluringly easy to play: they provide a rush of power whether they attempt to deny or establish authority, and they are free of all the stress and anxiety that comes with the uncertainty and ambiguity of adult life. When such a social game begins to receive wider dissipation, the allure becomes dangerous: a public discourse entirely preoccupied with childish provocation and parental supervision indicates that the society where it takes place is losing its adult core. The dialogue may be played for comedy; the storyline already runs in the direction of a tragedy.

The most dangerous allure for the adult bystander is called cynicism. Those of our readers who know their classics will recall that the ancient Cynics were the followers of a certain Diogenes from Sinope, today's Sinop in Turkey. He arrived in Athens some time after the death of Socrates and took up his residence in a discarded wine jar on the Agora, where he literally lived like a dog (Gr. *kynos*), showing little or no concern for the sensitivities of the people around him. Diogenes is said to have praised freedom of speech as the greatest good, but showed mere contempt for art, science, and philosophy of the kind that Plato had started to teach in his newly founded *Academy*. If Socrates had failed to communicate his thoughts from the basket, Diogenes does not seem to have even cared whether people understood him in his jar. Despite – or perhaps because of – this, he seems to have become a quite respected and popular figure in Athens ...

The problem with cynicism is that it is contentious. Values are neither intrinsic, as Plato would perhaps have it, nor illusory, as Diogenes would seem to imply: they are relational. By the end of the day, even when it seems the most challenging and unrewarding, building trust and relations is the only way of ensuring the permanence of knowledge and values, and the only thing that prevents brute force from getting the last word.

Vienna and Istanbul, August 2023

Olof Heilo, SRII director

New Horizon Project at the SRII: GAPS – Decentering the Study of Migrant Returns and Readmission Policies in Europe and Beyond

Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul (SRII) takes part in a new research project funded by the European Union (EU) under the Horizon Programme, called “GAPS: Decentering the Study of Migrant Returns and Readmission Policies in Europe and Beyond”. With this second project in the field of migration after the RESPOND Project, SRII and the research team will continue to intensify their contributions to this field. The Project officially started on 1 March 2023 and will be ended as of 28 February 2026.

GAPS is a comprehensive, transnational and interdisciplinary research project focusing on the drivers of return policies, international cooperation on returns and the experiences of migrants in the process. GAPS is not an acronym but refers to a disconnect between what global return migration policies are expected to do and what they do in practice. Migration return is vital to how national and EU asylum programs are managed. However, there is little alignment on the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of return. Critically, the experience of migrants is also hardly considered when policymakers make decisions on return migration. The GAPS project wants to change this through comprehensive, transnational and interdisciplinary research focusing on the drivers of return policies, international cooperation on returns and the experiences of migrants in the process. The Project examines the disconnects between expectations of return policies and their actual outcomes by decentering the dominant, one-sided understanding of “return policymaking”.

GAPS Aims

- To examine drivers of return governance by focusing on existing policy, legal, and operational infrastructures and the gaps between policies and practices to advance return governance indicators.
- To analyse enablers and barriers of international cooperation by assessing various cooperation attempts of the EU and its MSs targeting origin and third countries, studying specific dynamics and drivers of South-South returns in connection with EU policies.
- To examine the agency of migrants and the autonomy of migration processes that influence and are influenced by governance and cooperation.
- To co-create and suggest alternative pathways and models for existing return policies, practices, and cooperation with stakeholder expert panels in 12 countries that contribute to the interplay between policy and science

To capture geographical, socio-spatial, and political variations, the GAPs Project identifies three return systems in line with the EU's external migration policies:

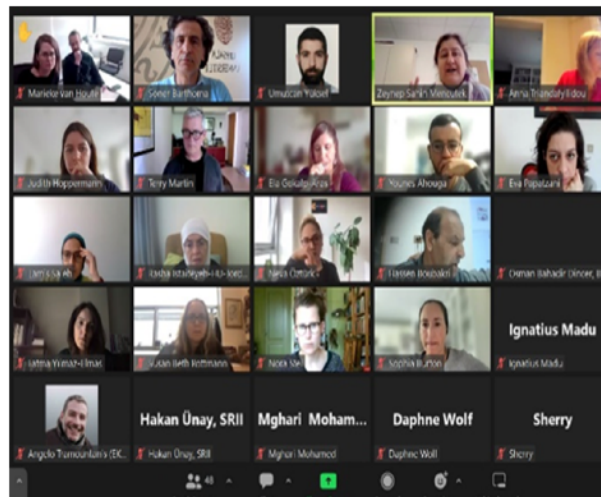
- Central and Western Mediterranean Return route: from EU countries to Africa (Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, Nigeria, and Niger).
- Eastern Mediterranean Return route: from EU countries to the broader Middle East (Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Afghanistan).
- Eastern European Return route: from EU to Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Georgia)

Regarding these routes, the consortium partners were chosen carefully from 13 countries in Europe, Africa and the broader Middle East (including Afghanistan) with 17 partner institutions, where SRII undertakes an important role for Turkey and Özyeğin University. The Project is co-coordinated by Uppsala University (Sweden) and Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies (Germany).

GAPs had its official kick-off meeting on 8-9 March 2023, with a public event on 10 March. The main part of the meeting was the presentation of the work packages that universities, research institutes and private entities will carry out during the 3-year program of the Project. Partners also presented impact activities, ethical challenges and data management. Since the onset of the Project, GAPs partners engaged in various preparatory work, including internal workshops, discussions on return concepts, development concept notes, country-specific implementation plans, guidelines, and sampling approaches for each work package.



In May 2023, GAPs partners came together to discuss return concept(s), consortium partners' inputs and reflections on presentations, suggested readings, and questions related to the country cases. In May 2023, the official website of GAPs was launched and can be accessed at returnmigration.eu.



Beyond country profiles and working papers, we also publish [blog posts](#) on various thematic topics such as the EU's governance of returns, return policies, international cooperation, recent related political development in specific countries, migrant experiences, stories and aspirations. A recent blog post from the SRII team focused on migration and return rhetoric during Türkiye's general and presidential 2023 elections.

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The SRII research team for GAPs are Dr N. Ela Gökalp-Aras (Principal Investigator/PI& Senior Researcher), Dr Neva Övünç Öztürk (Senior Researcher), Umutcan Yüksel (Researcher and the communication Expert of GAPs), and Hakan Ünay (Researcher) and. SRII team will lead Work Package (WP) 2: Legal and Policy Infrastructures of Returns in the EU on the macro level, more specifically on the legal, institutional and policy framework on the return and readmission policies at the EU level and in the selected nine countries. The SRII team will also take an intense role within the WP1 (Concepts & Data on Returns), WP3 (Operational Infrastructures of Returns), WP4 (Governing Returns in the EU's Neighbourhood), WP7 (Return Aspirations and Trajectories of Migrants) together with Özyeğin University, WP10 (Dissemination & Exploitation & Communication) and WP11 (Project Management & Ethical Governance).



As a part of the research, the SRII team will conduct desk research and multi-sited fieldwork with different research methods ranging from discourse analysis to ethnography in the four border cities representing exit and entrance points (Edirne, Izmir, Gaziantep and Van) and Ankara. For WP3- the focus will be Edirne and Izmir for forced removals and push-backs, while the focus will be South-to-South returns; thus, the fieldwork will be conducted in Van and Gaziantep for analysing the assisted returns and forced removals (mainly returns from Turkey to Iran, Afghanistan and Syria) for WP4. SRII team, together with Özyegin University, will also organise three stakeholder expert panels, bringing key actors such as policymakers, officials, academics, NGOs, migrants, and legal experts around the table.

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The project's website:
<http://www.returnmigration.eu> & <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101094341>

[@GapsReturns](#)

Report: Joint fellowship at SRII and Koç University Mustafa V. Koç Maritime Archaeology Research Center (KUDAR)

It's already shaping up to be a hot June day as we stand among the ruins of Boukoleon Sarayı, perched between sea and railway line and currently under restoration. Looking at the ruins of a palace in which notable arrivals to Constantinople would have been greeted, and in which the Varangian Guard was likely present at times,^[1] this is a good place to consider the historical connections which sparked my fellowship in Istanbul, and to think more broadly about the importance of emphasising global historical networks.

I arrived in Istanbul in April ready for a two-month joint fellowship at SRII and Koç University Mustafa V. Koç Maritime Archaeology Research Center (KUDAR), to put the finishing touches to my PhD and work on the *Nordic Tales Byzantine Paths* digital exhibition. This fellowship involved discussions with various people and institutions, considering how the exhibition had already been developed and which aspects might be developed further, making plans for future events which draw on the topic material, and generally conducting research on the points of connection highlighted by the exhibition. Working primarily with Olof, and Ivana Jevtić and Matthew Harpster at Koç University, I've enjoyed the opportunity to think about various means of research communication.

The *Nordic Tales Byzantine Paths* project is, at its heart, an investigation of global connection and interaction. The connections between Byzantium and the Nordic world take many forms – among other things the exhibition showcases people, texts, objects, modes of travel, and religion as evidence for the many forms of interaction and connection. We might characterise this as an example of the Global Middle Ages, especially where the consideration of global interaction is meaningful and multifaceted.^[2] The Global Middle Ages serves as a useful analytical tool, but recent scholarship, for instance by Sierra Lomuto, has pointed to a growing tendency for the term to be used as a buzzword which does not thoroughly engage with a truly global Middle Ages. Boukoleon Sarayı is a good setting for the consideration of Nordic-Byzantine connections, but it is only one piece of the story, and a courtly and militaristic one at that; the advantage of a digital exhibition such as *Nordic Tales Byzantine Paths* is the opportunity to consider multiple forms of connection. That could be the circulation of information about Rūs raids on Byzantium by Arab geographers, the movement of Byzantine coins into the hands of Scandinavians who never set foot in Constantinople, or treaties outlining the terms under which Rūs traders were allowed to enter and operate in Constantinople. Connection means different things to different people at different times.

^[1] Sigfús Blöndal suggests it would require “uncritical benevolence” to take claims of a Varangian runic inscription in the palace seriously, but the appearance of Varangians in the palace at various times can nonetheless be expected.

^[2] The Global Middle Ages serves as a useful analytical tool, but recent scholarship, for instance by Sierra Lomuto, has pointed to a growing tendency for the term to be used as a buzzword which does not thoroughly engage with a truly global Middle Ages.

Turbulent political times make scholarly emphases of former periods of interaction and connectivity appealing. Against commonly-held stereotypes of medieval insularity – my own PhD research, on Islamicate sources on the (Viking) Rūs, has frequently sparked incredulity from non-medievalists that the Vikings made it all the way “to those countries” – it is already important to present a more accurate historical picture, which accurately traces the interplay between nations, cultures, and peoples. This is all the more pertinent against a rising tide of intolerance.^[3]

For my part, I feel that the global story is rich and deserves telling. It was an interest in these connections which sparked my PhD research into Islamicate-Rūs connections, and it is fascinating to see the movement of information through languages, genres, cultures, and traditions. It is similarly exciting to encounter additional forms of connection – in this case, to stand in the ruins of Boukoleon Sarayı and consider those who arrived in Constantinople by ship.

Discussing the *Nordic Tales Byzantine Paths* exhibition with the excellent students at Koç University who have been involved in its development, it was clear that ideas abound as to the exhibition's uses, to its many audiences, and to areas for expansion and further work. This makes clear the importance and appeal of this area of global historical connection, for researchers and the general public alike.

I'm grateful to have had the chance to return to Istanbul so soon. It was great to work with Olof, Ivana, Matthew, and others involved in the exhibition, to submit my PhD thesis in sunny Istanbul, and to continue my manuscript research at Süleymaniye library. Thank you to everyone at SRII and Koç University who made this fellowship possible!

Tonicha Upham is a PhD student in the History department at Aarhus University. She holds an M.A. in Viking and Medieval Norse Studies from the University of Iceland and a B.A. in Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic from the University of Cambridge. Besides her current work on the presentation of gender and race in the Arabic sources for the Viking Age, Tonicha is interested in gender archaeology, networks of trade, and the reuse and reappropriation of objects.



[3] Although a refreshing antidote to ideas of insularity in our own and Medieval times, however, the Global Middle Ages is not automatically a force for good. In my PhD thesis I outline the appeal of Arabic sources on Viking connection to politically-charged projects undertaken in Nazi-occupied Norway, which sought to emphasise Viking expansion and dominance.



The SRII and the Retracing Connections project present
a series of events on translation and traveling narratives

Beyond Babel

"Borderlands: the gendered space of epic and translation"

October 3, 15.00 (London)/ 16.00 (Stockholm)/17.00 (Istanbul) - Online

Markéta Kulhánková, Czech Academy of Sciences / Masaryk University, Brno

Amanda Hannoosh Steinberg, Harvard Library

Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, Istanbul

Moderator: Ingela Nilsson, Uppsala University

"Narrating migration, migrating narratives"

October 19, 18.00 Stockholm / 19.00 (Istanbul) – Postane/hybrid

Shirine Hamadeh, Koç University

Marianne Boqvist, Folke Bernadotte Academy

Pinar Ensari, Koç University

Moderator: Susan Rottmann, Özyeğin University

"Translation: Multiplicities and Multitudes"

November 28, 19.00 (Istanbul) – Kiraathane Istanbul Literature House

Matthew Reynolds, Oxford University

Alev Ersan, Istanbul

Moderator: Milan Vukašinović, Uppsala University

Translating Worlds – Exhibition Opening

November 29, 18.30 (Istanbul) - Depo Istanbul

ft. (i), your story of me -

lecture-performance by

Setareh Fatehi & Shahrzad Irannejad

Transformation of a Library

I was invited to the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul following a recommendation of my program coordinator in my last semester of my bachelor's degree in library and information Science at Linnaeus University. So just after graduation, at the end of the summer, me and a friend from the same graduating class, Nic Olsson, made our way down to Istanbul. We were told before that the library needed organizing, as it had been left untouched for the last few years. What greeted us upon arrival was a mountain of work that we slowly and meticulously tackled.

This first visit of mine was spent gaining a deeper understanding of the library, the institute, and its needs and plans going forward. Time was spent discussing the library collections, sustainable collection development and the necessary steps that needed to be taken in the future for the library to take shape in a way it would fill a function and become an actual library rather than just a collection of random works. For this there needed to exist policy documents defining the library's specialization and focus, putting in place policies for additions to the collections, as well as editing of the collection. These first few weeks of my involvement in the project also revolved around going through as much of the collection as time allowed, making sure the materials were in the catalogue, as well as the removal of works not in line with the library's focus areas.



A large portion of this first trip was also spent learning the ropes of Libris Cataloguing, the Swedish national library cataloguing tool, and finding ways to export the metadata of our collection to find a way to create an overview of the collection that could be used to identify missing works and works not catalogued. This part was much more challenging than anticipated, and Nic spent many hours on trying to get it all to work. In some parts we succeeded, in others not so much, and we returned to the task even after our stay in Istanbul was over in September of 2022. The works in the collection of SRII are at times so rare or specific to Istanbul and the institute, that some are not preexisting in any other Swedish library collection connected to Libris, which meant that at times there was a need to create a primary catalogue post. Now, in July of 2023, I can say that it was brave to attempt. There are a lot of rules and standards in creating primary cataloguing posts, which are updated regularly. The work had to be left incomplete until I had the possibility to learn more during my second stay in Istanbul in June/July of 2023. This second stay allowed me to continue to contribute to the library transformation, as well as further develop my own skills and interests. I got to meet with a catalogue expert from Lund University Library, to learn about the metadata standards applicable to Libris and go back and fix some earlier mistakes. The first two weeks of this stay were also spent together with Catta Torhell, who travelled to Istanbul to consult on the creating of policy documents for the institute library. I was allowed to sit in on meetings where the processes were explained and discussed, and in so was given the chance to meet with organisers of Bibliopera, the library collaboration of which SRII is a part of in Istanbul.



The main accomplishments of this second and, for now, final stay, in Istanbul was the editing of the collection, removing and donating the materials which did not align with the developing focus of the institute and library, a thorough go through of the collection (mostly putting the physical items in order and rearranging the shelves) as well as making it possible for the entire Jarring Collection to move up into its own room, so no more of it was hidden away in the stacks in the cellar.



I am extremely grateful for the chance I have been given to help start up this project of transformation, and to have been allowed to voice my opinions and professional advice in the process of making this all happen. I have met interesting people along the way, learned new skills, and found a far greater love and understanding for information organisation than I ever imagined I would during the beginning stages of my education. Now I leave the library in its current state again in the capable hands of the institute and look forward to seeing how it continues to develop.

Katharina de Burger holds a bachelor's degree in library and information science from Linnaeus University and is currently pursuing a master's degree in ALM (Archival science, Library and information science, and Museology) specialising in Museology at Lund University. Her interests lie in metadata, standardisation, and interoperability; accessibility and universal design; and conscious organisation development

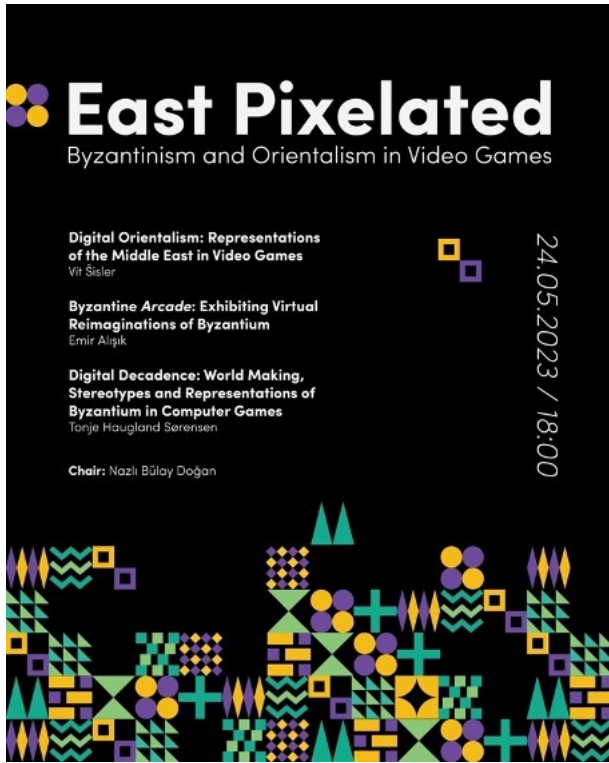


East Pixelated OR On the Virtues of Institutional Collaboration

When Anders Ackfeldt invited me to a panel he was organizing to address issues related to the portrayal of the Orient in video games, I became excited about the possibility of a collaboration between the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul (SRII) and the Istanbul Research Institute (İAE). These two research institutes had previously joined forces for a podcast project and were already part of the library platform known as Bibliopera in Beyoğlu. Anders's aspiration was to assemble an unusual audience for Bibliopera, especially in the context of a post-pandemic live event, considering the topic's ripe potential. İAE had recently established connections with the Özgen Berkol Doğan Science Fiction Library, the city's sole organization dedicated to its field of expertise. Consequently, it seemed only natural to invite them to participate in organizing this event, as the likely attendees of the event would also pique the interest of regulars at the Science Fiction Library. Bülay Doğan and her parents, Nevzat and Ferhan, generously offered to host the event in their charming wooden mansion turned library. The Doğan family informed me that it had once belonged to the family of late Martin Bachmann, who assumed the role of scientific director at the German Archaeological Institute in Istanbul in 2006 and collaborated with various local entities in the city, including İAE. This collaboration resulted in the exhibition titled "Wooden İstanbul: Examples from Housing Architecture" in 2008.^[1] The building now serves as a hub for the city's speculative fiction enthusiasts, comic book aficionados, and video game fans, located in Moda, Kadıköy. Therefore, even before the panel took shape, the prospect of introducing an urban studies and history-focused audience from Beyoğlu to Kadıköy, where another type of enthusiast group resides, excited Anders, Bülay, and myself and motivated us to collaborate.

Anders also extended invitations to Vít Šisler and Tonje Haugland Sørensen. Tonje, from Bergen University, is an art and media historian with a specific focus on the reception of Norse and Byzantine history. I had previously had the pleasure of remotely sharing a roundtable with her at the 24th International Congress of Byzantine Studies. Vít, hailing from Charles University, serves as an associate editor at CyberOrient, along with Anders, and possesses extensive experience in Video Game studies as well as video game production. Our host and panel chair, Bülay Doğan, not only co-founded the library but also chairs its board, in addition to her various professional and academic roles. She is responsible for overseeing the library's regular events

[1] Have a glimpse at it on <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/wooden-%C4%B0stanbul-istanbul-research-institute/4AXh5XGLtMnTKw?hl=en>



Poster for East Pixelated: Byzantinism and Orientalism in Video Games. Design: Volkan Şenozan.



Organizers and panelists in front of the annex in the garden of Science Fiction Library. From left to right: Vít Šisler, Emir Alışık, Tanje Haugland Sørensen, Anders Ackfeldt, Olof Heilo, Ahmet Can Karapınar, Bülay Doğan. Photo credit: Engin Şengünç.

Just like that, a party of researchers dealing with the reception of history in video games gathered to venture forth with the panel. Our interests happened to include the Orient. During our discussions about the panel's subtitle, the panel had effectively commenced. Our topics spanned Medieval Persia, the migration wave resulting from the Syrian war, and Byzantine history. We pondered questions such as whether Byzantinism could be considered a form of Orientalism and whether it was adequate to merely allude to Orientalism in the title. If it was indeed sufficient, would that choice in itself be seen as orientalist? At this juncture, Olof Heilo, the director of SRII, joined the conversation, and a flurry of email exchanges signaled the exciting start of our panel.

Together with Ahmet Can, an assistant researcher at İAE at that time, we crossed the Bosphorus by boat and enjoyed a leisurely stroll towards the wooden mansion that serves as the library's home. I instantly regretted that during the time when I lived relatively close by, I had not become a regular visitor to the library, which is a treasure trove of global speculative fiction. The conference setup was situated in a wooden annex in the small garden of the building, with a capacity for fifty people.

When the first speaker, Vít, took the stage, it was a full house, and I recognized many fellow art historians, archaeologists, and architectural historians among the audience. During the extended



discussion segment, it became apparent that the rest of the audience consisted of game developers, historians assisting in game development, and gamers who also happened to be history enthusiasts. Bülay skillfully managed a lengthy and fruitful discussion in which questions probed the panelists' experiences as gamers who play games for research purposes and whether games could (or should) be designed to educate about history.

Given that the panel was held in Istanbul, a city abundant in Ottoman tangible heritage alongside Byzantine heritage, and where the majority of residents' historical knowledge is rooted in Ottoman history taught during their formal education and popular culture, the question of how the reception of Byzantine history compares to Ottoman history in video games emerged as a significant inquiry. There is a vast expanse of terrain to explore in this area, and productive research can only be achieved through the collaboration of diverse experts and numerous research institutions active in the city.

Emir Alışık is exhibitions and events specialist at Koç University's Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations (ANAMED), and Byzantine Studies subject editor of YILLIK: Annual of Istanbul Studies. While continuing his doctoral studies with his dissertation on the appearance of Byzantine thought in Italian Renaissance art in the Department of Art History at Istanbul University, he also works on his research on the manifestations of Byzantium in speculative fiction through various art mediums.



Föreningen Svenska Istanbulinstitutets Vänner

Program hösten 2023

3 oktober

Palais de Suède
from Ottoman Constantinople to Modern Istanbul

Föredrag av Frederick Whitling och Peter Ericson

Lokal: Medelhavsmuseet, Stockholm **Tid:** 17.30–19.30

Anmälan: <https://www.medelhavsmuseet.se/>

31 oktober

Organizing as Alevi in Turkey today
Some reflections from recent fieldwork in Ankara

Föredrag av Hege Markussen

Lokal: LUX B152, Lund **Tid:** 17.30-19.30

Ingen förhandsanmälan

25 november

Release av institutets årsskrift Dragomanen 2023

Simon Stjernholm, Elisabeth Özdalga (red.), *A Hundred Years of the Turkish Republic*

Lokal: Rönnells Antikvariat, Stockholm **Tid:** 14.00–16.00

Ingen förhandsanmälan

5 december

Poseidons vrede. Jordbävningar under antiken

Föredrag av Kristian Göransson

Samarbete med Romvännerna

Lokal: Medelhavsmuseet, Stockholm **Tid:** 18.00

Anmälan: <https://www.medelhavsmuseet.se/>

Rustling leaves, turning pages. Byzantine Ecocriticism on Lesbos.

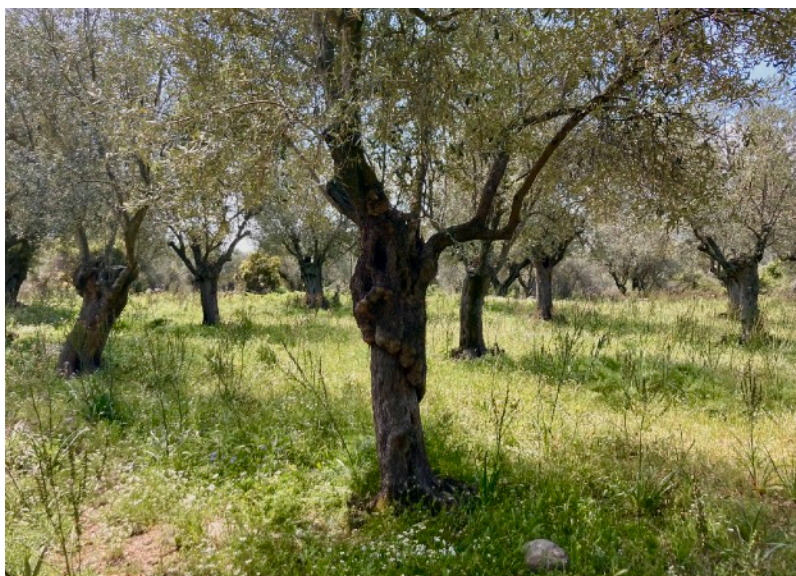
On a cloudy, early spring afternoon, while walking along the windswept Gulf of Kalloni shoreline, I feel almost overwhelmed by the powerful beauty of the coastal landscape. Patches of sunlight break through the thick layer of clouds, casting shimmering pools on the water's surface. The seamless melding of seawater and sandy beach unfolds against the backdrop of rocky hills, once sought-after sanctuaries for monks seeking solitude for meditation and prayer. In this timeless setting, one can easily journey through history and envision the likes of the ancient poet Sappho, seated beneath an olive tree, drawing inspiration from the sea breeze rustling among the leaves, and of the hymnographer Andrew of Crete, who died on the island. It feels as though Aristotle and Theophrastus might emerge at any moment, leisurely strolling along the shoreline and passionately discussing their perceptions of the natural world. Whether we delve into (late) ancient literature or early natural sciences, Lesbos appears to embrace and nurture some of the most captivating and pioneering examples of both.



Gulf of Kalloni - Lesbos

This captivating landscape was the backdrop for the International Workshop titled 'The Sound of Your Leaves Implores the Creator': Exploring the Non-Human in Byzantium.

The workshop, organized by Thomas Arentzen (Uppsala University) and myself, financed by the Swedish Riksbanken Jubileumsfond and with the crucial logistical support offered by the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, took place from May 1 to May 3, 2023 at the Metochi Study Centre (Lesbos), with a central focus on ecocriticism in Late Antique and Byzantine literature. More than one thousand years later than those authors and thinkers, few questions are more pressing than how we as humans relate to the species and environments around us, and how – or to what extent – ancient literature provides us with new (old) perspectives. While ecocriticism and environmental humanities are well established in most universities, Late Antique and Byzantine studies have only recently opened the ecological door, and only slightly. This open threshold sparked intriguing discussions between Thomas and me about the relations between human and nonhuman, Byzantium, Late Antiquity, language, literary texts, and more-than-human agencies. By bringing together scholars in the fields of Late Antique studies, Byzantine studies, and ecocriticism, we aimed to foster dialogue, establish a network, and potentially lay the foundation for a nascent academic discipline.



Olive trees near Leimonos Monastery

Our host, the Metochi Study Centre, is housed in an abandoned monastic complex a few miles inland from the Gulf of Kalloni. It was established in 1992 by the Norwegian professor Haakon Smedsvig Hanssen in cooperation with the late abbot of the neighboring Leimonos Monastery, Father Nikodimos Pavlopoulos. The center, run by Agder University, comprises various meeting and study spaces, as well as a cozy, small library. Some of the rooms have been preserved in their original monastic cell form, with a touch of modern comfort. Located in rural Lesbos, Metochi stands as a commendable model of sustainable management: it bases all its cooking on locally grown ingredients, and the meals are cooked by local staff. The warm hospitality of the local staff and their collaboration with the study center take on added significance when viewed within the context of the severe social and humanitarian crisis on the island.

This awareness, along with a sense of gratitude for sharing a safe and comfortable environment, was with us throughout our entire stay. Metochi offered us an immersive, almost timeless experience in a (post)Byzantine ambiance, where the ancient stones harmoniously merge with the untamed natural surroundings.

There could not have been a more suitable setting for the enriching discussions on natural world and literary texts among our guests: Mike Bintley (University of Southampton), Virginia Burrus (Syracuse University), Douglas Christie (Loyola Marymount University), Laura Feldt (University of Southern Denmark), Marco Formisano (Ghent University), Ingvild Gilhus (University of Bergen), Adam Goldwyn (North Dakota University), Glenn Peers (Syracuse University), Kate Rigby (University of Cologne), Christopher Schliephake (University of Augsburg), Tris-tan Schmidt (University of Katowice). The workshop program consisted of two days dedicated to academic presentations, complemented by two excursions: a hike to the Leimonos Monastery, which included a visit to its icon museum, and a day-trip to the Petrified Forest, including a visit to the Natural Historical Museum in Sigri and the town of Molyvos.

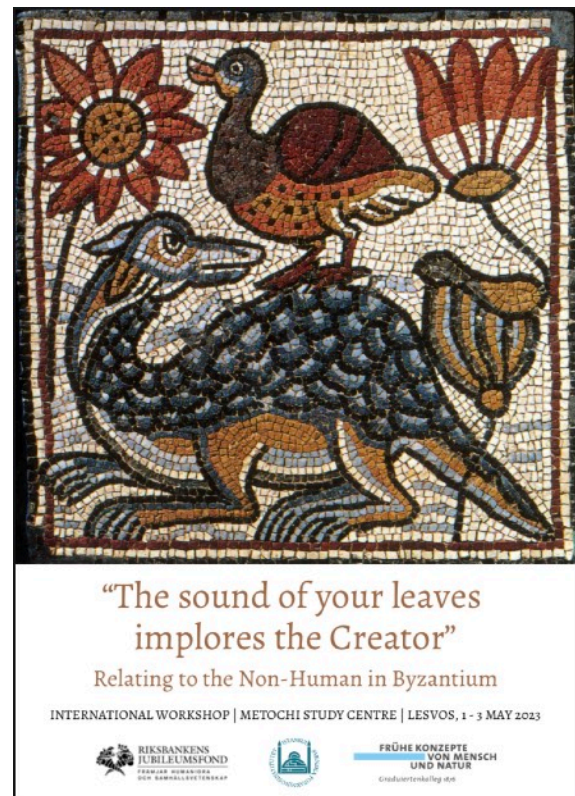


Guests and organizers at Leimonos Monastery

These excursions combined the exploration of Lesbos' ancient and Byzantine history with the appreciation of its extraordinary natural landscapes. The friendly and warm cooperation that developed among all participants nurtured engaging and productive conversations throughout the whole event. Numerous critical questions emerged and were lively discussed during our time on Lesbos. What kind of non-human world appears in the Byzantine and Late Antique literature, and what kind of non-human agencies work in texts? How do these agencies intertwine with the human one? What traces of the human/non-human emotions are left in texts? Just as humans can bear the passage of time and the impact of the non-human world on their bodies, texts as material items cannot escape the effects of weathering. By looking into the intricate interplay of various forces and agencies, we explored how the language and content of Late Antique and Byzantine literature is weathered. The outcomes of these explorations, derived from our conversations and inspired by our interactions with Lesbos' natural world, will be molded into a collaborative volume set to be published in 2025.



Petrified tree, aka "the Grumpy Octopus"



Poster of the International Workshop

In the continuous, dynamic encounter of nature and culture, the non-human flows as a creative energy and transcends the boundaries between domains and materialities. It is up to us to trace this energy and reveal its transformative impact on literary texts. After all, if we close our eyes for a moment, can we be certain that the rustling of turning pages is not, in fact, the gentle whisper of the wind blowing through the leaves of an olive tree?



Metochi Study Centre - garden



Metochi Study Centre - meeting room

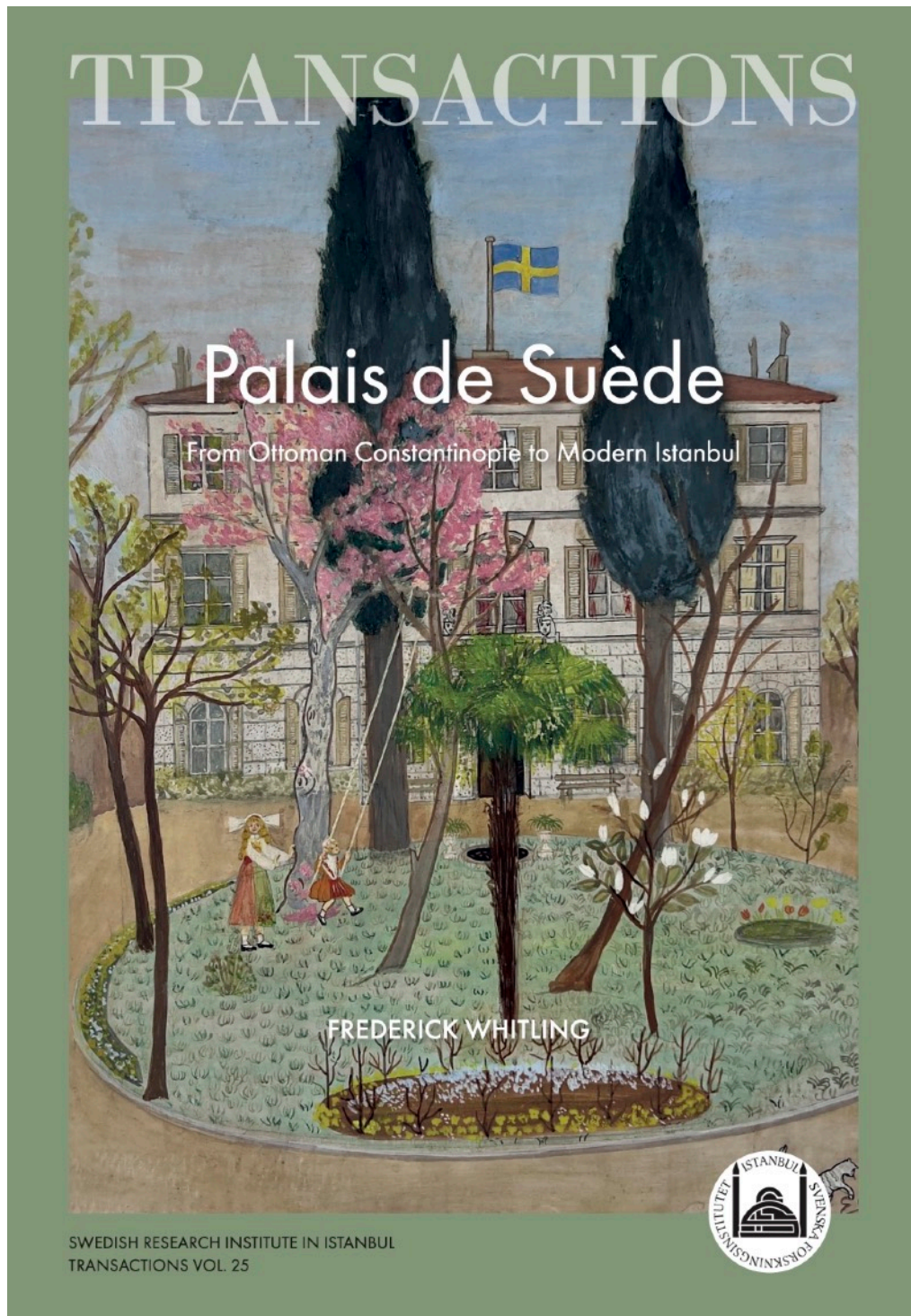


Thomas Arentzen and Laura Borghetti

On a personal note, I would like to express my gratitude to Thomas Arentzen – a friend, colleague, and fellow tree enthusiast – for not only making our Lesbos journey possible, but also memorable. His unwavering support and shared commitment to (eco)critical exploration are in-valuable.

Laura Borghetti is currently a PhD candidate and associate member of the DFG-funded Training Research Group 1876 - “Early Concepts of Humans and Nature” at the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, completing a doctorate on the literary depictions of winds in the Byzantine texts from the 9th to the 12th century. She is a former research associate at the University of Mainz (2016-2019) and holds a MA (2015) from the University of Roma Tre in Ancient Greek and Byzantine philology. Her main research interests revolve around questions of narratology, metaphor theories, agency and ecopoetics within the Middle-Byzantine literature.





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