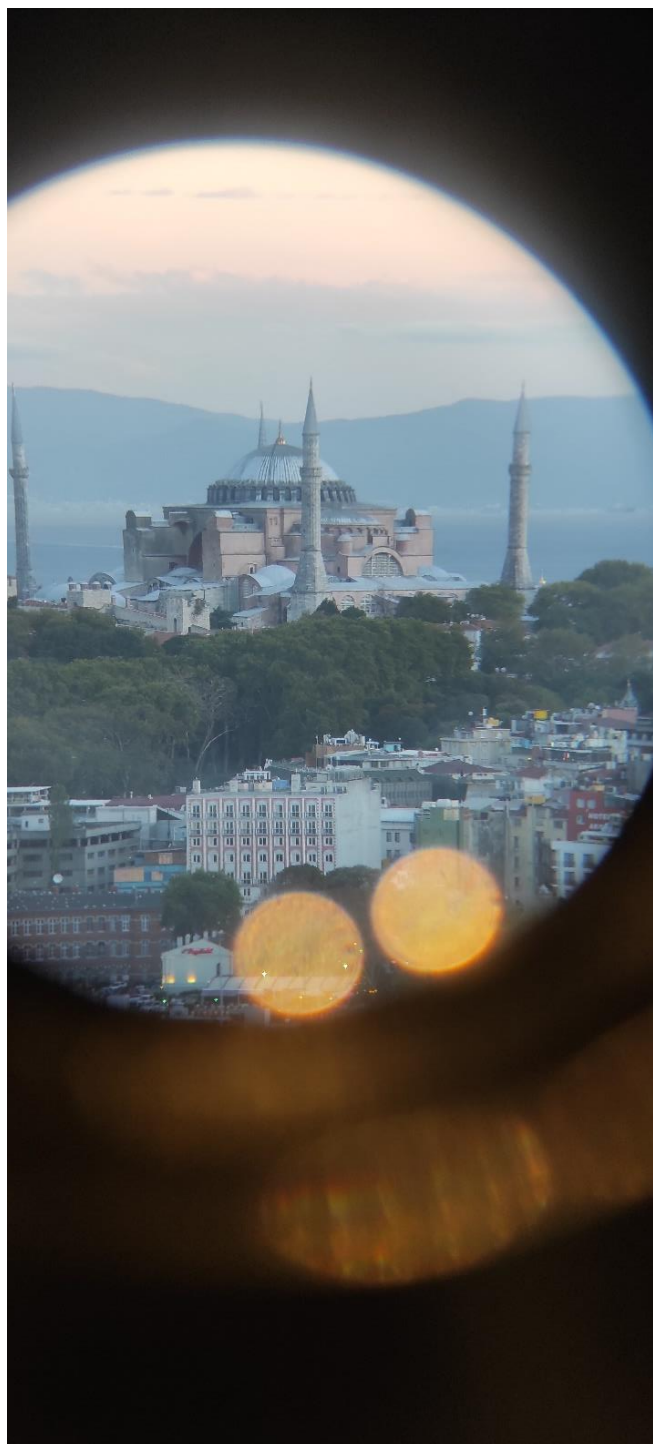


Kalabalik!

Bulletin of the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul



Thoughts from the Second Floor

Already at the time of its formal foundation in 1962, the – still very small – Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul offered facilities for a variety of scholars. Whether they came to Istanbul to study Byzantine inscriptions or Ottoman manuscripts, take part in archaeological excavations or record Turkish dialects, they would all be welcomed. As it has grown, the institute has received generations of researchers from these and other areas of study, with many of these having become members of its collegium and kept supporting and representing it at home. When the institute started to have its own directors and eventually deputy directors, it received a staff that produced its own academic output, but whose tasks within the institute consisted, first and foremost, in caring for this variety of academic users, and enhancing the infrastructure that they needed in Istanbul. Managing research, researchers, and research infrastructure require multi-tasking on various levels and collaboration between director, deputy director, research officer, accountant, housekeepers, and the occasional intern.

Projectors, loudspeakers, and piles of books

Originally, the infrastructure of the institute consisted of no more than two guest rooms in the main building of the Consulate General, furnished through private donations for the purpose of visiting researchers. In 1974, the institute took over the old Dragoman House, providing space for not only longer research stays but also a library. In 1997, the rear courtyard was transformed into an auditorium for lectures and conferences, and in 2010, a separate Annex with ten guest rooms was built next to the Dragoman House.

Each of these components – the library, the auditorium, and the guesthouse – is a resource in itself, with partly different target groups. Visiting scholars, who stay in the guesthouse, use the library as office space and workplace, but do not always have reasons to use or even visit the auditorium. For workshops and academic gatherings, the combination of the guesthouse and the auditorium is perfect, but mostly leaves out the library. Finally, local scholars come to the auditorium and the library to work and listen or give lectures, but do not use the guesthouse. Identifying the needs of these different user groups is key to maintaining the infrastructure and make it work together.

After twelve years, the guesthouse is in good condition. Smaller repairs or refurnishing take place all the time, but nothing of a more thorough nature is currently expected. The building, one of many important legacies of our former Director Karin Ådahl, has turned out to be a solid investment for the institute's first target group: scholars visiting Istanbul for longer or shorter periods. With direct access to the terrace, the shared kitchen and seminar room on the entrance level also provide space and facilities for non-residents who just want to sit down for a chat or a glass of tea with staff or guests.

The auditorium, built under Bengt Knutson's directorship, is a little jewel, integrating the old fire wall of the consulate compound with a modern space illuminated from above by slanted skylights. But demands on an auditorium were different in 1997 than they are today – long gone are whiteboards, slide and overhead projectors. A screen mounted at the front and a video projector mounted at the back enabled film and PowerPoint presentations for many years, but a later technical update forced the projector closer to the screen and made it into an architectural intrusion; it also mismatched the projecting angle. A further complaint was that speakers had to stand up in order to be seen by the audience, and that even then it was sometimes hard to hear them at the back of the room.

Thanks to my predecessor Ingela Nilsson, during the pandemic, the auditorium was furnished with a stage at the front, which has now received a technical setup for both seeing and hearing: a movable projector that displays content directly from under the screen, without any equipment distorting the ceiling, and a tall, slender loudspeaker that unobtrusively amplifies sound to the back of the room. A mixer board with microphone and headsets complete the upgrade to a professional auditorium, and a repainting of the walls has successfully covered all scars from earlier experiments. Next on the list is the purchase of conference tables that are easier to move and assemble than the current ones.



Part of the library at SRII

Then there is the library. Its collection has grown through the years. The first directors, Paavo Roos and Pontus Hellström, contributed to the collections solid archaeological basis; the vast presence to books and volumes on Ottoman and Modern Turkish history, politics and society can be traced to the important periods of Elisabeth Özdalga's directorship; while the rich assortment of books on urban, architectural and art studies show the hands of both Karin Ådahl and Johan Mårtelius. The efforts made by the Knutson and following directors in later years have resulted in a formidable assembly of lexica and encyclopaedias. Ingela Nilsson and I have both worked to extend the Byzantine collection. The most

complete and thoroughly conceived contribution to the library, the Gunnar Jarring Eurasia Collection, comprising about 5000 volumes, is a monument to Birgit Schlyter. All of the directors have contributed to the library's growth over time.

But not only has the institute and its disciplines developed in ways that were difficult to imagine from the onset; so have global information technology and digital accessibility. A library today is a different facility than it was just two decades ago: visiting scholars from abroad usually have access to their own digital libraries. It is worth stating that the *Bibliopera* network embeds the SRII collections locally in Istanbul and offers access to a multitude of nearby research libraries and collections. Before embarking on any further extensions of the content, it is time to make a thorough survey of what the library currently is and what it could be. In September 2022, we hosted two MA interns from the Archive, Library and Museology program at Linnaeus University, Katharina de Burger and Nic Olsson, who did an incredible work in just a few weeks, taking the first steps towards a renewal process that we intend to follow up during the year 2023.

Sacredness, corporeality, and hordes of Vikings

The autumn semester of 2022 saw a fresh batch of scholarship holders arriving at the institute, after the last stragglers from the pandemic had spent their remaining residences. First to arrive was Tonicha Upham from Århus University, who spent three months wrapping up her PhD on Arabic sources about the Rus. She was then followed by Thomas Arentzen from Uppsala University, who spent four weeks delving into Christian and Muslim notions of holiness in nature, especially trees. Both of them have contributed to this issue of *Kalabalık!.* Rustam Urinboyev (Lund University), who concluded his fellowship from Riksbankens Jubileumsfond earlier in the year, returned with Sherzod Eraliev (Lund University) to explore the Uzbek diaspora in Istanbul and will keep doing so in the spring of 2023. Researchers Jonas Svensson (Linnaeus University) and Pernilla Myrne (Gothenburg University) concluded their fellowships from Riksbankens Jubileumsfond. Agneta Westerdahl, one of our writers in residence during winter of 2019, returned on a scholarship from the Association of Friends, as you will be able to read about in one of the contributions to this issue.

Only one seminar took place in the autumn: in October Hale Güney (Odense University), holder of a one-month scholarship in spring, and Eda Saraç (Piri Reis University), one of the participants in the spring writeshop in Kavala, presented their respective projects. Hale Güney gave us a presentation of her

project on the economy of rural Anatolia in the Roman and Ottoman periods, while Eda Saraç discussed the many German Jewish exiles in the early Turkish Republic. Of the fellows, Thomas Arentzen and Jonas Svensson contributed with talks within the institute's autumn lecture series, while Tonicha Upham was discussant in a public panel on early Rus, of which you will get to read more in the following pages. As for Pernilla Myrne, she arranged a conference on *Sexual Knowledge in the Islamic World: Historical Perspectives* in late October. Other workshops that took place at the SRII during the autumn were devoted to *The Second Plague Pandemic in the Ottoman Empire (1346-1850)*, arranged by Alp Eren Topal and Einar Wigen (University of Oslo) and *Materiality, Rituals and the Senses: the dynamic World of lived Shi'i Islam*, arranged by Oliver Scharbrodt (Lund University). The latter was a major event with no less than forty speakers from fifteen countries worldwide. In early November, the "Retracing Connections" project, led by my predecessor Ingela Nilsson (Uppsala University), returned to Istanbul to host a workshop and to plan for an exhibition in collaboration with the Depo Gallery.

The autumn lecture series went under the title *Searching for the Sacred*. Under this headline, prof. Barry Strauss (Cornell University) gave an online talk in early September, "In Search of Troy: between Myth and History", which can be heard on our podcast page (<https://srii.org/pages/hubbub>). It was accompanied by the presentation of a new Swedish book on the same topic by Philippe Bohström, *Troja: Myt eller verklighet* (Svenskt Militärhistoriskt Bibliotek 2022). From there, the overarching theme led on to "The Sacred Landscape of Ancient Asia Minor" with Dr. İpek Dağlı (Istanbul University), co-director of the excavations at Labraunda. After Thomas Arentzen and Jonas Svensson had further delved on sacredness in Christianity and Islam, the series was concluded by Dr. Buket Kitapçı with a lecture on Byzantine and Islamic medical approaches to food and sex, and by myself with a lecture on the Danish anthroposophist Carl Vett (1871–1956) who spent some time in Istanbul in the 1920s searching for the sacred, first in the Kelâmî Dergâhı at Odabaşı – where he studied a community of Naqshbandi Sufis right before they were suppressed by the government – and then under the Çemberlitaş or Column of Constantine – where he hoped to find the mythical Palladium of Troy. As a befitting complement to our lecture series, the 2022 issue of *Dragomanen*, edited by Douglas Mattsson and Simon Sorgenfrei (Södertörn University), was devoted to the theme of "Blasphemy, Heresy, and Apostasy" and was presented at Rönnlunds Antikvariat in Stockholm just a few days before my talk.

Otherwise, the autumn semester stood in the sign of Vikings. At the International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Venice in late August, the SRII shared a book table with Uppsala University where we displayed

our new guidebook *In Search of Constantinople in Istanbul*. At the same venue, we took part in a panel called “Digital Byzantium” with our virtual exhibition *Nordic Tales, Byzantine Paths* – a virtual exhibition on which we have worked in collaboration with Koç University for the latest two years and that has been supported by the Retracing Connections project, the Yapı Kredi Bankası and the Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation. *Nordic Tales, Byzantine Paths* is aimed at youngsters and elders, scholars and laymen, who want to build or broaden their knowledge about contacts and interactions between the Byzantine and Scandinavian worlds. One can enter the exhibition at any random point and find oneself around the content by means of hyperlinks. Longer and shorter essays by experts in the field are accompanied by translated excerpts from major source texts, as well as objects and images selected by a group of PhD students at Koç University. There is also the possibility to access the content by means of a series of drawings by Per Demervall, the creator – together with Patric Nyström – of the popular comic *The Adventures of Siri*, which is about a Viking girl who goes to Byzantium. In the digital exhibition, the drawings feature a selection of hotspots where Siri invites the visitor to click and learn more. The exhibition can be accessed at <https://nordictalesbyzantinepaths.ku.edu.tr>



Per Demervall and Patric Nyström, the creators of Siri, signing copies of the comics at SRII

By coincidence, *The Adventures of Siri* comics appeared in Turkish this very summer through the Yapı Kredi’s publishing house. It enabled us to launch a whole series of events in Istanbul and Ankara to promote the exhibition, the comics, and both. Per Demervall and Patric Nyström came to visit us in early November for an event for kids at the Yapı Kredi Kültür Merkezi, followed by a visit to Ankara and Bilkent University, where the Swedish Embassy hosted a lecture on “Northerners in the East” with assistant Prof. Leif Inge Ree Petersen from Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim. Finally, we were proud to arrange a panel at the SRII called *Roads to Rus* with

Leif Inge Ree Petersen, Tonicha Upham, Monica White and Alexandra Vukovich, which explored the various and fascinating overlaps of Scandinavian, Byzantine, Finnic, Turkic, Slavonic and other cultural influences in modern-day Ukraine.

Thanks to the Retracing Connections project, we could further present the exhibition in Uppsala in the beginning of October, when Nikos Kontogiannis from its main board gave a guest lecture, which was in the later days followed by an excursion to the Byzantine-style churches of Gotland with him. Back in Istanbul, we ourselves together with Koç University arranged an excursion to the Küçükçekmece archaeological excavations – west of the old city – where some findings seem to indicate the presence of Northerners.



Possibly, parts of a Hnefatafl game found at Küçükçekmece archaeological excavations

Among them, there are pieces that could have belonged to a Hnefatafl game. It was yet another happy coincidence that Agneta Arnesson Westerdahl, archaeologist and best-selling author of a number of novels set in the Viking Age, could join us in the middle of all this. We are also very moved to learn that she has dedicated the fourth, upcoming volume in her Viking series, entitled *Miklagård*, to the institute.

Turan, non-Muslim Islam, and a photographic treasure

A question I often get by friends and colleagues when they hear about my work is: do you get any time to pursue your own research interests? The answer is that it can be difficult, but it is not merely a matter of time. Getting exposed to so many fascinating areas of research and researchers engenders a constant

flow of new ideas for other projects and endeavours, both for me and the institute, that it would take a lifetime to realize. During the past year, I have been honoured to contribute to the Viking exhibition, to the autumn lecture series, and to *Dragomanen*. In early December, I was happy to co-organise, together with my colleague Gabor Fodor from the Hungarian Culture Centre in Istanbul, a small but dynamic workshop at the institute entitled *Turan and Turanism: Traces and Trajectories of a Contested Ideology from Past to Present*, which brought together three Turkish, two Hungarian, one Finnish, one French and one German scholar. The term “Turanic languages”, which was briefly floated by some linguists in the mid-nineteenth century, has been discarded since long; but in political imagination, especially on the far right, it lives on in Turkey and Hungary and a few other places. The aim of the workshop was to explore its emergence, impact, and afterlife from the nineteenth century until today, and the various perspectives engendered by the workshop worked so well together that I and Gabor Fodor are aiming to publish them in a special issue of the Hungarian journal *Archivum Ottomanicum*.



Dreams of Turan: Traces and Trajectories of a Contested Ideology from Past to Present

Anders, for his part, got to see a workshop that he had been co-organising in the spring, *Non-Muslim Islam*, come to fruition in autumn, as his and his colleague Jesper Petersen (University of Copenhagen)

published preliminary observations in *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* (Brill) and a edited volume on the same topic which is on its way in early 2024. The edited volume will bring together Scandinavian scholars discussing various case studies in relation to the concept of non-Muslim Islam.

Together with the Consulate General and its cultural section we have resumed discussions – initiated before the pandemic – with the German Archaeological Institute in Istanbul concerning a thorough survey, perhaps even an exhibition, of the enormous material of glass plates that they keep from the Swedish photographer in late Ottoman Istanbul, Wilhelm (Guillaume) Berggren (1835–1920). Inspired by the topic, Anders has made some preliminary research in Swedish archives into the life and works of Berggren's niece, Hilda Ullin (1861–1953), who joined her uncle in Istanbul in 1882 to become a partner in his firm, and whose both written and photographic impressions earned her several awards at the time, locally and from Sweden. Unlikely as it may seem, given our vastly different areas of research, Anders and I may here have stumbled upon a topic where we will be able to join our forces during the upcoming year.



Anders Ackfeldt, Deputy Director of SRII, ready to eat pizzas made by our intern Erik

Last, but not least, we have had the pleasure of hosting an intern this autumn – the first in more than a year. Michele Erik Manni, student from the MA program in Middle Eastern Studies at Stockholm University, has not only been an enormous resource in preparing this issue of *Kalabalık!* but also turned out to be an excellent cook, who regularly provided us with all imaginable delicacies from the Italian cuisine. He also seems to have benefited greatly from the immediate research environment, as he has just outlined a Master thesis on Hip-Hop culture in Istanbul ...

Whatever happens, we hope that the year 2023 will offer endless new questions, problems and topics to investigate – for us, for our visitors, and for all our friends and followers.

Olof Heilo, Director

SRII

Horti Luculliani - The Gardens of Lucullus

Viktor Wretström



Sketch of a marble bust traditionally said to portray Lucullus.

Roman rule in Asia Minor first came in 133 BC as the whole of the Kingdom of Pergamum was bequeathed to them. The region was soon turned into a province and became a rich, but peripheral part of the growing Roman Republic. It would soon again become the centre of events by the beginning of the 1st century BC as the neighbour of the province, the Kingdom of Pontus - under its king Mithridates VI (135 - 63 BC) - showed its ambitions for Anatolian overlordship. These ambitions would result in three long and bloody wars with the Romans between 89 and 63 BC and would be known under the name of the Mithridatic Wars. These wars eventually resulted in Roman victory and dominance over all of Anatolia, including large parts of the Caucasus.

It is through these wars that the Roman aristocracy for the first time truly met, saw and

came in contact with Hellenistic rulers and their methods of displaying power and wealth. One such aristocrat who would be intricately involved in both the First Mithridatic War (89 - 85 BC) and the Third Mithridatic War (73 - 63 BC) was Lucius Licinius Lucullus (118 - 56 BC). After returning from Anatolia, Lucullus would construct one of Rome's first large gardens, the *Horti Luculliani*, and would become known among his contemporaries as "Xerxes in a Toga".

The *Horti Luculliani* was built in Rome shortly before those of the contemporary *Horti Pompeiani* and *Horti Caesaris Transtiberim* and was in comparison to these semi-public gardens an exclusively private garden. The garden was constructed on the summit of the Pincian hill and was visible from (and with a great view of) the Campus Martius. The construction phase is identified as being between 68 and 63 BC while Lucullus was stationed outside of Rome in wait for his triumph after his eastern campaigns. When

that it included apricots, peaches, and cherries, all of which are mentioned as being introduced to Rome by Lucullus.



Reconstruction of the Gardens of Lucullus from archaeological finds and ancient descriptions.

(Courtesy of André Caron)

The garden seems in many ways to have been a mixture of both Roman and Hellenistic traditions and, as expected, mythological and religious motives were common. Archaeological evidence shows that there was a monumental fountain, seemingly dedicated to Jupiter, within the complex and that the garden was terraced, reaching up to a total of 13 metres over the Pincian Hill. This gives proof of the technical expertise needed for the construction of the *Horti* - a high placed fountain in antiquity is no easy feat.

While we know that Lucullus ordered the construction of the *Horti* and - according to all sources - spent lavishly on it, we do not know much of its actual building process. The expertise for the *Horti's* advanced features would most likely have required specialists from outside of Rome, as no similar projects had been constructed within the city at this time. One can assume that these experts would have come from Asia Minor, or even Armenia, where they had either been captured and enslaved during Lucullus' conquests or hired by Lucullus through his vast network of contacts within the Hellenistic world.

The Greek Gardens



Summer Banquet at the House of Lucullus by Gustave Boulanger. An envisioning of a “lucullan” banquet at the Horti Luculliani

Greek influences on Rome as a whole had been an increasing phenomenon from the third century BC and Greek architecture became increasingly prevalent during the time of the middle to late Republic, owing to the conquests and land gains in mainland Greece and Minor Asia during the 2nd century BC. These Greek influences were then further increased by the Mithridatic Wars as the Romans came into increased contact with the Hellenistic and Persian monarchies of the Seleucids, Pontics and the Armenians. This resulted in an increased interest among Roman aristocrats in the tools used by these monarchs to display their wealth and power to their subjects, which in turn resulted in the rise of new building trends within Rome for the construction of theatres, gardens, baths and larger villas. One cannot avoid the clear connections between the grand features of the *Horti Luculliani* and the *paradaiza*, the gardens of the eastern royal courts. It has been argued that the style and the core concept of the *Horti Luculliani* comes from inspirations of these “oriental” gardens and that the garden stood as a testament to Lucullus' successful eastern campaigns.

The Growth of the Roman Garden - Aristocratic Competition and Public Spectacle

Many features that Lucullus introduced were controversial but would soon become mainstream in other *Horti* that followed the *Horti Luculliani*. An example is the *Horti Sallustiani* which was also located on

the Pincian Hill and included large water complexes, clearly inspired by those created by Lucullus. In the end, Rome's collection of gardens started with a few *Horti* during the late republic, of which *Luculliani* was the grandest, and ended as a "Garden City" in imperial times under such men as Maecenas. Although Lucullus' own intention with the gardens in regard to politics remained unclear, the *Horti* became intimately connected with politics. An increasing number of gardens were later included as imperial properties and these *Horti* (including the *Horti Luculliani*) became a vital part of the display of power for the imperial families in the centuries to come.

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Viktor Wretström is a master's student in History at Lund University. His primary focus in research is the Roman Republic and the early Empire. As part of his graduate studies, he is doing an exchange semester at Koç University, Istanbul. He is also participating in the activities of SRIL.

The text presented in the previous pages is a shortened and simplified version of a research paper written as a part of a graduate level course at Koç University.

Hello there ...

Tonicha Mae Upham, SRIL Fellow and PhD at Aarhus University



Tonicha Mae Upham

Hello Tonicha, happy to have you here at the Institute. You have been here almost three months now and we have had more than one occasion to talk about the work you have been carrying out. Would you mind giving our readers a short description of your PhD topic and the research you are carrying out here in Istanbul?

Of course not! My PhD studies deal with gender in the Islamicate sources on the Rūs. To be more specific, I am focusing on the construction of gender in Rūs and neighbouring societies and how men, women, and children are described within Arabic, Persian and Ottoman Turkish geographical

and historical sources from a period ranging between the 9th and the 16-17th century. Right now, I am looking at how the Rūs are portrayed in some less well-studied Arabic sources from the 13th and 14th centuries, which offer interesting distortions of earlier material on the Rūs from the 10th and 11th centuries. This was meant to be a short offshoot of my PhD topic, but as I started delving into the topic, I felt there was so much more that needed to be said and done with these sources. This ties into one of my wider aims, which is a broader argument for expanding the list of sources we use when we study the Rūs, particularly for the benefit of those in Viking Studies who only ever encounter these sources in translation. The same small handful of sources are used and re-used, and with good reason: they are considered early and reliable, and because they're close in time to the Rūs themselves they are preferred over later, and more, perhaps unbelievable sources. But my argument is that there is still value and interest in these later sources, and much to be gained from considering what gets translated from Arabic into

Persian and later into Turkish. In my case, seeing how an anecdote can be twisted over time, but still retained as interesting and believable by my geographers, is really exciting – and I hope that this kind of research will open up Viking Studies to additional sources, languages, and perspectives.

Why was it important for you to come to Istanbul then? Was there a specific reason behind your decision to come here?

Absolutely! First and foremost, I needed manuscripts, and Istanbul has provided that in spades, thanks to the Süleymaniye Library. Whilst I have worked in other archives previously, and make a lot of use of manuscripts digitized by other institutions, there were texts and manuscripts I simply couldn't access without coming to Istanbul. This is really exciting – with so much literature and so many manuscripts, it is inevitable that even the texts which have been edited and published might have overlooked something in a manuscript copy somewhere. So having the chance to look through the Süleymaniye Library's manuscript collection was a really great opportunity, throwing up more witnesses to some of my texts than I had been aware of, and offering little extras that I hadn't been expecting. And beyond that, of course, the research environment at SRII is fantastic – meeting so many new people working in different fields, working in the institute's own library, lectures and conferences... Especially after long periods of lockdown and remote working, it's been so inspiring to meet people face-to-face and get new ideas about my own work even as I'm encountering something completely new in someone else's research.

How is the work going then? Have you come to any conclusion?

I would say that the work is going well, though the problem with the city and with manuscript collections is that you never feel like the work is truly done! As I said, I am really happy to have had the opportunity to go through the manuscripts myself. It is always a good experience, and especially at my stage it's incredibly good practice and training in manuscript work – I know that my Arabic and my manuscript skills have improved over the autumn. Conclusions are trickier: my main aim here was to produce a parallel translation of two geographical texts which offer similarly outlandish comments on the Rūs and their neighbours. I have gathered what I need in terms of manuscript material to do this, but have come away with more textual material than I expected, so am excited to think about what that means for how I create my translation. That's really exciting, and will make for a fun few weeks once I am back in Aarhus! I also came across additional texts of interest, which I am trying hard to ignore for the time being while I work on other projects, but we'll see...

Has the Swedish Institute been of help in your research?

It really has. I'm very grateful to the institute and the wonderful people there. Having this funding was really critical to my ability to undertake this research, but beyond that, the lively environment of the institute was really important to me. Being welcomed by Olof and everyone at the institute, and encountering all of the other guests at the institute during my stay was fantastic – it meant that there was so much more to my stay than sitting at a desk and working. I've really enjoyed my time in Istanbul, and that has been enhanced by all sorts of trips – to Küçükçekmece and elsewhere – by the chance to sit down and have a chat or dinner or drinks, and just by everyone at the institute. Thank you so much!

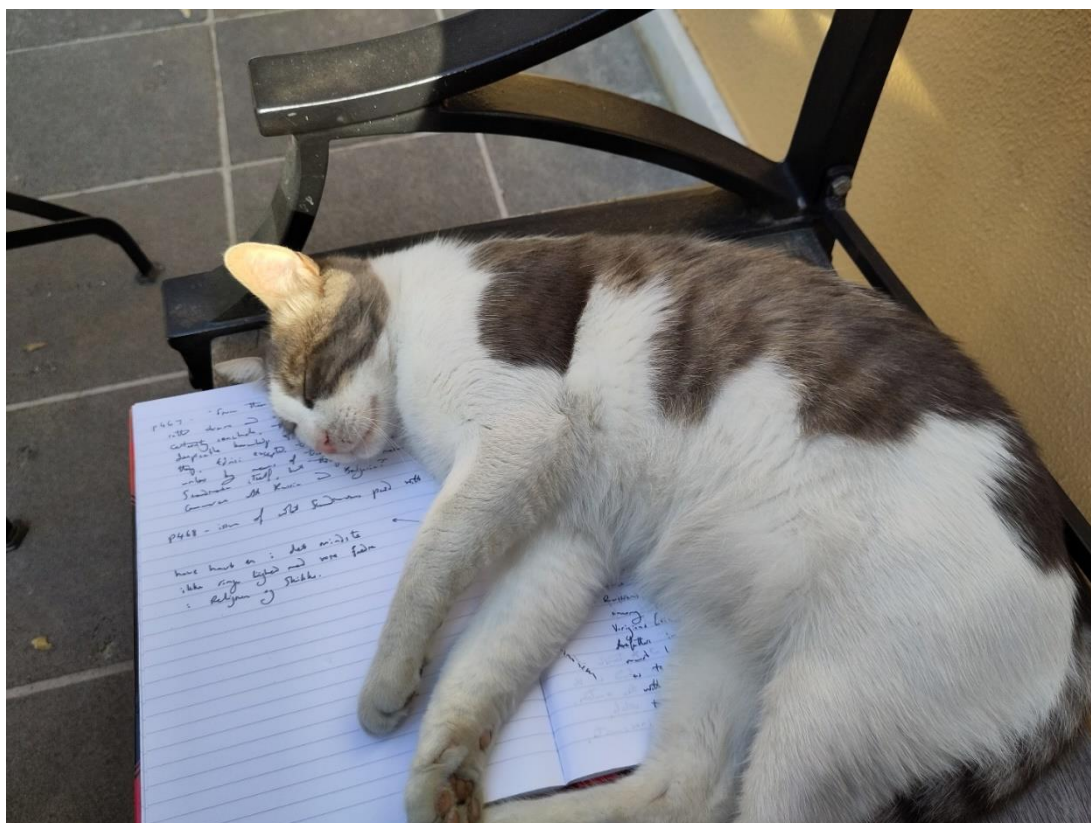
Interview by Michele Erik Manni

SRII Fellowship Report

Tonicha Mae Upham

My writing has been interrupted once again. If he isn't insisting on sitting on me, the grey-and-white cat who frequents the grounds of the Swedish Consulate likes to sit directly on top of my open notebook. He's equally keen on an open laptop, often making eloquent contributions to my open draft documents.

We have the same conversations every day ("Please remove your claws from my dress"; "No, I'd actually like to use that notebook please"), and he's conditioned me to expect his appearance as soon as I sit outside to take advantage of the mild October weather while I write. I've made the acquaintance of an incredible number of cats in Istanbul, and have regularly been a climbing-frame-turned-nap-spot for two cats at once, but this one inside the consulate is my most consistent work companion.



The grey-and-white cat living in the compound of the Swedish Consulate



Süleymaniye Mosque as seen from the entrance of the library

When not surrounded by cats, I split my time between two places: the institute's library, where I have used huge piles of books to stake my claim to a desk, and the Süleymaniye Library, across the Galata Bridge and a pleasant walk up to the surrounds of the Süleymaniye Mosque.

Just as I am splitting my time between two key (both blissfully quiet!) workplaces, I have been dividing my time between two related projects: the final stages of my PhD dissertation, and the specific manuscript project which led me to Istanbul with the help of a generous three-month fellowship grant from the Swedish Research Institute.

I am coming to the end of my PhD project, "Rūs Gender in Islamic Sources: The Transmission of Geographical and Historical Ideas on the North in Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish between the Third and Eleventh Centuries AH/Ninth and Seventeenth Centuries AD." Over the last three-and-a-half years, I have worked with a collection of sources commonly presented as the Arabic sources on the Vikings. These are geographical, eyewitness and chronicle accounts which tend to describe the Rūs or Rūsiyyah, a people who during the ninth and tenth centuries AD are perhaps best understood as a predominantly mercantile population living, trading, and operating along the river routes of the Eurasian steppe, with Scandinavian, Slavic, and Turkic cultural hallmarks. An increased interest in the Global

Middle Ages by Viking historians has led to the growing use of a handful of Arabic descriptions of the Rūs as part of a demonstration of Scandinavia's links with the wider world, via the Rūs. This was my own route into these sources – through their use as a complement to Viking history. However, language barriers, access to sources, and ideas about a preferred type of source for illustrating Arab-Rūs-Viking connections have really limited the field, and restricted the thorough and effective use of these sources. The sources drawn on by Viking historians – such as the incredible tenth-century eyewitness account of Aḥmad Ibn Faḍlān, who travelled from Baghdad to the Volga river in Russia and observed a Rūs funeral – are worthwhile, but it would be a mistake to ignore the many other sources which have not featured so prominently on modern reading lists.

This has been a driving force behind my PhD project, and the reason for the very wordy title I have given my thesis: delving into the sources and considering the contexts in which these geographical accounts were created, transmitted, preserved, and rehashed, it quickly became clear that I needed much more than just the earliest Arabic accounts. I have therefore watched my thesis evolve into something which considers how information about Rūs gender – that is, stereotypes, presentations, understandings of issues such as childhood, sacrifice, and the creation of homosocial communities – has shifted and changed as it moved between texts written in Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish from the ninth century right up to the seventeenth century.

At the beginning of this year, I was spending a lot of time looking at various descriptions of Rūs funerary and ritual sacrifice, in Arabic and Persian (this anecdote didn't do quite so well at making the jump into Ottoman Turkish geographical texts). This is a popular aspect of the Arabic sources on the Rūs, since funerary rituals are one of the clearest areas of cultural overlap between Rūs and Viking and Old Norse ritual specialists therefore have much to gain from the use of works by Ibn Faḍlān, Ibn Rusta, and others. Revisiting this area to consider how ideas were created and transmitted offered some interesting new ideas, though, and raised questions which led to the project I have been pursuing this autumn at the Swedish Research Institute.

Less “popular,” perhaps, among the Arabic sources on the Rūs and their Ṣaḡālība (generally translated as Slavic) neighbours, are geographical works by, amongst others, al-Waṭwāṭ and al-Dimashqī. Whilst both texts have been edited, and al-Dimashqī translated into French, neither geographer has been particularly heavily-studied when it comes to this geographical area, and so both texts were more or less new to me as I worked on sacrifice at the beginning of this year. It was a split-second moment with the French

translation where I expected to read the word “kill” and instead read “eat” which sparked the research project I’ve been working on this autumn. My first thought was that my French must really be terrible, but as I looked, and checked the Arabic, I realised that these side-lined sources, dismissed as barely credible, contained something quite interesting.

This formed the basis for my project, “Sidelined Sources on the North,” which has been funded by the Swedish Research Institute this autumn. Tracking the transmission of some unusual anecdotes repeated by my side-lined geographers, I felt that a proper foregrounding of the contents of these works would be best realised via retranslations (and in al-Waṭwāt’s case, simply a translation) which could put the two sources in conversation with each other as a way of reflecting on their position in a chain of geographical transmission – that is, as a demonstration of how one text informs another. For this I needed extensive manuscript access in Istanbul, via the Süleymaniye Library.

The Süleymaniye Library is an interesting manuscript collection to work with. Rather than being presented with physical manuscripts in the reading room, I was instead led (or, on quieter days and as I got more confident in looking like I knew what I was doing, found my own way) to a computer terminal, and introduced to a wealth of digitised manuscripts. L.W.C. van Lit has some illuminating reflections on the format of the Süleymaniye Library in *Among Digitized Manuscripts* (2020), and notes that the Süleymaniye Library has the largest collection of digitised Islamicate manuscripts in the world. Certainly, it was a new way of working for me when physically visiting the archive. I’ve reflected throughout the pandemic that when I have had a small query about certain texts it has often been easier to get hold of a digitised manuscript than it was to get hold of print editions of the same texts, but I had never visited an archive to see these digitisations. This method of working turned out to have unexpected benefits for me, though.

The first was scope, and chance. I had arrived in Istanbul and worked through manuscript catalogues to narrow down exactly which manuscripts I wanted to consult. The online system for viewing the digitised manuscripts, though, presented me with new opportunities; although transliteration wasn’t always consistent in the system, the linked data in the catalogue regularly presented me with new and unexpected manuscripts – additional manuscript copies which hadn’t been on my list, texts I hadn’t thought to consult, and in one case a text I had been completely unaware of. This gave me lots to work with, both in terms of my funded project, my PhD thesis, and tantalising ideas for future projects.

This was the second benefit of the digital format for me: it was easy to dip into lots of different manuscripts, and switch between multiple at once, without feeling like a nuisance for requesting so many physical manuscripts. Ease of access was, of course, a slippery slope – it was very hard at times to stay focused on the manuscripts I was *supposed* to be looking when it was so easy to distract myself by considering new ones, but I like to think I found a good balance between ticking manuscripts off my to-do list and finding new material to work with in the future.

In finding this new and unexpected material, computerised access was also a boon: one day, flicking through a manuscript copy of a text I had never encountered before to scan it for useful headings, I came across “Rūs.” This surprised me, and my first thought was that I must have read something wrong. Being able to zoom right in and confirm that I was indeed reading things right gave me licence to dig into the text in more detail, and start playing around with other copies of the same text. This was very much a case of digital happenstance; without the ability to simply open PDF copies of manuscripts, I would not have considered or even known to open many of the manuscript files I consulted, and could well have arrived at and left the Süleymaniye Library only with notes on the handful of manuscripts I’d initially planned to see.

My main aim with the Süleymaniye Library was al-Waṭwāṭ, and I got plenty of him, including a manuscript which appeared to elaborate somewhat more than the other copies of his work. This will serve as a nice complement to al-Dimashqī, I think, and I am excited to sit down with the two geographers over the course of December to start preparing my parallel translation of the two. Both geographical texts are exciting, and I look forward to being able to introduce more people to them via an accessible translation of the parts of their work which deal with the north.

My autumn in Istanbul has been a fantastic opportunity for some concerted manuscript work, and was well-timed in terms of the motivation for the final stages of my PhD, not only with my improved manuscript skills and Arabic, but also with the opportunity to encounter so many new people working in different fields. In this respect I found the institute and everyone in it to be incredibly welcoming. The chance to participate in the busy research environment of the institute has really fuelled my own work, offering new perspectives and ideas, and so I am grateful not only for the funding I have received, but also for the chance to participate in this research environment. When not in the library, my schedule was packed – lectures, panels, and conferences, including a very fruitful panel on the Rus in November with Monica White, Alexandra Vukovich, and Leif Inge Ree Petersen. Outside of the institute, visits to various

sites of interest, walks around the city, and trips, for example to Eyüp, and to the archaeological sites at Küçükçekmece, were an excellent means of enjoying Istanbul's history whilst also meeting and interacting with interesting new people, both those affiliated with the institute and the ANAMED fellows just down the road from us, who were also very friendly and welcoming. At other times, various bookshops across Istanbul have been incredibly helpful, finding me far more books than I should have acquired during my time in the city. Getting home was a challenge!



Tonicha Mae Upham (center-left) during the panel on the Rus with Alexandra Vukovich (left), Monica White (center-right) and Leif Inge Petersen (right)

Though an immensely positive experience on the whole, mention should be made of my final Sunday in Istanbul. I was very grateful to be safe inside the institute at the time of the terrible attack on İstiklal Caddesi, and to have company over the course of that day, both from the other guests at the institute, and from Peter and Stina at the consulate who opened their doors to us that evening.

I am so pleased to have been a fellow at the Swedish Research Institute, and have gotten so much out of the three months I spent in Istanbul. It was thanks to the institute that I was able to do this, both for facilitating and funding such a long stay but also for making my time in Istanbul so enjoyable. I am already working on excuses to come back.



Tonicha Mae Upham is a British PhD fellow at Aarhus University. Her research interests lie in the study of gender in the Islamicate sources on the Rūs. She has been awarded a three-month scholarship by the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul.

Tonicha is currently at SRII to carry out research on how the Rūs and the North have been described by understudied Arabic sources.



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Agneta Arnesson Westerdahl

Hello there ...

Agneta Arnesson Westerdahl,
SRII Fellow and author of the
Vikingaserien

Hello Agneta, it is good to have you here at the Institute once again! You are currently here to carry out research for the fourth novel of your *Vikingaserien*. What is the series about?

It is always a pleasure to be here at the Institute. The series I am working on, at the moment, mainly deals with the Vikings and their trade relations with the other populations. Each historical novel is set in a

specific time frame and deals with different kinds of trade. For example, the first one dealt with the slave trade, while the second and third one focus more on the exchange of material goods, such as amber and iron. The fourth one will deal with the trade of fur and silk, two precious materials in the 9th century. Of course, events and dialogues are romanced; I did not want it to be a heavy reading. But I try to convey as much truthful information as possible in my novels. I really strive to give a truthful portray of the Vikings, their society and how the social classes interacted with each other.

Would you say it is difficult to find a good balance between fiction and historical facts?

I would say it is really hard to find a good balance between fiction and historical facts. As I previously said, I do not want it to be a heavy reading, but at the same time I want the story to be as close to the reality of that time as possible. At the same time, it is really difficult to know exactly how events unfolded and how people behaved back in the days. For instance, there are several accounts on how people would behave at court and with the Byzantine emperor. Sources are not homogeneous, and so you will need to choose the source that you think fits better your novel, which will not always please everyone.

Why coming to Istanbul and SRII in the process of writing a historical novel on the Vikings? How well does Istanbul fit in the novels?

The Vikings had a very active trade exchange in Europe, as I have showed in the previous novels and the in the one I am writing at the present moment they trade with the Byzantines. But they also had an extensive cultural exchange and, in order to understand the rapid changes which the Viking society got through in 8th and 9th century, it is important to consider these contacts. In addition to this – as I have previously mentioned – I want my novel to be as correct as possible, so coming to Istanbul and visiting Byzantine archeological sites and ruins were and are important in the production of my novels. I believe it is necessary to do qualitative research when writing books of such genre. Thanks to SRII and the allocation of two scholarships – from the Swedish Writers' Union (*Författarförbundet*) and the Association of Friends of the Swedish Institute in Istanbul (*Föreningen Svenska Istanbulinstitutets Vänner*), in 2019 respectively 2021 – carrying out this kind of research has been somehow easy.

Besides being a little sample of Sweden and providing you a place to stay in Istanbul, in what ways would you say the Institute has been of help to your production?

As I previously said, the Swedish Institute in Istanbul has really been of help to my novel production. Both previous Director Ingela Nilsson and current Director Olof Heilo have helped me a lot. Their knowledge in Byzantine history and Istanbul as a city has allowed me to discover and visit off-track sites that I otherwise would have missed had I been on my own. These experiences have certainly enabled me to provide in my novels a glimpse of life in Constantinople. So for this reason, a huge thanks to both Ingela Nilsson and Olof Heilo. Besides that, the Institute – in its sense as a meeting and working hub for academicians – has really had a positive impact on me. The literature present in the library and the old maps in the archives (takes a look at the bookshelves); all of the material has been of big help to me. Nowhere else in the world would it be possible to find Byzantine ruins and such extensive literature at hand.

Interview by Michele Erik Manni

Trees in Istanbul

Thomas Arentzen

A City of Planes

Outside the Bayezid Mosque in Fatih, I am greeted by an elegant elder stretching his long limbs toward me. He is about 375 years old and almost 8 meters around the waist. Not entirely innocent of ironic playfulness, he says:

“Welcome to Beyazıt Square, built on the third hill of Istanbul. I am one of the many silent witnesses of history, my dear friend.”

Sitting on top of the Forum of Theodosius – between the main entrance of Istanbul University, the mosque, and the bazaar – this aging creature knows much more history than I do, having observed all sorts of human kalabalik. But, as he tells me, he keeps quiet about it. While his complexion is spotty, partly covered by moss and lichen, his leaves remain freshly green; he is reaching out, it seems, in a counter-clockwise twist, as if to say that his time – arboreal time – is a different time than the one insistently ticking in our modern human heads.

At the current moment in time, this old plane tree (*çınar*) is named after the poet Hüseyin Avni Dede, a human whose crown consists of a gray long flowing beard and mane, and who has allegedly spent almost forty poetic years at the foot of the tree. But the plane must have donned other names and greeted many a human before me and the poet. He speaks silence.

None of us knows what the Hüseyin Avni Dede plane is thinking – although I am guessing that the poet has a hunch. In any case, he is just one of the several trees given a voice, with some support from the Istanbul municipality. This city takes trees seriously. Not least plane trees, which overlook most of the urban palaces, parks, and mosques, connecting eras and ages, religions and realms.

To Ottoman people, planes connoted holiness, greatness, longevity, strength, and majesty, but the roots of human-plane connection stretch even deeper into history. The Hüseyin Avni Dede pair – the bearded human and the old plane – grow out of a longstanding tradition in these parts, an ancient affinity between people and planes. According to the Greek historian Herodotus (5th century BC), King Xerxes I fell in love with a plane as he was passing through Asia Minor: “Xerxes came upon a plane-tree, to whom for her beauty he gave adornment of gold, and he ordered one of his ‘immortal men’ to guard her.” (7.31)

In Theodore Prodromos' twelfth-century Byzantine novel *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, the male hero bemoans his beloved, who resembles a plane tree. Assuming she is dead, he exclaims: "Alas, Rhodanthe, where is the springtime of your youth, the cypress of your fair figure [...] the ivy of your locks (that strange adornment) which weaves around your head as if around a plane tree?" (6.291–295).

In the early Byzantine period, John Moschos tells of a holy man. His name was Adolas, and he apparently loved a plane so much that he settled in the hollow of the tree. There he lived a bearded life, in the middle of Thessaloniki (*Spiritual Meadow* 70), not unlike that of Hüseyin Avni Dede one and a half millennium later. Another legend relates that a Sufi master used to meditate in the hollow plane by the Atik Valide Mosque in Üsküdar, and similar stories are known from the Persian world as well. Planes are hospitable; their ability to open up their trunks, while still alive, grants hollow and hallowed spaces for peaceful retreats.



Handkerchiefs and flower tied to a tree in sign of devotion

Not all plane residents are bearded, however. The old Marian shrine of the Life-giving Spring lies just beyond the Byzantine city walls. According to the legend, this important pilgrimage church was erected where a healing spring gushed forth in the middle of a grove during the early Byzantine period – only few years before John Moschos' plane welcomed its human dweller into its trunk. The current church structure is fairly recent, and so are the patriarchal tombs in the cypress shade. But the spring (*hagiasma*) may be the same – if a spring is, indeed, ever the same. The water pours forth, clear and fresh. And outside the chapel that is built around the spring, another little chapel inhabits the courtyard: a plane tree. This plane has

opened a crack in its womb. Within it dwells an icon of the most holy Theotokos. Candles and incense

may be lit in front of it. It is a living, growing chapel, one veritably theotokian, a chapel that buds each spring.



Devotes at Eyüp Sultan Mosque

Outside the Eyüp Sultan Mosque, young boys and women are praying standing, bending gently, as if a wind is slowly swaying them. Inside the Abu Ayyub al-Ansari Mausoleum, a white leaf has been framed and put on display. The sign reads: “The leaf of the tree, which is planted by Prophet, Hz. Muhammed.” But it is outside that the crowds gather. In the courtyard, where an ablution fountain would otherwise have been located, a plane tree rises from the fenced platform, and the faithful have assembled around it. Its leaves are green. It grows from a sacred spring. “A spring from which those nearest to God shall drink,” says the plaque. Plane trees come with blessings. What they ponder in their silence, God only

knows, but I cannot help thinking that this one, with its slightly inclined posture, is also participating in prayer.

Beyond the Plane

The first tree that I encountered upon arriving in Istanbul was no plane tree at all. His name was Nâzım Hikmet. Hikmet is neither a mystic nor a devotee, but a modernist poet. He thinks with trees, writes with trees, sings with trees. This is the poem that came to me:

My head is a foaming cloud, inside and outside I'm the sea.

I am a walnut tree in Gülhane Park in Istanbul,

an old walnut tree with nots and scars.

You don't know this, and the police don't either.

I am a walnut tree in Gülhane Park.

My leaves sparkle like fish in water,
 my leaves flutter like silk handkerchiefs.
 Break one off, my darling, and wipe your tears.
 My leaves are my hands – I have a hundred thousand hands.
 Istanbul I touch you with a hundred thousand hands.
 My leaves are my eyes, and I am shocked at what I see.
 I look at you, Istanbul, with a hundred thousand eyes
 and my leaves beat, beat with a hundred thousand hearts.

I am a walnut tree in Gülhane Park.
 You don't know this, and the police don't either.

(trans.by R. Christie, R. McKane & T. S. Halman)

Hikmet wrote this poem in exile, his head foaming in the winds of Istanbul memories, torn perhaps between love and fear. Recurrently persecuted for his communist views, the poet had been imprisoned by the Turkish police before, but he remains a living presence, an unseen observer in the heart of the city, a hundred thousand leaves that watch and touch and pulsate as the streams of people pass him by, the fluttering of handkerchiefs. He is a walnut tree. He is, like Hüseyin Avni Dede, a silent witness to the atrocities and ecstasies of human kalabalik.

Days later I would travel to the island of Prinkipos/Büyükada, where the powerful were once confined. From the harbor, I walked up the steep hill in the sunny Marmara air, passed the wooden orphanage, a few cows and a goat, before I climbed up the even steeper hill to St. George of the Bells Monastery. This holy place, beautifully situated on the island's summit, is a pilgrimage site that attracts both Christian and Muslim believers. A true pilgrim here is supposed to walk barefoot, in silence.

I had kept my shoes on. As I slowly ascended the mountain, the smell of pine reached me; I was surrounded by trees – conifers, but also olives, pears, and others. Up here, beyond the lofty planes, the trees were smaller. But they were all dressed up – in fabrics. Long threads of yarn, in red, white, and yellow, appeared first along the path, then socks and ribbons, facemasks, headbands, sheets of plastic, shoelaces and strings, cotton belts (I think), bandannas, and myriad unidentifiable white pieces of textile – every single thread was a prayer, borne up by a forest of branches and stems, moved by the wind. The last saplings along the pilgrimage route stood only meters away from the monastery, and yet they never

arrived in its sanctuary; they were busy carrying prayers. And thus, it was as though the bosk itself formed a sanctuary, a space of ceaseless prayer.

Having visited the church, I pulled out my handkerchief from my pocket and tied it to a pine.



Handkerchiefs and cloths hanging on a pine tree outside the Monastery of St. George of the Bells in Büyükada

This was I pondering while wandering through Gülhane Park, among glittering schools of fish, walnuts scattered on the ground, under gnarly crowns. What had I been praying for? Toward what aim had I tied my handkerchief to a branch? What were the women at Eyüp praying for? Or the young boys in front of the sacred plane? What are all these whitening pieces of cloth fluttering high above the Marmara Sea praying for? I was not sure. I am not sure. I shall never be sure. To be honest, I know as little about prayer as I know about the inner lives of trees, but for some reason this form of arboreal prayer intuitively made sense to me. Sometimes we pray for an ailing grandmother, it is true, but eventually the prayers bleach in the sun and become quieter prayers. Perhaps what we hope for in the hollow of our speechlessness, as we lend the body of our prayers to boughs and branches, is some sort of resonance? The deep chorus of our supplications, I thought, amounted to a wafting silence, a longing for communion. Perhaps this was what Sufis and Christian mystics, poets and prayerful people – and even a cat I saw in an Istanbul plane tree – were all aching to find: their hearts beating with the leaves of trees? Perhaps in this affinity, which cuts

through religious and cultural boundaries, across grand sweeps of history, may reveal a slight treeness in us?

Perhaps. I don't know. And the police don't either.

A note of gratitude

In addition to the trees, I would like to thank the Swedish Research Institute for the scholarship and the possibility to work in Istanbul, Olof Heilo and Anders Ackfeldt for hosting me, other guests for great company, and Ivana Jevtic and ANAMED fellows for exploratory fun. My tree studies are part of the research project *Beyond the Garden: An Ecocritical Approach to Early Byzantine Christianity* (2018–01130) funded by the Swedish Research Council.



Thomas Arentzen is PhD holder and a reader in Church History. He is currently working as a researcher in Greek philology at Uppsala University, where he is conducting the research project *Beyond the Garden: An Ecocritical Approach to Early Byzantine Christianity*. His research focus is placed on ecological questions in early Christian poetry and devotional literature.

His publications include *The Virgin in Song: Mary and the Poetry of Romanos the Melodist* (2017) and *Byzantine Tree Life: Christianity and the Arboreal Imagination* (2021, with Virginia Burrus & Glenn Peers)

Puppets and Rulers: a Complicated Relationship

Michele Erik Manni

Almost three years have passed since Onur Uysal – Turkish actor and *karagözcü* of the Italian theatrical company Astragali – first introduced me to his long-time friends Karagöz and Hacivat, the two eccentric main characters of Turkish shadow play. You would expect such encounter to occur in a theatre in Bursa or on the streets of Istanbul during Ramadan nights, but in this case the meeting took place in a quite unusual place: a small university hall in Lecce, Italy. The two Turkish *stars* – who have siblings and twins scattered all around the Mediterranean region – performed for us students a medley of their repertoire, which is characterised by the presence of loud music, double meanings and a subtle irony. It was indeed an entertaining show the two puppets had set up – as the applauses might have hinted. But would it always be so well-received?

Origins of the Turkish Shadow Play and Its Parabolic Trajectory

Shadow plays emerged as a form of entertainment in the Ottoman Empire around mid-16th century – as different sources suggest. However, the origins of Karagöz and Hacivat, and so of shadow play at large, are still uncertain, with various theories having been drawn up by researchers. Several Turkish researchers, as well as Turkish officials, asserting that Karagöz and Hacivat, and in part shadow play, are of Ottomans Turkish origins, with the Municipality of Bursa claiming to be the birthplace of such form of entertainment. However, there are other theories suggesting that such play is either of Central Asia origins – given the existence of *Kolkorçak* (sometimes spelled *Kol Korçak*) and *Çadır Hayal* (the Tent Illusion) in Turkic nomad tribes of Central Asia – or of Egyptian origins – where the art puppetry was well-developed and a character named *Arāğūz* existed well before the 16th century. The latter appears to be the more plausible option, not only for the striking similarity between the names Karagöz and Arāğūz but also given that such form of entertainment emerged in Ottoman sources in the period just subsequent to the Ottoman conquest of Mameluke Egypt.

The karagöz shows had a huge success under the Ottoman Empire, with plays being performed for both common people and the élites on different occasion – mostly under Ramadan and circumcision parties. It is said, in fact, that it was the favourite form of entertainment of Sultan Selim I. What appealed to rulers and subjects was the action in the plot and the vivid language used by the characters. However, it is important to note that the karagöz play went into a major “renovation” period in the late 17th – early

18th century. The structure of the plays was changed – with the introduction of a four-section structure – and social criticism and satire were introduced in the plot of the shows. The newly-written shows featured new characters, all with distinctive features and all representing a certain category of people. No category was spared from the pungent irony of the puppets and their puppeteers – not even the sultans themselves, who often would even interact with the characters of the plays.

However, what exactly made Karagöz and Hacivat famous throughout the 17th and 18th century – that is to say, the irony – would prove to be even the reason for the fall of such art. By the beginning of the 19th century, the long tongues of the two *stars* became feared by the sultans and the élite class. As the power in the hands of the Ottoman rulers started waning, so did their tolerance towards any form of criticism or mocking by the people. The thinly veiled satire of the regent and his corrupt administration was no longer welcome in the 1830s, with Sultan Abdülmecid before and Sultan Abdülhamid I later banning karagöz plays and fining – sometimes even imprisoning – the puppeteers. As a consequence of such measures, the shadow play transformed into an art more apt for children than adults, having being stripped of its satirical and criticism-heavy dimension; something it would never really regain in the future – not even during the Republican times, where the state still would still retain control over the plays.

Puppets and Rulers in Contemporary Times

The transformation of shadow play, and puppetry at large, from a satirical form of art to an entertaining one did not only affect Karagöz and Hacivat, but also their fellow puppet companions around the Mediterranean. Karagiozis in Greece, Pulcinella in Italy, Arāğūz in Egypt – they all lost their primary role as critics of society and were relegated to simple *showmen*. Governments have made sure that the long-tongued papier mâché figures hold a certain standard and stick to topics that may not cast a dark light over the officials. Most of the Mediterranean puppets appears to have accepted the marginal roles in society that local governments have designated for them, but every now and then, some of them disobey to such command.

A great example is represented by the puppets of the theatrical group Maşaşit Mati. The main star is Beeshu, a caricatured version of the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who appears to suffer of bipolar disorder – swinging between periods in which he feels invincible and periods in which he is overwhelmed by the feelings of fear and anxiety caused by the protests of Ibn Ḥurriya and Bint Aş-Şām. Through the use of irony and over caricatured representation of the life in Syria and its political actors, the puppets’

intentions are clear: highlight what is not working within the country and who is to be held accountable for its malfunctioning and suffering. The plays, which started to be performed in the early days of the 2011 Syrian Revolution, did not attract the sympathies of the ruling élite of the country, with the militias of Bashar al-Assad attempting on the life of the puppets and their owners on multiple occasions.

A similar role has been taken by the extravagant Abla Fāhīta in Egypt. The long-tongued puppet tries to cast light on the social failures in Egyptian society and the inconsistency of the work carried out by the Egyptian politicians in regard to the problematics that affect the life of the common Egyptian. Even in this case has the government tried to intervene to silence the puppet, with parliament members filing complaints asking to bar the program in which she features and accusing her of being a British agent attempting to throw Egypt into chaos.

These last two examples show how puppetry plays can still be relevant in today's socio-political reality, providing a perfect occasion for the expression of the popular ideas and views in regard to certain topics and political actors. It also shows how rulers are still afraid of such figures and how they are aware of the puppets' reach and influence over society. It is difficult, however, to assess what the future of political puppetry in the Middle East will be. Will Karagöz and Hacivat make a comeback before next year's Turkish presidential elections? Who knows, the candidates are already warned!



Michele Erik Manni is a student at Stockholm University, where he is currently enrolled in a master's programme in Middle Eastern Studies. Under Fall 2022, he holds an intern position at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul. His research focus is placed on the Ottoman cultural and religious heritage, as well as the relations between modern Turkey and Egypt. He also has an interest in the cultural production during the Arab Spring.

SRII Fellowship Report

Queering the Lived-Experiences of Technology-Mediated Violence Against the Queer Community in Turkey

Rukaya Al Zayani

During my fellowship stay at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, I used to follow a pre-writing ritual. Every morning, I would grab a freshly brewed coffee from Caffè Nero opposite the Swedish Consulate, and I would march past the gates of the consulate, hoping to find the turtle and the beautiful cats in the courtyard. I would sit in my favorite spot in the library, and I would begin my working day. These would revolve around my current PhD project, which aims at queering the lived experiences of technology-mediated violence against the Queer community in Turkey. I used my fellowship opportunity to conduct interviews for my overall research, which will result in a compilation thesis. It was difficult to get hold of queer refugees to interview, but I managed to conduct interviews with online queer sex workers for the first stage of my fieldwork project. I found the institute to be the ideal place to carry out such work for multiple reasons. First, it was located in the center of Istanbul – making it easily reachable and convenient for my interviewees – and second, it provided me with a seminar room where I could conduct my interviews with utmost privacy.



One of the two turtles living in the courtyard of the Swedish Consulate



The view from one of the windows at the library

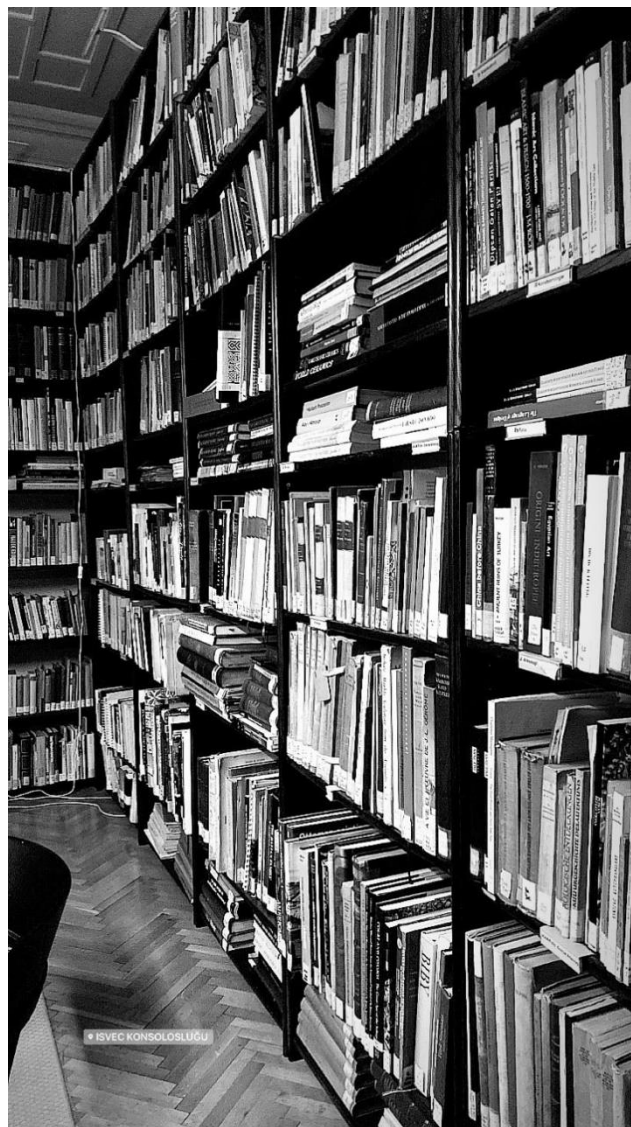
Upon returning to Sweden, I began to transcribe and code the interviews. Shortly after, I started to draft up an article about online queer sex work in Turkey since I had enough materials for it. My findings on the different forms of violence, abuse, and violations the queer community in Turkey is subjected to have enabled me to analyse both how these problematic issues are experienced by the queer interviewees and how they make use of empowering narratives to undergo such events. This dichotomy reflects how robust, resilient, and rebellious the queer community in Turkey is.

My research's preliminary results revealed that the virtual space is exacerbated by a myriad of violent and abusive acts, in which a group have more social power over the other. These findings mirror violence, injustice, and oppression already taking place in the offline context, which are based on the person's gender, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and social belonging. The majority of online queer

sex workers have been experiencing slut-shaming, homophobia/transphobia, non-consensual sharing of explicit content online, and blackmailing. The results I obtained following the conversations with my interviewees showed that there is a correlation between these forms of gendered violence and the ones existing in scholarly work and social policies. However, one of the factors that was crucial – and also significant – was how violence is expressed, embodied, and experienced. It is important to consider that violence travels both in time and space. Moreover, one should remember that consent, coercion, and blackmailing are experienced in a different way in the virtual space compared to how they would be experienced in the offline context. However, it is important to note that they are both embodied and embedded in the logic and structures of a Turkish patriarchal society. Online queer sex work can thus

represent a site of resistance and a reaction to systemic oppression stemming from gendered, classed, ethicized power relations.

Besides carrying out my research, the stay at the Swedish Research Institute gave me the opportunity to explore Byzantium. I must admit I found it to be immensely fascinating. Istanbul is a second home to me, as it is here that I have obtained my BA and MA degrees. But for the first time in my life, I had the chance to picture Istanbul as the old Byzantium and not the modern cosmopolitan city. Since moving to Sweden, I have learned a lot about the relationship between my new home and Turkey, which dates all the way back to the Ottoman period. Apart from providing me with a working hub and a chance to see Istanbul in a different light, the stay allowed me link up with fellow scholars researching in similar topics. In fact, I was allowed to hold a seminar, giving me the opportunity to talk about my project to fellow researchers and getting to know more about others' works. Moreover, it also gave me the chance to follow the seminars on other topics presented by



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other researchers at the Institute, which I found to be interesting. All these events organised under the period of my fellowship stay allowed me to meet many great Sweden-based scholars and artists, and enlarge my professional network.



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She holds a BA in Political Science and International Relations from Bahçeşehir University and a MA in the same field from İstanbul Bilgi University.

Rethinking the Diplomatic Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Swedish Empire in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century

Ahmet Can Karapınar

During the senior year of my bachelor's studies in History, Political Science and International Relations at Boğaziçi University, I had the opportunity to take a history course, which allowed me to deepen my knowledge in the diplomatic ties between the Ottoman Empire and the other European states. As a final exam, we were required to write a research paper on a topic of our choice tied to the so-called stagnation period of the Ottoman Empire (XVII – XVIII centuries) and, in general, to the content of the course. Moreover, we were required to use a primary source. For me, it was obvious that I would have written a paper on the diplomatic ties between the Ottomans and a European state. But which one?

The choice was hard. In fact, as we were required to use a primary source, the only material that could be useful to my intents was a *sefaretname* – an Ottoman embassy report. But – again – which one? The inspiration came following a visit at Pera Museum's permanent exhibition titled "Intersecting Worlds: Ambassadors and Painters". At this exhibition, huge portraits of Kozbekçi Mustafa Ağa and Mehmed Said Paşa – Ottoman ambassadors to the Swedish court in 1727–28 and 1732–33 respectively – by the Swedish painter Georg Engelhardt Schröder (1684–1750) were on display. As the two portrayals immediately sparked my interest in their job, the first question I posed myself was whether they did write any *sefaretnames*. Following a thorough literature review, I found out that the only known Ottoman *sefaretname* on Sweden was written by no other than Mehmed Said Paşa in 1733.

Having decided the topic of my paper and having found evidence on the existence of the *sefaretname*, the next step was the search for the text itself. Despite finding several extracts of it – either Latinized or translated into English – in many different venues, it appeared impossible to find a fully Latinized version or a complete English translation of it. But I was lucky to find a fully Latinized version of the *sefaretname* in a research article – even though I later found out it was a transcription of the text that had been published by İskender Yanko Hoçi in 1911. Having found the source, I could finally start my research paper.

For weeks, I went through the sefaretname text and my notes from the Theories of International Relations course I had taken in a previous semester. From the beginning, I was determined to analyse the diplomatic relations between the Ottomans and the Swedes through the prism of theories of international relations, an approach which I consider novel. By undertaking such approach, I wanted to draw a strong theoretical framework. While analysing the diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Swedish Kingdom, I noticed that relations between the states had emerged as both faced a common threat, that is to say Russia. In my eyes, this provided me the perfect opportunity to analyse their relations through what is called in international relations the realist theory – and, specifically in this case, defensive neorealist theory. In fact, I wanted to place emphasis on the strategies the two states adopted to maintain the status quo while searching for external security.

The rise of Russia as a strong political and military power in the early eighteenth century marked a historical turning point for Eastern Europe, which effects still resonate in today's political arena. The two states that suffered the most in the immediate time from Russia's rise were the Swedish Kingdom and the Ottoman Empire. In fact, Russia threatened their power balance in the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea, which at the time were considered almost their "private" lakes.



Portrait of Charles XII by Hyacinthe Rigaud

However, drawing the theoretical framework and explaining the long-term trends were only one side of the story. The question regarding the short-term events that shaped the future of the relations was still there. So, this time I turned my attention to the reign of the Swedish King Charles XII (r. 1697–1718) and especially his stay in the Ottoman Empire between 1709 and 1714. During his stay in the Ottoman Empire, *Demirbaş Şarl* – the Turkish name given to Charles XII – was very much involved in the early modern Ottoman politics, a period in which the line between domestic and foreign affairs was blurred. He successfully sided with the Ottoman political and military circles who

had a revisionist approach towards the Karlowitz (1699) and the Istanbul (1700) Treaties, following which the Ottoman Empire lost its status as a great power – just as the Swedes would experience following the Treaty of Nystad in 1721. Moreover, Charles XII actively took part in the related political intrigues.

During his five-year-long stay in the Ottoman Empire, Charles XII saw a whole Ottoman military campaign against Russia – the Pruth River Campaign between 1710–11 – which ended with the signing of the Treaty of the Pruth in 1711. Charles XII's insistence on following the military campaign with the soldiers under his command and his persistent refusal to leave the Ottoman Empire ultimately led to his forced removal – an event which is known in Swedish history as *Kalabaliken i Bender*. Interestingly, the forced removal of the Swedish king was badly received by some parts of the Ottoman elite and led to the dismissal of various high-ranking officials who had ties with the Swedish king – including the grand vizier, the grand mufti, the Khan of Crimea, and the commander of the fortress at Bender.

In 1732, Mehmed Said Paşa was sent to Sweden and the court of the King Frederick I (r. 1720–1751). It appears that he was initially sent to Sweden to pursue a payment of the substantial debt the previous regent Charles XII had with the Ottoman Empire and its élite. In fact, following the five year-long stay at Bender, the Swedish Kingdom owed 250,000 kuruş – as of 1732 – to the Ottomans. However, the real reason was to understand the current situation of the relations between Sweden and Russia, and whether they had become allies. Mehmed Said Paşa's ambassadorship – which was recorded by himself in his *İsveç Sefaretnamesi* in a quite detailed manner and later submitted to the Grand Vizier Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa (1689–1758) – is a remarkable historical example from a defensive neorealist point of view. The



Portrait of Frederick I by Georg Engelhardt Schröder

behaviour adopted by the two threatened states, the Ottoman Empire and the Swedish Empire, which wanted to maximize their security in face of the rising power of Russia, allowed the formation of an alliance interested in maintaining the status quo. Many of these structural dynamics become apparent when one studies the *İsveç Sefaretnamesi* in depth. So, while Mehmed Said Paşa was not able to collect the debt – even though he managed to get a bill payable from the Swedes with the king’s seal –, his efforts led to the formation of an Ottoman-Swedish alliance.

This alliance was formalized with the signing of the Trade Treaty in 1737 and later the Treaty of Alliance in 1739, with the latter considered as “the zenith of Ottoman-Swedish diplomatic relations”.



Mehmed Said Efendi and his Retinue by Georg Engelhardt Schröder

Both the long-term trends and the short-term events were at play during the process. Yet, they become visible only within a theoretical framework, in this case defensive neorealist theory. In that regard, interpreting Ottoman diplomatic history through the prism of theories of international relations has a great potential to open new horizons for old research questions. While concluding my article here, I would like to extend my thanks to Assoc. Prof. Derin Terzioğlu for giving her valuable feedback in various steps of my research paper and to Assoc. Prof. Emine Aslı Çalkıvık for introducing me to the exciting

world of theories of international relations. Also, I would like to thank Dr. Anders Ackfeldt for encouraging me to write about this in *Kalabalik!*.

Further Readings

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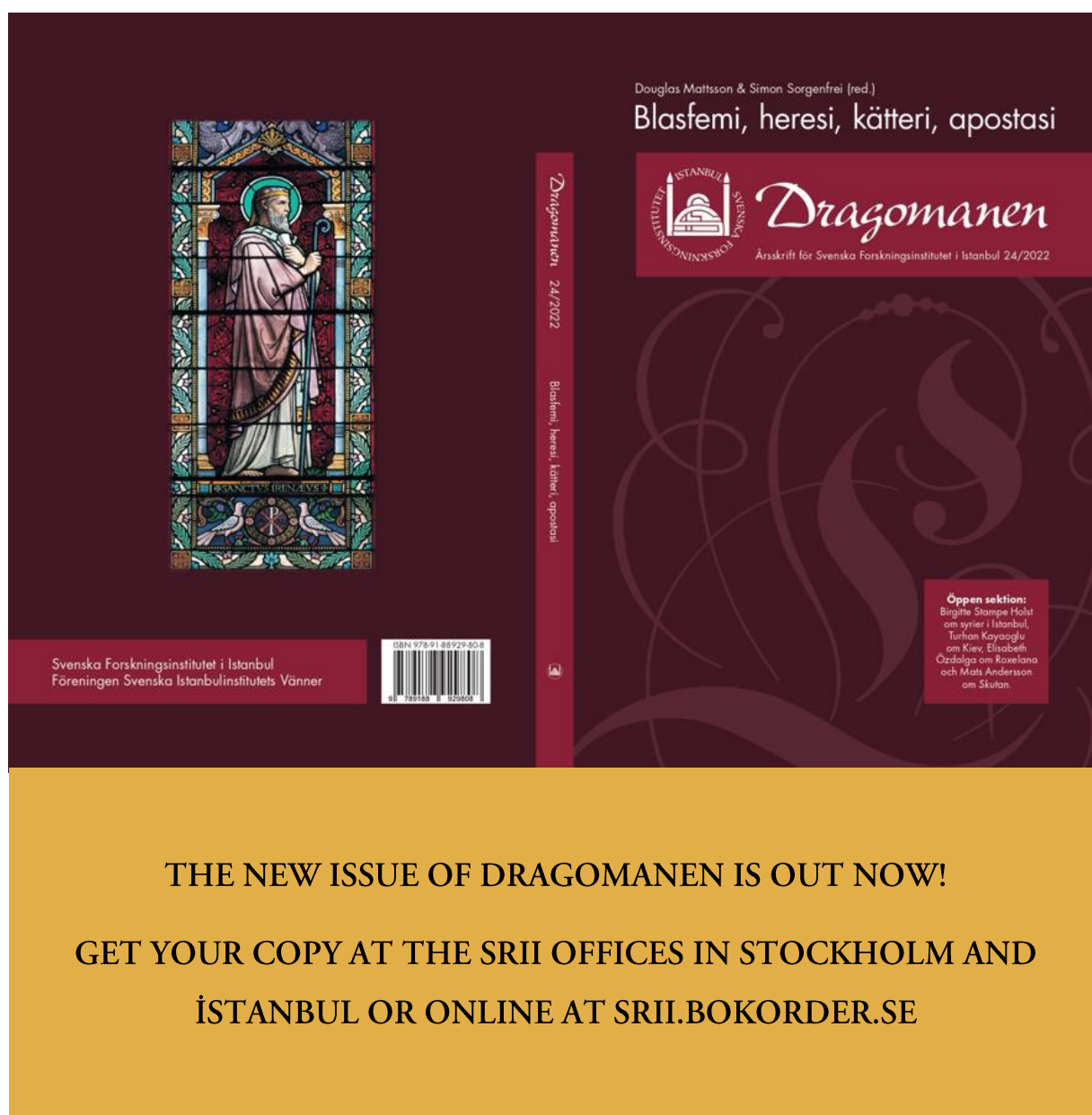
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Douglas Mattsson & Simon Sorgenfrei (red.)

Blasfemi, heresi, kätteri, apostasi

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