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## MAGNIFICENT WORK ON SWEDISH-ARMENIAN RELATIONS

(ANN GRÖNHAMMAR, *DRÖMMEN OM ARMENIEN.  
ARMENIER OCH SVENSKAR UNDER TUSEN ÅR*<sup>1</sup>,  
MEDSTRÖMS BOKFÖRLAG, STOCKHOLM 2021)

**Abstract:** The reviewer presents the content of the work of Ann Grönhammar on relations between Sweden and Armenia, beginning from cloudy – from the perspective of sources – times of Vikings who wandered as far as the Caucasus, through significantly better documented episodes from the 17th century, until the beginning of the 20th century. The reviewer indicates Polish threads, resulting from the existence of the Armenian diaspora in Poland as the nearest to Sweden from a geographical point of view. Furthermore, the reviewer emphasises the advantages of the work, i.e. usage of many sources, including unpublished ones, as well as iconographic material from different archival, library and museum collections.

**Keywords:** Armenia, Sweden, Swedish-Armenian relations, Ann Grönhammar

There are probably few in Sweden who are aware of the fact that Swedes and Armenians have had contacts with each other for more than one thousand years. Ann Grönhammar, former curator at the Royal Armoury (a museum in the Royal Palace), has found points of contact already during the Viking era. In her book, she describes these contacts all the way up to the Olympic Games in Stockholm in 1912. She stops her story there because in her view, the rest of it is well-known. I am not fully convinced of that, but the later history of the Armenians is certainly not as unknown as the one discussed in this book.

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<sup>1</sup> The Dream of Armenia: Armenians and Swedes During One Thousand Years.

Grönhammar first presents the early history of the Armenians, and then turns to the Vikings. During their journeys in the Caucasus and in Persia, they must have encountered some Armenians who lived there. However, the sources are scarce and Grönhammar only states that there must have been some encounters from the 8th until the end of the 10th century. There have also been suggestions about Armenians visiting Sweden during this period, but there is no evidence of that.

We are on more solid ground in the 17th century. Grönhammar presents a detailed description of Swedish commercial contacts with Armenians in the Persian city of Isfahan. The Swedish sea captain Nils Matson Kjöping (1621-1680) made several visits to Isfahan and characterized the Armenians there as hospitable and kind. In 1687, four Armenian tradesmen arrived from Persia to Stockholm and established import of silk and other Oriental products to Sweden. The Dutch Ludvig Fabritius (1648-1729) led three Swedish delegations to Isfahan commissioned by the king Charles (Karl) XI.

Further on, an array of fascinating persons appear. The Ottoman Armenian Ignatius Mouradgea (1740-1807) was employed at the Swedish legation in Constantinople. King Gustav III raised him to the rank of nobility and made him Swedish ambassador there. He was given the Swedish name d'Ohsson and also his son, son-in-law and grandsons served the Swedish state as diplomats and officers. Mouradgea d'Ohsson was also a respected scholar. His magnum opus about the Ottoman Empire in three volumes, written originally in French, was widely praised and translated into several languages.

An Armenian from Constantinople who used the name Norayr de Byzance (his original name was Stepanos Gapezian, 1844-1915) married Swedish-Jewish Selma Jacobsson (1841-1899) and moved to Stockholm. Jacobsson had a photo studio much in demand, especially among the upper class, including the royal family. Norayr was a linguist and published an extensive French-Armenian dictionary. He was also involved in the visit of the Armenian painter Ivan Aivazovsky to Stockholm in 1887 and in the 8th International Congress of Orientalists in the same city in 1889.

At the end of the 19th century, contacts between Swedes and Armenians increased. Swedes like the explorer Sven Hedin (1865-1952) and the writer Sophie Elkan (1853-1921) encountered Armenians on their journeys and wrote about them. An evangelical free church, Svenska Missionsförbundet (Mission Covenant Church of Sweden), had missionaries in the Caucasus, some of whom wrote books about their encounters with Armenians. The situation of Armenians themselves was deteriorating at this time and the Hamidian massacres in the 1890s got some attention in Sweden because of the accounts of missionaries and diplomats.

And what about the Olympic Games in Stockholm? For the first time ever the Ottoman Empire participated. That was due to two athletes, both of whom were

Armenians. They were not very successful, but one of them, Vahram Papazian (1892-1986), described his experiences in Stockholm in his memoirs.

Some parts of the book are of particular interest for a Polish audience. The Armenians of Poland were for some time the closest Armenian community to Sweden geographically. Some Armenians from Poland visited Sweden as early as the late 16th century. Simeon Lehatsi (1584-1639), born in Zamość, was one of the first who wrote about Swedes in Armenian. Zakarias Gamotski (Zachariasz Gamocki, 1620-1679) was an Armenian from Poland who moved to Sweden and served Swedish kings. As Sweden and Poland fought several wars during this period, Gamotski spent some time as a prisoner in Poland.

Ann Grönhammar has done a great job with this book. She has found both published and unpublished sources as well as relevant pictures in museums, archives, churches, and libraries not only in Sweden but also in other countries. I also want to compliment the layout of the book. The volume is richly illustrated and some of the maps are real treasures. This is, indeed, a great work about a subject which is mostly unknown to the public. It will definitely be the standard work of reference on this subject for a long time.

## Bibliography

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### Svante Lundgren, *Magnificent work on Swedish-Armenian relations*

**Streszczenie:** Recenzent przedstawia treść pracy Ann Grönhammar na temat relacji między Szwecją a Armenią począwszy od mglistych co do źródeł czasów Wikin-gów wędrujących aż po Kaukaz, poprzez znacznie lepiej udokumentowane epizody z wieku XVII, aż po początek XX wieku. Zwraca uwagę na polskie wątki, wyniki- kłe z faktu istnienia najbliższej Szwecji geograficznie diaspory ormiańskiej w Pol- sce. Podkreśla walory pracy, to jest wykorzystanie wielu źródeł, w tym niepubliko- wanych, a także materiału ikonograficznego z rozmaitych kolekcji archiwalnych, bibliotecznych i muzealnych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Armenia, Szwecja, relacje szwedzko-ormiańskie, Ann Grön- hammar

### Սվանտե Լունդգրեն, *Հիասքանչ աշխատություն շվեդական-հայկական փոխհարաբերությունների վերաբերյալ*

**Համառոտագիր.** Գրախոսը ներկայացնում է Անն Գրյոնհամմարի աշխատության բովանդակությունը նվիրված է Շվեդիայի և Հայաստանի փոխհարաբերություններին, որոնց ակունքները սկիզբ են առնում

վիկինգների մռայլ ժամանակներից, երբ նրանք ընդարձակվեցին ընդհուպ մինչև Կովկաս: Այնուհետև, ներկայացնելով 17-րդ դարի շատ ավելի լավ փաստագրված պատմական դրվագները, հեղինակը հասցնում է իր պատնամական գիծը մինչև 20-րդ դարի սկիզբը: Ուշադրություն է դարձնում նաև լեհական կապերի վրա, որոնք բխում են Լեհաստանում հայկական սփյուռքի գոյության փաստից, որն աշխարհագրականորեն ամենամոտն է Շվեդիային: Ընդգծելով աշխատության արժեքը՝ գրախոսը նշում է նրանում բազմաթիվ այդ թվում չիրապարակված աղբյուրների կիրառումը, ինչպես նաև զանազան արխիվային, գրադարանային և թանգարանային հավաքածուների պատկերագրական նյութերի օգտագործումը:

**Քանալի բառեր.** Հայաստան, Շվեդիա, շվեդ-հայկական հարաբերություններ, Անն Գոյոնհամմար