SWEDISH INSTITUTE at ATHENS

Wednesday, 2 December 2026, 19:00
Swedish Institute at Athens, Mitseon 9, Makrygianni

Associate Professor Georgios Pallis, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Carl Peter von Heidenstam in Grilla: The Attic estate of the first Swedish consul to Greece

ABSTRACT

Carl Peter von Heidenstam (1792-1878), a Swedish nobleman of German descent, was the first consul and then chargé d'affaires of the Kingdom of Sweden and Norway to Greece. After a rather adventurous youth, he was appointed consul and settled in Athens, where he was married to Elisa Skene, the daughter of the landscape painter James Skene of Rubislaw. Through his marriage and thanks to his position, he had bonds with the courts of kings Otto and George I and many prominent Greeks and Europeans living in the Greek capital.

Heidenstam family spent their summers in their estate of Grilla, a location between Maroussi and Kephissia, which were then small villages to the north of Athens. Carl Peter acquired the land –probably a former Ottoman property– as soon as he came to Athens. He built a house and planted a park full of pine trees, watered from Kephalari spring. The "little Swedish paradise", as Frederica Bremmer described it, was frequented by foreign diplomats, court officials, other dignitaries and Swedes passing through Athens.

The lecture explores the history of von Heidenstam's estate, from the beginning to the present day. The form of the house, the neighbors, the daily life and the relations with the nearby villagers are examined on the basis of the available evidence. Of particular interest are the antiquities found in Grilla and the small collection of attic tombstones owned by Carl Peter. After his death, the fate of the estate included its use as a hotel, its abandonment and finally its sale to the Amalieion Orphanage, in 1936. All that remains of the "little Swedish paradise" today, are some tall pine trees in the garden of this institution.

The lecture takes place on **Wednesday, 2 December 2026, 19:00,** with live presence at the Swedish Institute or via zoom link.