

Inspiring Story:

Dr. Ece Aynur Onur

Entrepreneur, Military Anthropologist

Turkish Fulbright Alumna, 2008-2009

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**RE-ENTRY
AND
NETWORKING
MEETING**

FULBRIGHT
Türkiye



Spring
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2023

Newsletter

From the Executive Director

Dear friends,

While I am happy to be writing this introduction to our Commission's Spring 2023 newsletter, I am also doing so with tremendous sadness, as this past semester we witnessed the tragedy of the large earthquakes in our country, and the countless deaths that resulted. Our Fulbright family was struck directly, with the loss of our alumnus, Dr. Cengiz Turan (2008-2009 FLTA) along with his wife and their small children. Please remember that the recovery, on every level, is a long and slow process, so in memory of Cengiz, his family, and so many others, I encourage us all to continue helping in whatever ways we can.

Fulbright activities continued in the aftermath of the earthquakes, despite the temporary turn to online instruction in universities. Throughout this period, we were also in the process of finally returning fully to face-to-face activities after two years of pandemic measures. We were grateful therefore, to be able to hold this spring our first in-person Re-Entry Meeting in three years. This event is an opportunity for recently returned Turkish Fulbrighters to come together, network with each other, and engage in a workshop-style meeting dealing with the issues and opportunities that follow a long foreign educational exchange experience. It was great to meet up with old friends, and to be together at such a challenging time. This Re-Entry Meeting was a great reminder of how much we missed having such contact with our grantees and alumni. It was also a reminder that given our mission of educational and cultural exchange, as much as possible, it is critical that such exchanges take place in person for maximum impact.

As another concrete sign of normalization, at the start of May I was able for the first time in three years to attend in person our annual European meeting of Fulbright Executive Directors, held this year in Prague. This time the event also included guests from the State Department in Washington, as well as the Public Affairs officers from the US Embassies in all European Commission countries. The Public Affairs Officers are an integral part of Fulbright activities, and I was very happy to be together in the meetings with our own PAO and Board Member, Ms. Viraj LeBailly. It was a great opportunity to exchange information about the structure, mission, challenges to and future of Fulbright. As the Turkish Fulbright Commission we are proud to be part of the European Fulbright family, which has been a true success story of binational practices in the world for the last 75 years.

On the following pages you will find pictures and more details about the above events, as well as many other interesting stories. Enjoy the newsletter, and I wish you all a safe, relaxing summer,

Prof. Ersel Aydınli

An Inspiring Story

Dr. Ece Aynur Onur grew up as a colonel's daughter in military settings. Encouraged by her family to stand on her own feet, she studied International Relations and Anthropology, won a Fulbright grant to do her Master's, and became one of the handful of military anthropologists in the world, and the only woman among them. She was set to move on in the academia, when after a loss in the family, she returned to a village in Burdur, and took a life-changing decision together with her brother. She left her promising life as an academic, sold her car and house to buy a tractor, and began dry farming on her grandfather's fields. Braving many challenges, she read and experimented extensively, finding the right fit of land, crop, and method to grow a successful business, as well as provide employment to women in the area.

To read about her many challenges and her Inspiring Story, please turn to page: 12-18



The February 6 Earthquakes

During this period of mourning, the Turkish Fulbright Commission cancelled all celebratory events, including receptions and the end-of-year meeting for our American grantees.

On 6 February 2023, at 04:17 local time, a magnitude 7.8 earthquake struck southern and central Türkiye and northern and western Syria. It was followed by a 7.7 earthquake at 13:24. There was widespread damage in an area of about 350,000 km². An estimated 14 million people, or 16 percent of Türkiye's population, were affected with an estimated 1.5 million people left homeless. The confirmed death toll stood at more than 50,500 in Türkiye, and with this number, it is the deadliest natural disaster in its modern history.

As millions of people and institutions did all over the world, The Turkish Fulbright Commission staff reached out to their loved ones to find out how they were affected. Ms. Neslihan Tekman, Alumni Specialist, compiled a list of all our alumni in the affected regions and made a personal phone call to each one of them. It was a harrowing experience, listening to the trauma, memories, and stories of our many alumni. Through this process she learned that we had lost an alumnus, a teacher, a husband and father, Dr. Cengiz Turan.

In Memoriam: Dr. Cengiz Turan

year in Syracuse University. Upon his return he went on to receive his M.A. and Ph.D. in Linguistics at Hacettepe University. For the past ten years he was a lecturer at Adana Alparslan Türkeş Science and Technology University.

It was with great sadness that we learned of the loss of Dr. Cengiz Turan, a Fulbright 2008-09 FLTA alumnus. Cengiz Turan won the FLTA grant just after he completed his B.A. in ELT at Çukurova University and spent his grant

Dr. Turan was visiting family at Kahramanmaraş, when the earthquakes struck, and passed away together with his family.



We would like to thank Associate Professor Hasan Gül, 2021-2022 Senior Scholar alumnus, now teaching at Adana Alparslan Türkeş Science and Technology University, who graciously agreed to write about his experience living through the earthquakes.



On February 6, 2023, two earthquakes with magnitudes of 7.8 and 7.7 struck eleven cities in Türkiye and northwestern Syria. As yet, this disaster ranks fifth among deadliest earthquakes of this century. Even though the epicenter of both earthquakes was Kahramanmaraş, my city Adana also suffered extensive destruction, causing major devastation in the region and

damaging or destroying many buildings.

That night at 04:17 AM local time, I was at my home in Adana, reading, when the tremors started. I had never felt anything like this in my whole life. I was convinced that I would die when the earthquake shook our fifteen-floor building. I heard screams in the building, and saw that the mosque near my apartment lost its minaret. I swayed on my feet for 30 seconds, but it seemed to last a lifetime.

When the earthquake paused, I fled outside without taking anything with me. My family was the only thing on my mind. They lived two blocks away, and I ran there with my slippers. There were cries and screams everywhere. I didn't see any buildings that collapsed, but the screaming didn't stop for a while. Thank God, my family was safe. I heard ambulances. The traffic had stopped by that time. People

rushed into the streets and they looked confused about what to do. I could see the sorrow and anxiety on people's face. Many people had to spend the night in their cars or out on the streets in the freezing cold because of constant aftershocks. Most people went to their villages or towns to take shelter in relatively lower-rise houses.

We all know that Türkiye is an earthquake-prone country, but I never expected these devastating earthquakes to strike the place I lived. As of April 28, the earthquakes have caused more than 50,000 deaths, and many more injuries. The aftershocks and cold weather made things worse. Despite lax construction standards in a rapidly urbanizing region, Adana did not experience a high death toll. Eleven buildings collapsed and close to 500 people lost their lives. I sincerely hope that we never have to go through the same experience again.



News from the Commission

Fulbright Conference on the Future of Fulbright Programs in Europe

From May 2 to May 5, 2023, the Czech Republic Fulbright Commission hosted a conference about the future of the Fulbright Program in Europe. Prof. Ersel Aydınli, together with Ms. Viraj LeBailly, Minister Counselor for Public Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Ankara, joined the directors of other European Commissions, diplomats from European U.S. Embassies, and other representatives of the Fulbright

Program in the U.S. to discuss current trends in international education, the need to adjust the Fulbright programs to turbulent worldwide conditions, and the changing needs of grantees who set off for their Fulbright stays. Ethan Rosenzweig, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Academic Programs in the U.S. Department of State was also present at the conference.



RE-ENTRY AND NETWORKING MEETING

After a three-year-break caused by the pandemic, the annual Re-Entry and Networking Meeting finally took place on March 30, 2023 in Istanbul. This occasion brought Turkish Alumni who completed their various Fulbright grant programs and returned to Türkiye in the last three years.



The purpose of the meeting was to facilitate the acclimation process for homecoming grantees and provide them with both the experiences of former alumni from different career paths, and the opportunity to network within the larger group. 96 alumni from Community

College (CCIP), Master's and Ph.D., Ph.D. Dissertation (VSR), Postdoctoral, Senior Scholar, Scholar-in-Residence, Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA), Teaching Excellence Award (TEA) and Humphrey grants attended this year's meeting.

The Re-Entry & Networking Meeting started with a solemn moment and a commemoration of the earthquakes, after which Board Chairman Mr. John Thomas McCarthy and Executive Director Prof. Ersel Aydınli gave their opening remarks.



Pictured: Board Chairman Mr. John Thomas McCarthy's opening remarks



Pictured: Prof. Ersel Aydınli's opening remarks

The meeting continued with a warm-up session when similar cohorts shared their interesting and memorable experiences.

Association; Dr. Uygur Özesmi, 1994-95 Master's Program Alumnus, Board Member of Ashoka Türkiye, Executive Director of Change.org Türkiye, and

Founder of Good4Trust.org; and Prof. Dr. Burçin Ünlü, 2017-18 Senior Scholar Program Alumnus, and Professor of Physics at Boğaziçi University.

A panel followed featuring alumni from various walks of life, who talked about how their different grants impacted their lives and careers and led them to different paths. Speakers were Ms. Ayşegül Çerçi, 2004-05 Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program Alumna, Director at the Development and Investment Bank of Türkiye, and President of the Humphrey Alumni



Finally connecting online, Dr. Ece Aynur Onur, 2008-09 Master's Program Alumna, Military Anthropologist, Owner of a Dryland Farm and Founder and CEO of "Toprağın Melekleri" Dermo Cosmetics Company spoke to the participants about her experiences, and answered questions.



Pictured (above left and right) L-R: Ms. Ayşegül Çerçi (Development and Investment Bank of Türkiye), Dr. Uygur Özesmi (Change.org Türkiye) and Prof. Burçin Ünlü (Boğaziçi University)

Pictured (right): Dr. Ece Aynur Onur

The afternoon session began with an online presentation on "Earthquake Trauma, Positive Psychology, and Resilience" by Prof. Nebi Sümer, 2011-12 Senior Scholar Program Alumnus, and Professor of Psychology at Sabancı University.



An information session from the Alumni Organization was followed by the last event – a feedback session focusing on the grantee experience, coping mechanisms, and valuable advice for future grantees. Prof. Aydınllı, and Board Member Prof. Akif Kireççi closed the event with their warm remarks, celebrating the enthusiasm of the group and their appreciation of the day's event. A video compiled from scores of pictures sent by the participants taken from their grant periods was received with much amusement and enjoyment, before the group members were sent off to their various cities, jobs, and paths.



News from the Alumni

Alumni Associations' Events

Earthquake Donations : We were all deeply saddened by a devastating earthquake that recently struck the southeast region of Türkiye, leaving many people without homes, shelter, or even the basic necessities of life. The earthquake has caused widespread damage, and many people were now in need of urgent assistance. In times like these, we all want to do our part to help those in need. As the Fulbright Alumni Association, we donated to the organizations that are actively working to provide aid and relief to those affected by this natural disaster. We also express our deepest sympathy for Fulbright alumnus and our member Mr. Cengiz Turan that we lost in the earthquake disaster. We wish he rest in peace and express our condolences to his family and friends.



Re-Entry 2023 FAA Presentation: We were proud to present our alumni activities and events at the 2023 Re-Entry gathering hosted by Türkiye Fulbright Commission. We believe that alumni gatherings play an important role in Fulbrighters' future career and life back in their home country. We organize events, panels, seminars, receptions and gatherings to promote a sense of belonging, foster personal and professional growth, and create opportunities for alumni give back to their institution and broader community. The events are also designed to provide our members with opportunities to network, engage with our community, reconnect with each other and exchange ideas.



Re-Entry 2023 FAA Presentation: The Consul General of the United States of America Julie A. Eadeh welcomed U.S. exchange alumni who participated in a successful pilot mentorship program which was organized in collaboration with Fulbright, Humphrey, and YES Alumni Associations. We would like to thank Consul General for hosting the night and all our participants who contributed to the project shared their experiences with us. We are proud to support the academic and professional career growth of these promising future leaders! We hope that these experiences and relationships will turn into a lifelong journey.

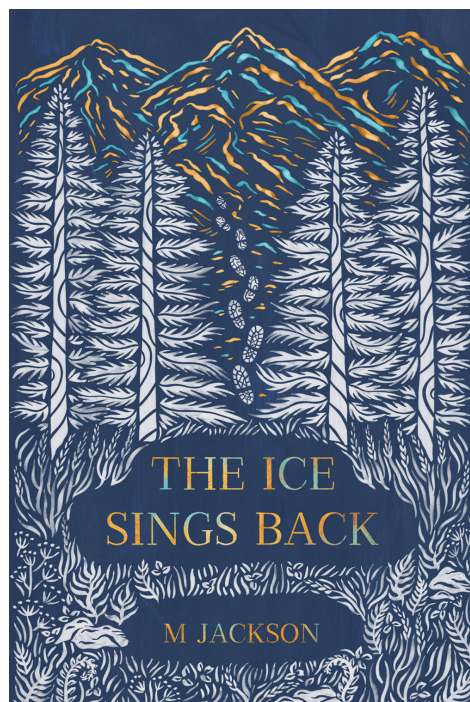


Dr. Jerilynn “M” Jackson’s Eco-thriller book is published

A 2011-2012 ETA alumna from Samsun Ondokuz Mayıs University, Dr. M Jackson is a geographer, glaciologist, and science communicator exploring the intersections of societal transformation, glaciology, and climate change.

Jackson is a National Geographic Society Explorer, TED Fellow, and three-time U.S. Fulbright Scholar. Jackson earned a Ph.D. from the University of Oregon, a Master of Science degree from the University of Montana, and serves as a U.S. Fulbright Ambassador and an Expert for National Geographic Expeditions. She is an active public speaker and author of the award-winning science books, *The Secret Lives of Glaciers* (2019) and *While Glaciers Slept: Being Human in a Time of Climate*

Change (2015). Jackson’s debut novel, *The Ice Sings Back*, is an eco-thriller story of a girl who goes missing in the remote wilderness of the western Oregon Cascades.



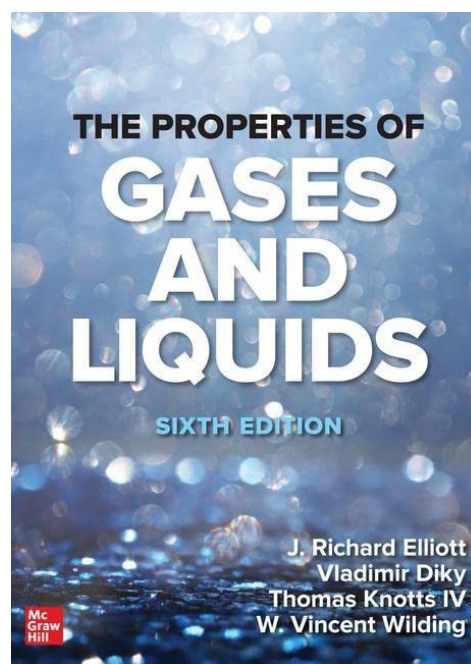
Jackson has worked for several decades in the Arctic and Antarctic exploring changing climates and communities and presently lives in Eugene, Oregon.



Prof. J. Richard Elliott co-authors the 6th edition of The Properties of Gases and Liquids

Richard Elliott, emeritus professor at the College of Engineering and Polymer Science at The University of Akron, was a 1994-1995 Fulbright Senior Lecturer alumnus hosted at Boğaziçi University.

The must-have chemical engineering guide *The Properties of Gases and Liquids*, Sixth Edition serves as a single source for up-to-date physical data, chemical data, and predictive and estimation methods, as well as providing the latest curated data on over 480 compounds and includes a special section devoted to the interpretation of uncertainty in physical property estimation.



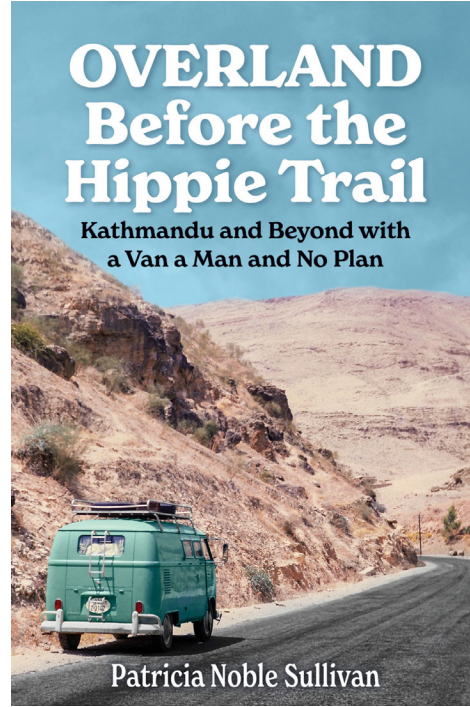
A Memoir by Patricia Noble Sullivan

Overland Before the Hippie Trail is about the long journey Patricia Sullivan and her husband took in the 60's from Europe to as far as Japan with their van, as they joined a group of low-budget international travelers headed for India and Nepal. The Route was called the "Hippie Trail" which was followed by thousands of young people for about ten years, mostly throughout the 1970s. The journey would become a way of life, one in which they became increasingly aware that the world, though large and varied, is filled with welcoming people who shared a sense of curiosity and openness.

Patricia Sullivan lives in Berkeley, California. She has taught at the University of California Santa Cruz, at the Shanghai Foreign Language Institute in China; conducted research in Vietnam at Vietnam National University; and received a Fulbright grant to be the director of a master's degree program for Turkish

teachers of English at Bilkent University in Ankara, Türkiye (1997-1999). After retiring from UC Santa Cruz, she was hired by the Foreign Service of the U.S. Department of State as a Regional English Language Officer, and consequently lived and

worked in Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. After retirement she continued teaching short term workshops and classes in Mongolia, Guatemala, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Vietnam.



Ege Maltepe's translation of Viola Spolin's *Improvisation for the Theater* is published

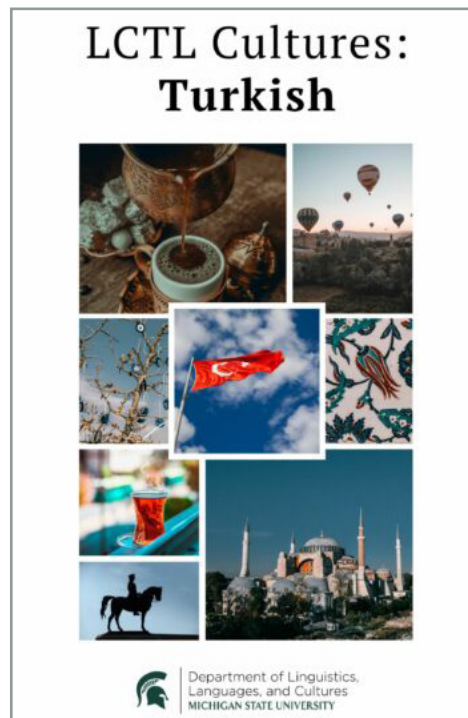
Viola Spolin's seminal book, *Improvisation for the Theater*, has been translated into Turkish by Ege Maltepe, our 2007-2008 Master's Program alumna, actor and director and was published in 2022.

Considered the "bible of improvisational theater", the book includes more than 200 exercises that Viola Spolin created during her work with both children and professional actors, and her unique philosophy of improvisation based on play. Maltepe, who learned these methods at the school of the famous director Paul Sills, son of Viola Spolin, while she was in New York with a Fulbright Scholarship, uses this technique in Türkiye with her organization called Spolin-ist.



Pinar Su contributes to an online book from Michigan State University

2021-2022 FLTA alumna Pinar Su prepared two modules on *Turkish Culture* for the online book *LCTL (Less Commonly Taught Languages): Turkish*, which was prepared by Michigan State University. The project aims to create more learning materials for less frequently taught languages. MSU plans to continue the project by adding new modules every year. The online interactive book gives students the opportunity to discover local culture while learning the Turkish language. Pinar Su's modules focus on Turkish hospitality and music, of which the latter, she thinks, helps immensely in learning and understanding a foreign language.



Dr. Şahin Hanalioğlu continues Novel Research with Barrow Neurological Foundation Funding

2021-2022 Senior Scholar alumnus Dr. Hanalioğlu joined the Loyal and Edith Davis Neurosurgical Research Laboratory as a Fulbright Visiting Scholar and a Robert F. Spetzler Barrow Neurological Foundation Neurosurgery Research Fellow under the direction of Mark Preul, MD. Hosted at Barrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix, Arizona, The Loyal & Edith Davis Neurosurgical Research Laboratory is a world-class facility that mentors, coordinates, and manages neurosurgical, surgical, and medical research, education, and training.

As a neurosurgeon, Hanalioğlu focused on the microsurgical anatomy of various surgical approaches to the mediobasal temporal region (MBTR) of the brain—one of the most complex and surgically challenging brain regions—with a special emphasis on white matter tracts. He also developed an integrative approach to studying human brain anatomy

utilizing advanced neuroimaging, photogrammetry, 3D modeling, and machine learning, an approach enabling surgeon-scientists to create high-quality, immersive models and simulations. Dr. Hanalioğlu was also awarded funding through Barrow Neurological Foundation's competitive grant process for a collaborative project that aims to bring together various visualization, rendering, and neuro-navigation tools to create life-like 3D models of cadaveric tissue.



Şahin Hanalioğlu is an Assistant Professor of Neurosurgery at Hacettepe University and Chair of Young Neurosurgeons' Committee at the Turkish Neurosurgical Society.



Ferah Özer co-authors the book *Problem Solving and Creativity Skills*

21. Yüzyıl Bağlamında Kuramdan Sınıf İçi Uygulamaya Problem Çözme ve Yaratıcılık Becerisi (Problem Solving and Creativity Skills from Theory to Classroom Practice in the Context of the 21st Century) aims to present a new and original perspective for 21st century classrooms by blending 21st century skills, science-engineering practices and thematic learning approaches with the concepts of the history of science. It was published in late 2022.

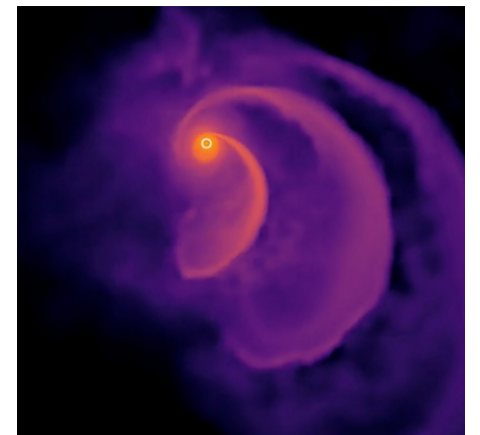
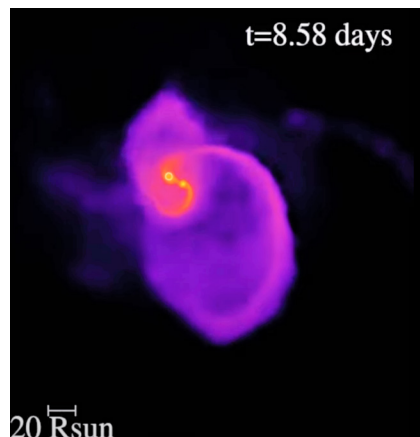
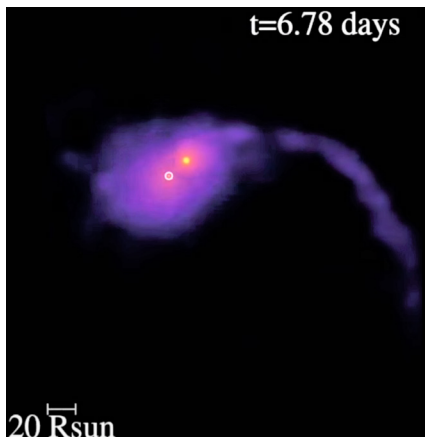
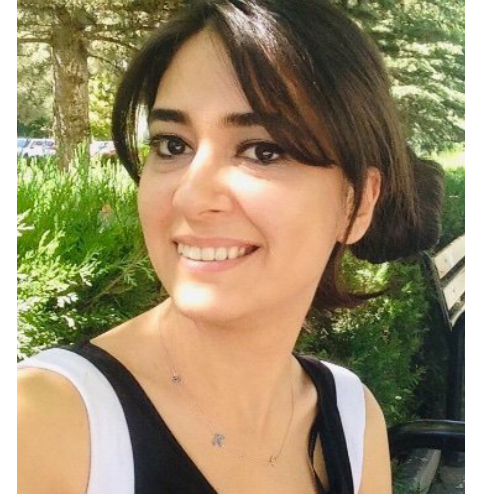
Dr. Özer completed her B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. in Educational Sciences at Abant İzzet Baysal University. In 2020-2021, she conducted research at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with her Fulbright Ph.D. Dissertation Research Grant.




Fulya Kiroğlu's simulation on "cannibal" black holes was featured on CNN

The successful simulation of our 2019-2020 PhD graduate Fulya Kiroğlu, who continues her studies at Northwestern University, was featured on CNN. Her 3D computer simulations show the eating habits of intermediate-mass black holes. When a star approaches an intermediate-mass black hole, it initially gets caught in the black hole's orbit. Every time the

star makes a lap, the black hole takes a bite-further cannibalizing the star with each passage. In the end, nothing is left but the star's misshapen core. At that point, the black hole ejects the remains, and the star's remnant flies to safety across the Galaxy. You can watch the simulation on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6LbA9fIFZw&t=2s>.



A photograph of a dry, rocky landscape. In the foreground, there are several clusters of bright yellow wildflowers on thin green stems. The ground is dark brown and rocky. In the background, there is a hillside covered in sparse, dry vegetation under a blue sky with some clouds.

...many people have begun hearing the call of land. I would say, let's get back to earth, and let's not wait until we die to reunite with the land!

An Inspiring Story

Dr. Ece Aynur Onur

Could you talk about yourself, and your childhood within the family culture you were brought up?

Were there any people and events that have influenced you?

My father is a retired colonel, so I practically grew up in and around military institutions and lodgings. It was a very different and sheltered environment. Indeed, when much later I was in the U.S. with the Fulbright grant, it was probably the first time I lived in a genuinely "free" environment. When I was growing up, there was always discipline around, a very structured lifestyle. I was accustomed to having military personnel everywhere I lived.

That environment had a very important impact on my life, and later my career. But another important influence was the value my parents placed on education.

What we are doing right now is a family project. My father has the discipline and the know-how of working with and repairing machinery and tools. My mother is a seamstress, so she mends things and pays attention to detail. My brother is a mechanical engineer, who obviously knows how to run a new project. So, as a family we can focus on a problem, and take it as a challenge for which we need to find solutions. We don't run away from problems, and I think this is one of the most important traits I gained from the family culture. Another family characteristic is to be able to work under pressure – a given in a military setting. So, this was the family culture I grew up in.

Then you decided to go to METU and study International Relations, and then Anthropology – How did that happen? Could you talk about your education?

I owe this to my father. He believed that women needed to be able to stand on their own two feet in both national and international settings. The law gives women the right of citizenship, but it is also true that there is a difference between active and passive citizenship. My family always expected that we would become active citizens. This expectation that I should equip myself with the education and skills to represent my country in the best way must have been a reason I chose to study International Relations.



Pictured: Ece Aynur Onur as a child

The first two years I struggled with the theories - I felt they did not always explain what was actually happening on the ground. There were generalizations about culture that I thought did not explain either the village culture of my grandparents or the military culture in which I was brought



up. And during the last two years I realized I loved doing fieldwork, interacting with people, taking notes, listening to their stories. My professors who took note of my growing skills decided I could create new theories by doing field work and introduced me to Anthropology. I loved working in this field, observing and studying people, writing about them, and formulating theories.

How did you apply for the Fulbright grant? How did you learn about it?

Again, my father and the community I was a part of played an important role. My father was the education commander among three of his colleagues who were charged with education. These colleagues had sons in METU as well, and all became happy when a daughter was accepted to METU. So, everyone in the community was involved in my education and supported me. Through the years, someone would advise me to take a particular subject, or to take a language course. And it was my father's commander who told him about the Fulbright Program, and that I should apply. The other commanders' sons had already applied, and were not chosen; so, when my application was accepted, everyone felt proud and happy for me.

"My supervisors encouraged me to read conflicting sources, to ask questions, to put things together - to analyze and synthesize, and to form my own opinion. They used to tell me if I was writing a text or coming up with a project, I needed to have my character in it, and my signature on it."



It must have been nice, living in such a supportive community. Then, after you were selected, why did you choose to go to Indiana University?

Indiana University was known to be one of the few good universities who had a department dedicated to Central Asia, and I was intending to study the Turkmen culture. I applied to other universities as well, to Michigan, Columbia, and Buffalo which also accepted me, but I chose to go to Indiana. The department I joined was very welcoming, I had huge support. They wanted to learn everything about our geography, culture, and how we viewed the Western world. They would ask me questions whenever a related issue came up, as if I were the authority on such matters! They would ask me what I thought, how I viewed certain matters, especially after 9/11. They made me feel important and valued. Starting my second year of Fulbright, and throughout my Ph.D., I was a teaching assistant, teaching eight different courses, from Middle East Anthropology to gender, from military anthropology to war culture, and traditional medicine. The ones I enjoyed the most were militarist culture and reconstructing peace; gender and popular culture in Muslim countries –after the Arab Spring. In this last course I was asked interesting questions, such as: did



Pictured: Ece Aynur Onur at Indiana University

I cover my head in Türkiye? was I allowed to laugh?! So it was important for me to represent my country and my culture in those classes. I felt successful when many of those students went on to learn Turkish, study the Middle East. I would often invite my students to ask whatever they wanted to know about Islam, Islamic popular culture and communities. It would be an open and safe environment that benefited both parties.

We see that you were a very successful example of what Senator Fulbright wanted to accomplish; that is, establishing a bridge between the two countries by engaging in rigorous cultural exchange.

Then how did you choose military anthropology?

When I was first writing my proposal for my dissertation, I was intending to study traditional medicine in Turkmenistan. I come from a family of nomadic Turkmens (Yörük), and can speak and understand Turkmen. The country's regime is actively promoting the use of traditional medicine, and that was very interesting for me. I wanted to study socio-political structure in the light of traditional medicine. I planned to compare the Yörük rug designs and cemeteries with the ones in Türkiye. I was deeply interested in Turkmenistan and its culture, and looking forward to researching

"I would say the most important skill I learned through my graduate studies in the U.S. is the ability to be on my own, and to take initiative. The important skill of asking good questions."

for my project. But then something much unexpected happened: they didn't issue me a visa because my father was a soldier. I felt my world collapsing, I had spent one and a half years studying the Turkic languages Turkmen, Uzbek, Kazakh, and done all my preparations for the field work, and suddenly all of that meant nothing, as I wasn't allowed in the country. For an anthropologist, field work is essential, you cannot do your work without it. What would I do if I couldn't go to Turkmenistan?

At that stage, my biggest luck and support was my two advisers, Prof. Nazif Shahrani, and Prof. Sara Friedman. At that catastrophic moment, Sara told me to listen carefully to her important advice. She said what I saw as my greatest disadvantage should be my best weapon, that the reason I couldn't get a visa – my father being military personnel – should open other doors for me. She told me about military anthropology – which I wasn't aware of. She said if I could get access to military institutions, I could work in the field as a participant observer.

I was so devastated at that moment, and when Sara told me about military anthropology, I remember running to the library to take out a few books on the subject and read them. I devoured the contents and said to myself that yes, I could do that!

I was very familiar with the military community, was brought up in the culture, knew my way around, and of course had clearance because of my father.

So, that is what I did!



Pictured: Aynur Ece Onur with the tractor she bought after she and her brother sold their cars



"They were stunned that we sold our cars to buy a tractor, and our houses to build the factory. They never believed that we would be able to grow anything. Now, however, our factory and fields are a place of pilgrimage; hundreds of people come to visit us to see and learn from what we are accomplishing here."

For two years, I conducted fieldwork in four different regions in Türkiye, Ankara, Malatya, Diyarbakır and Tunceli inside military institutions as a participant observer, living with military personnel, eating, sleeping and staying with them for extended periods of time. In the end, Sara's advice became true. When I had felt my world was crumbling, I steered in another direction which brought me to a different but much more important place. I became one of the handful, four or five civilian military anthropologists in the world. And probably I am the only woman in this small group.

In Middle Eastern anthropology, women are always seen as passive, or submissive to men. In the military I observed just the opposite was true. Female soldiers had higher ranks compared to men and had authority and power. Women are usually assumed to be more peace-seeking, under the influence of their maternal instincts; but what I observed with the women in the Turkish military was that they used their maternal instincts to defend their homeland; giving the homeland the place of children.

When I was preparing to go to Turkmenistan, I had applied to the National Science Foundation (NSF) for a grant, and was rejected. But this time, with the military anthropology project, my application was successful and I received the grant. My project was original and was seen as a bit risky, as it was not customary for a civilian to go inside the army and interview and observe such powerful people. I had chosen four regions, two of them in conflict zones and two in peaceful locations.



In the end, I completed all my field work, I conducted in depth interviews with around 300 active-duty officers as a participant observer. The interviews lasted anywhere between two and eighteen hours. I turned my focus on female soldiers, especially those active on the front lines.

When I was in the U.S., I realized I felt more at ease with American children of military personnel than Turkish civilians. We all live through similar lives, and have common cultures. And I believe any study about the military in a Turkish setting may have relevance in an American or other country setting. My dissertation project could provide a foundation for future similar studies as well.



Are you happy with the path you chose?

Military Anthropology was not maybe Indiana's strong point, but I loved my advisers, and their support was very important. They practically made me a new person, broadened my horizons, and rebuilt me!

The Fulbright grant, the path it allowed me to take, and my two advisers were the most important influences in my life. To this day, there isn't a day that goes by when I don't think about them. Whatever I do today, I believe it was them who gave me the courage and the strength. I am forever indebted to them.

So, after receiving your Ph.D., what came next?

There was a new position at Indiana University for which they asked me to take. I also talked with George Washington University,





Credit: Nedim Çiftçi

where I wanted to work and study with Hugh Gusterson. I was also in contact with Cynthia Enloe, known for her work on gender and militarism.

During the time I was studying and teaching in the U.S., I of course came back to Türkiye many times. And as I was preparing for my doctoral qualifying exams in 2011, my maternal grandfather passed away. I was really attached to him; a good farmer himself, he believed in educating girls, and gave away nearly all his wealth to make that happen--to sponsor girls to study. And my family did not tell me, as I was focusing on my exams. After I learned about this, I felt a lot of remorse. In 2015, I came back to Burdur, and visited the village my mother grew up in. It wasn't the first time I was there; but in the past I would visit the district center, when my father was on leave. So that was the first time I actually came to the village where my mother was born. The population was below 100, there were just a few children, and no youth at all.

In 2015-16 and 2016-17, I was a Teaching Fellow, and chosen for two teaching awards, one from students and one from faculty. I felt very happy then. And then when I came to that village and saw that the village school had shut down, I felt devastated. That image really got to me! At the time my brother was working as head of R&D at a Japanese-American company that manufactures and sells baby- and child-care and maternity products. And at that moment, I was thinking that I was able to deliver a high-quality education to students in the U.S., but the children of this village, my people, were getting nothing at all. And my brother was thinking that he was able to develop these medical products for mothers and babies in so many countries, whereas in this village there wasn't even the simplest store or health clinic. So, without

"Villagers are often stuck in the traditional ways of farming, using mobile phones and computers possibly in their daily lives; but not wondering or searching for ways to use technology in better farming practices. They cannot follow advances in farming technology, as they don't know any foreign languages; so, they keep doing the things they learned from their elders. And that was where we could do something, something that we could give back to our land, our roots and people."

speaking to each other we both felt the same pain, the lack of education and services in this village, and that we were using our talents and expertise for people in other countries. This realization hurt both of us; we both felt we also had to serve our own people.

If everyone, just like us, leaves these places, what is to happen in the future? Villagers are often stuck in the traditional ways of farming, using mobile phones and computers possibly in their daily lives; but not wondering or searching for ways to use technology in better farming practices. They cannot follow advances in farming technology, as they don't know any foreign languages; so, they keep doing the things they learned from their elders. And that was where we could do something, something that we could give back to our land, our roots and people. Having the same sentiments at the time, the two of us decided then and there that we would put all our efforts into developing the land.

You knew nothing about farming, how did you even begin?

It was no easy task! Although the area was part of the Turkish Lake District, there was a severe drought. There wasn't even enough water to drink. Cattle breeding used up all water sources; for that reason, it was imperative that people took up sheep farming instead, because it would consume less water. Also, many crops were grown that used excess amounts of water, like corn, alfalfa, and beet. It was outrageous that farmers would use the available water sources to grow animal feed while people did not have enough potable water. So, in order to learn about what we could do, we visited the Chamber of Agriculture, the Agricultural Development Support Institution, and other organizations who we thought could advise us on how to use our land. They suggested that we cultivate drought resistant medicinal aromatic plants. We asked about the demand, and they said they were used in the pharmaceutical and cosmetics industries. So we decided to go forward and try learning how to cultivate them.





So you got this idea from these agencies.

Yes, they gave us this idea. We then developed a project on our grandfather's land of 135 acres. It may sound a lot; but actually, it isn't! People around here would have on the average 2000 acres of land. So, people laugh when they see our land - but it's adequate for our purpose. Before that, I had no knowledge at all about land use and growing things; I didn't even have house plants! It was only at my house in the U.S. that I began to grow tomatoes and cucumbers. I had chickens, and of course eggs. I would bring all the produce to the university and give them away to students, colleagues and secretaries, so they almost cried when I told them I was going back to Türkiye; they would be missing my fresh produce!

Anyway, we developed a project for our new venture and imported seedlings, and began to learn how to cultivate them. It's a work in progress, and we are still learning. This year we switched to plow-free agriculture. We try new methods, adopting techniques we learn from Israel, U.S.A., Canada, and UAE. I also read all the literature on dry farming, and adapt what I learn to the local know-how and accumulated knowledge. We are doing this as a family as I said, but we call my maternal grandmother, the Commander, since she has the most experience and knowledge on farming.

They tell me I used to say I would be a farmer one day, and that I would build a house on one of my grandfather's fields - and my dreams have come true. I am a farmer now, and we built this small factory on that specific field. When we first came here to begin farming, people living here made fun of us, predicting that we would never succeed, that we were irrational, that we would leave the place and go back running, that we were just looking for an adventure! They were stunned that we sold our cars to buy a tractor, and our houses to build the factory. They never believed that we would be able to grow anything. Now, however, our factory and fields are a place of pilgrimage; hundreds of people come to visit us to see and learn from what we are accomplishing here. When various media channels come here to do a feature, they look at the fields and say it's like the surface of Mars, rocks and stones all around. And many people tell us to clear those rocks and stones - but in fact they are beneficial, as they help keep the soil humid.

It is a wonderful feeling to work the soil, to see the crops grow, and to feel the aroma of the flowers. It's a very satisfying experience.

"Learn as many languages as you can! Read voraciously. Take risks, even if you are afraid, and if you fall down a hundred times, learn to get up one hundred and one times! Be yourself. There is a lot of pressure to be like the majority, to conform to accepted social norms. Believe in your true self, your ideals, and your ideas."

One would think that learning how to study a certain discipline thoroughly, how to conduct research and test hypotheses are important skills that can be used in another discipline as well. How do you think your academic life, your studies here and in the US helped your work in dry farming?

I believe if an original idea has to emerge within a discipline, it is the people coming from outside the discipline who usually produce it; something like the concept of "thinking out of the box!" I was criticized constantly by agricultural engineers and experts, who advised me that I would never succeed with our methods; but I believe the skills I acquired in my studies--especially, observation, analysis, and critical thinking, as well as testing different options and methods to find out which would succeed--all helped me overcome the challenges. We didn't succeed in just one go! We had to try different crops and try different methods on multiple fields to find out which ones would work out. We sent the results to laboratories, to see which crop yielded the best results. It took many months and years of hard work, constant analysis of results, and trial and error.

As I said before, it was a team effort where all members of the family pitched in with their unique skills. I'm the dreamer, with many dreams I want to achieve, whereas my brother, with his engineering background, and his feet firmly on the ground is more practical.

I would say the most important skill I learned through my graduate studies in the U.S. is the ability to be on my own, and to take initiative. The important skill of asking good questions. And let me tell you, I didn't know how to ask questions when I first went there. Coming from a system where the expectation is to memorize information, I hadn't mastered this skill. My supervisors encouraged me to read conflicting sources, to ask questions, to put things together - to analyze and synthesize, and to form my own opinion. They used to tell me if I was writing a text or coming up with a project, I needed to have my character in it, and my signature on it. That way, someone reading it would know it was written by me. And what we are doing right now, in this





project, has everything that we learned, the skills we gained, and our character as well. We have proven our abilities to dream, plan, and execute a project, to take initiative, show entrepreneurship, and of course not be discouraged by occasional failures and start all over again.

The environment I experienced in the U.S.--where my house was next to a forest, with only a few other houses around, with no fencing at all--was especially challenging for me, because it was so different to the environment where I was brought up, within a very disciplined, sheltered and sterile setting! So, with no one guarding me or keeping me safe and making sure my needs were met, in the U.S. I learned to survive on my own, and flourish. That experience gave me the courage to begin this journey and gave me hope that I will succeed.

"I believe in my idea, and my venture. But if everything failed and I lost everything, I would get up the next morning, find something else to do and survive. I would build another life, another career."

Seeing that you love doing what you do, farming, cultivating your land and building an operation from the ground up; what would be your advice to other young entrepreneurs, hoping to walk in your steps?

I believe we have reached the peak of industrialization, and many people have begun hearing the call of land. I would say, let's get back to earth, and let's not wait until we die to reunite with the land!

I would tell them to not hesitate to take risks. They ask me often if I was never afraid of taking risks myself, and I tell them of course I was afraid, but it's part of entrepreneurship. One part of you will carry your hope, and the other will carry your fears. You need to train yourself to take the risk, even when you carry fears.

I believe in my idea, and my venture. But if everything failed and I lost everything, I would get up the next morning, find something else to do and survive. I would build another life, another career.

I would advise them to read greedily, not only in their own fields, but in different fields as well. In my experience, the most innovative ideas I had, came from the books I read in other subjects. Most literature in agriculture tells the same things more or less, but if you read more extensively, you will have more tools and ideas to connect with the main subject. It is important to experience different environments and meet different people from different

backgrounds - especially those that make you uneasy, or who bother you. They will break your prejudices and your taboos, and help you broaden your point of view.

Learn as many languages as you can! Read voraciously. Take risks, even if you are afraid, and if you fall down a hundred times, learn to get up one hundred and one times! Be yourself. There is a lot of pressure to be like the majority, to conform to accepted social norms. Believe in your true self, your ideals, and your ideas.

After all the years I spent studying and working, and learning and trying, and succeeding, I believe it is my duty to give back, to carry my people to the future, and to improve their lives.

My brother and I faced huge criticism from my family when we decided to work on this land. I stood up to my father and told him that it was him who supported my education, and my journey, it was him who wanted me to stand on my own two feet, and that he always believed in me. So, I told him to trust us and support us if he believed in our vision. And that he should step aside if he didn't want to help us.

In the end, we all came together, though my father still regards himself as the commander in chief! We have frequent skirmishes, but we have learned to work together, and conduct fiery discussions at the same time. It is a very productive setting that lets us flourish.



Pictured: Aynur Ece Onur with her adopted dog Max

"The Fulbright grant, the path it allowed me to take, and my two advisers were the most important influences in my life. To this day, there isn't a day that goes by when I don't think about them. Whatever I do today, I believe it was them who gave me the courage and the strength. I am forever indebted to them."

American Programs

Thank you & enjoy your stay in
Izmir and Türkiye!



Pictured: Prof. Kim being introduced to the Program, 18 April 2023

As we enter the second half of the 2022-2023 Academic Year, we have seen Senior Lecturers Stacie Haen-Darden and Vanessa Cornett-Murtada, who were placed in Çanakkale and Ankara respectively, end their grant periods and return safely to their homes in the U.S. We have also said good-bye to Emily Ruth Chesley, our Greece-Türkiye Joint Research

Award grantee who went to Greece to complete the second portion of her grant period and welcomed Brett Umlauf from Thessaloniki in return. Prof. Dong-Shik Kim, Senior Researcher grantee at Izmir Yüksek Teknoloji Enstitüsü has also arrived with his wife. We welcome them both! Online orientation programs were carried out for our new arrivals.

Mid-Year Progress Meeting

The Commission held a mid-year progress meeting on January 27th, 2023 with Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program, Fulbright U.S. Student Open Study/Research Program, Fulbright Greece-Türkiye Joint Research Award, and Fulbright Turkish Universities Master's Program grantees. The meeting took place in Istanbul, where we had a full day of presentations by the grantees. Those unable to attend joined us via Zoom. Engaging presentations outlined the progress in the grantees' projects during the first semester. We thoroughly enjoyed insight into various research topics and all the ensuing discussions. We savored a nice lunch together.

Pictured: 2022-2023 U.S. Scholar / Student Group in Istanbul, January 27, 2023



Mid-year Evaluation Meeting with ETAs

We came together with our ETA group in Ankara on February 24, in a workshop designed for receiving grantee feedback. The ETAs not only had a chance to come together as a cohort, but the meeting provided an opportunity for lively discussions reflecting on the program, host cities and host institutions. The ETAs came from all over Türkiye and spent the night before in Ankara. Given

that universities had to switch to online teaching following the earthquake, a special session was included in the program, presented by Dr. Tarik Uzun from Yıldırım Beyazıt University, sharing some useful tips on the challenges and possible opportunities of online teaching with the ETAs. A game played on Kahoot was the most fun bit that engaged everyone. Therapist Colin Neve joined us

via Zoom to provide some tools for the ETAs in managing and supporting their own students, who may have been directly or indirectly affected by the earthquake and its massive consequences. We had a chance to listen to some of the basics of trauma and trauma-related issues and advice on how to approach affected individuals. There were important takeaways for all of us.

Pictured right: Dr. Tarik Uzun on the "art" of online teaching

Pictured left: Therapist Colin Neve addressing the ETA group via Zoom



2022-2023 U.S. Senior Lecturer Dr. Şenel Poyrazlı Discusses Career Development at TENMAK

Dr. Senel Poyrazli, a Fulbright Senior Scholar in Ankara, presented a workshop on the topic of career development to a group of employees at the Turkish Energy, Nuclear, and Mineral Research Agency (TENMAK) on March 20, 2023. Close to 100 employees attended the seminar where Dr. Poyrazlı discussed career development for professionals, how to build a sense of belonging to one's agency, and what to do and not to do in the self-facilitation of a career development. Most participants in the seminar were sent abroad by the Turkish government to receive their master's education and had newly returned to assume their current jobs within TENMAK.



Pictured above right: 2022-2023 US Senior Lecturer Dr. Şenel Poyrazlı portrait by Jana Oezdemir, below right: Prof. Poyrazlı with TENMAK Employees, far right: Prof. Poyrazlı leading the career development workshop

Fulbright Specialist helps the foundation of the Documentation Studio at BLIS

Dr. Stephanie Cox Suarez, the first founder of the Documentation Studio in Boston, came to the Bilkent Laboratory and International School (BLIS) as a Fulbright Specialist for six weeks, to assist the foundation of Türkiye's first-ever Documentation Studio. The facility, created by BLIS educators, Dilek Duman and Alona Yıldırım, with the assistance

of Dr. Cox Suarez, will focus on using documentation as a central pillar of group learning, providing an innovative initiative to educators from pre-K to higher education. Bilkent University Rector Prof. Dr. Kürşat Aydoğan, a Fulbright alumnus, honored the grand opening on May 3, 2023, and praised the studio which will provide an open space for educators to

document and exhibit a variety of learning experiences and explore different methods of documenting the learning process. Fulbright Specialist Dr. Cox Suarez joined the event online.

For more information on the Documentation Studio and its upcoming events, visit documentationstudioturkiye.org.



Pictured: Initial Opening of the Documentation Center with BLISS Trustee Prof. Orhan Arıkan (right). Fulbright Specialist Dr. Stephanie Cox Suarez featuring in the middle, with blue scarf.



Pictured: Grand opening of the Documentation Center on May 3rd 2023 with Specialist Dr. Cox Suarez addressing online. Fulbright alumnus Prof. Aydoğan, Rector of Bilkent University is on the left, holding a glass.

2022-2023 U.S. Senior Researcher Dr. Amanda Phillips Meets with Professor Suraiya Faroqhi

Dr. Amanda Phillips (Dept. of Art, University of Virginia / Archaeology and History of Art, Koç University), based in Istanbul, continued her research into textiles, architectural decoration, and other topics, working mostly at the Ottoman archives in Kağıthane, with sources at Koç's ANAMED library, and with online databases of manuscripts in Türkiye and elsewhere. She travelled to Bursa to look at textiles in the Merinos Museum, as well as their collection of industrial looms and other weaving-related machines. In Istanbul, she has also met with friends and colleagues, including one of her first mentors, Professor Suraiya Faroqhi, who is pictured here with her most recent book, aptly titled *Surviving Istanbul*.



Pictured: Dr. Amanda Phillips and Professor Suraiya Faroqhi "Surviving Istanbul"!

"From One Singer to Another"

Brett Umlauf

2022-2023 Greece-Türkiye Joint Research Award Grantee



I head to İstanbul's Fatih district on April 1st for a tradition at "Ayın Biri Kilisesi." On the first day of every month, pilgrims of many faiths come to this Orthodox church. Today's line stretches beyond sight, the large number of pilgrims perhaps due to Ramadan and Lent coinciding in the Muslim and Christian calendars.

My audio recorder is with me; I am searching for sounds from this ritual in a shared sacred space. The sounds will become part of an installation called "KASSIA: SOUND ICON". The project centers on 9th-century composer Kassia of Byzantium, who founded a monastery in Constantinople, modern-day İstanbul. The installation weaves Kassia's liturgical hymns and gnomic verses together with recordings from my fieldwork. In Thessaloniki, I gathered sounds from living in a monastery and singing in a Byzantine choir. İstanbul is rich with sounds resonant of Kassia's historical home city.

Standing in line, I record indistinct murmurs of pilgrims outside the gate. Inside awaits their opportunity to make a wish, receive a blessing, light a candle, kiss the icons or collect holy water from a sacred spring. Vendors along the line sell little gold charms on ribbons, each to aid a

particular wish: a turtle charm for a home, a heart for good health, a lock for freedom, a coin for fortune.

I explain to one vendor, through my spouse's Turkish translation: I am a musician, collecting sounds for a performance piece. May I record? I like the gentle jingling the charms make as visitors sift through them at her table. "Hiç sorun değil" (No problem), she agrees and holds up her cellphone. It shows a photo of her younger self, once a cabaret singer. I tell her she is still glamorous. She demurs and pats my back.

In her warm, smoky voice, she explains: if my wish comes true, I must return the charm next time I come. "One worthy of friendship when he meets a loving friend vigorously rejoices as if he found a large sum of money," wrote Kassia (Tripolitis, translator). I leave Ayın Biri, charms clinking in my pocket, feeling fortunate indeed.

Pictured: Brett checking out the charms and sounds – Photo credit: Noah Amir Arjomand April 1, 2023



Turkish Programs

Initial Orientations for the 2023-2024 Academic Year Grants

The orientations for the newly-selected candidates from all categories continued during the winter and early spring in 2023.

We met with our 2023-2024 Community College Initiative (CCI) Program cohort on March 14, 2023 for an in-person orientation followed by lunch.

The CCIP Orientation was followed by the meetings with the 2023-2024 Postdoctoral Program candidates on March 16, 2023, and Visiting Student Researcher (VSR) Program candidates on March 17, 2023 in Ankara while a virtual orientation was organized with Visiting Scholar Program candidates on April 5, 2023.



Pictured: 2023-2024 Community College Initiative (CCI) Program grantees at the Initial Orientation held at the Commission's Head Office in Ankara



Pictured: 2023-2024 Postdoctoral Program grantees at the Initial Orientation held at the Commission's Head Office in Ankara



Pictured: 2023-2024 Visiting Student Researcher (VSR) Program grantees at the Initial Orientation held at the Commission's Head Office in Ankara



Pictured: 2023-2024 Visiting Scholar Program candidates at the virtual Initial Orientation



Application Period for the 2024-2025 Grants

The application deadline for the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program is **July 5, 2023**

Please visit the Commission's official website for more information:

www.fulbright.org.tr

"Western Ottomanists' Workshop at UCLA"

Hüseyin Göçen

2020-2021 Ph.D. Program Grantee

Boğaziçi University, İstanbul / University of California, Davis

On November 18 and 19, 2022, I participated in a workshop at the University of California, Los Angeles. The Western Ottomanists' Workshop is a yearly workshop that aims to provide an opportunity for graduate students studying Ottoman history to introduce their work to a forum consisting of other graduate students and professors from western United States.

The paper I presented was about vampirism and vampire-related practices in the Ottoman Empire. In provincial jurisconsults' (kenar müftüsü) legal opinion collections (fetva mecmuaları) I found questions about despoiling dead people's bodies and burning

"primary cases" of plague victims, who were believed to be a special kind of vampire. In the literature, people who died of diseases and became vampires are called "nachzehrer." I argued that the cases described in the fatwa collections are examples of nachzehrer in the Ottoman Empire, and through the questions in the fatwas, we can look at and enter the mental world of the early modern Ottoman peasant communities. These questions can shed light on the relationship between beliefs about revenants and vampires, and how people reacted against these supernatural beings as well as how they conceptualized disease, death, and life.

This was my first time participating in an Ottoman history-related event, and I significantly benefited from this unique experience. My paper's discussant was James Grehan who teaches at Portland State University and his research is closely related to my areas of interest. Besides meeting with new students from other universities, whose research topics were relevant to my own interests, I could meet with my friends from my undergraduate school, Boğaziçi University. The participants' and my discussant's comments and questions contributed to my paper, which I am planning to develop and turn into one of my dissertation chapters. In

this meeting, I had a chance to present my paper in the same panel with my friend from my department. Also, my advisor, Baki Tezcan was present and delivered a keynote speech. This two-day workshop was an enjoyable and great opportunity for me to improve my academic and social skills as well as develop new networks in academia.



Pictured: Hüseyin Göçen as he was presenting his paper at the workshop on November 19, 2022

Mustafa Çağıl Işık

2021-2022 Master's Program Grantee

İstanbul Technical University / University of Michigan

Pictured: Mustafa Ç. Işık (last row, fourth from the left) with 2022-2023 Michigan Climate Venture Fund Members on the Big Pitch Day at Ross School of Business in Ann Arbor



Prior to embarking on my Fulbright journey, I worked in the renewable energy sector, overseeing business development activities related to smart sensors and digital solutions. During my three-year expatriate experience in Italy, I managed negotiations for large-scale energy infrastructure projects, such as offshore wind farms in the USA and interconnection energy links in Germany, with contract values reaching \$4 billion. This experience ignited my passion for the convergence of sustainability and innovation, which led me to pursue an MBA at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business in Ann Arbor as part of the Fulbright Master's Program.

With this goal in mind, I immersed myself in various campus opportunities, including serving as the Director of the Energy Club, being selected for the Climate Tech Venture Fellowship, and receiving the Dow Sustainability Fellowship. However, my most significant experience came from participating in the Michigan Climate Venture Fund (MCV), a program within the University of Michigan's School for Environment and Sustainability. This program centers around a student-led investment fund targeting early-stage ClimateTech

companies with tremendous potential for rapid decarbonization. Prior to the Fulbright Program, I had never encountered such a unique learning model. Established in 2021, the Venture aims to provide hands-on, transformative experiences that prepare students for impactful careers addressing climate change—the most pressing challenge of our generation.

During my first year, I was honored to be chosen as part of the inaugural cohort of Investment Associate members. Throughout the academic year, as graduate students from various schools on campus, we collaborated to source, screen, vet, and ultimately invest in startups that aligned with MCV's mission. My responsibility was to lead financial analysis during the due diligence phase for Vertical Mobility. The second year proved even more rewarding as we witnessed the organization's growth. We welcomed fourteen new fund members from three University of Michigan colleges, evaluated 100 startups and screened 30, with three advancing to the due diligence phase. In the future, I aspire to replicate this hands-on learning model in my home country, fostering opportunities for graduate students who are passionate for sustainability and innovation in Türkiye.



"Moving to the USA as a Family"

Ahmet Görkem Er 2022-2023 Visiting Student Researcher (VSR) Program Grantee

Middle East Technical University,
Ankara / Stanford University

Moving to the US for a year, especially with family, was exciting. But it was also an adventure full of surprises! I must admit that I spent almost as much time adapting my children to the system as I spent on my scholarship at Stanford.

School life in the US starts with kindergarten at the age of five. In order to enroll in an American school, each child's immunization status must be adjusted to the US calendar before moving to the country. Finding a

suitable apartment close to highly rated schools was also a big challenge. The good news was that the children adapt quickly to the new environment. My wife and I were lucky that our children were at the beginning of their education (older sister Evrim, five, was in kindergarten, and Ekin, three, was in preschool). We loved that even in kindergarten, they were offered a curriculum full of math and literacy skills. The main barrier for our children was the language, but after a few weeks with a translator, they started to understand and, in the following months, started to use their own words and form sentences. They participated in art and sports classes. As a result, it was easy for the children to adapt to the USA as a country that easily captures children's imagination with its beautiful parks, playgrounds, great libraries, and various activities.

Most importantly, they met friends from different countries and cultures. They participated in various local holiday celebrations and made unforgettable memories. They

could not have had a more effective period of recognizing and respecting differences at such an early age. Therefore, for the development of the children, it was worth every second of effort we spent, and we highly recommend to all Fulbrighters to embark on this adventure.

Pictured: Ahmet Görkem Er and his family's first encounter with the impressive Golden Gate Bridge



"Life is about making hope out of despair"

Onur Ergünay 2022-2023 Fulbright Postdoctoral Program Grantee İzmir Demokrasi University, İzmir / George Mason University

Pictured: Dr. Ergünay (first from the right) after his speech at the Fairfax headquarters office of the urban search and rescue team



We all expect to welcome miracles every day in our lives, and believe these miracles embellish our lives toward much more wonderful days. However, life does not always present those miracles. February 6 was such a day in my country. Türkiye woke up to devastating earthquakes on that day. Cities were destroyed, and lives were lost! The Fairfax County (Virginia) International Search & Rescue Team including 79 team members and six rescue dogs was among the first organizations that reacted to the international aid request of Türkiye, which was an obvious sign of international solidarity.

As a Fulbright scholar, I felt honored to be invited to give a talk during the visit to the headquarters office of the rescue team by the Turkish community group members living in the USA. My Fulbright project advisor, Prof. Seth Parsons from George Mason University, also accompanied me during the visit. It was one of the most difficult speeches that I have given in my life! I ended my remarks by quoting a renowned Turkish novelist:

"As noted by Yaşar Kemal, a renowned Turkish novelist who grew up in the earthquake zone and put into words the pains of people living in that zone all his life: 'Life is about making hope out of despair, and humankind has survived so far by raising hope out of despair.' These are the words we need to believe in these days! On behalf of Turkish community members in Fairfax, I would like to thank you once again for raising hope out of despair."

It was a day of expressing a deep sense of gratitude to the rescue team for their invaluable immediate disaster response efforts with humanitarian assistance following the earthquake. After the meeting, Prof. Parsons encouraged me to inform the public relations of George Mason University College of Education and Human Development.

The details of the meeting were published on the news page of CEHD:

<https://cehd.gmu.edu/news/stories/mason-affiliate-faculty-onur-ergunay-thanks-the-fairfax-search-and-rescue-team-for-efforts-in-turkey>

"Fulbright and Academic Freedom"

Haydar Oğuz Erdin

2022-2023 Fulbright
Postdoctoral Program Grantee

Independent Researcher, İstanbul /
Lehigh University

*Pictured: Dr. Erdin's work station at Lehigh
University*

What is the best aspect of the Fulbright experience? For me, a visiting scholar in Philosophy, it is the freedom that it provides. The sense of freedom here is very specific but of vital importance. It is specific because it is not the usual freedoms provided in the USA: individual rights, freedom of expression, and the like. On the contrary, I'm finding the ways of hyper-individuality, organization of relations around an atomistic family, or the necessity of owning a private car extremely claustrophobic.

The freedom I'm talking about is the freedom of doing pure research with

no strings attached. The freedom of research with no explicit demands to get a result or write a paper. Even, dare I say, the freedom to be inefficient and wasteful. That is, the freedom to get deeper as opposed to specializing. This is of vital importance. From what I hear and read this actually was academia up until the early eighties. Didn't the Nobel laureate Peter Higgs (Higgs boson) once state that he would not be able to do the kind of work required for his discoveries if he was working under the conditions of today's "publish or perish" academia? Another important figure, whom I cannot remember, put it more bluntly by claiming that today's researchers are not good at doing meaningful research, but good at writing grant proposals.

At the beginning of my Fulbright program, I did not realize that I would have such freedom even though I already knew the examples above. My aim was to write a paper by the end of the program. Since I wasn't going to have any teaching load, this seemed to be the best option. Moreover, there was implicit but strong expectation from my advisors and colleagues that that is the natural thing to do. Not writing a paper, especially in such favorable conditions, is equated with "wasting" an opportunity. But around the second month of my visit, I've realized that using

this opportunity to get as deep as possible would be the best in the long run. Hence, I've worked as hard as possible to make that happen. Perhaps harder than writing a paper, because it was pure excitement and wonder. Whether this will turn out to be a "useless depth" or a fertile ground for many results and papers, only time will tell. But I will always be grateful to Fulbright for a short glimpse of such freedom.



"An eye-opening and self-improving US experience"

Seda Yeşildal Samsakçı

2022-2023 Teaching Excellence
and Achievement (TEA)
Program Grantee

İstanbul Fuat Sezgin Bilim ve Sanat
Merkezi, İstanbul / University of
Massachusetts Lowell



After working as a teacher for 18 years, I was looking for new opportunities to expand my horizons. I applied for the Fulbright TEA program and finally I was at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. Visiting the USA was one of my biggest dreams, hence I was extremely excited and happy.

The program was very well-organized from the very beginning. Every detail was taken into consideration. I felt very special. Also, I met fellows from 18 other countries, learned about their cultures along with the educational system and made friends that would be with me for a lifetime. It is the greatest wealth earned in a relatively short time.

We were taught about American culture and education. Also, we had a lot of excursions, visited landmarks and museums, watched sports events, listened to concerts, and participated in family dinners. We even went to New York City which was a surprise for all of the fellows. I enjoyed every moment, bursting with happiness. People in the US were very kind and considerate. They respect you as an individual. Anything you do, a tiny idea or product is

appreciated and praised; you are encouraged to do more. You feel yourself very precious.

I would like to mention my family friend Dr. Julio from the program. He took care of me like a family member. One day, he took us where he lived once. People there were from Cape Verde just like him. They were performing their music and dance. I am personally an anti-stage person; I do not like being at the center of attention. But there, I was invited to dance so many times that I was on-stage very often. What I would like to emphasize here: I stepped out of my comfort zone, I needed to embrace another culture, so I experienced something new. As long as you are open to new opportunities, you can grow.

Thanks to the Fulbright TEA Program, I had the chance to grow immensely; it enriched and enhanced me and now I feel much more confident both as an educator and individual.

Pictured: Ms. Samsakçı (second from the right) with her program advisor Prof. Phitsamay Uy (third from the right), TEA Program official Mr. Michael Kuban (fourth from the right), and other TEA fellows in Washington, D.C.



Advising Program

Outreach Activities for Fulbright Grants

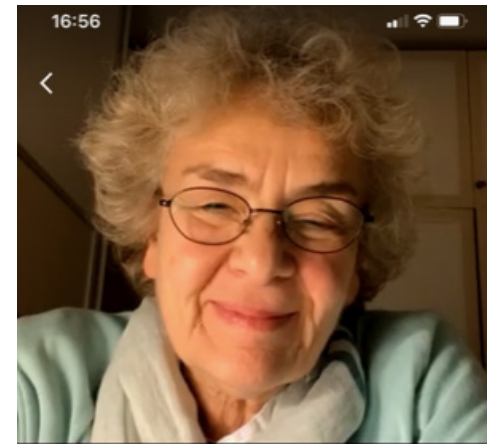
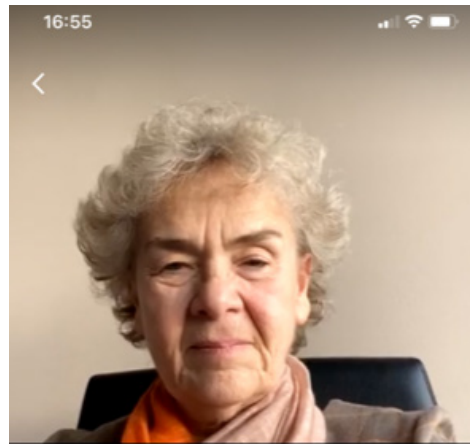
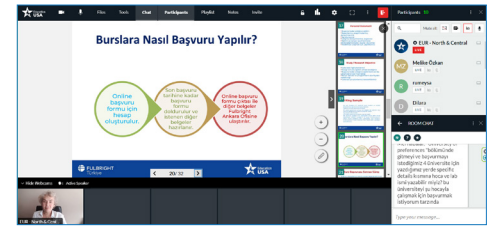
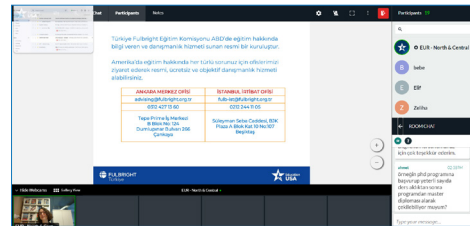
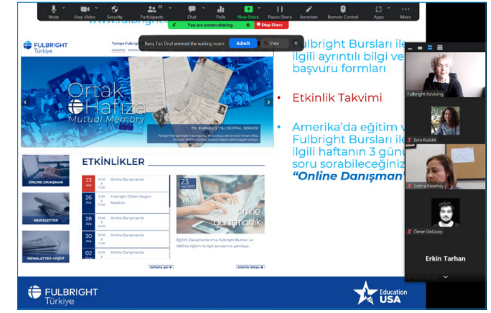
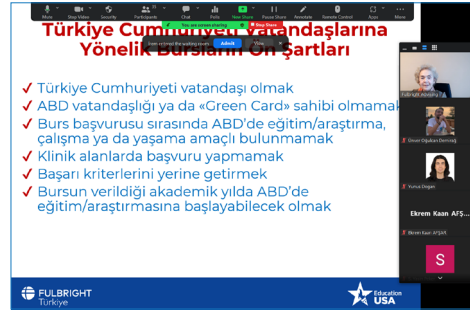
Master's and Ph.D. Grant: Advisers promoted the Fulbright Master's and Ph.D. Grants through many channels, throughout the application period which ran from December 28, 2022, to March 22, 2023.

Digital posters were sent to all rectors, faculties, institutes, and departments.

Multiple webinars were organized to aid the applicants for the grants: eight sessions on the details of the applications process, and another six on "How to Write an Effective Statement of Purpose" were presented by our advisers to a total of 764 students.

Due to the devastating earthquakes in Kahramanmaraş and nearby cities, the application period was extended, and some of our webinars and Instagram Live sessions had to be canceled.

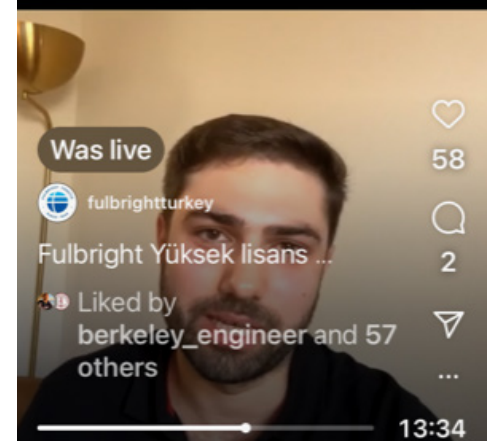
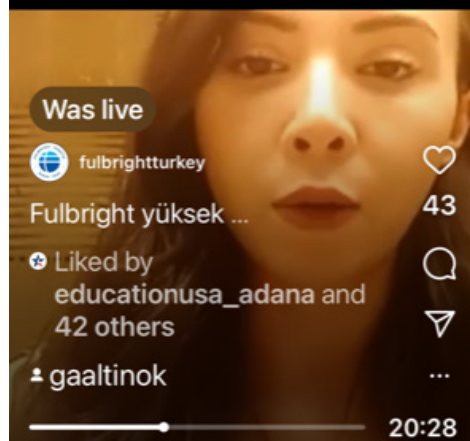
A total of 15 university-specific webinars were organized in collaboration with Turkish universities, which were attended by around 800 students and academics.



Pictured left: With Master's Program alumna Ayçıl Altınok

Pictured right: With Master's Program alumnus Burak Onat

Two Instagram Live sessions were conducted with alumni where details of the application process, the Fulbright experience and useful tips were discussed. A total of 488 participants were present at these sessions. In addition, four Instagram Live Q&A sessions were carried out, with a total of 762 participants.



Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program:

When the program opened to applications on April 24, it was announced on the web page and social media accounts, and announcements and posters were sent to universities, governors' offices, municipalities, bar associations, foundations, and NGOs.

Several webinars were organized to inform interested applicants and answer their questions about the program.

One Instagram Live session was organized to host Humphrey alumnus Önder Yalçın, Director of Migration Management at Gaziantep Municipality. Mr. Yalçın spent his grant year at American University Washington College of Law in Washington D.C. in the field of "Trafficking in Persons, Policy and Prevention."



EducationUSA Activities

Online Advising Hours are carried out as usual, in one-hour sessions, thrice per week.

One-on-one advising sessions which became very popular during the past year are still organized frequently, to inform students and parents of educational options in the U.S., and advise them on the application process, standard tests, and other tips. New advisers İrem Arıcan Yiğit and Ecem Mutlu completed their New Adviser Training Modules, and have begun advising students on a one-on-one basis.

Betti Delevi gave a presentation to the students and parents of Saint Michel French High School, discussing the essentials of applying to and studying at U.S. colleges (on the right).



Study Abroad Fairs

In March and April, our advisers at our Istanbul and Ankara Offices attended both IEFT and A2 International Education Fairs in person. The advisers answered questions regarding studying in the U.S.A and Fulbright Grant Programs. Our booths were visited by 331 students and parents in IEFT and 231 in A2 Fairs. More than 1.000 brochures and flyers were distributed. In addition, our advisers both in Ankara and Istanbul delivered seminars, reaching more than 300 students and parents.



Pictured above left:

Ecem Mutlu and Betti Delevi at the IEFT Fair in Istanbul

Pictured below left:

Ecem Mutlu giving a seminar at the A2 Fair in Istanbul

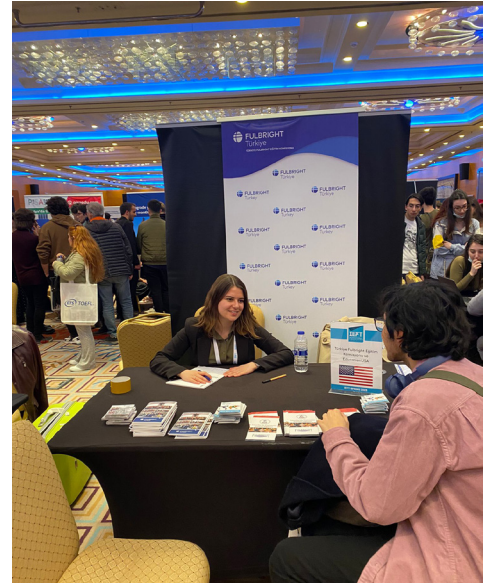


Pictured above right:

İrem Arıcan Yiğit at the IEFT Fair in Ankara.

Pictured below right:

İrem Arıcan Yiğit at the A2 Fair in Ankara



U.S. Higher Education Officials Visits

On March 10, International Admission Counselor at MICA (Maryland Institute College of Art), Ms. Katie Zazenski and on April 28, Ms. Pan Luo, Associate Director of International Admissions at Brandeis University visited the Istanbul Office to share information and answer questions about their respective schools, admission processes, support for international students, financial aid opportunities and their strong programs. They were also advised on recruitment possibilities and other tips.

Pictured:

Pan Luo with Istanbul Advisers



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Commission Staff

Dirty Santa

On December 30, 2022, our team in Ankara gathered for a fun-filled game of "Dirty Santa." Laughter and excitement filled the room as everyone took turns stealing and unwrapping gifts. It was a great way to wrap up the year and enjoy some festive cheer with our colleagues.



March 8 Women's Day

The annual tradition on Women's Day, of a celebratory gesture from the Executive

Director Prof. Aydınli took the form of Donation Cards this year.



"Bayramlaşma"

Staff came together across the video conferencing system between the two offices to share their plans and wishes for the Eid. Boxes of chocolates certainly helped lift our spirits!



Staff Transitions

Pictured: Serin's farewell lunch

Serin Alpokay Taş, Education Adviser at our Istanbul Office for over six years left the Commission in January, to join her husband Demir, who is doing his Master's at M.I.T. We wish her the best of luck, mild Boston weather, and good friends in the U.S.



Mr. Şahin Kaya, Senior American Programs Assistant and Education Adviser, left the Commission to pursue his Master's degree, and Ms. Ece Yaluğ, Turkish Programs Assistant, left to take a job in the Netherlands. We thanked our colleagues for their valuable contributions and wished them luck in their future careers. Ms. Ayşe Kevser Arslan was appointed as Placement Adviser and Turkish Programs Assistant while Ms. Anna Gerda South left the Commission to focus more on her last months in Türkiye as an ETA.



Ms. İrem Arıcan Yiğit joined the Commission as Education Adviser and American Programs Assistant in Ankara, and Ms. Ecem Mutlu as Education Adviser in İstanbul; the staff welcomed them as Serin, Şahin and Ece were saying goodbye.

Ms. Arıcan Yiğit has an undergraduate and a Master's degree in English Language Teaching from Hacettepe University and is pursuing a Ph.D. degree in the same department.

Ms. Ecem Mutlu has an undergraduate degree in English Language and Literature from Boğaziçi University and a Master's degree in Psychology from Bilkent University. Also a 2021-2022 FLTA alumna, we have welcomed her back "home!"



2023

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100 years of the Turkish Republic



FULBRIGHT Türkiye

THE TURKISH FULBRIGHT COMMISSION

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