



*Translations from Armenian into Swedish, 1991 to date*

a study by the Next Page Foundation in the framework of the Book Platform project

conducted by Vahagn Avedian<sup>1</sup>  
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<sup>1</sup> The author is editor-in-chief of [www.armenica.org](http://www.armenica.org) and a Ph.D. candidate at the Department of History, Lund University

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Cultural and literary connections between Armenia and Sweden in 21<sup>st</sup> century are literally non-existent. Albeit Sweden has a cultural policy of opening-up to other languages and cultures, Armenia seems not to be present at the Swedish cultural map at all. While as much as 30% of Swedish book production<sup>2</sup> constitutes of translations from other languages, **there is not a single translation from an Armenian original or from an Armenian author after year 1991.**

Literary connections during Soviet times are equally weak: in the whole pre-1991 period there are only two titles which can qualify as translations from Armenian.

1. *Hajastan* [Berättare från Armenien], Ragnhild Norlin-Svenning (ed.), translated by Carl Elof Svenning, 1968, Lidingö: Internationella bokklubben
2. Karen Simonian: *Tstesutyun Natanael* [På återseende, Natanael!], translated by Torsten M. Nilsson, 1979, Fripress

The first title “Tales from Armenia” is an anthology of Armenian tales compiled by Ragnhild Norlin-Svenning and translated by Carl Elof Svenning - a Swedish poet who mastered over ten languages and is mostly known for his numerous translations to Swedish from a variety of languages.

The second is children and youth book, translated by Torsten M. Nilsson, a Russian language teacher who worked also as translator and a freelance reporter.

In addition, we were able to identify a work by the 12<sup>th</sup> c. Armenian Patchriach Nerses Shnorhali translated into Swedish and published by the Mkhitarist Order in Venice in 1829.

3. *Armenianska patriarken S. Niersis Clajensis Böner* [The Prayers of Patchriach Nerses Shnorhali], Venice, 1852

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<sup>2</sup> Statistics by the Swedish Publishers Association, Rapport från Svenska Förläggareföreningen, SvF, Bransch statistik 2011, [http://forlaggare.se/media/47293/svfstat\\_2011\\_web.pdf](http://forlaggare.se/media/47293/svfstat_2011_web.pdf)



One explanation of this lack of literary connections is the lack of knowledge about Armenia in Sweden in general. The Armenian community in Sweden is quite small (estimated to about 8,000) and relatively young: the majority of Armenian immigrants arrived during early 1980s. The exchange of tourism is quite small, but a search in Google reveals an increasing number of blogs and offers of people visiting Armenia, which could in turn indicate that the interest in the country could impact other related areas, such as the language and the literature.

At the same time, there is a complete lack of skilled translators. There are no courses, neither on university nor college level, offering Armenian language while there is a number of courses in Persian, Kurdish, Turkish and Georgian at university level.

Recently, there is one newly launch program for basic Armenian language at public high-school level.

One way of introducing Armenian literature to the Swedish readers would of course to be financing a project of translating and publishing a selected number of titles from Armenian epic/classic novels or maybe preferably children's stories by famous Armenian writers to Swedish. These books could be translated by competent Swedish native-speakers or by pairs of translators, and be published in Armenia where the costs can be a fraction of those in Sweden.

### **A note on the bibliographical information and sources**

The available bibliographical sources should be approached with cautiousness, particularly in the case of less popular languages as Armenian is. For the current research, two sources have been used: The Swedish National Library service (<http://www.libris.kb.se>) and UNESCO [Index Translationum](#).

*The Swedish National Library* lists eight (8) titles “translations from Armenian”. However, a further investigation showed that five out of these eight titles are in fact translations from Aramean that were by mistake listed as “Armenian”.



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Thereby, the full list of translations from Armenian into Swedish is limited to three titles of which one is a mediated via Russian.

*Index Translationum* lists three titles, including the above book by Karen Simonian. Of the remaining two, none is actually a translation from Armenian.

- 1/2 Erzinkian-Lorelli, Sourène; Fjäll, Göta M.; Zubery, Anna: Sagor från Kaukasien [Swedish] / Hédé: HLT [Sweden], 1995. 105 s. ill. [Georgian], [Armenian], [Kabardian-Cherkess]

According to the preface in the book by the author's wife, this is a collection of Armenian and Georgian stories (the author was an Armenian native of Georgia) which her husband had told/written down. The wife has published that collection in Swedish after the death of her husband.

- 2/2 (Dunér, Anna; Räder, Andrea): Ängeln vid Aplyryds stup [Swedish] (ISBN: 91-7195-744-8) / Örebro: Libris, Helsinki: Fontana media [Sweden], 2006. 135, 2 s., ill. [Danish], [Armenian], [Portuguese], [Norwegian]

This is a collection of stories written by the famous Swedish author Selma Lagerlöf which has been translated into numerous foreign languages, among others Armenian but not the other way around.

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