Anglo-Turkish Society online lecture, 13 May 2025, 6.00 pm (UK time)

Speaker: Dr Robert Schild

Title: 'Burgazada: A living ethnographic museum'

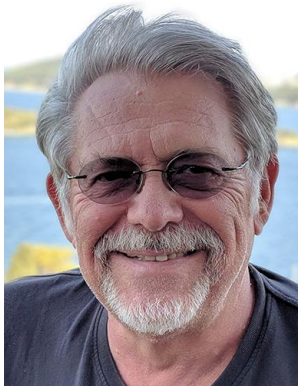
Burgazada, being the third largest of the Prince's Islands just off the Asian part of Istanbul, is with its 1.5 square kilometers still a tiny island. Its steady population consists of only a few hundred, albeit in the summer months it stretches to a few thousand… Most of the latter commute on weekdays to the city with ferry rides of +/- one hour.
The island's history dates to the time of Alexander the Great; hence its initial name *Antigoni* derives from the father of one of Alexander's generals. Its later name *Burgaz* relates to a small fortress ("Burg") on its sole hilltop. Starting from the Byzantine era, majority of its population have been Greek fishermen. Today the island hosts three historic Greek Orthodox churches, a nearly 100-year-old Catholic church, a mosque (built only in 1954!), one small synagogue, and a Cem-House for the Alevis of all Princess Islands.
This brings us to the main topic of this presentation: An island of just 1.5 km^2 hosts during the summer months a population consisting of close to 30 different ethnic groups and confessions – which seems to be unique amongst on all five continents of the world! Some might argue that *Büyükada*, the largest of the Price's Islands, shows a similarly diversified population, but this is not true – a tiny group of German families as well as Austrian priests and nuns of Istanbul spend their summer vacations on Burgaz island, are missing on the larger one!
Dr. Robert Schild, the host of this presentation, has returned to *Burgazada* every summer since 1989, despite his family's departure from Istanbul many years ago. For him this island with its outstanding diversity is nothing else than a *"live ethnographical museum"* – and he has written numerous articles on this topic, published two books on this island with impressions and comments about this phenomenon, including conducting numerous interviews with its inhabitants, partly also witnessing/documenting this "oral history".
A documentary film made by Nedim Bora in 2005, based on Robert's outline and guidance, will lead spectators through this presentation…

Booking essential: https://robert-schild-lecture.eventbrite.co.uk

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Burgaz Island



Dr. Robert Schild, born 1950 in Istanbul to Austrian expatriate parents of Jewish faith, attended Istanbul University and received his doctorate 1975 on International Marketing from the Johannes Kepler University in Linz/Austria where he was awarded the Eduard Haas Prize for his thesis. He has been working in the international steel trade from 1977 to 2016, after which he is spending his retirement period alternately in Israel, Turkey, and Austria.
He has published articles on International Marketing in Austria, the USA, and Turkey, furthermore a collection of essays on Judaism, a treatise on Jewish Humour and a short story collection in Istanbul. Co-editor of a study on the Ashkenazim in Turkey and an anthology of Sephardic poetry, he is also author of two books as well as the screenplay for a Turkish documentary about the Princes' Island of Burgaz. He produced radio programs on Jazz and Klezmer Music at a progressive Istanbul radio station, and since 2003 he writes theatre reviews for the renowned Turkish theatre magazine www.tiyatrodergisi.com.tr. As of today, his articles appear among others in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (Germany), Die Presse (Austria), and the Viennese quarterly magazine DAVID.