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Editorial



Volume 54 of the Historical Reporter continues the thematic line of volume 53 and is dedicated to the scholarly legacy of the eminent Russian orientalist, Professor Constantin Alexandrovich Panchenko (1968–2024).

The issue opens with a presentation delivered by Dr. Panchenko at the international conference held at the University of Balamand (Lebanon) in 2023. His plenary address analyzed the perception of the Union of Florence of 1439 within the Orthodox Church of Antioch and throughout the Christian East from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries. Central to the article is the Council of the Three Eastern Patriarchs (of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem) held in 1443, which for the first time publicly rejected the Union of Florence, thus becoming «the voice of the ancient Eastern thrones» at a critical moment for the Orthodox world.

The topic of the Union was almost forgotten in the sixteenth century, only to be revived at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, assuming a central place in historical studies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The author emphasizes that this issue — along with the Council of 1443 — is of exceptional importance for understanding the background of the 1724 schism within the Church of Antioch into Orthodox and Catholic branches, acquiring for contemporary Arab Christians not only a historical but also political and ideological significance. Dr. Panchenko convincingly disputes J. Gill's thesis concerning the spuriousness of the 1443 Council's charter. As a key new argument in favor of the document's authenticity, he adduces the discovery of its Church Slavonic translation made in the Neamț Monastery in Moldavia virtually immediately after the Council, in the same year 1443. The introduction of evidence for this early Slavonic translation into scholarly circulation constitutes a significant source-critical discovery, effectively concluding the long-standing academic debate over the authenticity of the Council of the Three Patriarchs. At the same time, it opens a new

field in comparative source studies and poses new challenges for Byzantinists, Slavists, and scholars of Middle Eastern Christianity.

The detailed analysis of Greek – Latin polemics and of the reception of the topic of the Union in the works of Arabic-speaking Orthodox historians and polemicists of the Early Modern and Modern periods (Anastasius ibn Mujalla, Patriarch Macarius III al-Za'im, Paul of Aleppo, Sophronius al-Kilizi, Asad Rustum, among others) enables the integration of the history of the Christian East into a broader ecclesiastical context. Dr. Panchenko's study affirms the canonical and historical significance of the 1443 Council of the Three Patriarchs as the first public, pan-Orthodox act of rejection of the Union of Florence by the Eastern sees.

Evgeny M. Kopot's contribution continues the study of the question of uniatism in the Church of Antioch in the second half of the nineteenth century, the initial results of which were published in the previous issue of the Reporter. This study involves a comparative analysis of specific cases of conversion of Orthodox communities to Greek Catholicism (and vice versa) within the dioceses of the Patriarchate of Antioch (Latakia, Zahle, Tripoli, and others). Drawing on unpublished archival materials, consular documentation, and the testimonies of Russian orientalists (Archimandrite Porphyrius (Uspensky), A.E. Krymsky), the author establishes a typology of motives underlying the Unia-related conversions. Among the dominant factors were the desire to avoid Ottoman obligations (notably the *bedel-i askeriye* tax), the low material status of parish clergy, property disputes concerning the exploitation of *waqf* lands, and violations of canon law in the sphere of matrimony. For the first time in Russian historiography, significant attention is paid to the mechanism of relative deprivation as a factor contributing to conversion to Catholicism.

The thematic block concerning the contacts between the Roman See and the Orthodox East is concluded by an article by

Mikhail V. Gratsianskiy, D. Sc. (History) and Senior Research Fellow at Lomonosov Moscow State University. It offers a critical analysis of the role of the Roman delegation at the Council of Ephesus in 449. The article proposes a fundamental reassessment of the traditional historiography, which has largely been based on the Roman version of events. The author argues that the conventional perception of the Council of 449 as the «Robber Council» originated from deliberately distorted reports submitted by the papal legates to justify their own conduct. The central thesis asserts that the Roman delegation's failure to advance its position at the Ephesian council was due not only to the opposition of its president, Dioscorus of Alexandria, but also to the incompetence, bias, and bad faith of the papal legates themselves. They left Ephesus without authorization before the official close of the Council — an act amounting, in effect, to official misconduct. Upon their return to Rome, they disseminated false claims that they had been subjected to violence and threats by Dioscorus of Alexandria. This misinformation was accepted by Pope Leo and Pulcheria Augusta, and subsequently became the foundation for the annulment of the Council's decisions and for its enduring designation as the “Robber Council”.

Dr. Gratsianskiy's study offers a conceptual framework for understanding how the failure of a diplomatic mission could be transformed into an official narrative of violence and heresy, thereby demonstrating that the subsequent condemnation of the Council of 449 and of Dioscorus of Alexandria was, to a significant extent, based on politically motivated distortion of facts. The work deepens our understanding of the limited actual influence of the Roman See within the Eastern Empire in the mid-fifth century, particularly in the absence of the personal participation of the Pope.

The section devoted to the Western advance upon the East comprises studies that address its two principal manifestations: overt military pressure and the subtler infiltration of European ideas. The first of these questions is the focus of the article by Taras Yu. Kobishchanov, which examines a particularly important yet hitherto insufficiently studied aspect of Napoleon Bonaparte's Eastern Cam-

paign — namely, the reaction of the Christian population of Greater Syria to the French intervention of 1798–1801.

The scholar successfully introduces and compares a broad range of narrative sources — Christian chronicles of various confessional traditions (Maronite, Orthodox, Greek Catholic), European consular reports, as well as Ottoman administrative materials, including documents from the Jerusalem Sharia court. This approach ensures a polyphonic presentation and guards against interpretive one-sidedness. The high degree of historical contextualization achieved by the author merits special commendation, as it elucidates the unique situations in Beirut, Palestine, and Aleppo.

The key contribution of the study lies in substantiating the thesis of the ambivalent attitude of Syrian Christians toward the French intervention, revealing social and ideological divisions within the communities. The author demonstrates that the outwardly humble ecclesiastical elites — fearful for their privileges and for the religious status quo — perceived French republican ideology as «heresy», horrified by the prospect of a «tree of liberty» growing on the site of Christ’s suffering, whereas the common people and petty traders regarded the French as a potential source of material gain, which they sometimes tapped into with success (for example, by selling alcohol to soldiers at five-to sixfold mark-ups). The Ottoman authorities and Islamic religious leaders, who proclaimed jihad against the European invaders, sought to exempt Eastern Christians from reprisals. In this context, the most vulnerable group proved to be the berat holders — Christian dragomans and merchants affiliated with the French consulate. After the withdrawal of foreign troops, despite the apparent restoration of the former order, the French invasion acted as a catalyst for change within Syrian society. Although the intervention did not result in mass pogroms, it heightened interconfessional tension, and the Muslim population began to perceive Christians as potential collaborators of the Europeans. Dr. Kobishchanov’s work makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the genesis of the modern Middle East, recording the moment of crisis in the dhimmi status of Syrian Christians.

The cohesion of Western and Eastern cultural traditions is represented in the article “The Emergence of Syrian Patriotism in the 19th Century: the Case of Butrus al-Bustani and His Contemporaries” by Dmitry R. Zhantiev. The study of Syrian Christian intellectuals and their role in the formation of Syrian national consciousness is essential for understanding the processes of modernization within the Ottoman Empire during the era of the Tanzimat reforms (1839–1876). Particular emphasis is placed on the position of Beirut – the “Paris of the East” – as a center of missionary activity (which performed a Kulturträger function) and of literary and educational initiatives. The author examines manifestations of the idea of Syrian patriotism in the writings of al-Bustani and his Arabic-speaking Christian contemporaries under the influence of contacts with American Protestant missionaries, noting that the principal stimulus for its emergence was reflection on the fate of Christian communities in the aftermath of the events of 1860 in Mount Lebanon and Damascus.

Dr. Zhantiev convincingly argues that members of the new Christian intellectual elite directly borrowed European ideas of supra-confessional patriotism and enlightenment as means of overcoming communal isolation. A notable strength of the study lies in its detailed analysis of the socio-political and economic context of the period, including the Tanzimat reforms, the rise of Beirut as the “sea gate of Ottoman Syria”, and the role of missionary educational institutions (both American Protestant and French Catholic) in shaping the Arabic-speaking elite. The periodical *Nafir Sūriyya* (“The Clarion of Syria”), published in 1860–1861, is rightly identified as the key source for understanding al-Bustani’s patriotic thought. From its pages, al-Bustani called for the replacement of “blind prejudices” with patriotism, concord, and unity, viewing an all-Syrian patriotism as the most effective means of overcoming inter-confessional strife. His use of the toponym *Sūriyya* (“Syria”) – unfamiliar to his contemporaries and substituted for the traditional *Bilad al-Sham* – indicates direct influence from Western European literature.

The main conclusion of the article, which has acquired renewed relevance in light of the current crisis in inter-confessional relations

in Syria, is that the tragic events of 1860 served as the decisive catalyst for the crystallization of the idea of Syrian patriotism.

The section devoted to the influence of Russia on the cultural sphere of the Orthodox Levant opens with an article by Professor Souad Abou Rouss Slim of the University of Balamand (Tripoli, Lebanon). Dr. Slim's study focuses on the significant impact of the schools of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (IOPS) in the Middle East and their role in the process of Arabization of the Patriarchate of Antioch. The work's extensive source base merits special attention. Among the sources are the memoirs of former students such as Mikhayil Nu'aymeh and Georges Hanna, who emphasized the free and liberal character of Russian education, its accessibility to children from the poorest families, the absence of religious segregation, and the high level of Arabic-language instruction, which distinguished these schools from other missionary institutions. Of particular note is the role of Russian schools in providing access to education for girls. The study also cites the testimony of European missionaries, such as Martin Hartmann, who highly praised the effectiveness of IOPS educational policy, as well as the apprehensive reports of Catholic missions fearing the displacement of French influence by Russian activity. Also included are striking accounts by the Muslim sheikh and Arabic teacher Muhammad al-Tantawi, whose flowery odes to Russian emperors Nicholas I and Alexander II reflected an exceptionally positive image of Russia in the eyes of local communities.

This combination of sources enables the reconstruction of a multidimensional picture of the perception of Russian presence. Presenting extensive material on Russia's multifaceted influence in the Levant, Dr. Slim demonstrates that Russian educational and political engagement acted as a catalyst for the cultural revival of Arab Orthodox communities and created a powerful counterweight to the threat of cultural and religious assimilation emanating from the West.

Complementing this thematic line is another study by Evgeny M. Kopot', which offers a detailed reconstruction of the establishment of the network of Russian schools of the Imperial Orthodox

Palestine Society in Beirut during 1887–1897 — a subject that has not previously been analyzed in historiography. The particular value of this work lies in its empirical foundation, based on materials from the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire introduced into scholarly circulation for the first time. The main content of the article centers on the missionary and pedagogical activity of Maria A. Cherkasova, known among Beirut’s Orthodox Arabs as “Mama Moskobie”. The study of this phenomenon reveals the complex and ambivalent character of Russia’s educational mission in the Orthodox East and invites a critical re-examination of the apologetic myths entrenched in later historiography. Maria Cherkasova’s continuous thirty-year teaching career in Beirut has no parallel in the history of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society and is unique in both scope and content. The author concludes that the successful and long-term development of the IOPS school network in Beirut was ensured not by systematic support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Society’s leadership, but solely by Cherkasova’s personal energy, sincere faith, and self-sacrifice.

The traditional “Sources” section presents an annotated translation from Coptic of a sermon by Pisentius, Bishop of Coptos, prepared by Dr. Voytenko. Delivered on the feast day of Saint Onuphrius the Great, the sermon illuminates the moral condition of Christians in Upper Egypt at the beginning of the seventh century. The text is of considerable interest both linguistically and liturgically (in particular, it includes the Coptic translation of a deacon’s exclamation from the Liturgy of Saint Mark).

The issue concludes with a complete bibliography of the scholarly works of Professor Panchenko, compiled by E. Yu. Kovalskaya.

Alexey E. Titkov,
Editor-in-Chief of the Journal “Historical Reporter”.



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Original paper



Constantin A. Panchenko

The Union of Florence and the Church of Antioch: A Retrospect

(prepared for publication
by Elena Yu. Kovalskaya)

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Abstract

This publication presents Professor Constantin A. Panchenko's keynote address, delivered at the international conference "The Orthodox Church of Antioch from the 15th to the 18th Century: Toward a Proper Understanding of History" at Balamand University (Lebanon) on October 16, 2023. It is devoted to the Union of Florence of 1439 and its perception in the Church of Antioch over the following centuries up to the present day. The article examines the main stages of the relations between the Orthodox East and Rome, as well as the degree of involvement of the Middle Eastern Orthodox Churches in the union project at each of these stages; it identifies the factors that led to fundamental chang-



es in church policy. Central place is given to the Council of the Three Patriarchs in 1443, when for the first time, at the most crucial moment for the Orthodox world, disoriented by the union, the Eastern patriarchal sees rejected it. Arguing against Joseph Gill, who insisted that the conciliar letter of 1443 was a forgery, Professor Panchenko cites the arguments of M.-H. Blanchet in favour of its authenticity and of the historicity of the Council of the Three Patriarchs; he also puts forward new arguments of his own. The article also examines in detail the vicissitudes of Melkite-Catholic relations in the 1450s–1470s. Historically speaking, the Levant is situated between two Christian poles: Russia, as the defender of Orthodoxy, and the Catholic West, which sought to absorb Orthodoxy by offering material enticements. Particular attention is given to how the Council of Ferrara-Florence is reflected in the works of Arab Orthodox historians and polemicists of the early modern and modern era (Anastasius ibn Mujallā, Patriarch Macarius III az-Za‘īm and Paul of Aleppo, Sophronius of Kilis, Mas‘ad Nashw, Michael Breik ad-Dimashqī, and Asad Rustum). Professor Panchenko notes that the topic of the Council of Florence, which had been all but forgotten in the 16th century, was revived at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries, and in the 19th and 20th centuries occupied a foremost place in historical research and polemics. This topic continues to be extremely important for modern Arab Christians, as it is not merely historical but political and ideological in nature.

Keywords:

Christian Middle East, the Orthodox Church of Antioch, the Union of Florence, the Council of the Three Patriarchs of 1443,

Melkite-Catholic relations, anti-Latin polemic in Arabic, the schism of the Church of Antioch in 1724.

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he problem of the Union of Florence seems to be one of the dominant themes in the long history of relations between the Eastern and the Western Christianity. Although this main unionist project of Rome which was labelled “the Eighth Ecumenical Council” wasn’t crowned by long-term effect, the acts of the Council of Florence were a model for future unions between the Vatican and the Eastern Churches. The Council had a strong impact on collective historical memory of various Christian peoples. For example, it was a trigger which started the emergence of the current Russian national identity (the rejection of the Union of Florence by the Russian Church, which caused isolation of Russia in the Christian world for decades, promoted the genesis of the Russian messianic ideology of “the Third Rome”). The same topic of the Union of Florence is still important for historical consciousness of Middle Eastern Orthodox Christianity. The Council of Florence and the Council of the Eastern Patriarchs of 1443 which rejected the Union are extremely crucial for understanding the subsequent history of the Church of Antioch and its schism of 1724.

The Middle Eastern Orthodox and the Council of Florence

Speaking about the place of the Union of Florence in a history of the Christian Arabs one should start from the historical background of the Union, a political situation in the Christian Middle East in the early 15th cent. Since the late 14th cent. the Eastern patriarchates were more and more isolated from Constantinople. A system of close cooperation between the Byzantine empire and the Christian East, which existed for centuries, collapsed. Ecclesiastical contacts between Constantinople and Levant were reduced drastically. No one of the Middle Eastern Patriarchs visited the Byzantine capital in this period unlike the situation of the 13th and 14th centuries. It seems that the failing Byzantine lost possibilities to influence the Christian East and lost even interest in Middle Eastern affairs. In contrast with the fact that some previous Eastern Patriarchs were Byzantine Greeks or Chalcedonian Armenians from Cilicia, almost all the Patriarchs of the late Middle Ages were of local Arab origin.

One can suggest that the reason for this isolation of the Christian Levant was the policy of the Mamluk state after the Alexandrian Crusade of the king of Cyprus Peter Lusignan (1365). The Mamluks severely persecuted the Eastern Christians and forbade any unapproved contacts of the Patriarchs with the foreign Christian countries. However, such restrictions couldn't be effective. The pre-industrial society had little methods of total control of movement of people, goods and ideas. The causes of the isolation of the Christian East should be looked for inside the Greek Orthodox civilization which had been in serious crisis in that period¹.

¹ Панченко К.А. Восточные патриархии Константинополя от крестоносцев до османов // Ермилов П.В., Грацианский М.В., Панченко К.А. Понятие первенства: Истоки и контексты: Коллективная монография / Отв.

While in the 14th century the Eastern Patriarchs were actively involved in discussions about the union of Eastern and Western Churches, the Middle Eastern Patriarchates had little relation to the main unionist project of the 15th century, the Council of Florence. Negotiations between emperor John VIII Paleologos (1425–1448) and Rome continued for years but the Eastern Patriarchs were informed about the project of the Council only in spring 1436 when Byzantine envoy Paul Makhrokhir was sent to them with invitation to take part in the council².

Already in autumn 1436 it became clear that the Patriarchs were unable to participate in the council personally and intended to delegate their prerogatives to members of the Byzantine clergy³. Since February 1437 names of these representatives (procurators, vicars) began to appear in the sources, however with some variants. Antonios of Herakleia and protosyncellus Gregorios were nominated patriarch vicars for the throne of Alexandria, Markos of Ephesos and Isidor of Russia for Antioch and Dionisios of Sardis for Jerusalem⁴. Paul Makhrokhir returned to the Byzantine capital 1 of March 1437 and already in April new envoy of the emperor named Theodosios Antiochos was sent to the East. About early September he brought letters of the Patriarchs confirming powers of the vicars⁵.

I don't think that during the preparation of the Council the Eastern Patriarchs communicated between themselves and discussed any common position. Nevertheless, it's worth to men-

ред. П.В. Ермилов, М.В. Грацианский. М.: Издательство ПСТГУ, 2022. С. 519–526.

² For more details: Ibid. С. 526–527.

³ Les registes des actes du patriarcat de Constantinople / Ed. J. Darrouzès. Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1991. Vol. 1. Les actes des patriarches. Fasc. VII. Les registes de 1410 à 1453. №. 3355 (= Darrouzès. Les registes).

⁴ Darrouzès. Les registes. №. 3355, 3361, 3369, 3373.

⁵ Ibid. №. 3361.

tion that Sinai Arabic manuscript 420 (the Synaxarion written in 1287) contains marginalia mentioning visit of Patriarch Yuwakim of Jerusalem to the Sinai monastery in February 1437. The note was written by monk Philimon, who called himself “the pupil of the Patriarch kir Yuwakim”⁶. Perhaps it was just a pilgrimage, however this visit to Sinai could be a chance to meet somehow with the Patriarch of Alexandria and to discuss urgent ecclesiastical affairs.

In April 1438 in Ferrara the Greek delegation demonstrated the patriarchal letters about prerogatives of the vicars⁷. Soon Dionisios of Sardis died, delegating his power of the vicar of Jerusalem to Dositheos of Monemvasia⁸. 6 July of 1439 r. all the Greek delegates except Markos of Ephesos signed the act of Union⁹.

Soon after the conclusion of the Council Gregorios Mammias, at that time protosyncellus and confessor of the emperor and later Patriarch of Constantinople, wrote to Theophilus of Alexandria informing him about the union’s decree signed in Florence¹⁰. Moreover, Nathanael, bishop of Rhodes, was charged by

⁶ MS Sin. Ar. 420. P. 1v.

⁷ *Darrouzès*. Les registes. №. 3369.

⁸ *Ibid.* №. 3373.

⁹ *Nasrallah J.* Histoire du mouvement littéraire dans l’église melchite du Ve au XXe siècle. Louvain-P., 1981. Vol. III. T. 2. P. 72–73; *Успенский Ф.И.* История Византийской империи XI–XV вв. Восточный вопрос. М.: Мысль, 1997. Т. 3. С. 619–620. См. также о Флорентийской унии и участии восточных патриархов в этом проекте: *Blanchet M.-H.* Theology, Philosophy and Politics at Ferrara-Florence // *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium* / Eds. A. Kaldellis, N. Siniosoglou. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. P. 557–572; *Van Sickle J. N.* Re-evaluating the Role of Emperor John VIII in the Failed Union of Florence // *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*. 2017. Vol. 68. № 1. P. 40–58; *Koukousas V.* The Representation of the Patriarchate of Alexandria at Ferrara-Florence and the Fight against Proselytization in the Provinces from the 15th to 18th Century: Investigation on the Basis of the Sources // *Ἐκκλησιαστικὸς Φάρος*. 2012. Т. 94. P. 260–289.

¹⁰ For the letter of Gregorios to Theophilus, see: *Orientalium documenta minora* / Ed. G. Hofmann. Roma: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium studiorum,

John VIII Palaeologus to communicate the promulgated union in Florence to Theophilus¹¹. The reply of the Alexandrian prelate to pope Eugenius V is known; The Patriarch expressed his joy for the fact that ecclesial communion between Rome and Alexandria was restored as well as his willingness to commemorate the name of the Roman pontiff in the liturgy¹². The Orthodox historiography questions authenticity of this letter¹³.

After the return of the Greek delegation to Constantinople in early 1440, hesitations began among the Greek clergy¹⁴. The Union caused strong opposition in the Byzantine society. The authorities even didn't bring themselves to publish officially the Act of Union. No one of popular Metropolitans inclined to occupy the throne of the Patriarch of Constantinople which was vacant after the death of Patriarch Joseph in Florence. Finally in May 1440 Metrophanes of Cyzicus, the strong advocate of Union, was appointed the Patriarch. Many members of the political and ecclesiastical elite left Constantinople. Perhaps, one of them was Arsenios, metropolitan of Caesarea of Cappadocia and exarch of the whole Anatolia, who visited the three Eastern Patriarchs and inspired them to define their official attitude on the Union of Florence.

1953. Vol. III. Fasc. 3. P. 40–45. (Concilium Florentinum. Documenta et Scriptores. Ser. A.) (= *Hofmann. Orientalium*).

¹¹ The specific mission of Nathanael is referred in a letter of the Byzantine emperor to the Patriarch of Alexandria see: *Hoffman. Orientalium*. P. 39–40.

¹² For the letter of Theophilus to pope Eugene, dated on September 1, 1440 and preserved only in latin translation, see: *Hoffman. Orientalium*. P. 51–53.

¹³ *Χρυσόστομος (Παπαδόπουλος), αρχιεπ. Αθηνών και πάσης Ελλάδος*. Ιστορία της Εκκλησίας Αλεξανδρείας (62–1934). Αλεξάνδρεια: Πατριαρχικόν Τυπογραφείο, 1935. Σ. 581. See also: *Koukousas V. The Representation of the Patriarchate of Alexandria...* P. 260–289.

¹⁴ По выражению Ф.И. Успенского, «по мере удаления от Рима их латинство линияло» (*Успенский Ф.И. История...* С. 620) (предложение из русской версии доклада К.А. Панченко, опущено при переводе на англ. яз. — Е.К.).



Patriarch of Antioch and All the East John X (Yazigi) and Professor Panchenko at the conference “The Orthodox Church of Antioch from the 15th to the 18th Century: Towards a Proper Understanding of History”. Lebanon, University of Balamand, October 16, 2023
<https://www.antiochpatriarchate.org/>

The Council of the Middle Eastern Patriarchs 1443

At the Easter 1443 Patriarchs Yuwakim of Jerusalem, Theophilus of Alexandria and Dorotheos of Antioch joined in Jerusalem and signed a decree demonstrating their extremely negative attitude towards the Union and its supporters¹⁵.

The Synodal letter spoke about arrival for a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre metropolitan of Caesarea of Cappadocia who had a rank of Exarch of the whole Anatolia. He informed

¹⁵ There are two modern editions of the decree by G. Hoffman (*Hofmann. Orientalium*. P. 69) and by I Sakellion (*Κατάλογος των χειρογράφων της Εθνικής Βιβλιοθήκης της Ελλάδος / Σακελλίων Ι., εκδ. Εν Αθήναις: Εθνικό Τυπογραφείο, 1892. Σ. 24*), which differ in the title of the document.

the three “Syrian” Patriarchs about “scandals” in Constantinople caused by the “rotten” Latin Council in Florence, which adopted the doctrine on emanation of the Holy Spirit from the Son also, usage of the azymes and recognized the priority of the Pope of Rome. As it was said in the Synodal letter, Metropolitan of Cyzicus Metrophanes “illegally” occupied the throne of the Church of Constantinople supported by the heretics, the Pope and “Latinophrone” emperor John Paleologos. The new Patriarch oppressed the true believers, honoured infidels and heretics and appointed his partisans at the sees of bishops. Several bishoprics of Anatolia such as Amasia, Neocaesarea, Tyana, Moccusus were occupied by “Latin-minded” clerics¹⁶. Unable to see the decline, corruption and betrayal of the Church of Christ, metropolitan Arsenios of Caesarea travelled to the three “Syrian” Patriarchs asking their advice. As a result, the Council of the Patriarchs ordered to excommunicate the unworthy metropolitans — the heretics and persecutors of Orthodoxy — until their case would be investigated by a canonical council. The ones who would be disobedient to this decision should be condemned and anathematized. The Patriarchs by the power of the Holy Spirit delegated to the metropolitan of Caesarea the right to preach the right doctrine even in front of the wrongly minded Emperor and Patriarch [of Constantinople] and delegated the power to condemn, to forbid and to correct. The letter was signed by the three Patriarchs and dated 6 April 6951 (1443).

This document written in Greek was published the first time in 1648 by Leo Allatius who also attached a Latin translation of the text. In 1682 Patriarch of Jerusalem Dositheus Notaras re-printed it as a part of a corpus of anti-Latin polemical treatises.

¹⁶ It is known from other sources that Metrophanes appointed unionist bishop of Amasia Pakhomios, while nothing is known about other sees.



Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence.
In 1439, the Council of Florence Union was signed here.
From open sources

The authenticity of the letter of the three Patriarchs has been questioned, as have many other texts of the Greek-Latin controversy of the 15th cent. Prominent place among these documents belongs to the so called “Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 1450” which was said to take place in the Byzantine capital with the participation of the Eastern Patriarchs and condemned the Union of Florence. Already in the late 19th century these “Acts” were convincingly proved to be a forgery, composed by Greek intellectual of the early 17th cent. George Coresios of Chios¹⁷. The Council of 1443 was also suspected to be a fake.

Joseph Gill, professor of the Pontifical Oriental Institute, studied the letter of the Patriarchs of 1443 and insisted that it is spu-

¹⁷ Папаиоанну X. Акты так называемого Последнего Софийского собора (1450 г.) и их историческое достоинство // Византийский временник. 1895. Т. 2. С. 394–415; *Darrouzès*. Les registes. №. 3403.

rious. He paid attention that the Greek style of the document is poor and in places ungrammatical (in fact it isn't strange — none of the three Patriarchs was a native speaker). The scholar pointed that the Patriarchs in their letter said nothing about their vicars in Florence, there was no repudiation of their signatures of the Acts of Union, the Patriarchs didn't mention the Papal messages about the results of the Council (such message had been sent at least to the Patriarch of Alexandria) and pretended that it was metropolitan Arsenios of Caesarea who familiarised them with the fact of the Union at the first time. Moreover, the main argument of Gill was complete ignorance of the Byzantine anti-Unionist polemicists of the 15th century, like Gennadius Scholarius, about the existence of this document. Metropolitan Arsenios of Caesarea was also unknown from any sources besides the Patriarchal letter. J. Gill suggested that the author of the letter of the Eastern Patriarchs could be the abovementioned George Coresios, who composed the spurious "Acts of the council of Constantinople of 1450"¹⁸.

Later on, Marie-Helene Blanchet turned again to the problem of the Council of 1443 and revised the arguments of J. Gill. She easily proved that the text couldn't be a forgery of the 17th century, because the letter of the Patriarchs survived in 17 manuscript copies, the earliest of which belonged to the 15th or early 16th centuries. Nevertheless, one could suppose that the document might be a forgery not of the 17th but of the late 15th century. However, M.-H. Blanchet argued that the situation described in the letter was absolutely realistic. The application of metropolitan of Caesarea Arsenios to the three Patriarchs wasn't impossible¹⁹.

¹⁸ Gill J. The Condemnation of the Council of Florence by the Three Oriental Patriarchs in 1443 // Gill J. Personalities of the Council of Florence and Other Essays. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964. P. 213–221.

¹⁹ Blanchet M.-H. Le patriarcat de Constantinople et le rejet de l'union de Florence par les patriarches orientaux en 1443. Réexamen du dossier documentaire // Le patriarcat œcuménique de Constantinople et Byzance hors fron-



Note by the monk Philemon about Patriarch Joachim of Jerusalem, February 1437 (MS Sin. Ar. 420)

I can only agree with it. Arsenios indeed is the key figure of the Council. The text of the Patriarchal letter was obviously composed under his influence and dealt first of all not with the very fact of the Union but with prerogatives of the exarch of Anatolia, whose authority was challenged by new-appointed unionist bishops of several Anatolian bishoprics. The very fact of these small details proves that the document was inspired by concrete events (now partly forgotten) of ecclesiastical life of Central Anatolia of the mid. 15th cent. and isn't a late forgery. The ignorance of Genadius Scholarius and other anti-Latin polemicists about this text can be explained by the above-mentioned isolation of the

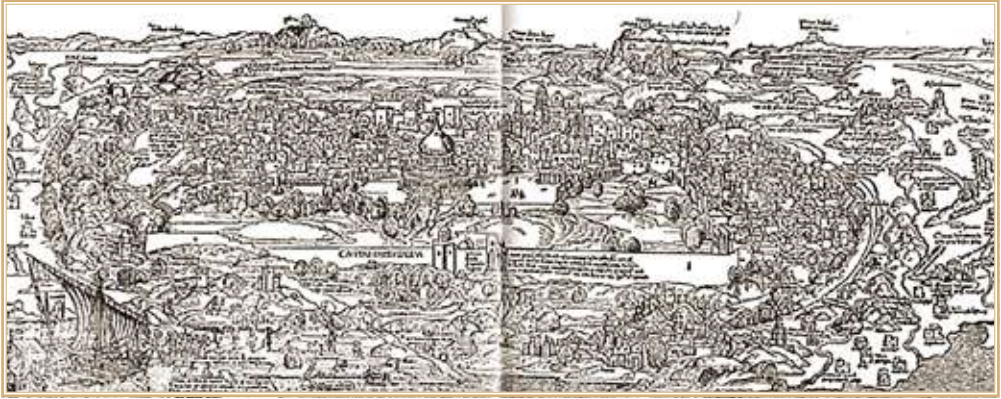
tières (1204–1586): Actes de la table ronde organisée dans le cadre du 22e Congrès International des Études Byzantines, Sofia, 22–27 août 2011. Paris, 2014. P. 309–326.

Middle East from the Byzantine and by the fact that the letter was addressed not to the Byzantine society but personally to the metropolitan of Caesarea. In fact, as it was said, the letter wasn't a direct condemnation of the Union, Emperor John Palaeologos and Patriarch Metrophanes but a confirmation of the prerogatives of the metropolitan of Caesarea. Nevertheless, negative attitude to the Union emanates from every line of the letter although not being its main theme.

I am to add a few more arguments to end the discussion about the authenticity of the Council of 1443. The fact of the synod of the three Patriarchs was confirmed by Franciscan missionary Fra Gryphon, who worked in Beirut in that time (1442–1450)²⁰. Another proof of the authenticity of the letter is its translation into Slavonic made in the same year 1443 in Moldavia which at that time was one of hotbeds of the Slavonic culture. Although this Slavonic translation was published already in 1906, it had been unknown for a long time to scholars of Middle Eastern Christianity. The translation was done by monk Gavriil of Neamt monastery and survived in several early copies (the earliest one is dated 1512)²¹. It's a puzzle why this text was little known to the intellectuals of Constantinople but spread in monastic circles of Moldavia. Certainly, there had been Slavic presence in the Late Medieval Holy Land, for example the Serbian Archangel monastery in Jerusalem. Slavic or Moldavian monks or pilgrims could transfer a copy of the Patriarchal letter to the Neamt monastery. The text was immediately translated and copied being treated as an important argument in polemic against the Union. The letter

²⁰ *Nasrallah*. Histoire. P. 73–75.

²¹ Яцимирский А.И. Из истории славянской проповеди в Молдавии: Неизвестные произведения Григория Цамблака, подражания ему и переводы монаха Гавриила. [СПб.]: Тип. И.Н. Скороходова, 1906. С. I–II, LXVI–LXVII, 77–83. (Памятники древней письменности и искусства; 163).



Jerusalem. Engraving by Erhard Reuwich. 1483.
From open sources

of the Eastern Patriarchs seemed to be very important for the Orthodox world demoralized by the Union of Florence²².

Political zigzags

In the following decades relations between the Orthodox East and Rome passed through several dramatic turning points. It seems that the fall of Constantinople in 1453 had a traumatic effect for the Orthodox hierarchs of the Middle East²³. They tried to find a new protector instead of the fallen empire. Disoriented by the collapse of the traditional structure of the universe, Patriarchs Yuwakim II of Antioch, Marcos of Alexandria and Yuwakim of Jerusalem (one of the members of the Council of 1443) in 1458

²² Подобный демарш трех патриархов, осудивших своего константинопольского собрата, был явлением исключительным: в 1443 г. они впервые выступили как консолидированная сознательная сила, противопоставляющая себя Константинополю (Панченко К.А. Восточные патриархи и Константинополь... С. 531). — Е.К.

²³ Восточные патриархи не могли не ощутить потерю того, кто был, пусть символически, главой их цивилизации и заступником перед мусульманскими властями (Ibid. С. 533). — Е.К.

accepted persuasions of Papal legate Mois Gibelet and signed a document on their union with Rome and a call to the European kings to organize a new Crusade. These documents survived only in Latin translation and their authenticity also had been questioned²⁴. However, I suppose that according to the current level of our knowledge the contacts of the Eastern Patriarchs with the Papal legate look realistic enough.

Nevertheless, Patriarch of Jerusalem Yuwakim soon changed his political position drastically and decided to find another source of support. In 1463 he personally travelled to Russia asking alms to help his declined Patriarchate. As he wrote to Prince of Moscow Vasiliy II: “Being informed about your piety we decided to come to you... Beloved brothers, we are physically far from you, but spiritually we are together”²⁵. The old-aged Patriarch died during his journey in Genoese Kaffa in Crimea, however his nephew Joseph managed to reach Moscow with Patriarchal letters and was met with great pomp.

The unprecedented journey of the Patriarch of Jerusalem to Moscow became one of the stages of political and ideological self-affirmation of Russia, the process which later was finalized by the concept of “Moscow the Third Rome”. It’s worth mentioning that at that moment the canonical status of the Russian Church was unclear. After the rejection of the Union of Florence in 1440 Russia broke its ecclesiastical subordination to Constantinople however this self-proclaimed autocephaly wasn’t recognized by other Orthodox Churches. The visit of the Patriarch of Jerusalem (even despite the fact of his death on the way) elevated the status of the Russian Church to the great extent and legitimized its break with Constantinople.

²⁴ *Nasrallah*. Histoire. P. 79.

²⁵ Кобеко Д.Ф. Разрешительные грамоты иерусалимских патриархов // Журнал Министерства народного просвещения. 1896, июнь. С. 273, 274.

Patriarch Yuwakim in his letter asked the Russian bishops to appoint his nephew Joseph the metropolitan of Caesarea Philippi, the bishopric in the area of lake Tiberias. In Moscow Joseph proclaimed the Orthodox confession of the faith and confirmed condemnation of the “God hated and unclean tradition” of the council of Florence. After it he was consecrated the metropolitan of Caesarea. In spring 1464 he was sent to the northern Russian cities Pskov and Novgorod where he collected large alms. On his way back to Palestine Joseph stayed in Constantinople for a long time and sent to the Grand Prince of Moscow important information on political and ecclesiastical affairs in South-Eastern Europe. So, these Jerusalem clerics — Patriarch Yuwakim and his nephew — openly associated themselves with the anti-unionist forces in the Orthodox world²⁶.

I am speaking so much about the Patriarch of Jerusalem because he belonged to the same community of the Arabophone Middle Eastern Orthodox, such as the Christians of the Church of Antioch, and presumably shared with them political sympathies and antipathies.

The final statement about the attitude of the Orthodox East to the Union of Florence was made by the Council of 1484 in Constantinople. This was the first major synod after the fall of Byzantine. The Church of Constantinople consolidated its power under Ottoman protection and returned into its jurisdiction Greek lands won by the Ottomans from the Latins. The Council discussed the correct ritual for the reception into the Orthodox Church of the Uniates Greeks. It was declared also that the

²⁶ On the journey of Patriarch Yuwakim see: *Панченко К.А. Патриарх Иоаким между Каиром, Римом и Москвой: к истории русско-палестинских контактов XV в. // Русская Палестина. Россия в Святой Земле: [материалы Международной научной конференции, 21–22 октября 2009 г.]. СПб.: Изд. дом СПбГУ, 2010. С. 228–239.*

Council of Florence had not been canonically composed and his decrees were invalid²⁷. The Eastern Patriarchs at least the Patriarchs of Jerusalem and Alexandria were invited to participate in the Council to demonstrate its oecumenic status. Unable to be present personally they, as in 1438, delegated their power to member of the Greek clergy Daniel Metropolitan of Smyrna, who had previously been sent to invite the Patriarchs of the ancient eastern thrones²⁸.

Perception of the Council of Florence by the Orthodox Middle East: the first phase

After the mission of Mois Gibelet contacts between Rome and the Eastern Patriarchs were stopped for more than a century. It seems that the memory of the Union of Florence in the Christian Middle East was lost.

The only data which contradicts such an assumption belongs to a Melkite Catholic writer of the late 19th cent. Cyril Rizk. He wrote that in the library of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem he had seen two manuscripts of Arabic translations of the Acts of the Council of Florence. The earlier translation which presumably could be dated by the second half of the 15th century was done by metropolitan of Beirut Mikhail while the manuscript itself was copied in Kara about 1500 by certain Dawud ibn Musa al-‘Azak. In 1901 the Catalogue of Arabic manuscripts of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem was published. The abovementioned

²⁷ *Runciman S.* The Great Church in Captivity. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968. P. 228.

²⁸ *Пападопуло-Керамевс А.И.* В котором году Смирнский митрополит Даниил посетил Св. Землю? // Сообщения Императорского Православного Палестинского Общества. 1893. Т. 4 (октябрь). С. 631–637.

tioned manuscript was absent there (it was only a late translation of the Acts of the Council, dated 1811, based on the printing edition of 1715 in Paris²⁹). The scholars were puzzled by this fact³⁰. The date of the first Arabic translation of the Acts of the Council is still unclear. Mikhail, Metropolitan of Beirut, is unknown from other sources, however it isn't surprising taking into consideration our very limited knowledge on the Melkites' history of the 15th century. There had been Franciscan mission in Beirut which presumably could familiarize the Orthodox prelates with the documents of the Council (in Greek version). Town Kara in the 15th and early 16th centuries had been one of prominent centers of the Orthodox culture and book production so it's possible that a copy of the Acts of the Council could be made there. Anyhow such manuscripts even in case they existed were very rare. In collective memory of the Rum Orthodox Arabs the Union of Florence was forgotten.

This fact was discovered by Jesuit missionaries who appeared in the Middle East in the late 1570-s. Pope's legate Giowanni Battista Eliano in 1581 and 1582 met with two rival Patriarchs of Antioch Yuwakim Daw and Mikhail Sabbag and persuaded them to accept the Gregorian calendar and to renew the Union with Rome. Cardinal Julio Antonio de Santa Severina who supervised relations with the Greek Orthodox Churches ordered to send to the missionaries the text of the Papal bulla on the Union of Florence and the documents on the Union of the Eastern Patriarchs with Rome of 1458. Eliano had to translate these docu-

²⁹ Κατάλογος ἀραβικῶν χειρογράφων τῆς ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς βιβλιοθήκης / Ὑπὸ Κλεοπᾶ Μ. Κοικυλίδου. Ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις: Ἐκ τοῦ Τυπογραφείου τοῦ Ἱεροῦ Κοινοῦ τοῦ Π. Τάφου, 1901 = [A Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts in the Library of Jerusalem / Comp. Kleopa M. Koikylidoy. Ierosolymis, 1901]. № 94. Σ. 83.

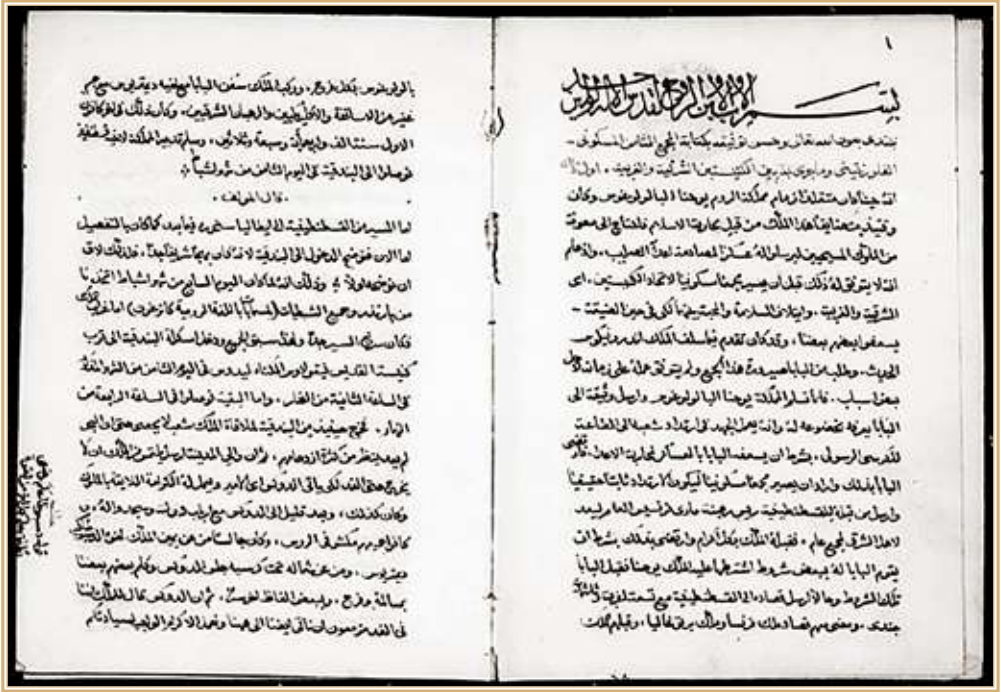
³⁰ *Karalevskij C. Antioche // Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques. Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1924. T. III. Col. 632; Nasrallah. Histoire. P. 73.*

ments from Latin into Arabic and use them in his negotiations with the Orthodox Patriarchs. It means that in Rome nothing was known about the existence of Arabic translation of the Acts. Eliano hardly had a chance to familiarize the Patriarchs with the Acts of the Council of Florence because the documents were sent from Rome 24 June 1582 while already in September the legate received an order to travel to Egypt to establish contacts with the Coptic Church³¹.

The next Jesuit mission in the Middle East led by Leonardo Abel also met with Yuwakim Daw about March of 1584. The project of renewal of the Union was discussed again. Yuwakim was a skillful diplomat able to charm his partner and to avoid any concrete promises and obligations. He said that he had never heard about the Union of Florence. The Pope's legate delivered to him a copy of the Arabic translation of the Acts of the Council and agreed about the next meeting for conclusion of final agreement about the Union. This meeting certainly never happened because in September of the same year the Patriarch travelled to Istanbul looking for financial support of Phanariots to pay debts of his Church. From Istanbul Yuwakim departed on a long journey to Eastern Europe. He never met Leonardo Abel any more³².

³¹ Monumenta Proximi-Orientis. Vol. I. Palestine — Liban — Syrie — Mesopotamie (1523–1583) / par S. Kuri. Roma: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1989. P. 317–319. (Monumenta Missionum Societatis Iesu, Vol. LI: Missiones Orientales); Панченко К.А. Антиохийская Православная Церковь и Рим в эпоху Контрреформации. Полемический ответ папе Римскому Анастасия ибн Муджаллы // Панченко К.А. Православные арабы: Путь через века: Сб. статей. М.: Изд-во ПСТГУ, 2013. С. 293–300.

³² Panchenko C. The Antiochian Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate and Rome in the late 16th C. A Polemic Response by the Metropolitan Anastasius Ibn Mujallā to the Pope // Actes du symposium international Le Livre. La Roumanie. L'Europe. 4^{ème} edition. 20–23 septembre 2011. Bucarest: Editura Bibliotecii Bucureștilor, 2012. T. III. Section III. Latinité Orientale. P. 306. For more details: Панченко К.А. «Триполийское гнездо»



Acts of the Council of Ferrara-Florence in Arabic. Manuscript c. 1500.
 (Κατάλογος ἀραβικῶν χειρογράφων τῆς ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς βιβλιοθήκης /
 Ὑπὸ Κλεοπᾶ Μ. Κοικυλίδου. Ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις, 1901. Σ. 83)

However, it's obvious that information about the Union of Florence began to spread among the Christians of the Church of Antioch by efforts of the missionaries. At Autumn of 1584 a group of Melkite Philo-Catholics from Tripoli sent to Rome a message welcoming a forthcoming agreement of the Churches: "let it be absolute love and obedience to the Pope's see of [Apostle] Peter according to the statement of 318 holy fathers in city Nicea and the statement of the holy fathers in city Faransia (Florence)"³³.

(Православная община г. Триполи в культурно-политической жизни Антиохийского патриархата XVI – первой половины XVII в.) // Православные арабы. Путь через века: Сб. статей. М., 2013. С. 230–233; Панченко К.А. Антиохийская Православная Церковь и Рим в эпоху Контрреформации... С. 301–304. — Е.К.

³³ Risālat wuḡahā' al-rūm al-ṭarāblusiyyīn ilā al-bābā Ġriḡūriyūs al-ṭalīt 'aṣār / Ed. Anṭūn Rabbāt // al-Mašriq. 1906. Š. 357–361.



Lebanon, Kadisha Valley.

Photo by Professor Panchenko, February 2015

Anastasios ibn Muğalla and anti-Latin polemic in Arabic

Yuwakim Daw returned back to Syria in the late 1580-s with rich Russian alms. He felt self-confident enough to define openly his attitude to the project of Union. On behalf of the Patriarch his close confidant Metropolitan of Tripoli and Beirut Anastasios ibn Muğalla wrote a “Response” to the Pope. It seems to be the first example of Arabic anti-Latin polemic. The central topic of the “Response” was the Gregorian calendar just accepted by the Western Church, however the Union of Florence also wasn’t forgotten. I am quoting: “...Our father the Pope wrote also in his message suggesting us to [join] agreement of the Eighth Council. However, we never heard about this council and it is not in our tradition. We didn’t receive information about it either from our books or from [the people of] our country or from our fathers

Patriarchs who had ruled before us. You told that 140 bishops had assembled there, famous for their piety, and among them the Patriarch of Antioch and the Patriarch of Jerusalem and the Patriarch of Egypt and vicar of the Patriarch of Istanbul together with the Pope who had been in that time. And they condemned everybody who denies that the Holy Spirit emanates from the Father and the Son and everybody who doesn't confirm the holiness of the unleavened bread and doesn't reject the leavened bread. Let it be known to our holy father the Pope and to his learned men that this heresy is the worst heresy among the all ones which had appeared before because it's the strongest apostasy and the unbelief which is worse than the heresies of Arius, Eutychius, Nestorius, Dioscorus, Jakob Baraday and other infidels who separated the Son from the nature of His Father..."³⁴.

After it the author analyzed in details the doctrine of *Philioque* and unleavened bread finalizing his study by the following words: "As for the participants of the abovementioned council [that is, the Council of Florence], which deviated from the [doctrine of] the Seven Ecumenical Councils and preferred unleavened bread to leavened bread, and established such an order and introduced such a heresy and ugly tradition and disastrous rules – woe is them, because they were wrong and clouded all Frankish peoples and misled them. While the community of Rum-Melkites was not mistaken..."³⁵.

The main part of the treatise of Anastasios is devoted to condemnation of the Council of Florence and the Western Church tradition in general. Here I am not going to go into details of the text of the "Response"³⁶. It's worth to mention only that the

³⁴ MS Saint Petersburg. ИВР РАН. В 1220. Fol. 92r–93v.

³⁵ Ibid. Fol. 100v.

³⁶ For more details: Панченко К.А. Антиохийская Православная Церковь и Рим в эпоху Контрреформации... С. 305–322; Митрополит Анастасий



“Response” to the Pope of Rome by Metropolitan Anastasius ibn Mujalla.
Copy made by Archdeacon Paul of Aleppo, 1642
(Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg.
B 1220 об. — 87)

Orthodox Arabs of the 16th century in general had negative and confrontational attitude to the Latin world.

The 17th century and transformation of inter-communal relations

However, in the 17th century this attitude changed. The Patriarchs and Metropolitans of the Church of Antioch maintained friendly relations with Western missionaries and dreamed about adoption of cultural and technological achievements of Europe, such

ибн Муджалла. Ответ папе Римскому / Пер. с араб., предисл. и коммент. К.А. Панченко // Антология литературы православных арабов. Т. 1: История / Сост. К. А. Панченко. М., 2020. С. 212–223. — Е.К.



Macarius III al-Za'im, Patriarch of Antioch.
 Portrait from the Tsar's Titulary. 1672.
 (*Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts*)

as book-printing. The key figures of the Melkite Renaissance — Patriarch Macarios III al-Za'im and Paul of Aleppo — were familiar with Arabic translations of Latin authors such as works of historian Caesar Baronius (1538–1607), which presumably were the source of their information about the Council of Florence.

Records on the Council in the historical texts of Paul and Macarios look almost similar, however they don't coincide literally. Either both authors used the same source or Macarios re-told by his own words the information of Paul. Here is the record of Macarios: "And after it Dorotheus I became the Patriarch of Antioch who originated from God saved Saidnaya and had been bishop there. And during his reign there was the Eighth Council

of the Franks in the city Fluranda. Among the participants there were John Palelogos the Emperor of Constantinople, because it had been before its conquest by the Muslims, and Joseph the Patriarch of Constantinople and all the bishops, and Antonios the Metropolitan of Heraklea *vakil* [representative] of Patriarch of Alexandria kir Philopheos, and Isidor the Metropolitan of Kiev and all the country al-Rus *vakil* of Patriarch Dorotheos of Antioch, and Dorotheos the Metropolitan of Monemvasia *vakil* of Yuwakim the Patriarch of Jerusalem. This Council was in 6948 AM which corresponds to 1448 from the Divine Incarnation (=1439/40 г. AD)³⁷ and to 843 АН³⁸.

It is obvious that this information is absolutely neutral, perhaps even too neutral for an Orthodox author. By the way, Russian bishop Porphiriy Uspenskiy (1804–1885) in his translation of the Orthodox chronicle of Mikhail Brayk (which in the paragraph about the Council of Florence reproduced the text of Paul of Aleppo) instead the words “the Eighth Council of the Franks” wrote “the eighth pseudo-council of the western people”³⁹.

³⁷ Мелькиты использовали особую эру, так называемую «мелькитскую эру от Боговоплощения», которая «опережала» нашу эру от Р.Х. на 8 лет. Так образом, мелькитский год «1448 от Боговоплощения» соответствует 1440 г. Р.Х. (точнее, 1 сентября 1439 – 31 августа 1440 г. Р.Х.). О мелькитской эре от Боговоплощения см.: *Samir K.S. L'ère de l'Incarnation dans les manuscrits arabes melkites du 11^e au 14^e siècle // Orientalia Christiana Periodica. 1987. Vol. 53. P. 193–201. — свящ. А. Трейгер.*

³⁸ MS Saint Petersburg. ИВР РАН. В 1227. Fol. 182. For more details: *Панченко К.А. Вспомнить прошлое: Антиохийский патриарх Макарий III аз-За'им как историк // Miscellanea Orientalia Christiana (Восточно-христианское разнообразие). М.: ИВКА РГГУ; Пробел-2000, 2014. С. 359–384. — Е.К.*

³⁹ *Mīḥā'il Burayk. al-Ḥaqa'iq al-wafiyya fī ta'rīḥ baṭārikat al-kanīsa al-Anṭākiyya = [The Complete Truth about the History of the Patriarchs of the Church of Antioch]. Bairūt: Dār al-Ādāb, 2006. P. 134; Translation of Porphiriy Uspenskiy: Список Антиохийских патриархов // Труды Киевской Духовной Академии. 1874. № 6. С. 423. For more details: *Панченко К.А. Михаил Брейк // Православная энциклопедия. М., 2017. Т. 45. С. 703–704. — Е.К.**



Treatise by Macarius III al-Za'im on the Antiochian dioceses and bishops.
Autograph manuscript of the Patriarch, completed in Georgia in 1665.
Marginal notes by Macarius's grandson, Patriarch Cyril V al-Za'im.
(*Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg. B 1227*)

Religious polemic of the 18th century

The polemic between the Orthodox and the Catholics in the Middle East became much more intense since the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The climax of the confrontation was the schism from the Church of Antioch in 1724⁴⁰. During the next century the controversies between the theologians of the opposite communities continued. Each side tried to prove the truth of its

⁴⁰ Расколу Антиохийской Церкви 1724 г. предшествовало признание в 1716 г. Антиохийским патриархом Кириллом V аз-За'имом главенства папы; вместе с этим он принимал постановления Ферраро-Флорентийского собора и все католические догматы. См. подробнее: Панченко К.А. Ближневосточное православие под османским владычеством: первые три столетия, 1516–1831: [монография]. М.: Индрик, 2012. С. 440. — Е.К.



Translation by Sophronius al-Kilisi into Arabic of Greek anti-Latin polemical texts, including the acts of the Council of the Three Eastern Patriarchs of 1443.

Manuscript Kitāb jalā' al-abṣār min ghiṣā' al-akdār
 (“The Book of the Clarification of Obscurity”). 1739.

(Ms Balamand 179. Bala-0171. Fol. 322r)

doctrine⁴¹. Strangely enough, the topic of the Union of Florence didn't occupy a noticeable place in this polemic. It seems that the

⁴¹ For more details: Панченко К.А. Становление антилатинской полемики православных арабов в XVIII в. // Вестник церковной истории. 2021. № 1/2(61/62). С. 219–235; Ермилов П.В., свящ., Панченко К.А., Петрова Ю.А. Переписка Александрийского патриарха Герасима Паллады с Антиохийскими христианами: исторический и текстологический аспекты // Вестник Православного Свято-Тихоновского гуманитарного университета. Серия 3: Филология. 2021. № 69. С. 34–52; Ermilov P., Bernatsky M., Panchenko S. Gerasimos Palladas of Alexandria and the Eucharistic Disputes in the Church of Antioch (1701–1702) // La division de l'Église rûm d'Antioche en 1724 et la construction des identités confessionnelles orthodoxe et catholique / Sous la direction de B. Heyberger, Ž. Paša, R. el Gemayel. Beyrouth, 2024. P. 518–557. — E.K.



Sermon by Mas‘ad Nashw on the schism of the Christian Churches. 1750.
 (MS HIERUS. AR. 119)

events in Italy of the 15th century didn't look actual for the Syrian Arabs of the 18th century.

At the same time the information about history of relations and confrontations between the Eastern and the Western Churches indeed was accessible for the Christian Arab intellectuals. As it was said before, in 1682 Patriarch of Jerusalem Dositheos published in Yassi a collection of Greek texts of anti-Latin polemic including the Acts of the Council of the three Eastern Patriarchs of 1443. In 1739 Orthodox Arab theologian and future Patriarch Sophronios al-Kilizi composed an Arabic translation of this book. So, he returned the Acts of 1443 to its place of origin⁴².

⁴² Речь идет о рукописи Софрония аль-Килиси, озаглавленной *Kitāb ḡalā' al-abṣār min ḡiṣā' al-akdār* («Книга прояснения сумрака»; MS Balamand 179. Bala-0171). В ее состав входит перевод трактата Иерусалимского патриарха Нектария под названием *Περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Πάπα* («Возражения против главенства папы») по греческому изданию Иерусалимского патриарха Досифея II Нотары 1682 г., перевод биографии патриарха

However, as I have said, historical topics were not of much interest to the Middle Eastern polemicists of the 18th century. They preferred to argue about concrete theological matters such as *filioque*, unleavened bread, the Purgatory, the primacy of the Pope, the Transubstantiation, while various Church councils were mentioned only occasionally just an illustration of opinion of the Church (or certain groups inside the Church) concerning the problems under discussion. For example, one of leading Arab Orthodox theologians Mas‘ad Nashw (d. after 1785) in his preaching of 1750 about the Schism of the Christian Churches demonstrated his familiarity not only with the Council of Florence but even with the Acts of the Council in Basel in 1435, however Mas‘ad discussed controversial theological matters not the Church history.

Even historical chronicles of that epoch, as the History of the Church of Antioch by Mikhail Brayk al-Dimashqi (*al-Ḥaqā’iq al-waḥīyya fī ta’rīḥ batārikat al-kanīsa al-Anṭākiyya*) of 1767 mentioned the Council of Florence only briefly (Brayk literally repeated neutral and short record of Paul of Aleppo), while the history of competition between the Orthodox and the Catholics in the 18th century was described emotionally and in details⁴³.

The same situation existed in the unionist camp. The bulk of historical texts which appeared in the 18th century dealt with the current ecclesiastical and political situation. Historical memory of

Нектария и предисловия к греческому изданию, составленных патриархом Досифеем, а также помещенных им в издании нескольких документов, имевших отношение к греко-латинскому противостоянию, включая Акты Собора трех Восточных Патриархов 1443 г. См. подробнее: Панченко К.А. Софроний II аль-Килиси, патриарх Константинопольский // Православная энциклопедия. М., 2022. Т. 65. С. 314. — Е.К.

⁴³ See for example: Михаил Брейк. Полная истина об истории патриархов Антиохийской Церкви (фрагмент) / Предисл. К. А. Панченко, пер. с араб. Р. И. Касумова, коммент. Р. И. Касумова и К. А. Панченко // Антология литературы православных арабов. Т. 1: История / Сост. К. А. Панченко. М., 2020. С. 333–348.



Professor Panchenko, H. Cholak, and E.Yu. Kovalskaya at the conference
“The Orthodox Church of Antioch from the 15th to the 18th Century:
Towards a Proper Understanding of History.”
Lebanon, University of Balamand, October 18, 2023.
From the archive of Professor Panchenko

the authors was not longer than one generation before their time. The only exception was Yuhanna al-‘Uğaymi (1724–1785) the monk of al-Mukhallisiyya order, who received perfect European education and was familiar with the Western historiography. He presented the history of the Church of Antioch from the point of view of its relations with the Latin West. Unfortunately, the analysis of his text is difficult because it has been published only partly.

The epilogue

In the 19th and 20th centuries the confrontation of the Orthodox Church of Antioch and the Melkite Catholic became more moderate. At the same time the educational and academic level of the polemicists increased. They tried to prove legitimate continuity between “their” Church and the historical heritage of the ancient Church of Antioch. It determined increased interest in Church history. In particular, Catholic authors of the early 20th centu-

ry stated that the Patriarchate of Antioch almost permanently was in connection with Rome, and considered that the Orthodox branch of the Church of Antioch appeared only in 1724. In this situation the topic of Union of Florence and its acceptance or non-acceptance by the Church of Antioch occupied central position in historical research and accompanying polemic. From their standpoint, the Antiochian Orthodox underline the fact that their Church preserved the same faith, liturgy and spiritual life, both after 1724 as before it, and accordingly, they consider that they are the continuation of the historical Patriarchate of Antioch. I remember that once when I first time read the book of Rustum Asad *Kanīsat madīnat Allah Anṭākiya al-‘Uḍma*, that is, the Orthodox version of history of the Church of Antioch, I was surprised how much the author digressed from the Middle Eastern ecclesiastical affairs into side subjects like the Byzantine hesychasm or the Council of Florence. However now it's clear for me that the problem of the Council for today's Middle Eastern Christians is less a historical than a political and ideological question. Why it is worth further study.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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Russia and the Uniate Movement in the Orthodox Church of Antioch in the Second Half of the 19th — Early 20th Century

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to critically reassess the dominant paradigm in Russian historiography, which interprets Russian patronage of Orthodoxy in the Near East primarily through the lens of counteraction to the Uniate proselytism of the Western powers. The central problem of the Unia-related process within the Patriarchate of Antioch (second half of the 19th — early 20th century) is examined not as an instantaneous consequence of external heterodox propaganda or Greek xenocracy, but as a systemic reflection of socio-cultural, political, and economic dysfunctions within the Eastern Christian community of the Ottoman Empire. The study includes a comparative analysis of specific cases of transitions of Orthodox communities to Greek Catholicism (and back) within the dioceses of the Patriarchate of Antioch (Latakia, Zahle, Tripoli, and others). On the basis of

unpublished archival sources, consular documentation, and the testimonies of Russian Orientalists (Archimandrite Porphyrius (Uspensky), A. E. Krymsky), a typology of the motives underlying the Uniate movement has been developed. The dominant factors have been identified as follows: the desire to avoid Ottoman obligations and charges (the tax *bedel-i askeriye*), the low material well-being of the parochial clergy, property disputes related to the exploitation of *waqf* lands, and violations of canonical law in the matrimonial sphere. Considerable attention is devoted to the contacts with Western civilization through the mechanism of relative deprivation.

The significance of the research lies in the demythologization of the role of the “Uniate threat” as a defining vector of Russian policy in the Near East. Shifting the focus from exogenous missionary factors to the endogenous problems of the Patriarchate of Antioch (financial instability, inefficiency of ecclesiastical administration, and the “fluidity” of Levantine identity) underscores the necessity of reassessing the effectiveness of the activities of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society and the diplomatic efforts of the Russian Empire in the region.

Keywords:

Patriarchate of Antioch; Orthodox Arabs, Russia and the Orthodox East, Syria, Lebanon, Melkites, Uniates.

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*“To be a Levantine is to live in two worlds
or more at once, without belonging to either”*
— Albert Hourani



The division of the Church of Antioch into the Orthodox and the Catholic branches in 1724 remains one of the most pressing issues of the intellectual and spiritual life of the Patriarchate¹. On the eve of the 300th anniversary of the schism, the Orthodox Church of Antioch made every effort to organize a representative academic conference² devoted to this event. Its objectives, as formulated by His Beatitude John X (Yazigi), Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, were polemically declared to be the strengthening of a “genuine (which implies the existence of a false one — E. K.) Antiochian identity through joint scholarly endeavors” and the “healing (an indication of the Unia as a disease — E. K.) of historical memory”³.

However, despite the sharp anti-Catholic tenor of the event, this tone was confined to the framework of the official program — a fact not overlooked by the observant participant and scholar Professor Panchenko: “At the everyday level, communication with Catholics remains entirely friendly — in the hall were present representatives of the Maronite and Melkite Catholic Churches, and at the banquet some of them sat at the same table with Orthodox hierarchs”⁴. It would appear — and this is important for

¹ We can refer the reader to the highly polemical title of the international conference held in October 2023 at Balamand University (Lebanon): “The Orthodox Church of Antioch from the 15th to the 18th Centuries: Toward a Proper Understanding of History”.

² Despite the escalation, after October 7, 2023, of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which drew in neighboring states.

³ Quoted from: Панченко К.А. Антиохийская Церковь в попытке самопознания: впечатления от конференции “The Orthodox Church of Antioch from the 15th to the 18th cent. Toward a Proper Understanding of History”, Balamand, 16–18 October 2023 г. // Вестник ПСТГУ. Серия 3: Филология. 2023. Вып. 77. С. 162.

⁴ Панченко К.А. Антиохийская Церковь в попытке самопознания: впечатления от конференции “The Orthodox Church of Antioch from the 15th to the 18th Centuries. Toward a Proper Understanding of History”, Баламанда, 16–18 октября 2023 г. // Вестник ПСТГУ. Серия 3: Филология. 2023. Вып. 77. С. 164.

what follows — that the perceptive observation of a distinguished Orientalist grasped more than the organizers intended to reveal.

The issue of the 1724 schism and its subsequent development is significant not only for the local Church. The struggle against the growth of Catholic influence constituted one of the legitimizing foundations of Russian presence within the canonical territory of the autocephalous Orthodox Churches of the Near East. As N. N. Lisovoy writes: “The revival of Russian-Antiochian inter-church relations occurred in the 19th century in connection with the general change in the situation in the Near East, the intensification of heterodox propaganda, and, following it, the political interests of the Western European powers, both in Palestine and in Syria and Lebanon — the traditional ecclesiastical domain of the Patriarchate of Antioch”⁵. This point of view, which long determined the research framework of modern Russian historiography, is not new and fully reproduces the logic of one of the founders of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (IOPS), V. N. Khitrovo. In his 1881 seminal article “Orthodoxy in the Holy Land”, characterizing the activities of the Catholic missionaries, he drew a decisive conclusion: “...Without the adoption of urgent, energetic measures ... , a few years will suffice for Orthodoxy to cease to exist in the very land where the Sun of Righteousness once shone forth...”⁶

Khitrovo placed the responsibility for the oppressed condition of the Arab Christians and their conversion to the Unia upon the dominance of the Greek clergy, infected by Pan-Hellenism and neglecting its duties toward the flock. Consequently, he concluded that the only means of salvation for the local Christians was the assistance of Russia through the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society. The Uniate threat, Greek xenocracy, and Russia as the savior — such was the schematic justification for the active (though canonically questionable) activities of the Society in the region. A century later, N. N. Lisovoy repeated the position of V. N. Khitrovo almost verbatim: “Weak and poor (in comparison with the Constantinopolitan Greek elite) Orthodox Arabs of Syria and Palestine were unable

⁵ *Лисовой Н. Н. Русское духовное и политическое присутствие в Святой земле и на Ближнем Востоке в XIX – начале XX в. М., 2006. С. 235.*

⁶ *Хитрово В.Н. Православие в Св. Земле. Православный Палестинский сборник. Т. I. Вып. 1. СПб., 1881. С. 47.*

to preserve any independence in ecclesiastical affairs”⁷, and “the Greek hierarchy was not interested in the enlightenment of the Arab flock”⁸.

In fact, Lisovoy’s position in 2007 is a repetition, under analogous conditions⁹, of Khitrovo’s tendentious ideas, who, in 1881, “pushed through”¹⁰ the establishment of the Society by alarming Russian public opinion with the Western threat to the Orthodox East¹¹. The Unia-related alarmism justified the necessity of creating the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society and allocating significant funds from the state treasury to ensure its operation. And while the thesis of Greek xenocracy in the Church of Antioch of the late 19th century must be recognized as an evident simplification¹² (or a deliberate myth), the question of the development of the Uniate threat is no less problematic. Revising the thesis of heterodox propaganda’s role inevitably entails a reconsideration of the entire nature of Russian diplomacy and the activities of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society in this sphere. At the same time, the Uniate process opens a world of far more complex social relations and internal and external connections of the Eastern Christian society in the transitional era of the second half of the 19th – early 20th century. It is important to emphasize that the issue of inter-communal relations among Ottoman Christians belonged to political and social history to a much greater extent than to the history of the Church and the clergy per se. An attempt has previously been made by the author to reveal the regional aspects of inter-communal relations¹³,

⁷ *Лисовой Н.Н.* Русское духовное... С. 234.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *N.N. Lisovoy* for many years served as Deputy Chairman of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society.

¹⁰ *Лисовой Н.Н.* Русское духовное... С. 168.

¹¹ Indeed, *N.N. Lisovoy* was open about it. Quoting the church historian *V.V. Bolotov*, who wrote that “whoever aims to be completely objective thereby takes up a position unnatural to himself, and in essence, to be a historian from the standpoint of a faith not one’s own is impossible” (*Болотов В.В. Лекции по истории древней Церкви.* СПб., 1907. Т.1. Репринт: М., 1994. С. 32), *Lisovoy* also expressed his own principled position: “I would like to emphasize the relevance of this thesis for our own time”. *Лисовой Н.Н.* Русское духовное... С. 211.

¹² Throughout the period, the majority in the Synod – with rare exceptions – belonged to Arab hierarchs, and the parish clergy (except in the Cilician diocese) were represented by the local clergy.

¹³ See: *Исторический вестник.* Вып. 53. 2025.

yet such a complex phenomenon as the Unia had significantly more driving forces in its genesis.

Conscription and tax issues in the diocese of Latakia

Two major conversions, separated by a span of half a century and representing opposite directions of communal movement, nonetheless attract attention by their typological similarity.

In 1866, several sheikhs of the Ansariyeh, residing in villages near Latakia, petitioned the newly consecrated Metropolitan of Laodicea Meletius (Doumani) for admission into Orthodoxy. According to their declaration, “being neighbors of the Orthodox inhabitants, they have long been acquainted with Orthodoxy and now recognize all its superiority over the errors of their former beliefs”¹⁴. Considering their request to be sincere, the young metropolitan — the future Patriarch of Antioch Meletius II (Doumani) — sought the patronage of the Russian Consul General in Syria, A. F. Beger¹⁵, and requested from Constantinople “a vizierial letter, so that the local authorities and Muslims might not impede this conversion, and that the newly converted Ansariyeh, having embraced Orthodoxy, might enjoy all the rights of Christians”¹⁶. According to the (updated) information of Actual State Councillor A. F. Beger, “several sheikhs and three or four villages near Latakia”¹⁷ joined the movement. In the consul’s opinion, they could be divided into three categories: “some accept the Orthodox faith from conviction; others, to avoid conscription; and the others, in order to enjoy the protection of the Russian agents on an equal footing with the Christians. The Ansariyeh seek and request no financial assistance. His Grace Meletius hopes that for the construction of village churches and the establishment of schools he will find the necessary means in Lata-

¹⁴ Российский государственный исторический архив (hereinafter — РГИА). Ф. 832. Оп. 1. Д. 105. Л. 49 об.

¹⁵ Beger Alexander Fedorovich (1823–1895) — Consul General in Syria, February 16 (28), 1860 — January 7 (19), 1869.

¹⁶ РГИА. Ф. 832. Оп. 1. Д. 105. Л. 49 об.–50.

¹⁷ Ibid. Л. 50 об.

kia, as well as among the Ansariyeh themselves”¹⁸. As the consul diplomatically noted, the motives of the sheikhs were “not entirely disinterested”¹⁹, as “by becoming Christians, they will be freed from conscription and will only pay the fee, which is incomparably less and easier (to bear) than the military obligation”²⁰. Nevertheless, according to A. F. Beger, the appeal merited attention, since a successful transition to Orthodoxy could subsequently attract other Ansariyeh, whose number was estimated at up to 140,000, of whom 80,000 resided in the Latakia district²¹. In his response, the Russian envoy in Constantinople, Adjutant General N. P. Ignatiev, expressed well-founded doubts concerning “the firmness and constancy of the spiritual convictions of the heterogeneous populations of Syria”²². Furthermore, he assessed pessimistically the possibility of overcoming the resistance of the Ottoman authorities: “The very demands of the Ansariyeh, who wish now through our mediation to obtain a vizierial letter from the Porte guaranteeing them various privileges, will undoubtedly meet with stubborn opposition from the Turkish Government and clearly indicate the mercenary aim of their conversion to Christianity”²³.

This story, for the reasons stated above, had no continuation; yet it enables us to compare it with a similar episode that occurred in the same diocese forty years later (a year after the death of Patriarch Meletius II).

In the spring of 1907, the entire Orthodox population of Latakia was preparing to convert to Catholicism. The reason proved typologically close to the one considered above — a tax on non-Muslims subject to military conscription. The immediate reason was the attempt of the Turkish authorities “to collect the *askeriye* tax several times”²⁴. They took advantage of the absence of Metropolitan Arsenius (Haddad), who had left for Damascus in February 1906 to participate in the election of the patriarch and had not returned. There he “became entangled in an intrigue with a

¹⁸ Ibid. А. 50 об.–51.

¹⁹ Ibid. А. 51.

²⁰ Ibid. А. 52.

²¹ Ibid. А. 50.

²² РГИА. Ф. 832. Оп. 1. Д. 105. А. 53.

²³ Ibid. А. 53–53 об.

²⁴ Архив внешней политики Российской империи (hereinafter — АВПРИ). Ф. 180 Оп. 517/2, Д. 1354. А. 76 об.

certain woman, to the great displeasure of the community”, and spent his time awaiting from Gregory (Haddad) “the revenue from the Bessarabian estates promised to him as payment for the assistance rendered during the election”²⁵. Exasperated, the local population sought protection from the Catholics, who sent from Beirut a priest to receive them into the Unia. This transition was prevented thanks to the assistance of Metropolitan Gerasimos (Mesara) of Beirut, himself a native of Latakia, and his friendship (which is quite characteristic from the standpoint of inter-communal relations — E. K.) with the Uniate Metropolitan. Moreover, the Orthodox clergy received support from an unexpected quarter. On one hand, the French Consulate General²⁶ rendered assistance to the Russian diplomatic mission in settling the conflict by declaring to the Catholic clergy that it did not support propaganda directed against the Orthodox. On the other, the positions of different confessions were brought closer by the presence of a common adversary — the Masonic lodges, that were spreading their influence along the coast. As A. A. Gagarin noted²⁷: “It helped, in part, that the local Jesuits, hoping for my support against the ever-spreading Freemasonry, are zealous to demonstrate their goodwill toward me and avoid any occasion for misunderstanding”²⁸. In turn, the Russian Consulate General drew the attention of Patriarch Gregory IV (Haddad) to the need for the prompt return of the Metropolitan to his diocese. Thanks to the return of Arsenius (Haddad) to Latakia and the energy of the influential Metropolitan Gerasimos (Mesara) of Beirut, “it was possible for the time being to prevent the conversion of this community to Catholicism”²⁹.

Thus, in both cases, the potential change of faith was determined by fiscal rather than confessional considerations. Also significant was the ability of some Great Powers — in this instance, Russia and France — to provide consular protection to its protégés before the Ottoman authorities.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ At the regional level, the rapprochement between Paris and St. Petersburg, formalized in 1891–1893, had an impact.

²⁷ *Gagarin Aleksandr Aleksandrovich* — Russian Consul General in Beirut, November 11 (24), 1905 — May 16 (29), 1911. Later Consul General in Genoa.

²⁸ АВГРП. Ф. 180 Оп. 517/2. Д. 1354. Л. 76 об.

²⁹ Ibid. Л. 76–76 об.

There were also local variations on the already familiar theme of the conversion of the Ansariyeh and Orthodox Latakians. In the village of Kfeir, located in a valley southwest of Mount Hermon³⁰ and inhabited by Druze and Christians (the latter represented by Orthodox, Uniates, and Protestants)³¹, the number of the Uniates tripled under similar circumstances. In 1896, according to the inspector of the IOPS, the flock of the Patriarch of Antioch numbered about “300 households (approximately 1,500 souls; local inhabitants estimate more than that); previously there had been 3 Uniate households, now there are 8: three months ago a Uniate priest came to the village and began to entice the inhabitants by promising to pay their *askeriye* (military tax) if they would convert to Catholicism, and some succumbed”³². The very modest — if not downright pitiful — success of the Protestant mission is also noteworthy: “There are only 3 Protestant households, existing already for 35 years”³³. In the countryside, preaching that required a drastic change in ritual had little chance of success, a fact well understood and exploited by the Uniates. Complete external similarity with the Orthodox clergy, combined with tax privileges, ensured successful conversions to the Uniate faith.

The maintenance of parish clergy

Returning to Orthodox-Uniate relations in Kfeir, it is worth noting another significant factor — the source of the clergy’s livelihood. As A.I. Yakubovich wrote: “The Orthodox church (in the name of St. George the Victorious) has existed for a long time; it has been several times destroyed by the Druze and then rebuilt; there are three priests: Khouri Semaam (probably a distortion of *Semyan* — E.K.), Abu-Rizek, Khouri Anthony Tawil, and Khouri Yusuf Kherbawi; the priests are supported by the congregation

³⁰ Arab. *Jebel esh-Sheikh* — “Mountain of the Old Man”. Located at the southern end of the Anti-Lebanon range.

³¹ In 2014, the population of Kfeir (Kfeyr) was also roughly divided equally between Christians and the Druze. Of the total population, Orthodox Christians and Uniates comprised 43.09% and 3.78%, respectively.

³² АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 393. Л. 95.

³³ Ibid.

and do not engage in agriculture. The Uniates have a church in the name of the Mother of God; their priest receives 200 piastres in salary from the Uniate Metropolitan...”³⁴ It is important to emphasize that while the Uniate hierarch provided material support to the parish clergy, the upkeep of the Orthodox priests rested entirely on their parishioners. This circumstance played a significant role. The extremely modest life of the rural clergy in Lebanon — comparable to that of the poorest *fellahin* — was vividly described by A.E. Krymsky: “The dwelling is a single room, extremely poor and plain: the peasants of Shweir live in much better and richer homes. The master (the priest) walks barefoot, in a worn cassock and cowl, with a downtrodden expression (his name is Michael Haddad, i.e., ‘blacksmith’ — obviously his ancestors were smiths). <...> A rifle hangs on the wall. According to the church’s rule, a priest should not hunt (so say the Arabs in Beirut too), but evidently in Lebanon the rule is different: the priest in Shweir is also a hunter. Breakfast consisted of bread, salt, and potatoes; they invited us too, but we declined”³⁵. Under such constrained material conditions in the mountain villages of Lebanon, even small stipends from the metropolitan carried great weight — a fact well understood by the Catholics.

As reported in a highly confidential dispatch of 1913 by the Russian consul in Damascus, Prince B.N. Shakhovskoy³⁶, concerning the Uniate clergy: “The lower clergy are placed in good material conditions, receiving one franc for each mass, apart from other sources of income”³⁷. As a result, even a modest stipend was often enough to induce a conversion — whether to Uniatism or Protestantism. Examples of this are also found in A.E. Krymsky’s accounts. In 1897, he visited a Protestant priest in Shweir who was “blind (*darir*), but received a salary because he had become a Protestant from among the Orthodox Arabs”³⁸. It is reasonable to assume that the entire essence of this conversion lay in the blind man’s attempt to find a means of livelihood. This was

³⁴ АВПРИ. Ф. РИГПО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 393. Л. 95.

³⁵ Крымский А.Е. Письма.... С. 162.

³⁶ *Shakhovskoy Boris Nikolaevich* — Russian Consul in Damascus from March 2 (15), 1907 to 1914. With the outbreak of the war, he was assigned to the Headquarters of the Caucasian Army.

³⁷ АВПРИ. Ф. РИГПО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 517. Л. 83 об.

³⁸ Крымский А.Е. Письма.... С. 160.

hardly a secret to his fellow villagers, who still considered him “not to have lost his sympathies toward Orthodoxy”³⁹.

The roots of this phenomenon lay in the system by which parish clergy were appointed in the dioceses of the Church of Antioch. Porphyrius (Uspensky), who observed the life of the Patriarchate closely in the mid-1840s, wrote: “Every village in the Arcadian diocese has a *didaskalos*... This is necessary, for priests are chosen from among the peasants... In a disputed case or when parties arise, the Arcadian metropolitan takes neither side and appoints his own man”⁴⁰. The priest thus appointed received his meager livelihood from the congregation. Often the parishioners, following the practices of Uniates and Protestants, sought to avoid extra expenses altogether. The Antiochian Patriarch Methodius complained to Porphyrius in 1843 that “local Christians show very little *φιλότητι* toward him and the metropolitans; the reason is that the Uniates take no money from anyone”⁴¹. Under such circumstances, if a priest decided to convert to Uniatism, the entire village — or at least the group supporting him — tended to follow.

The persistence of this pattern as a basic feature of the Patriarchate’s life is demonstrated by the fact that even a century later the situation changed little. In 1961, Professor N.D. Uspensky of the Leningrad Theological Academy reported to the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate that the parish clergy of the Patriarchate of Antioch were “poorly provided for materially”⁴². He continued: “As a result, many parish churches lack priests. For example, in the Byblos-Batroun Metropolis (Metropolitan Elias Karam), out of 80 churches there are only 30 priests. There are no deacons in parish churches, and the duties of psalmist are performed by unpaid lay volunteers”⁴³.

The situation in Hauran was similar. As noted by I.I. Sokolov in 1913, there was neither priest nor school there⁴⁴, and the Patriarch had visited

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Порфирий (Успенский). Книга бытия.... С. 299.

⁴¹ Ibid. С. 261.

⁴² Государственный архив Российской Федерации (hereinafter — ГА РФ). Ф. Р-6991. Оп. 8. Д. 33. Л. 307.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Соколов И.И. Антиохийская церковь. Очерк современного ее состояния / СИППО.

¹⁹¹³. С. 323.

only once in a century (in 1911) — thanks to the initiative of the Russian Consulate in Damascus. Before that, Hauran had been visited only by the Uniate Patriarch Maximos III Mazlum (1833–1855)⁴⁵. By the mid-20th century, the situation remained unchanged. Metropolitan Basil (Samaha) visited his diocese “under our supervision”, wrote the Moscow Patriarchate’s representative in Damascus, Metropolitan Vladimir (Kotlyarov), in 1965: “The previous metropolitans never visited Hauran. Now the Metropolitan travels to the diocese almost every week and is building a church. If we did not urge him, he would do nothing there”⁴⁶. The Metropolitan explained his inactivity rather prosaically: “What is the point of spending money on the Hauran diocese, which gives nothing in return? I have already worked for the Church for 15 years — that is enough”⁴⁷.

Thus, expenditures on parish clergy — minimized by both the rural population and the bishops — remained minimal even in the mid-20th century, creating fertile ground for Uniate proselytism.

“Like priest, like flock”

As already noted, in many cases a secession to Uniatism — or, conversely, a return to Orthodoxy — did not require preaching or personal work with the congregation: in rural areas, the community simply followed its priest. Archimandrite Porphyrius (Uspensky) was the first to observe this feature in his 1843 account of how clergy were chosen in the Arcadian diocese: “The election of pastors from among the people pleases me. It is an ancient and apostolic custom. Under it, the faith is preserved more safely and purely, but on the other hand, apostasies may occur collectively, with entire communities...”⁴⁸ The history of the following decades fully confirmed the accuracy of his observation. Moreover, conversions from Orthodoxy to Uniatism and vice versa exhibited the same typological patterns. One example is the village of Maarat, located about three-quar-

⁴⁵ АВГРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 3439. Л. 34.

⁴⁶ ГАРФ. Ф. Р-6991. Оп. 6. Д. 59. Л. 22.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Л. 162.

⁴⁸ *Порфирий (Успенский)*. Книга бытия.... С. 299.

ters of an hour's ride from the monastery of Saidnaya and belonging to the Seleucian diocese. In 1895, according to the village priest and sheikh, its population consisted of 350 Orthodox, 700 Catholics, and one Muslim family. A.I. Yakubovich, who opened an IOPS school in the area, reported: "All the inhabitants of this village were formerly Catholics (and before that Orthodox), but the present priest, Khouri Elias, converted to Orthodoxy, and gradually those who are now Orthodox have followed him. Khouri Elias is an energetic man; he is not foolish and knows how to get things done"⁴⁹.

How such a process could happen in the opposite direction is shown by the case of Father Nicholas Shehadeh of the village of Kusba (in the Koura District) in the Tripoli diocese in 1912. A conflict arose between the local Orthodox Metropolitan Alexander (Tahan) and the Father, who had failed to observe the fast on Holy Saturday. The Metropolitan imposed a *penance* (*epitimia*) on the offender; in response, Father Shehadeh launched an aggressive campaign against Alexander (Tahan). When the former even ceased to commemorate the Metropolitan's name during the litanies, he was summoned to the ecclesiastical court in Tripoli. He expressed repentance, but the court suspended him from priestly service for six months (later reduced to three). This measure so embittered the Father and his supporters that, as reported by the Russian Consul in Beirut, "Father Nicholas Shehadeh and his adherents issued a proclamation stating that since the Metropolitan had ignored his explanations and sincere repentance, refused to accept his resignation, and deprived him of the right to serve for three months, he was laying down his priestly rank and no longer considered himself under the Metropolitan's authority; at the same time, he and his followers submitted a petition to the Greek-Catholic bishop asking to be received into the bosom of the Catholic Church. The latter had already sent his vicar to Kusba for negotiations"⁵⁰. Thus, following the priest, the portion of the community that supported him also entered into the Unia — fully confirming the half-century-old warning of Archimandrite Porphyrius (Uspensky).

⁴⁹ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 393. Л. 32.

⁵⁰ АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 3439. Л. 14 об.



An Orthodox priest and two Kurdish Men.

Osman Hamdi Bey; Marie de Launay; J. Pascal Sébah.

Les Costumes Populaires de la Turquie en 1873: a work published under the patronage of the Imperial Commission of the Ottoman Empire for the Vienna World Exhibition. Turkey. Imperial Commission of the Ottoman Empire for the Vienna World Exhibition, 1873

Questions of waqf property

Another important source of conflict and of conversions between the Orthodox and Greek-Uniate communities lay in the economic relations connected with the management of *waqf* (endowed) property⁵¹.

In 1899, a group of villagers from Joun in Lebanon (Chouf District) converted to Orthodoxy, and apparently, property disputes played a decisive role in this transition. The village was located about 12 km from Sidon and, more importantly, about 4 km from one of the major Uniate monasteries, Deir al-Mukhalles (Monastery of the Savior). The question of returning to Orthodoxy was initiated by the members of the influential Khariati family, who first appealed to the Russian Consul General K.N. Lishin, and then to the Beirut Metropolitan Gabriel (Shatila), asking him “to help them rid themselves of the Uniate clergy and re-

⁵¹ *Waqf* — according to Islamic law, property whose income is wholly or partially directed to charitable purposes. In Muslim states, *waqfs* were also established by Christian donors.

turn to the faith of their ancestors”⁵². While this petition was under consideration in Damascus, the Uniate clergy (the Sidon Archbishop Basil (Khajar)) appealed to the Consulate to stop part of the community from converting. His statements, which shed light on the background of the situation, claimed that the converts merely sought “to evade their obligations toward the Monastery of the Savior, whose lands they cultivate”⁵³. At the same time, Archbishop Basil “resorted to entreaties, threats, and complaints to the Lebanese authorities, demanding that they prohibit the inhabitants of Joun to convert to Orthodoxy”⁵⁴. The Russian Consulate, however, ignored his requests, which ultimately determined the outcome: by the end of 1899, “200 souls out of the 1,500 total inhabitants of Joun, consisting of Uniates, Maronites, and Metwali (Shiite Muslims), had converted to Orthodoxy”⁵⁵. With private donations, a small primary school was opened for Orthodox children. The Consul reported with satisfaction: “Around 40 pupils now attend this school”⁵⁶. In 1900, he appealed to M.P. Stepanov, Assistant Chairman of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, requesting assistance “for the construction of a church, the provision of icons, vessels, and vestments, and, most importantly, the opening of an IOPS school in the village of Joun”⁵⁷. Thus, the conflict with the monastery over the cultivation of its lands brought one of the influential Khariati families and its supporters into the jurisdiction of the elderly Orthodox Metropolitan of Tyre and Sidon, Michael, who resided mostly in Damascus and had no intention of expanding his flock.

A similar intra-community conflict in 1895–1896 in Souk el-Gharb, under the Beirut Metropolis, produced a comparable result — this time within the Orthodox milieu. As reported in 1896 by the IOPS inspector A.I. Yakubovich: “A former abbot of the monastery (St. George’s — E.K.) came to the village; the Metropolitan had ordered him to hand over all property to another. He refuses to do so, continues to perform services, while only a small minority attend them; yet when the second priest

⁵² АВГПРИ. Ф. 180 Оп. 517/2.А. 1348. Л. 13 об.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid. Л. 14.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

serves, almost everyone comes. Thus arises the usual picture of local morals: the church becomes the scene of various demonstrations over purely personal matters”⁵⁸. The community split, and eventually, “some of the inhabitants turned to the Catholics, who sent them a priest”⁵⁹. “We were in Souk el-Gharb on Sunday”, the inspector continued, “and found part of the population in the church of the Orthodox monastery, while others were attending mass in a temporary Catholic church; they also take their children there, including our schoolchildren”⁶⁰. As we see, the point of departure for the conflict around which two hostile factions formed was the issue of monastic property, and the replacement of the abbot merely served as the trigger for the conversion

Speaking of monastic property, it is important to note that, when characterizing the patriarchal monasteries, Porphyrius (Uspensky) clarified: “The monasteries are leased out”⁶¹. Olive trees, arable land, and vineyards were rented; real estate also provided income. An example of such activity by the abbot (hegumen) of the Monastery of St. Thecla can be found in the writings of the “Spy of the East” (Porphyrius Uspensky) in 1843: “In the course of about seven years, almost the entire monastery has been rebuilt — and what has been done? Guest rooms for pilgrims. Next to the monastery there is a cattle yard, below there are small gardens on the rocks; it is clear that the hegumen is a landlord for his own benefit. He is a robber, extremely angry, discourteous, rude, and obtuse”⁶². Later, Hegumen Zachariah reasoned about the need to build a new church and “add cells in place of the old ones that were demolished”⁶³. Porphyrius’s companion, Archimandrite Agafangel, remarked to him that “monks should also be added”⁶⁴. The objection of the “terrible hegumen”, as Porphyrius called him, was unambiguous and blunt: “What do we need the monks for?”⁶⁵. This economic practice remained widespread in the following de-

⁵⁸ АВПРИ. Ф. РИГПО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 393. Л. 51 об.

⁵⁹ Ibid. Л. 71 об.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ *Порфирий (Успенский)*. Книга бытия... С. 225

⁶² *Порфирий (Успенский)*. Книга бытия...Т. 1. С. 233–234.

⁶³ Ibid. С. 234.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

cedes, systematically provoking conflicts within dioceses — for example, in Beirut in 1848⁶⁶.

It is not surprising that the social structures, unchanged for centuries, led to the almost literal repetition of familiar plots. In 1958, the representative of the Russian Orthodox Church to the Blessed Patriarch of Antioch, Archimandrite John (Wendland), met with Metropolitan Elias (Karam) of the Mountains of Lebanon, of whom fellow metropolitans said that he “stripped three of his monasteries bare to build profitable villas in a resort area”⁶⁷. Popular rumor even coined a saying: “The stone that falls from the wall of the monastery appears in the wall of the new villa at the resort”. This same metropolitan, having laid the foundation for a new monastery, requested funds from the Soviet government for its completion⁶⁸. In this connection, Archimandrite John (Wendland) asked Metropolitan Elias (Karam) whether there were any wishing to pursue the monastic life in the monastery. The metropolitan replied that “they should be brought from Russia”⁶⁹. It is obvious that the metropolitan cared more about creating a new income-generating property than about the flourishing of monasticism⁷⁰.

Despite some evolution in the rent system, the archetype of the “terrible hegumen” described by Porphyrius (Uspensky) clearly retained its vitality even a century later. In 1961, Professor N.D. Uspensky noted that “the source of existence for the Patriarchate of Antioch and its metropolises is the income from the lands and buildings owned by the dioceses, which they sell or rent out at very high prices”⁷¹. We can summarize that rent relations and the disputes generated by them remained a fertile ground for commu-

⁶⁶ *Копоть Е.М.* От дамасского патриархата к ливанскому: «восстание» региональных элит в Антиохийской Церкви (втор. пол. XIX –нач. XX в.) / Христианский Восток. Многообразие региональных элит: от поздней Античности до Нового времени. Под ред. К.А. Панченко. М., 2025. С. 245–246.

⁶⁷ ГАРФ. Ф. Р-6991. Оп. 2. Д. 240. Л. 30.

⁶⁸ ГАРФ. Ф. Р-6991. Оп. 2. Д. 240. Л. 30.

⁶⁹ ГАРФ. Ф. Р-6991. Оп. 2. Д. 240. Л. 65.

⁷⁰ After his death, 600 icons and 1,000 gold coins were found in his house, as well as several thousand Lebanese lira in cash, “in addition to a substantial bank account”. (ГАРФ. Ф. Р-6991. Оп. 6. Д. 269. Л. 27).

⁷¹ ГАРФ. Ф. Р-6991. Оп. 8. Д. 33. Л. 307.

nity conversions over the centuries⁷². It should be emphasized that acquisitiveness among the higher clergy was equally characteristic of both Greeks and Arabs. Both the Greek Patriarch Spyridon (Euthymiou) and the Arabs Gregory (Haddad) and Alexander (Tahan) were accused of appropriating income from *waqf* property and selling it off.

The undervalued female factor

Family and marital relations, and the role of the clergy in regulating them, played an important role in the genesis of conflicts of canonical nature. Examples of this kind — when canonical violations became the reason for conversions (or threats of conversion) to Uniatism — were quite widespread and appear to have been underestimated by historiography, which focused primarily on Greek-Arab conflicts and missionary proselytism. In his diary notes for 1843, Porphyrius (Uspensky) writes that “the Metropolitan of Seleucia is under trial for performing a marriage for a couple from another diocese for 70 piastres”⁷³. Apparently, the marriage faced serious canonical obstacles to its conclusion, which prompted the parties to turn to a hierarch from another diocese. The situation developed further: “He (the Seleucian Metropolitan — E.K.) offered the other hierarch 35 piastres”⁷⁴, that is, wishing to settle the matter amicably by dividing the illegal income in half. However, as Archimandrite Porphyrius wrote, “the latter denounced him to Patriarch Methodius and requested that the Metropolitan of Seleucia be excommunicated from the Church. And the latter threatens to defect to the Unia”. “Bedouin! Robber!”⁷⁵ exclaimed Archimandrite Porphyrius. Thus, the “price” of the Seleucian Metropolitan’s potential conversion to Uniatism amounted to 35 piastres. The outcome of this 1843 episode is un-

⁷² According to *Souad Slim*, it was precisely the issue of the exploitation of Lebanese monastic *waqfs* that led to conflict and the separation of the Diocese of the Mountains of Lebanon (Jubayl–Batroun) from the Beirut Diocese in 1901. (*Slim S. The Greek Orthodox Waqf in Lebanon during the Ottoman period. Beirut, 2007. P.225.*)

⁷³ *Порфирий (Успенский). Книга бытия... С. 248.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

known, but by the end of the 19th century, in Zahle — the main city of the Seleucian diocese — the number of Uniates had reached about 12,000 people, while the Orthodox population had dwindled to only “2,000–3,000”⁷⁶. Even the fate of those remaining caused concern. In 1896–1897, the inhabitants of Zahle “were already seriously thinking about converting en masse to Uniatism”⁷⁷. The reason was a conflict between the community and Metropolitan Gerasimus (Yared), who “granted several divorces without legitimate cause, allowed a number of marriages prohibited by the Church”, and also ordained several unworthy priests for money⁷⁸. Zahle was not alone in its moral laxity and tangled matrimonial affairs.

The well-known Tripoli quarrel, which nearly led to a mass conversion of the Orthodox to Uniatism in 1887–1889⁷⁹, besides its regional dimension, also had a family basis. Analyzing the causes of this conflict (in which one of the main figures was the Russian Honorary Vice-Consul A. Katseflis — K.D.) Petkovich⁸⁰ was forced to admit the total helplessness of official instructions in the face of the family and domestic atmosphere (embodied in the Vice-Consul’s second wife, Rada Katseflis) typical of Levantine diplomats: “No orders or instructions can tear them away from the local squabbles and interests of the environment in which they were born and raised. Their personal and family interests and calculations take precedence over official duties everywhere”⁸¹. Looking at the events of the following decade, it can be said that the main conflict took place between the Tripoli Metropolitan Sophronius (an-Najjar)⁸² and the true mistress

⁷⁶ АВПРИ Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1713. Л. 3 об.

⁷⁷ Ibid. Д. 1345. Л. 72.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ See: *Копоть Е.М.* «Триполийская церковная распря» (1887–1890) в контексте русского влияния. В антиохийском патриархате в конце XIX в. (по материалам АВПРИ) // Вестник Московского университета. Востоковедение. Сер. 13. 2012. № 4. С. 83–94.

⁸⁰ *Petkovich Konstantin Dmitrievich* (1827–1897) — Consul General in Beirut, 1869–1896.

⁸¹ АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1337. Л. 100 об.–101.

⁸² According to *K.D. Petkovich*, Alexander Katseflis’s attacks on Metropolitan Sophronius (an-Najjar) were motivated by “personal malice and vengeance against Sophronius, for about 25 years ago the latter had excommunicated him for marrying the sister of his deceased wife”. (АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1336. Л. 66)



A Christian woman from Zahle, a Druze woman,
and a Christian woman from Zgharta.

Les Costumes Populaires de la Turquie en 1873: a work published under the patronage of the Imperial Commission of the Ottoman Empire for the Vienna World Exhibition. Turkey. Imperial Commission of the Ottoman Empire for the Vienna World Exhibition, 1873

of the excommunicated vice-consul's household — his second wife, Rada Katseflis (the sister of his first wife). As Acting Consul General in Beirut, Prince A.A. Gagarin, reported in 1897, after her husband's death, Rada Katseflis lived "with her eldest son in Tripoli, in the house belonging to the heirs of Alexander Katseflis, together with the deceased's brother"⁸³. When N.V. Kokhmansky visited Tripoli in 1910 — almost a quarter century after these events — he described the character of the Tripolitans (which can well be extended to Levantine townspeople in general) in the following way: "The relatively small Orthodox community of Tripoli consists mainly of merchants, corresponding to the commercial nature of the entire locality, and is therefore wealthy. Perhaps this same commercial spirit introduces into it a noticeable indifference [...]; at any rate, the Orthodox of Tripoli are known for their extreme liberalism regarding the teachings of the Orthodox faith and are ready to convert to any heterodox confession on the slightest occasion, whenever Orthodoxy restricts them

⁸³ АВПРИ Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1345. Л. 47 об.



Women of the Qalamoun Plateau in traditional dress. Photo: Joseph Delore.
Les petites écoles du Mont-Liban: Joseph Delore, s.j. (1873–1944).
 Beirut: Presses de l'Université Saint-Joseph, 2003

in any way — for example, forbidding marriage within certain degrees of kinship, etc.”⁸⁴

The importance of marriage and divorce cases in the life of the local clergy is shown by the fact that the deposition of the last Greek Patriarch, Spyridon (Euthymiou), began when, in the summer of 1897, he became embroiled in a conflict between two influential Damascus families, the Tannus and the Kassab. By the decision of the patriarchal commission of June 26, 1897, Yu. Tannus, dragoman of the vilayet, divorced his wife Maria Kassab without her presence and obtained permission to marry again. On June 28, 1897, enraged crowds stormed the patriarchate, forcing the Patriarch to call in Ottoman soldiers to restore order⁸⁵.

To understand that we are dealing with another raw nerve of the patriarchate's internal life, let us turn to the testimony of N.D. Uspensky from the early 1960s: “A large income for the metropolitans of the Church of Antioch is brought in by handling marriage and divorce cases. <...>

⁸⁴ Архив востоковедов Института восточных рукописей РАН (АВ ИВР РАН). Ф. 120. Оп. 1. №178. Л. 44–44 об.

⁸⁵ See: *Englezakis B. The Antiochene Question of 1897–1899: An Unpublished Journal of Constantine I. Myrianthopoulos // Idem. Studies on the History of the Church of Cyprus, 4th–20th Cent. / Transl. N. Russell. Brookfield, 1995. Pp. 325–420.*

The decisions of metropolitans regarding the amount of alimony are not subject to review by the civil court, and a defaulter is imprisoned or fined. Such a peculiar status of marital cases in the Patriarchate of Antioch makes them a source of great income for metropolitans and of canonical violations. Metropolitans perform weddings themselves, and for the marriages of wealthy people several metropolitans officiate together, each receiving payment. They will conduct weddings at any time of the year, even on the eve of major feasts or during fasts⁸⁶. It would be no exaggeration to say that this sphere of Levantine social life for centuries was a cauldron of seething passions, in which conversion from one community to another served as the *ultima ratio*.

Techniques of attraction

For the poorly educated — whether Orthodox or Greek Catholic — there was no insurmountable dogmatic abyss between the communities; indeed, they were only superficially aware that one existed. As Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, Archimandrite⁸⁷ of the theological School of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem, wrote in 1906: “The Christian faith is for the people an indeterminate mixture, where Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Protestantism are combined without any distinction, and none of them produces any special impression upon their soul. The people distinguish confessions only by external forms and rites and have no clear notion of Christianity in general... Many Orthodox, from birth to death, never come to know what they believe in and why they believe so and not otherwise⁸⁸. The Uniates were well aware of the futility of discussing the problem of the *filioque* in high-mountain Lebanese villages or on the Qalamun plateau. Obviously, for the semi-literate masses who, in Maaloula, would throw blazing bonfires from the surrounding cliffs on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, or who, on Clean Monday, would carry on their shoulder a monk (or any passerby) dressed in rags and green branches, the writ-

⁸⁶ ГАРФ. Ф. Р-6991. Оп. 8. Д. 33. Л. 307.

⁸⁷ Until 1908.

⁸⁸ Сообщения Императорского Православного Палестинского Общества. Т. 17. Вып. 3. СПб., 1906. С. 489.

ings of Ephrem the Syrian or Andrew of Crete could not be understood. Under such conditions, emphasis shifted from inner spiritual life to its external ritual forms. Yet, the less the population knew “about the dogmas of the Orthodox Church”, the more zealously it clung to its centuries-old liturgical customs — and the more insurmountable this barrier became for missionaries. Even luring an Orthodox villager into a space where a dialogue about the Latin theological tradition could begin was not easy, so the Uniate clergy sometimes resorted to externally unexpected, but locally justified, measures.

In 1899, the Rector of the Uniate seminary in Ain Traz⁸⁹ (a village in the Lebanese mountains southeast of Beirut, where the summer residence of Patriarch Peter IV (Gerajjiri) was located) — as reported by Russian Consul General K.N. Lishin — “filed a petition addressed to His Imperial Majesty, asking for a donation of icons and church vessels for the Seminary’s church”⁹⁰. The petition puzzled the First Asian Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which requested clarification of this unprecedented situation from the Russian diplomatic agent. In his petition, the Rector deliberately referred to the Ain Traz Seminary as “Greek”, which caused officials on the Pevchesky Bridge in St. Petersburg to doubt the institution’s Catholic affiliation. The Rector’s ruse — probably blessed by the Patriarch and certainly suited to local realities — consisted, as K.N. Lishin reported to the embassy, in the fact that, having received a donation, he would “be able to assure the inhabitants of Lebanon that Russia treats the Uniates as favorably as the Orthodox”⁹¹. In this Uniate desire to obtain proof of Russia’s benevolence, one can see another obstacle that Catholic propaganda could hardly overcome — the centuries-old tradition among local Christians of perceiving the great northern power as the protector of Christianity in the region. Even the most zealous Catholics could not afford to declare themselves enemies of the “Moscofs” while seeking support from Orthodox believers.

Thus, Uniate propaganda was built not on the idea of difference from Orthodoxy but on the notion of proximity to it — one of the signs of which

⁸⁹ Founded in 1811 by Patriarch Agapius II (Matar) (1796–1812).

⁹⁰ АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1347. Л. 121.

⁹¹ Ibid. Л. 121 об.

was the traditional patronage by the Russian Empire. “To lull the moral sense of the Orthodox, Peter IV of Antioch, as he calls himself, persuades his listeners that there is no difference between Orthodoxy and the Unia”⁹², the Consul General in Beirut concluded his observations.

This assertion was supported by quite tangible material incentives, which, however, had their darker side. Two years before the petition, in 1897, Russian diplomacy had already dealt with the Ain Traz Seminary. The priest of the village of Tannurin⁹³, Father Michael, having joined the Unia and “yielding to the requests of his Catholic superiors, placed his ten-year-old son in the Greek Catholic Seminary in Ain Traz for free education”⁹⁴. After returning to Orthodoxy — which, as we have seen, happened rather frequently — he “wished to take his son back, but the Seminary authorities refused to release him”⁹⁵. The Russian Consulate appealed to mutasarrif Naum Pasha⁹⁶, asking for the boy’s return to his Orthodox parents. The governor ordered the *kaimakam* to remove the pupil from the Uniate seminary and return him to his father. However, the seminary refused, asserting that “without the Patriarch’s permission and without payment of 400 francs for the boy’s maintenance, they would not release him”⁹⁷. Naum Pasha, explaining this to A.A. Gagarin “with his usual simplicity, said that he could do nothing more than ask the Patriarch for permission, and that, in his opinion, the money should be raised by subscription among the Orthodox community — even offering to participate in the collection himself”⁹⁸. Thus, the seminary that had admitted “a poor boy free of charge and without a

⁹² АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1347. Л. 121.

⁹³ Located south of the Wadi Kadisha in Lebanon.

⁹⁴ АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1345. Л. 19.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Naum Pasha (Dukhani Naum Nimetullah Pasha, 1846–1911) — in 1892–1902, mutasarrif of Mount Lebanon. A Catholic from the Tyutyunchi family; nephew and later son-in-law of Franco Pasha. Served in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; for a short time in the Ottoman embassy in St. Petersburg, then, until 1902, in Constantinople, in the ministry apparatus. In 1892 he received the title of vizier and was appointed mutasarrif of Mount Lebanon. In 1902–1907 he again served in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, then became ambassador to France. (See: *Akarli E. The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon, 1861–1920*. Berkeley, 1993. P. 196–197.

⁹⁷ АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1345. Л. 19 об.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

contract with his parents”⁹⁹ now demanded ransom for his release. For a parish priest in a remote Lebanese mountain village, the stated sum was utterly unaffordable. With the passive indulgence of the Catholic mutasarrif, the chances of recovering the son were minimal. As A.A. Gagarin reported, this case was not unique: “Besides him, there are still 28 Orthodox boys in this Seminary, whose parents would certainly wish to take them back if they saw that the Consulate or the community paid for them”¹⁰⁰. “Only poverty and the absence of an Orthodox seminary can explain this abnormal situation”¹⁰¹, the Consul General concluded.

However, the story of the priest from Tannurin ended well. A.A. Gagarin instructed the Greek-Catholic dragoman of the consulate, Habib Doumani, “to obtain, on the dragoman’s behalf, the most favorable terms from the Patriarch and then take all measures necessary for the boy’s release”¹⁰². The dragoman, an influential figure in his community¹⁰³, managed to reduce the ransom to 200 francs, which were immediately collected among Orthodox notables. “Yesterday, Father Michael came to the Consulate with his son to express his gratitude for the assistance rendered and asked, as a special favor, that the boy be placed in one of the Russian schools”, reported Prince A.A. Gagarin to the Embassy on March 30, 1897, about the ending of the Ain Traz captivity.

Financial enslavement for the purpose of drawing converts to Catholicism could take even more straightforward forms. In February 1890, the Russian Embassy in Constantinople considered it necessary to inform the General Consulate in Beirut about the transfer there of the former Director of the Ottoman Bank branch in Salonika, Mr. Loir, attaching a characterization of this financier “from the standpoint of his involvement in

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid. A. 20.

¹⁰³ According to the data of the Intelligence Division of the Admiralty War Staff (1912–1917) of the British Empire, he was one of the leading Greek Catholics of Beirut. He enjoyed a certain popularity, mostly due to his independent character and ingratiating manners. Well-educated, but not wealthy, he was also a close personal friend of Esper Effendi Shuker, dragoman of the British Consulate General”. (Personalities. Arabia & Syria. Secret. Admiralty War Staff. Intelligence Division (No. C.B. 1152). 1916. P. 78).



Yabroud.

*Les petites écoles du Mont-Liban: Joseph Delore, s.j. (1873–1944).
Beirut: Presses de l'Université Saint-Joseph, 2003*

Catholic propaganda”¹⁰⁴. The diplomat, ethnographer, and Balkan scholar I.S. Yastrebov, who had observed Loir’s activities in Salonika, reported to the Embassy that he was “a Frenchman by origin but born in Turkey, raised in Catholic obscurantism”, and that he “would make a much better missionary than a bank director”¹⁰⁵. In practice, this meant that “there was not a single case when he refused a loan of Ottoman coin to his brethren, at exceptionally reduced interest rates, provided only that they presented <...> a certificate of their conversion to the Unia”¹⁰⁶. The Embassy, quite justifiably, feared that this method might be applied in Beirut as well.

Against the backdrop of the active work of the Ain Traz Seminary, however, one should not overestimate the pedagogical level of rural Uniate schools. The overall intellectual level of both the previously mentioned *khouri* (priest) Elias of Maara and his rural flock (formerly Catholic, now Orthodox) is best illustrated by the following episode from 1895, during discussions about conditions for teaching in the local school: “For the time being, I left the priest as the teacher (temporarily); he told me that he could not regularly attend to lessons, and that therefore his nephew would be working with the children instead. I replied that I had no objections for now, but since I was dealing with him personally, paying him a salary of

¹⁰⁴ АВПРИИ. Ф. 208. Оп. 819. Д. 322. Л. 29.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. Л. 30.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. Л. 30 об.

20 francs a month, I would hold him responsible for the regularity of instruction. <...> I asked the priest not to beat the children (36 boys), nor to use any corporal punishment; but he categorically told me that this was impossible with the *fellahin* – they do not understand words”¹⁰⁷. “Nevertheless, I extracted from him a promise not to beat the children. The poor boys turned out not to have a single little book, nor even a single slate”¹⁰⁸, concluded A.I. Yakubovich in his report.

In the countryside, conversion to Uniatism or back to Orthodoxy did not bring about any transformation of everyday life. Not only the *khouri's* vestments remained unchanged: the school, the teaching methods, and the mindset stayed the same. The church space also underwent no alteration. A.E. Krymsky gives a characteristic description of the Uniate church in the Monastery of St. John (Mar-Hanna), which was “in its arrangement entirely Orthodox; the iconostasis was intact, unlike in Galicia. The monks’ clothing was purely Orthodox: beards unshaven (although, to be fair, even Jesuits in the East wear beards)”¹⁰⁹. No change of clothing or external transformation occurred. Ritual similarity, combined with the dogmatic indifference of the majority of *fellahin*, facilitated migration between Orthodox and Uniate communities. It can safely be assumed that catechization of the *fellahin* proceeded according to the axiom formulated by the former Uniate priest: “they do not understand words”.

Escaping From Prison... Into the Unia

The mechanism of conversion to the Unia and the methods of catechization are complemented by a colorful episode from the life of the Akkar Metropolis. In the mid-1890s, a rather characteristic lawsuit unfolded in the Tripoli court between Metropolitan Nicodemus of Akkar and the Greek-Catholic community. In 1897, an Orthodox inhabitant of Tannurin, Anton Jamal, was being sought by the court for a crime he had committed. Hiding from punishment, he converted to Uniatism, where he was

¹⁰⁷ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 393. Л. 32 об.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Крымский А.Е. Письма... С. 176.

ordained as a priest. Soon he “returned to Tannurin and forcibly broke into the house of his brother, an Orthodox priest, who was at that time in Beirut. He presented himself as an Orthodox”¹¹⁰. Metropolitan Nicodemus, upon learning of this, hastened to Tannurin, “summoned the priest to him, and when he saw that he refused to heed his exhortations, tore off his *kamilavka* (kamelavchion/kamelaukion — *translator*) and detained him in order to hand him over to the judicial authorities”¹¹¹.

The Uniate version of these events looked somewhat different. According to their account, Metropolitan Nicodemus, with eighteen priests under his command, “set out to arrest Priest Anton Jamal”, beat him, “tore off his *kamilavka* and held him for two days in a stable together with the Catholic Nahle Abdush, in order to compel them to return to Orthodoxy <...>”¹¹². It is worth noting not only the rather unusual form of catechization (in the spirit of Khouri Elias of Maara) — namely, holding Catholics in a stable — but also two quite typical aspects. First, the conversion to Uniatism served as a means of avoiding criminal prosecution. Second, the external similarity of the *kamilavka* worn by the Orthodox and the Uniate clergy at the end of the 19th century remained striking. This is important because the dispute over the *kamilavka*, which had lasted from 1837 to 1847 between Catholics and Orthodox, was settled by a firman requiring Greek-Catholic clergy to wear a hexagonal *kamilavka*, distinct in shape and color from the Orthodox one. Nevertheless, fifty years later, the situation on the ground did not change, and in appearance, the Uniate and Orthodox clergy were almost indistinguishable. In a setting where the ritual blurred with the dogma, joining a Uniate community as a way to escape legal punishment was all the easier.

The Unia as a reaction to administrative arbitrariness

Another reason for conversion to Uniatism was the arbitrariness of local authorities and the lack of security outside major urban centers and the

¹¹⁰ АВІРІИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1345. Л. 42.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid. Л. 41 о6.

diplomatic missions of the European powers. Consular reports are filled with dozens of examples of the near-total defenselessness of Orthodox Christians before the Muslim majority, often acting in concert with the abuses of Ottoman officials. To illustrate the general atmosphere, it suffices to cite the chronicle of events at the end of 1897 in the Tripoli and Arcadia metropolises¹¹³. According to the report of A.A. Gagarin dated November 20, 1897, Muslims “attacked the village of Tannurin at night and drove off part of the Christians’ cattle and a valuable mare belonging to an Orthodox man. The next day they returned in even greater numbers than before and attacked the Orthodox village of Bdadeh, robbing the house of a wealthy Orthodox resident, taking silk and money worth more than 200,000 piastres, and seriously wounding the owner. Other Christians who came to help their fellow believer had to retreat, with five wounded. Reshid Bey promised to take measures to restore order and sent troops to support the judicial authorities. The investigating magistrate arrested about fifteen people, but the real culprits, the village elders, were left unpunished”.

At the same time, “the Orthodox church in Hakour, in the Akkar *kaza*, was robbed and desecrated by thieves. Despite the energetic requests of the kaymakam, the mutasarrif postponed any investigation of this matter. <...> The same happened with another Orthodox church in Rahbeh, another village in Akkar, which had been robbed several months earlier, and where the criminals have still not been punished. Likewise, those responsible for two murders committed in April and September of the previous year were not even brought to trial. Even if they had been, the case would have ended as the recent trial of twenty-seven Muslims of Dmadisheh for the robbery and murder of an Orthodox shepherd from the Monastery of St. George, where some were acquitted and others sentenced to light imprisonment, as if for a minor offense”¹¹⁴.

In this context, it is not surprising that Orthodox Christians, abandoned to the arbitrariness of Ottoman authorities, sought protection from French diplomacy through Uniate clergy. However, it was the pressure exerted by the Russian Embassy on the administration of the Beirut vilayet

¹¹³ Similar examples occurred systematically, taking into account regional specificities, throughout the 1860s–1900s.

¹¹⁴ АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1346. Л. 20–20 об.

that resulted in “the return to Orthodoxy of numerous families and several priests who had joined the Unia in search of some kind of protection from Turkish arbitrariness”¹¹⁵. As Prince A.A. Gagarin summarized: “From this side, our co-religionists are no longer oppressed by the authorities, and one may hope that, with the joint efforts of the Arcadian and Tripoli Metropolitans, even the few families still remaining in the Unia will return to Orthodoxy, too. This favorable result was furthered by the establishment of three schools by the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society in the Arcadian diocese. The Orthodox have understood that they, too, are being cared for, and began to defend their rights with greater courage. With the development of these schools, one may count on the complete failure of heterodox propaganda in this region”¹¹⁶.

Even the capital of the Beirut vilayet was no exception to the general insecurity. From January 22–24, 1888, mass clashes broke out in a southern Beirut quarter between Christians and Muslims: dozens of Orthodox were injured, two fatally. The victims included parents of pupils of M.A. Cherkasova’s Russian school, who turned to her for help. Finding no protection from Consul General K.D. Petkovich, they expressed indignation: “Is he Orthodox at all? Is he really Russian, a Moscob (Muscovite)?”¹¹⁷ The clergy, too, complained in language unbecoming of their rank: “A priest came and said he met a crowd of about twenty women going to the French Consul to ask for protection, because, though he (the Consul — *translator*) is a Catholic and we are Orthodox, he will help us sooner in everything than the Russian. The Russian, though he claims to do all he can, does nothing — and the priest added words unfit to be written <...>”¹¹⁸ These accounts were confirmed by A.E. Krymsky: “The situation of local Christians is indeed dismal: any Muslim can abuse them <...>. The Catholics, relatively speaking, live best, because the French are in the habit of seeking punishment for the guilty; but the condition of the Orthodox, who are under the protection of Russia, is utterly miserable”¹¹⁹.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. Л. 18 об.

¹¹⁶ АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1346. Л. 18 об.

¹¹⁷ АВПРИ. Ф. РИГПО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 70 об.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Quoted from: Валеев Р.М., Валеева Р.З., Василюк О.Д., Кириллина С.А., Мартынов Д.Е., Хайрутдинов Д.Р. Неопубликованные письма... С. 31.

The persecuted Orthodox sought help not only from French diplomacy and the Uniates. After another outbreak of violence in Beirut in 1906, during which residents of the Mazraa quarter, including pupils of Russian schools, were injured, Metropolitan Gerasimos (Mesara) informed the Russian Consulate that “the Orthodox wish to convert to Protestantism, hoping thereby to attract the attention of the British Consulate General, which, they say, will summon warships for their protection”¹²⁰. “They are, of course, mistaken”, added Consul A.A. Gagarin, “for it is impossible to be more indifferent to the fate of Christians than the British Consul General is”¹²¹.

Summing up, it may be stated that conversion to other confessions (Catholicism or Protestantism) was often a response to insecurity and the administrative arbitrariness of Ottoman authorities, whose governance was visibly deteriorating in the empire’s final decades. Russian consular support was not always sufficient or effective (for a whole number of reasons), which drove the victims to seek alternative solutions.

Another response to the security problem, apart from conversion, was emigration to Europe and the New World. By the late 19th century, this movement among the Lebanese population had become massive. Consequently, in March 1900, an American archaeological expedition was astonished to encounter in the village of Muallaqa, in the Seleucia Metropolis, inhabited by Orthodox and Uniates, a Syrian who addressed them “in broken English, saying that he had been some years in America and intended in a few days to return to his work there, this time taking his wife with him”¹²². Emigration made the study of foreign languages (primarily English) increasingly relevant, drawing Syrians to the missionary schools that flooded the region and promoting contact with heterodox clergy. The clergy themselves did not remain untouched by this trend. Raphael (Hawaweeny)¹²³, former Head of the Antiochian metochion in Moscow and educated in Russia to strengthen Orthodoxy among Syrian Christians, despite repeated offers to head a diocese in his homeland, preferred to

¹²⁰ АВПИР. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1353. Л 86 об.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² *Garret R. Publications of an American Archaeological Expedition to Syria in 1899–1900. Vol. 1: Topography and itinerary. New York, 1914. P. 50.*

¹²³ *Raphael (Hawawini) (1860–1915) — Rector of the Antiochian Metochion in Moscow, 1889–1892. Canonized on March 29, 2000.*

remain in New York, where he continued his ministry until his death. Observing the similar motivational basis of these two mass phenomena, one may say that Uniatism was, in a sense, a form of internal emigration for those who could not leave the country.

A union amid a common threat

The antagonism between the Orthodox and the Uniates was not insurmountable, as it might have seemed from St. Petersburg. When having to deal with the Muslim population and Ottoman authorities, the intercommunal strife of the Christians receded into the background.

In late March 1897, “a Muslim gendarme was killed by a Lebanese Christian, said to have been Orthodox”¹²⁴, and the murderer fled. The following night, Muslims killed two Christians: “Innocent and peaceful people paid with their lives solely because they were Christians”¹²⁵. Beirut’s vali, Nazim Pasha, “ordered the arrest of up to twenty Muslims and kept them in custody despite protests and threats from their relatives”¹²⁶. The entire city feared spontaneous pogroms in Christian quarters. A.E. Krymsky noted of these moods in April 1897: “Nobody here cares about the plague <...> Now, once again, Christians are being slaughtered at night — that frightens everyone a hundred times more than the plague. Even I, though a European, have begun to avoid going out into the streets after dark...”¹²⁷

The brother of the Christian suspected of killing the gendarme was imprisoned. Reports said that “he is being subjected to every kind of torture to make him reveal where his brother is hiding”¹²⁸. Soon “the investigation was concluded and the arrested man released. Along with him, sixteen Muslims detained in connection with the murders were also released. On the same day, one Christian known for his bad conduct was exiled to Acre, and the next day two Muslims, likewise notorious scoun-

¹²⁴ АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1345. Л. 21 об.

¹²⁵ Ibid. Л. 22.

¹²⁶ АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1345. Л. 22.

¹²⁷ Крымский А.Е. Письма... С. 124.

¹²⁸ АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1345. Л. 22.

drels”¹²⁹. The case ended inconclusively, the culprits were never found. Nevertheless, A.A. Gagarin reported that everyone knew the killer of the gendarme, Elias Khalebi, was in Beirut: “He is a Greek-Catholic, but lives among the Orthodox, who help him in every way to hide. He is so popular among the Orthodox, even among their wealthy class, that everyone willingly helps him with money and influence to save him. Nazim Pasha made every effort to capture him, but in vain”¹³⁰.

It is important to emphasize here that in that case a Greek Uniate was perceived among the Orthodox not as a traitor, but as a hero and defender of the faith. Thus, in the public consciousness, conversion did not in itself signify an unbridgeable gulf between the communities — something that was, understandably, difficult for the Russian diplomats to grasp, since they viewed the situation primarily through the lens of a civilizational struggle against Catholicism and the Western world.

A shared mentality: self-interest and opportunism

Different denominations of Syrian Christians displayed a remarkable unity not only in resisting the Muslim majority.

It is hard not to agree with the succinct characterization given after ten years of service in the Middle East by Russian Consul General A. A. Gagarin regarding the religious outlook of the local population: “Syrians of various denominations sincerely hate each other. The Maronites hate the Orthodox and the Druze; the Orthodox hate the Maronites and the Druze, as well as all other non-Orthodox; and their entire life passes in quarrels and intrigues among themselves. Yet these same people act with astonishing harmony when it comes to obtaining money from foreigners. Then all old grievances are forgotten, even the bitterest feuds subside for a while, and everyone works together until the money is securely in the hands of one of their own. For such ends, they do not disdain any means...”¹³¹

¹²⁹ Ibid. А.27 об.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1354. Л. 112.

Similarly, A. E. Krymsky, who spent the summer of 1897 in the village of Shweir, expressed the essence of these conversions succinctly: “The majority of Shweir’s inhabitants are Orthodox, but for a monetary payment some of them sometimes convert to Protestantism or Catholicism (the Unia). These conversions, as everyone assures me, are insincere. The local pastor, Husn al-Hawa, is on constantly friendly terms with the Orthodox and attends the Orthodox church. So do many other Protestants”¹³².

Such behavior was not condemned even in circles close to the higher clergy. In 1907, the husband of the niece of the Akkar Metropolitan Basil was put on trial after complaints by Protestant missionaries in Mersin. Shortly before, in order to obtain a position teaching Arabic at their school with a salary of 50–60 francs a month, he had converted to Protestantism. This man, named Latuf, succeeded in winning the Americans’ confidence to such a degree that they entrusted him with various purchases for their schools. After some time, the missionaries — surprised by their new convert’s rapid enrichment — conducted a thorough investigation and found that he had been “systematically robbing them”¹³³. “Realizing that he could no longer avoid exposure and would lose his ill-gotten gains, Latuf turned for help to his wife’s uncle, the Metropolitan of Akkar, who hurried to Mersin and took his relatives away with him”¹³⁴, wrote prince Gagarin in his report. Thus ended the episode, which, largely due to the Metropolitan’s intervention, became a local scandal throughout the entire vilayet of Adana.

It should be recalled that Russia’s mission in the region was officially defined as the rescue of the Orthodox from heterodox propaganda. Yet in practice things proved far less clear-cut. In early 1896, a local priest, Hanna Mjaas, opened an Orthodox school in Shweir, Lebanon, and applied to the Russian consulate in Beirut for a subsidy. “The school is quite elementary”, wrote A.A. Gagarin, “and the ‘famous professors’ he mentions are barely literate Arabs, former pupils of American or Jesuit schools who never completed their studies. Father Ivan himself is poorly educated and can scarcely write Arabic, and that with many mistakes. Nevertheless, his school has done considerable good in Shweir in the sense that,

¹³² Крымский А.Е. Письма... С. 212.

¹³³ АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1354. Л. 111.

¹³⁴ Ibid. Л. 111 об.

thanks to his talent for self-promotion, part of the Orthodox youth have left the Protestant schools for his own..."¹³⁵ The Russian diplomat characterized Father Hanna as a figure typical of the Levant: "This priest knows perfectly how to look after his own interests and to obtain the necessary means from all possible sources. His appeal to Your Excellency for aid is motivated solely by his unwillingness to miss the chance of receiving an additional subsidy. I am convinced that after paying the school's expenses he still retains some profit. His habit of begging is so strong that, for lack of other pretexts, he keeps writing me letters asking to be recommended for a decoration. This distinction, he believes, would also help his school"¹³⁶.

In a private letter to A. E. Krymsky, the consul was more candid, bluntly calling Abouna (Father)¹³⁷ Hanna a "rogue"¹³⁸. In truth, the priest's behavior toward the consul differed little from that of the patriarchate, which simply appealed directly to St. Petersburg, threatening that without financial support all would succumb to Uniatism¹³⁹. "As of late", added Krymsky in 1897, "he conceived the idea of collecting funds in Beirut for the construction of a large school in Shweir. Knowing of my good relations with the consul, he has spent the last five days trying to persuade me to influence the consul so that he might pressure the local notables to donate 100 ducats to Father Hanna. Every day I hear from him sighs about the decline of Orthodoxy in Lebanon and about the urgent need for a school that would surpass the Protestants and Catholics. Yesterday, as he spoke, an elderly man — the owner of the house where I am staying —

¹³⁵ Ibid. Д. 1345. Л. 46.

¹³⁶ АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1345. Л. 46 об.

¹³⁷ From Arabic: "our father" — a traditional form of address in the Syro-Lebanese region toward parish clergy.

¹³⁸ *Крымский А.Е. Письма...* С. 180.

¹³⁹ During the coronation festivities in Moscow in 1896, a memorandum on the condition of the Patriarchate of Antioch was presented to Emperor Nicholas II by Germanos of Cilicia, the representative of the Patriarch of Antioch. It stated that if urgent measures were not taken, "after a few decades even the last traces of Orthodoxy will disappear from this land, exhausted under the weight of four afflictions: extreme poverty, ignorance verging on savagery, the Catholic propaganda of the Jesuits, and the cruelties of both the Muslim population in general and the Turkish authorities in particular". The problem could be alleviated by aid from Russia: a lump sum of 61,500 rubles and an annual subsidy of 19,340 rubles. (Ф. 180 Оп. 517–2 ед. хр. №7204. Л. 46–48).

expressed doubt that the notables would give him money. Father Hanna leaned toward him and whispered something in his ear. After the priest left, the old man told me what he had said: ‘And if I fail to raise the money, I’ll convert to Protestantism’¹⁴⁰. Later, Father Hanna would also write to the newly appointed Russian ambassador in Constantinople Zinoviev, presumably without mentioning his Protestant conversion threat.

Equally curious, from the standpoint of understanding conversions from and to Orthodoxy, was the biography of Father Hanna’s assistant, “a certain Pastor Khawi, an Arab from Shweir. He had traveled to Canada and the United States to collect donations for schools and the spread of Protestantism. Instead of engaging in missionary activity, however, he *used the funds he collected to build a hotel in Shweir, whose revenues he now lived on* (emphasis of the author). At the same time, he provided Father Mjaas with advice and financial assistance. He engages in no Protestant propaganda at all, on the contrary, he persuades people to remain Orthodox. The Metropolitan of Beirut, Gabriel, even allows him to preach in the Orthodox church on Sundays”¹⁴¹. In other words, Khawi was using American Protestant money to support an Orthodox priest and his school — and even to deliver sermons promoting loyalty to Orthodoxy. If in this case the Protestants were the deceived party, there was no guarantee that the same fate could not befall Orthodoxy’s own “protector”, Russia itself.

Beginning in 1879, the Antioch metochion in Moscow was headed for seven years by Archimandrite Christophoros (Jibara). By the charter of the institution, the proceeds from the metochion were to be used for the support of Orthodoxy in Syria. Yet the story of the archimandrite — who “entangled the Antiochian metochion in hopeless debts, built on every scrap of land, and filled it with Jews and all sorts of riffraff as tenants”¹⁴² — led to an inquiry between the Moscow Synodal Office and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The final conclusion was telling: “All rectors of foreign metochia are seized by a kind of thirst for profit, not restraining themselves even from dubious practices and paying no attention to Russian law”¹⁴³.

¹⁴⁰ Крымский А.Е. Письма... С. 227–228.

¹⁴¹ АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1345. Л. 46–46 об.

¹⁴² АВПРИ. Ф. 208. Оп. 819. Д. 322. Л. 491 об.

¹⁴³ Ibid. Л. 493–493 об.

Having built a hotel in the center of Moscow with Russian funds, the archimandrite, much like his Protestant counterpart from Shweir, returned to Damascus. After fruitless negotiations with Patriarch Spyridon, he left Syria and, joining the stream of other emigrants, departed for America. There he participated in the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in September 1893. According to Consul K. D. Petkovich, by 1895 "his personality, already lacking any real religious Orthodox respectability, now fell away not only from Orthodoxy but from Christianity itself"¹⁴⁴. In America he grew close to "Protestant missionaries and sectarians"¹⁴⁵. He published an English-language brochure expounding "anti-Christian ideas, asserting that Judaism, Islam, and Christianity constitute one and the same religion, and that humanity should be united and reconciled upon this basis. Recently, he has moved from America to Egypt accompanied by a wealthy American convert to Islam; with his patron's money, he was now publishing in Cairo a journal in Arabic for the purposes of religious propaganda..."¹⁴⁶.

Nevertheless, from the standpoint of public opinion in the Mashriq, Archimandrite Christophoros's activities were probably not viewed as radically as the Russian consul portrayed them. It is important to stress the plurality and fluidity of worldview characteristic of Levantine society. As the Arab Christian historian Albert Hourani wrote: "To be a Levantine is to live in two worlds or more at once, without belonging to either ; to be able to go through the external forms, which indicate the possession of a certain nationality, religion or culture, without actually possessing it. It is no longer to have a standard of values of one's own, not to be able to create but only able to imitate; and so not even to imitate correctly, since that also needs a certain originality. It is to belong to no community and to possess nothing of one's own. It reveals itself in lostness, pretentiousness, cynicism and despair"¹⁴⁷.

If by outwardly changing one's confession one could obtain material benefits by deceiving foreigners, a Levantine would hardly fear social stigma for doing so. A striking example comes from 1897, when a zealous defender of Orthodoxy — the same Father Hanna Mjaas, who demanded

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. A. 805 o6.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. A. 804 o6.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Hourani A. Syria and Lebanon. A Political Essay. London, 1946. P. 70.

a medal from the Russian government — while traveling through the Lebanese mountains with A. E. Krymsky, led him to visit a Uniate priest, Father Samaan (Simon) al-Murr, in the village of Bteghrine. Feeling at home among his Catholic counterpart's family, the Orthodox priest “sat down on the carpet in the living room and began to tell me about the household. Father Samaan himself was away, but his whole family stood around us, listening. ‘Father Simon (Samaan) went over to the Unia some twenty years ago,’ Father Hanna declaimed, ‘but his heart (here he struck his own chest several times) ... his heart remained Orthodox — oh, how Orthodox!’ None of those present contradicted him — whether out of politeness or because it was true, I cannot say”¹⁴⁸. For Father Hanna, it was evidently natural to “convert to the Unia, keep an Orthodox heart, and maintain friendship with Orthodox clergy”. A similar absence of antagonism had earlier been displayed by the inhabitants of Beirut, who gratefully accepted an epitaph written by the Uniate poet and Nahda intellectual Nasif al-Yaziji (1800–1871) for the tomb of the late Orthodox Metropolitan of Beirut, Benjamin (1814–1848). Returning to the present, one may observe that in 2023 Orthodox hierarchs similarly amicably shared a meal in Balmand with their sworn Catholic adversaries — those same ones they had publicly criticized earlier that day during the plenary session.

The leniency shown to “their own”, coupled with rigid orthodoxy and zeal when addressing Russia, was shaped by the peculiar religious marketplace that had developed in the Ottoman East. The right of the Great Powers to “protect” particular religious communities gave them leverage over the Sublime Porte — and at the same time bred a certain corruption among the local population, who grew accustomed to viewing themselves as the object of missionary and diplomatic competition. When the Russian Consulate in Beirut in the 1880s appealed to wealthy Orthodox notables to support their clergy and schools, they replied that they “did not consider themselves obliged to open schools or hospitals for others, and that Russia must assume care for the Orthodox in Syria, just as France does for the Catholics, spending, for example, 200,000 francs a year only on school subsidies”¹⁴⁹.

¹⁴⁸ Крымский А.Е. Письма.... С. 174.

¹⁴⁹ РГИА. Ф. 797. Оп. 55. Д. 275. Л. 16.

Nor did the Greek Patriarch of Antioch, Spyridon, feel obliged to do so: in 1895 he transferred the patriarchate's schools to the financial care of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society. In this respect, the Greek hierarchs and the Arab Orthodox notables were fully united — Russia was the one expected to pay for Orthodoxy.

Among the Europeanized citizens of Beirut, a peculiar kind of fanaticism prevailed — as A. E. Krymsky noted ironically:

“If you have two francs in your pocket, that is your worth — two francs... and if you have four francs, then your worth is four francs”¹⁵⁰. He was echoed by Consul General Gagarin: “The thoughts of all Syrians are occupied exclusively with money and with finding ways to obtain it from foreigners. The Syrian clergy are no exception”¹⁵¹.

It would be a mistake, however, to see the local clergy merely as passive pawns in the rivalry of the Great Powers. They could also act as initiators, provoking the attention — and the resources — of external actors. The “savior of Orthodoxy” (Russia) could easily find itself turned into a victim of manipulation. In 1908, rumors began to circulate from the Damascus Patriarchate to the Russian consulates that Patriarch Gregory (Haddad) was inclined to seek British protection. After analyzing the information, the Beirut Consulate concluded that the campaign had been “invented by the Patriarch and his closest advisers to frighten us and compel us to outbid our supposed competitors, so as not to lose our predominant influence in the Church of Antioch”¹⁵². Despite the personal animosity between the consuls in Beirut and Damascus — Princes A. A. Gagarin and B. N. Shakhovskoy — the latter reached a similar conclusion: “The Syrians are hostile to us and, thinking that we depend on them, will seek to exploit us; and as soon as they fail, they will immediately turn to those from whom they can expect at least a temporary benefit”¹⁵³. He also noted the dry pragmatism in religious matters typical of the local clergy: “Seeing no clear goals that we might pursue in Syria, and realizing that by making sacrifices for the Patriarchate of Antioch, we may be supporting not Ortho-

¹⁵⁰ *Крымский А.Е.* История новой арабской литературы, XIX — нач. XX в. М., 1971. С. 329.

¹⁵¹ АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1355. Л. 114–114 об.

¹⁵² АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1355. Л. 117 об.

¹⁵³ Ibid. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 435. Л. 69.

doxy — for which all has hitherto been done — but mere exploitation...”¹⁵⁴ The Damascus Consulate’s strictly confidential report to the Ambassador in Constantinople concluded unequivocally: “Assuming that the Patriarchate’s demands will continue to grow and will always be accompanied by bargaining such as is now taking place, I am not certain that we should satisfy the Patriarch’s monetary requests, which are already being presented quite openly”¹⁵⁵.

A typical example of the general Levantine worldview, formed under the influence of the specific “religious market” of the Middle East, is the conversion to Orthodoxy of a Maronite community recorded in 1908 in the Lebanese Mutasarrifate. The notables of the village of Bsharri¹⁵⁶ and the neighboring village of Ainata declared to Metropolitan Germanos (Shehadeh) of Seleucia that 700 of their people wished to join his diocese. The bishop tried to persuade the petitioners “not to take a step in which religion clearly plays no role”¹⁵⁷. Having “exhausted all his eloquence”¹⁵⁸ in vain, he “demanded guarantees in the form of building a school, a church, and a monetary deposit to make a return impossible”¹⁵⁹. Moreover, he even appealed to the Maronite Patriarch, asking him to retain the discontented within his flock and reconcile with them through mutual concessions.

The real reason for the conflict lay elsewhere. The Maronite Patriarch Elias Boutros (Peter) Hoayek (1899–1931), as reported by the Russian Consul General in Beirut, Prince A.A. Gagarin, “had requested from Yusuf Pasha¹⁶⁰ the dismissal of one mudir (district administrator), and

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ A village at the upper end of the Wadi Qadisha (“Holy Valley”), lying at an altitude of about 1,000 meters above sea level in the Lebanese mountains; owing to its isolation, it long served as a natural refuge for the Maronite community.

¹⁵⁷ АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1355. Л. 107.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. Л. 107 об.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ *Franco Kussa Yusuf Pasha* (d. 1933) — Greek Catholic, mutasarrif of Mount Lebanon from July 1907 to December 1912. Son of Nasri Franco Pasha. Served in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in 1899 represented the Ottoman Empire at The Hague Peace Conference. In 1907, with the rank of vizier, he was appointed mutasarrif for a five-year term. (*Akarli E. The Long Peace... P. 198*).

the Governor-General had fulfilled this request”¹⁶¹. Since the dismissed official had strong support among the local population, “his entire faction decided to withdraw from the Patriarch’s authority and become Orthodox, hoping that the Orthodox Patriarch would be able to secure some position for this mudir”¹⁶². The protesting Maronites appealed to the Russian consulate, asking it “to build them a school, to grant various privileges to the new converts, and generally to reward them generously for their conversion”, in other words, to pay for their transfer under the protection of the Russian Empire¹⁶³. The consulate refused, noting that “this matter resembles the case of last year in Koura, where part of the population, encouraged by the Patriarch’s agents, declared that they were converting to Anglicanism”¹⁶⁴.

Thus, attempts to put one’s confessional allegiance up for sale were undertaken not only by Orthodox but also by Catholic communities, revealing a shared origin — the peculiar geopolitical position of the region, situated at the epicenter of the Great Powers’ struggle for influence in the Ottoman Empire and structured through the principle of confessionalism. This phenomenon applied far more to the narrow coastal strip where East and West met, and far less to the remote districts of Qalamun, Hauran, and similar areas. As the brilliant scholar of the East, Albert Hourani (himself a descendant of a family from Marjeyoun that had successively converted from Orthodoxy to Protestantism and then to Catholicism) wrote:

“There have always been Levantines in the ports of the eastern Mediterranean, because they are places, where more than one world meets to do business. But the special mark of the present age is the spread of the Levant inland to regions hitherto untouched by it. In a sense every Arab, or at least every educated Arab of the towns, is forced to live in two worlds. Not only his way of thought but his social life is becoming daily more deeply affected by Europe and America...”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ АВПИРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1355. Л. 107 об.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ АВПИРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1355. Л. 108.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Hourani A. Syria and Lebanon. A Political Essay. London, 1946. P. 71.

A new era in the Levant: the origins of relative deprivation

With a fair degree of confidence, one can assert that the Uniate movement was a response to the military and economic power of the West. As Robert Haddad wrote, Orthodoxy “Counting themselves among the earliest victims of the European intrusion into Ottoman society”¹⁶⁶. It was a reflex reaction to the consequences of European penetration. Yet business and trade relations themselves did not automatically lead to religious conversion. Therefore, it is important not merely to state the fact of European influence but to uncover the mechanism of its indirect effect. To describe this process, it seems fruitful to draw upon the sociological concept of relative deprivation¹⁶⁷ (RD)¹⁶⁸.

The specific dissatisfaction that arose among Orthodox believers fits this concept well. T.R. Gurr defined it as “the perceived discrepancy between the men’s value expectations and their value capabilities”¹⁶⁹.

The general condition for rising expectations was the display of the material culture of the West, which awakened in Middle Eastern Christians a longing for new goods and a new way of life. The result of such exposure, as Daniel Lerner formulated it, was “revolution of rising expectations”¹⁷⁰. A vivid example of this frustrating influence was recorded by A.E. Krymsky: “It is characteristic that when I first brought the hosts my monthly payment, the parents literally tore a piece of bread from their

¹⁶⁶ Haddad R. On Melkite Passage to the Unia: the Case of Patriarch Cyril al-Za‘im (1672– 1720), in B. Braude, B. Lewis (eds.) *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, New York: Holmes & Meier Publ., vol. 2. P. 87.

¹⁶⁷ This concept, formulated by S.A. *Stouffer* et al. and developed by R.K. *Merton*, holds that people experience feelings of deprivation primarily when they find their situation unfavorable in comparison to that of other individuals or groups. The comparisons may be made with both those with whom people interact and outsiders; what matters is which reference group an individual or group chooses as the focus of comparison. (The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology. — London: Penguin Books, 2006. P.326.)

¹⁶⁸ One of the major works devoted to this subject is *Ted Robert Gurr’s* study “*Why Men Rebel*”, conducted in the late 1960s with the support of the U.S. Department of Defense’s Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA)

¹⁶⁹ *Гарр Т.Р. Почему люди бунтуют.* СПб., 2005. С. 51.

¹⁷⁰ *Lerner D.* *The Passing of Traditional Society: modernizing the Middle East.* New York, 1964. P. VII. This study was conducted under the aegis of the American intelligence community.

own mouths and condemned themselves to dry rations, because with the money, they immediately went to the city and bought European-style suits for their two boys to replace the Asian *gumbaz* robes they had worn until then. Parental pride required that their children look like Europeans. Both Orthodox boys studied with the Jesuits, though not in the higher school with French instruction but in the lower one, still taught in Arabic; yet already they knew several polite phrases in French...”¹⁷¹

The desire to live according to European standards led, on the one hand, to Jesuit schools with French as the language of instruction, and on the other, to a rejection of traditional culture. Literacy and Western education became prerequisites for growing expectations and, consequently, for the intensification of RD¹⁷². It should be noted that the self-awareness described by Krymsky concerned mainly the urban Orthodox. Urbanization imposed “new standards of life”¹⁷³, thereby heightening the feeling of RD.

Among the various mechanisms that demonstrated this new way of life, missionary activity has been highlighted by scholars¹⁷⁴ as the main source of RD, due to the dysfunctional impact of missionary education. The growing demand for education, amplified by missionaries, could hardly be met by the local Orthodox clergy, who appeared deeply archaic and increasingly subject to criticism.

Another key source of rising expectations, according to Gurr, lay in the value gains of reference groups, when individuals compare their circumstances to those of some reference group that possesses what they desire and what they believe they themselves should possess¹⁷⁵. The greater the perceived negative gap, the stronger the sense of deprivation¹⁷⁶. In the case of the Orthodox, such reference groups were the Uniate and Protes-

¹⁷¹ Крыmsкий А.Е. История новой арабской... С. 288.

¹⁷² Гурр Т. Почему люди... С. 145.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ See: Cole A.H. The Relation of Missionary Activity to Economic Development / Economic Development and Cultural Change, IX (January 1961). Pp. 120–127.

¹⁷⁵ Гурр Т. Почему люди... С. 155.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

tant communities. In contrast to new Catholics and Protestants schools¹⁷⁷, effective consular protection — even naval demonstrations of power — and dynamic economic activity, the Orthodox under the traditional Russian patronage felt increasingly deprived¹⁷⁸. Following a long Levantine tradition, the locals asked A.E. Krymsky in 1897: “When will the Russians come to take us away?”¹⁷⁹ Ten years later, in 1908, the Inspector of Syrian schools for the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, N.M. Bogoyavlensky, noted that “if such hopes ever existed, they have long been abandoned, as people have seen that Russia takes no decisive steps”¹⁸⁰. The very possibility of comparison intensified the Orthodox community’s dissatisfaction.

By the end of the 19th century, their situation was hardly worse than it had been a few decades earlier; yet the more visible the successes of Western civilization and its affiliated communities became, the more intolerable their own position seemed. The blame for this was placed variously on local hierarchs (especially the Greeks), Russian consular agents (e.g., K.D. Petkovich), or the Palestine Society (criticized for the absence of foreign languages in schools, low teacher pay, etc.). The discontent among the Orthodox — both lay and clerical — was channeled through criticism of the clergy in general, of the Greek hierarchy within the Patriarchate, of the community’s status, and of Russia’s insufficient activity. As the Russian Consul in Damascus, Prince B.N. Shakhovskoy, reported in a highly secret dispatch to the ambassador in Constantinople in 1908: “The present conditions in Syria are far from what they were before. The mass emigration of Syrians to America and the presence of excellent heterodox schools and universities have developed a new spirit among the Syrians and raised their demands, so that now they are no longer content with what they had before. They demand improvements, above all in education, to be implemented by the higher clergy and the Palestine Society, whose schools no longer meet the needs of the time. The

¹⁷⁷ In 1891, there were 293 educational institutions in Syria and Lebanon with 17,566 students. (Сообщения Палестинского общества. Т. II. СПб., 1891. С. 101).

¹⁷⁸ As *Robert Haddad* notes, the entry of “...Holy Russia’s entry into Syria was tardy and her stay brief”. (*Haddad R. On Melkite Passage to... P. 87.*)

¹⁷⁹ *Крымский А.Е. Письма...* С. 175.

¹⁸⁰ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 435. Л. 44.

population unanimously demands the introduction of French and English instruction, expansion of the curriculum, and is no longer satisfied with the Society's elementary schools in larger centers. They therefore turn to the heterodox schools with broader programs. Dissatisfaction with the Palestine Society's schools is universal... Also causing great resentment is the increased teaching of the Russian language, from which the Syrians can derive absolutely no benefit..."¹⁸¹

Overall, this reflected the growing disparity between the dynamic West (Britain, France, the U.S.) and the lagging East (Russia, the Ottoman Empire). The Orthodox community of the Levant — converting to Uniatism, occasionally to Protestantism or Freemasonry, or emigrating by the tens of thousands to Egypt, Europe, and the New World — served as a kind of social barometer of global economic development. It must be acknowledged that conversions to Uniatism, despite official declarations, reflected the decline of Russia's prestige among Orthodox Christians. Russia's attractiveness belonged more to the past than to the present or future. Amid Anglo-French economic rivalry in Beirut (port, waterworks, roads, etc.) and the intellectual renewal of the Nahda era, Russia's presence was minimal. The same N.M. Bogoyavlensky observed: "Among the Arabs, a national feeling of unity is already awakening — a desire for liberation from Turkish rule under the protectorate of one of the European powers, but hardly Russia; their sympathies incline above all toward England"¹⁸².

Summing up Russia's relations with the Church of Antioch concerning the Uniate problem and paraphrasing Lucien Febvre, it seems important to step away from the history of consuls and patriarchs — the history of V.N. Khitrovo, A.P. Belyaev, or Patriarch Gregory (Haddad) — and to focus instead on the three levels of reality that determined the mechanics of interaction between Christian communities. Those levels were: first, the internal long-term structures of the functioning of the Patriarchate of Antioch¹⁸³ (above all, the management of *waqf* properties, the regulation of family and marital relations, and the system of material support for the clergy); second, the general mentality of the region, shaped by the

¹⁸¹ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 435. Л. 65–66.

¹⁸² АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 435. Л. 44.

¹⁸³ The situation in the Jerusalem Patriarchate, despite geographic proximity, would differ significantly.

centuries-old stateless existence of Eastern Christianity; and third, the civilizational position of the Levantine Orthodox community, suspended between the heterodox West and the Muslim East.

The internal life of the Patriarchate was defined by sociocultural and economic parameters formed over previous centuries — and these, as was shown, retained their stability despite the political transformations that took place in the Middle East during the first half of the twentieth century. The legal status of the Antiochian clergy during the Ottoman period immersed it deeply in the social and economic life of its flock. It controlled divorce and inheritance processes, collected taxes on behalf of the Ottoman government, petitioned European consuls for protection of its parishioners, managed communal *waqf* property, and oversaw education and social welfare. Thus, a bishop combined within himself not only ecclesiastical authority but also many functions usually associated with state power: the civil registry, the tax inspectorate, the ministries of education, health, social protection, and foreign affairs. The distribution of administrative posts in the Lebanese Mutasarrifate along confessional lines also made the Orthodox Patriarch and the Metropolitan of Tripoli participants in Ottoman administration and justice. It is therefore unsurprising that, given this volume of thoroughly secular powers, conflicts arose when dissatisfied members of the Orthodox community availed themselves of the opportunity to pass into another jurisdiction — a move facilitated by the similarity of clerical vestments and the ritual side of worship. The reverse also occurred just as easily.

It must be acknowledged that the established traditional practices of the Patriarchate — which formed the foundation of its internal life — were essentially resistant to significant Russian influence. The replacement of a Greek patriarch by an Arab primate in no way solved the problem of reforming church life. Just as the Greek Patriarch Spiridon I (Euthymiou) (1891–1898) was accused of misappropriating *waqf* properties, so too were the Arab patriarchs Gregory (Haddad) and Alexander (Tahan) suspected of the same — in both cases involving the very same Saidnaya Monastery. Likewise, the Greek Patriarch Hierotheos (1850–1885) confessed to Archimandrite Porphyrius (Uspensky) that he had accepted the Antiochian throne “solely in the hope of receiving subsidies from Mos-

cow”¹⁸⁴, and decades later, the protégé of the Moscow Patriarchate’s Department of External Church Relations, Metropolitan Basil (Samaha) of Hauran, declared that fifteen years of church work had been enough for him and that there was “no point in spending money on the Hauran diocese, which gives nothing in return”¹⁸⁵. Just as Hierotheos, the Greek patriarch, had bequeathed 200,000 francs in the Athens Bank to his relatives, so too did Gregory (Haddad), according to Consul A.A. Gagarin, prove unable “to refuse his insatiable kin financial aid from church funds”¹⁸⁶. The Arab patriarchs went even further than their Greek predecessors: while Gregory IV (Haddad) maintained openly hostile relations with the Russian Consul General in Beirut, A.A. Gagarin, in 1906–1908, Theodosius VI (Abourjaily), who had begun his clerical career¹⁸⁷ under him, declared in 1966 the Russian representative of the Moscow Patriarchate to the Patriarch of Antioch, Bishop Vladimir (Kotlyarov), *persona non grata*. Thus, V.N. Khitrovo’s very framing of the issue — blaming the Greeks for the state of the Orthodox Church in the East — was misguided and stemmed from the armchair reasoning of a metropolitan bureaucrat. For the employees of the IOPS with practical experience in the region — such as P.I. Ryazhsky, N.M. Bogoyavlensky, M.A. Cherkasova, and others — as well as for Russian consular agents like A.A. Gagarin and B.N. Shakhovskoy, the situation appeared far less clear-cut. What Khitrovo presented as a victory for the Palestine Society — the election of Meletius II (Doumani) through financial support of Arab metropolitans — was seen by the local higher clergy merely as a way to access Russian financial flows, skillfully manipulating the threat of “the ruin of Orthodoxy”. If anything threatened Orthodoxy, it was often the local hierarchs themselves. The true victims were the parish clergy and the impoverished laity, especially in rural areas.

Moreover, the “protector of Orthodoxy” — Russia — risked becoming an object of manipulation, when threats of conversion to Uniatism

¹⁸⁴ Порфирий (Успенский). Книга бытия... Т. 4. С. 143.

¹⁸⁵ ГАРФ. Ф. Р-6991. Оп. 6. Д. 59. Л. 162.

¹⁸⁶ АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1355. Л. 116 об.

¹⁸⁷ He was sent by Patriarch Gregory IV (Haddad), an Arab, to the Ecumenical Patriarchate to pursue higher theological studies at the Theological School of Halki, where he studied alongside the future Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I (Spyrou).

or Anglicanism became a tool of blackmail to secure subsidies. In this sense, Russia's position came to resemble that of Rome, which, despite generously subsidizing the Uniate community, was forced in 1898 to accept the election of Patriarch Peter IV (Geraigiry), whom the Vatican disliked, and earlier to endure Patriarch Maximus III (Mazlum)'s opposition to the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith¹⁸⁸ on liturgical (ritual) matters¹⁸⁹. The Greek Uniates defended their interests as vigorously as their Orthodox counterparts. It is quite possible that there was much more in common between the Orthodox and Uniate communities than observers in the Vatican or St. Petersburg could perceive.

Returning to the Russian perspective, it appears we are dealing here with a particular form of Russian Orientalism (in the Saidian sense), through which certain Petersburg officials viewed the Levant at the end of the nineteenth century¹⁹⁰ — and with the vulnerability inherent to that mode of perception.

Looking ahead, it took nearly a century to partially acknowledge the fallacies of the approaches applied to the Orthodox East. As Bishop Vladimir (Kotlyarov) wrote in 1966: “My assistants and I believe that the question of aid to the Church of Antioch must be reconsidered and the method of providing it must be fundamentally changed”¹⁹¹. Soberly assessing the past, the representative of the Russian Orthodox Church to

¹⁸⁸ In particular, his relations with the Apostolic Delegate *Francisco Villardel* (1839–1852) were especially tense (1839–1852).

¹⁸⁹ *Massot A.* Patriarch Maksīmūs Mazlūm's Reverse Missionary Enterprise during the Tanzimat period: Bringing the Greek Catholics back into the Greek Rite / Latin Catholicism in Ottoman Istanbul: Proreties, People & Missions, eds. Claudio Monge & Vanessa R. de Obaldía. Istanbul: Isis Press, 2022. Pp.109–122.

¹⁹⁰ The European orientation of *V.N. Khitrovo's* views is clearly discernible in the following passage, which combines elements of geopolitics, rationalism, and veiled coercion: “We must not forget the duty imposed upon us — the defense of Orthodoxy — and we must also remember the words of the Protestant Robinson, an American: if the Catholic is a natural ally of France, the Protestant of England and Germany, then the Orthodox believer is likewise a natural ally of Russia. If the Jerusalem Patriarchate should forget this, it probably still remembers that half of its funds come from Russia, and that Russia can always remind about this”. (*Хитрово В.Н.* Православие... С. 96–97.)

¹⁹¹ ГАРФ. Ф. Р-6991. Оп. 6. Д. 59. Л. 118.

His Beatitude, the Patriarch of Antioch, had to admit that “the aid transferred to the metropolitans in most cases disappears without a trace and never reaches the broader population. Frankly speaking, we must admit that most metropolitans are of little use”¹⁹². For this reason, he argued that assistance should no longer be delivered “from above”: “Help must reach the simple people directly, in the most open and accessible form, and from the Russian government — not through the hands of the metropolitans (whose actions are often difficult to verify)”¹⁹³.

In his report to Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad and Novgorod, chairman of the Department of External Church Relations, Bishop Vladimir idealized the model of aid “as it was carried out 70–100 years ago” (that is, at the end of the nineteenth century — E.K.): “Assistance must be conveyed to the people through schools and clinics”¹⁹⁴, — effectively bypassing the church structures of Damascus (a course that was canonically difficult to implement). This bitter conclusion from the Moscow representative, declared *persona non grata* by the Church of Antioch in 1966, reflected not only disappointment but also, objectively, a qualitative step forward in self-understanding.

Russia’s means of influencing the established mentality of Levantine society were limited — a mentality marked by plasticity and multiple identities. As for the sense of relative deprivation among local Christians arising from contact with the West, for Russia, “assisting Orthodoxy and the Orthodox” primarily meant turning Russia itself into one of the world’s major military, political, and economic powers — a model for the Eastern Christian world. Yet in the prewar decades this goal was unattainable, and graduates of Russian schools in the Levant often joined the ranks of Syrian emigrants in Europe and the United States¹⁹⁵.

Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that despite all difficulties and the mismatch between plans and reality, the work of Russian

¹⁹² Ibid. A. 158.

¹⁹³ Ibid. A. 118.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. A. 167.

¹⁹⁵ In a certain sense, this task was fulfilled as a result of World War II, which — despite the complete divergence of ideological foundations from pre-revolutionary Russia — led to the revival of contacts with the Church of Antioch in the mid-1940s under Patriarch Alexander III (Tahan) (1928–1958).

teachers in Syrian schools possessed enduring humanitarian value. It brought the Russian and Arab-Christian cultural worlds into large-scale contact for the first time. The memory of the devotion and heartfelt care of the humble teachers of Orthodox primary schools, who dedicated themselves to the children of Syria, has been preserved for more than a century and remains alive among the people to this day.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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Participation of the Roman See in the Council of Ephesus in 449

Abstract

The circumstances of the participation of the Roman See in the Council of Ephesus in 449, represented at the sessions by papal legates, constitute the subject of study in this article. Its purpose is to reveal the motives, actions, and conduct of the legates of Pope Leo the Great (440–461), which led to the position of the Roman bishop being disregarded by the chairmen and participants of the Council. This fact later made it impossible for him to accept the results of the Council. The objectives of the article include an analysis of the conciliar acts and the correspondence of both Pope Leo and his legates during and immediately after the conclusion of the Council of Ephesus in 449. It can be concluded that the legates of the Roman See adopted a biased and inconsistent position at the Council, failed to fulfil their mission of delivering papal correspondence to the addressees in Constantinople and Ephesus, and violated the rules of conduct at the Council as well as the imperial directives. Their reports to the officials contained unreliable information concerning the persons and circumstances of the Council, which later



influenced its perception by contemporaries and by subsequent tradition, including the academic one.

Keywords:

Pope Leo the Great, Dioscorus of Alexandria, Eutyches, Council of Ephesus of 449, papal legates, Emperor Theodosius II.

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Among the best-documented events of the pontificate of Pope Leo the Great¹ are the two Ecumenical Councils held in the eastern part of the Empire: in Ephesus in 449 and in Chalcedon in 451. The events of these Councils, as well as the extensive documentation that accompanied their proceedings, have survived in the form of papal correspondence and conciliar acts. The Council of Ephesus in 449 took place contrary to the plans and intentions of the Roman bishop, which he expressed in anticipation of

¹ See: *Pertbel E.* Papst Leo's I. Leben und Lehren. Jena, 1843. *Caspar E.* Geschichte des Papsttums von den Anfängen bis zur Höhe der Weltherrschaft. Bd. 1. Tübingen, 1933. Pp. 525–555; *Jalland T.* The Life and Times of St. Leo the Great. L., 1941; *Haller J.* Das Papsttum. Idee und Wirklichkeit. Bd. 1. Stuttgart, 1950. Pp. 152–202; *McShane P.A.* Romanitas et le pape Léon le Grand. Tournai; Montréal, 1979; *Ullmann W.* Gelasius I. (492–496). Das Papsttum an der Wende der Spätantike zum Mittelalter. [Päpste und Papsttum 18]. Stuttgart, 1981. Pp. 88–103; *Wessel S.* Leo the Great and the Spiritual Rebuilding of a Universal Rome. [Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae. Texts and Studies of Early Christian Life and Language; 93]. Leiden; Boston, 2008.

the Council, during an extended correspondence among various actors that had arisen following the condemnation of Archimandrite Eutyches at the local council of Constantinople, convened under the presidency of the capital's Archbishop Flavian in 448. The position of Pope Leo, to whom both Eutyches himself and Emperor Theodosius II (408–450) appealed in this matter, was initially uncertain. However, for reasons that are not entirely clear, after a certain time he adopted a firm anti-Eutychian stance, which was reflected in the extensive papal correspondence up to the very beginning of the Council of Ephesus in 449².

Although the Council of Ephesus in 449 has gone down in history, owing to Pope Leo, under the enduring epithet of the “Robber Council”, it was originally convened and conducted as an Ecumenical Council with full observance of the rules and attributes necessary for that status³. It had been regarded as such until Emperor Marcian (450–457), at the request of the participants of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, annulled its ecumenical status by imperial decree.

The circumstances of the participation of the Roman See in this Council, represented in the sessions by papal legates, constitute the sub-

² On this correspondence and the position of Pope Leo, see: *Грацианский М.В.* Подготовка папы Льва Великого к участию в Эфесском соборе 449 г. по материалам его переписки // ΔΙΔΑΣΚΑΛΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΣΟΦΟΣ. Сборник статей к 90-летию И.П. Медведева / Под редакцией Л.А. Герд. [Труды Санкт-Петербургского института истории РАН. Т. 9]. СПб., 2025. С. 126–140; *Грацианский М.В.* Римская кафедра в преддверии Эфесского собора 449 г. // Византийский клуб. Альманах. 2025. К 60-летию профессора Н.Н. Болгова. Белгород, 2025. С. 86–98.

³ On this council, see: *Hefele Ch.J.* Histoire des conciles d'après les documents originaux. T. 2. Pt. 1. P., 1908. Pp. 499–621; *Schwartz E.* Der Prozess des Eutyches // Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Abteilung. Jahrg. 1929. H. 5. München, 1929. Pp. 53–93; *Camelot P.-Th.* Éphèse et Chalcédoine. P., 1962. Pp. 70–114; *De Vries W.* Das Konzil von Ephesus (449), eine Räubersynode? // *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*. 1975. Vol. 41. Pp. 357–398; *Horn St.O.* Petrou Kathedra. Der Bischof von Rom und die Synoden von Ephesus (449) und Chalcedon. [Konfessionskundliche und kontroverstheologische Studien; 45]. Paderborn, 1982. Pp. 50–71; *Leuenberger-Wenger S.* Das Konzil von Chalcedon und die Kirche. Konflikte und Normierungsprozesse im 5. und 6. Jahrhundert. [Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*; 153]. Leiden; Boston, 2019. Pp. 46–56; *Menze V.L.* Patriarch Dioscorus of Alexandria. The Last Pharaoh and Ecclesiastical Politics in the Later Roman Empire. Oxford, 2023. Pp. 98–140.

ject of the present study. Its purpose is to uncover the motives, actions, and behaviour of Leo's legates that led to the disregard of the Roman bishop's position by the chairmen and participants of the Council, which in turn made it impossible for him to accept its results. The article also demonstrates that the fault for this situation lies entirely with the Roman legates, who in fact failed to carry out their mission and subsequently, in self-justification, presented their actions in a distorted manner. The objectives of the study include the analysis of the conciliar acts and of the correspondence of both Pope Leo and his legates during and immediately after the conclusion of the Council of Ephesus in 449.

The events of the Council of Ephesus, which began its sessions on 8 August, developed in a way entirely different from the scenario that Pope Leo had envisaged for it during the preliminary correspondence. The Roman legates were evidently unprepared for the course of events that unfolded at the Council. Unfortunately, among Leo's extant correspondence there is no copy of the instructions given to his envoys, such as those that have survived in the case of Pope Celestine's dispatch of legates to the Council of Ephesus in 431. However, judging from what Leo wrote about the mission of his legates in letters to various correspondents in June 449, only one possible course of action was foreseen for them: either the repentance of Eutyches and the restoration of communion with him, or participation in his conciliar condemnation in the event of his refusal to renounce his heretical opinions⁴. The matter appeared to Leo simple and unambiguous, and the consensus of the episcopate regarding it – beyond doubt. It is necessary to draw attention to the rather narrow circle of Leo's addressees on the eve of the Council: unlike Pope Celestine in 430, Leo did not deem it necessary even once to address the eastern primates, which leads to the conclusion that his information concerning the actual sentiments in the East and the position of individual sees was completely insufficient. On the other hand, it is evident that there was simply no time for extensive correspondence and for probing the situation: the Council, announced in May, was to be held as early as August, and the eastern hierarchs themselves – first and foremost the future president of the Council, Dioscorus of Alex-

⁴ See: *Грацианский М.В. Подготовка папы Льва Великого... С. 129–136.*

andria — did not consider it necessary, nor, it appears, had the time to coordinate their position in advance with the Roman bishop.

On 30 March 449, the Emperor sent to the heads of the major sees a summons to appear at the “holy Council” (*sanctam synodum*) in Ephesus by 1 August. The summons addressed to Dioscorus of Alexandria has survived, but it appears to have been a standard form, and therefore the same text was likely sent to all others. The question remains whether an identical text was also sent to Pope Leo, or whether it was phrased in a different tone. In the summons it was prescribed that, “taking with thee ten most venerable bishops of the metropolises that are under thy diocese, and likewise ten other holy bishops distinguished by their speech and life, who in teaching and in knowledge of the right and unsullied faith are outstanding among others”⁵, the hierarch should appear in Ephesus at the appointed time, “so that by the most careful investigation and inquiry every opposing error might be removed from the midst, and that the catholic and most beloved teaching of the orthodox faith in our Saviour Christ might be strengthened and, according to custom, shine forth”⁶. The concluding part of the letter contained an indication of the measures to be taken in case of failure to comply with the imperial order: “If anyone should neglect so necessary and truly God-pleasing a Council and should not with all zeal appear at the appointed time and place, he shall find no excuse either before God or before our piety, for only he who is wounded by his own evil conscience avoids the assembly of bishops”⁷.

It is evident that such a letter could only have been addressed to a narrow circle of the highest-ranking prelates of the major Churches, at

⁵ *Schwartz E. (ed.). Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum / . T. II. Vol. III. Pars I. Berlin; Leipzig, 1935. Pp. 43.12–15: sumptis secum decem reuerentissimis metropolitanis episcopis qui sub tua degunt diocesi, et aliis similiter decem sanctis episcopis sermone et uita ornatis, qui in doctrina et scientia rectae et immaculatae fidei prae cunctis eminent... (Hereafter: ACO. II.3.1).*

⁶ ACO. II.3.1. P. 43.19–21: subtilissime inuestigantibus et quaerentibus omnis de medio error contrarius auferatur, catholica autem doctrina et orthodoxae fidei saluatoris nostri Christi amicissima solidetur et consuete effulgeat...

⁷ ACO. II.3.1. P. 43.22–26: si quis uero tam necessariam et uere deo amicam synodum praetermiserit et non omni uirtute secundum praedictum tempus ad praefinitum locum peruenerit, nullam excusationem neque apud deum neque apud nostram inueniet pietatem. sacerdotalem enim conuentum non nisi quis mala propria conscientia sauciatus euitat.

a “supra-metropolitan” level, located within civil dioceses, of which only three could be counted: Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch⁸. The representation of the Churches of Asia Minor was apparently ensured through the administrative mechanisms of the Church of Constantinople, which was also widely represented at the Council⁹.

For a number of reasons, the principal one being that the Emperor, by his direct decree, appointed Dioscorus of Alexandria as the presiding officer of the conciliar sessions, granting him the Council’s “authority and primacy” (*auctoritatem et primatum*¹⁰, *τὴν ἀθθεντίαν καὶ τὰ πρωτεῖα*¹¹) and designating as his closest assistants Juvenal of Jerusalem and Phalassius of Caesarea, the position of Rome at the Council of Ephesus was extremely weak¹². It should be noted, however, that the determination of the conciliar presidency occurred only at the last moment, when the bishops had already gathered in Ephesus. This coincided with the arrival of the Roman legates in the city. Thus, it is clear that the Emperor postponed the appointment of the presiding officer until the very beginning of the Council’s proceedings, and there can be no doubt that the bishop of Rome, had he arrived in Ephesus personally, would have had every chance, by virtue of his status, to preside over the Council sessions. At the same time, the

⁸ For the heads of these Churches, the title of Patriarch begins to come into use already in the 5th century, and in the acts and canons of the Council of Chalcedon, they are referred to by the epithet “exarch of the diocese”. See: Грацианский М.В. Церковно-административное содержание термина «экзарх диоцеза» 9-го и 17-го правил Халкидонского собора и вопрос о подсудности дел против митрополита // Античная древность и средние века. 2020. Т. 48. С. 53–73.

⁹ On the composition of the Council participants, see: Honigmann E. The Original Lists of the Members of the Council of Nicaea, the Robber-Synod and the Council of Chalcedon // Byzantion. 1942–1943. Т. 16. Fasc. 1. Pp. 20–80 (here: Pp. 28–41).

¹⁰ ACO. II.3.1. P. 49.17.

¹¹ ACO. II.1.1. P. 74.19.

¹² Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that in the official list of Council participants opening the conciliar acts, the name of the papal envoy Julius is mentioned in second place after Dioscorus of Alexandria: Schwartz E. (ed.). Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum /. Т. II. Vol. I. Pars I. Berlin; Leipzig, 1933. Pp. 77.17–19. (Hereafter: ACO. II.1.1). However, this was merely a testimony to the comparative “honor” of the Roman legate, not his presiding role. Cf.: Jalland T. The Life and Times of St. Leo the Great. London; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941. P. 238.

Pope's refusal (expressed in a rather haughty and categorical form) to attend the Council personally, as well as the disregard for the Emperor's instruction to send a substantial delegation — which could have numbered up to twenty representatives — led to Rome lacking any significant influence at the Council. Considering also that numerous supporters of Flavian of Constantinople were removed from the conciliar judicial process by imperial order, it turned out that among the bishops who adjudicated at the Council, there was practically no one to represent the position of the Roman Church: the Roman Deacon Hilary had absolutely no ecclesiastical or administrative weight on the inter-church stage, and the sole bishop, Julius of Puteoli, could not alone exert substantial influence on the Council on behalf of the episcopate of the Roman Church.

This balance of power became evident already at the very beginning of the conciliar sessions during the review and proclamation of the foundational documents, primarily the imperial decrees regarding the composition, agenda, and procedural rules of the Council¹³. Overall, the acts of the Council of Ephesus record only about five interventions by the Roman representatives throughout the entire Council proceedings. During the reading of the Emperor's invitation letter, Julius of Puteoli noted that it had also been received by "our most holy Pope, the prelate of the Church of Rome, Leo" (*sanctissimus noster papa Romanae ecclesiae praepositus Leo*), while Deacon Hilary provided more detailed information: the Emperor had requested the personal presence of the bishop of Rome; however, as it should have been known to the Council participants, "neither at Nicaea, nor at the holy Council of Ephesus, nor at any other such holy Council did the Pope of the holy See appear, wherefore, following the custom of this decision, he sent us, whom the Most Holy One will not doubt are present in his stead, of whom he knows in particular that we will do everything pertaining to the inviolability of the catholic faith and the respect due to the holy Apostle Peter. Through us he sent to Your Beatitude the letters appropriate for the Councils of the Holy Fathers, which you are to receive and examine"¹⁴.

¹³ See: *Caspar E. Geschichte des Papsttums...* Pp. 485–486; *Horn St.O. Petrou Kathedra...* Pp. 56–57.

¹⁴ ACO. II.3.1. P. 58.14–24: ... neque in Nicaea neque in Ephesena sancta synodo neque in alio tali sancto concilio papa sanctae sedis affuit. pro qua re huius

The request to “examine” (*recenseri*) the letter of the Roman Church, which implied its official reading, was not granted by the presiding officer Dioscorus, who only decreed its acceptance. Later, at the Council of Chalcedon, this was held against Dioscorus, yet in the context of the Council of 449, this procedure could clearly have been considered superfluous, since the conciliar letter was regarded as a letter of credence from the papal legates, whose authority was unquestioned anyway. On the other hand, the passages of the Roman conciliar letter containing instructions on how the Council should conduct itself and what decisions it should take were obviously inappropriate, as they intruded upon the competence of the Council, which had specific decrees from the Emperor regarding its agenda, and contained an attempt to predetermine the outcome of the conciliar proceedings. It should also be noted that the papal legates did not insist on the reading of the letter and did not lodge a protest when Dioscorus, after incorporating the text into the acts, moved on to other items on the Council agenda¹⁵.

The agenda and format of the Council proceedings prescribed by the Emperor, in which the conciliar judicial process was directed against those

formae sequens consuetudinem nos direxit, qui sanctissimus non dubitans se in nobis hic adesse, quos praecipue cognoscit omnia quae ad fidei catholicae sinceritatem et quae ad sancti Petri apostoli pertinent reuerentiam, agere, qui etiam per nos ad uestram beatitudinem congruas sanctorum patrum concilii direxit epistulas, quas suscipere et recenseri praecipite. Греч. перевод см.: ACO. II.1.1. P. 83.7–14. См.: *Jalland T. The Life and Times...* Pp. 238–239.

¹⁵ The papal legates twice during subsequent stages of the session mentioned the possibility of reading the *Tomos to Flavian* (ACO. II.1.1. P. 99.14–16; 190.34–191.3), but this was not done due to the obvious bias of the document toward the persons judged by the Council. Cf.: *Menze V.L. Patriarch Dioscorus...* P. 118. B In Menze’s reasoning, the letter of the Roman council authorizing the legates is mixed with the *Tomos*: the former did not require formal reading, just as “letters of recommendation” from other sees, delivered by representatives rather than the heads themselves, did not. The *Tomos* was a private letter of a single hierarch, not reflecting the council’s position of the local Church, and therefore its reading could not in principle be obligatory. For this reason, the papal legates did not insist on its reading, but only indicated the possibility to the participants of the Council of 449. De Vries expresses the opinion that it was quite prudent on Dioscorus’s part not to make the questionable theses of Leo’s *Tomos* public at the Council, since this could have immediately led to unrest and disorder; in this way, Dioscorus rather saved the authority of Rome than harmed it: *De Vries W. Das Konzil von Ephesus...* Pp. 367–368.

who had acted as judges at the Council of Constantinople in 448, elicited no protest from the participants of the Council of Ephesus, including the papal legates. Since a significant portion — up to one third — of the bishops present at the Council were excluded from the conciliar discussions as having been involved in the decisions of 448, it was important for the legates to maintain their position among the judges and not associate themselves with the faction whose actions were now under investigation. The non-reading of the conciliar letter and the instructions given to the legates concerning Eutyches was essentially a courtesy to them from Dioscorus of Alexandria and the Emperor's representative at the Council, Elpidius, which allowed them to remain as judges. Consequently, they adopted a passive stance, being compelled to follow conciliar procedures and lacking the opportunity to express opinions on the comparative merits of the doctrines of Eutyches and his opponents, as the Pope insisted, confident in the high theological authority of his *Tomos*: reducing the Council sessions to theological debates was explicitly prohibited by the Emperor.

A key point at the beginning of the conciliar sessions was the reading of the acts of the Council of Constantinople of 448. The presiding officer Dioscorus asked the bishops present whether they agreed to hear the acts. He addressed this question particularly to the papal envoys. Julius of Puteoli consented on the condition that “first, that what has been sent by the Pope will be read”¹⁶. Deacon Hilary explained that the letters of Pope Leo were written precisely as a result of the reading of these acts¹⁷. The response of Eutyches to the legates' proposal effectively questioned their impartiality: “The most devout men that most holy and God-loving archbishop Leo has sent to your holy Council, have become suspicious of me. For they went to the God-loving bishop Flavian, had breakfast with him, were received and honored in every way. Therefore, I entreat Your Holiness, if anything should occur on my behalf from them contrary to justice, do not treat it as a preliminary condemnation against me”¹⁸. Dioscorus adopted a compromise decision: “The acts of the case

¹⁶ ACO. II.1.1. P. 99.12–13: ... εἰ πρῶτον ἀναγνωσθῆ τὰ παρὰ τοῦ πάπα ἐπισταλέντα. See: *Jalland T. The Life and Times...* P. 239.

¹⁷ ACO. II.1.1. P. 99.15–16. See: *Horn St.O. Petrou Kathedra...* Pp. 61–62.

¹⁸ ACO. II.1.1. P. 99.17–22: Οἱ ἀποσταλέντες θεοσεβέστατοι ἄνδρες ὑπὸ τοῦ ἁγιωτάτου καὶ θεοφιλεστάτου ἀρχιεπισκόπου Λέοντος τῆς Ῥωμαίων εἰς τὴν

shall be read first, as order and prudence dictate, and only thereafter the letters of the most God-loving bishop of Rome”¹⁹.

It can be stated with sufficient confidence that Eutyches was hardly aware of the details of Leo’s theological position, since at that time they had only been articulated in private letters. At the same time, however, the general negative attitude of Leo toward Eutyches’ position and theses was certainly known to him. Therefore, it can be assumed that he feared not so much a substantive refutation of his theological views by Leo – which was not present in the letter of the Roman Council – but rather the general declaration of his error, which Leo had repeatedly proclaimed. Thus, the conciliar letter of the Roman Church indeed constituted a “preliminary²⁰ decision” (*praeiudicium, πρόκριμα*), while lacking a justificatory section and anticipating the decisions of the Council of Ephesus, taking a particular stance before any formal judicial proceedings. In light of these obvious facts, the legates did not protest against Dioscorus’ decision, nor did they challenge Eutyches, since his statements were entirely accurate: subsequently, Flavian reported to Pope Leo in his appeal about the staying of the legates with him before the Council began²¹.

During the reading of the acts of the Council of Constantinople, when the claim of Eusebius of Dorylaeum – who had instigated the entire conflict – was being read out, the name of Cyril of Alexandria prompted exclamations from the audience asserting the identity of Cyril’s and Dioscorus’ faith. Julius of Puteoli considered it appropriate to support this view, stating that it was also taught by the “apostolic see” (*ἡ ἀποστολική*

ἀγίαν ὑμῶν σύνοδον ὑποπτοί μοι γεγόνασιν. κατήχθησαν γὰρ πρὸς Φλαβιανὸν τὸν θεοφιλέστατον ἐπίσκοπον καὶ ἠρίστησαν παρ’ αὐτῷ καὶ συνεκροτήθησαν καὶ πάσης θεραπείας παρ’ αὐτοῦ ἠξιώθησαν. ἀξιῶ οὖν τὴν ὑμετέραν ἀγιότητα, εἴ τι παρὰ τὸ δίκαιον γίνοιτο παρ’ αὐτῶν κατ’ ἐμοῦ, τοῦτο πρόκριμά μοι μὴ φέρειν.

¹⁹ ACO. II.1.1. P. 99.23–25: Ἀκόλουθόν ἐστιν καὶ εὐλογον πρῶτον ἀναγνωσθῆναι τὰ ἐπὶ τῇ ὑποθέσει πεπραγμένα, εἴθ’ οὕτως τὰ γράμματα τοῦ θεοφιλεστάτου ἐπισκόπου Ῥώμης.

²⁰ B In this case, one could also say “premature”.

²¹ Cf. the reasoning of Horn: *Horn St.O. Petrou Kathedra...* Pp. 62–63. *Caspar* seems to blame the legates for associating themselves clearly with Flavian from the start: *Caspar E. Geschichte des Papsttums...* Bd. 1. P. 483. In this, however, they were following the policy and, apparently, the instructions of the Roman bishop, which, we repeat, are not preserved in this case.

καθέδρα²²), thereby demonstrating solidarity with the presiding officer of the council, whose authority Rome would soon vigorously contest²³. Later, after the reading of the acts of the sixth session of the Council of Ephesus in 431, Julius reaffirmed the apostolic throne's adherence to the Nicene Creed²⁴. When the Council proceeded to render its judgment, the acts do not record the reaction of the Roman representatives to the announcement of Eutyches' acquittal²⁵; however, regarding the condemnation and deposition of Flavian of Constantinople, they note the famous "contradicitur!" of Deacon Hilary²⁶.

It is evident that Hilary's reaction was ignored by the Council, whereas the stance of another key member of the Roman delegation, Bishop Julius of Puteoli, remains unknown, as it is not reflected in the subsequent active correspondence²⁷. Only after the conclusion of the Council were Hilary's actions following the condemnation of Flavian documented, in a number of sources: Flavian's appeals to Leo and the Roman Council, and the letters of Pope Leo. These documents consistently convey that Hilary faced physical danger, compelling him to flee and arrive secretly in Rome to report everything to Pope Leo and the Roman Church. The most detailed account of these circumstances is provided in a letter written by Hilary to Pulcheria Augusta. This letter is quite informative and, in our view, further clarifies the reasons for the relatively marginal position of the Roman see during the conciliar proceedings in Ephesus.

The letter reads in full as follows:

"I ought not to say that my desire after the Council was to proceed to Constantinople, since there was an evident necessity compelling me to bring the

²² ACO. II.1.1. P. 101.6–14. The Greek acts do not contain this remark of Julius. See: *De Vries* W. Das Konzil von Ephesus... P. 365; *Horn St.O. Petrou Kathedra...* P. 67.

²³ ACO. II.3.1. P. 237.5–6.

²⁴ ACO. II.3.1. P. 237.5–6.

²⁵ See: *Horn St.O. Petrou Kathedra...* P. 65. *Jalland T.* states that the absence of a formal protest by the legate Julius was a "passive betrayal of the doctrine supported by the Roman see": *Jalland T.* The Life and Times... P. 240.

²⁶ ACO. II.1.1. P. 191.30–31: "Ἰλαρος διάκονος τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἐκκλησίας εἶπεν Κοντραδικτοῦρ, ὃ ἐστὶν ἀντιλέγεται. См.: *Horn St.O. Petrou Kathedra...* Pp. 69–71.

²⁷ From this point, Julius completely disappears from the sources; his role in subsequent events is unknown. See: *Hefele Ch.J.* Histoire des conciles... T. 2. Pt. 1. P. 620.

letters of the most blessed Pope addressed to Your Clemence, in order equally to render the tribute of respect owed both to Your Piety and to the invincible and most Christian prince. But for this proper intention of mine there arose an obstacle hostile to all good, which causes Christians to lament, namely the Bishop of Alexandria — the most powerful in condemning innocent men! For after I could not comply with his will and judgment, he attempted by intimidation and intrigue to summon me to another Council, so that I might — God forbid! — either be seduced into agreeing with the condemnation of the most holy Flavian or be prevented from leaving, so that I might not hasten²⁸ to Your Piety in Constantinople or return to the Roman Church. Yet, trusting in the help of Christ our God, I preserved myself innocent and untainted by the condemnation of the most venerable and holy man: no scourges, no tortures could have forced me to agree with his verdict! But, having left everyone behind, I departed, traveling by unknown and untrodden paths to Rome, and becoming a suitable messenger to the most venerable Pope regarding all that was accomplished at Ephesus. Thus, Your Venerable Clemency shall know from the aforementioned Pope that all that was done at Ephesus contrary to the canons, through disorder and worldly enmity, by Bishop Dioscorus, together with the entire Western Council, is condemned, and in no way can what was committed there through his power, with insult to the faith and prejudice against the most holy and innocent man, be accepted here. And what I reported with firm and courageous authority concerning the faith, I deem unnecessary to recount, since you can learn it from the letters of the most blessed Pope. Therefore, most illustrious and most gracious Augusta, your revered piety should not abandon what it willingly began, but preserve it with devoted zeal of faith and steadfast will²⁹.”

²⁸ Caspar interprets this phrase and the “permission” (*licentia*) mentioned in it as evidence of an initial prohibition by the “government” (*Regierung*) for the Roman legates to appear in Constantinople. See: Caspar E. *Geschichte des Papsttums...* Bd. 1. P. 483, note 3. However, this is clearly mistaken. First, the situation referred to did not take place *before* the Council (at which point, according to all rules, the legates should already have delivered all necessary letters to Constantinople (which they did not)) but *during* the Council. Second, Hilary’s departure was supposedly blocked by Dioscorus, not by the “government”. Third, having escaped from Dioscorus, Hilary still went not to the capital but to Rome.

²⁹ Schwartz E. (ed.). *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum* /. T. II. Vol. IV. Berlin; Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1932. Pp. 27.21–28.9: *Studium mihi fuisse post sy-*

In essence, this letter exposes the main problems related to the position of the Roman see at the Council of Ephesus in 449. First and foremost: at the time of the Council's opening, which the Emperor had postponed from August 1 to 8, the court had no understanding of the position of the Roman Church: the representatives of the Roman bishop did not deliver the papal or conciliar letters to Theodosius, Pulcheria, or other addressees in Constantinople. Consequently, the *Tomos* was also unknown. In practice, the legates' actions, who immediately proceeded to Ephesus, were limited to interactions solely with Flavian of Constantinople. Why the legates neglected their duties and did not contact their addressees beforehand is impossible to determine. Accordingly, the insistence in subsequent correspondence that Hilary allegedly faced mortal danger, compelling him to flee to Rome, appears to be an attempt to explain and justify the strange conduct of the Pope's delegate. Hilary portrays as a threat of unprecedented-

nodum aduenire Constantinopolim dicere non debeo, quoniam manifesta necessitas erat quae me litteras beatissimi papae ad uestram clementiam directas offerre compelleret, ut pariter et uestrae pietati et inuictissimo et Christianissimo principi officium quod debebam uenerationis exsoluerem. sed huic congruo meo proposito illud impedimentum euenit, quod omnium bonorum inimicum est et Christianorum ingemescit affectus, hoc est Alexandrinus episcopus in damnatione uirorum inculpabilium potentissimus. nam posteaquam iniustae eius uoluntati atque sententiae communicare non potui, ad aliud concilium terroribus atque insidiis me euocare conatus est, quatenus me, quod absit, aut seductionibus faceret consentire ad condemnandum sanctissimum Flavianum episcopum aut resistentem teneret, ut mihi non esset licentia ad pietatem uestram Constantinopolim percurrere aut ad Romanam ecclesiam remeare. uerumtamen confidens de auxilio Christi nostri dei a damnatione reuerentissimi et sanctissimi uiri innocentem me integrumque seruauit, licet nulla flagella, nulla tormenta me possent facere eius consentire sententiae, sed omnibus derelictis exinde discessi per incognita et inuia loca Romae ueniens et reuerentissimo papae omnium quae in Epheso gesta sunt, idoneus nuntiator existens. uestra itaque ueneranda clementia cognoscat a praefato papa cum omni Occidentali concilio reprobata omnia quae in Epheso contra canones per tumultus et odia saecularia a Dioscoro episcopo gesta sunt, et nulla ratione haec in his partibus suscipi posse quae per potentiam praedicti non sine laesione fidei et praeiudicio sanctissimi uiri innoxiique commissa sunt. quae uero constanti ac forti auctoritate pro fide a me nuntiata sunt, superfluum credo narrare; nam haec ex litteris beatissimi papae poteritis agnoscere. unde, domina splendidissima atque clementissima augusta, adoranda uestra pietas in quibus libenter fecit initium, relinquere non debet, sed haec zelo religioso fidei constanti uoluntate seruate. (Hereafter: ACO. II.4).

ed violence Dioscorus of Alexandria’s demand that the Deacon remain for the concluding part of the conciliar sessions, held after Eutyches’ acquittal and Flavian’s condemnation. It is difficult to see why Dioscorus would need to address this matter with a Council participant: the presence of members throughout the Council proceedings was presumed. It is evident that Hilary himself declared his intention to leave further sessions, prompting Dioscorus, as presiding officer, merely to indicate the inadmissibility of such conduct. The demand to observe the procedural rules can hardly be considered “intimidation and intrigue”, and Hilary’s framing of the directive to attend the next session as a summons “to another Council” represents an unconvincing self-justification. It must be emphasized that a Council was considered concluded only after its verdict had been communicated to the Emperor via a special conciliar letter, who would then ratify the decisions, declare the Council closed, and permit the participants to return to their cities. It is entirely clear that nothing of the sort occurred at the time the legates chose to flee, and their actions constituted, in essence, a dereliction of duty for which penalties were provided.

In his letter, Hilary rather awkwardly avoids the question of why he traveled directly from Ephesus to Rome, despite having earlier expressed his desire to proceed straight to Constantinople³⁰. The reason he did not go there is clear from the foregoing: he would have faced severe punishment. His unauthorized absence from the conciliar sessions, his appearance at the imperial court with “overdue” letters, and, moreover, his possession of the appeals of Flavian and Eusebius of Dorylaeum addressed to the Roman bishop – which in particular demanded the convocation of a new Ecumenical Council, thereby undermining the competence of the still-ongoing Ecumenical Council approved by the Emperor – together evidently constituted a criminal offense.

Thus, Hilary’s pressing task was to justify himself in the eyes of the Eastern court, and for this reason he needed to create the impression that he was compelled to flee secretly to Rome immediately after the conclu-

³⁰ *Caspar* assumes that Hilary thereby lost “all his baggage” (“unter Verlust seines gesamten Gepäcks”). See: *Caspar E. Geschichte des Papsttums...* Bd. 1. P. 488. This statement represents speculation, apparently intended by the author to indirectly explain Hilary’s failure to appear in Constantinople to carry out his mission.

sion of the session³¹. Hilary hints at this sequence of events in his letter, arranging the narrative as follows: the session concludes, Dioscorus issues threats, and Hilary flees. However, the fact that Hilary had these two appeals in his possession upon arrival in Rome raises doubts about the complete accuracy of his account, since composing them would clearly have required time. While it is sometimes claimed that Flavian, in the midst of the tumultuous events at the end of the first session, directly handed (or wrote?) his appeal for Hilary³², Eusebius would have necessarily had to meet Hilary separately, as both Flavian and Eusebius state in their appeals that they were under guard, with Eusebius being unable even to attend the conciliar session. Consequently, to draft the appeals, they would have had to be either entirely unguarded or, at the very least, their confinement could not have been very strict, since they had to meet the Pope's envoys at least twice: first, to discuss the plan for submitting the appeals to Rome, and second, to hand them over. It is possible that these meetings with the Roman legates had to take place separately.

In fact, these suppositions are not merely speculative, since the Syriac version of the acts of the Council of Ephesus in 449 – which is more complete than the Greek and Latin versions – preserves the dating of the second session, whose acts begin on Monday, August 22, 449, i.e., two weeks after the first session³³. The first item on the agenda of this session was the absence of the Roman legates. As it turns out, representatives of

³¹ See the characterization of Hilary given by *De Vries*: “Although Hilary was an eyewitness of the events, he was not entirely blameless, since he had to justify his rather pathetic failure” (“Hilarus ist zwar Augenzeuge der Vorgänge, aber kein ganz unverdächtiger, da er sein ziemlich klägliches Versagen in Ephesus zu entschuldigen hatte”: *De Vries W. Das Konzil von Ephesus... P. 385*).

³² We agree with *De Vries*'s assessment of Flavian's writing of the appeal: “He was able to write this well-ordered letter without any haste, probably with the help of Hilary” (“Er hat diesen wohlgeordneten Brief in aller Ruhe, wahrscheinlich mit Hilfe des Hilarus, verfassen können”: *De Vries W. Das Konzil von Ephesus... P. 388*).

³³ Akten der Ephesinischen Synode vom Jahre 449 Syrisch mit Georg Hoffmanns Deutscher Übersetzung und seinen Anmerkungen / Hrsg. von J. Flemming // Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Philologisch-historische Klasse. Neue Folge. Bd. 15. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1917. Pp. 6–11. The date is given according to the Egyptian calendar as 29 Mesore, which corresponds to 22 August. See: *Grumel V. La chronologie*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1958. P. 301.

the Council had been sent for them two days earlier, on Saturday, and had found in the house only the ailing Roman notary Dulcitus, who reported that Julius and Hilary were absent: one “in the countryside”, the other “at the church of St. John”. When the representatives arrived the following day, Dulcitus informed them that the bishop and the deacon were not present and would not attend the Council, since they had the authority from the Roman bishop to discuss only the case of Eutyches. The legates were never seen in Ephesus again.

Thus, it is evident that, on the one hand, the legates received no threats from Dioscorus³⁴, while, on the other hand, they left Ephesus no later than August 20–21, 449, having nearly two weeks at their disposal to discuss the appeals of Flavian and Eusebius³⁵. It follows that Hilary presented false information in his letter to Pulcheria regarding his motives and conduct.

Let us summarize the results of the study. The delay of the papal legates resulted in the Roman representatives not being considered candidates for the presidency of the Council, leaving Dioscorus of Alexandria as the presiding officer. Attempts by the legates to intervene in the conciliar agenda were gently deflected by Dioscorus, which allowed them, on the one hand, to retain the status of judges, while on the other, avoiding a potential scandal arising from the reading of the papal *Tomos to Flavian*. The legates, in effect, acquiesced to Eutyches’ acquittal, but in the person of the papal Deacon Hilary, rejected the condemnation of Flavian. Since the legates did not preside over the Council, their dissent remained private and did not affect the final conciliar judgment. Subsequently, the Ro-

³⁴ *Jalland* believes that Hilary was threatened and coerced, and that this occurred at the end of the first session. He further claims that Hilary was imprisoned, though without citing a source. *Jalland* does not consider the chronology of Hilary’ flight, nor does he analyze his letter to Pulcheria. See: *Jalland T. The Life and Times...* Pp. 241–242, 249.

³⁵ Contrary to these quite clear data, most scholars follow the version of an immediate flight of Hilary in the confusion after the reading of the sentence against him: *Hefele Ch.J. Histoire des conciles...* T. 2. Pt. 1. P. 600; *Caspar E. Geschichte des Papsttums...* Bd. 1. Pp. 487–488; *Wojtowysch M. Papsttum und Konzile von den Anfängen bis zu Leo I. (440–461). Studien zur Entstehung der Überordnung des Papstes über Konzile. [Päpste und Papsttum; 17]. Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1981. Pp. 322–323.* In contrast, *De Vries* accepts the dating of Hilary’ flight given here: *De Vries W. Das Konzil von Ephesus...* P. 389.

man legates spent nearly two weeks consulting with the deposed Flavian and Eusebius of Dorylaeum while waiting for them to draft their appeals to the Roman bishop. They then secretly left Ephesus, despite the Council not yet being officially closed by the Emperor and the participants not having received imperial permission to depart. Upon arriving in Rome, the legates disseminated false information that they had been subjected to violence at Ephesus, primarily at the hands of Dioscorus of Alexandria. They convinced Pope Leo of this, and attempted to persuade Pulcheria Augusta. The false information propagated by them regarding the events of the 449 Council became the basis for papal actions aimed at revising its decisions through the convocation of a new Council. It also provided the grounds for the condemnation and deposition of Dioscorus at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, and deprived the 449 Council of Ephesus of its status as Ecumenical.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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Original paper



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Christians of Syria During the French Expedition to the Middle East (1798–1801)

Abstract

This article is an attempt at a comprehensive analysis of the reaction of Syrian Christian communities to the invasion of French troops in 1799. The subject of Napoleon Bonaparte's Eastern Campaign is academically highly popular. However, there has not yet been a dedicated study analyzing how Christians in Greater Syria — both in the occupied territories and those remaining under Ottoman rule — perceived the French incursion. Consequently, the mindset of Syrian Christians during the first European invasion of the Holy Sites of Palestine since the Crusades remained largely unknown. Another objective of the research is to examine the stages of deformation of the system of ethno-confessional relations in the Middle East in the period preceding the full-scale crisis of the 19th century. It can be concluded that, although the French invasion increased inter-confessional tensions, there was no wave of anti-Christian violence (pogroms) in Syria. Religious peace, based on the principles of Sharia, was observed by the Ottoman authorities almost flawlessly. Nonetheless, Turkish officials exploited Christian communities and their wealthy leaders as one of the sources of funds nec-



essary for waging war. As for the Christians themselves, the church elites largely viewed the proponents of French Revolutionary ideas negatively, though they concealed their sentiments when confronted with Republican soldiers. In contrast, the Syro-Christian common people expressed genuine joy at the arrival of European troops and provided them with various forms of assistance. The French invasion altered the balance of power and deformed the Sharia-based system of dependence and patronage. A split emerged between church elites and their congregations. The struggle over control of the Holy Sites of Palestine intensified. In Mount Lebanon, the Maronite community claimed political authority for the first time. All of these factors continued to accumulate over subsequent decades, ultimately leading Syria to an inter-confessional explosion in the mid-19th century.

Keywords:

history of Syria, Syrian Christians, Eastern Campaign of Napoleon Bonaparte, French expedition to Syria, ethno-confessional relations in the Middle East, struggle for the Holy Places of Palestine

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The short-term French expedition to Syria (Napoleon departed from Cairo on February 10, 1799, and returned on June 14, 1799) is usually treated by researchers as an episode of the Eastern Campaign, overshadowed by the events in Egypt. Indeed, the French remained in Syria for slightly more than three months, rather than three years as in the Nile Valley, and occupied only the coastal strip

from Gaza to Tyre, as well as parts of Western Galilee up to the Jordan River. Yet the fundamentally different geographic landscape of Syria, its population composition, the features of its social and administrative-political structures, and its cultural, religious and psychological distinctions bear a closer examination of the encounter between these two civilizations in 1799.

This article addresses only one aspect of the Syrian campaign: the reaction of the local Christians, both those in the French-occupied territories and those beyond. While this topic has not been entirely ignored¹ — Napoleon's Eastern Campaign is a popular subject in Arab studies and Napoleonic scholarship, with contributions from Russian historians — there has still been no focused study on how the Napoleonic invasion was perceived by the Christians of Greater Syria², including both the inland and the coastal areas from Aleppo to Gaza and from Mount Lebanon to Jerusalem, in major cities and small villages alike.

In the modern period, Christians constituted at least 10% of Syria's 1.5 million population³, but their distribution was uneven. In the late 18th century, Damascus and Aleppo, the two Syrian “megacities”, each had 80–90,000 inhabitants, of whom 6–8% and roughly 20%⁴ respectively, were Christian. Christian communities also existed in other administrative centers of inland Syria, including Hama and Homs, and were relatively numer-

¹ See: Жантиев Д.Р., Кириллина С.А. Французская политика в отношении христиан Египта и Сирии во время Восточной экспедиции Бонапарта // Французский ежегодник 2019. Т. 52: Эпоха Наполеона и память о ней. Москва, 2019. С. 128–147.

² Historical Greater Syria extends beyond the borders of the modern Syrian Arab Republic and covers the territory between the Eastern Taurus Range in the north, the Mediterranean Sea in the west, the Sinai Peninsula in the south, and the Syrian Desert in the east.

³ Barkan, Ömer Lütfi. Research on Ottoman Fiscal Surveys // Studies in Economic History of the Middle East. London: Routledge, 1970. P. 171; Masters B. Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World. The Roots of Sectarianism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. P. 53. However, some authors estimate the share of the Christian population in Syria to have been two to three times higher: Haddad R. Syrian Christians in Muslim Society. An Interpretation. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970. P. 10.

⁴ Hereafter, see: Кобищанов Т.Ю. Христианские общины в арабо-османском мире. М.: Доброе слово, 2003. С. 60–67; Панченко К.А. Ближневосточное православие под османским владычеством. Первые три столетия, 1516–1831. М.: Индрик, 2012. С. 118–148.

ous in pilgrimage cities. In Jerusalem, Christians likely made up 15–20% of 12,000 residents, excluding the annually arriving pilgrims. In Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Ramla (and smaller towns) Christians comprised one-third to one-half of the population.

A special situation developed along the coast. Trade connections with Europe turned Syrian ports into magnets for Christian merchants from across the Eastern Mediterranean. Uniate Christians from Aleppo and Damascus, the Orthodox from Nazareth and the Aegean coast, Catholics from Malta – Christians of various confessions migrated en masse to Syrian port cities in the second and third quarters of the 18th century. The ruler of Galilee, Sheikh Dahir al-'Umar (c. 1690–1775), actively encouraged this migration. By the time of the Napoleonic invasion, populations were estimated as follows: Gaza, 3–4,000; Jaffa, 7–8,000; Haifa, 2–3,000⁵; Acre, 15–20,000⁶; Beirut, around 6,000⁷; Tripoli (Tarabulus), up to 10,000⁸. All these ports had sizable Christian communities, with Christians forming the majority in Acre and Haifa⁹.

In rural areas, Christians lived interspersed with Muslims; exclusively Christian villages were rare. Certain Christian “reservations” included the Orthodox-inhabited Qalamun plateau north of Damascus and the Maronite-populated northern Mount Lebanon. Migration of Maronites southward during the 17th–18th centuries also turned central Lebanon into a predominantly Christian zone. Under the protection of Maronite feudal lords, Greek-Catholics (Melkites) from inland Syria and Armenian-Uniates from Cilicia relocated to Lebanon.

Administratively, the Ottoman authorities divided Syria into four *eyalets* (provinces). By mid-1798, two were governed by members of the pow-

⁵ *Бонапарт, Наполеон. Кампания в Египте и Сирии (1798–1799 гг.) // О военном искусстве. Избранные произведения. Москва: ЭКСМО, 2003. С. 590, 592, 600.*

⁶ *Philipp T. Acre. The Rise and Fall of a Palestinian City, 1730–1831. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001. P. 194.*

⁷ *Volney. Voyage en Syrie et en Egypte. 3e édition, 1799 // Œuvres. Tome troisième. Paris: Fayard, 1998. P. 441.*

⁸ *Pascual J.-P. La Syrie à l'époque ottomane (le XIXe siècle) // La Syrie d'aujourd'hui (ed. A. Raymond). Aix-en-Provence: Institut de recherches et d'études sur les mondes arabes et musulmans, 1980. P. 32.*

⁹ *Philipp T. Acre. The Rise and Fall of a Palestinian City. P. 22–24.*

erful Syrian al-‘Azm clan: ‘Abdallah Pasha ruled Damascus (1795–1798), and his brother Yusuf Pasha governed Tripoli (1798–1799). The Sidon eyalet (with Acre as its center) was under Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar for over 20 years (1776–1804). Aleppo had been without a governor (*wali*) appointed from Istanbul since 1795, with real authority resting in the hands of one of Syria’s wealthiest men, the *muhassil*¹⁰ Ibrahim Agha Qattar-Aghasi. *The French invasion prompted the Porte*¹¹ to implement a series of inconsistent, even chaotic, administrative rearrangements. Moving pashas between provinces triggered armed uprisings in Damascus and Aleppo, exacerbating the political crisis. Stability only partially returned with the arrival of the army of Grand Vizier Yusuf Ziya Pasha (1798–1805; 1809–1811) in late summer of 1799.

The 18th century was an era of local elite flourishing in the Ottoman Empire generally and in Syria in particular. Regional leaders, relying on feudal clientage networks and kinship ties, capitalized on the weakening of central authority. Three locations are directly relevant to this study: in Mount Lebanon, the emirate remained with the Shihab family, increasingly relying on Christian Maronites rather than Druze feudal lords. In the mountainous area north of Jerusalem centered on Nablus, power rested with rival tribal sheikhs, Ahmad Bey al-Tuqan and Yusuf Jarrar. Aleppo was torn by conflict between the Janissaries and the Sharifs claiming descent from the Prophet Muhammad. In 1798, the city became a battlefield for two and a half months following a Janissary-led massacre of the Sharifs at al-Utrush Mosque.

Interreligious relations in Syria in the early months of war (July 1798 – February 1799)

News that France had attacked Egypt on July 1, 1798, arrived in Syria with significant delay and spread slowly and unevenly. Archimandrite Maxim

¹⁰ *Muḥaṣṣil* — an official responsible for tax collection in a province. In Aleppo, the authority and income of the *muḥaṣṣil* were exceptionally great compared with other provinces — a fact that American scholar *Herbert Bodman* attributed to a combination of the province’s wealth and its role as a center of transit trade (*Bodman H. Political Factions in Aleppo, 1760–1826*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963. Pp. 36–38).

¹¹ *Porta* (Sublime *Porte*) — the European term for the central administrative authority of the Ottoman Empire.

Simsky (d. 1810), brother of the Holy Sepulcher¹², reported that Jerusalem residents learned of the attack on July 10 (June 28 Old Style)¹³, whereas according to the Uniate merchant Yusuf ‘Abbud, Aleppo’s inhabitants were informed in the beginning of Safar, i.e., after July 14, 1798¹⁴. However, French Consul in Aleppo Jean-Charles Choderlos reported that by July 15, the local European community had received a letter about the departure of the squadron from Toulon and its potential course toward the Nile. Only a month later, on August 14, did it become widely known in the city that the French landing had occurred near Alexandria¹⁵. In Beirut, Orthodox chronicler ‘Abdallah Trad reported that his fellow citizens learned of the invasion when a trading galleon, fleeing from Damietta, arrived at the port. Beirut residents were so alarmed that they delayed unloading the ship, which sailed on at night fully loaded to Istanbul. Local Christian merchants evidently suffered losses, prompting Trad to lament: “May the Lord compensate these people for their losses and send them prosperity!”¹⁶ According to the chronicler¹⁷, his townsmen learned of the invasion slightly earlier than Aleppo, in the last week of July to the first week of August 1798, as Damietta fell to the French on August 6. For comparison, Istanbul

¹² The Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre — an association of the monastic members of the Jerusalem Orthodox Church. One of its main tasks is to defend the rights of the Orthodox Church concerning the Holy Places of Palestine.

¹³ *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. Материалы для истории Иерусалимской патриархии XVI–XIX века // Православный палестинский сборник. Вып. 55. Часть 2. СПб. 1904. С. 86–87.

¹⁴ ‘Abbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī. Ḥawādith Ḥalab al-yawmiya 1771–1805. Al-Murtād fi tā’rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdad [Daily Events of Aleppo, 1771–1805. A Study of the History of Aleppo and Baghdad] Ḥalab: Sha’ā’ li-n-nashar wal-‘ulūm, 2006. Pp. 294–295.

¹⁵ *Kuroki H.* Events in Aleppo During Napoleon’s Expedition of Egypt // Bulletin d’études orientales. T. 51 (1999). Pp. 263–264.

¹⁶ *Трад, Абдаллах*. Краткая история епископов, восходивших на высокую архиерейскую кафедру города Бейрута (пер. И.Г. Константинопольского) // Арабы-христиане в истории и литературе Ближнего Востока. М.: Изд-во ПСТГУ, 2013. С. 179.

¹⁷ This section of the chronicle was written from memory or subjected to later editing, since ‘Abdallah Trad dated the arrival of the galleon from Damietta to 30 June 1799, when French troops had already been in Egypt for a year and had even marched into Syria.

learned of the French attack on July 17–18¹⁸, and by July 24, the Sublime Porte initiated negotiations with Russia to join the anti-French alliance¹⁹.

In the coastal Syrian cities, which were vulnerable from the sea, news of the invasion of neighboring Egypt provoked widespread panic. “Fear took hold in the hearts of both Muslims and Christians”, wrote ‘Abdallah Trad²⁰. The inhabitants of Beirut were not alone in their feelings. Yūsuf ‘Abbud reported that the residents of Askale (Arabic: Asakil, from the Italian *Scala*) feared that their cities would be the next targets of French aggression. Anxiety in the ports intensified when local “merchants and craftsmen” learned of the fall of Cairo²¹. Yet, apparently, the population of Beirut reacted to this news most nervously, at the level of mass psychosis and panic. The cause lay in the historical memory of the city’s residents: a quarter century earlier, during the Russo-Turkish War of 1768–1774, Beirut had twice been stormed by Russian squadrons, endured a prolonged siege, and experienced subsequent occupation. The suffering and losses had not faded from memory, and the Muslims also recalled the ambivalent stance taken by some of their Christian compatriots at the time.

Remembering the events of 1772–1773, the authorities of Beirut this time ordered homes, shops, and warehouses in the port area to be vacated for soldier accommodation. ‘Abdallah Trad noted that these structures belonged to Christians²², which is credible given the active participation of ethno-confessional minorities in maritime trade. The first instinct of the residents was to organize self-defense. To quote the chronicler: “The Muslims called upon the Christians to arm themselves and go with them to the fortifications to defend the city together. Some reckless Christians procured weapons and, equipped, went with the Muslims to the fortifications.

¹⁸ *Shaw S.J.* Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III, 1789–1807. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971. P. 256.

¹⁹ Кобищанов Т.Ю. Преодолевая старые обиды: османский путь к подписанию союзного договора с Россией в 1798 г. // Электронный научно-образовательный журнал (ЭНОЖ) «История». 2020. Т. 11. Вып. 12 (98). Ч. I. 45–50.

²⁰ Трад, Абдаллах. Краткая история епископов. С. 179.

²¹ ‘Abbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī. Al-Murtād fī tā’rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdad. P. 295. French troops entered Cairo on 25 July 1798.

²² Трад, Абдаллах. Краткая история епископов. С. 179.

The rest avoided this and wanted to flee”²³. Subsequent events revealed a difference in position between local and provincial authorities. Beirut’s administration decided to prevent the Christians from fleeing. Guards at the city gates were instructed to prevent the *dhimmis*²⁴ both from leaving and from removing their property. A separate problem arose with the discovery of weapons: “The Muslims, seeing some Christians armed, imagined that, with the arrival of the enemy, the Christians would turn against them along with the inhabitants of Mount Lebanon”²⁵. In turn, the *dhimmis*, surrounded by suspicion and confined in the city, were extremely alarmed and frightened, “and they called upon the Lord to save them from this disaster!”²⁶.

A pogrom and a massacre was prevented by the Sidon governor, Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar. Upon learning of the situation in this important port city, he ordered all Christians to leave, taking their families and belongings. “Not a single Christian was to spend the night within the limits of Beirut”²⁷. The city authorities executed the order, but “sometimes they opened the gates and allowed Christians to leave freely; at other times they commanded them to take only essential items and provisions, and not to go beyond the suburban gardens”²⁸. Any weapons discovered were confiscated. As a result, Beirut was cleared of its Christian population, most of whom evacuated to Mount Lebanon. Some of the vacated houses were occupied by soldiers, and the goods stored within them were plundered²⁹.

It should be noted that this deportation of Christians was a unique and unprecedented event. Emir Haydar al-Shihab recorded in his chronicle that upon learning of the French conquest of Egypt, Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar had ordered all Christians to leave his territories³⁰. However, as noted by the German scholar Thomas Philipp, it remains unclear whether the

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ *Dhimmi* — from Arabic *dhimma* (“protection”) — a collective term for the non-Muslim population in territories governed by Islamic law (*sharī‘a*).

²⁵ Трад, Абдаллах. Краткая история епископов. С. 180.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid. Pp. 180–181.

²⁹ Ibid. P. 180.

³⁰ *Shihāb, Haidar Aḥmad*. Tārīḥ Aḥmad bāshā al-Jazzār [The History of Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar] // Tārīḥ Aḥmad bāshā al-Jazzār [The History of Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar]. Bayrūt: Maktabat Anṭūn, 1955. Pp. 37–212. P. 123.



A Burial site in Beirut. Artist Francis B. Spillsbury. 1799.
 From the book *Picturesque Scenery in the Holy Land and Syria, Delineated during the Campaigns of 1799 and 1800.*
London: Edward Orme, 1803. From open sources

wali even attempted to enforce his order³¹. We will see that in the spring of 1799, Christians remained in all the settlements of the Sidon Pashalik where they had lived previously, with Beirut as the sole exception. Unlike Beirut, no other Syrian city had been subjected to Russian attacks in the preceding quarter-century.

In inland Syria, chaotic alarmist measures were undertaken by the authorities in Jerusalem. After receiving news of the French landing near Alexandria, the immediate response of the local administration was to arrest the heads of the three main Christian communities and to station troops in monasteries. As Archimandrite Maxim Simsky reported, the Muslims feared “that we [the Orthodox], the Franciscans, and the Armenians might unite with the French and surrender Jerusalem to them”³². The next day, the heads of the communities were released and the soldiers withdrawn³³; however, the trust in the clergy was not restored. “You too are *khiyanet* [from the Arabic *khiyana*, meaning ‘treachery’], that is, rebels, because you are friends of the Franks”, wrote Neophytos of Cyprus (d. after 1844), Sec-

³¹ *Philipp T. Social Structure and Political Power in Acre in the 18th Century // The Syrian land in the 18th and 19th Century. The Common and the Specific in the Historical Experience / ed. Thomas Philipp. Stuttgart: Steiner, 1992. P. 98.*

³² *Максим Симский. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 87.*

³³ *Ibid.*

retary of the Holy Sepulcher Brotherhood, later describing the accusations leveled against the Orthodox monks³⁴. Inspections continued: “Not a single cell was left unsearched... even chests and cupboards were examined”, complained Maxim Simsky³⁵. Weapons were particularly sought in buildings belonging to the Catholic Custody of the Holy Land³⁶.

The Jerusalem clergy decided to appeal for assistance to the governor of Damascus, ‘Abdallah Pasha al-‘Azm, whose authority extended over the Holy City. The correspondence between the Damascus and Jerusalem officials, preserved in the archives of the Jerusalem Sharia court, contrasts with the emotional chronicles of the Christian monks. On July 29, 1798 (15 Safar 1213 AH), the wali reviewed the appeal of the clerics, who complained that “as soon as the rumors of events in Alexandria reached the city [Jerusalem], they were persecuted by the crowd, their monasteries plundered, the inhabitants taken hostage”³⁷. In response, ‘Abdallah Pasha ordered an investigation to determine whether the monks harbored “overt or secret plans of treachery”, and to report if such plans were confirmed. He also instructed that, pending orders from the Sublime Porte, the monks be placed under custody and supervision, emphasizing that they should be protected from oppression and treated properly³⁸.

The troubles of the Christian hierarchy and the search for potential traitors were not the main concerns of the provincial administration in

³⁴ *Неофит Кипрский*. Рассказ Неофита Кипрского о находящихся в Иерусалиме христианских вероисповеданиях и о ссорах их между собой по поводу мест поклонения. Материалы для истории Иерусалимской патриархии XVI–XIX века // Православный палестинский сборник, Вып. 55. Часть. 1. СПб. 1901. С. 29.

³⁵ *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 87.

³⁶ Custody of the Holy Land (lat. *Custodia Terrae Sanctae*) – the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, a subdivision of the Franciscan Order authorized by the Pope to guard the Roman Catholic shrines in Palestine. Beginning in the 1740s, the privilege of patronage over the Catholic presence in the Holy Land belonged to France, though the Custody’s leadership retained an international character.

³⁷ Quoted from: *Mannā, Ādel*. The Sijill as Source for the Study of Palestine During the Ottoman Period, with Special Reference to the French Invasion // Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period. Political, Social and Economic Transformation / ed. Kushner. Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Press, 1986. P. 357.

³⁸ *Ibid*.

those days. The Governor's message was addressed to the entire Muslim elite of Jerusalem, as a response to requests to provide arms and troops and to permit occupation of the city citadel for defense against a possible French invasion. The Pasha confirmed that a detachment of soldiers, artillerymen (*topchuye*), and auxiliary forces (*arabachiye*), led by Ahmad Agha, would soon arrive to assist the Jerusalemites. As Arab-Israeli historian Adel Manna noted, the usual time for correspondence between Jerusalem and Damascus was one week³⁹. 'Abdallah Pasha's response was recorded in the Jerusalem Sharia court registry on August 6, by which time extremely dramatic events had already unfolded for the local Christian population.

On August 1, 1798, Jerusalem probably received news that the army defending Cairo had been defeated in the famous "Battle of the Pyramids" (July 21, 1798). The reaction of Muslims, learning that thousands of their co-religionists had perished and one of Islam's largest cities had fallen to the French, was predictable. "From small to great, all these foolish animals rushed together", scolded Maxim Simsky his Muslim compatriots⁴⁰. The subsequent events are described ambiguously in sources, but they can be reconstructed with a high degree of confidence. A crowd began to storm the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Savior. "The Franciscans ... firmly locked the gates; and the Turks [Muslims] with shouting and roaring brought axes and other tools and tried to break the gates and enter. But as the gates were iron, they did not succeed; they brought ladders, climbed the walls, and began jumping down"⁴¹. The monastery was plundered; however, the monks survived, sheltering in the hospital and in the Orthodox Monastery of Archangel Michael⁴².

It should be noted that, according to European travelers of the 18th and early 19th centuries, the Jerusalemites were not particularly pious; the French traveler and scholar Constantin-François de Chassboeuf (Volney) described them as "deserving the reputation of the most impious inhabitants

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Максим Симский. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 88. Его единоверец Неофит Кипрский относил упомянутые события к весне 1799 г. (*Неофит Кипрский*. Рассказ Неофита Кипрского. С. 28–31). Однако Неофит писал свои заметки в 30–40 гг. XIX в., что дает нам больше оснований полагаться на датировку участника событий Максима Симского.

⁴¹ *Неофит Кипрский*. Рассказ Неофита Кипрского. С. 28.

⁴² Ibid.

of Syria”⁴³. The status of the third-holiest city in Islam (after Mecca and Medina) did not lead Jerusalem to lose its Christian heritage, which was carefully preserved by the Sultan’s authorities. From the early 16th century, the Ottomans had established in Palestine a complex system of Muslim-Christian symbiosis, based on respecting the rights of church hierarchs, their local congregations, and visiting pilgrims, conditional upon the payment of substantial official and unofficial taxes⁴⁴. By the late 18th century, the most important positions in Jerusalem were occupied by influential clans such as al-Husayni and al-Khalidi. For example, at the end of the century, ‘Abdallah al-Husayni held the post of local *naqib al-asbraf*⁴⁵, while his brother Hasan was *mufti* and *shaykh al-Haram* (head of the third most significant Muslim shrine, al-Aqsa Mosque)⁴⁶. These clans were thoroughly corrupted by the Christian hierarchs of Jerusalem, who paid them for protection in disputes over the Holy Sites. By the century’s end, one-time bribes had become fixed regular exactions, some of which were hereditary⁴⁷. The local *mutesellim*⁴⁸ also received annual payments. Thus, the Arab-Ottoman elite of Jerusalem had a vested interest in maintaining this profitable religious status quo.

*The city authorities calmed the anger of the crowd. As noted by Neophytos of Cyprus, the mutesellim Ismail Pasha “quelled the assault with peaceful speeches”, a task that took him three days*⁴⁹. Subsequently, the Jerusalem administration acted in accordance with the orders received from Damascus, which coincided with its own interests. Ottoman soldiers meticulously “searched almost every nook and cranny” in the Catholic and Orthodox establishments and confirmed that no weapons were present. Afterward, upon a consultation (“quietly negotiating”, in Neophytos of Cyprus’ terminology)

⁴³ Volney. Voyage en Syrie et en Egypte. 3e édition, 1799 // Œuvres. Tome troisième. Paris: Fayard, 1998. P. 485.

⁴⁴ See also: Peri O. Christianity under Islam in Jerusalem. The Question of the Holy Sites in Early Ottoman Times. Leiden: Brill, 2001.

⁴⁵ *Накыб аль-аураф* – head of the corporation of the descendants of the Prophet.

⁴⁶ Asali, K.J. “Jerusalem under the Ottomans, 1516–1831 AD.” // *Jerusalem in History*, ed. K.J. Asali. New York: Olive Branch Press, 1990, p. 217.

⁴⁷ Ibid. P. 222.

⁴⁸ *Mutaşallim* – an Ottoman official, head of the administration of a *sanjak* (district) within a *provinca* (*eyalet*).

⁴⁹ *Неофит Кипрский*. Рассказ Неофита Кипрского. С. 28.



King David Street in Jerusalem. Artist Gustav Bauernfeind.
From open sources

with other officials, the Mufti of Jerusalem ordered the Catholic monks of the Custody and the Orthodox Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher, led by Metropolitan Arsenios, “all to be sent to the Holy Church of the Resurrection for confinement”⁵⁰. Maxim Simsky dramatically exclaimed that “they imprisoned all of us as if wolves had ambushed lambs”⁵¹, yet all evidence indicates that this was done to ensure their safety from attacks by agitated Muslims.

In addition to 36 Orthodox primates⁵² and 18 members of the Custody, 20 Armenian and several Coptic and Abyssinian monks were sent to the Church of the Resurrection, “so that the total numbered up to one hundred souls”⁵³. They remained in the church building until November 16 (November 5, Old Style) 1798, when, as Maxim Simsky recalled⁵⁴, “by written order of Sultan Selim and due to the protection of Jazzar Pasha... we were released from confinement and from death”⁵⁵.

⁵⁰ Ibid. P. 29.

⁵¹ Максим Симский. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 87.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Неофит Кипрский. Рассказ Неофита Кипрского. С. 29.

⁵⁴ Maksim Simsky wrote that the imprisonment lasted 108 days — thus, it must have begun on 31 July or 1 August. It seems he added a few days for dramatic effect.

⁵⁵ Максим Симский. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 87–88.

Soon after the release of the detained clergy, ‘Abdallah Pasha himself arrived in Jerusalem from Damascus, leading a military corps of 5,000–6,000 soldiers. Yusuf ‘Abbud, who bore animosity toward the wali, reported that the arriving troops “seized everything within reach and began to destroy the holy Bethlehem”⁵⁶, although local Christian chronicles do not confirm this.

In Syria’s largest cities – Damascus and Aleppo – no anti-Christian actions were recorded in the first months following the invasion, as consul Choderlos⁵⁷ specifically noted. Local non-Muslims continued their lives largely as before, experiencing roughly the same hardships and joys as their Muslim neighbors. Moreover, for several weeks, no actions were taken by either the city authorities or the citizens against the French residents of Aleppo, as particularly emphasized by the Japanese researcher Hidemitsu Kuroki⁵⁸. Only on September 8, 1798, in accordance with government orders from Istanbul, were the French subjects placed under house arrest⁵⁹, and on September 16, all 36 individuals, including women and children, were “placed in one of the citadel’s rooms”⁶⁰: four small chambers, as Choderlos later wrote⁶¹. Property belonging to the French from houses and warehouses was removed, and the premises sealed. Servants and attendants were not allowed to remain with their employers⁶².

The repressions also affected local Christians attached to the French consulate as dragomans and assistants. What kind of people were these? A brief digression is necessary.

By the end of the 18th century, European presence in Aleppo had significantly declined due to the downturn in the city’s transit trade, including Iranian silk. The vacancies left by departing European merchants were filled by Middle Eastern Christian and Jewish traders. Ottoman non-Muslims were not concerned by the reduced profitability of caravan trade. The *dhimmi*s enjoyed significant advantages over the Western merchants: Arabic was their

⁵⁶ ‘Abbud, *Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī*. *Al-Murtād fī tā’rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād*. P. 297.

⁵⁷ Kuroki H. *Events in Aleppo During Napoleon’s Expedition of Egypt*. P. 264.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* P. 273.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* P. 264.

⁶⁰ ‘Abbud, *Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī*. *Al-Murtād fī tā’rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād*. P. 295.

⁶¹ Kuroki H. *Events in Aleppo During Napoleon’s Expedition of Egypt*. P. 264.

⁶² ‘Abbud, *Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī*. *Al-Murtād fī tā’rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād*. P. 295.

native or well-known language, they did not require intermediaries, and they had a deep understanding of the psychology of their counterparts – both the Muslims and the Europeans⁶³. Thus, in some cases, they were willing to accept lower profits than foreign entrepreneurs, and in others, able to increase profitability through skill and local knowledge.

With the intensification of commercial activity, *dhimmi* merchants increasingly turned to European consuls to obtain special documents: *berats*⁶⁴ and *firmans*, issued to dragomans (Ottoman: *turjuman*) and their assistants (Ottoman: *khizmetgar*), respectively. The overwhelming majority of these document holders used them as protective charters, confirming special extraterritorial status under the Capitulations regime⁶⁵: exemption from Sharia courts, relief from paying *jizya*⁶⁶, *reduced customs duties, and other privileges*. For consuls, putting individuals on the *berat* and *firman* lists became a highly profitable business. According to data available to the Istanbul authorities, Aleppo had six holders of “French” *berats* and twelve of *firmans*. In September 1798, the local judge (*qadi*) reported to the capital that in reality, only three dragomans and three assistants remained in the city; the rest had either died, moved to Istanbul, or could not be located⁶⁷.

⁶³ See also: *Goffman D.* The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. P. 90–91; *Masters B.* The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East: Mercantilism and the Islamic Economy in Aleppo, 1600–1750. New York: New York University Press, 1988. P. 60–62.

⁶⁴ Under the Capitulations regime in the second half of the 18th century, the term *barā‘a* (Arabic “skill”, “knowledge”) came to denote a patent that granted certain privileges to Ottoman non-Muslims employed in European consulates. *Berats* were issued to vice-consuls, dragomans (interpreters), guards, and, in some cases, even personal servants of consuls or consular employees. A *berat*-holder (*beratli*) did not cease to be an Ottoman subject but enjoyed various commercial, fiscal, and legal privileges, including consular protection. The privileges extended to members of his family. Two *firmans* were attached to each *berat* for the *beratli*’s assistants. Holders of these *firmans* – *nāfar firmanli* or *khizmetgār* – also enjoyed privileges, though personal and lesser than those of the *beratli*. European consuls widely practiced the sale of *berats* and *firmans* to prominent non-Muslim merchants and landowners.

⁶⁵ Capitulations – from *capitula* (Lat. “chapter”) – treaties granting subjects of foreign states and their nationals special rights within the Ottoman Empire.

⁶⁶ *Jizya* – a poll tax levied on *dhimmīs* (non-Muslim subjects).

⁶⁷ *Kuroki H.* Events in Aleppo During Napoleon’s Expedition of Egypt. P. 269.



Aleppo. Daguerreotype by Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey. 1843.
From open sources

The composition of this *berat* corps was multiethnic: the qadi's list included Arabic, Armenian, and Greek names⁶⁸. Yet these Christians acted with remarkable synchrony. Upon learning of the attack on Egypt, the “translators” attempted to surrender their *berats* and *firman*s to local authorities and obtain receipts for *jizya* payment. As noted by Hidemitsu Kuroki, this was an important, not so much symbolic as formal, step: by accepting the poll tax, Ottoman officials, as representatives of the Sultan and executors of the Muslim *umma*'s will, became “patrons” of the non-Muslims who had paid the *jizya*⁶⁹. The ruse failed: perceiving an opportunity for profit, local officials did not allow the tax to be paid; instead, they threatened the *berat* holders and extorted bribes. The “translators” petitioned Istanbul, and at the beginning of September 1798, the Aleppo qadi received a *firman* instructing lenient treatment of the French *turjumans* and *khizmetgars*, due to the uncertainty regarding their legal status⁷⁰.

On September 2, the Ottoman Empire officially entered a state of war with the French Republic, and by mid-month, a new government order arrived in Aleppo. The *berats* and *firman*s of the French consulate's trans-

⁶⁸ Ibid. P. 277.

⁶⁹ Ibid. P. 270.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

lators were to be annulled, and their holders reduced to the status of ordinary non-Muslim subjects. The decision was a compromise. As Yusuf ‘Abbud noted, none of these Christians were arrested, but their homes were sealed⁷¹. Yusuf Kubbe, a member of a wealthy Maronite family in Aleppo, reported that three dragomans attached to the French consulate — Hanna Andria, Antun Gaukas, and Antun Ghazzal — had to hide from persecution, and their houses were sealed⁷². Later, Consul Choderlos reported that the berat holder Hanna Andria was arrested but managed to escape under Swedish protection⁷³, though this was an isolated case.

A special situation developed around the berat holder Yusuf son of Krikor Farra, a wealthy Armenian merchant. ‘Abbud reported that he had freed his house from restrictions “through personal connections and a large monetary gift”⁷⁴. Yet the story did not end there. Yusuf Farra had to pay repeatedly; ultimately, after losing 200,000 piastres, he fled to Mount Lebanon, from where he requested a berat from Dubrovnik⁷⁵.

The fate of the Maronite Yusuf Karaali was tragic. Karaali himself was actively engaged in trade and served as a *mabzandji* (Arabic: “manager of goods”) or *dallal* (Arabic: “broker”) for the leading European merchant in the region, the Frenchman Thomas Velin, who, according to contemporaries, feared the influence and intrigues of his business partner⁷⁶. In August 1797, Consul Choderlos provided an extremely unflattering assessment of Karaali: “There is not a single Turk [Muslim — T.K.], European, or *rayah* [non-Muslim — T.K.] in this city who would not consider Joseph Karaali the most dangerous schemer”⁷⁷. In contrast, a Capuchin monk residing

⁷¹ ‘Abbūd, *Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī*. *Al-Murtād fī tā’rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād*. P. 295.

⁷² Quoted from: *Momdġian, Maran*. *The Levantine Merchant Consuls of Aleppo; The Commercial Elites 1750–1850*. A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in History. Los Angeles: University of California, 2017. P. 92.

⁷³ *Kuroki H*. *Events in Aleppo During Napoleon’s Expedition of Egypt*. P. 269.

⁷⁴ ‘Abbūd, *Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī*. *Al-Murtād fī tā’rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād*. P. 295.

⁷⁵ *Kuroki H*. *Events in Aleppo During Napoleon’s Expedition of Egypt*. P. 269.

⁷⁶ *Heyberger B*. *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique*. Rome: École Française de Rome, 1994. P. 129.

⁷⁷ *Kuroki H*. *Events in Aleppo During Napoleon’s Expedition of Egypt*. P. 272.

in Syria, while acknowledging that Karaali was universally regarded as an “schemer” and “the most audacious and reckless” person in Aleppo⁷⁸, nevertheless recognized his merits. “Several times”, the monk wrote, “he used his influence and his purse to free indebted Christians from prison, or to save others from being strangled [the traditional method of execution — T.K.]; he protected widows and orphans from the tyranny of the Turks”⁷⁹. One such case was recounted by ‘Abdallah Trad. Karaali, whom the Beirut chronicler called “an eloquent and knowledgeable man”⁸⁰, did not hesitate to intercede with Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar on behalf of imprisoned Orthodox Beirut merchants, securing their release through ransom⁸¹.

Yusuf Karaali was considered a man capable, thanks to his connections and wealth, of appointing and dismissing pashas and customs officials: “he succeeded in everything he undertook”⁸². However, misfortune befell the Maronite when in 1797 he actively intervened in the conflict between Thomas Velin and the muhassil Ibrahim Qattar-agasi⁸³. The dispute arose over the size of customs payments, a matter resolvable only at the governmental level. Karaali spent several months in Istanbul, meeting influential figures and distributing bribes in unsuccessful attempts to secure the resignation of the muhassil⁸⁴. In this struggle, the Qattar-agasi family emerged victorious, retaining enmity toward Karaali.

The opportunity for revenge came with the news of the French invasion. Qattar-agasi (by that time Pasha and governor of the Damascus province, and in September 1798, commander-in-chief of the Ottoman forces concentrated in Syria) and his son Muhammad, who had succeeded him as Aleppo’s muhassil, secured the issuance of several government firmans ordering the

⁷⁸ *Heyberger B. Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique. P. 128.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Трад, Абдаллах. Краткая история епископов. С. 180.*

⁸¹ *Ibid. С. 176.*

⁸² *Heyberger B. Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique. P. 128.*

⁸³ On the biography of the latter, see: *Bodman H. Political Factions in Aleppo. P. 38–40.*

⁸⁴ *‘Abbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī. Al-Murtād fī tā’rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 298; Heyberger B. Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique. P. 129.*

confiscation of Thomas Velin's money and property. In late November 1798 and January 1799, Velin, along with some other French merchants, was subjected to torture; Yusuf Karaali was interrogated as well⁸⁵. The berat issued to the Maronite by the Spanish consulate was annulled, Karaali was arrested, his property confiscated, his house sealed, and his records sent to Istanbul⁸⁶. The disgraced Christian became an easy target. After interrogations, he was transferred to the barracks of the *orta* (Ottoman: "company") of Sheikh Bubakr, who, promising to "petition the Porte for a firman for a pardon"⁸⁷, extorted the remaining hidden funds from Karaali. The Maronite awaited daily a directive from Istanbul "to release and pardon him"⁸⁸. Indeed, on February 6, a new firman arrived in Aleppo, requiring a renewed investigation into the property of French subjects. Thomas Velin and another merchant were again tortured⁸⁹, while Karaali was ordered executed.

Yusuf Karaali became the only individual to lose his life during the anti-French repressions in Aleppo, and his death shocked his co-religionists. The drama of the execution was heightened by the date — the first day of the sacred Muslim month of Ramadan — and the manner in which it was carried out. Yusuf 'Abbud vividly described the event. On the day of the execution, Karaali was summoned from prison and "told: Go home, rest!" He was handed over to four cruel men of violent temper, and after being led from Sheikh Bubakr's house to al-'Arkub⁹⁰, he was informed that he would be killed. He offered them money; they refused. Without a moment's delay or giving him time to prepare for his imminent encounter with eternity, one of them shot him, and another beheaded him. They stripped him to his shirt and threw him to the dogs, which devoured his flesh. The following afternoon, permission was granted to recover the bones gnawed by the dogs"⁹¹. Thus ended the life of Yusuf Karaali, which, as the Capuchin monk

⁸⁵ *Kuroki H.* Events in Aleppo During Napoleon's Expedition of Egypt. Pp. 265–266.

⁸⁶ *'Abbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī.* Al-Murtād fī tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 298.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ *Kuroki H.* Events in Aleppo During Napoleon's Expedition of Egypt. P. 266.

⁹⁰ A quarter in the northeastern part of Aleppo.

⁹¹ *'Abbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī.* Al-Murtād fī tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. Pp. 298–299.

philosophically observed, “for approximately twenty years had good and evil, hope and fear mingled in it”⁹².

Aleppo’s Christians fared better if they were under the protection of the Netherlands or Venice – countries then under French control. In February 1799, the Porte ordered subjects of the Batavian Republic to leave Aleppo⁹³; local Christians affiliated with the Dutch consulate were only required to surrender their *berats* and *firman*s and begin paying *jizya*⁹⁴. In March 1799, a similar decision applied to six dragomans and ten assistants affiliated with the Venetian consulate⁹⁵, occupied by Napoleon’s troops two years earlier. The former *berat* holders, relieved by the mild outcome, “after experiencing complete fear, received reassurance, and were given letters and certificates confirming that they were peaceful people and did not interfere in anything concerning the French”, as the chronicler noted⁹⁶.

At the beginning of January 1799, the authorities began auctioning off the sealed property of the French and “translators”. Ottoman officials, Muslim theologians, and “some other Muslims”, including, as Yusuf ‘Abbud emphasized, individuals from Palestine (*Balistan*)⁹⁷, took advantage of the opportunity to purchase houses and goods at bargain prices. The Christian chronicler emphasized that “no local Christian, Frenchman, or Jew participated in these auctions, nor anyone else, because they were prohibited by any law”⁹⁸. One can only speculate whether this was done out of inter-communal solidarity or whether minority representatives feared that the illegitimately acquired property might someday have to be returned to its rightful owners, while the Muslim elite felt more secure.

Describing the repressions against the Eastern Christian merchants connected to France and its European satellites, it should be noted that

⁹² Heyberger B. *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique*. P. 129.

⁹³ *Batavian Republic* – the official name of the Dutch Republic of the United Provinces during its occupation by France between 1795 and 1806.

⁹⁴ ‘Abbūd, *Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī*. *Al-Murtād fī tā’rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād*. P. 299.

⁹⁵ *Kuroki H*. *Events in Aleppo During Napoleon’s Expedition of Egypt*. P. 270.

⁹⁶ ‘Abbūd, *Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī*. *Al-Murtād fī tā’rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād*. Pp. 299–300.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* P. 296.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

other dhimmi merchants were unaffected by government sanctions and continued operations as before. The largest Christian traders in Aleppo from the Kubbe (Maronite) and Balit (Armenian) clans, under Ottoman protection, faced no obstacles, nor did the Christian merchants affiliated with the Austrian consulate⁹⁹. The aforementioned Yusuf Kubbe, in a letter of September 29, 1798, noted the successful delivery of a shipment of grain to the Pasha of Belen¹⁰⁰.

However, Christian merchants living in Sidon Pashalik faced greater difficulties. Mount Lebanon and adjacent areas of Syria could not fully supply their alimentary needs and depended on external deliveries, primarily from the Nile Valley. Contemporaries noted Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar's "concern" over the state of maritime trade following the French invasion of Egypt¹⁰¹. The ruler, hastening to replenish warehouse stocks, began forcibly purchasing grain at below-market prices. 'Abdallah Trad complained that rice was recorded upon purchase at 70 piastres instead of 100, and that the remaining 30% of the value was later compensated only to Muslim merchants. "The Christians were plundered", lamented the chronicler¹⁰². The Lebanese Shwairite¹⁰³ monk Hananiah al-Munayyir, exaggerating for effect, reported no partial compensation to Christian merchants for confiscated rice and wheat, "resulting in their losing large sums of money"¹⁰⁴. Moreover, showing unusual awareness for a clergyman, he noted that Beirut merchants had 35 *ratl*¹⁰⁵ of silk confiscated, of which no less than 24 *ratl* were sold¹⁰⁶.

⁹⁹ *Momdġian, Maran*. The Levantine Merchant Consuls of Aleppo. P. 147.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* P. 56.

¹⁰¹ *Al-Munayyir, Ĥanāniyā*. Kitāb al-ĥūrī Ĥanāniyā Al-Munayyir ĥuṭī [The Writing of the Sinful Priest Ĥanāniyā al-Munayyir] // Tārīḥ Aĥmad bāshā al-Jazzār [The History of Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar]. Bayrūt: Maktabat Anṭūn, 1955. Pp. 351–516. P. 465.

¹⁰² *Трад, Абдаллах*. Краткая история епископов. С. 180.

¹⁰³ The Shuweirite Brotherhood — a Greek Catholic (Melkite) Basilian order of St. John the Baptist (*Ordo Basilianus Sancti Iohannis Baptistae Melkitarum*), founded in 1712 in the village of Shweir (Shweyr/Shuweir) in Mount Lebanon, recognized by the Vatican in 1757.

¹⁰⁴ *Al-Munayyir, Ĥanāniyā*. Kitāb al-ĥūrī Ĥanāniyā Al-Munayyir. P. 465.

¹⁰⁵ *Ratl* — an Islamic unit of weight and volume, varying between 406 and 449.28 grams depending on time and region.

¹⁰⁶ *Al-Munayyir, Ĥanāniyā*. Kitāb al-ĥūrī Ĥanāniyā Al-Munayyir. P. 465.



Jazzar Pasha condemning a criminal. Artist Francis B. Spilsbury. 1799.
From the book *Picturesque Scenery in the Holy Land and Syria, Delineated during the Campaigns of 1799 and 1800.*
London: Edward Orme, 1803.
From open sources

Having conducted the requisitions, Ahmad Pasha, motivated by security concerns and possibly seeking to drive up prices for the grain stored in his warehouses, issued a ban on any communication with territories occupied by the French¹⁰⁷ “Because of this, prices rose for Egyptian goods such as rice, fabrics, sugar, and coffee”, the chronicler noted¹⁰⁸. The order was strictly enforced. Two Christian merchants from Acre — Antun Zaghīb and Hanna ‘Atiyya — who arrived at al-Jazzar’s court at the end of August 1798 with the French commissioner Bovoisin, were arrested, and their goods confiscated¹⁰⁹. Both were later executed¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁷ *Трад, Абдаллах. Краткая история епископов. С. 181.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *El-Turk N. Histoire de l’expédition française en Égypte / Publiée et traduite par M. Desgranges aîné. P.: Impr. royale, 1839. P. 60; al-Turk, Niqūlā ibn Yūsuf. Dhikr tamalluk djumhūr al-Faransāwiyya al-aqtār al-Miṣriyya wa-l-bilād al-Shāmiyya. P.: Impr. royale, 1839. Pp. 51–52.*

¹¹⁰ *Turk, Nicolas. Chronique d’Égypte, 1798–1804 / éd. et tr. Par Gaston Wiet. Le Caire: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1950; al-Turk, Niqūlā ibn Yūsuf. Mudhakkirāt Niqūlā al-Turk. Le Caire: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1950. P. 34.*

Let's make a preliminary summary. News of the Western army's invasion of neighboring Egypt did not provoke a wave of anti-Christian pogroms in Syria. Significant unrest occurred only in Beirut and Jerusalem. In Beirut, the unrest was a consequence of a historical wound that had not healed: the bloody siege and subsequent occupation by Russian troops a quarter century earlier. Jerusalem, in turn, was not only the largest city closest to the Egyptian border but also a center for European monks, whom local Muslims perceived as a potential "fifth column". In both cases, the consequences were less tragic than they might have been. Beirut Christians were forced to leave the city, abandoning their homes and part of their property, yet the chronicles record no murders or physical violence. In Jerusalem, monks endured several stressful hours of inspections and fear of the Muslim crowd, followed by more than three months in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, again without bloodshed. In Aleppo, a small group of merchants attached to the French consulate lost part of their money and property, and Yusuf Karaali paid with his life for his relentless energy and fearless opportunism. In Acre, two Christian merchants accompanying Bonaparte's emissary to Jazzar Pasha were arrested. In the remaining cities and towns of Greater Syria, including Damascus, no significant unrest was reported. The religious peace, founded on the principles of Sharia, was observed by Ottoman authorities almost without exception.

Interconfessional relations during the French invasion of Syria, spring 1799

Fragmented Syria appeared to Bonaparte as easy prey. Within a few weeks, he expected to seize the entire territory, including the coastal cities, Aleppo, Damascus, and Jerusalem. The French commander had particular plans for the local ethno-confessional minorities: he intended, in particular, "to arm the Christians of Syria, kindle an uprising among the Druze and the Maronites, and then act according to circumstances"¹¹¹. This, according to

¹¹¹ *Бонапарт, Наполеон. Кампания в Египте и Сирии (1798–1799 гг.) // О военном искусстве. Избранные произведения. Москва: ЭКСМО, 2003. С. 579.*

Napoleon's plans, would have supplemented his army with "18,000 Druze, Maronites, and other Syrians"¹¹². However, as the commander-in-chief admitted, "the course of events contradicted his calculations"¹¹³.

In mid-February 1799, French forces, numbering around 13,000 soldiers, crossed the Sinai Desert and captured the main outpost on the Egypt–Syria border: the fortress of El-Arish. On February 24, 1799, Napoleon's troops approached Gaza and occupied the city the following day. Upon learning that war had reached Syria, the Muslims of Jerusalem resorted to a previously tried method: on February 26, they placed the local Christians under custody in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher¹¹⁴. This time, monks and priests remained free, while about a thousand laypeople were arrested¹¹⁵: "young and old, excluding wives and children"¹¹⁶; as Neophytos of Cyprus later specified: 600 Orthodox, 300 Catholics, and 80 Armenians. Their large number was explained by the approach of Easter and the detention of Christian pilgrims, who aroused particular suspicion¹¹⁷. A document from the archives of Jerusalem's Sharia court records that on March 6, 1799 (29 Ramadan 1213 AH), 52 monks from Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Ramla¹¹⁸ were also placed in the same church, though the Christian sources do not mention this.

The Church of the Holy Sepulcher was accustomed to the role of a metochion: pilgrims had been accommodated within its walls for centuries. Maxim Simsky, habitually dramatizing, wrote that the pilgrims "fell under the mad attack of wild beasts, they were being kept under custody with the intent of being killed in an inhuman and savage manner"¹¹⁹. However, reality proved less dramatic. The hostages remained in the church

¹¹² Ibid. С. 580.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 88.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ *Неофит Кипрский*. Рассказ Неофита Кипрского. С. 30.

¹¹⁷ By the end of the 18th century, against the background of spreading secularism and the wars against revolutionary France, the number of European pilgrims declined, but Eastern Christians continued to arrive in large numbers to the Holy City for Easter (*Asali K.J.* Jerusalem under the Ottomans. P. 221).

¹¹⁸ *Mannā, Ādel*. The Sijill as Source for the Study of Palestine. P. 359.

¹¹⁹ *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 88.

“for over 75 days”¹²⁰, during which food was provided by monks of all three congregations¹²¹. Assistance was distributed selectively: each monastery fed its co-religionists. The prolonged stay in the Church apparently weighed more heavily on the monks than on the pilgrims, who were accustomed to long, unhurried pilgrimages: the Eastern Christians often worshipped for months, while the average European pilgrim’s stay in the Holy Land at the end of the 18th century used to be about six months¹²². In mid-May, on the eve of or during the French retreat from Acre, the hierarchs managed to negotiate with the authorities and, “having paid a large sum of money”, released the detainees “from the sacred prison”¹²³.

For comparison, let us consider what happened during these months to the Jewish community of Jerusalem. The geographer Joseph Schwarz (1804–1865), who moved from Bavaria to Jerusalem in 1833, wrote that in the spring of 1799 a rumor spread among the local Jews that Muslims accused them of colluding with Bonaparte and intended to kill them¹²⁴. The Jewish historian Isaac Rivkind collected complaints from Jerusalem’s Jews, who feared for their lives, property, and the “chastity of the daughters of Israel”. The city braced for the French invasion, the prices soared, and Muslim creditors demanded repayment of debts from Jews. To raise the necessary funds, the community imposed internal levies, taxed the previously exempt rabbis, sold silver-covered *me’irim* (Torah scroll covers), and even their own clothing¹²⁵. Demonstrating loyalty, the leading rabbis, Yom Tov Algazi and Mordechai Meyuchas, organized a prayer stand at the Western Wall, asking God to protect the city from the advancing French army. The rabbis did not stop at prayer; they volunteered to help the authorities prepare Jerusalem for defense. Hundreds of Jews took part in building fortifications around

¹²⁰ Ibid. C. 89.

¹²¹ *Неофит Кипрский*. Рассказ Неофита Кипрского. С. 30.

¹²² *Asali K.J.* Jerusalem under the Ottomans. P. 221.

¹²³ *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 89.

¹²⁴ *Schwartz J.* Descriptive Geography and Brief Historical Sketch of Palestine. Transl. by Isaak Leeser. Philadelphia: A. Hart, 1850. P. 374.

¹²⁵ *Rivkind I.* Separate Pages (Documents on the History of the Jewish Settlement in Palestine in the Eighteenth and the Nineteenth Centuries) // *Yerushalayim* (Collection of Papers in Memory of Abraham Moses Lunz), Jerusalem, 1929. P. 111–178. Quoted from: *Lieber Sh.* Mystics and Missionaries. The Jews in Palestine, 1799–1840. Salt Lake City: University of Utah press, 1992. P. 12.

the city citadel with the grey-haired Rabbi Mordechai leading by example with a shovel in hand. According to Schwarz, the diligence of Jerusalem's Jews earned them the gratitude and respect of the local Muslims¹²⁶. Nevertheless, the community's overall debt, which had been 50,000 piastres in 1797, had risen to 200,000 by the beginning of the 19th century¹²⁷.

Thus, Jerusalem's Jewish community adopted a more active stance compared to the Christians, demonstrating a high degree of adaptability and resourcefulness. Why did the Orthodox, Catholic, or Armenian hierarchs not attempt by word and deed to demonstrate loyalty to the Sultan? Why did the church shepherds not mobilize their flock for collective prayers and fortification work, preferring instead to negotiate directly with the Jerusalem authorities? Perhaps because they were not confident that the faithful would show the necessary zeal and diligence. However, we will see that the Jerusalem authorities found a way to use the local Christians even more effectively than for building fortifications.

On March 2, 1799, French detachments were within three miles of Jerusalem. Napoleon considered occupying the Holy City, hoping to "recruit a significant number of Christians and secure vital resources for the army" there¹²⁸. His soldiers were also excited at the prospect of seeing the Holy Sites. "The entire army was seized with a festive mood in anticipation of entering this famous Jerusalem", Napoleon recalled, "a few veteran soldiers, educated in seminaries, sang hymns and the 'Lamentations of Jeremiah,' as heard during Holy Week in European churches... The army was burning with desire to see Golgotha, the Holy Sepulcher, the plateau of Solomon's Temple; it felt bitter when ordered to turn away"¹²⁹.

Napoleon was forced to abandon the capture of the Holy City for tactical reasons and continued north along the coast. The next day, French vanguard units reached Jaffa, and on March 7, the decisive assault began. The attackers breached the walls through the Christian quarter¹³⁰, later one of the most heavily affected areas of the city. The massacre perpetrated by

¹²⁶ Schwarz J. *Descriptive Geography*. P. 374.

¹²⁷ Lieber Sh. *Mistics and Missionaries*. P. 12.

¹²⁸ *Бонапарт, Наполеон. Кампания в Египте и Сирии*. С. 591.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* С. 591–592.

¹³⁰ *al-Shihābī, 'amīr Ḥaydar Aḥmad. Lubnān fī 'ahd al-'umarā' al-Shihābīyīn [Lebanon in the Era of the Shihabi Emirs]. Bayrūt, 1969. T. 2. P. 257.*



Wailing Wall, Jerusalem. Artist Gustav Bauernfeind. 1887.
From open sources

the invaders was indescribable, shocking the more humane participants of the expedition. Doctor Étienne-Louis Malus recalled: “Soldiers tore to pieces men and women, young and old, Christians and Turks [Muslims — T.K.] alike. All living beings became victims of their cruelty”¹³¹. The shocking details of Malus’s account are too graphic to reproduce here. A few days after the assault, the surviving townspeople were forced to gather the corpses lying in the streets and houses for burial. They were also required to pay an enormous indemnity of 175,000 livres¹³². The city emptied: from 7–8,000 inhabitants, only 1–1,500 remained by 1800¹³³. Among the surviving prominent Christians and Muslims, Napoleon established a puppet self-governing body — a council (*divan*) of seven members¹³⁴.

Jaffa was only 33 miles from Jerusalem, and news from there reached the Holy City the same or the following day. On March 9, 1799, Bonapar-

¹³¹ Malus E-L. L’Agenda de Malus. Souvenirs de l’expédition d’Égypte 1798-1801 Paris: H. Champion, 1892. P. 135f.

¹³² Bernoyer F. Avec Bonaparte en Égypte et en Syrie 1798–1800 / ed. C. Tortel. Abbeville, 1976. P. 143.

¹³³ Kark R. Ottoman Jaffa: From Ruin to Central City in Palestine // The History and Archaeology of Jaffa 1 / ed. Martin Peilstöcker and Aaron A. Burke. Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press, 2011. P. 132.

¹³⁴ Jonquière C. de la. L’Expédition d’Égypte. Paris: Henri Charles-Lavauzelle, 1899. T. IV. P. 282.



Jerusalem, April 9, 1839. Artist Louis Haghe (1806–1885).
Illustration from *The Holy Land*, Vol. 1, fol. 16.
From open sources

te sent a message to the “sheikhs, ulama¹³⁵, and commandant of Jerusalem”. In the letter, the commander-in-chief urged the citizens to submit to the French army, calling himself a “friend of the Muslims”¹³⁶. The next day, March 10, a delegation of Jerusalem Christians arrived at Napoleon’s headquarters, sent by mutesellim Ismail Pasha either in response to this letter or after receiving news of Jaffa’s fall. The Christians “pleaded for their salvation” and described the threat posed by Jerusalem authorities to “kill them before allowing them to leave the city and cross the Jordan”. On the other hand, if the French did not advance on Jerusalem, the mutesellim promised to “release and protect the Christians, not aid Jazzar, and after Acre’s capture submit to the victor”¹³⁷. Napoleon did not reject this tempting offer: “It was advantageous”, he wrote. “It meant not abandoning a visit to Jerusalem, but postponing it for a week or two!”¹³⁸ The Jerusalem authorities kept their promise: no reprisals against Christians occurred until the end of the war.

¹³⁵ *Ulamā*’ (sing. *‘ālim*) — Muslim theologians and jurists, guardians of Islamic tradition and custodians of *sharī‘a*.

¹³⁶ *Napoléon*. Correspondance de Napoléon Ier. T. 5. Paris: Henri Plon, J. Dumain, 1860. P. 458.

¹³⁷ *Бонапарт, Наполеон*. Кампания в Египте и Сирии. С. 598.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* С. 598.

A situation similar to that in Jerusalem was observed in other parts of inner Syria, up to Transjordan. English officers Charles Leonard Irby and James Mangles, who visited Al-Karak in 1818, reported that during the French invasion of 1799, Muslims had intended to disarm and expel local Christians, but the ruling sheikh of Al-Karak had prevented this¹³⁹.

If Christians in Jerusalem escaped unscathed, in nearby Ramla, a town of about 1,000 inhabitants¹⁴⁰, the events were more dramatic. Maxim Simsky reported that on March 9, 1799, the Muslims from the surroundings of Jerusalem had stormed Ramla and looted the homes of Christians – both the Orthodox and the Uniates. Evidently, the main perpetrators were not only the militant fellahin from nearby villages but also residents of the neighboring mountainous districts centered in Nablus and Jenin. After the attack, Christian men, leaving their families, fled from Ramla, some reaching the French-occupied Jaffa. During a secondary attack on the town, around 200 Christian women and children were captured by Muslims; they were ransomed by the Holy Sepulcher monks and placed in the women's Monastery of Saints Theodores¹⁴¹. During the pogrom, the Church of Saint George the Victorious was burned, and a priest and an acolyte candle bearer were killed¹⁴². Christians only dared to return to Ramla several years later; the church was restored in 1817.

Archimandrite accounts leave out the circumstances suggesting that Muslim actions were motivated by more than a desire to rob the defenseless Christians. A week before the first attack, the French army had passed through Ramla. The commander of the engineering brigade, J.-F. Detrua (1771–1799), recorded in his diary that Christian women of the town “came

¹³⁹ *Irby C.L., James M. Travels in Egypt and Nubia, Syria, and the Holy Land, Including a Journey Round the Dead Sea, and through the Country East of the Jordan.* London: John Murray, 1852. P. 112.

¹⁴⁰ *Cohen A. Ottoman Rule and the Re-Emergence of the Coast of Palestine // Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée, No. 39, 1985. P. 166. Napoleon wrote of Ramla that its entire population was Christian (Бонапарт, Наполеон. Кампания в Египте и Сирии. С. 592), however, both in the late 16th and early 19th centuries, Muslims constituted the majority of its inhabitants (Панченко К.А. Ближневосточное Православие под османским владычеством. С. 140–141).*

¹⁴¹ *Максим Симский. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 88.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

out to greet the French... They and their children demonstrated immense joy at our arrival”¹⁴³. Cartographer Pierre Jacotin (1765–1827) also noted the warm reception of the French by Ramla’s residents¹⁴⁴. Napoleon himself entered Ramla the next day, inspected local sites, and spent the night in the Franciscan monastery of St. Nicodemus and St. Joseph of Arimathea. The support shown by Ramla’s Christians for the invaders was a sign of disloyalty for the Muslims and a pretext to punish the dhimmi, likely by imposing additional contributions. Consequently, Christian men considered it prudent to leave the city temporarily, safeguarding remaining money and valuables from further exactions. Finding the household heads absent, the armed fellahin and mountain dwellers captured their wives and sold them for ransom to the Holy Sepulcher monks.

The punishment of Ramla’s Christians was evidently part of a jihad that united the Muslims of Nablus. The *mutesellim* of the Jenin sanjak, Sheikh Yusuf Jarrar, wrote a patriotic poem calling his co-religionists to unite in the face of the invasion, reports of which “brought tears to the eyes and fire to the heart”¹⁴⁵. “The nation of infidels is attacking us, intending to destroy our mosques!” proclaimed Sheikh Yusuf, appealing to devout Muslims. His call was heeded. On March 15, combined forces of Nablus sheikhs, numbering 4,000 with 1,000 Mamluk support, confronted Napoleon’s troops near Khan-Kakun. The French won the battle but could not pursue the retreating Nablus forces into the mountains. The region remained under the sheikhs’ control until the end of the Syrian expedition.

Yusuf Jarrar was not the only Syrian attempting to ignite a flame of jihad in Muslim hearts. Sheikh Musa al-Khalidi (1767–1832) was an *alim* from an influential Jerusalem family, who by 1799 had risen to the position of *qadi asker* of Anatolia¹⁴⁶; he issued a proclamation calling Palestine’s Muslims to resist Bonaparte¹⁴⁷. Later, the notable Jerusalemite Sufi Muhammad ibn Bu-

¹⁴³ Jonquière C. *de la*. L’Expédition en Egypte. T. IV, P. 237.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Doumani, *Beshara*. Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700–1900. Berkeley: University of California press, 1995. P. 17.

¹⁴⁶ *Qāḍī (kadi) ‘asker* — the supreme judge over military and religious matters. Since the late 15th century, judicial affairs in the European part of the Ottoman Empire were handled by the *Qāḍī ‘asker* of Rumelia, and in the Asian–African part by the *Qāḍī ‘asker* of Anatolia.

¹⁴⁷ Asali K.J. Jerusalem under the Ottomans. P. 222.

dayr (1747–1805) composed a poem glorifying al-Jazzar’s struggle against Napoleon¹⁴⁸. A communication from Palestine’s sheikhs to the Porte, based on an intercepted “letter from Bonaparte”, an obvious Ottoman forgery, survives. The provocation achieved its purpose. Arab sheikhs reported in horror that the French command’s true goal was to slaughter Egypt’s inhabitants, seize their property, and enslave their children. The context suggests that the sheikhs wrote to Istanbul during the siege of Acre, noting that while the city held, Bonaparte intended to lull the faithful with sweet but false words. After the fortress’s capture, he allegedly planned to set Muslims against one another to exterminate them entirely. The ultimate objective of his invasion was the Hijaz, with the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, where the French allegedly planned to commit atrocities similar to those in Egypt and Palestine¹⁴⁹.

While inciting hatred toward the French invaders, the Ottoman authorities simultaneously sought to prevent interconfessional clashes and pogroms against their Christian subjects. Surviving records (*sijillat*) of Jerusalem’s Sharia court contain a series of similar firmans and other government orders concerning Syrian non-Muslims. Both central and provincial authorities instructed officials to treat dhimmi properly, “for as long as they pay jizya and show no signs of treachery, they and their monasteries must be protected from popular oppression”¹⁵⁰. The Beirut chronicler also noted the tolerant attitude toward Christians by Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar, who in early 1799, in addition to the Sidon Eyalet, received governorships of Tripoli and Damascus. “Al-Jazzar”, wrote ‘Abdallah Trad, “... being the governor of Damascus, Jerusalem, and their lands, as well as ruler of Acre, Jaffa, Sidon, Beirut, and their territories, constantly sent orders far and wide, urging Muslims not to oppress Christians, subjects of our Sultan. He threatened vengeance on anyone who harmed a Christian”¹⁵¹. “For this good deed”, the Orthodox chronicler added, “the Almighty rewarded him with victory over the Franks”¹⁵².

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ The document is preserved in the Saints Cyril and Methodius National Library in Sofia. Quoted from: *Ze’evi, Dror. Ottoman Intelligence Gathering During Napoleon’s Invasion of Egypt and Palestine // The Ottoman Middle East. Studies in Honor of Amnon Cohen / ed. Eyal Ginio and Elie Podeh. Leiden: Brill, 2014. P. 52.*

¹⁵⁰ *Mannā, Ādel. The Sijill as Source for the Study of Palestine P. 358.*

¹⁵¹ *Трад, Абдаллах. Краткая история епископов. С. 181–182.*

¹⁵² Ibid. С. 182.

Precautionary measures against a potential “fifth column” were taken by al-Jazzar only when the French army approached Acre, his residence, on March 20. At this time, Rabbi Nachman (1772–1810), founder of Bratslav Hasidism, was in the city, returning home after a pilgrimage disrupted by the war. The rabbi recalled that on March 17, the Pasha announced that “only two hours remained for those unable to bear arms to leave the city by sea, as the gates were closed, and the only exit was toward the sea; those who did not leave would be slaughtered by the Muslims, who had to prepare the city for defense and intended to kill all [noncombatants] remaining inside [the walls]”¹⁵³. Rabbi Nachman noted that this order caused panic among non-Muslims and a terrible uproar¹⁵⁴. Before the war, Acre had a predominantly Christian population, and the dhimmi were not permitted to bear arms under Sharia. They could not board ships simultaneously, and the vessels in the harbor could carry only a few hundred people at most, anyway. Syrian chronicles report no subsequent massacre of Acre’s non-Muslims, so evidently al-Jazzar did not immediately carry out his threat. The executions, according to French sources, took place only on March 30, when the Pasha ordered the killing of around 100 Christians in the city suspected of sympathizing with the invaders¹⁵⁵. Their bodies were stuffed into coffee and rice crates and thrown into the sea; some crates were washed back ashore¹⁵⁶. One can only speculate how much this mass execution was intended to intimidate Acre’s Christians as opposed to preventing an imminent real rebellion.

During the siege of Acre, the Christians of Damascus also suffered. The hostility of the local Muslims had been growing ever since news of the French invasion of Egypt¹⁵⁷ reached the region and peaked in the spring of 1799. “Christians were subjected to severe trials”, complained a Damascene chronicler, “their homes were looted, and they suffered great losses, yet by

¹⁵³ Quoted from: *Schur N. Napoleon in the Holy Land*. London: Greenhill books, 1999. Pp. 82–83.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ B In his report to the Directory, Napoleon stated that 200 Christians in Acre had been executed by al-Jazzar (*Jonquière C. de la. L’Expédition d’Égypte*. T. IV. P. 440).

¹⁵⁶ *Schur N. Napoleon in the Holy Land*. P. 89.

¹⁵⁷ *Al-Dimashqī, Mīkhā’il. Tā’rikh ḥawādīs jarat bi-l-Shām wā sawāḥil Barr al-Shām wā-l-Jabal min sana 1197 ilā sana 1257 hijriya (1782–1841 masīhiya)*. Bayrūt: al-Maṭba‘a al-kāthūlikiya li-l-‘abā’ al-yasū‘iyīn, 1912. P. 9.



A Market in Acre. Artist Francis B. Spilsbury. 1799.
 From the book *Picturesque Scenery in the Holy Land and Syria, Delineated during the Campaigns of 1799 and 1800*. London: Edward Orme, 1803.
From open sources

God’s providence, all was resolved”¹⁵⁸. The main danger for the dhimmi came from local bandits, who sought to take advantage of the power vacuum: Jazzar Pasha was locked in besieged Acre, and the Damascene army marching to his aid was defeated on April 16 near Mount Tabor. Among the most lawless was a certain ‘Abid al-‘Adhami, who gathered a band of 40 to 50 brigands. The gang terrorized the people of Damascus indiscriminately, targeting both Muslims and Christians¹⁵⁹.

The arrival of the first Ottoman troops from Rumelia (the European part of the Ottoman Empire) in Damascus in the summer of 1799 did not improve the situation for Christians. The local chronicler¹⁶⁰ did not spare them epithets: according to him, these were “vicious, cruel men, libertines and drunkards”¹⁶¹. The low moral character of the Rumelian soldiers, in-

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. P. 10.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ The author of this chronicle, who signed himself as Mīkhā’īl al-Dimashqī (“Mikhail the Damascene”), was, as demonstrated by the Israeli scholar Fruma Zachs, the Ottoman Christian historian, music theorist, and physician Mikhail Mishāqa (1800–1888) (*Zachs F. Miha’īl Mishaqa: The First Historian of Modern Syria // British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. №28/1, 2001. P. 67–87; *Zachs F. The Making of a Syrian Identity — Intellectuals and Merchants in Nineteenth Century Beirut*. Leiden, 2005. P. 178–179).

¹⁶¹ *Al-Dimashqī, Mīkhā’īl. Tā’rikh ḥawādīs jarat bi-l-Shām*. P. 11.

compatible with the ethics of devout Muslims, did not prevent them from showing aggression toward Syrian Christians, “insulting and humiliating them”¹⁶². The excuse for harassment was the appearance of the dhimmi. In Damascus, “there existed an ancient custom of wearing *kavuk*¹⁶³: Muslims wore white muslin¹⁶⁴, Christians black or dark blue, Jews red; all knew the rule, and no one violated it”¹⁶⁵. However, the arriving Rumelian soldiers also wore tall conical hats (*kulbak*) with attached bells¹⁶⁶. Apparently, the soldiers considered the *kavuk* of Damascus Christians too similar to their own headgear. Under the pressure of insults and extortion, the Christians of Damascus “deemed it necessary to abandon wearing the *kavuk* and began to wear shawls of gray, black, and dark blue, while the Jews wore red”¹⁶⁷.

In Aleppo, Christians also suffered material losses related to violations of the modest style of dress prescribed by Sharia. As early as February 3, 1799, a decree was issued concerning the wearing of red headgear (*klobuks*) by Christians — tall hats of conical, rounded, or cylindrical shape¹⁶⁸. This tradition was long-standing and was not only a privilege but also a reason to levy an additional tax on the dhimmi, amounting annually to 4,000 piastres¹⁶⁹. However, the new governor of Aleppo, Sharif Pasha, ordered them to pay 9,000 kurush¹⁷⁰ at once, because, as Yusuf ‘Abbud wrote bitterly, “all of the vizier’s [Sharif Pasha’s] entourage was insatiable”¹⁷¹. In the spring of 1799, as the French army approached his territories, the wali feverishly prepared troops to repel the invasion. Considerable funds were required, and they were collected by all means, fair and foul. The chronicler noted that

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ *Kavuk* — a tall, cylindrical or conical headgear, around which a turban was wrapped.

¹⁶⁴ *Muslin* (from the city of Mosul) — a fine plain-weave fabric made of cotton, and less frequently of wool, silk, or linen.

¹⁶⁵ *Al-Dimashqī, Mīkhā’īl*. Tā’rikh ḥawādis jarat bi-l-Shām. P. 11.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ ‘Abbūd, *Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī*. Al-Murtād fī tā’rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 297.

¹⁶⁹ Bodman H. Political Factions in Aleppo. P. 45.

¹⁷⁰ *Kirsh*, pl. *kurush*) — a silver Ottoman coin; Europeans usually referred to it as the “piastre”.

¹⁷¹ ‘Abbūd, *Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī*. Al-Murtād fī tā’rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 297.

in April 1799 Sharif Pasha “taxed everything arriving from Istanbul to Syria that he needed for equipping the army”¹⁷². Christian merchants had to pay as well; they were forced to hand over 100,000 kurush on the pretext that their business partners in Istanbul were traitors¹⁷³.

A great stir was caused by a Bedouin raid on the famed Orthodox monastery: the Lavra of Saint Saba¹⁷⁴. Maxim Simsky dated the sacking of the Lavra to the end of March 1800¹⁷⁵, but it is more likely that it had occurred a year earlier, as indicated by the German naturalist Ulrich Seetzen, who visited Palestine in 1806. The pretext for the raid, the traveler wrote, was that men from Bedouin tribes west of the Jordan had joined the Damascene army in the campaign against Napoleon. Taking advantage of this, the Hadjaya tribe and other nomads from Transjordan invaded the West Bank and plundered the Lavra; some groups reached Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The Khtem tribe, with which the Sabaite monks had a protection agreement, could not allow a raid on “their” territory to go unpunished. The Khtem crossed the Jordan and struck the Hadjaya; several encampments were destroyed, and women and children were killed. The Hadjaya declared blood vengeance on the Khtem¹⁷⁶.

The French invasion of Syria led to increased interconfessional tensions across the country. In the largest cities — Damascus and Aleppo — the dhimmi were forced to observe certain dress restrictions. In Jerusalem, around 1,000 pilgrims were preemptively detained in the Church of the Holy Sepul-

¹⁷² Ibid. P. 302.

¹⁷³ Ibid. P. 301.

¹⁷⁴ The Lavra of St. Sabbas — a Greek Orthodox monastery on the western bank of the Jordan River, midway between Bethlehem and the Dead Sea.

¹⁷⁵ Максим Симский. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 90–91.

¹⁷⁶ Seetzen J.U. Reisen durch Syrien, Palästina, Phönicien, die Transjordan-Länder, Arabia Petraea und Unter-Aegypten. 4 vols. Berlin: G. Reimer, 1854. Vol. III. P. 49. Quoted from: Schick R. Jordan at the Turn of the 18th–19th Centuries: Napoleon and the Wahhabis // Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan XIV. Culture in Crisis: Flows of Peoples, Artifacts, and Ideas. Amman: Department of Antiquities, 2022. P. 716.

cher. The general treatment of non-Muslims worsened, fueled by circulating reports of the Napoleonic army's atrocities in Jaffa, the hardships caused by wartime conditions, and the prevailing atmosphere of anxiety. Christians of Ramla, who had warmly welcomed French soldiers, suffered greatly at the hands of their Muslim neighbors. However, the Ottoman administration maintained a balanced religious policy, preventing pogroms. French sources mention the execution of hundreds of Christians in besieged Acre on al-Jazzar's orders, but the exact number of victims, the true reasons, or even the historical reality of the executions remain uncertain. Conversely, we see that while inciting a jihad against European invaders, Ottoman authorities and Islamic religious leaders protected Eastern Christians from harm. This did not prevent officials from using Christian communities and their wealthy leaders as a source of funds needed for the war effort.

Syrian Christians and the French army

Different ethno-confessional groups in Syria perceived the invaders differently. For most Muslims, the French were "Franks" who, after a hiatus of several centuries, sought to seize Islamic lands once again. Yet the republican army bore little resemblance to the medieval Crusaders. The Ottoman propaganda, attempting to explain the unprecedented alliance between the Sultan and Christian monarchies Russia and England, emphasized the "godlessness" of their common enemies – the French revolutionaries, who had rejected God and become the "army of Shaitan"¹⁷⁷. However, these ideas apparently reached the minds of the Arab populace with difficulty. Even in Damascus – the empire's third-largest city – the Janissary officer Hasan-aga al-'Abd (d. 1826), a man of considerable local influence, wrote that Egypt had been attacked by "French Christians"¹⁷⁸. Subsequently, he

¹⁷⁷ Кириллина С.А. Бунабарди-паша и «воинство шайтана»: ислам в политике Восточной экспедиции Бонапарта (1798–1801 гг.) // Французский ежегодник 2017: Франция и Средиземноморье в Новое и Новейшее время. Москва: ИВИ РАН, 2017. С. 219–238.

¹⁷⁸ al-'Abd, Hasan-āḡa. Tārikh Hasan-āgha al-'Abd: kiṭ'a minhu. Hawādith sanat 1186 ilā sanat 1241 H (История Хасан-аги аль-'Абда. Отрывок. События 1186–1241 гг. X) / ed. Na'īsa, Yūsuf Jamīl. Dimashq, 1979. Pp. 36–37.

persistently continued to call Bonaparte's republican army "Christians"¹⁷⁹, while clearly distinguishing between the European allies of Istanbul and the hostile forces.

Eastern Christians, for their part, had a mixed attitude toward the invading French army. Abdallah Trad reported that the French were "feared in all Syrian provinces up to Aleppo, and their power was dreaded, for all knew them as godless heretics"¹⁸⁰. Indeed, Syrian Christian chroniclers referred to the ideology established in the French Republic as "heresy" (Arabic *ghartaka*), "proud faith", "devilish delusion"¹⁸¹, "unbelief, godless faith" (Arabic *kufir*), and "abominable godlessness"¹⁸². Syrian Christians learned about the French Revolution and the ensuing wars primarily from Catholic monks and other supporters of the Old Regime¹⁸³, who, as noted by the Russian consul in Beirut, K. M. Bazili (1809–1884), "had already depicted Bonaparte's army in the most repulsive colors"¹⁸⁴. As a result, much of the church clergy sincerely wished for the destruction of Napoleon's army and discouraged their flock from supporting it. "May God deliver our country from the invasion of these godless creeping vermin and help the Egyptian people", wrote the Maronite cleric Girgis Ghanem to his patriarch Joseph VII Tyān (1796–1809)¹⁸⁵. Local Orthodox clergy felt no sympathy for the invaders either. The abbot of the Lavra of Saint Saba, Neophytos of Cyprus,

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. Pp. 49–52, 54, 62.

¹⁸⁰ Trad, *Абдаллах*. Краткая история епископов. С. 181. The insertions in the manuscript version preserved in the Oriental Library of Saint Joseph University in Beirut — where the word "all" is expanded to "that is, Muslims", and after "heretics" is added "according to their claim" — are later corrections in which the copyist attempted to shift emphasis. See: Константинопольский И.Г. Бейрутская летопись Абдаллаха ибн Михаила Трада // Арабы-христиане в истории и литературе Ближнего Востока. М.: Изд-во ПСТГУ, 2013. С. 154–158.

¹⁸¹ *‘Abbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī*. Al-Murtād fi tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 272.

¹⁸² *Al-Munayyir, Ḥanāniyā*. Kitāb al-ḥūrī Ḥanāniyā Al-Munayyir. P. 448.

¹⁸³ See also: Кобищанов Т.Ю. Бедный, бедный Людовик... Французская революция в сиро-ливанских хрониках // Французский ежегодник 2025. [In print].

¹⁸⁴ Базили К.М. Сирия и Палестина под турецким правительством в историческом и политическом отношениях. М.: Изд-во Восточной литературы, 1962. С. 69.

¹⁸⁵ *La Révolution française et l'Orient*. 1789–1989. Paris: Cariscript. 1989. P. 267.

recalled with undisguised satisfaction how the plague epidemic “divinely mowed down those [French invaders in Syria] like wheat”¹⁸⁶.

Of course, priests and monks present in the occupied territories outwardly displayed full Christian humility and benevolence. At the approach of the French, monasteries opened their gates¹⁸⁷, provided shelter, wine, and food for soldiers, and cared for the wounded and sick, in Napoleon’s words, “as the French themselves might have cared”. For example, after the storming of Jaffa, wounded soldiers were housed in a nearby Greek Orthodox monastery, the sick in Armenian and Catholic monasteries. “The number of the sick reached 700”, Napoleon recalled; “the corridors, cells, dormitories, and courtyard [of the Franciscan monastery] were full of them”¹⁸⁸. However, the Minorite friars proved less selfless than one might expect from people devoted to God. When symptoms of plague appeared among the French, “the monks of the Holy Land order locked themselves in and refused further contact with the sick”¹⁸⁹. “The hospital was so abandoned”, Napoleon recalled, “that food supplies were lacking”¹⁹⁰. Neither threats nor appeals to Christian and humanitarian values helped. Desperate, the commander-in-chief sent the Minorites to Jerusalem and Nazareth.

On April 17, after the battle near Mount Tabor, the Franciscan monastery in Nazareth opened its gates to quarter French officers, and its cells were turned into a hospital for wounded and sick republican soldiers. The residents engaged in efforts to save the lives and souls of their new charges; some dying men gratefully took the opportunity to confess. At the request of the holy fathers, Bonaparte agreed to be the godfather of a newborn child. The Franciscans did not limit themselves to humanitarian work. On the occasion of the Muslim army’s defeat, the monks held thanksgiving services with organ music and the singing of the liturgical hymn *Te Deum* (“We Praise You, O God”), performed in the Catholic tradition on major

¹⁸⁶ *Неофит Кипрский*. Рассказ Неофита Кипрского. С. 30.

¹⁸⁷ It should be noted that Syrian monasteries also warmly welcomed opponents of the French. Commodore Sidney Smith (1764–1840) recalled a ceremonial dinner in Acre attended by British and Ottoman officers as well as civilians; the reception took place in a Christian monastery. (*Howard E. Memoirs of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith*. L.: R. Bentley, 1839. Т. 1. Рр. 158–159).

¹⁸⁸ *Бонапарт, Наполеон*. Кампания в Египте и Сирии. С. 596.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* С. 597.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*



Bonaparte visiting plague victims of Jaffa on March 11, 1799.
 Artist Antoine-Jean Gros. 1804.
From open sources

feast days¹⁹¹. It is noteworthy that the Franciscans, who had previously demonized “the godless heretics”, now praised the French republicans.

Later, the Franciscans openly shared their true feelings. In 1800, the Custodian of the Holy Land told the British surgeon Francis Spilsbury: “When General Dumas¹⁹² with a detachment of the French army was a few leagues from Jerusalem, he sent [a messenger to Bonaparte], asking permission to attack. Bonaparte replied that when he captured Acre, he would personally come and plant the Tree of Liberty on the very spot where Christ suffered; and that the first French soldier to die in the capture of Jerusalem would be buried in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher”¹⁹³. One can imagine the horror and disgust of the Franciscan monks at the thought of such sacrilege.

While the clergy exhibited hypocritical hospitality upon meeting republican soldiers, the Christian common people apparently genuinely

¹⁹¹ *Jonquière C. de la. L'Expédition d'Égypte. T. IV. P. 425.*

¹⁹² In fact, this was the French General François-Étienne Damas (1764–1828). Spilsbury confused him with another general, Alexandre-Thomas Dumas (1762–1806), father of the famous novelist Alexandre Dumas. A.-T. Dumas left Egypt on 7 March 1799.

¹⁹³ *Spilsbury F.B. Picturesque Scenery in the Holy Land and Syria Delineated During the Campaigns of 1799 and 1800. London: G.S. Tregear, 1823. P. 69.*

welcomed the French. This is unanimously recorded by a chorus of chroniclers, including the Greek-Catholic priest from Deir al-Qamar, Rufʿail Karam al-Himsi (1730–1800)¹⁹⁴, cousin of the ruling emir of Mount Lebanon, Haydar al-Shihabi (1761–1835)¹⁹⁵, and the Orthodox Beirutite Abdallah Trad (who cautiously noted that “the Muslims thought so”)¹⁹⁶. None of these chroniclers had been in the zone of French occupation, but there is no doubt about the reliability of their information.

Ulrich Jasper Seetzen heard in Palestine and Transjordan many poems and songs describing the French invasion. In one poetic work, a certain “Arab bard” Shammas, living in Es-Salt¹⁹⁷, urged the local Christians to immediately enter the service of Bonaparte. The language of these verses, Seetzen noted, “was so ornate that Muslims or al-Muwahidin [Arabic: *al-muwahhidin*, ‘monotheists’] could not understand their meaning”¹⁹⁸. The German historian and archaeologist Robert Schick reasonably concluded that by deliberately complicating the style of the poem and refusing to commit it to paper, the Christians were concealing their disloyalty to the Ottoman authorities¹⁹⁹. However, another circumstance must be considered. At the end of the eighteenth century, about 100 Christians from Nazareth had moved to Es-Salt to escape Ahmed Pasha’s levies²⁰⁰. It is quite likely that Shammas was one of these settlers, with personal reasons to hate al-Jazzar and to wish for Napoleon’s victory.

It was mentioned above about how the Christians of Ramla welcomed the French. A similar enthusiasm was shown by the inhabitants of Nazareth,

¹⁹⁴ *Karāma, Rufāʿil al-Himsī*. Maṣādir tāriḥiya. Ḥawādith Lubnān wa Sūriya min sanat 1745 ilā sanat 1800 [Historical Sources: Events in Lebanon and Syria from 1745 to 1800]. Beirut, 1969. P. 157.

¹⁹⁵ *al-Shihābī, ʿamīr Ḥaydar Aḥmad*. Lubnān fī ʿahd al-ʿumarāʾ al-Shihābīyīn. T. 1. P. 192.

¹⁹⁶ *Trad, Абдаллах*. Краткая история епископов. С. 181–182.

¹⁹⁷ As-Salt is a city in northwestern Jordan, 30 km from the capital, Amman.

¹⁹⁸ *Seetzen J.U.* Reisen durch Syrien, Palästina, Phönicien, die Transjordan-Länder, Arabia Petraea und Unter-Aegypten. 4 vols. Berlin: G. Reimer, 1854. Vol. III. P. 49. Quoted from: *Schick R.* Jordan at the Turn of the 18th–19th Centuries. P. 716.

¹⁹⁹ *Schick R.* Jordan at the Turn of the 18th–19th Centuries. P. 716.

²⁰⁰ *Steen E. van der.* Near Eastern Tribal Societies during the Nineteenth Century: Economy, Society and Politics between Tent and Town. London: Equinox, 2013. P. 189.

a town of about 1,250 people, 60% Christian and 40% Muslim. On March 23, 1799, Bonaparte ordered General Berthier to ensure the safety of Nazareth's residents from "Arabs [Bedouins] or other thieves"²⁰¹. On March 31, a detachment under General Jean-Antoine Junot (1771–1813) occupied the town. Junot himself stationed in the Franciscan monastery at the Church of the Annunciation. The local Christians showed open excitement at the arrival of the French²⁰² and sent a delegation — including elderly sheikhs — to the commander-in-chief's headquarters. Bonaparte recalled in his memoirs being struck by an appearance of three elders each over 90 years old: "One of them was 101 years old and presented to him [Napoleon liked to write of himself in the third person — T.K.] his descendants down to the fourth generation. The commander-in-chief invited him to dine with him. This elder could not speak three words without quoting from the Holy Scriptures"²⁰³. As was his custom, Napoleon gifted the sheikhs revolutionary tricolor cloaks.

Exaggerating somewhat, Bonaparte recalled that several thousand Christians from Nazareth, Shafa-Amr, and Safad had come to his headquarters — they "appeared in masses". "The joy of these Christians is impossible to express", he wrote proudly, "after so many centuries of oppression, they saw co-religionists!"²⁰⁴ It should be noted that Shafa-Amr was then predominantly a Muslim town. Later, in Egypt, the sheikh of Shafa-Amr, Ya'qub Hubaybi, commanded one of the companies of "Syrian mounted Janissaries" formed by order of the commander-in-chief²⁰⁵. Regarding Safad (Tzfata), in 1812 the Swiss traveler Johann Ludwig Burckhardt (1784–1817) counted 600 houses, with Jews living in 150 and Christians in 80–100²⁰⁶. Thus, speaking of "masses" of Christians is an exaggeration: the numbers were in the hundreds, not thousands.

Syrian Christians were drawn not only by the desire to see Europeans and "talk about the Bible, which they knew better than the French sol-

²⁰¹ *Jonquière C. de la. L'Expédition d'Égypte. T. IV. P. 328.*

²⁰² *Shur N. Napoleon in the Holy Land. P. 95.*

²⁰³ *Бонапарт, Наполеон. Кампания в Египте и Сирии. С. 604–605.*

²⁰⁴ *Ibid. С. 604.*

²⁰⁵ *Brégeon J.-J. L'Égypte française au jour le jour, 1798–1801. Paris: Perrin, 1991. P. 353.*

²⁰⁶ *Burckhardt J.L. Travels in Syria and the Holy Land. London: John Murray, 1822. P. 317.*

diers”²⁰⁷. They also saw the arrival of the Western army as an opportunity to earn money. In the French camp under besieged Acre, Syrian Christians set up a bazaar, which “was distinguished by crowds and abundance; they supplied flour of various sorts, rice, vegetables, milk, cheese, livestock, fruits, figs, raisins, wine”²⁰⁸. Arab sources noted that local Christians provided the French with “wine and goods, for which they received much money”²⁰⁹. The Jews, including those from Safad, also sold provisions and alcohol²¹⁰. Only one case of gratuitous supply is known: when Maronite Patriarch Joseph Tyan, awaiting the outcome of the struggle for Acre, sent several people to the French with a cargo of wine and other gifts²¹¹. In the accompanying letter to Bonaparte, the Patriarch emphasized that he did this “out of love for our French brothers, not for you, who persecuted the Catholic Church”²¹². This, however, was an exception. Hanania al-Munayyir, either outraged by the greed of his co-religionists or admiring their commercial acumen, recalled that wine was sold to the French at 130 kurush per *qantar*²¹³, and *arak*²¹⁴ at 6 kurush per *ratl*. After the French withdrew, prices fell to 20 kurush for wine and 1¼ for arak, i.e., five to six times lower²¹⁵.

The sale of alcohol was so profitable that Christians transported it at personal risk through areas controlled by Ottoman authorities. The court chronicler of Sadrazam Yusuf Ziya Pasha, ‘Izzet Hasan Efendi ad-Darendeli, recorded that Damascene soldiers prevented Christians from traveling “from afar into the land of Canaan”²¹⁶ from joining the

²⁰⁷ *Бонапарт, Наполеон. Кампания в Египте и Сирии*. С. 604.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.* С. 605.

²⁰⁹ *al-Shihābī, ‘amīr Ḥaydar Aḥmad*. Lubnān fi ‘ahd al-‘umarā’ al-Shihābīyīn. T. 2. P. 263.

²¹⁰ *Shur N*. Napoleon in the Holy Land. P. 95.

²¹¹ *Harik, Iliya F*. Politics and Change in a Traditional Society: Lebanon, 1711–1845. Princeton, 1968. P. 203.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ *Qantar* — an Islamic unit of weight, consisting of 100 *ratls* of 406–449.28 grams each.

²¹⁴ *Arak* — an anise-flavored alcoholic beverage with a strength of 40°–60°.

²¹⁵ *Al-Munayyir, Ḥanāniyā*. Kitāb al-ḥūrī Ḥanāniyā Al-Munayyir. P. 470.

²¹⁶ Ad-Darendeli used, alongside the rarely employed Ottoman administrative term *muhāfaẓa* (“region to be defended”), the already archaic toponym *Canaan*, which in the Old Testament referred to the coastal region of Syria. It is possible he was citing contemporary Christian slogans.

French at Acre²¹⁷. Ad-Darendeli noted that they intended “to assist in the siege”²¹⁸, but since they were simply turned back, it was more likely they sought to profit from selling food and alcohol. Emir Haydar Shihab told the story of a Maronite wine trader from Mount Lebanon²¹⁹, seized by Muslims on the Beirut coast. In Beirut, he was placed on a large cargo boat (*shabtur*) bound for Acre, where he was to be handed over to Jazzar Pasha. At sea, a British ship was spotted. Commodore Smith, commanding the vessel, ordered inquiry into the man on board who desperately cried for help. The Christian seized the opportunity and convinced the commodore he could serve as a mediator in correspondence with Emir Bashir Shihab²²⁰. The rescued Maronite fulfilled his promise, delivering the message to the emir²²¹.

Besides supplying food and alcohol, Syrian Christians actively entered the service of French generals as “interpreters, quartermasters, or secretaries”²²². Napoleon noted that they were local Catholics “who spoke a little ‘lingua franca’ – Italian jargon; they explained to the soldiers all the traditions of their legends, full of superstitions”²²³. That the Christians who joined the French army did not know Italian and had only a rudimentary grasp of *lingua franca* indicates they were not priests or international merchants, but people of a more modest status. Napoleon also mentioned secret agents – Christians, Jews, and Muslims: some were sent by him “to Damascus, Aleppo, and even Armenia”, others delivered “extremely important messages” from Asia Minor²²⁴.

Syrian Christians acted both as paid assistants and voluntary informants. It was they who sent messengers to Bonaparte to warn that a large

²¹⁷ Ад-Дарендели, ‘Иззет Хасан-эфенди. Зийа-наме. Каир: Аль-Хай’а аль-Мысрийя аль-‘амма ли-ль-китаб, 1999. С. 202.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Commodore Sidney Smith clarified that the Christian was transporting a shipment of arak (*Howard E. Memoirs of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith. T. 1. P. 159*).

²²⁰ *al-Shihābī, ‘amīr Ḥaydar Aḥmad. Lubnān fī ‘ahd al-‘umarā’ al-Shihābīyīn. T. 1. P. 193–194.*

²²¹ *Howard E. Memoirs of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith. T. 1. P. 159.*

²²² *Бонапарт, Наполеон. Кампания в Египте и Сирии. С. 589.*

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid. С 605.



View of Acre and H.M. Ship Le Tigre. Artist Francis B. Spilsbury. 1799.
From the book *Picturesque Scenery in the Holy Land and Syria, Delineated
during the Campaigns of 1799 and 1800*. London: Edward Orme, 1803.
From open sources

Ottoman army had left Damascus and met General Kléber's corps at Mount Tabor. According to Niqula al-Turk, these were residents of Nazareth²²⁵; according to Berthier, they were Damascenes²²⁶. General Berthier noted that Christian informants had reported the presence of supplies in the citadel of Tiberias, occupied by a detachment of Maghrebis²²⁷. This information proved critical. Tiberias was captured, and Bonaparte recalled that since the battle of Mount Tabor, the army had lived off the provisions from these warehouses²²⁸.

It should be noted that in Syria, the French were supported not only by local Christians but also by some Muslims. One of the first to join Napoleon was Sheikh 'Abbas al-Daher, son of the former ruler of Galilee, Daher al-'Umar. He brought with him 400–500 horsemen. Sheikh Mustafa

²²⁵ *El-Turk N. Histoire de l'expédition française en Égypte*. P. 111; *al-Turk, Niqūlā ibn Yūsuf. Dhikr tamalluk djumhūr al-Faransāwiyya*. P. 94.

²²⁶ *Berthier L.-A. The French Expedition into Syria, Comprising General Bounaparte's Letters with Gen. Berthier's Narrative and Sir Wm. Sidney Smith's Letters from the London Gazette*. London: J. Ridgway, 1799. P. 49.

²²⁷ *Berthier L.-A. The French Expedition into Syria*. P. 71. Mentioned in *Jonquière C. de la. L'Expédition d'Égypte*. T. IV. P. 355.

²²⁸ *Бонапарт, Наполеон. Кампания в Египте и Сирии*. С. 603.

Bashir, having been dismissed by al-Jazzar from the governorship of Safad, also defected to Bonaparte. The Shia Mutawali of southern Lebanon were severely oppressed by al-Jazzar; their leader Sheikh Maneh expressed willingness to come under French rule and was appointed governor of Tyre, occupied by General Vial's column. In all these cases, though, these were elite figures, removed from power by Ahmad al-Jazzar, personally hating him and acting on the principle: "the enemy of my enemy is my friend". For the local Christians, the situation was different. Christian religious leaders regarded the "godless" republicans largely with hostility, whereas ordinary members of the communities welcomed the occupiers.

The ruling emir of Mount Lebanon, Bashir II Shihab (a Sunni secretly practicing Christianity), took a wait-and-see approach. He maintained correspondence with Napoleon²²⁹ and received valuable gifts²³⁰, but offered no real support. Impressed by the battle at Mount Tabor, the emir's emissaries secretly promised Bonaparte 12,000 mountaineers²³¹ — 6,000 Druze and 6,000 Maronites — to support the French in the campaign on Damascus²³². Meanwhile, the Druze sheikhs openly took a pro-Ottoman stance. Patriarch Joseph Tyan, whom Napoleon zealously reassured of his loyalty to the Catholic faith²³³, urged the Maronite sheikhs to gather troops and keep them ready²³⁴.

The British also intervened in the struggle for the sympathies of Emir Bashir II and other Maronite leaders. Commodore Sidney Smith wrote to the emir that before the Arabs, Bonaparte wished to appear as a Muslim, boasting that he had destroyed churches, broken crosses, and deposed the Supreme Pontiff. It was no wonder (continued Smith) Bonaparte said otherwise to the mountaineers. He made promises but did not keep them and discarded all pity when he achieved his goal. The English naval officer continued saying that they (the British) were of noble origin and Christian

²²⁹ *Jonquière C. de la. L'Expédition d'Égypte. T. IV. P. 313.*

²³⁰ *Perrier F. La Syrie sous le gouvernement de Mehemet-Ali, jusqu'en 1840. Paris: A. Bertrand, 1842. P. 331.*

²³¹ *Bertrand H.G. Campagnes d'Égypte et de Syrie, 1798–1799. Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Napoléon, dictés par lui-même à Sainte-Hélène et publiés par le general Bertrand. T. 1-2. Paris: Au Comptoir des Imprimeurs-Unis, 1847. T. 2. Pp. 90–92.*

²³² *Бонапарт, Наполеон. Кампания в Египте и Сирии. С. 621–622.*

²³³ *Harik, Ilya F. Politics and Change in a Traditional Society. P. 203.*

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

faith and their policy was to fight oppressors and support the oppressed²³⁵. As proof, Smith attached to the letter a copy of Napoleon's proclamation to the Muslim scholars of Cairo, containing the relevant statements.

The failure of Bonaparte's mobilization plans was one reason for the inglorious end of the Syrian campaign²³⁶. By the third decade of May, it became clear to Napoleon that Acre could not be taken with his available forces. The commander-in-chief began preparing to retreat to Egypt. The question arose of what to do with the residents who had shown loyalty to the French. When leaving Ramla and Lydda, it was planned to distribute weapons to local Christians. Adjutant Pierre Grésier (1755–1799) was ordered to provide them with everything necessary for self-defense and protection of property²³⁷. On May 18, Berthier passed to General Junot the commander-in-chief's order "to gather all residents of Nazareth who wish to leave with us"²³⁸. It was also planned to do the same with the population of Shafa-Amr.

We do not know how many Syrians left with the French to Egypt; clearly, it was a small number: at most a few hundred. When forming in Cairo two companies of "Syrian mounted Janissaries", each with 95 soldiers and 6 non-commissioned officers, Bonaparte included those who had long settled in Egypt; command of one company was given to Yusuf Hamawi, a Damascene merchant trading in Cairo²³⁹. Obviously, these were some Christians among the Syrian refugees, but they played no prominent role in subsequent events, and references to them are extremely rare.

The conclusion that Syrian Christians had an ambivalent attitude toward the French army is valid when speaking about communities as a whole,

²³⁵ Howard E. *Memoirs of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith*. T. 1. P. 159

²³⁶ See: Кобищанов Т.Ю. Христианские общины в арабо-османском мире. С. 197–201; Жантиев Д.Р., Кириллина С.А. Французская политика в отношении христиан Египта и Сирии во время Восточной экспедиции Бонапарта. С. 136–143.

²³⁷ Jonquière C. *de la. L'Expédition d'Égypte*. T. IV. P. 292–293.

²³⁸ *Ibid.* T. IV. P. 537.

²³⁹ Brégeon J.-J. *L'Égypte française au jour le jour*. P. 353.

but inaccurate at a deeper social level. Local church elites perceived the bearers of the ideas of the French Revolution extremely negatively, though when encountering republican soldiers, they displayed the humility and meekness appropriate to the servants of God. As for the less ideologically sophisticated Syrian Christian common people, they generally expressed joy at the arrival of European troops. This was recorded by both the Arab chroniclers and the French generals and officers. Christians apparently made up the majority of merchants supplying the invaders with alcohol and food. Some Christians also joined Napoleon's forces as translators and quartermasters, delivered reports, and relayed information. However, there is no known case of Syrian Christians integrating into the fighting units of the French army or otherwise taking up arms. The only significant local force capable of effectively supporting the French was the Maronite militia led by their sheikhs. Yet both Emir Bashir II Shihab and the dependent Maronite Patriarch Joseph Tyan were hesitant to aid Bonaparte, waiting to see how events would unfold. These events ended with the French retreating ingloriously to Egypt.

Christian communities in Syria after the departure of the French army, June 1799 – August 1801

“And there was rejoicing in all Syrian regions”²⁴⁰, – thus a Beirut chronicler described the reaction of locals to the news of the French retreat from Acre. Not only Muslims but also Christians rejoiced; many hoped that the normal course of life, disrupted by the foreign invasion, would be restored. Yet the war continued, and until its end, Christians attempting to return to their homes were “driven out of the city by the Muslims of Beirut, fearing the arrival of the Franks”²⁴¹.

The situation was exacerbated by the fact that the defense had seriously drained the material resources of the Sidon governorship. Al-Jazzar needed substantial funds to recruit and maintain new mercenaries; the army of Sadrazam Yusuf Ziya Pasha was approaching his territory, with

²⁴⁰ *Трад, Абдаллах*. Краткая история епископов. С. 182.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.* С. 184.



Procession in Jaffa. Artist Gustav Bauernfeind. 1890.
From open sources

whom the wali had hostile relations. Ahmad Pasha hastened to replenish the treasury with the help of a new administrator — Sheikh Taha al-Kurdi. The chronicler described the sheikh and his Kurdish associates as “cruel, corrupt, and godless people” who “oppressed both Muslims and Christians, mercilessly subjecting the arrested debtors to hellish torture”²⁴². Informers became active. One of them, “the Beirut Christian Yusuf al-Tuayni, went to al-Jazzar, submitted a list of certain Christians, and brought upon them the levies they were forced to pay”²⁴³.

Christians in Beirut reacted differently to these pressures. Those who could, went to relatives in Istanbul or the Aegean coast. Others tried to leverage connections with officials “so that they would help reduce the amounts demanded from them”²⁴⁴. “The poor and destitute”, the chronicler wrote, “came to the gardens of Beirut, and some of them entered the city with fear, humiliation, and with insults yelled at them. They sought refuge and mercy from the influential *tufenkji-bashi* of the city, al-Hajj Ya-

²⁴² Ibid. C. 185–186.

²⁴³ Ibid. C. 185.

²⁴⁴ Ibid. C. 184.

hya al-Majzub²⁴⁵. He was a kind man and promised them safety. Thanks to his authority, most Christians returned to Beirut and lived in peace under him²⁴⁶. This protection was short-lived. In 1800, al-Jazzar demanded that al-Hajj Yahya pay 100,000 piastres, after which he ordered the arrest of the *odabashi* and the confiscation of his property. Al-Majzub managed to flee to Jubayl, where he soon died²⁴⁷. The absence of Christian merchants undermined Beirut's economy, and sometime later, al-Jazzar "sent a merciful order to those who had fled to Mount Lebanon, so they could return and reclaim their homes. After this, the remaining Christians also returned"²⁴⁸, including those who had gone to other provinces of the empire.

A comparatively tolerant attitude of Ahmad Pasha may have been influenced by the words and actions of his ally in the defense of Acre, Commodore Sidney Smith. In the summer of 1812, Johann Ludwig Burckhardt recorded that the Christians of Nazareth were convinced that al-Jazzar had ordered their massacre, along with their co-religionists in Jerusalem, for assisting the French. The Nazarenes were allegedly saved by Commodore Smith, who threatened al-Jazzar with the bombardment of Acre if "even one Christian head were cut off"²⁴⁹.

How real were the threats of the Sidon governor? On one hand, al-Jazzar's biography did contain a precedent: in 1776 he struck at the Christians of Beirut accused of collaborating with Russian occupying forces (October–December 1773). The chronicler noted that those found guilty of collaboration were hanged, impaled, or suspended on hooks through the ribs, while the wealthy community members faced financial contributions²⁵⁰. On the other hand, we have no documentary evidence that in 1799 Ahmad

²⁴⁵ Al-Hajj Yahya al-Majzub ("the possessed") — *odabashi* of Beirut. *Odabashi* was a junior military rank meaning "commander of the barracks" or "assistant to the commander" of a janissary *orta*. Since Jazzar Pasha's forces did not include janissaries, various titles and ranks could be used to designate their commanders. The chronicler calls Al-Hajj Yahya al-Majzub *tüfenkci-başı* (Ott. "chief of the musketeers/artillerymen"), as he directly commanded the artillery crews in the towers of the city citadel

²⁴⁶ Трад, Абдаллах. Краткая история епископов. С. 184.

²⁴⁷ *al-Shihābī*, 'amīr Ḥaydar Aḥmad. Lubnān fī 'ahd al-'umarā' al-Shihābīyīn. T. 1. P. 205

²⁴⁸ Трад, Абдаллах. Краткая история епископов. С. 185.

²⁴⁹ *Burckhardt J.L. Travels in Syria and the Holy Land.* P. 340.

²⁵⁰ Трад, Абдаллах. Краткая история епископов. С. 104.

Pasha planned a pogrom of the Christians of Nazareth. Acre is less than 40 km from Nazareth, which was an eight-hour journey. Most likely, if the Sidon wali had actually planned such a punitive operation, Sidney Smith would have learned about it only after the fact.

Regarding Jerusalem, which was farther from Acre, it had remained only formally under al-Jazzar's control until summer 1799, after which it was taken from him along with the Damascus Pashalik. Ahmad Pasha would hardly have risked acting arbitrarily in a neighboring province while the army of the Sadrazam approached Syria. Nevertheless, Maxim Simsky wrote with visible relief that on June 3, 1799, an Ottoman detachment of 1,200 men entered Jerusalem "to protect the city, mainly from the local Saracens [Muslims]; for news of our great and unbearable disasters had reached ... the Sultan"²⁵¹.

It is most likely that the story of the prevented pogrom was distorted through repeated oral transmission, later growing into a legend about Commodore Smith's visit to the Holy Land. In early November 1799, Smith, with the permission of the Sadrazam and accompanied by an escort of 400 Ottoman soldiers, made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem²⁵². The English entered the city armed and in military uniform — a phenomenon unseen since the Crusades. By raising the British flag over the Franciscan monastery, the commodore symbolically asserted the protection of King George III (1760–1820) over the Custody of the Holy Land. In addition to gifts from local Ottoman authorities (pashas, muftis, and the aga of the Janissaries), Smith received gifts from the Greek and Armenian archbishops²⁵³. Archimandrite Maxim Simsky left a memoir of Smith's visit, calling him "Izmit-Egleg"²⁵⁴, Knight of the Grand Cross²⁵⁵. He noted both the courteous reception by Jerusalem's *mutesellim* and the commodore's refusal to intervene in disputes among the Franciscans and the Holy Sepulchre monks: "He said ... we should not quarrel among ourselves and fill the pockets of the Saracens [Muslims — T.K.]"²⁵⁶.

²⁵¹ Максим Симский. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 89.

²⁵² Howard E. *Memoirs of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith*. T.1. P. 301.

²⁵³ АВПРИ (Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire). Ф. 89, оп. 8, ед. хр. 906, л. 14–15 об.

²⁵⁴ Egleg — probably a corruption of *ingiliz*, Arab./Ott. "Englishman".

²⁵⁵ Максим Симский. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 90.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Indeed, the Ottoman-French war in the Middle East shifted the balance of power in the competition among Christian denominations over control of the Holy Sites. Shortly before Smith's visit to the Holy City, in late October 1799, Kirkor, head of the Armenian *sarrafs* (money-changers') guild accompanying the Sadrazam, had made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem from Jaffa, the site of the Ottoman headquarters²⁵⁷. He was accompanied by 400 co-religionists. The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem aimed to leverage the visit to secure important privileges for the community. Under the pretext of honoring a high-ranking co-religionist, the Armenians requested permission from the Orthodox to: first, celebrate Mass on Golgotha; then in the Holy Cave of Bethlehem; and finally, hang a silver lamp on Golgotha²⁵⁸. The Holy Sepulchre monks refused all requests, "fearing that what was permitted once would later become law"²⁵⁹. The Armenian Patriarch then petitioned the Grand Vizier. Orthodox chroniclers noted that by the end of 1799, the Armenians "spent a large sum of money"²⁶⁰ but achieved no tangible result, as Ziya Pasha had departed for Egypt with his army. A secondary petition occurred after the defeated Sadrazam returned to Syria, nearly penniless and with most of his army lost. In early June 1800, Armenian Jerusalem Patriarch Bedros Yevtogeeyatzee (1793–1800) arrived at the Sadrazam's headquarters in Jaffa. "He was helped by circumstances, the people around the *sarrafs*, and partly by the vizier himself, and also gold"²⁶¹, wrote Maxim Simsky; "a lot of gold", clarified the deputy of the Orthodox Jerusalem Patriarch, Procopius of Nazianzus (1776–1822)²⁶². The bribery ensured results: Yusuf Ziya Pasha granted the Armenian community permission "to freely and unhindered perform their usual worship in all common places of devotion ... both within Jerusalem, in the church, and

²⁵⁷ Максим Симский. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 89.

²⁵⁸ Golgotha, which forms part of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, is divided into two chapels (naves): Orthodox and Catholic. The Armenian Church possesses no liturgical objects there.

²⁵⁹ Неофит Кипрский. Рассказ Неофита Кипрского. С. 31.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Максим Симский. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 92.

²⁶² Прокопий Назианзин Арабogu. Попираемый Иерусалим. Материалы для истории Иерусалимской патриархии XVI–XIX века // Православный палестинский сборник. Вып. 55. Часть 2. СПб. 1904. С 183.

outside Jerusalem, in Bethlehem and Gethsemane”²⁶³. The document was issued secretly. The cautious Yusuf Pasha feared a scandal that allied Russian diplomats in Istanbul might provoke.

Neophytos of Cyprus, appealing for sympathy, wrote: “An endless sorrow fell upon us, for we had no money to resist, and we had previously been robbed and could not appease the Agarians [Muslims], angered by Napoleon”²⁶⁴. Thanks to the assistance of Enrico Franchini, a Russian agent at the Sadrazam’s headquarters, the Orthodox managed to defend their positions at the holy sites: Yusuf Ziya Pasha revoked his previous decision and destroyed the firman²⁶⁵. After this, the Armenian Patriarch Bedros, wrote Procopius of Nazianzus gleefully, “being unable to endure shame and disgrace, fell ill from grief and gave up his impious soul”²⁶⁶.

A few months later, the Porte, needing funds to raise a new army, again focused on the monastic communities of Jerusalem. Presumably, those around the Sadrazam concluded there was nothing left to take from the impoverished Custody; thus, in mid-October 1800, only the Greek and Armenian deputies with their dragomans were summoned to Yusuf Pasha’s headquarters in Jaffa. From Simsky’s somewhat confusing account, it appears that both communities were initially asked for 500,000 piastres; “due to tears and pleas”²⁶⁷, the sum was reduced by half, but shortly thereafter the Sadrazam and the new Jerusalem mutesellim Mehmed-Haji demanded the full original amount. “Since our monastery did not have such a sum”, complained Simsky, “it had to borrow money at high interest; lamps and other silver and gold vessels of the Holy Sepulchre were sold, barely raising the required amount”²⁶⁸.

There was also no calm in the major Syrian cities. Yusuf ‘Abbud’s chronicle meticulously recorded the complaints of Aleppo Christians about levies imposed during the war. In late September 1799, Ahmad-aga Khomsa, lead-

²⁶³ *Проконий Назианзин Арабоглу*. Попираемый Иерусалим. С. 182.

²⁶⁴ *Неофит Кипрский*. Рассказ Неофита Кипрского. С. 32.

²⁶⁵ See: *Кобищанов Т.Ю.* Война Энрико Франкини: российский агент в османском походе на Египет (1799–1800) // *Исторический вестник*. № 48. Паладины Российской империи. М., 2023. С. 111–112.

²⁶⁶ *Проконий Назианзин Арабоглу*. Попираемый Иерусалим. С. 183.

²⁶⁷ *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 92.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*



The Janissaries. Unknown artist. Illustration from Codex Vindobonensis 8626, fol. 13. Austrian National Library, Vienna.

From open sources

ing a detachment of local Janissaries²⁶⁹ to campaign in Egypt, demanded that Christians collect 3,530 *ratl* of wax from churches²⁷⁰. Unsatisfied, he forced the residents of Christian quarters to supply grain to the Janissaries; when the grain was lost en route, he ordered it supplied again. Grain was taken from *khans* (wholesale storage centers), wealthy community members, and ordinary artisans²⁷¹. There was no consensus among Aleppo's Christian communities on how to pay the authorities: collectively or individually. The Greek Catholics considered it fair for each community to pay for itself, while the Maronites insisted that the funds be collected from all Christians

²⁶⁹ *Al-Gazzī, Kāmīl ibn Hussain. Kitāb nahr al-thahab fī tarikh Ḥalab. Ḥalab: al-Matba'a al-Marūniyya. T. III, 1926. P. 315. According to information received by Spencer Smith from the *rais efendi*, the Porte mobilized 5,000 Aleppine janissaries for the 1799 campaign. Yūsuf 'Abbūd mentioned a 7,000-man detachment ('Abbūd, *Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī. Al-Murtād fī tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 306.*), while the French consul in Aleppo, Charles Chauderlo, reported that 8,000–10,000 janissaries marched out, leaving 3,600 in the city (Bodman H. *Political Factions in Aleppo. P. 62.**

²⁷⁰ 'Abbūd, *Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī. Al-Murtād fī tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 306.*

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

together²⁷². This allowed the Maronites to contribute less, counting on their more numerous and wealthier co-religionists to cover the shortfall.

In addition to official payments, there were cases of individual extortion and fines imposed on residents of Christian quarters, e.g., for possessing arak²⁷³. Yusuf ‘Abbud vividly described one episode he witnessed. Janissaries broke into the home of Christian Antun Tajir and did not leave until 2 a.m., demanding that he hand over his co-religionists Yusuf al-Khumsi and Girgis Mitra. The attack was led by the nephew of Ibn Nassar, one of the Janissary leaders. His uncle forbade him from acting arbitrarily, so the young Muslim, with a group of supporters, brought the captives to “settle matters” — the sons of al-Khumsi and Yusuf ‘Abbud himself, the chronicler. The dialogue reads like a Francis Ford Coppola or Martin Scorsese film: “They brought us to the al-Bahhi coffeehouse, where Hajj Ibrahim [al-Kharbali, another respected Janissary leader — T.K.] arrived. He asked me, ‘Where is Girgis Mitra?’ about whom it was known he had gone to Kilis. I told him, ‘I don’t know.’ He said, ‘I want to ask him a question’... I said to him, ‘If I go and find him at home, maybe he will answer me.’ He [Hajj Ibrahim] swore he would say nothing to upset him. We returned, and these people went with us. I entered Girgis’s house and brought him along”²⁷⁴. The next day, Yusuf al-Khumsi and Girgis Mitra paid the extortionists 140 kurush, with assistance from their community.

Reading Christian chronicles, one might think that only non-Muslims suffered from levies and extortion, bearing the entire burden of paying for, supplying, and equipping troops. This was not the case; however, Christians rarely concerned themselves with the hardships of their Muslim neighbors. Indicative is Yusuf ‘Abbud’s reaction when, in April 1800, the wali Ibrahim Pasha Qattar-Aghasi demanded 400 purses²⁷⁵ from the city, 80 of which (20%, roughly proportional to the Christian population in Aleppo) fell to Christians. They managed to barely collect the sum in a month. “As for the Muslims, God knows how much was taken from them”²⁷⁶, noted the chronicler, demonstrating not only ignorance but indifference.

²⁷² Ibid. P. 307.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ *Purse (kese)* — a monetary accounting unit equal to 500 *kurush*.

²⁷⁶ *‘Abbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī. Al-Murtād fī tā’rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 307.*

Yusuf ‘Abbud described the joy that spread through Aleppo in the spring of 1800 upon hearing that peace with the French had been achieved and life would return to normal²⁷⁷. He also recorded the sorrow of the townspeople when they learned of renewed hostilities, with new restrictions, levies, and deprivations. But the true cry of grief burst forth from Yusuf ‘Abbud when, in August 1800, the order was issued that a 4,000-strong detachment of Aleppo’s Sharifs was to march out²⁷⁸.

The influence of the local corporation of the Prophet’s descendants surpassed that of any other major city in the empire. Based on an analysis of various sources, Herbert Bodman estimated that about 12,000 Sharifs lived in Aleppo, of whom around four thousand were adult men, heads of households²⁷⁹. Most of them were at least somewhat educated, which distinguished this group favorably against the almost entirely illiterate Janissaries. Almost all of Aleppo’s ‘ulama belonged to the sharifs, though many were also from the urban poor: small artisans, day laborers, porters, etc.²⁸⁰ The impoverished and lumpenized portion of the Sharif corps experienced internal dissonance due to the meagerness of their existence on one hand and pride in the blood of the Prophet running through their veins on the other. This often led to extreme religious intolerance²⁸¹. Poor Sharifs harbored particular resentment toward wealthy Christians. Sources from the 18th century, Bodman noted, are full of cases in which Sharifs accused dhimmi of showing them disrespect, presenting these incidents as an affront to “the House of the Messenger of Allah” and to Islam as a whole²⁸².

Despite their characteristic bellicosity, Aleppo’s Sharifs were evidently less ready for campaign than the Janissaries. They planned to procure equipment, uniforms, and provisions at the expense of the townspeople, including the “infidels” they so despised. The *naqib al-ashraf* Muhammad Qudsi Effendi distributed the city quarters among members of the corpora-

²⁷⁷ Ibid. P. 310.

²⁷⁸ *Al-Gazzālī, Kāmil*. Kitāb nahr al-thahab. P. 315. Drawing on other sources, Herbert Bodman indicated that the detachment consisted of 5–6 thousand Sharifs (Bodman H. Political Factions in Aleppo. P. 120).

²⁷⁹ Bodman H. Political Factions in Aleppo. P. 97.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid. P. 98.

²⁸² Ibid.

tion; the Christian quarter was assigned to a certain Ibn Hallas. “From this moment”, wrote Yusuf ‘Abbud, “extortion and violence began. And they [the Sharifs — T.K.] started troubling the church and our quarter, and the Jewish quarter, and [other] places where there had previously been no oppression, where no one had taken anything, and where no warnings had been heard. And this bandit dust wrought whatever it pleased in the quarters, including threats and beatings, levies and extortion”²⁸³. Ibn Hallas’s subordinates “moved everywhere, seizing by force and threats”, giving Christians no peace — even at night. Shots were fired into the homes of two residents, and the door of another home was struck “with iron so that it seemed he was going to be killed”²⁸⁴. Frightened Christians collected 1,200 kurush.

The disturbances experienced by Christians seem minor compared to the pogrom in Aleppo half a century later, and even more so compared to the Damascus Massacre of 1860. Yet such an emotional reaction demonstrates how shocked Syrian non-Muslims were by violations of the rights of a “protected” community. The attacks, threats, shootings at homes, and attempts to break down doors far exceeded the normal limits of coexistence among ethno-confessional groups in an Ottoman city. The seeming triviality of these incidents should not obscure the fact that these were the first sparks of the fire that would later engulf the Middle East.

Of all the regions of Greater Syria, the most serious political crisis after the French departure erupted in Mount Lebanon. Angry at Emir Bashir’s disloyal stance, al-Jazzar dispatched a military expedition of 10,000 soldiers against him. This force was supposed to hand the emirate over to the sons of the previous ruler, Yusuf Shihab (1770–1790), who was also secretly Christian. In reality, it was the Maronite Girgis Baz who acted on behalf of Emir Yusuf’s sons. Baz was a member of the feudal al-Huri family, married to a woman from the influential co-religionist al-Hazin family. Baz’s uncle and cousin — Sa’ad and Gandur al-Huri, respectively, — served as administrators for Emir Yusuf, while Baz himself held the same position under his sons. Baz’s entourage consisted almost exclusively of Christians, and the core of his army was made up of Maronite sheikh forces. Support for Baz was also declared by Patriarch Joseph Tyan. Thus, the civil war in Lebanon

²⁸³ ‘Abbūd, *Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Halabī*. Al-Murtād fī tā’rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 315.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.* P. 315–316.

entered a new phase, in which the Maronite community for the first time asserted claims to a dominant position²⁸⁵.

Napoleon's departure brought joy to most Syrians but did not bring relief. The war continued, and Syria remained an important base for mobilizing Ottoman troops and resources, draining the country. Moreover, the French invasion altered the balance of power and deformed relations of dependence and patronage. Contrary to the fears (or expectations) of many, Muslim victory did not become a moment of retribution for the local dhimmi. Christian chronicles are full of laments over the suffering of co-religionists, but levies and extortion by authorities and soldiers affected members of all communities. After the war, Beirut Christians were allowed to return to their homes; religious pogroms did not occur in Nazareth or Jerusalem, and even the misadventures of Yusuf 'Abbud and his circle appear minor compared to real tragedies. Yet the European invasion left a lasting mark on Syrians, even if life outwardly seemed to return to its former course. The breakdown of the Sharia-based system of ethno-confessional relations — adapted by Ottoman sultans in the 15th–16th centuries — accelerated. The Muslims began to view Christians as collaborators with the invaders, while the Christians felt their first real chance to throw off Muslim rule. A split appeared between church elites, who viewed French revolutionaries with hostility, and their flock, who welcomed the invaders with joy. The struggle for control of the Holy Sites in Palestine intensified. In Mount Lebanon, the Maronite community for the first time claimed political power. All these factors would continue to grow over the following decades, ultimately driving Syria toward a sectarian explosion in the mid-19th century.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.

²⁸⁵ See: *Harik, Iliya F. Politics and Change in a Traditional Society*. P. 180–199; *Кобищанов Т.Ю. Христианские общины в арабо-османском мире*. С. 137–139.



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The Emergence of Syrian Patriotism in the 19th Century: the Case of Butrus al-Bustani and His Contemporaries

Abstract

The article examines the activities of Syrian Christian intellectuals and their role in the emergence of Syrian national consciousness in the mid-19th century within the context of the Arab Literary Renaissance (*an-Nahda*). These issues require in-depth study to understand the modernization processes within the Ottoman Empire during the Tanzimat reforms (1839–1876) and to appreciate the special significance of Beirut as a center of literary and educational publishing activity. The study hypothesizes that the idea of Syrian patriotism first emerged in the writings of Butrus al-Bustani and a number of his Arabic-speaking Christian contemporaries under the influence of contacts with American Protestant missionaries; however, the primary impetus for its development was reflection on the



fate of Christian communities in Syria following the tragic events of 1860 in Mount Lebanon and Damascus. Based on an analysis of biographical data and key theses of Butrus al-Bustani and his associates, as reflected in their works, it is possible to conclude that they directly borrowed European ideas of supra-confessional patriotism and enlightenment as tools to overcome communal insularity. The most important source for understanding the spiritual, moral, and socio-political questions addressed by the first generation of Arabic-speaking figures of the Nahda is the periodical *Nafir Suriyya*, published by Butrus al-Bustani in Beirut in 1860–1861. Representatives of the emerging Christian intellectual elite in the Syrian provinces of the Ottoman Empire advocated for the creation of a Syrian (Syro-Lebanese) supra-confessional national community based on territorial and ethno-cultural criteria, while maintaining loyalty to Ottoman sovereignty and the Sultan's authority.

Keywords:

Ottoman Syria, modernization, Tanzimat, Beirut, Butrus al-Bustani, Syrian patriotism

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By the mid-19th century, significant socio-political transformations occurred in the Syrian provinces of the Ottoman Empire due to the Tanzimat reforms (1839–1876). The core of these reforms involved strengthening direct links between the Sublime Porte (the Ottoman government) and the provincial periphery, as well as subordinating provincial elites to the state-imposed modernization framework. In the Syrian provinces, as in other parts of the Ottoman Empire, influential Muslim landowning families were compelled to comply with the reformist dictates of the central bureaucracy. Urban and rural life saw the growing importance of reformed administrative and judicial structures. A notable indicator of a tighter integration between Ottoman Syria and Constantinople was the expansion of state schools, which became a prerequisite for entry into government service during the Tanzimat period.

The integration of Ottoman territories into the global capitalist system as a source of raw materials and as a market for European manufactured goods in the 19th century stimulated economic growth in the Syrian provinces (*eyalets*, from 1864 — *vilayets*) on a commercial basis. Traditional artisanal production in cities gradually yielded to European imports, while trade and money-lending activities intensified. Consequently, alongside Syria's main commercial and artisanal centers — Damascus and Aleppo — coastal Beirut gradually acquired particular economic significance. By the second half of the 19th century, with the development of steamship connections to Western and Southern Europe, Beirut became the primary “maritime gateway” of Ottoman Syria. Growing trade and transit commerce brought significant profits to local merchants, both Muslim and Christian. At the same time, Damascus and Aleppo found it increasingly difficult to compete with Beirut, prompting the merchants to focus on distributing imported European goods in the domestic market. Rising resentment among the Muslim urban majority toward the more successful Christian competitors, who were often under foreign consular protection, contributed to the Aleppo uprising of 1850 and the mass killings



Beirut, 1868–1869.

*Lenkin Family Collection of Photography at the University of Pennsylvania Librarie.
photo no. 4060*

of Christians in Damascus in 1860¹. Repressive measures by the Ottoman authorities in punishing those responsible weakened the political influence of the provincial landed elites (*ayanlar*) and the ulama. Meanwhile, Beirut's reputation as the safest city on the Syrian coast grew, attracting many Christians from Mount Lebanon and other parts of Ottoman Syria. The presence of Ottoman troops and European warships guaranteed security for Beirut's multi-confessional population and foreign residents. By the mid-19th century, Beirut, with its prosperous and religiously diverse merchant community, European trading houses, and network of Christian missionary schools, stood as a vivid example of economic and social modernization.

¹ The Damascus massacre of 9–18 July 1860 was a mass killing of Christians (between 2,000 and 6,000 victims) in Damascus, accompanied by the looting of their property. The tragedy resulted from the collective refusal of Christian communities in Damascus to pay a special tax exempting them from military service and was also connected to the escalation of the Druze–Maronite conflict in Mount Lebanon.

The Ottoman government's strategy of promoting state schools faced competition in Beirut and Mount Lebanon from missionary educational institutions, primarily established by American Protestant and French Catholic missionaries². Missionary activity intensified in the 1830s during the occupation of Syria by the forces of Egyptian governor (*wali*) Muhammad Ali Pasha. Under the protection of French consuls, Jesuits established a school in Beirut in 1839 and expanded collaboration with the Maronite Church. An important step was the establishment of a Jesuit college-seminary in 1843 in Ghazir (Mount Lebanon³) to train Maronite clergy. This college was later relocated to Beirut in 1875 and became the Catholic *Université Saint-Joseph de Beirouth*, still considered the most prestigious Catholic higher education institution in the Middle East.

The educational model established by Catholic missionaries on the Syro-Lebanese coast targeted both Eastern Catholic clergy and laypeople. Throughout the 19th century, however, it faced persistent competition from Protestant schools, particularly those established by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). The printing press of the American mission in Beirut, founded in 1835, allowed missionaries to widely distribute new Arabic translations of the Gospels and other religious texts⁴, while expanding their network of schools, thereby contributing significantly to the intellectual and literary Nahda among Christian communities in Ottoman Syria, including Mount Lebanon. By the

² For more on the establishment of Catholic and Protestant missionary schools in Beirut and Mount Lebanon during the nineteenth century, see: *Murrevan den Berg H.* (ed.), *New Faith in Ancient Lands: Western Missions in the Middle East in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*. Leiden: Brill, 2006. Pp. 19–41, 65–91, 211–239; *Makdisi U.* *Rethinking American missionaries in nineteenth-century historiography of the Middle East*. *Philipp T. and Schumann C.* (eds.). *From the Syrian Lands to the States of Syria and Lebanon*. Beirut: Orient-Institute, 2004. Pp. 209–224. See also: *Zeuge-Buberl U.* *The Mission of the American Board in Syria. Implications of a transcultural dialogue* (translated by E. Janik). Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2017. 296 p.

³ Gazir — a settlement in Mount Lebanon, located in the predominantly Maronite Christian Keserwan region

⁴ See: *Zeuge-Buberl U.* *The Mission of the American Board in Syria*. Pp. 41–42.



The Syrian Protestant College in Beirut.
From open sources

mid-1830s, American Protestant missionaries had established the first secondary schools in Beirut, and by 1859 ABCFM oversaw 33 schools with 967 students⁵. A qualitatively new stage of missionary activity began with the establishment of the Syrian Protestant College in 1866⁶.

Through expanding intellectual contacts among local Syrian Christians, American missionaries introduced Protestant spiritual perspectives and European scientific knowledge. Under the protection of American and British consuls, a small Arabic-speaking Protestant community emerged, formally named the “Syrian Evangelical Church” (*al-Kanisa al-Injiliyya al-Suriyya*) in 1847. Access to a rationalist-based education in missionary schools, combined with

⁵ A Brief Chronicle of the Syrian Mission: 1819–1870. Beirut: American Mission Press, 1901. P. 14.

⁶ The institution was renamed the American University of Beirut in 1920.

instruction in literary Arabic and European languages (especially French), fostered critical thinking among students, overcoming traditional communal insularity. Nonetheless, only a few local Arabic-speaking Christians — whether Maronites, Orthodox, or Greek Catholics — converted to Protestantism, as such conversion entailed a nearly complete social and spiritual estrangement from their original religious communities, including many family members⁷. One notable individual who took this step was the distinguished Arabic-language writer, philologist, scholar, educator, and public figure Butrus al-Bustani (1819–1883), who became a key figure of the Nahda.

Born into a respected Maronite family from Mount Lebanon, Butrus al-Bustani completed an eight-year course at the Maronite Seminary in Ain-Warqa, mastering Catholic theological disciplines, literary Arabic, Classic Syriac, Latin, and Italian. At the age of 20, the talented youth refused the plan of his high-ranking uncle, Metropolitan Abdallah al-Bustani, to send him to Rome for advanced studies, and instead remained a lay teacher at the seminary. In 1840, however, following the dramatic expulsion of Egyptian forces from Syria and the restoration of Ottoman control, al-Bustani made a decisive turn in his life: he chose to “align his future with the rapidly Europeanizing Beirut”⁸ and converted to Protestantism under the guidance of three American missionaries — William Thomson (1806–1894), Eli Smith (1801–1857), and Cornelius Van Dyck (1818–1895)⁹. Serving as dragoman at the American consulate in Beirut, al-Bustani began teaching at the Protestant school in Abeih

⁷ Zeuge-Buberl U. *The Mission of the American Board in Syria*. Pp. 51–52.

⁸ Крымский А. Е. *История новой арабской литературы*. М.: Главная Редакция восточной литературы, 1971. С. 399.

⁹ William McClure Thomson (1806–1894) was an American Protestant missionary who worked for many years in Beirut and was among the founders of the American Protestant College. He authored *The Land and the Book* (1859), describing his spiritual and practical experiences in Syria; Eli Smith (1801–1857), another American missionary and scholar, a Yale graduate, founded the first Arabic printing press in Beirut and initiated the Protestant translation of the Bible into literary Arabic. Cornelius Van Alen Van Dyck (1818–1895) was a missionary, physician, and translator who, together with Thomson, founded the Protestant school in Abeih (Mount Lebanon) and the American Protestant College.



Butrus al-Bustani
AUB Libraries Online Exhibits, accessed October 6, 2025

and collaborated with Eli Smith on translating the Bible from Hebrew and English into Arabic for publication by the American mission press.

In order to facilitate constructive and, as far as possible, non-conflictual relations with the Christian communities on the Syro-Lebanese coast, Protestant missionaries established in 1847 “The Society of Arts and Sciences”, composed of Americans and collaborating local Arabic-speaking Christians. Despite its brief five-year existence, the Society served as an important model of joint efforts to disseminate Western scientific knowledge and promote literary Arabic as a medium for its communication to an Arabic-speaking audience. In 1857, following the closure of the Society, a new Syrian Scientific Society (*Al-Jam'iyya al-'Ilmiyya al-Suriyya*) was founded in Beirut. Within its first years, membership grew to 150, including not only Christians but also Sunni Muslims and the Druze¹⁰. Butrus

¹⁰ *Antonius G.* The Arab Awakening. The story of the Arab national movement. Philadelphia – New York – Toronto: J. B. Lippincot Company, 1919. Pp. 50–54.

al-Bustani and his contemporary, poet and publicist Nasif al-Yaziji¹¹, played a central role in establishing this society. Notably, the Sunni and the Druze participants agreed to join on the condition that the society remain free from foreign missionary control and include only local Arabic-speaking members.

As evident from the facts presented above, the Nahda intellectuals among the local Christians, who enjoyed the patronage of foreign missionaries and consuls, largely linked their educational and reformist activities to these external supporters. However, reliance on the protection and advocacy of Western Christian powers proved fateful, culminating in tragedy for many Christians in both Mount Lebanon and Damascus, who became victims of the bloody events of the spring and summer of 1860. The catastrophe, which had been brewing for several years, introduced confusion and horror into the collective consciousness of the Christians of Ottoman Syria. After the tragic summer of 1860, they could no longer rely on European or American protectors, nor on the safeguards of the Ottoman government. Many Christians from Mount Lebanon and the interior regions of Syria chose to emigrate during 1860 and in subsequent years, seeing flight abroad as a preferable alternative to the constant threat of recurring tragedy. At the same time, the Ottoman authorities, while punishing the direct perpetrators of the massacres, continued reforms in administrative, judicial, and military spheres, thereby expanding social opportunities and contributing to the gradual overcoming of the isolation of Christian communities (*millet*s). Within this context, Butrus al-Bustani and some of his associates gradually came to the conclusion that it was both possible and necessary for representatives of different religious communities in Ottoman Syria to cooperate not only in scientific and educational endeavors but also in socio-political activities under the unifying patriotic banner of “love of the homeland”

¹¹ Nasif al-Yaziji (1800–1871) was an Arab poet, translator, and educator, and one of the leading figures of the nineteenth-century an-Nahda movement. He belonged to the Greek Catholic (Melkite) community.



Cornelius Van Dyck
<https://alumni.aub.edu.lb>

(*hubb al-watan*). Thus, all-Syrian patriotism appeared to them as the most effective means of preventing future inter-confessional conflicts, while simultaneously providing an ideological basis for collaboration among fellow countrymen regardless of their religious affiliation.

An important intellectual manifestation of al-Bustani's patriotic ideas was the publication of the periodical *Nafir Suriyya* ("The Clarion of Syria") in Beirut in 1860–1861. This periodical, which A. E. Krymsky somewhat wryly described as a "news-leaf bulletin"¹², consisted of a series of patriotic pamphlets authored by al-Bustani and issued under the pseudonym *Muhibb li-l-Watan* ("Lover of the Homeland") in the form of a modestly sized newspaper. It can be asserted that, influenced by the tragic events of 1860 in Mount Lebanon and Damascus, al-Bustani

¹² Крымский А. Е. История новой арабской литературы. С. 569.

founded the first periodical of socio-political orientation in Ottoman Syria. From the pages of *Nafir Suriyya*, the Christian educator and public figure called for the replacement of “blind prejudices” with patriotism, concord, and unity for the sake of ending “civil wars” (*khurub ahliyya*)¹³. It is noteworthy that the very title of the periodical, *Nafir Suriyya*, contained an implicit appeal to conceive of Ottoman Syria as a single geographical and culturally-historical space in which followers of different confessions were to perceive themselves as compatriots. Remarkably, al-Bustani employed the somewhat uncommon ancient toponym *Suriyya* (Syria) instead of the more conventional term in Arab geography, *Bilad al-Sham*¹⁴, which may indicate direct influence from Western European literature¹⁵. On the pages of his periodical, al-Bustani expressed unconditional loyalty to the Ottoman Sultan and the Sublime Porte, while simultaneously invoking the ancient glory of the Arabs and Arab culture. He also called for the dissemination of enlightenment so that his Syrian compatriots (*suriyun*), regardless of their religious affiliation, could occupy, in his view, a higher and more appropriate position within the Ottoman state system¹⁶.

The patriotic advocacy in *Nafir Suriyya* was combined with a sharply critical, rationalist perspective on the contemporary state of the country: “Syria remains one of the most beautiful countries in terms of natural resources and commercial centers. The country and its people would not have fallen into such a state of degradation, humiliation, and backwardness had it not been for

¹³ *Al-Bustani, Butrus*, *Nafir Suriyya* (Beirut: Dar Fikr li-l-Abhas wa-n-Nashr, 1990). P. 28.

¹⁴ *Al-Bustani, Butrus*. *The Clarion of Syria. A Patriot’s Call against the Civil War of 1860*. Introduced and translated by Jens Hanssen and Hichame Safeddine. Foreword by Usama Makdisi. Oakland:University of California Press, 2009. Pp. 46–47.

¹⁵ On the influence of American Protestant missionaries on the social and political worldview of Butrus al-Bustani, see also: *Zachs F. Toward a Proto-Nationalist Concept of Syria? Revisiting the American Presbyterian Missionaries. Die Welt des Islams. New Series. Jul. 2001: 41 (Issue 2). Pp. 165–169.*

¹⁶ *Al-Bustani, Butrus*, *Nafir Suriyya*. Pp. 49–50.

the absence of unity and love among Syrians, their indifference to the welfare of their country and compatriots, and their foolish and ignorant capitulation to the dominance of fanaticism and the allure of doctrinal, communal, and familial prejudices (...)”¹⁷. The conclusion that al-Bustani reached in the last issue of *Nafir Suriyya* (22 April 1861) was expressed with a marked pessimism: “Even if we acknowledge that the Syrians know what is best for them, we cannot assume that all of them agree. Moreover, if they have decided to agree, there is little hope that they will be allowed to act upon it. Consequently, this country is moving in an extremely dangerous direction. There is no hope of restoring it or saving it from ruin unless God guides its people rightly, or, through His extraordinary providence, provides effective and impartial means for the development of civilization, or at least guides it on the path of security and success. At present, all we can do is mourn this unfortunate country, a land that has fallen victim to such conflicting prejudices and personal interests, and in which so few patriots reside...”¹⁸

The rationalist worldview presented in *Nafir Suriyya*, inspired by European Enlightenment ideals and the assertion of the necessity of separating spiritual authority from political and civil power¹⁹, nevertheless bore the clear imprint of the author’s Christian identity, which is evident in his emphasis on the virtues of Christianity as a religion that calls one to love even one’s enemies²⁰. Yet the principal unifying element fostering the cultivation of a sense of territorial (particular) Syrian patriotism in al-Bustani’s writings was the Arabic language and pride in a shared historical past²¹. The perception of Syria as a distinct, geographically unified country with its own

¹⁷ *Al-Bustani, Butrus*, *Nafir Suriyya*. P. 48.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* Pp. 69–70.

¹⁹ *Al-Bustani, Butrus*. *The Clarion of Syria*. P. 117. On interpretations of al-Bustani’s intellectual legacy, see: *Antonius G.* *The Arab Awakening*. P. 49–50; *Hourani A.* *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1789–1939*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1983. Pp. 101–102.

²⁰ *Al-Bustani, Butrus*, *Nafir Suriyya*. P. 20.

²¹ *Ibid.* P. 21.

socio-cultural characteristics, rich historical heritage, and significant economic potential rendered it, in al-Bustani's depiction, not a Muslim or Christian country, but an Arab country. This perspective had already been evident before the tragic events of 1860 in the activities of Beirut scientific societies established by missionaries, and later in the work of the Syrian Scientific Society²². Subsequently, Butrus al-Bustani and his son Salim al-Bustani (1848–1884)²³ sought to popularize the idea of Syrian patriotism through the periodical *Al-Jinan*, which they published in Beirut from 1870 to 1886. In one of his articles, titled “Our Situation” and published in 1872, Salim al-Bustani reflected on Syria as a key country in economic terms within the Ottoman domains, describing it as a kind of “gateway through which the West enters the East, and the East gains access to the West”²⁴.

Salim al-Bustani's reflections on Syria as a country historically rich in human and agricultural resources, possessing advantageous trade routes, and occupying a distinctive economic role as a transit corridor between East and West, were closely linked to the aforementioned rapid demographic and economic growth of Beirut. The city's population, which in the first third of the nineteenth century barely exceeded 10,000, quadrupled between 1830 and 1860 and continued to grow thereafter, primarily due to the influx of Christian refugees and settlers from Mount Lebanon and the interior regions of Syria²⁵. The migration to the city of numerous Christian artisans and merchants from Mount Lebanon, Damascus, and Aleppo contributed to Beirut's economic expansion, particularly as Ottoman Syria gradually integrated into the global capitalist system. Equally significant was the fact

²² Zachs F. Toward a Proto-Nationalist Concept of Syria? P. 168.

²³ Butrus al-Bustani, was an Arab Lebanese journalist and writer, regarded as one of the most prominent figures of an-Nahda and the founder of the modern Arabic historical novel.

²⁴ See: *Traboulsi F. A History of Modern Lebanon*. New York: Pluto Press, 2012. P. 55.

²⁵ During the tragic year of 1860 alone, about 20,000 refugees arrived in Beirut and its surroundings, according to Lebanese historian *Fawwaz Traboulsi*. See: *Traboulsi F. A History of Modern Lebanon*. Pp. 55–56.

that, unlike the older commercial and artisanal centers of Syria, Beirut had not yet developed a rigid structure of trade and craft guilds (*tawa'if*). In an environment marked by the influx of both internal and external capital, this fostered social mobility among newcomers and stimulated economic activity in trade and services.

According to Butrus al-Bustani and his fellow Nahda-era reformers, the multi-component and dynamic social environment of coastal Beirut could provide fertile ground for cultivating a Syrian patriotic consciousness capable of transcending traditional sectarian isolation. Guided by this lofty objective, al-Bustani established in 1863 the National School (*al-Madrasah al-Wataniyya*) in Beirut — the first private institution offering instruction modeled on Western curricula in Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, and French. Open to students of all confessions, al-Bustani's National School successfully competed with both Muslim and Christian educational institutions, including missionary schools. In this context, during the 1870s, philosophical and ethical debates on educational principles were conducted in Beirut periodicals such as *Al-Jinan*, *Al-Bashir*, and *Samarat al-Funūn*. In 1873, in *Al-Jinan*, al-Bustani, drawing on the example of the school he had founded, characterized education (*ta'lim, tarbiyya*) as the foundation for “cultivating love of the homeland” (*tarbiyat mahabbat al-watan*) among children of diverse confessions²⁶.

Another significant illustration of the emergence of a Syrian-Lebanese national consciousness is found in the works of the prominent Nahda figure, historian, and physician Mikhail Mishaqa (1800–1888). Raised in a Greek Catholic family in southern Mount Lebanon, Mishaqa converted to Protestantism in the 1840s under the influence of literature distributed by American missionaries. In 1859, he was appointed U.S. vice-consul in Damascus, thereby gaining the privileges of consular protection. His writings, *Mashhad*

²⁶ More on Butrus al-Bustani's views on education, see: Ferguson S. “A Fever for an Education”: Pedagogical Thought and Social Transformation in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, 1861–1914. *The Arab Studies Journal*. 2018: 26, (№ 1). Pp. 62–63.



Mikhail Mishaqa
www.MIDEASTIMAGE.com

al-‘Ayyan bi Hawadith Suriyya wa Lubnan (“An Eyewitness Account of the Events in Syria and Lebanon”)²⁷ and *Muntakhabat min al-Jawab ‘ala Iktirah al-Ahbab* (“Responses to the Proposals of the Beloved”)²⁸, reflect Mishaqa’s spiritual and intellectual development as a member of the new Syrian-Lebanese Christian intelligentsia. His self-consciousness remained religious, yet the blind faith in traditional religious authorities gradually gave way to a rational analysis of the essence of Christian doctrine. In 1860, Mishaqa experienced the tragic anti-Christian pogrom in Damascus and later recounted

²⁷ *Mishaqa M.* Mashhad al-‘Ayyan bi Hawadith Suriya wa Lubnan (An Eyewitness to the Events in Syria and Lebanon). Cairo, 1908.

²⁸ *Mishaqah M.* Murder, Mayhem, Pillage and Plunder: The History of the Lebanon in the 18th and 19th Century. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988. 309 p.

it in his works. Like Butrus al-Bustani, he sought to regard Syria and Mount Lebanon as a unified country and its inhabitants, regardless of confession, as a single people called to display fraternal love toward their compatriots. By referring to the inhabitants of the Syrian provinces of the Ottoman Empire as “Syrians”, Mishaqa emphasized their historically established territorial and cultural-linguistic cohesion²⁹. In narrating the tragedy in Damascus in 1860, the Syrian-Lebanese historian criticized the Ottoman authorities for facilitating the anti-Christian violence, yet he simultaneously wished success for the Tanzimat reforms and never questioned Ottoman sovereignty over his homeland³⁰.

The literary and intellectual activity of Syrian-Lebanese Christian publicists and educators in the early Nahda period, despite its apparent apoliticism, addressed important ethical and civic questions, which can be summarized as follows: what does it mean to be an Arabic-speaking Christian, a resident of Syria, while remaining a loyal subject of the Ottoman Empire? Should the Christians of Syria and Mount Lebanon rely on the assistance of European and American co-religionists in an environment dominated by the conservative Muslim majority, skeptical of granting Christians the equality proclaimed by the Ottoman government? Representatives of the emerging Arabic-speaking Christian intellectual elite of Ottoman Syria did not question Ottoman sovereignty or their loyalty to the Sultan and the Sublime Porte³¹. At the same time, they advocated for the formation of a Syrian (or Syrian-Lebanese) supra-confessional community based on territorial and ethno-cultural criteria. The continuation and development of the idea of Syrian patriotism

²⁹ More on the socio-political views of Mikhail Mishaqa, see: *Zachs F. Mikha'il Mishaqa — The First Historian of Modern Syria. British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. 2001: 28 (№ 1). Pp. 77–78.

³⁰ Mishaqah M. *Murder, Mayhem, Pillage and Plunder*. Pp. 244–249.

³¹ For a broader discussion of Christian and Muslim contemporaries' perceptions of the 1860 events in Mount Lebanon and Damascus, see: *Krimsti F. The massacre in Damascus, July 1860. Thomas D. and Chesworth J. A. (eds.), Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*. Leiden — Boston: Brill, 2018. Pp. 378–406.

persisted into the twentieth century, in the post-Ottoman period, significantly contributing to the emergence of national statehood in both Syria and Lebanon.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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The Importance of Russian Schools in the Levant

Abstract

The article analyzes the cultural significance of the Russian schools established by the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society in the Levant in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The study addresses an important yet understudied aspect of the sociocultural interaction between Russia and this Middle Eastern region in modern historiography. The aim of the article is to examine the influence of Russian schools on the formation of the cultural, religious, and national identity of Arab Orthodox communities, as well as their role in the process of the Arabization of the patriarchates. The author demonstrates that the Russian schools not only provided free education but also contributed to strengthening the Arabic language and literature, the development of a local intelligentsia, and the broader cultural revival known as the Nahda. Through the example of the schools' graduates (such as Mikhayil Nu'aymeh, Khalil Baydas, and others), the study shows how exposure to Russian literature and culture influenced the emergence of modern Arabic literature and journalism. Particular attention is given to the role of Russian diplomats and educators in supporting the Arab Orthodox communities in

their pursuit of the Arabization of the local church administration. The research confirms that the activities of Russian schools and diplomats played a key role in the Arabization of the Antiochian Patriarchate and contributed to the cultural renaissance of the Arab world. The main contribution of the work lies in the use of new historical sources (including interviews) as well as in the systematic analysis of historical evidence demonstrating the interconnection between Russia's educational policy and the religious and national developments in the Levant.

Keywords:

Russian schools, Orthodox communities of the Levant, Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, Middle East, Antiochian Patriarchate, Jerusalem Patriarchate, Nahda.

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Starting the 16th century, with the arrival of Western Catholic and Protestant missionaries to the East, numerous Orthodox families were attracted to the West and to the services offered by missionaries' schools, and consequently, converted to Catholicism and Protestantism. In the centuries that followed, the Ottoman Empire, commonly known as the 'sick man', came under the grip of the European powers, whose privileges and interests were clearly recognized in the Capitulation agreements.

Various religious brotherhoods and orders within different communities became intertwined with the political interests and agendas of afore-mentioned powers, from whom they received donations and ensured protec-

tion for their schools: for the Catholics, from France and Austria, and for the Protestants, from Great Britain, Prussia and later, the United States of America. Their schools spread throughout the Ottoman Empire, especially in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. It was only towards the last quarter of the 19th century that the Russians would start establishing schools in the Levant. It was in Palestine that the Imperial Russian Society of Palestine founded the first schools in Galilee in 1882.

On the eve of the First World War, Russian schools numbered 105. Yet, despite the short time that these schools operated in the East, their memory remained alive in the mind of the region's Orthodox community. In fact, these schools, aside from functioning free of charge, provided their pupils with books and other school supplies.

They dedicated several hours to the teaching of the Orthodox faith, where the various subjects covered: dogma, history, and the saints. These schools gave particular attention to the teaching of the Arabic language and valorized its literary and poetic heritage.

The importance of Russian schools in the Levant can also be found in the writings of their former students. We report in this article on the testimonials of two former students, Mikhayil Nu'aymeh and Georges Hanna, on the testimonial of a Muslim Sheikh professor of Arabic, and on the testimonial of other missionaries working in the region. In a last part, we will look at the role of Russia in the Arabization of the Patriarchate of Antioch.

1. Two Testimonials from Former Students

In his autobiography, Georges Hanna praised the free and open-minded nature of these schools, while Mikhayil Nu'aymeh stressed the importance of the girls' access to education and the interest they showed in the Arabic language.

Georges Hanna, a student at the Shoueifat school, testifies that these schools developed the love of Russia in children's hearts. Russia was seen by the Catholics and Protestants as the protective power of the Orthodox Christians. Despite the setbacks endured by Russia — the war with Japan and the 1905 revolution — children continued to shout “Long live the Tsar”, unaware that a few years later, he would be dethroned. Russian schools were open to

all students without any segregation based on religion. In those schools, everything was free: tuition, school uniforms, books, etc... This free education enabled the poorest students, whose financial situation would never have allowed them to attend other schools, to receive some education. Hanna insists that the level of Arabic instruction was better than in any other missionary school that only gave importance to their own national languages¹.

Mikhayil Nu'aymeh, another former student of Russian schools, who graduated from the Nazareth boys' seminary and attended university in Russia, reports that: "For the first time in Baskinta, an ideal school was founded. It was the first time that girls could go with boys to a school that had a well-established curriculum, discipline and courses. "Importance was given to the Arabic language, unlike in other schools"².

In addition, Mikhayil Nu'aymeh and Khalil Baydas both bear witness to the influence of Russian language and literature on their lives, as former students at Russian schools.

New means of expression, new aspirations, new horizons and new activities were acquired. Russian school education was instrumental in the birth of an Arab cultural movement in North America. The al-Rabitat al-qalamiyya (The New York Pen League) movement was founded in New York by four educated graduates of Russian schools, of whom three Syrian nationals: Nadra Haddad, Abdel Massih Haddad and Nassib Arida, former students at the Russian school in Homs, and the Lebanese Mikhayil Nu'aymeh, former student at Baskinta school. Nassib Arida and Mikhayil Nu'aymeh had also studied at the *l'École normale russe de Nazareth*. Al-Rabitat alqalamiyya included two Lebanese poets as well: Gibran Khalil Gibran and Eliya Abou Madi.

When Alexei Dmitrievsky was in office as Inspector and General Secretary of the Imperial Palestine Society, he regretted the two poets' departure to the United States of America because Russian schools would be losing future young teachers. On the other hand, he also felt that they could be vessels of the rich Russian literature to the New World. As a matter of fact, on April 23, 1912, Abdel Massih Haddad and Nassib Arida founded the New York-based magazine as-Sa'ih (The Traveler)³, that included several trans-

¹ HANNA Georges, *Qabla Al Maghib*, p. 60

² NU'AYMEH Mikhayil, 1960, *Sab'un (Seventies)* p. 86

³ DE TARAZI Philippe, tome IV, 1933, *Tarikh al Sahafat al Arabiyya (History of Arab Newspapers)* p. 4

lations of Russian literature articles. For five years (1913–1918), Arida served as the editor of the magazine called al-Funun (The Arts), in which novels by Tolstoy, Pushkin, Lermontov and others were published in Arabic.

In Palestine, several graduates of Russian schools contributed to the Arab Nahda⁴ movement, including Salim Qab'in. After graduating from the *l'École normale russe de Nazareth*, he settled in Egypt, where he specialized in translating Tolstoy's works. He published a study on Tolstoy, wrote several articles on Russian literature and, above all, he developed an agricultural project modelled around projects developed in Russia.

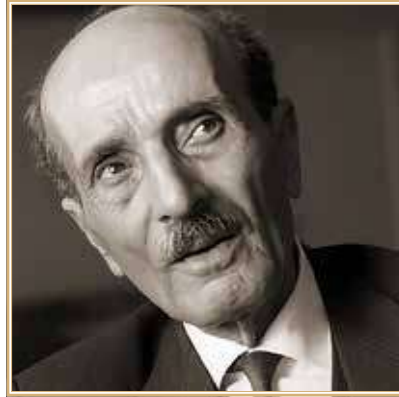
Mikhail Nu'aymeh, who had studied at the Poltava seminary in Russia and was also a member of al-Rabitat al-qalamiyya, says: "I quickly immersed myself in Russian literature. I read avidly. It was hard to find an author whose works I had not read. Literary stagnation in the Arab world had become obvious to me by the time I left Russia. This issue was discouraging and humiliating for someone who had experienced the delicate art of Pushkin, Lermontov, Turgenyev, the laughter to tears of Gogol, the appealing realism of Tolstoy, the literary ideal of Belinsky and, above all, the great humanity of the most profound and powerful of writers, Dostoyevsky".

Khalil Baydas, a graduate of schools in Palestine, talks about his impressions of Russian language and literature: "It was not only about the Russian language", he writes, "that was close to my heart. As soon as I had barely started to write it with difficulty... that I began to devour Russian books abundantly available in the school library. Each book I read gradually dispersed the fog obscuring my knowledge of Russia. What was merely a word at first, became a country, then an idea, and finally a whole world – the only world I could live and breathe in"⁵.

These testimonials highlight the deep inspiration of Russian literature on former students of Russian schools who, seriously trained in the Arabic language, ignited a literary renaissance movement in Lebanon, Syria and Palestine. Owing to this movement, Russian schools tremendously contributed to the development and modernization of the Arabic literature. Journalism,

⁴ The Nahda is the Arab cultural and literary renaissance movement that flourished in the Near East in the second half of the 19th century.

⁵ This testimonial by Khalil Baydas is quoted by Derek Hopwood, "The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine" (1843–1914) 1969, pp. 157–158 (himself quoting A. Shifman, *Lev Tolstoy i Vostok*, Moscow, 1960, p. 447).



Mikhayil Nu'aymeh

<https://www.arabamerica.com/pathbreakers-of-arab-america-mikhail-naimy/>

literature and translation were the fields in which these students excelled. Khalil Baydas, also graduate of *the École normale de Nazareth* was a teacher at the Russian schools in Haifa and Damascus. He translated works by Pushkin and Gogol. From 1908 to 1914, he edited the Jerusalem-based magazine *al-Nafa'is (The precious things)* exclusively dedicated to the publication in Arabic of the works of Russian authors.

2. Testimonials of Other European Missionaries

The importance of Russian schools in the Levant was also highlighted in the notes written by representatives of other European missions. In the same context, Russian inspectors' admiration for German schools seems to have been mutual. The missionary Martin Hartmann writes that the Imperial Society founded by Grand Duke Sergei provides support for devout Russian pilgrims and promotes an efficient education policy: "The Society is founding schools throughout Syria, even in the most distant areas". Hartmann also notes that Ottoman authorities are watching all this, anticipating that at some point the Russians might intervene. But Hartmann thinks that no Russian intervention in Syria is to be feared⁶. During his trip, Hartmann noted the presence of Russian schools in Homs and Latakia, where Catholics and Protestants also

⁶ HARTMANN Martin, "Reisebriefe aus Syrien" Berlin 1913, Introduction, p. XIII and XIV.



Students of the Male Teachers' Seminary of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society in Nazareth. *Russian Institutions in the Holy Land and Deceased Figures of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society. Vol. XXV (1882–1907).* St. Petersburg, Kirschbaum Publishing. 1907

had their own schools; “The Russians”, he wrote, “have also set foot in Beirut, where they founded 5 schools that accommodate 1,050 students in 4 different neighborhoods, and they also took care for the poorest”⁷. While Russia had no fewer than 101 schools in Syria and Palestine, it had no schools at all in Hama, where the Russian Consulate serves the Christian community, the majority of whom are Orthodox⁸. During that period, German newspapers advised Germany to follow Russia’s example when establishing and setting up German schools.

Conversely, French Catholic missions thought differently of the Russian schools flourishing in Palestine and Syria. The newspaper *La Vérité* wrote bitterly: “If the French policy does not change in the Holy Land, the French influence will disappear, soon to be replaced by the Russian power”⁹. The issue of land acquisition and expansion of schools was already worrisome to the Catholics. The same newspaper wrote: “At the cost of 100,000 human lives and one billion in expenses during the Sebastopol war (Crimea), France only acquired one piece of land and the house of Saint-Joachim and Sainte-Anne. Do we still have to wait for Russia to secure the privilege of protecting the Orthodox and that of opening schools in the heart of Jerusalem?” These excerpts from the newspaper *La Vérité* are reposted by the periodical published by the Palestine Imperial Society *Palestinskii Sbornik*, which concludes, with

⁷ Op. cit., p. 33 and 77.

⁸ Op. cit., p. 59.

⁹ Palestinskii Sbornik, tome VI, August 1894, p. 401–409.

a note of pride: “the dissatisfaction of our opponents is the best proof of the importance of Russia’s undertaking in the Holy Land and its duty to protect the Orthodox population”¹⁰.

3. Testimonials from Muslim Sheikh Professor of Arabic

Predominantly, Russia’s image within the local communities was shining. Moreover, the 19th century was marked by the rapid expansion of the Russian empire, then at its glorious peak. Shaykh Mohammad Ayyad al-Tantawi, Arabic teacher at the Russian school in Jerusalem in 1855, founded at the time of the mission of Kapoustine¹¹, and who also taught Arabic at the Institute of Oriental Studies in St. Petersburg, wrote three poems to praise the glory of Russia and its tsars, characterized by the strong praise and a hagiographic style.

The first poem commemorates the 25th anniversary of the coronation of Tsar Nicholas I, emperor of Russia (1855–1825). In this poem, the author lists and glorifies the works and victories of the Tsar during his reign. He begins by citing his military victories and the growth of his army. He also mentions the construction of a luxuriously decorated palace. Yet, the work that he considers greater than the pharaohs’ pyramids consists of the arcaded bridge over the river “la Neva” that facilitated the movement of inhabitants during the periods of heavy snow. The author once again mentions the army, its strength and glory, as well as the expansion of Russian territories, which clearly constitutes a source of frustration and jealousy of other countries vis-à-vis Russia’s power. He also praises the Tsar’s family, his impressively beautiful wife, whom he describes as the “countless procreator” (“من المنجيات بلا عد”) and his sons, one of whom was to become the crown prince and the other the commander of the armies.

The last line of this poem is the traditional method to find a date, in which the number of letters constituting words mentioned after the dated word, would give the exact date of the coronation¹².

¹⁰ Op. cit.

¹¹ In other words, this is a school of the Russian Mission that opened prior to the establishment of the Imperial Society.

¹² Arabic Manuscript 111, University of Halle, Manuscript Department.

The second poem was written to announce the death of Tsar Nicholas the First. He describes this event as an astronomical catastrophe, the falling of the sky, an earthquake, an eclipse of the moon and sun, the disappearance of the star Venus. Foreigners, magazines and orphans mourn him for his generosity! His courage and his fight against the enemies did not prevent him from freeing the hostages and prisoners. The buildings he built mourn him, so do schools, newspapers and pencils! His daughters and subjects mourn him. His fleet and all Russia mourn him. The poem ends with the same way of dating the event.

A third poem was written to mark the enthronement of his son, Crown Prince Alexander II (1855). The same poet describes the joy that substitutes the sadness of the people. He describes the new Tsar as a renowned horseman and hunter, victorious over his enemies. He also evokes the beauty of the new tsarina, before whom “the moon bows”, “children are honored like flowers”, writes al-Tantawi¹³, “whose fragrance perfumes the world with dew”. The poem celebrates the strength of the new tsar’s armies and his victories over territories to which the occupation instills justice. The poet mentions that he had the honor to meet the Tsar, and that the latter was pleased. Furthermore, even when the dating process was finished, the author continues to praise the tsar in five verses, describing his trip to Paris and the signing of the treaty that ended the war.

Though written in the 19th century, these poems echo the poem composed by bishop Issa who had accompanied the Antiochian Patriarch Yuwakim Daw to Russia in the 17th century. We find therein the same admiration for the power and glory of Russia, the same amazement vis-à-vis the grandeur and luxury of the tsarist power. What is remarkable here, however, is that Shaykh al-Tantawi praises the military victories and the posterity of the royal family for both Tsar Nicholas I and his successor Alexander II, even though he himself is Muslim and Ottoman.

This form of admiration for Russia, illustrated by these poems, not only resonated with the local communities, but was also reflected in the Orthodox keen interests in all the news they received from Russia. Thus, in 1905, news of the assassination of Grand Duke Sergei fell like a thunderbolt on the students of the *École normale de Nazareth*. Students did not understand how

¹³ Arabic Manuscript 111, University of Halle, Manuscript Department.

the Tsar's uncle, the founder of the Society, so generous to them, could be so hated in his own country. The school organized a condolences session in his memory, attended by all notables of Nazareth. The school management chose a poem by the student Mikhayil Nu'aymeh to be read in public. At the time of writing his memoirs, the author remembered only the following two lines:

سرى نعيه بالبرق في كل جانب»
 «وما كان ظني الطود بالبرق يرفع¹⁴

(*"The news of his death came like a bolt of lightning from all sides, and I did not think the mountain could be lifted by lightning"*).

Another Russia-related event was to upset the Eastern Orthodox community's opinion. It was the Russian-Japanese War (1904–1905), at a time when the radio did not exist yet, and Beirut newspapers needed at least one week to reach Nazareth, and Russian newspapers, one month. The defeat of Admiral Stepan Makarov and the destruction of his battleship "Petropavlovsk" in the port of Vladivostok (1904), was perceived as a great tragedy at the schools of Nazareth. The Orthodox went to *École normale de Nazareth* to get the latest news on the war. Nu'aymeh narrates that students would sometimes manipulate the feelings of an old gentleman who was very attached to Russia by distorting some events, only to see him react in a very theatrical way and shout: "Zito, may God give him victory"¹⁵.

This war gave rise to a song celebrating the Russian tsar, to the tune of the Turkish song "Uskudar" or the Arabic song "Les filles d'Alexandrie", "*Ya banat Iskandaria*"

قيصر الروس نيقولا صنه يا متان
 واجعل النصر حليفه في حرب اليابان

*O tsar of the Russians Nicolas may God the Generous keep him
 And may victory be his ally in the war against Japan.*

This lullaby is still sung to this day by Lebanese Orthodox grandmothers who put their grandchildren to sleep¹⁶.

Russia's influence on the region's Orthodox communities continued even after the 1917 October Revolution. In Lebanon, for example, at the end

¹⁴ Nu'aymeh Mikhayil, *Tis'un* (Nineties) 1988, p. 213–214.

¹⁵ Verbal testimonial by Marie Zakhour collected in 2000 by Souad Abou-Rousse-Slim.

¹⁶ Interview with Dr. Nadim Nu'aymeh (nephew of Mikhayil Nu'aymeh) in 2012.

of the Second World War, and following the victory of the allies, during the Pascha holy liturgy in Baskinta in 1945, the celebrants intoned “May God protect our hero Stalin” instead of the prayer “May God protect our believing (Orthodox) kings”.

In the Orthodox homes of Koura (a territory in north-western Lebanon), one would see photos of Lenin and Stalin surrounding the icon of the Virgin by the same people who had previously hung the photo of Tsar Nicholas II and his family.

4. Russia’s Role in the Arabization of the Antiochian Patriarchate

In people’s memory, the Arabization of the Antiochian Patriarchate remains one major achievement of Russia’s influence in the Near East.

In 1895, the Greek Patriarch of Antioch in Damascus, Spyridon I who was facing a myriad of difficulties, was unpopular and deeply indebted. That same year, he invited the Imperial Society to run the schools of his Patriarchate, hoping to benefit from the Society’s popularity and efficiency. This decision generated the first positive impact, that of accelerating the Arabization of the Antiochian Patriarchate.

By entrusting the schools to the Russians, Spyridon condemned himself: he had to flee to Constantinople 4 years later (see *infra*).

Another result followed. In Syria, the 15 schools that existed in 1895 would grow to become 41 schools with 5,500 students by 1900. With the arrival of Meletios, the first Arab Patriarch on the See of Antioch since 1724, Syria would account in 1905, 70 Russian schools with over 9,000 students: not only did this unexpected expansion put a serious strain on the Imperial Society’s budget, but this development did not please all its members. Grand Duke Sergei, the Society’s founder and honorary president, saw this as a deviation from the Society’s original aims, which were to welcome pilgrims in the Holy Land. In fact, the 1888–1890 report already mentioned the idea that Syria was not a field of action likely to supersede the objectives of the Society in Palestine¹⁷.

¹⁷ HOPWOOD Derek “The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine (1843–1914)”, 1969, p. 150.

The Arabization of the Antiochian Patriarchate in 1899 was in fact, the result of a series of events. In this context, since the Greek War of Independence that lasted from 1821 till 1832, negative feelings related to the differences between the Greek Patriarch and his Arab parishioners had grown considerably. The Greeks had gone from being Ottoman subjects, to foreigners and enemies of the Ottoman state. The empire had taken this war very badly and took revenge on its Orthodox subjects, especially those who dared to support Greece. In Beirut and several Syrian coastal cities inhabited by large Greek communities, riots broke out in support of the Greek people. The Protestant printing house, established in Beirut since 1827, had to relocate to Malta where it operated for some years before returning to Beirut. As a revenge move, Ottomans recognized the Greek Catholics in 1848, following several requests by their Patriarch Maximus III Mazloum (1833–1855). Priest Porphyrius Uspenski, of the Russian Mission in Jerusalem and one of the few Russian dignitaries renowned for his in-depth knowledge of the Antiochian Patriarch prior to 1850, considered it impossible for the Syrian Orthodox Church to continue to be ruled by a Greek Patriarch, and therefore advised the Russian Church to exert pressure for the election of an Arab Patriarch.

The issue of Arabization of the Patriarchate of Antioch arose again with the Bulgarian crisis. In 1872, the Damascenes revolted against their Greek Patriarch, Iérothéos, who had voted with Constantinople for the excommunication of the Bulgarians. If the Antiochians saw this as a reason to revolt against their Patriarch, the Orthodox of Damascus, on the other hand, mainly revolted against the way in which the Patriarchate's revenues were being utilized¹⁸.

The Orthodox believers of Damascus found support in their uprising against the Patriarch in the Russian General Consul in Damascus, Belyaev. The latter was in fact sent from Jerusalem to Damascus that soon became the seat of the General Consulate. Seemingly, this assignment was not a routine procedure. Belyaev was keenly interested in Arab affairs and the situation of the Orthodox Church. He would later be appointed as president of the Imperial Russian Society of Palestine. He forged ties with Arab bishops (namely Bishop Gerasimos Yared of Zahle, who had pursued his studies in Russia)¹⁹, and seeing

¹⁸ op.cit., p. 162.

¹⁹ Op.cit., p. 160.

the increasing intensity of the “Arab national” feeling, he joined forces with the Arab bishops in their uprising against their Greek Patriarch, Spyridon I.

By calling for the election of an Arab Patriarch, Arab bishops were seeking to bring to light the issue of schools in the Patriarchate of Antioch. Spyridon hoped that by improving the schools and entrusting them to the Russian Society, he would calm his Arab parishioners. However, the Patriarch did not foresee that the Arab bishops, backed by Russia, would succeed in making their voices heard to the capital Istanbul and to the Sublime Porte, the two spiritual and temporal authorities of the Ottoman empire.

In the summer of 1898, the Holy Synod of the Church of Antioch met and, with a majority of the Arab bishops, decided to revoke Spyridon, who, after taking refuge at the Saydnaya convent, fled to Constantinople. Discussions that would eventually lead to the election of his successor would last two years²⁰.

To succeed in the election of a Patriarch from among their own ranks, Arab bishops needed external support in two capitals: Damascus, where encouragement and talks with Arab Orthodox bishops and local authorities were necessary, and in Constantinople, to face up to the opposition from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. They would benefit from the support of Belyaev in Damascus and that of the Russian ambassador Zinoviev in Istanbul.

The major problem for the Damascus Orthodox Christians was the absence of a constitution for the Church of Antioch. It had not been necessary for so long as the Patriarchate of Antioch functioned under the auspices of the Patriarch of Constantinople. However, the election of the Patriarch needed to be validated by the Ottoman governor of Damascus, who required that Greek bishops participate in the election. The synod, meeting in an electoral assembly, appointed Germanos, the Greek bishop of Adana, as patriarchal vicar. The latter presided over the synod; yet, the Arab bishops were in the majority and acted under the leadership of the bishop of Zahlé, Gerasimos Yared. They were determined to elect an Arab Patriarch to the seat of the Patriarchate in Damascus.

In Constantinople, the conflict crystallized between two parties: Sultan Abdel Hamid on the one hand, and his ministers on the other. The

²⁰ Op.cit., p. 166.



Beit Jala. Female students of the Women's Teachers' Seminary of the IOPS.
*Russian Institutions in the Holy Land and Deceased Figures of the Imperial
 Orthodox Palestine Society. Vol. XXV (1882–1907).*
St. Petersburg, Kirschbaum Publishing. 1907

Russian ambassador addressed the Grand Vizier, Tewfik Pasha, to convince him to support the election of an Arab Patriarch²¹ arguing that a system of autocephalous patriarchates not dependent on Constantinople would make it more difficult for the Orthodox to rally to obtain political privileges. The Grand Vizier was not convinced by the ambassador's arguments, so he turned to the Sultan, and obtained what he requested. Once Abdel Hamid convinced, the Ottoman administration understood that Russian pressure would be too strong and could not be countered.

On the Greek side, the Patriarchate of Constantinople started to address ambassadors from France and Great Britain, warning them against the growing Russian political influence in the Middle East. The French ambassador felt unable to intervene because of his country's alliance with Russia, and the British ambassador O' Connor, did not wish to get involved in a dispute that did not directly serve the British interests. Nevertheless, he sent his interpreter to speak privately to the Sultan's secretary to explain to him "the danger of giving official support to Russian propaganda".

The Grand Vizier received a delegation composed of three Greek patriarchates and a representative of the Ecumenical Patriarch himself²². They offered him 25,000 Turkish pounds as a gift. The Ottoman ministers could not show a direct opposition to the Sultan, so they embraced the cause of the

²¹ Op.cit., p. 168.

²² It is the Patriarch of Constantinople that is meant here. See chapter I, note 30.

Greek Patriarchs and attempted to influence the actions of the governor of Damascus²³.

The outcome of the conflict largely depended on the attitude of the governor of Damascus, Nazim Pacha, who seemed to favor the Arab party from the start. He was in an embarrassing position given the different views of the Sultan and his ministers, and the persistent pressure exerted by the Greeks and Russians in Damascus. In March 1899, shortly following ambassador Zinoviev's visit to the Sultan, Nazim Pasha informed the Antioch synod that he had received instructions to dismiss the Greek patriarchal vicar, Germanos for opposing the decisions of the majority of the synod, and suggested that they appoint the bishop of Latakia, Meletios al-Doumani as patriarchal vicar. The latter was confirmed patriarchal vicar by the Sultan in March 1899. The Sublime Porte informed Nazim Pasha that the three Greek patriarchates had protested the exclusion of Greek bishops from the elections, which constituted an infringement of their rights. The Orthodox replied that their language was Arabic and that their sacred right stipulated that their spiritual leader be an Arab Ottoman who would serve the State and his community. They argued that the situation that had prevailed in the 18th and 19th centuries had not affected the ancient tradition of the Patriarch being elected by the various bishops and parishioners²⁴.

The governor of Damascus sent this reply to Istanbul, which only added up to the existing confusion. On a desperate note, Arabs realized that time was running against them. They wished to hold the elections before even receiving official authorization. Belyaev promised them that he would ask the Tsar to intervene in favor of an Arab Patriarch. Most bishops estimated that they should benefit from the Sultan's support and call for immediate elections without the presence of Antiochian laity. They soon nominated three candidate bishops: Meletios (Latakia), Athanasios (Homs) and Gerasimos (Zahlé). The doors of the Cathedral of Damascus, closed for the short interval of the election, finally opened to announce to the crowd the election of Meletios al-Doumani to the seat of the Patriarchate of Antioch. Celebrations of joy in Bab al-Charqi district lasted until midnight.

²³ HOPWOOD Derek op.cit. 1969, p. 168.

²⁴ Op.cit., p. 169.



Women’s School of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society in Damascus.
*Russian Institutions in the Holy Land and Deceased Figures of the Imperial
 Orthodox Palestine Society. Vol. XXV (1882–1907).*
 St. Petersburg, Kirschbaum Publishing. 1907

For his official recognition, the newly elected patriarch needed a “Firman of Investiture” (order) from the Sultan. The Ecumenical Patriarchate sent to the palace his opposition against this election²⁵. Under these circumstances, and following a heated debate, the Ottoman Council of Ministers decided to reinstate Germanos, bishop of Adana, as patriarchal vicar and to call for new elections. The Council of Ministers asked the governor of Damascus, Nazim Pasha, to depose Meletios. Although disappointed by the Arab Orthodox (who, in practice, were moving away from the Ottoman support rule), Nazim Pasha continued to support their cause and took no action. The Arabs were losing hope, and tensions in Damascus increased with the numerous demonstrations and conflicts taking place. In the summer of 1899, former Russian ambassador to Constantinople, Nelidov, visited Damascus. After his departure, Nazim Pasha summoned the Russian consul Belyaev and informed him, in the presence of several Arab priests, that there was no risk of Meletios being deposed²⁶.

In Istanbul, the Russian ambassador Zinoviev held further discussions with the Sultan to convince him that refusal to recognize Meletios would create bitter animosity among the Arab Orthodox, which might also encourage them to join the ranks of Arab Muslim movements claiming national in-

²⁵ Op.cit., p. 170.

²⁶ Op.cit., p. 170.

dependence. As for the Arab Orthodox, they realized that their two enemies were the Ecumenical Patriarch and O' Connor, the English ambassador to Constantinople, who declared that the election of an Arab Patriarch would only generate more Russian influence. The policy of the Arab Greek Orthodox was also to refuse any obedience to Russia. They officially declared:

“Nothing links the Arab Orthodox to Russia apart from the community of faith that also links them to the Greeks, Bulgarians and Romanians”²⁷. Until mid-September 1899, no action was taken to depose Meletios. Both the Sultan and Nazim Pasha held firm. Meletios received a friendly reply to his courtesy telegram on the occasion of the Sultan's enthronement anniversary. In November, when the synod was summoned to hold new elections, Meletios got re-elected. Only four days later, Nazim Pasha received confirmation of this nomination from the Sultan and the Sublime Porte. Meletios was enthroned in the Cathedral of Damascus on November 13, 1899, in the presence of the Arab bishops of the synod, of Belyaev, the Russian Consul in Damascus, as well as all consulate officials. That same evening, Belyaev dined with the bishops and the Patriarch.

This eventful episode in the relationship between the Patriarchate of Antioch and Russia formed a founding pillar in the development of this Patriarchate and the cultural and political expansion of Bilad al-Cham in the 20th century. One of the first theorists of Arab nationalism, Sati' al-Husri, would later say in a lecture: “The independence of the Patriarchate of Antioch from the control of the Hellenic prelates and hierarchy constituted the first steppingstone in the Arab rebellion against the Ottomans”²⁸

Henceforth, the efforts of Russians, diplomats and teachers alike, leading to the reinforcement of the community identity and sense of belonging of Orthodox Christians to the Arab identity, undoubtedly succeeded in Antioch. On the other hand, this Russian policy failed in Jerusalem, where

²⁷ Op.cit., p. 170.

²⁸ Sati' al-Husri, *Muhadarat fi nushu' al-fikra al-qawmiyya* (Lectures on the birth of the nationalist idea), Cairo, 1st edition, 1951, p. 171. Sati' al-Husri (1880–1968), Syrian modernist teacher and intellectual, and theorists of Arab nationalism, was appointed Minister of Education in the government of King Faysal I in Damascus. In 1920, he followed Faysal to Iraq following the entry of the French into Syria. Following numerous stays in Syria and Egypt, he returned to Iraq in 1967.

the Orthodox Patriarch is still Greek to this day, despite persistent demands from the Palestinian Orthodox for the Arabization of their Jerusalem patriarchate.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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Russian Schools of Maria A. Cherkasova in Beirut: The Formative Era (1887–1897)

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to provide a detailed reconstruction of the history of the establishment of the network of Russian schools of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (IOPS) in Beirut between 1887 and 1897 – a topic that has not yet been the subject of a focused analysis in historiography. The relevance of the study stems from the need to critically reassess the «anniversary myths» that have become entrenched in later historiography. The empirical foundation of the research consists of materials from the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire, introduced into scholarly circulation for the first time. The study of this phenomenon makes it possible to reveal the complex and contradictory nature of the Russian educational mission in the Orthodox East. The main focus of the article is on the missionary and pedagogical activities of Maria A. Cherkasova, known as «Mama Moskobie». Sent to Beirut in 1887, at a time when the leadership of the IOPS lacked both a detailed work plan and scholarly assessment of the region, she encountered a low level of education and the



dominance of heterodox influences within the local Orthodox community. On her own initiative, she founded the first Russian school for girls. The article provides a detailed account of the opposition she faced from corrupt dragomans of the Russian consulate, the peremptory demands of the Society's leadership in St. Petersburg that conflicted with local conditions, the shortage of qualified personnel, the indifference of representatives of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and threats to security from the surrounding Muslim environment. The phenomenon of Maria A. Cherkasova's uninterrupted thirty-year teaching career in Beirut has no parallel in the history of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society and is unique in its nature. The significance of this work lies in substantiating the thesis that the successful and lasting development of the IOPS's educational activity in the region was ensured not by systematic institutional support, but solely by Maria A. Cherkasova's personal energy, sincere faith, and self-sacrifice.

Keywords:

Patriarchate of Antioch, the Orthodox Arabs, Russia and the Orthodox East, Syria, Lebanon, Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, Orthodoxy, M.A. Cherkasova, V.N. Hitrovo, Elisaveta Fedorovna.

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Unable to develop fully in Palestine, the educational activities of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (IOPS) were forced to shift to Syria and Lebanon. Within the canonical territory of the Church of Antioch there lived more than

200,000 Orthodox Christians, largely belonging to the prosperous strata of society¹. The local hierarchs, who were financially independent of the Greek Patriarch, wielded considerable influence, and Russia's position there was significantly stronger. The most authoritative among them in the final third of the nineteenth century was the Metropolitan of Beirut, Gabriel (Shatila). Between 1861 and 1869 he served as head of the Antiochian Metochion in Moscow², spoke fluent Russian, and was a staunch advocate of close ties with Russia; he aspired to the patriarchal throne twice, in 1885 and 1891. With his blessing and, above all, owing to the energy of the missionary Maria A. Cherkasova (1841–1918)³, the first steps of the Society in the educational sphere within the Patriarchate of Antioch were taken.

A quarter-century later, official documents of the Society described the founding of the schools in dry bureaucratic language:

“The school activities of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society in Syria began twenty-three years ago, in 1887, when the first Russian school of the Prophet Elijah was established in the Mousaitbeh quarter of Beirut by a Russian teacher dispatched by the Society. Three years later, when this school gained the trust and sympathy of the local population, three more schools were opened during 1890 and 1891: one in the Mazraa quarter, two in Rumeli Hisari, and finally, two years later, in 1893, a school was opened in Ras Beirut. <...> The rather rapid and successful development of the Russian urban schools in Beirut attracted the attention of the

¹ Unlike the Jerusalem Patriarchate, whose poor and ignorant flock did not exceed 20–25 thousand (Хумрово В.Н. Православие в Святой Земле. СПб., 1881. С. 122.) and was likely even smaller — 16.7 thousand according to K. Karpat. (*Karpat K. Ottoman population. 1830–1914. Demographic and social Characteristics. Madison, 1985. P. 128–129.*)

² Knight of the Order of St. Anna, 2nd Class. Awarded at the petition of Innocent Metropolitan of Moscow on April 12, 1870 1870 г. (Российский государственный исторический архив (далее — РГИА). Ф. 797. Оп. 39. 3 ст. 2 отд. Д, 67. Л. 73).

³ Despite the significant number of publications devoted to M. A. Cherkasova, N. N. Lisovoy was compelled to note: “The biography of this unquestionably remarkable woman [...] has not yet been written”. *Лисовой Н.Н. М.А. Черкасова и школы Императорского Православного Палестинского Общества в Бейруте / Всмотриваясь друг в друга... Россия и арабский мир: взаимное восприятие (Сборник статей). Сост.: Н.Г. Романова, И.М. Смилянская (отв. ред.), А.О. Филоник. М.: Институт востоковедения РАН, 2013. С. 440.*

*Orthodox communities and clergy of the entire Patriarchate of Antioch ...*⁴ The triumphantly monotonous tone of this narrative was far removed from reality. Unfortunately, its stylistic template was inherited by later historiography⁵. Among the most attentive studies of recent years, the article by P.V. Fedotov⁶ deserves mention; nevertheless, the formative period of the Russian school network in Beirut has not yet become the subject of detailed examination in Russian scholarship. Reconstructing, on the basis of newly introduced materials from the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire, the complex history of the emergence of the Beirut schools of the Palestine Society is of considerable significance. In this phenomenon, as in a microcosm, the very character of the Russian presence in the Orthodox East is reflected.

First steps on the Syrian shore

At the beginning of 1887, following interviews with M.P. Stepanov and V.N. Khitrovo, Maria Cherkasova was sent to Syria. It should be noted that the dispatch of Cherkasova to Beirut was in many ways accidental. Instead of the future capital of Lebanon, Maria Aleksandrovna (Cherkasova – translator) might easily have found herself in any other locality along the Levantine coast. The leadership of the Society had no well-developed instructions for her future work.

On 20 February 1887, V.N. Khitrovo wrote the following in an accompanying letter addressed to the General Consul K.D. Petkovich⁷:

“...Mikhail Petrovich (Stepanov – E.K.) wrote about our intention to send, in addition to a male Russian teacher, also a Russian woman teacher at your disposal. We have a very suitable person for this, and we would be glad

⁴ Отдел рукописей РНБ. Ф. 253. Оп.1. Д. 36. Л. 1.

⁵ See: Лисовой Н.Н. Русское духовное и политическое присутствие в Святой земле и на Ближнем Востоке в XIX – начале XX в. М., 2006. С. 160–253.

⁶ Федотов П.В. Бейрутские школы Императорского православного палестинского общества (1887–1914 гг.): религиозно-политический проект М.А. Черкасовой (по материалам Архива внешней политики Российской империи) // Российский журнал истории Иерусалима. 2022. № 3(2). С. 50–65.

⁷ Konstantin Dmitrievich Petkovich (1827–1897) – Consul General in Beirut in 1869–1896.

to put her to good use. Initially she could simply teach the Russian language in the girls' school in Beirut, and within six months of such teaching she could look around and familiarize herself sufficiently to determine mainly how to organize her own girls' school, should there prove to be a need for it. Where? In Beirut, Acre, Haifa, or Jaffa — time will tell"⁸.

It would be difficult to imagine a plan more detached from reality. The letter vividly illustrates how distant the St. Petersburg leadership was from understanding its next steps in the region, whose local social and economic conditions appeared to them rather hazy. Alongside Beirut — “the bride of the sea”, as contemporaries called it — Khitrovo entertained the possibility of opening a school in cities such as Acre, Haifa⁹, or Jaffa, which were utterly unsuitable for that purpose.

By late spring of 1887, when most well-to-do residents, fleeing the heat and humidity, moved to their summer houses in the coolness of the Lebanese mountains, M.A. Cherkasova arrived in Beirut. The “Paris of the East” “stretched like an amphitheater along the seashore, with numerous gardens on the outskirts of the city; a narrow stone embankment separated the city from the sea; the houses were fairly tall, with flat roofs over which several Christian churches rose; in the background, the chain of the forested Lebanese mountains extended...”¹⁰.

Overcoming the oppressive climate, the missionary began her work, striving “to spend every day in a way beneficial to the cause and to the glory of God, as far as my strength allows...”¹¹ The IOPS assumed that she would become a teacher of the Russian language at the “celebrated” — in A.E. Krymsky's words — School of the Three Holy Hierarchs (a secondary-level institution)¹². However, thanks to Maria Aleksandrovna's percep-

⁸ *Дмитриевский А.А. XXV-летие русских школ в Бейруте и служение в них М. А. Черкасовой // Сообщения ИППО. 1912. Т. 23. Вып. 1. С. 76–88.*

⁹ They were secondary settlements with a predominantly Muslim population, administratively dependent on the capital of the Coastal Vilayet of Beirut (from 1888) and located at its southern borders, far from both the consulate and the central authorities.

¹⁰ *Коптев А. Воспоминание о поездке в Константинополь, Каир и Иерусалим в 1887 году. СПб., 1888. С. 268.*

¹¹ Архив внешней политики Российской империи (далее — АВПРИ). Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 3 об.

¹² *Крымский А.Е. Письма из Ливана (1896–1898). М., 1975. С. 76.*



View of Beirut from the residence of the Society of Jesus toward
the Gemmayzeh–Surssock–Medawar district.
Les petites écoles du Mont-Liban: Joseph Delore, s.j. (1873–1944).
Beirut: Presses de l'Université Saint-Joseph, 2003

tiveness, this error was avoided. Having familiarized herself with “the great school’s” organization¹³, she reluctantly concluded that “the girls’ school, in which I was expected to teach, like Kezma, has such teaching staff that joining it would mean ruining the whole matter from the very start, for one does not enter Rome and not behave as the Romans, yet following their rules is not permitted by any reasonable understanding of education”¹⁴.

She was particularly outraged by the school’s faculty: “some Greek women who had failed in trade, imported from Marseille”¹⁵. “Clearly, they can offer nothing serious; the very spirit that reigns in the school shows the corruption of children’s hearts through the methods of these teachers... Their manners and affectations are improper for ordinary people of decent society, let alone for educators. All this, of course, is transmitted to the children. And the Arab girls under their rule are unkempt, incapable, and behave improperly”¹⁶, Cherkasova concluded. On the level of a well-known Arabic proverb — “a stick for the disobedient” (العصا لمن عصى) —

¹³ *Al-madrasat al-kubraa* as the School of the Three Holy Hierarchs in Beirut (also known as the Three Moons School) was called.

¹⁴ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 5.

¹⁵ Ibid. Л. 5.

¹⁶ Ibid.

stood the school's pedagogy as well: "The children's faces are dull, they recite their lessons by rote; altogether, it is distressing"¹⁷. "Unfortunately, here especially in the Orthodox schools there exist methods of teaching that are more likely to stifle children's abilities than to develop them"¹⁸, she lamented.

The reason for such a sharp rejection of the school, which the Arab scholar A.E. Krymsky described as "celebrated"¹⁹, must likely be sought in the religious atmosphere to which the missionary was acutely sensitive. "In the boys' school, where Kezma previously taught <...> what struck me most was that the Law of God is taught from a Jesuit French textbook, and the teacher of the Law of God himself is a Latin or a Uniate"²⁰. A characteristic figure of such a teacher was Najib Nasim Trad, "undoubtedly a good and educated man"²¹, as the anti-clerical A.E. Krymsky judged him, who had studied with the Jesuits and taught French at the same school, though "local society disliked him for his engagement with philosophy"²². But what suited A.E. Krymsky and the local *nahḍawī* intellectuals of the Arab Renaissance was unacceptable to the missionary Cherkasova. Combating the corrupting influence of the West – whether Catholic or positivist – was a central idea in the work of *Mama Moskobie*.

"Greek, or rather Arab, schools seem to exist only to instill in children a disgust for learning and to develop all sorts of illnesses", the teacher summarized her first impressions²³. Entering the Three Moons School, as Khitrovo wished, would have meant assuming responsibility for the existing order and compromising the Society from the outset in the eyes of the Orthodox population, which regarded all "Russians as saints"²⁴.

With this challenge, thrown down by Lebanese reality, begins the history of *Mama Moskobie's* schools – the most vivid and original phenomenon in the entire educational activity of the IOPS. With characteristic en-

¹⁷ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 7 об.

¹⁸ Ibid. Л. 14 об.

¹⁹ *Крымский А.Е.* Письма... С. 76.

²⁰ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 7 об.

²¹ *Крымский А.Е.* Письма... С. 76.

²² Ibid. С. 79.

²³ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 6.

²⁴ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 8 об.

ergy and initiative, M.A. Cherkasova decided not to join the Three Moons School but to open her own.

“An experienced and energetic woman”²⁵, she held a meeting with General Consul K.D. Petkovich and, on 13 June 1887, not very diplomatically — *post factum* — informed the Society’s Council of its outcome: “Taking all this into consideration, we decided with Konstantin Dmitrievich to simply open a Russian-language class for day girls in my apartment, at least as a beginning”²⁶. There was no facility, no teaching materials, no support from high officials. But there was also no direct prohibition.

On 11 July 1887, the office of His Imperial Highness Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich sent an approving, though not uncritical, reply from M.P. Stepanov²⁷: “Open your class with God’s help, as you write; I think it would be better and more convenient to open a small Arabic class jointly with it <...> I fear that for Russian alone not even two pupils will come to you. However, you know best”²⁸.

His concern proved justified. A week later, only one pupil came to Cherkasova to study Russian — the teacher at the local Orthodox Arab school of the Three Holy Hierarchs, Afife Abdo, “a 22-year-old young woman, very modest, of good conduct and morals, so that she might even serve as an assistant if only her knowledge and pedagogical methods corresponded somewhat to that role”²⁹. In July 1887, few could have foreseen that the sole visitor to the Russian class would become Cherkasova’s loyal companion until the final days of her life. Afife herself considered her encounter with *Mama*, as she called her, a miracle foretold by a prophetic dream two years earlier³⁰.

²⁵ Дмитриевский А.А. XXV-летие русских школ.... С. 80.

²⁶ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 5 об.

²⁷ Mikhail Petrovich Stepanov (1853–1917) — Major General (1891), Secretary of the Orthodox Palestinian Society in 1882–1889; in 1889–1917 Assistant to the Chairman of the IOPS.

²⁸ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 12.

²⁹ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 14 об.

³⁰ She dreamed of a star shining in the west, under which “in large letters in a foreign language” something was written. “I was confused and amazed when I saw this. Then I said to myself: ‘If you do not know the meaning of these letters, do not know in what language this is written, then why did the Lord show you all this? Surely He wants me to learn this meaning’”. (Абдо А.Д. Краткая история жизни Мамы — Марии Александровны Черкасовой,

Such a far-from-triumphal beginning of the Russian class exposed the entire complex of problems inherent in Russia's presence in the Middle East. A predominantly agrarian country with a largely peasant population and a late-starting industrial transformation (typologically similar to the Ottoman Empire), the Russian Empire at the end of the nineteenth century could not withstand competition with Britain, France, and the United States. Rapid economic changes influenced the life choices of young people in the Middle East: knowledge of European languages was becoming a daily necessity for Levantines. As the Russian general consul in Beirut noted, "parents prefer schools in which foreign languages are taught"³¹. Educational institutions (mostly missionary) that offered mastery of the "new" languages, French and later English, enjoyed particular popularity. These languages displaced Italian as the *lingua franca* of the coastal cities of the Eastern Mediterranean in the second half of the nineteenth century. French, as the language of commerce, industry, the postal service, telegraphy, railroads, navigation, and higher education, was indispensable for life in Syria; English gained importance with the rise of emigration from the Syro-Lebanese region, opening "the doors to the American 'fabulous' earnings and profits"³².

On 18 July 1887 Cherkasova wrote to M.P. Stepanov:

*"Public opinion demands from a school, above all, the French language... There are very few persons wishing to study Russian; Russia, they say, is far away, we have no commercial ties with it, and in general no one in society speaks Russian, not even the Russians themselves, who seem ready to prefer any language to their own"*³³.

In addition to French, a girls' school was expected to teach skills necessary for a future wife and mother: "the ability to embroider and generally to sew, and partly music and singing, for those who are able"³⁴.

главы и основательницы русских школ Российского Императорского Православного Палестинского общества в Бейруте / Всмотриваясь друг в друга... Россия и арабский мир: взаимное восприятие (Сборник статей). Сост.: Н. Г. Романова, И. М. Смилянская (отв. ред.), А. О. Филоник. М.: Институт востоковедения РАН, 2013. С. 420).

³¹ АВПРИ. Ф. 208. Оп. 819. Д. 322. Л. 110 об.

³² АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 434. Л. 119 об.

³³ Ibid. Д. 425. Л. 15.

³⁴ Ibid.



St. Elijah Girls' School in Beirut with headmistress M.A. Cherkasova.
*Russian Institutions in the Holy Land and Deceased Figures of the Imperial
Orthodox Palestine Society. Vol. XXV (1882–1907).*
St. Petersburg, Kirschbaum Publishing. 1907

Thus, the stumbling block for the teacher became the question of the Russian language and, more broadly, the role and place of Russia in the life of the Middle East. An answer to what distant Russia could offer to Orthodox Syrians had to be found within the shortest possible time and taken into account in preparing to open the school.

From a Russian-language class to a school of her own

On 22 September 1887 the first school of M.A. Cherkasova opened its doors in the Mousaitbeh quarter of Beirut. A quarter-century later, in 1912, A.A. Dmitrievsky described this event as follows:

“...M.A. Cherkasova began insisting that by the beginning of the next academic year an independent Russian school be opened, and this was done by K.D. Petkovich... After long searches and efforts, on 22 September 1887, the late Metropolitan Gabriel of Beirut, who had lived for a long time in Russia <...> consecrated, in the lower part of the city <...> the first Russian school in Beirut. And since then, for twenty-five years Maria Aleksandrovna, ‘for the glory of God,’ despite her advanced age and serious infirmities, has labored

tirelessly for the benefit of the Syrian Church and for the glory of her fatherland in the field of education"³⁵.

On closer examination, it becomes clear that this account was a jubilee myth skillfully constructed by Dmitrievsky, who deftly assigned a significant role to the consul and highlighted the activity of the metropolitan. This deferential panegyric to official diplomacy and the Society's leadership was later adopted by N.N. Lisov, acquired new "details"³⁶ (cf. N. Laguzova³⁷), and became entrenched in contemporary historiography — representing a clear schematization and simplification³⁸.

The Mama herself wrote of those intense days of the early Lebanese autumn in far less ceremonial tones:

*"Our school opened in haste; at that time, we had nothing, not even furniture. The divan in my room was nailed together from a travel crate, and I still keep it as an object of dear remembrance..."*³⁹

A house had been rented for her beginning on 17 September 1887 for one year at 4,500 piastres, "which sum", she wrote to Stepanov, "I paid to the owner out of my salary so as not to postpone the opening of the school until

³⁵ Дмитриевский А.А. XXV-летие русских школ... С. 76–88.

³⁶ Лисовой Н.Н. М.А. Черкасова и школы... С. 446.

³⁷ "Initially supported by the Consul General in Beirut, K. D. Petkovich (italics mine — E.K.), the school was handed over (sic! — E.K.) to M. A. Cherkasova..." (Лазузова Н.А. Школьная деятельность Императорского Православного Палестинского Общества в 1905–1914 гг. // Иерусалимский Православный семинар. Вып. 3. М., 2012. С. 125).

³⁸ Interestingly, the text by Afife Abdo, created for the same purpose, was written in a distinctly hagiographic genre and presented an opposite kind of schematization. It treated the person of Maria Alexandrovna herself and the distant Holy Rus', but scarcely mentioned the Palestinian Society. These emphases reflected the strained relations between the Society's leadership, M. A. Cherkasova, and the Abdo family (the Society's members are but thinly veiled when Afife declares that slander was spread against her by "wicked, dishonest people", wishing to separate her from Maria Alexandrovna). She was not far from the truth; N. M. Anichkov wrote directly in his report: "It seems to me that the Society must carefully and skillfully remove the Abdo family from the schools supervised by M. A. Cherkasova... But especially Afife Dmitrievna must not remain in the St. Elias School or assist Maria Alexandrovna, because she interferes absolutely in everything..." Аничков Н.М. Учебные и врачебные заведения императорского Православного Палестинского Общества в Сирии и Палестине. Ч. 1. Учебные заведения Сирии и Иудеи. СПб., 1901. С. 117–118.

³⁹ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 195. Л. 107–111 об.

I received money from you"⁴⁰. A characteristic touch is added by her next remark: "Not wishing to complain and lament, I did not write to you until circumstances allowed me to convey something pleasant"⁴¹.

Only on 30 September 1887 could Cherkasova, with relief and joy, finally report to St. Petersburg:

*"Glory and thanks be to the Creator! The school for day girls was opened on this 22nd day of September"*⁴².

It must be stressed that the school was opened by the teacher at her own personal expense and risk, and until early October 1887 the Society's board had had no idea it existed.

The 'dragomania'⁴³ syndrome

The house for the school had been rented on the recommendation of "an Arab, an honest man, one Selim Raies, whose uncle is a metropolitan in Lebanon in Tripoli, and who received his education in Russia, having lived there for twenty-five years"⁴⁴. He also sent "a large icon of the Tikhvin Mother of God for the school; Selim is in general a man of a Russian soul"⁴⁵.

There could be no assistance from the Russian consulate or its dragomans:

*"The most obstruction in opening the school and in renting the apartment came precisely from those who should have assisted me; but God is stronger than all, and... when the opportunity to prevent me from renting this house had passed – and to force me to rent another unsuitable one (perhaps allowing them to receive a bribe from its owner) – then all of them began to praise and consider the house I chose the best of all"*⁴⁶.

⁴⁰ АВПРИ. Ф. РИГПЮ. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 32 об.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² АВПРИ. Ф. РИГПЮ. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 32.

⁴³ The term introduced by David Urquhart, denoting the unhealthy dependence of European diplomats on local dragoman intermediaries. *Cunningham A. The Dragomans of the British embassy at Constantinople. / Eastern Questions in the 19th century: collected essays / by Allan Cunningham; edited by Edward Ingram. Vol.2. London 1993. P. 1.*

⁴⁴ АВПРИ. Ф. РИГПЮ. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 37 об.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid. Л. 36 об.–37.

Here, for the first time, Cherkasova encountered the system of relations existing within the following triangle: the Russian consulate — the Shahade family — the Arab society. The consular dragomans from the Shahade family were “hated by almost all Arabs, yet all fear them and therefore ingratiatingly bow to their slightest wish”⁴⁷. Selim Shahade “is known here to all as a Mason, an atheist, and a man who openly lives with the wife of an Orthodox photographer (whom she now keeps as a lackey, and Shahade as her husband), a Catholic woman who manages all the affairs of the Consulate through Shahade (the son), taking bribes from those who come to her and appropriating the money (salary) of Shahade, whom she has under her heel. And this is known openly to all; everyone knows it, and everyone is afraid”⁴⁸.

The general consul himself understood the power of his dragomans (father and son), telling Cherkasova that “he had long known them to be swindlers, but that he could not dismiss them...”⁴⁹ “It seems even the consul fears them”, Cherkasova concluded, “and here they say: ‘the consul lies in a cradle; one (of the Shahades) rocks him, the other (the son or the father) listens at the door to hear whether he has fallen asleep, in order to set his machines in motion’”⁵⁰.

The sources permit an independent verification of these unflattering descriptions. A decade later, the anticlerical A.E. Krymsky, who never met Cherkasova, called her in private letters a “sanctimonious prude,” and never visited her “little schools”⁵¹, left the following comments on the relationship between K.D. Petkovich’s successor and his all-powerful dragoman. In November 1896, Prince A.A. Gagarin⁵², together with Krymsky,

⁴⁷ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 36 об.

⁴⁸ Ibid. Л. 37–37 об.

⁴⁹ Ibid. Л. 36 об.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ *Крымский А.Е. Письма...* С. 92. These were A. E. Krymsky’s personal views. Another orientalist, the son of an alumnus of St. Petersburg Theological Academy, Arabist and RAS member I. Yu. Krachkovsky, visited her schools every Sunday in 1908–1910. (*Крачковская В.А. И.Ю. Крачковский на Ливане и в Палестине. /Палестинский Сборник. Вып. 1 (63), 1954. С. 113.*) “During my two-year wanderings through Syria, I greatly enjoyed visiting the schools of the Russian Palestinian Society”. (*Крачковский И.Ю. Над арабскими рукописями. М., 1965. С. 75.*)

⁵² Alexander Alexandrovich Gagarin — Russian Consul General in Beirut from 11 (24) November 1905 to 16 (29) May 1911. Later Consul General in Genoa.

dreamed of “establishing justice here in Beirut, prosecuting bribery, and, to begin with, driving out the dragoman who traffics in Russian justice”⁵³. The eminent Orientalist fully confirms Cherkasova’s view:

*“When I found out what goes on here, in Turkey, my hair stood on end. Among other things, I discovered that the dragoman conceals from the Prince the names of guilty Muslims from whom he receives bribes”*⁵⁴.

Such a convergence of assessments speaks both to their authenticity and to the perceptiveness of the teacher. Cherkasova’s version of female influence over consular affairs is likewise fully confirmed by Krymsky:

*“Shahade still maintains close relations with his former mistress, from whom he had separated after marrying a respectable young woman... In the house of this mistress, as earlier, various transactions between Selim and the persons needing the Russian consulate take place”*⁵⁵.

Looking ahead another ten years, it must be sorrowfully noted that the situation had changed little by 1906. During an inspection of the South Syrian schools, P.I. Ryazhsky wrote to the vice-chairman of the IOPS, N.M. Anichkov, about S. Shahade:

*“Being the consul’s right hand owing to his indisputable abilities and knowledge, he makes use of and trades on Russian influence not without benefit to his personal aims, though not always to the benefit of the Russian cause”*⁵⁶.

Agreeing with this appraisal, Anichkov, who had earlier visited Beirut himself, underlined the final words in red pencil and wrote beside them: “yes, yes, yes”⁵⁷.

Despite all obstacles, the school, as M. A. Cherkasova reported on 30 September 1887, opened “quietly, modestly, and meekly, that is, without unnecessary fuss and noisy celebrations; **neither the Consul nor the Metropolitan were present** (boldface mine – E.K.); the local priest performed a short service, and the nearby parishioners prayed”⁵⁸. K. D. Petkovich, like Gabriel (Shatila), diplomatically avoided attending the ceremony so as not to incur difficulties either with the Ottoman government

⁵³ Крымский А.Е. Письма... С. 60.

⁵⁴ Крымский А.Е. Письма... С. 60.

⁵⁵ Ibid. С. 259.

⁵⁶ АВПРИ. Ф. РИГПО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 434. Л. 21.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ АВПРИ. Ф. РИГПО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 32.

(the Society did not possess authorization to open schools, and they were not officially recognized by the government until 1902) or with the ecclesiastical authorities in the person of Patriarch Gerasimos (Protopapas) (1885–1891).

As we see, the school was not “supported” by the diplomatic mission, let alone “handed over” to the instructress; it owed its very existence solely to the energy and determination of “Mama Moskobie”.

The establishment of the Russian Orthodox school was received with enthusiasm by the local population, which led to an influx of pupils far exceeding Cherkasova’s expectations: “more than two hundred girls from the very first days, during the first week”⁵⁹. As a result, the house of Abdu Said proved “insufficient for such numbers; yet unwilling to turn away those who came, so as not to give them cause to return to heterodox schools, I accepted them all, arranging a tent in the courtyard for the younger ones”⁶⁰. Cherkasova embarked on a determined struggle against child homelessness, illiteracy, and Protestant proselytism. Of her early steps on this missionary path she wrote enthusiastically to M. P. Stepanov:

*“...I rejoice at your intention to make religion the foundation of the school, for this has always been and remains my constant desire which, with God’s help, I strive to carry out. On Sundays we have already begun holding lessons — for now simply an explanation of the liturgy, prayers, the Gospel, etc.”*⁶¹.

Afife Abdo reported that in the year of Cherkasova’s arrival in Beirut, the Protestants had achieved great success in Mousaitbeh, “where, as a result of their activity, the girls did not even know the meaning of the sign of the cross. This is why Mama considered it necessary to instruct the girls first and foremost in the Orthodox faith, and only afterward in other subjects. At that time, religious debates arose between the Protestants and our pupils. The girls turned to Mama with numerous questions, and she taught them how to answer properly, refuting the Protestants”⁶². Cherkaso-

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid. A. 34.

⁶² Абдо А.Д. Краткая история жизни Мамы — Марии Александровны Черкасовой, главы и основательницы русских школ Российского Императорского Православного Палестинского общества в Бейруте. / Всмотриваясь друг в друга... Россия и арабский мир: взаимное восприятие

va's missionary work led to the fact that "the local Protestant school was nearly emptied, and having dismissed most of the teachers, left only two"⁶³.

In addition to the inadequacy of the rented premises, the question of faculty that would meet the headmistress's requirements arose with equal urgency. These requirements consisted in the combination of mastery of the subject and readiness to serve the Orthodox Church. As N. M. Anichkov emphasized in his report:

*"The elementary school founded by M. A. Cherkasova rests on the firm assimilation of the Word of God, and young girls are brought up not only in the awareness of the necessity of unwavering faith, but also in the strict observance of ritual practice, with the headmistress of the school serving as an example of the most sincere religiosity"*⁶⁴.

Cherkasova had to admit that it was "very difficult to find Orthodox women teachers here, meaning those truly able to teach"⁶⁵. The absence of trained pedagogical personnel did not disconcert her. "A lady of small stature"⁶⁶, as Afife Abdo described her, she energetically set about training instructors.

*"During the day Mama herself taught the first class, and when finished there, she instructed the teachers. ... We teachers stayed awake half the night, rising at five in the morning, for at that hour Mama gave us lessons in teaching as well as in the art of managing a school. She did all this in French, since she did not know a word of Arabic, and at that time I did not know a word of Russian. Therefore, the learning process was difficult both for her and for us. We worked tirelessly, unaware when the day ended and the night began"*⁶⁷.

Such an approach sometimes induced discouragement and despair even in the eldest of the four young Syrian teachers⁶⁸, who at the time had scarcely turned twenty-two: "Sometimes I despaired; life seemed too hard;

(Сборник статей). Сост.: Н. Г. Романова, И. М. Смилянская (отв. ред.), А.О. Филоник. М.: Институт востоковедения РАН, 2013. М., 2013. С. 425.

⁶³ АВПРИ. Ф. РИГПО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 35 об.

⁶⁴ Аничков Н.М. Учебные и врачебные заведения... С. 108.

⁶⁵ АВПРИ. Ф. РИГПО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 35.

⁶⁶ Абдо А.Д. Краткая история... С. 423.

⁶⁷ Абдо А.Д. Краткая история...С. 423.

⁶⁸ Rosa Smat, Emilia Smat, Emilia Abdennur, and Afife Abdo.

I wanted to give everything up and return to my family home”⁶⁹. But after moments of despondency came renewed hope. Afife Abdo “again submitted to that call which commanded me to continue bearing my cross”⁷⁰. Their spiritual affinity and shared convictions concerning the work ultimately predetermined the success of the long collaboration between Abdo and “my lady, my beloved Mama”⁷¹.

The language issue and notes of Orientalism

It was not only everyday difficulties that caused Cherkasova anxiety. As mentioned above, the key issue was the language of instruction. Her first practical experience made it clear that Russian was in no demand. Nevertheless, the Society’s Council categorically prohibited instruction in French, which they regarded as the language of Catholic propaganda.

Caught between the ultimatum-like demands from St. Petersburg and the no less rigid conditions of Beirut’s reality, Cherkasova was forced to maneuver. “With the French language one must contrive in every possible way. For now I have announced that during the first month I will begin exclusively with Russian, which has already been done — the French will come later...”⁷² As an explanation — not entirely sincere — Cherkasova declared to parents that she was “dissatisfied with the local textbooks, that it was necessary to order them from Russia, etc. This was for those who did not understand the matter and who demanded French at all costs, and those were almost all of them. For the understanding minority it is quietly explained that French is not only useless but harmful, as it demoralizes the girls, accustoming them to French novels and fashions, and as a means enabling them to read Voltaire, etc.”⁷³ It is hardly an exaggeration to say that such tactics had little chance of success: the working population of Mousaitbeh demanded French not in order to read Voltaire but as a vital means of earning a livelihood in St. George Bay.

⁶⁹ Абдо А.Д. Краткая история... С. 423.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid. С. 420.

⁷² АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 34.

⁷³ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 34.

Yet Cherkasova's concerns found no understanding on the banks of the Neva. The Society demanded in no uncertain terms a ban on French in the school: "regardless of everything, even if everyone leaves, that is, an unconditional prohibition of teaching this language"⁷⁴. Having done nothing to establish the school, it was prepared with ease to destroy it. V. N. Khitrovo's position was utterly uncompromising: "We must not teach our Arab wards a language that facilitates access to the Catholic literature of Jesuit propagandists. And for their broader education the Arabs will certainly find everything in Russian, in the richest, world-renowned Russian belles-lettres..."⁷⁵ The hypocritical ambiguity of the situation was underscored by the fact that both members of the Society and Russian diplomats spoke French among themselves. The Orientalist A. E. Krymsky noted that in the household of Consul A. A. Gagarin conversation "quite often switched to French"⁷⁶, and that "such a rather chauvinistic Russian patriot as V. N. Khitrovo spoke with us about Russia's tasks in the East in excellent French, not Russian"⁷⁷. When in October 1897, in the drawing room of the Russian General Consulate, Krymsky attempted to object that "indeed here the three of us are conversing not in Russian but in French, and we are not turning into Catholics", Khitrovo replied conclusively: "We are another matter", and changed the subject⁷⁸.

For her part, Cherkasova's closest assistant, Afife Abdo, regarded her knowledge of French as the "inspiration" of the Lord. After two and a half years of "severe torment" under the instruction of the Lazarist sisters, she alone among the four Abdo sisters had mastered it well. It was the French language that later became for her "the only means of becoming acquainted with Mama"⁷⁹.

For the sake of saving the nascent school, Mama Moskobie resorted to direct disobedience to the Society's leadership. No announcement was made to pupils regarding the prohibition of French. In discussion with M. P. Stepanov she justified her decision thus:

⁷⁴ Ibid. Л. 34 об.

⁷⁵ Крымский А.Е. История новой арабской литературы. XIX — начало XX в. М., 1971. С. 311.

⁷⁶ Крымский А.Е. Письма... С. 61.

⁷⁷ Ibid. С. 241.

⁷⁸ Крымский А.Е. История новой арабской... С. 311.

⁷⁹ Абдо А.Д. Краткая история... С. 418.

*“As for your supposition that knowledge of French will ease their entrance into higher Jesuit schools, first, no such higher schools for girls exist; second, those who know local customs say that depriving them of French instruction will force almost all of them to leave us in order to obtain this desired knowledge in heterodox schools. In view of all this, I hesitated to declare...”*⁸⁰

Fully aware of the local situation but also of the futility of open conflict with the leadership, Cherkasova in conclusion placed responsibility for the school’s imminent closure upon the Society’s Council: “For my part I only stipulate that in such a case I not be blamed if all leave because of this”⁸¹.

At the Consular threshold

The first month of the school’s existence nearly became its last. Meanwhile, in the lukewarm reality of the imperial consulate everything appeared quite serene. There were neither worries nor apprehensions. On 28 October 1887, Petkovich reported to Khitrovo that the school was doing well and that many pupils were studying Russian. The lack of concern was easy to explain: it is difficult to worry about something to which one has practically no connection.

The attitude of the consul is illustrated by an incident at the end of September 1887. “Before leaving for Jerusalem, I went to him (Petkovich — E.K.) to ask where to store my belongings; he forestalled my request, saying ‘My house does not exist for the purpose of storing things’⁸². ‘I am not speaking of the house; I am referring to the consular yard.’ But this miserliness so struck me that I left my things in the boys’ school”⁸³. As might be expected, the teacher’s belongings were stolen.

“But what astonished me most of all”, she wrote to Stepanov, “was that the consul disavowed to my face the very words he had earlier spoken about the house not being for (storing) things, as though it had not been to me, to my very face, that he had said them. I looked at him, listened, and could

⁸⁰ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 34 об.

⁸¹ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 34 об.

⁸² Ibid. Л. 38.

⁸³ Ibid.

not believe my ears! Yes! Our consuls are the glory of Russia, yet they do not merely fail to give help to the Russian cause, but anyone sincerely wishing to serve the Russian Orthodox Church must above all beware of the hidden reefs lying right at the consulate's threshold. <...> But God be with him; we rarely call at his house. I have lived here in Beirut for five months and have not yet had the honor to drink even a cup of tea in his household, not to mention breakfast. You understand, dear M. P., that I do not need his bread; the Lord feeds me, glory and thanks be to Him, and I believe that He will not abandon me in the future. It's the sympathy that is precious..."⁸⁴ A stark and uncompromising characterization, to which little can be added.

Shortly after Petkovich's optimistic report, Cherkasova's worst fears were realized. The problem of the undesirability of Russian again manifested itself. On 22 November 1887 the headmistress was forced to report to the Society's Council that "half the school has left, seeing that French is not being taught, and some because I did not teach them from an alphabet with pictures as the Protestants do, but immediately gave them the Gospels to read. Note: now there are about 150 people in the school. But their number changes daily"⁸⁵.

"Moskob is a magical word": popular diplomacy in Mazraa

Yet within a month, philological problems receded into the background, giving way to matters of life and death. The small Mousaitbeh found itself at the center of high politics. January 1888 was marked by an upsurge of interconfessional violence: dozens of Christians were wounded in Beirut.

On 22–24 January 1888, large-scale clashes between Christians and Muslims erupted in the southern part of Beirut, in the quarter of Mazra'at al-‘Arab, which bordered directly on Mousaitbeh.

*"In the evening we were all terribly frightened. I heard screams and wailing and at first thought it was a fire <...> Not seeing flames or smoke from any side, I asked: but where is the fire? — What fire! Not a fire, but killing; they are fighting, shooting, wounding, torturing, murdering..."*⁸⁶

⁸⁴ АВПРИ. Ф. РИГПИО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 38 об.–39.

⁸⁵ Ibid. Л. 45.

⁸⁶ Ibid. Л. 62–62 об.

The immediate cause of the conflict was the hostile attitude (stemming from smuggling-related issues) of the Christian population toward the guards of the tobacco tax-farm, “who are recruited exclusively from among Muslims”⁸⁷. As a result of the disturbances and the subsequent actions taken by soldiers and gendarmes to suppress them, it was primarily the Christian population that suffered: more than thirty people were wounded, two of whom died from their injuries⁸⁸. On the morning after the pogrom, instead of two hundred pupils, only 5–10 girls came to school, “all with frightened faces <...> and evidently some of the older girls came today only to talk about it, to express their regret and sympathy that I am here alone, that they are afraid I might be killed, etc. ‘If only the Russians would come and protect us; write to them, let them come and rule over us...’”⁸⁹ Lessons were disrupted, for “all were in fear and terror. The children asked me to teach them to sing ‘God Save the Tsar’ instead of holding class. This served as a kind of consolation”⁹⁰.

The clashes occurred under evident connivance by the Ottoman authorities. As one mother of a pupil recounted: “At night soldiers burst into our homes on the pretext of searching for those in hiding, and take from us our last piece of bread, eating the cooked food and breaking the dishes afterward...”⁹¹ Under the influence of Beirut’s qadi, Ramiz Bey, Mutasarrıf Nesukhi Bey presented the affair as a Christian uprising against legitimate authority⁹².

⁸⁷ АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1336. Л. 53.

⁸⁸ Ibid. Л. 53 об.

⁸⁹ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 62 об.

⁹⁰ Ibid. Л. 63.

⁹¹ Ibid. Л. 69 об.

⁹² In a broader context, these (quite ordinary for Lebanon) clashes in 1888 had special significance against the background of the political struggle connected with attempts to make Beirut into a separate vilayet. The hopes of influential circles of the local elite gained new strength with the appointment of Kamil Pasha (Kibrisli) as Grand Vizier, who, they hoped, “had not forgotten his time in Beirut”. European diplomats believed that the clashes were connected with the Ottoman government’s decision to divide the provinces of Damascus and Beirut. In the situation of a “Christian revolt” against the authorities, the Syrian governor-general Rashid Nashid Pasha argued to the Porte that the creation of a coastal vilayet would deliver it to foreign powers. However, Rashid Nashid Pasha lost this battle. He died of a heart attack on the day he received the notice of his dismissal, and the sultan’s decree on the creation of the coastal vilayet was proclaimed on March 7, 1888.



M.A. Cherkasova at the Archangel Michael Mixed School (Mazraa).
“Moscow Schools” of Lebanon, 1887–1914. Beirut; St. Petersburg, 2012

In February 1888 the unrest still profoundly affected the school’s life. According to Cherkasova, “nearly half the children do not come, since their fathers are in prison or sentenced to death: five are to be hanged <...>, and 80 have been sentenced to 15 years’ imprisonment. And all these children, together with their mothers, remain hungry and cold, and it is known that a hungry belly has no ears; they are not up to study when they are starving and cold. Those who do come try and do well and make progress in the Russian language; it is only a pity they come irregularly, two or three times a week; one today, another tomorrow”⁹³. Deprived of the means to live, “women with small children incessantly” burst into the doors of the St. Nicholas school, which “at certain hours are opened for the children, imploring help”⁹⁴. “And what do I do? – the headmistress exclaimed. – Marvel at my cruelty: my heart is breaking, yet I drive them from the door without giving them even alms. Alas, sinful me, I do this for fear of attracting a crowd and, God forbid, arousing suspicion. And so I send the poor away with nothing, telling them: ‘It is not my affair; my affair is the school, and you may apply to the consul.’ At this advice they

⁹³ АВГРИ. Ф. РИГПИО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 77–77 об.

⁹⁴ Ibid. Л. 70.

fall almost into despair, crying out: everyone sends us away: one consul to another, and that one to the Metropolitan, and you too, and we have nothing to eat; the little children ask for bread, and we have no flour; our day-laborer husbands, up to seventy men, are thrown into prison, and if in some family a man remains, he is either lying exhausted from wounds, or hiding somewhere in the house, afraid to go out and fall into the hands of the Turks”⁹⁵.

In January–February 1888, entirely without intending it, Cherkasova became Russia’s representative in Mousaitbeh and Mazraa. “*Moskob* is a magical word. When I walk through the streets, adults whisper ‘Moskobia,’ and the children shout ‘Moskobia’ until I disappear from sight. And some cross themselves and say: We are Moskob, that is, Orthodox, which is identical in meaning for them”⁹⁶. On the one hand, Cherkasova wrote enthusiastically, “my Russian Orthodox heart cannot but rejoice at seeing such goodwill toward the Russians”, yet on the other, she was made to feel personally the distance between the idealized image of Russia and the actual state of affairs.

During the days of the crisis, the question of protecting the Orthodox population by the Russian diplomatic mission intensified. The parish clergy of Beirut actively criticized Petkovich for passivity: “Although the Russian (the consul – E.K.) assures us that he is doing everything he can, we know that he is doing nothing, and he added words which are not suitable for writing...”⁹⁷ These displays of freedom of speech placed the teacher in an “extremely delicate and awkward position”⁹⁸.

Driven to despair, she wrote to the consul requesting that he visit the school. When Petkovich arrived, A. Abdo addressed him on behalf of the quarter’s residents: “Send a telegram to Russia – let them dispatch a squadron; will you send a telegram? If we all, including the men, gather at your door and ask you to send a telegram to the Russian Tsar?”⁹⁹ The general consul, who had earlier advised Cherkasova “not

⁹⁵ Ibid. А. 69 о6.

⁹⁶ Ibid. А. 71 о6.

⁹⁷ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. А. 70 о6.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid. А. 71 о6.

to listen”, “fell into the trap himself and could not silence her”¹⁰⁰. Quite rightly fearing that these conversations, “retold and embellished by the southern imagination”, might reach the Ottoman authorities and bring harm, the Society demanded that Cherkasova cease “such manifestations absolutely”¹⁰¹.

Stepanov proposed an exhaustive solution to the consular problem: “We cannot allow any gossip or talk in our school concerning our General Consul Petkovich. To the parents who permit themselves such conversations, you may simply forbid it, pointing out how improper it is to permit such abuse of a representative of the Russian government in a Russian school”, and also to hang his portrait “in a prominent place in the school”¹⁰². Simple solutions — prohibiting criticism and hanging the consul’s portrait¹⁰³ — do not always work well. As a result, in order not to “hear such conversations and complaints”¹⁰⁴, Cherkasova was forced to stop receiving even the parents of the pupils.

The gap between theory and practice becomes evident when comparing Stepanov’s working instructions with the programmatic text of the Society’s Vice-Chairman, V. N. Khitrovo. In 1879 he declared: “As for political interests, I will point out only that we are the natural heirs of the Greeks wherever Orthodoxy exists, and that one can beat the Turks not only on the Danube and not only by supporting the Orthodox Slavs, but also on the Euphrates and on the shores of the Mediterranean, relying on the Orthodox Arab population”¹⁰⁵. It is clear that Khitrovo’s theses were tailored to the tastes of the highest circles of St. Petersburg society and to domestic political tasks, whereas in the reality of the Ottoman Empire, the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society followed far more moderate guidelines.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. Л. 79–79 об.

¹⁰² АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 79 об.–80.

¹⁰³ It is important to note that from the very moment the school opened, K.D. Petkovich’s portrait was hung “under the portraits of Her Majesty the Empress Maria Feodorovna”.

¹⁰⁴ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 74 об.

¹⁰⁵ Хитрово В.Н. Неделя в Палестине. Из путевых воспоминаний В.Н.Хитрово. СПб., 1879. С. 60–61.

Images of Russia

The real danger of the incident of 1888 lay in the specific circumstances of the moment (though it is unlikely that anyone in St. Petersburg suspected this), connected with the administrative division of the vilayets. Yet the very notions (“why do the Moskobs not come to rule us?”) that the crisis brought to the surface were entirely traditional and stereotypical within the Orthodox Arab milieu. In 1897 A. E. Krymsky described the following dialogue with a local woman in the village of Tabisha in Lebanon: “When will the Russians come to take over us?” she asked me cheerfully. <...> ‘Why on earth would the Russians come to do this?’ I asked her. ‘But we are Russian subjects, Moscow people,’ she replied with the same care-free tone, scarcely grasping the meaning of her words, uttering them as a memorized phrase...”¹⁰⁶

Here we encounter directly the image of “the other” that circulated in Beirut’s society at both macro- and microlevels. On the one hand, there was the historically formed notion of a great power, the protector of the Orthodox in the Ottoman Empire; on the other, a specific image of Russian people. “Here in the East, which sees of Russians only pilgrims, the conviction has formed that there is no more devout nation in the world than the ‘Moskobs’; they are ‘*abrār*’ (the righteous)”¹⁰⁷, wrote Krymsky. And he added ironically: “I suppose that by the plentiful crossings of myself I helped sustain this reputation”¹⁰⁸.

He himself belonged to a different type of Russian, about whom Maria Aleksandrovna repeatedly said: “Oh! Woe to us! I always remember the late Innokenty (Innocent) Metropolitan of Moscow, who said to me: ‘I, you know, mother, used to tell the natives on the Aleutian Islands about visiting Russians: “These are not real Russians; the real Russians are far away”, for I was ashamed to acknowledge them as Russians from whom the natives might take an example of Christian life”¹⁰⁹. Krymsky, who did not attend church and did not fit the image of the *Moskob abrār*, produced a

¹⁰⁶ Крымский А.Е. Письма... С. 175.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. С. 181.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 426. Л. 155–155 об.

public sensation: “My landlady made me cross myself before her to be sure that I was a Christian”¹¹⁰. Matters reached such a point that even small children began to reproach Krymsky, calling him “yahudi” (Jew)¹¹¹. It was of such “not real Russians” that Cherkasova complained to I. P. Yuvachev in March 1900, saying that she “had many times been forced to blush” when they “showed inattention or negligence toward the divine service and the church”¹¹². Cherkasova herself, from the perspective of Orthodox Arabs, represented the ideal type of Russian.

At the macro-level, Russia was perceived as a formidable opponent of Turkey and a protector of the Orthodox Christians of the East. In situations where idealized images did not coincide with reality, as in 1888, disappointment and protest arose. When Consul Petkovich, acting fully in accordance with the instructions of the embassy in Constantinople, recommended that the headmistress avoid arousing Ottoman suspicion, the Orthodox residents of Beirut, with Eastern ardor, traversed the short distance from love to hatred. Accordingly, if Russia’s representative in Mousaitbeh and Mazraa, Cherkasova, was called *Mama Moskobie*, yet people asked whether Petkovich was a “Moskob” at all, and they made Krymsky cross himself and called him a Jew, reluctantly acknowledging in him a hitherto unknown type of Russian.

In 1897 a crisis arose in the popular consciousness of the Orthodox similar to the one described above. Due to Russia’s support of the Ottoman government in the Thirty Days’ War, the image of Russia as protector of the Orthodox noticeably faded. Nevertheless, in ordinary times, the notion of the Orthodox empire as a friendly country persisted on the streets among both Muslims and Christians. “The Muslims know that Turkey now survives only thanks to Russia, and the Orthodox Arabs know that Orthodoxy survives thanks to Russia”, Krymsky wrote to his family. “The name ‘Russian’ became for me, as for all those she [Cherkasova] had educated, sacred and full of love, for it belonged to the one who left everything dear to her out of love for our people and our nation”¹¹³,

¹¹⁰ Крымский А.Е. Письма... С. 41.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ювачев И.П. Паломничество в Палестину ко Гробу Господню. СПб., 1904. С. 44–49.

¹¹³ Абдо А.Д. Краткая история... С. 423.

recalled Abdo later. In spring 1900 Yuvachev added his own impression: “One could judge the friendly trust with which the inhabitants of Beirut relate to Maria Aleksandrovna and to her schools by observing the group of Arabs who accompanied her from the church to her home”¹¹⁴.

Thus, amid anxieties and the struggle for survival, passed the first year of the Holy Prophet Elijah Russian school in Mousaitbeh.

In June 1888, the Vice-Chairman of the Society, V. N. Khitrovo, arrived at the school for an inspection. “It was eight o’clock in the morning; Maria Aleksandrovna was in the church; the door to the house was locked, in the yard there were two or three girls, early pupils; we also sat down in the shade on the bench. New girls began to arrive; in the hands of one I noticed a familiar binding with a cross. Excellent: we shall not waste precious time. I open the book — it is the Russian Gospel. I ask the girl: ‘Can you read?’ She replies that she can, and without hesitation reads an entire page *a livre ouverte*. I was truly astonished. [Meanwhile Maria Aleksandrovna arrives. While we were drinking coffee, we quarreled, that is, she expressed her *griefs*¹¹⁵, and I expressed mine.] *They rang the bell for prayer, meaning that all the children had gathered. We proceeded to the classroom. I asked Maria Aleksandrovna not to conduct examinations, but to teach her lessons as on an ordinary weekday. The number of children reached 119. I will not describe in detail either the touching common prayer or the classes*¹¹⁶; *it is enough to say only this: out of 120 girls, 20 read in Russian and translate from Russian into Arabic and back — of course with pauses, but insignificant ones; the others, divided into 4 classes, are at all stages — from being taught how to make the sign of the cross and to learn Arabic prayers, up to the senior class mentioned above. Their only guidebook is the Gospel, in Russian and Arabic. That is what they use to learn reading and writing. In addition, arithmetic is taught. And all this in 9 months*”¹¹⁷.

Noting the children’s delight at his visit to the school, M. A. Cherkasova wrote to V. N. Khitrovo: “For me, perhaps no less than for them, your tear was

¹¹⁴ Ювачев И.П. Паломничество в Палестину... С. 44–49.

¹¹⁵ Grief (Fr.) — “grievance”, “complaint”.

¹¹⁶ A. Abdo recalled Khitrovo’s impression of the Russian language in Beirut: “The late Vasily Nikolaevich Khitrovo burst into tears of joy when he heard the girls praying in Russian. After examining the pupils, he was surprised by their progress”. Абдо А.Д. Краткая история... С. 424.

¹¹⁷ Аничков Н.М. Учебные и врачебные заведения... С. 109–110.

*the best encouragement, as an expression of sympathy for the cause to which I am devoted with all my soul — and behold: this cause is now our common child. Forgive me, Vasily Nikolaevich, that I could not restrain myself from expressing these feelings to you, such is my nature: I am glad to share a thought and a feeling*¹¹⁸. *The success of the pupils so inspired the leadership that Luiza Bhamduni, Asma and Afife Abdo, together with their mentor, were invited to Jerusalem to a meeting of school administrators to demonstrate their achievements*¹¹⁹.

Imperial inspections and the delineation of the Russian presence

Not limiting herself to the school, “on Sundays Mama gave lessons to the families of the girl students”¹²⁰. Close interaction with the community produced unexpected fruit. Residents of the quarter persistently requested “that an evening class of the Russian language be established for adult men”¹²¹. According to the assurances of the parents, “up to 30 people will come; we will soon understand, only teach us a little”¹²². Cherkasova replied that “as much strength as God grants me, I am ready”¹²³. Commenting on this request, she noted that “the Orthodox Syrians constantly pray to God that they may be under the authority of the Russian Sovereign; when, they say, a school opens and they sing in church, we shall have a Little Russia in Mousaitbeh; they translated into Arabic *O Lord, Save Thy People* (the prayer for the Tsar) and pray for our Father-Monarch Alexander III, whose portrait, together with that of the Empress, is in almost every home”¹²⁴.

Let us repeat that under conditions of constant threat to the Beirut Christians from the Muslims, the head of the Russian schools involuntarily became the representative of Russia — the protector of Orthodox Christians. Portraits of the august personages, the school, and the Russian

¹¹⁸ АВГРИ. Ф. РИГПО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 102.

¹¹⁹ Абдо А.Д. Краткая история... С. 425.

¹²⁰ Ibid. С. 423.

¹²¹ АВГРИ. Ф. РИГПО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 425. Л. 39 об.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

language constituted symbolic elements intended visibly to demonstrate belonging to the Orthodox community and to signify that these people were under the protection of one of the Great Powers.

The attention of the Imperial patrons of the Society contributed to reinforcing these views. On 21 September 1888, Beirut was visited for one day by august pilgrims: the chairman of the IOPS, Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich, Grand Duchess Elizaveta Feodorovna, and Grand Duke Pavel Alexandrovich. At 9:30 in the morning, having disembarked from the steamship *Kostroma*, Their Highnesses, accompanied by the consul general, proceeded “first to the church”, where a short service was performed in Church Slavonic by Beirut Metropolitan Gabriel (Shatila)¹²⁵, and from there to M. A. Cherkasova’s school in the quarter of Mousaitbeh. As K. D. Petkovich reported:

*“On the way the people everywhere greeted the Russian August travelers with expressions of lively, genuine enthusiasm, especially in the Christian Orthodox quarters, where our co-religionists, men and women, raised their hands to heaven, sent blessings, shouted ‘Allah insur’ (may God grant victory to the Russian Tsar), threw flowers and palm branches, and fired their rifles in defiance of strict prohibition”*¹²⁶.

The Turkish police tried in vain to stop the shooting and the singing. In the school itself active preparations were underway for the visit of the IOPS chairman: “They made uniforms for the teachers — there were only four at that time — from which all the schools of the Society later took their model, thanks to the visit of Their Imperial Highnesses; the clothes of the poor children were covered, over their motley and scruffy garments, with white blouses and sashes of various colors: each class had its own color, and headscarves of the same color”¹²⁷.

On the square in front of the school, M. A. Cherkasova, together with the teachers and children, greeted “Their Highnesses by singing in Russian: *God Save the Tsar* and *Save, O Lord*, the prayers which Their Highnesses listened to reverently, standing and making the sign of the cross, as well as the address that followed, spoken by my assistant, an Arab woman”¹²⁸. During

¹²⁵ АВПРИ. Ф. 180. Оп. 517/2. Д. 1336. Л. 209 об.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 195. ЛЛ. 107–111 об.

¹²⁸ Ibid.



M.A. Cherkasova with students of St. Nicholas School (Hay Rmeil).
“Moscow Schools” of Lebanon, 1887–1914. Beirut; St. Petersburg, 2012

the two-hour visit, Elizaveta Feodorovna was accompanied by Afife Abdo, while Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich conversed with Cherkasova, asking about relations between Arabs and Russians. As M. A. Cherkasova writes: “I was deeply happy to have the opportunity sincerely and truthfully to testify to Him about the unfeigned love of the Orthodox Arabs for their Protectress, the Great Russian Church”¹²⁹. Sergei Alexandrovich personally listened to the children’s reading and answers, asked them questions, pointed out passages in the Gospel for reading, and interacted with the pupils with extraordinary simplicity. Unexpectedly for M. A. Cherkasova, Sergei Alexandrovich and Elizaveta Feodorovna wished to visit the teacher’s room, where they had to sit on the very divan that “had been knocked together out of a travel crate”¹³⁰. From a temporary witness to early hardship it was destined to become a school relic, which the missionary cherished “as a token of dear memory”¹³¹. After a rest and their official calls, the grand dukes visited the Russian Consulate General. That same evening M. P. Stepanov congratulated M. A. Cherkasova on “the delightful impression that your excellent school made on Their Highnesses. <...> May the

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

Lord God bless your holy work in the future for the support of the Orthodoxy so dear to us. From me personally, endless thanks”¹³².

Summarizing the visit, it is important to note the formation of the Beirut triangle and, in a broader sense, the Antiochian or Syrian one: the Russian consulate, the Russian school, and the Orthodox church with elements of Slavonic liturgy. These three points would become the foundation of the Russian presence in the Orthodox East at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.

Faculty-related issues

In the next academic year, 1889–1890, attempts were made to strengthen the faculty with teachers from Russia. In June 1889, by decision of the Society, A. S. Dubenskaya and A. F. Klementovskaya were appointed to Beirut.

The experiment ended in fiasco. Soon after arriving, A. S. Dubenskaya requested¹³³ a transfer “from this den to anywhere you choose”¹³⁴. “We want to escape back to Russia”, she wrote to V. N. Khitrovo; “we do not want to ruin our health because of this penal servitude. Here the heart has not a minute’s peace; however strong it may be, it will burst from the great grief”¹³⁵. The source of “grief” and the imagined loss of health of the two friends was Maria Aleksandrovna: “Never in my life have I seen a person so pious and with such a ferocious character. <...> She treats us like ten-year-old girls; anyone’s self-respect would burst...”¹³⁶ Afife Abdo also came in for criticism in this “report”: “We were never kitchen-maids, and here we have taken on that rank; how painful it is for the heart to do and see all this when everyone sits at the table, and we must wait upon some girl who, because of her youth, should be serving us”¹³⁷. She was not accustomed to “performing the duties of a servant under the title of teacher

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ “A denunciation by a scatterbrained woman”, as V.N. Khitrovo described it.

¹³⁴ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППЮ. Оп. 873/1. Д. 426. Л. 71.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid. Л. 71–73 об.

¹³⁷ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППЮ. Оп. 873/1. Д. 426. Л. 73.

for 50 rubles”¹³⁸. “But sooner or later”, A. S. Dubenskaya concluded, “I will pack my things and go. I am not accustomed to humiliation”¹³⁹. On 18 October 1889 she submitted a request for a transfer from Beirut, and on 1 November A. F. Klementovskaya followed suit.

Later, when the Society raised the question of a possible assistant from Russia, M. A. Cherkasova confessed that “fear seizes me at the very thought that she might turn out to be another Savelyeva, Bakunina, or Dubenskaya... You must agree, it is not a desire to judge that prompts these words, but the sad and painful tale of the attempts to bring teachers from Russia and their subsequent return”¹⁴⁰. The young women, who, as A. E. Krymsky wrote, referring to the IOPS teachers, “always suffer terribly from the lack of entertainment”¹⁴¹ in the East, clearly did not suit M. A. Cherkasova. To give an objective assessment of the important Dubenskaya–Klementovskaya case, it is useful to turn to the experience of sending Russian teachers to the Bakurat al-Ihsan boarding school in 1896–1897, of which A. E. Krymsky was a witness. Although he personally disliked M. A. Cherkasova, the orientalist nevertheless agreed with her assessments and noted that despite the “great demand for Russian teachers”, they are “difficult to find in Russia. <...> Every two years they are entitled to travel expenses for vacations in Russia; but they usually, having returned to Russia, do not want to go back under any circumstances”¹⁴². The Russian faculty members of the boarding school hated Beirut with all their hearts, calling Syria, as M. A. Kamenskaya did, the land of “palm trees, cactus, and *khubz* (flatbread–E.K.)”¹⁴³, or, like O. I. Malinina, who exclaimed pathetically: “When I leave here, I will close my eyes, throw my head back, and try to ensure that the happy moment of departure is not darkened by a glance at this vile Beirut”¹⁴⁴.

It would be no exaggeration to say that A. S. Dubenskaya and A. F. Klementovskaya thought in approximately the same terms and left in the spirit described above.

¹³⁸ Ibid. Л. 72 об.

¹³⁹ Ibid. Л. 73 об.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. Л. 117.

¹⁴¹ *Крымский А.Е. Письма...* С. 95.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ *Крымский А.Е. Письма...* С. 57.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. С. 98.

On the mission of the Palestine Society

The faculty shortage was felt acutely within the Society. In 1889 the question arose of opening a women's teacher training boarding school, which was intended to be headed by M. A. Cherkasova. "It was enough for me to become acquainted with you and your school to say to myself: if this is not the absolute ideal (where does such exist in human affairs?), then this is my ideal. Once I arrived at this conviction, it is natural that the desire arose to realize it, by placing you not at the head of the Beirut school alone, but of the one that will be the nursery of our future female teachers"¹⁴⁵, the secretary of the Society wrote to Beirut on 22 March 1889. According to his plan, the teacher seminary was to be located in Beit Jala near Bethlehem. The children of the Mousaitbeh school were to be sent to the boarding school of Labiba Jahshan, and M. A. Cherkasova was to be transferred to Palestine. "All that remains is to determine when?" V. N. Khitrovo concluded peremptorily¹⁴⁶.

On paper, this plan appeared smooth. Yet, being familiar with the local realities, M. A. Cherkasova raised objections. She counter-proposed that the boarding school be opened in Beirut.

"It is not without reason that the Catholic Jesuits, the wisest of their kind, chose Beirut as the center of their propaganda, establishing here both the lower and the higher educational institutions, and from here sending out teachers to all the Palestinian schools. Here the people are somewhat cleaner and more intelligent than the Palestinian fellahin. This conviction is universal, so that a teacher arriving from Beirut is regarded with respect and presumed to be competent; whereas the Beirutis will never accept a teacher from Palestine, looking upon them with contempt"¹⁴⁷. Things have been arranged this way for decades – the Protestants have been here for fifty years"¹⁴⁸.

¹⁴⁵ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 426. Л. 25 об.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. Л. 26.

¹⁴⁷ This prediction was not tested in Beirut, but in Damascus women's school it was fully confirmed: parents in the capital did not want to accept teachers from Palestine, preferring Greeks.

¹⁴⁸ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 426. Л. 15–15 об.

“Given the inherent realities of the Arab people, their teachers must come from Beirut”¹⁴⁹, M. A. Cherkasova concluded.

In the unfolding debate, V. N. Khitrovo’s sole argument was money. In his opinion, the boarding school “must be located in the Holy Land without fail, for it is by the Holy Land that we live, and we have no right whatsoever to expend funds collected in its sacred name on other Orthodox countries...”¹⁵⁰ Guided by three years of experience in the Syro-Lebanese region, M. A. Cherkasova did not yield: “To regard this school as a portal to Palestine, as you put it, is, I will say at the least, incomprehensible to me; I repeat, I know that the Society is Palestinian, not Syrian, but on the other hand, in terms of the size and quality of its population, it is not without reason that Beirut is regarded even from Palestine as the center”¹⁵¹.

This discussion touched upon a far more significant issue — the mission of the Palestinian Society in the Orthodox East. Reflecting on the quantitative and qualitative differences between the patriarchates of Jerusalem and Antioch, M. A. Cherkasova unintentionally raised the question of the meaning of the Palestinian Society’s existence: “I know that your goal is Palestine, **but it is not the land, after all, but the living Church** (boldface mine — E.K.); and here the members of this Church are being devoured by wolves”¹⁵². Yet the “living Church”, that is, the Christians of Syria, did not interest V. N. Khitrovo from a missionary standpoint. Here the worldview gulf separating M. A. Cherkasova from Khitrovo became clear: he viewed the Arab schools as an “portal” to Palestine and a means of securing Jerusalem.

The School of Archangel Michael

With no candidate available to replace M. A. Cherkasova in Beirut, it was decided to postpone the opening of the seminary until 1890. During this time Maria Aleksandrovna remained in deep reflection: “I struggled

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. A. 81.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. A. 26.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. A. 16–16 о6.

¹⁵² Ibid. A. 17 о6.

greatly with the thought as to whether remain here or to depart; in this inner strife, not relying on myself, I prayed to the Lord to accomplish in us His Will”¹⁵³. In May 1890, an event occurred that determined the missionary’s decision to refuse Beit Jala. Three years after her arrival in the East, a School of Archangel Michael was opened.

In spring 1890, in Mazraa, the Protestants dismissed “an Orthodox teacher who had served them”¹⁵⁴. As A. Abdo writes: “One day this teacher came to the church of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel, lit a candle, and began to pray near the altar”¹⁵⁵. The headmistress of the Protestant school, upon learning of this, fired the teacher, sternly remarking to her: ‘If you light candles and pray before idols (as they call our Orthodox icons), then you cannot teach in our school.’ And they cast her out”¹⁵⁶. Being a poor widow, she came to M. A. Cherkasova and, “flooded in tears, begged her to open a school in Mazraa and to employ her there”¹⁵⁷. Upon learning that the Protestants were left for several days without a teacher, “with God willing and helping”, and “having reflected and asked the Metropolitan’s advice (for it is his eparchy)”, M. A. Cherkasova decided “to take advantage of their confusion”¹⁵⁸. Gabriel (Shatila) advised her not only not to delay, but himself offered to come and consecrate the school.

Taking advantage of Mazraa’s reputation as an unsettled district, from which “former residents had moved out, fearing a repetition of massacres”¹⁵⁹, Maria Aleksandrovna and her assistants found “a fairly decent little house (much better than the American school), a detached building surrounded by a garden, for only 11 francs (600 piastres) per year¹⁶⁰, under 6 Napoleons”¹⁶¹.

“We hired a poor woman to stand guard, to sleep in the kitchen at night, and by day to bring water for the children, give them drinks, and in general

¹⁵³ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 426. Л. 83.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. Л. 83 об.

¹⁵⁵ Абдо А.Д. Краткая история... С. 426.

¹⁵⁶ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 426. Л. 83 об.

¹⁵⁷ Абдо А.Д. Краткая история... С. 426.

¹⁵⁸ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 426. Л. 84.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. Л. 84 об.–85.

¹⁶⁰ 1 Napoleon equals 108 piastres and 10 para.

¹⁶¹ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 426. Л. 85.

keep the little house clean and orderly, which would cost about 5 francs a month. Then we bought boards, and partly used old boards by taking down a partition <...> We hired a carpenter, who worked under my supervision, arranged the other little necessities, and all of this (we did) quietly and quickly, so that within a week the school was opened”¹⁶².

On 19 May 1890, Metropolitan Gabriel celebrated the liturgy in the church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel (the parish in which the school was located), and “then, on foot, through deep sand, came to the school, performed a service of supplication with the blessing of water, sprinkled the school, and blessed the children and their mothers who surrounded him; then again on foot (for it is difficult for horses) through the hot sand under the scorching sun, he walked half an hour to our main school, refreshed himself with food at my house, and remained the whole day until four o’clock in the afternoon”¹⁶³. Such attention from a hierarch encouraged the Orthodox and contributed to the success of the undertaking, and considering that the elderly “metropolitan hardly ever visits this quarter, so far from the city, the celebration was a great one...”¹⁶⁴ M. A. Cherkasova did not hide her delight: “our joy is still greater, for on the very first day 40 children came, on the next 85, on the third day 101, and today 116 children. In the Protestant school there remained on the first day only three little boys, in front of whom sat their newly hired teacher”¹⁶⁵. “Thus”, concludes A. Abdo’s account of the opening of the school in Mazraa, “instead of a Protestant school there appeared an Orthodox one, because all the girls of this quarter came to Mama to study, and the Protestants were forced to close their school”¹⁶⁶. By August 1890, the number of pupils in the school had reached 220. The faculty of the two schools, headed by Afife Abdo, increased to six teachers.

Diplomatic involvement in the opening of the second school was minimal; the Beirut consul was absent, “he was on leave in Constantinople”¹⁶⁷.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid. Л. 85 об.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. Л. 86.

¹⁶⁶ Абдо А.Д. Краткая история... С. 426.

¹⁶⁷ АВПРИ. Ф. РИГПО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 426. Л. 84.

The role of the Society's leadership was lesser still — they were informed of the newly established school (as in 1887) *post factum*.

Acting at her own risk, the missionary did not doubt for a moment the correctness of her decision: “and if I had begun to wait until my letter reached you and an answer was received, then surely this matter would have been covered with an icy crust”¹⁶⁸. Perhaps this was the only correct path. As A. E. Krymsky quite rightly noted: “in Russia everything is done very slowly, and in the Palestine Society especially”¹⁶⁹.

“Strike the iron while it is hot. And so we struck”, M. A. Cherkasova explained to the IOPS secretary, “and if now you should intend, for the alleged self-will, to put the smith herself under the hammer on the anvil, well then? I shall only rejoice, like the apostles, that for spreading the Word of God and serving His Church it has been my lot to suffer”¹⁷⁰. As expected, she received a “friendly expressed” reprimand from V. N. Khitrovo for her independent action. More severe measures were averted by a telegram from M. P. Stepanov containing thanks on behalf of the chairman of the Society, Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich. “Personally, after this, I can scarcely have any opinion”¹⁷¹, the IOPS secretary summarized with pointed dryness.

However, the impossibility of expressing official opinions did not prevent V. N. Khitrovo from commenting sarcastically on M. A. Cherkasova's successes: “yes, it is undoubtedly excellent, if you were pursuing a personal undertaking; but this is a public matter... It requires a great deal of presumption to suppose that every undertaking you carry out is necessarily the work of God's hands or an inspiration from above”¹⁷².

The lack of support, the dry tone, and the complete opposition in outlook between the “toadstool” (in A. E. Krymsky apt term) Khitrovo and the passionate missionary led M. A. Cherkasova to a nervous breakdown and several days of “burning fever”: “I am not without feeling, Vasily Nikolaevich, <...> and I grieve deeply that I earned all the reprimands so ‘friendly’ expressed by you in your letter; having received it, I was so upset

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. А. 84–84 об.

¹⁶⁹ Крымский А.Е. Письма... С. 139.

¹⁷⁰ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 426. А. 84 об.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. А. 103 об.–104.

¹⁷² Ibid. А. 104 об.

after reading it that I could not close my eyes, straining to think through the mad mistake I had made”¹⁷³.

The result of her sleepless nights was the decision that she communicated to V. N. Khitrovo: “To correct my mistake I shall return the 1,200 francs allocated for this school and take it upon my personal means, according to your just remark”¹⁷⁴. “Indeed I had this in mind when opening it: that if it did not fall within the aims and plans of the Society, I would assume it at my own expense. In future, rest assured, I do not intend to render you such a disservice again”¹⁷⁵. This proposal was not supported by the Society.

Cold war with the Consulate

By 1890, Actual State Councilor K.D. Petkovich had the opportunity to report to the embassy in Constantinople on the state of Russian school affairs:

*“In two schools in Beirut, maintained at the expense of the IOPS, girls are taught to read and write both in Arabic and in Russian. They are made to memorize and sing various prayers and to translate the Gospel from Russian into Arabic. Of academic subjects, they are taught only the basics of Orthodox catechism, geography, and arithmetic. The headmistress of the schools is Russian, while all her assistants are local Orthodox Arab women”*¹⁷⁶.

Over the course of three years, M.A. Cherkasova’s relations with the consulate did not improve; on the contrary, they approached a state akin to a cold war. A minor conflict escalated into a sharp confrontation in the autumn of 1890. The headmistress requested consular protection from the attacks of her Arab landlord, who had rudely threatened to evict her, but she was told that such matters were “of no concern to the consul”¹⁷⁷.

Reporting this to the Society’s Council, M.A. Cherkasova described typical attitudes of diplomatic staff toward their compatriots¹⁷⁸:

¹⁷³ Ibid. А. 119.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ АВПРИ. Ф. 208. Оп. 819. Д. 322. А. 110 об.

¹⁷⁷ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 426. А. 123.

¹⁷⁸ А.Е. Krymsky found himself in a similar situation with K.D. Petkovich’s successor at the consulate, Prince A.A. Gagarin (from December 5, 1896, to De-

*“In general, he has the habit of complaining that I do not visit him, and even invites me to lunch, or says that he invites me. Yet I have several times, exhausted from the city, gone to see him and found him sitting down to breakfast. And what do you think? Not only did he not invite me, but even remarked: ‘Do you not know I have breakfast at 12?’ and shut the door in my face. And this happened more than once: delayed by affairs in the city, I would stop by for a moment, and if he was at the table, I would have to stand in the corridor for an hour, where the guards looked on in surprise, wondering who this lady is, kept outside while the gentlemen eat...”*¹⁷⁹

As an experienced diplomat, K.D. Petkovich framed the issue in political terms, effectively accusing M.A. Cherkasova of unreliability and lack of loyal sentiment:

*“You show no respect for the Consul General. You have been here for four years, yet have never attended the service on August 30 for the Sovereign’s Day with the girls, nor congratulated me, whereas the teachers of the local Arab schools have always done and do. That year, the Patriarch himself descended from the mountains. I do not know whether your institution can be called Russian in this case”*¹⁸⁰.

Analyzing the situation, M.A. Cherkasova drew broader conclusions:

*“It is not painful when a semi-wild Arab yells; God be with him; that would still be nothing, but what is painful is the long-established awareness of the defenselessness of Russian subjects in Asia Minor; all nations have their consular defenders, all are protected so that no one dares to treat them roughly, knowing imprisonment awaits any abuse, all except Russians”*¹⁸¹.

*“So it is not the Muslims we fear here, but the Consul and his dragomans”*¹⁸², she summarized¹⁸³.

ember 20, 1897, head of the Beirut consulate, later appointed secretary of the general consulate in Morocco), which, however, did not prevent them from establishing good relations later (the prince needed a translator from Arabic).

¹⁷⁹ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 426. Л. 133–133 об.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. Л. 123.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. Л. 130 об.

¹⁸² Ibid. Л. 132 об.

¹⁸³ The gap between the official and the real history of the Society can be judged from the following episode. In 1888, Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich, planning his visit to Palestine, asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs N.K. Girs for the Order of St. Anna, 1st Class, for K.D. Petkovich, who, he said, “never

These descriptions likely reflected a general dysfunction in Russian foreign institutions. In the same years, the distinguished physician and publicist N.A. Belogoloviy in Geneva described a similar situation. His testimony illustrates the universality of the trials faced by the headmistress in Beirut:

*“If for any educated nationality <...> the embassies of their homeland serve abroad as a home away from home, where one can receive advice in difficult situations or protection from unlawful oppression, our embassies for Russians are a kind of high authority, a kind of sanctuary, whose entrance is difficult for the ordinary mortal”*¹⁸⁴.

Although “not a consul’s daughter, but a hereditary noblewoman”¹⁸⁵, the schoolmistress was primarily concerned not with her own wounded pride, but with the effect such treatment had on the local population, undermining the prestige of Russian initiatives. She wrote to Khitrovo:

*“You always hold up Catholic and Protestant missions as examples. My God! But here I see firsthand the respect accorded to headmistresses of non-Orthodox schools: they travel in their carriages, have guards <...> Only in relation to my position does it act extremely unfavorably on the Arabs, who always ask why Moscovites do not treat their schoolmistresses as Catholics and Protestants do”*¹⁸⁶.

Thus, quite unexpectedly, the social practices accepted within the country (and described many times in Russian literature of the democratic tradition) revealed themselves beyond its borders.

For obvious reasons, M.A. Cherkasova could find no support in V.N. Khitrovo, who wrote: “We cannot replace K.D., nor do I have the right to reprimand him; in conclusion, trust my experience – he is the best of our representatives in the East”¹⁸⁷.

refuses his enlightened assistance to the activities of the Orthodox Palestine Society. The existence of the Society’s schools in Syria and their proper direction owe much to the participation and care of K.D. Petkovich...” (Россия в Святой земле: документы и материалы. Т.1. М., 2000. С. 456). We consider it necessary to give the reader the opportunity to assess for themselves the degree of justification of this award.

¹⁸⁴ Белоголовый Н.А. Наши посольства и консульства. Посвящается русским путешественникам. Сароуге (Geneve), 1894. С. 4.

¹⁸⁵ АВПРИ. Ф. РИГПО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 426. Л. 130.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. Л. 134 об.–135.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. Л. 141.

Moreover, she was explicitly instructed that attendance at the “ceremonial service in the cathedral on Imperial Days and congratulating the representative of the Imperial Government on such festive occasions was mandatory (underlined by V.N. Khitrovo – E.K.)”¹⁸⁸. Khitrovo’s assistance was limited to a courteous invitation to spend the following spring holidays in St. Petersburg¹⁸⁹, “to rest and refresh,” and a “friendly” piece of advice: “remain calm, and also do not judge”¹⁹⁰. Subsequently, M.A. Cherkasova’s relations with the Russian consulate ranged from tense to openly hostile. Only after K.D. Petkovich’s death (1897, Odessa) and the transfer of K.N. Lishin¹⁹¹ in February 1898 (Lishin’s favorite pursuits were history and archaeology¹⁹²) from Adrianople to Beirut, did a thaw occur. As N.M. Anichkov wrote, K.N. Lishin treated the missionary’s work with great respect and made “every effort to support the esteemed M.A. Cherkasova; he not only visited St. Elijah School, but even gave a lecture to the teachers on St. John of Damascus once”¹⁹³.

On September 17, 1891, in the mountain village of Rmeil, near the suburban gardens, Metropolitan Gabriel consecrated the third school, dedicated to St. Nicholas. M.A. Cherkasova had demonstratively informed V.N. Khitrovo of her desire to open it as early as the autumn of 1890, immediately after the Mazraa controversy, and requested that the Society Council discuss it, which resulted in a positive decision. The school accommodated 400 students with 10 teachers, all “Mama’s alumnae”¹⁹⁴. In 1893, in the distant suburb Ras-Beirut, a school dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary was founded, with 75 students¹⁹⁵.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. Л. 141 об.

¹⁸⁹ During all her service in the Society until her death, M.A. Cherkasova never once made use of the leave to which she was entitled.

¹⁹⁰ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППО. Оп. 873/1. Д. 426. Л. 142.

¹⁹¹ K.N. Lishin (1851–1906) — 1887–1897: consul in Adrianople. November 27 (December 9), 1897 — March 23 (April 5), 1902: general consul in Beirut. 1902–1906: minister-resident in Abyssinia. Member of the Russian Archaeological Society, numismatist.

¹⁹² *Крымский А.Е. Письма...* С. 270.

¹⁹³ *Аничков Н.М. Учебные и врачебные заведения...* С. 162.

¹⁹⁴ *Абдо А.Д. Краткая история...* С. 426.

¹⁹⁵ *Аничков Н.М. Учебные и врачебные заведения...* С. 132.

On September 15, 1897, at the request of Metropolitan Gabriel, a mixed school, dedicated to St. George's, was opened in the al-Jumayzeh quarter. With 150 students (during the inspection by N.M. Anichkov on March 16, 1899, there were 80 students present)¹⁹⁶, it became the fifth school in Beirut. Its consecration by the metropolitan occurred without the missionary's participation, as she was seriously ill at the time. By autumn 1897, her condition worsened to the point of a life-threatening situation, requiring urgent surgery, successfully performed by English doctors. By 1899, the city schools comprised 852 students under 21 teachers¹⁹⁷.

Not thanks to, but despite...

In Russian historiography, largely through the work of A.A. Dmitrievsky and N.N. Lisovoy, the history of the entire Russian enterprise in the Patriarchate of Antioch has been reduced to the leadership of the Society, primarily V.N. Khitrovo, and the officials of the diplomatic corps. However, this perspective requires reconsideration: Khitrovo in St. Petersburg and Mama Moskobie in Beirut, at best, had no direct contact, and at worst, were in opposition.

M.A. Cherkasova's independence irritated the Society's leadership. In his official report, N.M. Anichkov complained that over time, Cherkasova had ceased correspondence with Khitrovo and did not write "detailed letters or reports to anyone in the administration of the Council of the Orthodox Palestine Society"¹⁹⁸. In his view, what she did send were "queries filled with reproaches, complaints, and marked by extreme irritation of the author"¹⁹⁹. All responsibility, he argued, lay with the difficult temperament of the now middle-aged headmistress. Yet, in a personal letter to V.N. Khitrovo dated May 9, 1900 (at the same time when a revision report was being prepared for publication), the emphasis shifts entirely. Anichkov cites excerpts from Cherkasova's letter to the Society's office:

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. C. 126.

¹⁹⁷ *Аничков Н.М. Учебные и врачебные заведения...* С. 109.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. C. 115.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

“...for a whole year we maintained two teachers without having funds. You do not permit extraordinary expenses without your authorization. Meanwhile, for years you force me to write you the same thing, without seeing fit to respond, while the matter cannot wait: children lie on the floor, exposed to winter rains and summer heat, without books, without school supplies, etc.”

In a far more diplomatic tone, Anichkov added:

“To verify this, work must be done under special assignment and authority of the Society Council to determine who is at fault”²⁰⁰.

That Cherkasova’s grievances were entirely justified was well known to Anichkov (even down to a shortage of pens)²⁰¹, but he dared not act against the omnipotent Khitrovo.

In June 1897, on the eve of the opening of the Jumayzeh school, when Cherkasova was between life and death, A.E. Krymsky, equidistant from the conflicting parties, reported the following characteristic details about the educational activities of the IOPS in Beirut:

“Khitrovo has completely lost his mind... Four Russian teachers of the institute refused to serve in Syria. Khitrovo, without bothering to look for replacements, decided for no reason to hand their annual salaries (12,000 francs, i.e., 4,500 rubles) to Amelia Sursuq for school improvement, where by the fall there would barely be any Russian element left — to place it at her uncontrolled disposal. What will come of this is easy to guess. The actual headmistress, Labiba, now does not conceal her hostile intentions toward Russianness... She now assures all parents that Russian will be eliminated, and instead two Frenchwomen will be brought from France”²⁰².

Furthermore:

“When M.A. Cherkasova asked Khitrovo to add a few francs to the wages of one of her Beirut teachers of Russian, who received a tiny salary and worked very diligently (she was an Arab), Khitrovo replied: ‘The Palestine Society has no funds for this.’ One must not forget that the funds of the Palestine Society, which Khitrovo squanders, are collected from ordinary

²⁰⁰ ОР РНБ. Ф. 253. Оп. 1. Д. 43. Л. 84 об.–85.

²⁰¹ In his diary during the inspection of St. Elijah School on March 18, 1898, he noted: “Cherkasova’s St. Elijah School in Mousaitbeh. Poor environment; few supplies, even pens are insufficient” (ОР РНБ. Ф. 253. Оп. 1. Д. 774. Л. 10)

²⁰² Крымский А.Е. Письма.... С. 146.

people, their meager earnings. By Khitrovo's command, they go to the uncontrolled disposal of Beirut Arabs to combat the Russian element. What an absurdity"²⁰³.

It seems that in 1897 everything was conspiring toward the destruction of the schools along with their headmistress. Thus, if the schools survived, it was solely due to the sincere faith, dedication and incredible self-sacrifice of the team assembled by Mama Moskobie.

The value of the Society leadership's criticism and nitpicking of Cherkasova was revealed by time. The results of the 1906 audit of southern Syrian Society schools, conducted by inspector P.I. Ryazhsky, allow for an assessment of her work. While in Damascus for the election of the majority of metropolitans, he collected the opinions of the hierarchs of the Church of Antioch, headed by Patriarch Gregory (Haddad), regarding the main shortcomings of the Society's Syrian schools.

The general opinion of the hierarchs was that instruction should include not only French, which had been excluded as a language of non-Orthodox propaganda, but also "even English in urban and large rural schools". Ryazhsky himself could not disagree:

*"I am now fully convinced of the error of that exclusion, although in my early years here in Palestine I supported it... The most active and successful propaganda, and the most dangerous for us, comes not in French, but in Arabic"*²⁰⁴.

Thus, in the dispute with the Society leadership regarding the French language, life confirmed the correctness of Cherkasova's approach²⁰⁵.

Another major shortcoming in the organization of schools was the absence of secondary institutions for the urban population. Metropolitan Gerasimos (Mesarra) of Beirut noted that "Orthodox schools, both Arab and Russian, work for Catholic and Protestant boarding schools..."²⁰⁶ As seen, in 1906 the hierarchs raised the same issue Cherkasova had in 1889. However, for objective reasons, she could not resolve it independently,

²⁰³ Крымский А.Е. Письма... С. 147.

²⁰⁴ АВПРИ. Ф. РИГПО. Оп. 873/1. №434. Л. 118–118 об.

²⁰⁵ By the time of the inspection, French had already been unofficially taught in St. Elijah School in Beirut for several years.

²⁰⁶ АВПРИ. Ф. РИГПО. Оп. 873/1. №434. Л. 120–120 об.

and the IOPS chose the remote Palestinian towns of Beit Jala and Nazareth as locations for teacher training seminars²⁰⁷.

Regarding the curriculum in girls' schools, the "broadest possible inclusion of handicrafts" was deemed highly desirable so that graduates could not only support themselves and their families but earn a living"²⁰⁸. The only Society schools where sewing and tailoring were taught — the subject of particular pride for their founder — were the Beirut schools.

The hierarchs also addressed the behavior of the faculty and staff of the Society. According to the inspector, "there are unanimous complaints that Russian employees, especially teachers, and also some Arabs with Russian education imitating them, avoided local residents, did not establish personal contacts, and rarely visited them socially or formally"²⁰⁹. Russian teachers "behave proudly, often arrogantly and contemptuously toward parents... thus lowering the school's popularity in the eyes of the local population"²¹⁰. Metropolitan Alexander (Tahan), the future patriarch, added that they "learn little Arabic, are distant from Arab teachers, give little guidance, and, instead of heartfelt engagement, are satisfied with formal and dry requirements of professional discipline, failing to instill in their faculty a lively love and interest in the work"²¹¹. It goes without saying that deep and selfless commitment to the community and to the students distinguished the entire activity of missionary M.A. Cherkasova.

The cause and consequence of this alienation between teachers, students, and parents was the language barrier. As P.I. Ryazhsky noted, "the rapprochement of Russian teachers with the local population is largely

²⁰⁷ This led to entirely predictable results. In 1896, the women's school in Damascus refused to accept teachers from Palestine, which caused unrest in the community. (АВПРИ. Ф. РИППЮ. Оп. 873/1. №393. Л. 107–107 об.) Only in V.N. Khitrovo's mind was Syria "the portal to Palestine"; in the eyes of the clergy and population everything was quite the opposite. Cherkasova warned that Beirut would never accept a teacher from Palestine. It fell to Damascus to prove this prediction.

²⁰⁸ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППЮ. Оп. 873/1. №434. Л. 123.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. Л. 123 об.–124 об.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ АВПРИ. Ф. РИППЮ. Оп. 873/1. №434. Л. 124 об.

hindered by poor knowledge of Arabic; but this is no excuse in the eyes of locals, as American and generally Protestant teachers, through close contact with residents, learn the language faster and consider such learning absolutely necessary”²¹². Cherkasova provided a model of this approach. Without awaiting admonitions from the metropolitans, she considered it her duty to begin learning the language from the first day in the East, and within three years had mastered conversational speech. This was largely possible due to constant immersion in the linguistic environment and her overall approach to the mission as a lifelong calling rather than a short-term Oriental adventure.

It can be asserted that the only schools meeting the expectations of the population and clergy were the Beirut institutions, which did not follow IOPS requirements. Typical problems of the Russian education system in the region included the indifference of the Foreign Ministry (with rare exceptions such as K.N. Lishin and A.A. Gagarin), contradictions between the Society leadership and local staff, and a chronic shortage of personnel. Of particular note was the low level of regional expertise among the IOPS leadership. All these problems were exacerbated by the near-total absence of Russian economic influence in the region, which limited the potential impact of spiritual and educational work.

Against this background stands the missionary feat of M.A. Cherkasova, who spent over three decades of teaching in Beirut schools without ever returning home on leave. If Protestants and Catholics justly take pride in their long-serving missionaries such as Cornelius Van Dyck (53 years in the East) and Joseph Delore (over 40 years in schools of Mount Lebanon), then the figure embodying Orthodox Russia was the Mama – Maria A. Cherkasova. Her dedicated life became embedded in the collective memory of the Orthodox community in Beirut. 138 years after she first set foot on Syrian soil, one can now reach the Church of St. Elijah in the Mousaitbeh district on Mama Street, named in honor of the founder of the Russian schools.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.

²¹² Ibid.



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Россия в первой половине XIX века

Россия во второй половине XIX века

Россия в XX веке