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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unpublished archival sources, consular documentation, and the testimonies of Russian Orientalists (Archimandrite Porphyrius (Uspensky), A. E. Krymsky), a typology of the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 Patriarchate<sup>1</sup>. On the eve of the 300th anniversary of the schism, the Orthodox Church of Antioch made every effort to organize a representative academic conference<sup>2</sup> 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”<sup>3</sup>.

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”<sup>4</sup>. It would appear — and this is important for

<sup>1</sup> 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”.

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

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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”<sup>5</sup>. 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...”<sup>6</sup>

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

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

<sup>6</sup> *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”<sup>7</sup>, and “the Greek hierarchy was not interested in the enlightenment of the Arab flock”<sup>8</sup>.

In fact, Lisovoy’s position in 2007 is a repetition, under analogous conditions<sup>9</sup>, of Khitrovo’s tendentious ideas, who, in 1881, “pushed through”<sup>10</sup> the establishment of the Society by alarming Russian public opinion with the Western threat to the Orthodox East<sup>11</sup>. 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 simplification<sup>12</sup> (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 relations<sup>13</sup>,

<sup>7</sup> *Лисовой Н.Н.* Русское духовное... С. 234.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

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

<sup>10</sup> *Лисовой Н.Н.* Русское духовное... С. 168.

<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> 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”<sup>14</sup>. 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. Beger<sup>15</sup>, 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”<sup>16</sup>. According to the (updated) information of Actual State Councillor A. F. Beger, “several sheikhs and three or four villages near Latakia”<sup>17</sup> 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-

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

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

<sup>16</sup> РГИА. Ф. 832. Оп. 1. Д. 105. Л. 49 об.–50.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. Л. 50 об.

kia, as well as among the Ansariyeh themselves”<sup>18</sup>. As the consul diplomatically noted, the motives of the sheikhs were “not entirely disinterested”<sup>19</sup>, 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”<sup>20</sup>. 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 district<sup>21</sup>. 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”<sup>22</sup>. 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”<sup>23</sup>.

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”<sup>24</sup>. 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

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. А. 50 об.–51.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. А. 51.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. А. 52.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. А. 50.

<sup>22</sup> РГИА. Ф. 832. Оп. 1. Д. 105. А. 53.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. А. 53–53 об.

<sup>24</sup> 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”<sup>25</sup>. 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 General<sup>26</sup> 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 noted<sup>27</sup>: “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”<sup>28</sup>. 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”<sup>29</sup>.

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.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

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

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

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

<sup>29</sup> 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 Hermon<sup>30</sup> and inhabited by Druze and Christians (the latter represented by Orthodox, Uniates, and Protestants)<sup>31</sup>, 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”<sup>32</sup>. 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”<sup>33</sup>. 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

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

<sup>31</sup> 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.

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

<sup>33</sup> 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...”<sup>34</sup> 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”<sup>35</sup>. 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. Shakhovskoy<sup>36</sup>, 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”<sup>37</sup>. 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”<sup>38</sup>. 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

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

<sup>35</sup> Крымский А.Е. Письма.... С. 162.

<sup>36</sup> *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.

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

<sup>38</sup> 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”<sup>39</sup>.

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”<sup>40</sup>. 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”<sup>41</sup>. 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”<sup>42</sup>. 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”<sup>43</sup>.

The situation in Hauran was similar. As noted by I.I. Sokolov in 1913, there was neither priest nor school there<sup>44</sup>, and the Patriarch had visited

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Порфирий (Успенский). Книга бытия.... С. 299.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. С. 261.

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

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

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

<sup>1913</sup>. 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)<sup>45</sup>. 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”<sup>46</sup>. 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”<sup>47</sup>.

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...”<sup>48</sup> 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-

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

<sup>46</sup> ГАРФ. Ф. Р-6991. Оп. 6. Д. 59. Л. 22.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. Л. 162.

<sup>48</sup> *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"<sup>49</sup>.

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"<sup>50</sup>. 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).

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

<sup>50</sup> 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) property<sup>51</sup>.

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-

<sup>51</sup> *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”<sup>52</sup>. 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”<sup>53</sup>. 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”<sup>54</sup>. 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”<sup>55</sup>. With private donations, a small primary school was opened for Orthodox children. The Consul reported with satisfaction: “Around 40 pupils now attend this school”<sup>56</sup>. 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”<sup>57</sup>. 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

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<sup>52</sup> АВГПРИ. Ф. 180 Оп. 517/2.Д. 1348. Л. 13 об.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. Л. 14.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> 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”<sup>58</sup>. The community split, and eventually, “some of the inhabitants turned to the Catholics, who sent them a priest”<sup>59</sup>. “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”<sup>60</sup>. 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”<sup>61</sup>. 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”<sup>62</sup>. Later, Hegumen Zachariah reasoned about the need to build a new church and “add cells in place of the old ones that were demolished”<sup>63</sup>. Porphyrius’s companion, Archimandrite Agafangel, remarked to him that “monks should also be added”<sup>64</sup>. The objection of the “terrible hegumen”, as Porphyrius called him, was unambiguous and blunt: “What do we need the monks for?”<sup>65</sup>. This economic practice remained widespread in the following de-

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

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. Л. 71 об.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> *Порфирий (Успенский)*. Книга бытия... С. 225

<sup>62</sup> *Порфирий (Успенский)*. Книга бытия...Т. 1. С. 233–234.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. С. 234.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

cedes, systematically provoking conflicts within dioceses — for example, in Beirut in 1848<sup>66</sup>.

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”<sup>67</sup>. 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 completion<sup>68</sup>. 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”<sup>69</sup>. It is obvious that the metropolitan cared more about creating a new income-generating property than about the flourishing of monasticism<sup>70</sup>.

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”<sup>71</sup>. We can summarize that rent relations and the disputes generated by them remained a fertile ground for commu-

<sup>66</sup> *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.

<sup>67</sup> ГАРФ. Ф. Р-6991. Оп. 2. Д. 240. Л. 30.

<sup>68</sup> ГАРФ. Ф. Р-6991. Оп. 2. Д. 240. Л. 30.

<sup>69</sup> ГАРФ. Ф. Р-6991. Оп. 2. Д. 240. Л. 65.

<sup>70</sup> 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).

<sup>71</sup> ГАРФ. Ф. Р-6991. Оп. 8. Д. 33. Л. 307.

nity conversions over the centuries<sup>72</sup>. 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”<sup>73</sup>. 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”<sup>74</sup>, 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!”<sup>75</sup> 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-

<sup>72</sup> 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.*)

<sup>73</sup> Порфирий (Успенский). Книга бытия... С. 248.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> 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”<sup>76</sup>. 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”<sup>77</sup>. 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 money<sup>78</sup>. 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 1887–1889<sup>79</sup>, 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.) Petkovich<sup>80</sup> 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”<sup>81</sup>. 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)<sup>82</sup> and the true mistress

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

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. Д. 1345. Л. 72.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> 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.

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

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

<sup>82</sup> 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"<sup>83</sup>. 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

<sup>83</sup> 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.”<sup>84</sup>

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 order<sup>85</sup>.

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. <...>

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

<sup>85</sup> 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 fasts<sup>86</sup>. 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, Archimandrite<sup>87</sup> 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 otherwise<sup>88</sup>. 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-

<sup>86</sup> ГАРФ. Ф. Р-6991. Оп. 8. Д. 33. Л. 307.

<sup>87</sup> Until 1908.

<sup>88</sup> 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 Traz<sup>89</sup> (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”<sup>90</sup>. 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”<sup>91</sup>. 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

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<sup>89</sup> Founded in 1811 by Patriarch Agapius II (Matar) (1796–1812).

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

<sup>91</sup> 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”<sup>92</sup>, 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 Tannurin<sup>93</sup>, 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”<sup>94</sup>. 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”<sup>95</sup>. The Russian Consulate appealed to mutasarrif Naum Pasha<sup>96</sup>, 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”<sup>97</sup>. 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”<sup>98</sup>. Thus, the seminary that had admitted “a poor boy free of charge and without a

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

<sup>93</sup> Located south of the Wadi Kadisha in Lebanon.

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

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> 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.

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

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

contract with his parents”<sup>99</sup> 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”<sup>100</sup>. “Only poverty and the absence of an Orthodox seminary can explain this abnormal situation”<sup>101</sup>, 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”<sup>102</sup>. The dragoman, an influential figure in his community<sup>103</sup>, 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

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. A. 20.

<sup>103</sup> 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”<sup>104</sup>. 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”<sup>105</sup>. 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”<sup>106</sup>. 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

<sup>104</sup> АВПРИИ. Ф. 208. Оп. 819. Д. 322. Л. 29.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. Л. 30.

<sup>106</sup> 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”<sup>107</sup>. “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”<sup>108</sup>, 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)”<sup>109</sup>. 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

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

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> 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”<sup>110</sup>. 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”<sup>111</sup>.

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 <...>”<sup>112</sup>. 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

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

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> 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 metropolises<sup>113</sup>. 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”<sup>114</sup>.

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

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

<sup>114</sup> 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”<sup>115</sup>. 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”<sup>116</sup>.

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)?”<sup>117</sup> 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 <...>”<sup>118</sup> 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”<sup>119</sup>.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. Л. 18 об.

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

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

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> 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”<sup>120</sup>. “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”<sup>121</sup>.

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”<sup>122</sup>. 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)<sup>123</sup>, 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

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

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

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

<sup>123</sup> 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”<sup>124</sup>, and the murderer fled. The following night, Muslims killed two Christians: “Innocent and peaceful people paid with their lives solely because they were Christians”<sup>125</sup>. 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”<sup>126</sup>. 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...”<sup>127</sup>

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”<sup>128</sup>. 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-

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

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. Л. 22.

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

<sup>127</sup> Крымский А.Е. Письма... С. 124.

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

drels”<sup>129</sup>. 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”<sup>130</sup>.

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...”<sup>131</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. А.27 об.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> 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”<sup>132</sup>.

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”<sup>133</sup>. “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”<sup>134</sup>, 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,

<sup>132</sup> Крымский А.Е. Письма... С. 212.

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

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. Л. 111 об.

thanks to his talent for self-promotion, part of the Orthodox youth have left the Protestant schools for his own..."<sup>135</sup> 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"<sup>136</sup>.

In a private letter to A. E. Krymsky, the consul was more candid, bluntly calling Abouna (Father)<sup>137</sup> Hanna a "rogue"<sup>138</sup>. 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 Uniatism<sup>139</sup>. "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 —

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. Д. 1345. Л. 46.

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

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

<sup>138</sup> *Крымский А.Е. Письма...* С. 180.

<sup>139</sup> 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’<sup>140</sup>. 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”<sup>141</sup>. 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”<sup>142</sup> — 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”<sup>143</sup>.

<sup>140</sup> Крымский А.Е. Письма... С. 227–228.

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

<sup>142</sup> АВПРИ. Ф. 208. Оп. 819. Д. 322. Л. 491 об.

<sup>143</sup> 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"<sup>144</sup>. In America he grew close to "Protestant missionaries and sectarians"<sup>145</sup>. 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..."<sup>146</sup>.

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"<sup>147</sup>.

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

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid. A. 805 o6.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. A. 804 o6.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> 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”<sup>148</sup>. 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”<sup>149</sup>.

<sup>148</sup> Крымский А.Е. Письма.... С. 174.

<sup>149</sup> 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”<sup>150</sup>. 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”<sup>151</sup>.

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”<sup>152</sup>. 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”<sup>153</sup>. 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-

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

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

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

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

doxy — for which all has hitherto been done — but mere exploitation...”<sup>154</sup> 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”<sup>155</sup>.

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 Bsharri<sup>156</sup> 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”<sup>157</sup>. Having “exhausted all his eloquence”<sup>158</sup> in vain, he “demanded guarantees in the form of building a school, a church, and a monetary deposit to make a return impossible”<sup>159</sup>. 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 Pasha<sup>160</sup> the dismissal of one mudir (district administrator), and

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> 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.

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

<sup>158</sup> Ibid. Л. 107 об.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> *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”<sup>161</sup>. 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”<sup>162</sup>. 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 Empire<sup>163</sup>. 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”<sup>164</sup>.

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...”<sup>165</sup>

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

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

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

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> 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”<sup>166</sup>. 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 deprivation<sup>167</sup> (RD)<sup>168</sup>.

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”<sup>169</sup>.

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”<sup>170</sup>. 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

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<sup>166</sup> 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.

<sup>167</sup> 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.)

<sup>168</sup> 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)

<sup>169</sup> *Гарр Т.Р. Почему люди бунтуют.* СПб., 2005. С. 51.

<sup>170</sup> *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...”<sup>171</sup>

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 RD<sup>172</sup>. It should be noted that the self-awareness described by Krymsky concerned mainly the urban Orthodox. Urbanization imposed “new standards of life”<sup>173</sup>, thereby heightening the feeling of RD.

Among the various mechanisms that demonstrated this new way of life, missionary activity has been highlighted by scholars<sup>174</sup> 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 possess<sup>175</sup>. The greater the perceived negative gap, the stronger the sense of deprivation<sup>176</sup>. In the case of the Orthodox, such reference groups were the Uniate and Protes-

<sup>171</sup> Крыmsкий А.Е. История новой арабской... С. 288.

<sup>172</sup> Гурр Т. Почему люди... С. 145.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

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

<sup>175</sup> Гурр Т. Почему люди... С. 155.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

tant communities. In contrast to new Catholics and Protestants schools<sup>177</sup>, effective consular protection — even naval demonstrations of power — and dynamic economic activity, the Orthodox under the traditional Russian patronage felt increasingly deprived<sup>178</sup>. Following a long Levantine tradition, the locals asked A.E. Krymsky in 1897: “When will the Russians come to take us away?”<sup>179</sup> 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”<sup>180</sup>. 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

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

<sup>178</sup> 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.*)

<sup>179</sup> *Крымский А.Е. Письма...* С. 175.

<sup>180</sup> 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..."<sup>181</sup>

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"<sup>182</sup>.

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 Antioch<sup>183</sup> (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

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

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

<sup>183</sup> 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”<sup>184</sup>, 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”<sup>185</sup>. 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”<sup>186</sup>. 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 career<sup>187</sup> 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

<sup>184</sup> Порфирий (Успенский). Книга бытия... Т. 4. С. 143.

<sup>185</sup> ГАРФ. Ф. Р-6991. Оп. 6. Д. 59. Л. 162.

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

<sup>187</sup> 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 Faith<sup>188</sup> on liturgical (ritual) matters<sup>189</sup>. 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 century<sup>190</sup> — 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”<sup>191</sup>. Soberly assessing the past, the representative of the Russian Orthodox Church to

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

<sup>189</sup> *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.

<sup>190</sup> 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.)

<sup>191</sup> 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”<sup>192</sup>. 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)”<sup>193</sup>.

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”<sup>194</sup>, — 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 States<sup>195</sup>.

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

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid. A. 158.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid. A. 118.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid. A. 167.

<sup>195</sup> 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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