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Original paper



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## **Embassy Churches in Constantinople — Outposts of Russian Spiritual Presence on the Bosphorus (1721–1821)**

### **Abstract**

Under the Treaty of Constantinople of 1700, Russia obtained the right to maintain a permanent diplomatic representative in the Ottoman capital. One consequence of this was the establishment of embassy churches, whose rectors were usually “house priests” or “chaplains” of the Russian diplomatic mission. Among Orthodox pilgrims were Andrey Ignatyev, Varlaam (in the world Vasily) Lenitsky, and Anastasius Paussius Kondoidi (Kandidi). The most famous Russian pilgrim of the 18th century to visit Jerusalem was Vasily Grigorievich Grigorovich-Barsky, a native of Kyiv. The first permanent house church of the Russian diplomatic mission on the Bosphorus was the Church of Saints Anthony and Theodosius of the Caves, founded and consecrated in 1721 under Resident I.I. Nepluyev (1721–1734). Its regular rector was Pyotr (Petr) Zlotkovich. In August 1733, he was replaced by the



hieromonk Konstantin Politansky (or Neapolitansky), sent from the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra (served 1733–1736 and 1740–1742), who took the place of the now-blind Zlotkovich. Executed in 1742, he was later canonized by the Orthodox Church of Constantinople. After the embassy residence and the church housed within it, along with all its furnishings, burned down in 1808, all members of the church clergy returned to Russia and services ceased. Under the new Russian envoy Count G.A. Stroganov (1816), in accordance with an imperial decree, a small permanent church of Saints Constantine and Helena Equal-to-the-Apostles was established in 1818. Services were held there in the summer, while in winter members of the embassy attended the Greek Church of the Mother of God of Kaffa. The establishment of a Russian church in Constantinople became one of the first important steps in the development of Russian spiritual presence on the Bosphorus.

**Keywords:**

Russian church in Constantinople; Russian pilgrimage; Russian spiritual presence; A. Ignatiev; V. Lenitsky; A. Kondoidi; K. Politansky; D. Vozmuylov; Leonty

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he beginning of the Russian spiritual presence on the Bosphorus, as well as the emergence of Russian embassy churches, dates back to the reign of Peter I. According to the Constantinople Treaty of 1700, Russia obtained the right to have a permanent diplomatic representative in the Ottoman capital. The first envoy extraordinary appointed to the Sublime Porte was P.A. Tolstoy (1702–1714)<sup>1</sup>. Spiritual persons accompanying the first Russian diplomatic emissaries on the Bosphorus were Orthodox pilgrims who had visited Jerusalem. The senior priests of embassy churches were called “house priests” or “chaplains”<sup>2</sup>.

The first known representative of the clergy who visited Constantinople after the establishment of the first permanent diplomatic mission on the Bosphorus was Moscow Old Believer priest Ivan Lukyanov (1701–1703)<sup>3</sup>. During his stay in the Ottoman capital, the pilgrim-writer met with P.A. Tolstoy, mentioning him in his travel diary<sup>4</sup>.

The first chaplain of the Russian diplomatic mission on the Bosphorus was Moscow priest Andrey Ignatiev. In 1702–1707, he was a house priest with the envoy extraordinary P.A. Tolstoy in Adrianople. In 1707–1708, pilgrim-writer Andrey Ignatiev, together with his brother Stephan, visited Jerusalem and described

<sup>1</sup> Якушев М.М. «Приятели ево работают великому государю в чем могут усердно». Иностранцы на русской службе в Царьграде в первой четверти XVIII века // Военно-исторический журнал. № 8. Август 2025. С. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Chaplain (Rus. *капеллан*) (Latin *capellanus*, from *capella* — “chapel”) — a regimental, military campaign, or domestic priest who combines church duties (ongoing pastoral care and full or partial divine services) with additional responsibilities, such as serving as a personal secretary or archivist.

<sup>3</sup> *Ivan Lukyanov* was of merchant origin and resided in Moscow. As stated in his travel document (*proezzhabaya gramota*), he was a priest at the Church of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker on the Sands (known as “the church of Nikola on the yellow sands, in the Streltsy sloboda”). He made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem accompanied by the monks Luka (Luke), Grigory (Gregory), and Adrian, and left a detailed account of his journey.

<sup>4</sup> Лукьянов Иоанн. Хождение в Святую Землю московского священника Иоанна Лукьянова (1701–1703) // *Русский архив*. 1863.

his pilgrimage in detail<sup>5</sup>. In Jerusalem, he participated in the services in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In 1708, he again served as house priest under P.A. Tolstoy in Constantinople. Soon Ignatiev left the Ottoman capital, returned to Russia, and several years later took monastic vows at the New Jerusalem Monastery, taking the name Aaron.

The second house priest of the Russian diplomatic mission in Constantinople was hieromonk<sup>6</sup> Varlaam (in the world Vasily) Lenitsky of the St. Michael's Monastery of Kyiv<sup>7</sup>. In 1711, he was a house priest under Count B.P. Sheremetev during the Pruth River Campaign, and in 1711–1712, he was a house priest under the envoys extraordinary Count M.B. Sheremetev and Baron P.P. Shafirov in Adrianople and Constantinople. In 1712–1713, pilgrim-writer Varlaam Lenitsky visited Jerusalem and described his pilgrimage in detail. In 1714, Varlaam Lenitsky left the Ottoman capital together with P.A. Tolstoy, M.B. Sheremetev, and P.P. Shafirov.

The third house priest of the Russian diplomatic mission on the Bosphorus was priest Anastasius Paussius Kondoidi (Kandidi), born on the island of Candia (Crete, Greece). In 1711, during the Pruth River Campaign, he was noticed by Peter I. In 1712–1714, Anastasius Kondoidi was house priest under the envoy extraordinary P.A. Tolstoy. In 1714, he left Constantinople together with P.A. Tolstoy, M.B. Sheremetev, and P.P. Shafirov, who had been released from the Fortress of Seven Towers. In 1721, Anastasius Kondoidi was made an assessor of the Holy Synod, and for faithful

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<sup>5</sup> *Игнатъев Андрей. Хождение во святой град Иерусалим священника Андрея Игнатъева при царе Петре Алексеевиче / РГБ ОР (Российская государственная библиотека Отдел рукописей). Ф. 172 («Архив Московской духовной академии»). К. 487. № 14. Л. 1–41.*

<sup>6</sup> Hieromonk (Greek *hieros monachos* — “holy monk”) is a monk in the Orthodox Church who holds the priestly rank. The rank of hieromonk is equivalent to the rank of ierey (Orthodox priest) in the white (secular) clergy.

<sup>7</sup> Bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church (1719): Bishop of Suzdal and Yuryev (1719–1722), Bishop of Kolomna and Kashira (1724–1727), Bishop of Astrakhan and Stavropol (1727–1730), Bishop of Pereyaslav and Boryspil, vicar of the Kyiv diocese (1730), Bishop of Astrakhan (1730), Bishop of Pskov and Narva (1731–1739). He died and was buried in the Kyiv Pechersk Monastery in 1741.

service with P.A. Tolstoy, received not an assessor's but a counselor's salary (1000 rubles). In 1722, Anastasius Kondoidi took monastic vows with the name Athanasius<sup>8</sup>.

During the reign of Peter I, other well-known Russian pilgrim-writers of Little Russian origin visited the Holy Land: hieromonks Macarius and Sylvester of the Spaso-Preobrazhensky (Transfiguration) Novgorod-Seversky Monastery (1704–1707)<sup>9</sup>, hieromonk Hippolytus Vishensky of the Chernigov Borisoglebsky (Boris and Gleb) Monastery (1707–1709)<sup>10</sup>, hieromonks Sylvester and Nicodemus of the St. Nicholas Rykhly Monastery of Chernigov Province (1722–1723)<sup>11</sup>, who left detailed descriptions of Constantinople and the Holy Land; some of them met with Russian diplomatic representatives and clergy in the Ottoman capital<sup>12</sup>.

In 1721, under resident I.I. Neplyuev (1721–1734), a church dedicated to the holy monks Anthony and Theodosius of the Caves, founders of monastic life in Russia, was founded and consecrated in the suburban district of Buyukdere. In the same year, a permanent priest was sent to Constantinople from Russia, receiving a salary from the embassy treasury<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church (1726): Bishop of Vologda and Belozersk (1726–1735), Bishop of Suzdal and Yuryev (1726–1735). Before his death, he bequeathed his personal library, with part of it to be transferred to the Moscow Theological Academy and the other part to the Peter and Paul Cathedral in St. Petersburg.

<sup>9</sup> *Макарий и Сильвестр*. Описание путешествия в Иерусалим иеромонахов Макария и Сильвестра в 1704 году. РГБ ОР. Ф. 310 («Собрание рукописных книг В.М. Ундольского»). № 717.

<sup>10</sup> *Вишенский И.* Пельгримація или путешественник Ишполита Вишенского во град Иерусалим в 1707–1709 году // РГБ ОР. Ф. 148 («Архивархимандрита Леонида (Кавелина)»). К. 11. № 17.

<sup>11</sup> *Сильвестр (Диканский) и Никодим*. Описание путешествия иеромонаха Рыхловского Николаевского монастыря Сильвестра и Никодима в Царьград и Иерусалим в 1722 г. // Труды Киевской духовной академии. 1883. Т. 2. № 5. (май).

<sup>12</sup> Another prominent Russian pilgrim-writer, who traveled to Constantinople and Jerusalem in the first half of the 18th century, was Hieromonk Serapion Mnozhinsky of the Chyhyryn Holy Trinity Motroninsky Monastery. (1749–1751 гг.).

<sup>13</sup> Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire (АВПРИ). Ф. 89 («Сношения России с Турцией»). Оп. 89/1. 1721. Д. 8. Л. 24–24 об.



Варлаам (Леницкий) — архиепископ Псковский и Нарвский.  
Портрет первой половины XVIII в.  
*Российский государственный исторический архив*

The home church of Anthony and Theodosius of the Caves became the first permanent home church of the Russian diplomatic mission on the Bosphorus. The religious institution was called the “Russian embassy church”, “ministerial home church”, “Russian temple at the imperial embassy”, and “Russian home temple at the Constantinople mission”. Services were attended by members of the diplomatic mission in Constantinople, Russian pilgrims and merchants visiting the Ottoman capital on their way to Jerusalem or on their return from the Holy Land, and sometimes by local Christian residents.

One of the first permanent house priests of the embassy church in the Ottoman capital was Petr Zlotkovitch, who lost his sight in 1733 and returned to Russia.



Афанасий (Кондоиди) — епископ Суздальский и Владимирский.  
Портрет XVIII в.

*ФГБУК «Государственный Ростово-Ярославский  
архитектурно-художественный музей-заповедник»*

The Russian resident in Constantinople I.I. Neplyuev invited a Greek priest for temporary service in the church and asked the Holy Synod to send a widowed priest from Kyiv to the Ottoman capital, requesting that his candidacy, recommended by church authorities, should receive the approval of the Collegium of Foreign Affairs, since embassy churches were the property of the Russian state.

Neplyuev's request was satisfied, and in August 1733, hieromonk Konstantin Politansky (Neapolitansky) (1733–1736, 1740–1742), was sent from the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra to the Bosphorus, replacing the blind Petr Zlotkovitch, and serving in the home church under Russian resident in Constantinople A.A. Veshnyakov (1735, 1742–1745), who had replaced Neply-

uev in the resident's post. Konstantin Politansky became one of the most famous priests of the embassy church in the Ottoman capital.

Some scholars consider Politansky a Great Russian by nationality, basing this on the translation of the word “Neapolitansky”, and citing Novgorod (Greek *neo polis* — new city, *Novgorod*) as his birthplace, while others consider him a Little Russian and fellow pupil of the pilgrims Vasily Grigorovich-Barsky and Varlaam Lenitsky at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.

In 1733, Politansky received an appointment to the embassy church on the Bosphorus. In 1736–1739, he visited Jerusalem and Mount Athos. He served the liturgy and delivered sermons in Greek in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre several times. In 1740, upon his return from pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Politansky presented the resident A.A. Veshnyakov with certificates of his conduct over the past five years, signed by the Patriarchs of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Constantinople, as well as Athos archimandrites. According to Barsky's account, hieromonk Konstantin was an “eloquent man of Latin learning”. Politansky showed “special care in adorning the church”, contributing his own funds, distinguished himself by exceptional zeal for “divine service”, celebrated the liturgy almost daily and twice a week conducted spiritual conversations in Russian and Greek. However, on August 8, 1742, Politansky<sup>14</sup>, for unknown reasons, fled to the Ottomans and “became a Muslim”. In his letter to Kyiv Archbishop Rafail Zaborovsky, A.A. Veshnyakov reported Politansky's apostasy, calling him a “rogue”, “traitor”, “apostate”, “renegade”, and “unworthy hieromonk at the palace church”.

Several days later, Politansky repented and rejected Islam, “cursed the prophet Muhammad, trampled and tore all Ottoman gifts”, as a result of which he was executed. On October 23, 1742, A.A. Veshnyakov noted in his letter to Kyiv Archbishop Rafail

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<sup>14</sup> АВПРИ. Ф. 89. Оп. 89/1. 1742. Д. 31. The case on the replacement of Hieromonk Konstantin Politansky at the Russian mission in Constantinople with another hieromonk or a widowed priest sent from Kyiv, along with church attendants and singers.

Zaborovsky that Politansky “with pure repentance and his own blood washed [his sin] away, as a former true believer, adorning his former angelic life with glory”. Politansky was canonized by the Constantinople Orthodox Church as a martyr saint, and his name was included in the *Synaxis of the Venerable Fathers of Mount Athos*<sup>15</sup>.

Unfortunately, there was later another case of apostasy among the clergy of the Russian church in Constantinople. This occurred in 1820 with sacristan Vasily Ivanovich Savin, who had been sent to Constantinople in 1818. For unknown reasons, he fled to the Ottomans and converted into Islam. For four years he “wore Turkish clothes and was covered with a turban”, and in 1824 he returned to Orthodoxy, “the rite of reunion of adherents of other faiths was performed over him, a twelve-year penance was imposed, and he himself was excluded from the clerical rank”<sup>16</sup>.

The most famous Russian worshipper of the eighteenth century was Vasily Grigorievich Grigorovich-Barsky, a native of Kyiv<sup>17</sup>. His ancestors were residents of the city of Bar in the Mogilev District of the Podolian Governorate. In 1726–1728, V.G. Grigorovich-Barsky visited Jerusalem. In 1734, in Damascus, Patriarch of Antioch Sylvester tonsured him as a monk with the name Basil and ordained him a subdeacon; later Grigorovich-Barsky settled on the island of Patmos, where he lived from 1736 to 1743.

In 1743, the resident in Constantinople A.A. Veshnyakov called Grigorovich-Barsky to the Ottoman capital and offered him the position of priest at the embassy church and associate officer at the diplomatic mission, but the pilgrim-writer re-

<sup>15</sup> Антонов В.В., Кобак А.В. Русские храмы и обители в Европе. СПб., 2005. С. 354.

<sup>16</sup> Здравомыслов К. Мученическая кончина иеромонаха Константина неаполитанского (К истории православной церкви в Константинополе) // *Русский архив*. № 9. 1894. С. 306–318.

<sup>17</sup> He wrote under the pseudonyms Vasily of Kyiv (Vasily Kyivsky), Vasily Plaka, Vasily Plaka-Albov, and others. He passed away in 1747 and was buried in the Kyiv Brotherhood Epiphany Monastery (Kyivo-Bratsky Bogoyavlensky Monastery).



Вид на Константинополь из нидерландского посольства в районе Пера.  
Художник Ж.-Б. Ванмур. XVIII в.  
Рейксмузеум (Амстердам)

fused, as he intended to teach Greek at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. A.A. Veshnyakov informed Empress Elizabeth Petrovna about Grigorovich-Barsky and his works. In 1744–1746, Grigorovich-Barsky visited Mount Athos<sup>18</sup>. However, upon returning to Constantinople, he did not get along with the new resident, A.I. Neplyuev (1746–1750), who accused him of Hellenism and betrayal of national interests<sup>19</sup>. Grigorovich-Barsky was described by his brother, the famous Russian architect Ivan Grigorievich Grigorovich-Barsky. This description was placed in the preface to the first edition of his travel notes: “There is no portrait of this father Basil, but by features he was thus: of tall stature, black hair on his head and beard without any gray, dark-complexioned

<sup>18</sup> Григорович-Барский В. РГБ ОР. Ф. 299 («Собрание рукописных книг Н.С. Тихонравова»). №. 437. Л. 1–349.

<sup>19</sup> Якушев М.М. Резиденты и секретные агенты России в Константинополе 1721–1751 гг. // Исторический вестник. 2025. № 52. С. 80.

face, well-proportioned body, black high brows, large and almost meeting together, sharp eyes, brown, short nose; both in dress and in speech he resembled a Greek, which is why his own mother, upon his return home after 24 years of travel, could not recognize him even after an hour of conversation; moreover, he was of cheerful and jocular character, curious about all sciences and arts, especially drawing; from childhood he had a desire to see foreign lands, which he accomplished in deed". In 1778, Prince G.A. Potemkin commissioned the publication of Barsky's book<sup>20</sup>. Vasily Grigorovich-Barsky became the most famous Russian pilgrim-writer of the eighteenth century.

The most renowned house priest of the embassy church in the Ottoman capital was Archimandrite Leonty (in the world Luke) Zelinsky (1766–1799)<sup>21</sup>, who visited Jerusalem in 1763–1766 and described his journey<sup>22</sup>. In 1763, hieromonk Leonty of the Poltava Hoy Cross Exaltation Monastery visited the Ottoman capital on his way to Jerusalem and became acquainted with the resident in Constantinople, A.M. Obreskov (1752–1768)<sup>23</sup>.

In 1766, hieromonk Leonty, ordained Archimandrite by Jerusalem Patriarch Ephram, returned to Constantinople, where he met his countryman Stephan Melnikov, serving as secretary and dragoon at the Russian diplomatic mission on the Bosphorus. Through Melnikov's patronage, he was appointed as house priest of the embassy church under Russia's diplomatic representation in Constantinople, replacing the gravely ill hieromonk Pakhomius (1765),

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<sup>20</sup> Subsequently, the book was republished several times, and in the late 19th century it appeared as a critical scholarly edition issued by the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society under the title *The Wanderings of Vasily Grigorovich Barsky to the Holy Places of the East, 1723–1747* (*Странствование Василия Григоровича Барского по святым местам Востока с 1723 по 1747 г.*). СПб., 1885–1887 гг.

<sup>21</sup> Кириллина С.А. Очарованные странники. Арабо-османский мир глазами российских паломников XVI–XVIII столетий. М., 2010.

<sup>22</sup> Леонтий (Зелинский). История жизни младшего Григоровича. Письма монаха Полтавского монастыря отцу Мартиниану / АВПРИ. Ф. 152 («Библиотека Азиатского департамента»). Оп. 505. Т. 6. 1766. Д. 11.

<sup>23</sup> Якушев М.М. Русское православное паломничество на Ближний Восток в контексте осmano-русских отношений (1774–1847 гг.). М., 2018.

who, in turn, had replaced hieromonk of Greek origin Dorotheos Vozmuylov, or Vozmuylos (1759–1765)<sup>24</sup>.

At the beginning of the Russo-Turkish War of 1768–1774, hieromonk Leonty, along with other employees of the Russian diplomatic mission, was imprisoned in the Fortress of Seven Towers, and then accompanied the Russian resident in Constantinople A.M. Obreskov alongside the Grand Vizier in the Ottoman army camp for a year and a half. In 1771, Leonty arrived in Russia and from 1771 to 1775 lived in the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra. In 1775, he returned to Constantinople with the embassy of the envoy extraordinary and plenipotentiary Prince N.V. Repnin (1775–1776), who came to Constantinople for the ratification of the Kuchuk-Kainardji Peace Treaty of 1774. In 1787, in connection with the beginning of the Russo-Turkish War of 1787–1791, Leonty again came to Russia, and after the end of the war returned to Constantinople. Hieromonk Leonty, calling himself half-jokingly in his works “junior Grigorovich”, became one of the most famous Russian pilgrim-writers of the eighteenth century.

The embassy or ministerial house, which housed residential quarters in addition to the home embassy church, was repeatedly rebuilt<sup>25</sup>.

At the end of the eighteenth century, services and liturgies held in the embassy church were timed to festive celebrations connected with Empress Catherine II and members of the imperial family, and attended by the envoy extraordinary and plenipotentiary Prince M.I. Golitsyn-Kutuzov (1793–1794), who had arrived in Constantinople for the ratification of the Peace Treaty of Jassy (1791–1792), his suite and mission employees<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church (from 1787): He served as Bishop of Feodosia and Mariupol (1787–1790). Empress Catherine II personally gifted him a cross and a panagia.

<sup>25</sup> АВГПИИ. Ф. 89. Оп. 89/1. 1757. Д. 7. The matter regarding the rebuilding of the church housed in the state-owned ministerial residence in Constantinople.

<sup>26</sup> On 22 September 1793, during a stop at the camp near San Stefano, M. I. Golenishchev-Kutuzov and his entourage listened to a “prayer service with prostration” (*molebstvie s kolenoprekloneniem*) marking the anniversary of Empress Catherine II’s accession to the throne/ АВГПИИ. Ф. 89. Оп. 89/8. 1793–1794. Д. 777. Л. 128 об.

Hieromonk Meletius notes that among the churches of Constantinople there was a “Russian church in the imperial ministerial house”. According to him, on October 1, 1793, on the feast of the Most Holy Mother of God, “in the ministerial home church, during the celebration of the divine liturgy, the embassy singers, for the first time, sang a concert”<sup>27</sup>. Meletius wrote that “the house of the Russian envoy stands on the main street, which almost from the shore on the south side, though somewhat indirectly, stretches through all villages to the north, on the highest place on the left side going from the south”, noting that “the chambers stand in the middle of the courtyard ... (and) inside the courtyard behind the chambers on the west side, there is a water-collection reservoir, a cistern, which was made previously” by the envoy extraordinary and plenipotentiary Ya.I. Bulgakov (1781–1787)<sup>28</sup>, who replaced A.S. Stakhiev (1776–1781) in his post. According to Meletius’s description, the home church of Saints Anthony and Theodosius of the Caves, in which “the service of God is performed in Church Slavonic, is quite spacious, but appears humble”<sup>29</sup>.

On November 24, 1793, on the occasion of Empress Catherine II’s name day, the embassy suite gathered at the embassy house and went to church “to hear the liturgy”, after which there was a “prayer service with genuflection”, and during the prayer for health of Empress Catherine II, “upon the proclamation of [*let her live*] *many years*”, the Russian ships present there, “by a signal, produced cannon fire”<sup>30</sup>. On December 12, 1793, on the occasion of the birthday of Grand Duke Alexander Pavlovich, “in the presence of the ambassador and entire suite, the lit-

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<sup>27</sup> Мелетий. Путешествие во Иерусалим Саровския Общежительная Пустыни иеромонаха Мелетия в 1793–1794 годах / Российский государственный архив древних актов (РГАДА). Ф. 357 («Собрание Саровской пустыни»). Оп. 1. Д. 305. Л. 1–350 (черновой оригинал); М., 1800. С. 19–20.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. С. 34.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. С. 20.

<sup>30</sup> АВПРИ. Ф. 89. Оп. 89/8. 1793–1794. Д. 777. Л. 128 об., 284 об., 128 об.

urgy and prayer service were celebrated in the embassy church”. On January 13, 1794, “in the presence of the ambassador and suite, a prayer service was celebrated in the embassy church” on the occasion of the birthday of Grand Duchess Elizabeth Alekseevna. On February 4, 1794, on the occasion of the birthday of Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna, a prayer service was also “celebrated in the embassy church”<sup>31</sup>.

The home church of Saints Anthony and Theodosius of the Caves had existed until 1808, and the clergy staff changed in 1743 and 1779. The last house priests of the embassy church were hieromonk Hierotheus (1799–1801), Archimandrites Samuel (1801–1804) and Benjamin (1804–1808). Russian pilgrim-writer ensigns brothers Ivan and Vasily Veshnyakov, as well as their companion Michael Novikov, who visited Constantinople in 1804 on their way to Jerusalem, mentioned that in Pera, “in the old house standing high on a hill of the Russian envoy”, there dwelt “most reverend monks” and “chaplains”: Archimandrite Benjamin and hierodeacon of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra Epiphanius, who showed pilgrims “much benevolence in all respects”<sup>32</sup>.

In 1808, the envoy extraordinary and plenipotentiary minister in Constantinople, A.Ya. Italinsky (1802–1806, 1812–1816), noted in his report that “the embassy house and the church housed in it with all its utensils had burned down”, and the clergy staff had left the Ottoman capital and returned to Russia. That is why Russian pilgrim-writers junior officer Ilya Sysoev and his companion Peter Khostov, who visited Constantinople in 1817 on their way to Jerusalem, did not mention either the home church destroyed in the fire or the clergy serving their flock<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. Л. 524, 525, 525 об.

<sup>32</sup> *Вешняков И.И.* Путевые записки во Святой Град Иерусалим и окрестности оного Калужской губернии дворян Вешняковых и медынского купца Новикова в 1804–1805 гг. М., 1813. С. 5, 11, 14.

<sup>33</sup> *Сысоев И.С.* Путевые записки во Святой град Иерусалим и его окрестности Новгородской губернии города Старой Руссы подпоручика Ильи Степановича Сысоева и крестьянина Петра Хостова в 1817–1818 гг. / РНБ ОР (Российская национальная библиотека Отдел рукописей. Ф. 536 («Собрание Общества любителей древней письменности»). № 623.

In 1808–1816, due to the absence of an embassy church, mission employees attended the Greek Church of the Intercession of the Mother of God in Ayvansaray, the Church of the Rejoicing Mother of God in Balat, and other Greek churches, mainly in Pera and Galata.

In 1816, by imperial decree “in a country inhabited with such abundance of our co-religionists and serving as the cradle of primitive Christianity, worship was mandatory, with spiritual persons being selected for such a place who combined their teaching with the example of Christian virtues and justified the benevolent intentions of the Emperor”<sup>34</sup>.

In 1818, under the envoy extraordinary and plenipotentiary minister in Constantinople, Baron G.A. Stroganov (1816–1821), in a suburban embassy house in Buyukdere, on the second floor of a “wooden wing of the embassy chancellery, a small temple” of the holy equal-to-the-apostles Tsar Constantine and his mother Helen was arranged, becoming the second permanent home church of the Russian diplomatic mission on the Bosphorus<sup>35</sup>. The first house priest of the new embassy church was hieromonk Melchisedek (1818–1821). Pilgrim-writer K.I. Bronnikov (1820–1821), who visited Constantinople in 1820 on his way to Jerusalem, left information about the home church and hieromonk Melchisedek. According to K.I. Bronnikov’s description, “the Very Reverend Father Melchisedek” received the Russian worshipper “like a family member”. According to him, “in the court church there was a short evening service... the church is large and beautiful, with sufficient utensils”; in the evening there was all-night vigil with reverence, in the morning water blessing, at 9 o’clock in the morning the Hours and Prothesis began; “during the Hours”, the envoy extraordinary and pleni-

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<sup>34</sup> Шкаровский М.В. Русские православные общины в Турции // Вестник Православного Свято-Тихоновского университета (ПСТГУ). 2009. Вып. 1 (30). С. 21.

<sup>35</sup> Шкаровский М.В. Русские церковные общины на территории Турции (Османской империи) в XVIII–XX вв. // Вестник церковной истории. 2014. № 1–2 (33–34). С. 176.

potentiary minister G.A. Stroganov “with all officials stationed at the embassy came to the church; there were many foreign members; the liturgy began, and after it a prayer service to Saint Alexander Nevsky with Supplicatory Canon and then the Many Years Chant”<sup>36</sup>.

The diplomatic representation of Russia in the Ottoman capital was located in Buyukdere only during the summer months, and in winter it moved to Pera. Russian diplomats rented quarters in the central part of Constantinople: first in Fontan’s house, and then in Frankini’s house. In winter, mission employees attended the Greek Church of the Mother of God of Kaffa.

In 1838, under the envoy extraordinary and plenipotentiary minister A.P. Butenev (1830–1843), in Pera, the laying of an embassy house for winter residence took place, in which a third permanent embassy church (Church of Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker) was built. In 1845, under the envoy extraordinary and plenipotentiary minister in Constantinople V.P. Titov (1843–1853), the church, located on the third (“upper”) floor of the new building of the diplomatic mission in Pera, was consecrated.

Thus, from the beginning of the eighteenth century, embassy churches in Constantinople, being integral parts of the Russian diplomatic mission on the Bosphorus, were outposts of Russian spiritual presence in the region, and the clergy and church servants who served in them or described them left their mark in the history of Russian diplomacy in the Near East and Russian pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

### **Conflict of interests**

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.

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<sup>36</sup> Бронников К.И. Путешествие к Святым местам, находящимся в Европе, Азии и Африке, совершенное в 1820–1821 гг. села Павлова жителем Киrom Бронниковым. М., 1824. С. 9–10.



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