



Original paper



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## Travels to the Ottoman Empire of Russian Pilgrim-Writers in the Last Quarter of the 18th Century — the First Quarter of the 19th Century

### Abstract

Pilgrimage diaries written by Russian Orthodox pilgrims during their journeys to the holy cities on the territory of the Ottoman Empire are a valuable and informative source of information about the socio-economic and ethnocultural life of the Near East. The monastic metochia of the Jerusalem Patriarchate in Jaffa and Ramle, as well as the Patriarchal monastery in Jerusalem, were responsible for accommodating of Russian Orthodox pilgrims. The Russian diplomatic mission in Constantinople provided all possible assistance to Russian worshippers in the Holy Land. The establishment of the Russian vice-consulate in Jaffa marked the first step toward the institutionalization and development of Russian Orthodox pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

### Keywords:

Russian pilgrims, Holy Land, Ottoman Empire, Sublime Porte, Ivan Veshnyakov, Ilya Sysoev, Pyotr Khostov, Kir Bronnikov, Yakim Vasilyev, Yakov Rahmanov

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In the first half of the 18th century, the Holy City of Jerusalem was visited by Russian pilgrim-writers, primarily members of the clergy: Ivan Lukyanov (1701–1703), Makariy and Seliverst (1704–1707), Andrey Ignatyev (1707–1708), Ippolit Vishensky (1707–1709), Varlaam (1712–1714), Matvey Nechayev (1721–1722), Sylvester and Nikodim (1722–1723), Vasily Grigorovich-Barsky (1723–1747), Serapion (1749–1751). Their pilgrimage diaries and travel notes belong to the genre of “*khozhdenie*” (pilgrimages or wanderings)<sup>1</sup>.

In the second half of the 18th century, Hieromonks Ignaty (1766–1776) and Leonty (1763–1765) also visited Jerusalem.

From the last quarter of the 18th century, following the signing of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774) and the Treaty of Jassy (1792) between Russia and the Sublime Porte, which granted Russian subjects the right to freely and safely visit the Christian holy sites of Palestine, the flow of Russian pilgrims to the Ottoman Empire began to increase, despite the numerous hardships and dangers encountered on such long journeys.

The pilgrimage literature of the last quarter of the 18th to the first quarter of the 19th century continued the *khozhdenie* tradition of Jerusalem travel narratives from the early 18th century, enriched by several vivid descriptions of journeys to the Holy Land.

Two notable pilgrimages to the Holy City of Jerusalem, composed by members of the clergy at the end of the 18th century, deserve special attention.

<sup>1</sup> Кириллина С.А. “Благочестивые путешествия” в Иерусалим: российские паломники-писатели XVIII столетия // Исторический вестник. 2019. Т. XXX (177). С. 164–185.

In 1793–1794, the Holy Land was visited by Hieromonk Meletiy<sup>2</sup> of the Holy Dormition Sarov Hermitage, “of merchant origin from Astrakhan”<sup>3</sup>. In 1794–1795, Hieromonk Nikanor Moskvitinov of the Kursk Root Hermitage<sup>4</sup> made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land<sup>5</sup>.

In 1804–1805, Kaluga noblemen, ensigns Ivan and Vasily Veshnyakov<sup>6</sup> and their companion, merchant Mikhail Novikov<sup>7</sup> from the town of Medyn in the Kaluga Province, visited the Holy Land. In 1817–1818, it was visited by Second Lieutenant Ilya Stepanovich Sysoev from Staraya Russa in the Novgorod Province, accompanied by peasants from the village of Marfino in the Staraya Russa district: Pyotr Khostov, Zakhar and Ivan<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Кириллина С.А. “Приде мне неотступное желание видеть Град Иерусалим и поклониться тамо святым местам”: иеромонах россиянин во владениях османского султана // Исторический вестник. 2015. Т. XI (158). С. 38–77.

<sup>3</sup> Мелетий. Путешествие во Иерусалим Саровския Общежительная Пустыни иеромонаха Мелетия в 1793–1794 годах / Российский государственный архив древних актов (РГАДА). Рукопись собрания Саровской пустыни (Ф. 357). Оп. 1. № 305. Л. 1–350 (черновой оригинал); М., 1800. Л. 10, 41.

<sup>4</sup> Никанор (Москвитин). Путешествие во Иерусалим монаха Курской Коренной пустыни Никанора Москвитина в 1794–1795 годах (оригинал, поднесенный сочинителем Санкт-Петербургскому Митрополиту Гавриилу и переданный им в Валаамский монастырь) / Рукопись собрания Валаамского монастыря. Отдел 4 (рукописи). № 167. Л. 1–44; СПб., 1796.

<sup>5</sup> One of Monk Nikanor's obediences was icon painting. He created an icon of the Korsun Mother of God for the Gethsemane church (“House of the Theotokos”), noting in the inscription that it was made “by iconographer Monk Nikanor, who came from Moscow”. He also drew a plan of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which he attached to his pilgrimage diary.

<sup>6</sup> Якушев М.М. Путешествие братьев Вешняковых и Кира Бронникова на Святую Землю в первой четверти XIX в. // *Восток*. 2014. № 5. С. 36–42.

<sup>7</sup> Вешняков И.И. Путевые записки во Святой Град Иерусалим и окрестности онога Калужской губернии дворян Вешняковых и медынского купца Новикова в 1804 и 1805 гг. М., 1813. Л. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Сысоев И.С. Путевые записки во Святой Град Божий Иерусалим и окрестности онога Новгородской губернии города Старой Руссы подпоручика Ильи Степановича Сысоева и крестьянина Петра Хостова в 1817-м и 1818-м годах / Отдел рукописей (ОР) РНБ. Собрание Общества любителей древней письменности (ОЛДП). № 623. Л. 1–73.



Pilgrims at the walls of Jerusalem. Artist N.G. Chernetsov.  
1831. Simferopol Art Museum

In 1818–1819, the peasant Yakim Vasilyev<sup>9</sup> from the village of Lyakhovo in the Rostov District of the Yaroslavl Province visited Jerusalem and briefly described his pilgrimage. In 1819, Anna Alexeyevna, an unmarried woman from the village of Lezhnevo in the Vladimir Province, and the widow Praskovya Stepanovna<sup>10</sup> made the journey; their pilgrimage was recorded by the local priest Father Kondrat, based on the account of a female parishioner<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> *Васильев Я.* Путешествие во Святой Град Иерусалим из России ростовского крестьянина Якима Васильева в 1818–1819 гг. / ОР РНБ. Собрание А.А. Титова. № 889. Л. 1–32.

<sup>10</sup> *Анна Алексеевна.* Путешествие во Святой град Иерусалим села Лежнева девицы Анны Алексеевны и вдовы Прасковьи Степановны в 1819 году / ОР РНБ. Собрание А.А. Титова. №. 1307. Л. 1–62; Предисловие: А. Титов. М., 1885; Государственный исторический музей (ГИМ). Собрание Е.В. Барсова. № 1785.

<sup>11</sup> Паломнические путешествия на Святую Землю: Путевые записки подпоручика Ильи Сысоева, Путешествие девицы Анны Алексеевны (подготовка текста и комментарии И.В. Федоровой). Библиотека литературы Древней Руси (БДР). СПб., 2020. Т. 20. С. 171–248, 353–392.

In 1820–1821, a pilgrim from the Smolensk Province, Yakov Ra-khmanov, visited the Holy Land with companions<sup>12</sup>. Around the same time, Kir Ivanovich Bronnikov, a serf of Count Dmitry N. Sheremetev from the village of Pavlovo in the Gorbatov District of the Nizhny Novgorod Province, also traveled to the Holy Land, departing from Jaffa during the height of the Greek uprising in 1821<sup>13</sup>. It is noteworthy that the abovementioned Russian subjects were the last Russian pilgrims to document their journeys to Jerusalem before the onset of the tragic events in the Holy Land.

The first pilgrimage stop en route to Jerusalem was the Russian mission in Constantinople. From the first quarter of the 19th century, following the signing of the Treaty of Bucharest (1812) between the Russian Empire and the Sublime Porte, the Imperial Mission on the Bosphorus began to pay increased attention to pilgrimages to the Holy Land. Among the *khozhdenie* accounts of the early 19th century, one can identify numerous travel narratives to the Near East authored by noble and peasant pilgrim-writers<sup>14</sup>.

Particular attention should be given to pioneering pilgrims of the first quarter of the 19th century from the nobility who were in military service<sup>15</sup>. At the commercial chancellery of the mission, Russian pilgrims exchanged rubles for Ottoman piastres at a favorable rate. Impoverished or destitute pilgrims received financial assistance sufficient for subsistence in Constantinople and to hire a vessel from the Ottoman capital to Jaffa. Wealthier travelers, including renowned pilgrim-writers, financed their journeys independently.

<sup>12</sup> Рахманов Я. Описание путешествующего во Святой Град Иерусалим и во Святую гору Афонскую Смоленской губернии поклонника Якова Рахманова с товарищи в 1820 году и в 1821 году от портового города Одессы Российской державы. Российская государственная библиотека (РГБ). Музейное собрание (Ф. 178). № 9466.

<sup>13</sup> Бронников К.И. Путешествие к Святым местам, находящимся в Европе, Азии и Африке, совершенное в 1820–1821 гг. села Павлова жителем Кирием Бронниковым. М., 1824. Л. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Якушев М.М. Русское православное паломничество на Ближний Восток в контексте османо-российских отношений (1774–1847 гг.). М., 2018.

<sup>15</sup> In 1857, the Holy Land was visited by the merchant Anisim Simochenkov from Zhizdra, Kaluga Province, who provided a detailed account of his pilgrimage / Russian National Library (RNL). Collection of P.N. Tikhonov. No. 827.

At the chancellery of the Russian Mission in Constantinople, pilgrims also received the most critical travel documents: the sultanic *firman* (an imperial decree issued in the pilgrim's name) and a foreign pilgrimage passport in Italian, which replaced the Russian-language passport and was registered in the passport ledger.

These documents granted the bearer the right to travel within the Ottoman Empire. The “sultanic decrees” carried by Russian pilgrims ensured safe and free passage within the Empire, functioning as both safe-conduct passes (*aman*) — issued to foreign nationals (*mustemin*) — and travel permits (*tezkere*) — granted by the Porte to Ottoman subjects for free and safe internal movement. Personalized *firman*s provided a higher level of protection, bearing the seal of the Sultan<sup>16</sup>.

The Ottoman government received from the heads of the Russian Imperial Mission in Constantinople an officially drafted request for *firman*s for Russian pilgrims. A few days later, it would issue personalized decrees signed by the Sultan, granting free and duty-free travel within the Ottoman Empire.

For instance:

- In 1793, Chargé d'affaires A.S. Khvostov, head of the Russian diplomatic mission on the Bosphorus, received a *firman* from Sultan Selim III for Hieromonk Meletiy of the Sarov Hermitage<sup>17</sup>;
- In 1794, Khvostov obtained a *firman* from Selim III for Hieromonk Nikanor Moskvitinov of the Kursk Root Hermitage<sup>18</sup>;
- In 1804, Extraordinary Envoy and Plenipotentiary Minister A. Ya. Italinsky secured a *firman* from the Turkish government for the Kaluga noblemen I.I. Veshnyakov and his brother

<sup>16</sup> The Sultan's seal, consisting of his names and titles, was placed on *firman*s, *berats*, and similar documents and had various names: *tugra-i garray-i ciban*, *tugra-i garray-i sami*, *nishan-i sharif-i alishan*, *nishan-i tamtal-i humayun*, *tevki-i refi-i humayun*, *mubr-i humayun*, *misal-i humayun*, *misal-i meymun*, *sitan-i haqqani*, *mekan-i haqqani*, *alamat-i sharife* / *Bayerle*, Gustav. Pashas, Begs and Effendis: A Historical Dictionary of Titles and Terms in the Ottoman Empire. Istanbul, 1997.

<sup>17</sup> Мелетий. Путешествие во Иерусалим. Л. 10, 41.

<sup>18</sup> Никанор. Путешествие во Иерусалим. Л. 1–44.

V.I. Veshnyakov, as well as for their companion, merchant Mikhail Novikov<sup>19</sup>;

- In 1817, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary G. A. Stroganov obtained a *firman* from Sultan Mahmud II for nobleman I.S. Sysoev of Staraya Russa and the accompanying peasants, who paid “26 levs” (20 rubles 80 kopecks) for the decree<sup>20</sup>;

- In 1818, Stroganov secured another *firman* from Mahmud II for Yakim Vasilyev, who paid “25 levs” for the sultanic decree<sup>21</sup>.

Some of the aforementioned pilgrims included translations of the *firman*s from Turkish into Russian in their travel accounts and diaries. The front of these decrees (e.g., those issued to Meletiy, the Veshnyakov brothers, and Kir Bronnikov)<sup>22</sup> bore the Sultan’s seal, while the reverse side contained the signatures of two high-ranking Ottoman officials: the *Reis Efendi*<sup>23</sup> and the *Beylikçi Efendi*<sup>24</sup>. The latter was responsible for registering the Sultan’s *firman*s and forwarding them to the *Nişancı Efendi*<sup>25</sup>, who finalized their formal issuance.

In the early 19th century, due to the lack of a dedicated pilgrimage infrastructure in Constantinople, pilgrims faced significant difficulties in finding shelter. Many were forced to sleep in harbors or coffeehouses (*kahvehanes*) in the open. According to Ivan Veshnyakov, “in Turkish coffeehouses, which by custom across Turkey must

<sup>19</sup> Вешняков И.И. Путевые записки во Святой Град Иерусалим и окрестности оного. Л. 5.

<sup>20</sup> Сысоев И.С. Путевые записки во Святой Град Божий Иерусалим. Л. 4об., 25.

<sup>21</sup> Васильев Я. Путешествие во Святой Град Иерусалим. Л. 5, 20, 26.

<sup>22</sup> Мелетий. Путешествие во Иерусалим. Л. 42–43; Вешняков И.И. Путевые записки во Святой Град Иерусалим. Л. 210–212; Бронников К.И. Путешествие к Святым местам. Л. 285–287.

<sup>23</sup> Reis Efendi, Reis ül-Küttab – Deputy to the Grand Vizier, responsible for the foreign policy of the Porte.

<sup>24</sup> Beylikçi Efendi (Beylikci) – Deputy to the Reis Efendi, responsible for drafting and publishing the texts of decrees, described as “the first after the Reis Efendi, through whom all *firman*s (decrees) of the Porte are dispatched”.

<sup>25</sup> Nişancı Efendi, Tevkii – A high-ranking official responsible for authenticating decrees by affixing the “Sultan’s mark” (a stylized signature of the Padishah); the “inscriber of the Sultan’s tughra”. Until the 18th century, the Nişancı also oversaw the Porte’s foreign affairs.



Title page of a book by Hieromonk Meletius. Moscow, 1798

offer lodging to anyone regardless of faith — and free of charge — money is only taken for tobacco and coffee”<sup>26</sup>, Sysoev<sup>27</sup> noted, “here, drinking coffee is an established custom, it is served without sugar or cream, Turkish style”. Hieromonk Meletiy reported that in Ottoman coffeehouses, “a cup of coffee is served for one *para*, together with a tobacco pipe”, and that “Turks drink coffee without sugar or milk<sup>28</sup>, and only one cup”.

A comparative analysis of travel expenses from Odessa to Jerusalem, based on the early 19th-century pilgrim records, provides further insights. In addition to the listed costs, I.I. Veshnyakov paid 10 *para* (20 kopecks) to the ship’s cook and 2 *para* (4 kopecks) to Arab porters. I.S. Sysoev spent 8 *para* (16 kopecks) on similar services.

<sup>26</sup> Вешняков И.И. Путевые записки во Святой Град Иерусалим. Л. 28.

<sup>27</sup> Сысов И.С. Путевые записки во Святой Град Божий Иерусалим. Л. 5.

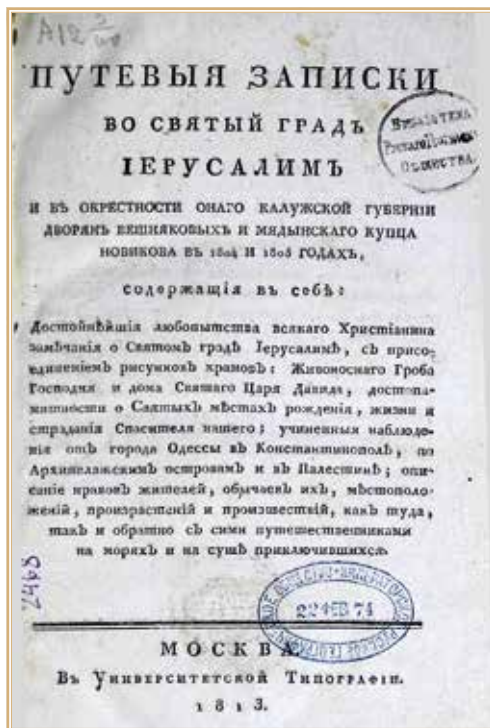
<sup>28</sup> Мелетий. Путешествие во Иерусалим. Л. 45, 95.

*Travel expenses from Odessa to Jerusalem: a case study of three pilgrims visiting the Holy Land in the early 19th century*

Name of pilgrim	Travel expenses from Odessa to Constantinople	Payment to ship captain for passage to Jaffa	Payment to boatmen in Jaffa	Payment for lodgings to the hegumen of the Greek monastery	Travel expenses to Jerusalem/baggage fees
Veshnyakov (1804–1805)	25 rubles	35 piastres	20 para (40 kopeks)	5 piastres	8 piastres/—
Sysoev (1817–1818)	free	40 levs (32 rubles)	2 levs (1 ruble 60 kopeks)	“each according to their ability and desire”	18 levs /— (14 rubles 40 kopecks)
Bronnikov (1820–1821)	16 rubles	free	2 levs (1 ruble 80 kopeks)	“each according to their ability and desire”	8 levs (7 rubles 20 kopeks) /6 para (12 kopeks) per batman <sup>29</sup>

The first transit point on the main pilgrimage route from Constantinople to Jerusalem was the port city of Jaffa. Upon arriving at the shores of Jaffa aboard commercial sailing vessels, pilgrims would transfer to small rowing boats, in which local Arab boatmen would ferry them ashore. There, they were met by Arab porters and laborers who transported their luggage to the Greek Monastery of St. George the Trophy-Bearer, located near the local harbor.

<sup>29</sup> Pilgrim Stefan, who visited Jerusalem in 1830–1831, noted that the fare to Jerusalem was 3 rubles 60 kopecks, and the cost of transporting baggage was “35 kopecks per pud” (a Russian unit of weight) / *Стефан (Агеев)*. Путешествие во Святой Град Иерусалим Патриаршего Иерусалимского монастыря монаха Серапиона, именовавшегося прежде пострижения Стефаном 1830 и 1831 годов / ОР РНБ. Собрание Н.П. Тиханова. № 511. Л. 1–32; Два путешествия в Иерусалим в 1830 и 1831 и в 1861 годах / Составила Е.Л. Румановская. М., 2006. Р. 44–61.



Title page of a book by Ivan Ivanovich Veshnyakov. St. Petersburg, 1813.

*From open sources*

It should be noted that in both Jaffa and Ramla, the Monasteries of St. George served as hospices for Russian pilgrims. These establishments functioned as residencies (metochia) of the Patriarch of Jerusalem and were headed by a hieromonk bearing the title of hegumen or protohegumen.

Diplomatic documents and pilgrimage diaries from the late 18th and early 19th centuries indicate that, from the time of the Treaty of Jassy in 1792<sup>30</sup> until the establishment of the first formal Russian vice-consulate in the Holy Land<sup>31</sup>, the interests of the Russian Empire had been represented by three consular agents of Italian de-

<sup>30</sup> Переписка поверенного в делах в Константинополе Хвостова с вице-консулом в Яффе Дамиани / Архив внешней политики Российской империи АВПРИ. Ф. "Константинопольская миссия". Оп. 90/1. 1792–1793. Д. 1116. Л. 1–7.

<sup>31</sup> Смелянская И.М., Горбунова Н.М., Якушев М.М. Сирия накануне и в период младотурецкой революции. По материалам консульских донесений" / Отв. редактор М.С. Мейер. М., 2015.

scent from the Damiani family. As Ottoman subjects, they simultaneously served as consuls for several European powers<sup>32</sup>.

In the 1790s, Pietro Damiani, who was also the consul of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (Sicily and Naples. – *Author*)<sup>33</sup>, was the first to conduct Russian consular affairs in Jaffa. In the 1800s, he was succeeded by his son, Antonio Damiani, who concurrently represented British interests<sup>34</sup>. By the 1810s, Francesco Damiani, Antonio's brother, had assumed the position while simultaneously discharging the duties of the consul of France.

Pilgrims often mentioned the Damiani family in their writings. Ivan Veshnyakov offered a positive description of Antonio Damiani, stating<sup>35</sup> that “he is a very kind, gentle, and courteous man, though he does not know a single word of Russian”.

A similarly complimentary account of Francesco Damiani was later given by Ilya Sysoev, who wrote that “the Italian consul Franz invited all Russian male and female pilgrims to his home”, where he “welcomed them warmly, invited everyone to sit down”, served vodka, “offered sweets as appetizers, then had tablecloths laid down on the carpets and dishes brought out”, and entertained them “with a dinner, after which everyone was served a cup of coffee with sugar”<sup>36</sup>.

Nevertheless, the Damiani agents could not provide full consular assistance to Russian subjects, not least because they lacked any knowledge of the Russian language. This situation changed in 1820 with the establishment of the Russian vice-consulate in Jaffa – the first official Russian consular mission in the Holy Land – headed by Georgy Mostras, a Greek by origin. Mostras not only spoke Russian and served the Russian Empire in an official capacity, but also devel-

<sup>32</sup> The head of the family, Boutros Damiani, was born in Jerusalem in 1687. Four of his sons served as consuls for Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Tuscany/ *Fisk R. Pity of the Nation: Lebanon at War*. Oxford, 2001. P. 23–24.

<sup>33</sup> Переписка чрезвычайного посланника и полномочного министра графа Кочубея с консулом в Яффе Дамиани / АВПРИ. Ф. “Константинопольская миссия”. Оп. 90/1. 1797–1798. Д. 1298. Л. 1–3.

<sup>34</sup> *Fisk, Robert*. *Pity of the Nation*. P. 275–276.

<sup>35</sup> *Вешняков И.И.* Путевые записки во Святой Град Иерусалим. Л. 173.

<sup>36</sup> *Сысоев И.С.* Путевые записки во Святой Град Божий Иерусалим. Л. 14 об.



Title page of a book by Kir Ivanovich Bronnikov. Moscow, 1824.

*From open sources*

oped a clear system for supplying Russian pilgrims with everything they needed during their pilgrimage.

Russian pilgrims held the vice-consul in high regard. In 1820, K.I. Bronnikov wrote<sup>37</sup> that he was “very satisfied with Mostras, and it is clear in every respect that he is a kind and honest man”.

Upon arrival in Jaffa, Russian pilgrims were required to register with the Russian vice-consulate, deposit part of their funds for safekeeping to be used on the return journey or in case of emergency, and surrender their passports. As a form of protective identification, they retained their *firmans*. The return-trip funds were stored in a government chest at the vice-consulate, sealed with an official stamp. In lieu of the passports, pilgrims were issued notes bearing the Russian coat of arms; in return for the deposited funds, they received signed receipts.

<sup>37</sup> *Бронников К.И. Путешествие к Святым местам. Л. 28.*

According to Kir Bronnikov, Mostras would collect the Italian-language pilgrimage passports issued in Constantinople and “in place of them” issued each traveler “small slips with the Russian coat of arms, though he did not confiscate their Turkish *firmans*”. Upon learning that a Russian peasant intended to travel to Mount Sinai, he<sup>38</sup> “certified this intention and affixed the official seal”.

Brothers Ivan and Vasily Veshnyakov recounted their stays at the Patriarchal guesthouses en route to Jerusalem. In Jaffa, they were given “a fine lodging”, and in Ramla, “comfortable quarters furnished with carpets”<sup>39</sup>.

Bronnikov highlighted the hospitality of the monks at the patriarchal metochion and the care shown by vice-consul Mostras, who requested that the hegumen provide a private cell for Bronnikov and his companion<sup>40</sup>.

Pilgrims traveled to Jerusalem on pack animals — horses, mules, donkeys, and camels — or in wheeled vehicles such as carts and wagons; some went on foot. The primary route led through the transfer points of Ramla and Lod, from where they proceeded to Jerusalem and Bethlehem. This same route was taken on the return journey. Ramla also served as a transit hub for those continuing on to Nazareth and Tiberias from Jerusalem.

Hieromonk Meletiy offered evocative names for the Greek monasteries: he referred<sup>41</sup> to the monastery in Jaffa as “the Jerusalem wanderer-lodging” and the one in Ramla as “the Jerusalem hospitium”. He noted<sup>42</sup> that nearly all the rooms in the “most splendid metochion” of Jaffa were designated for hosting “visiting pilgrims, of whom more than five hundred could be accommodated there”.

Meletiy, Ivan Veshnyakov, Sysoev, Vasiliev, Bronnikov, and other pilgrim-writers of the period described the gastronomic and culinary culture of the Middle East, giving special attention to ceremonial foods and beverages served in the metochia. According to

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. Л. 28–29.

<sup>39</sup> Вешняков И.И. Путевые записки во Святой Град Иерусалим. Л. 58, 66.

<sup>40</sup> Bronnikov К. И. Путешествие к Святым местам. Л. 24.

<sup>41</sup> Мелетий. Путешествие во Иерусалим. Л. 75, 80.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. Л. 75–76.



Title page of a manuscript by Ilya Stepanovich Sysoev. 1817–1818.

*From open sources*

monastic protocol, guests were offered formal refreshments — coffee, grape wine, and vodka—alongside light snacks. The food and drinks usually included a cup of coffee, a shot of vodka (*gorelka*), sweet treats (*zaedki*), halva, candies, preserves, honey, pastries, rolls, fritters, dried fruits, figs, grapes, dates, and crackers<sup>43</sup>.

Hieromonk Nikanor Moskvitinov<sup>44</sup> particularly noted the monastery meal, emphasizing that he had been well fed at the Greek patriarchal metochion in Jaffa: “a meal was prepared for the arrivals consisting of cheese and eggs, while laypersons were also offered meat dishes, and wine was provided in abundance”. Ivan and Vasily Veshnyakov, Ilya Sysoev, Kir Bronnikov, and their companions were hospitably received and generously fed in the dining halls of the Greek monasteries in Ramla and Jaffa. In Ramla, the hegumen treated Veshnyakov and his companions to coffee and vodka, followed by a plentiful dinner of “bread, Saracen millet (*rice-author*), and lamb”. After the meal, they

<sup>43</sup> Панченко К.А. К реконструкции материальной культуры Православного Востока XVI–XVIII вв. (на материале письменных источников) // *Вестник ПСТГУ*. 2008. Вып. 4 (14). С. 40–62.

<sup>44</sup> *Никанор*. Путешествие во Иерусалим. Л. 223.

were served another round of coffee and a cup of vodka<sup>45</sup>. Sysoev and his party were likewise treated to vodka in Ramla, followed by a meal during which “grape wine was served continuously in ladles, the dishes were rice with butter and scrambled eggs, and those who wished could eat lamb”, with coffee served afterward<sup>46</sup>. In Jaffa, Bronnikov and his companion were served dinner on reed mats laid out on the floor, the food consisting of “pilaf with butter, rice, and cheese”. “White and red wine was served generously in ladles”, and in Ramla they were also offered a full meal with wine<sup>47</sup>.

Meletiy spent the night in Ramla on two occasions: once on the way to Jerusalem, at the “Jerusalem metochion” near the Church of St. George, and once again on the return journey<sup>48</sup>, “in a garden, under the shade of almond and other fruitful and fragrant trees”.

The Veshnyakov brothers likewise stayed in Ramla twice, both times at the patriarchal metochion—on the way to the Holy City and on the return journey<sup>49</sup>. Fifteen years later, Bronnikov also stopped twice there: once en route to Jerusalem and once on his way to Gaza<sup>50</sup>.

Heavy chests and crates brought by Arab coachmen and camel drivers to the Patriarchal Monastery of Jerusalem a day before the arrival of the pilgrims were placed by monastic novices into the specially designated storage rooms. Valuables and small items were carried by the pilgrims themselves, while surplus bags and bundles were left at the Monastery of Saint George the Trophy-Bearer.

Then, according to the recollections of the Veshnyakov brothers<sup>51</sup>, having left their excess baggage “in the monastic storage chamber”, they assembled into a caravan comprising “up to one and a half hundred people of both sexes”.

<sup>45</sup> *Вешняков И.И.* Путевые записки во Святой Град Иерусалим. Л. 66–67.

<sup>46</sup> *Сысоев И.С.* Путевые записки во Святой Град Божий Иерусалим. Л. 15об.-16.

<sup>47</sup> *Бронников К.И.* Путешествие к Святым местам. Л. 25, 32.

<sup>48</sup> *Мелетий.* Путешествие во Иерусалим. Л. 80, 309.

<sup>49</sup> *Вешняков И.И.* Путевые записки во Святой Град Иерусалим. Л. 66, 165.

<sup>50</sup> *Бронников К.И.* Путешествие к Святым местам. Л. 32, 140.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* P. 64–65, 72.



Title page of a book by Vasily Grigorovich-Barsky. St. Petersburg, 1778.

*From open sources*

It is worth noting that in the first quarter of the 19th century, Jerusalem lacked the inns, hostels, or guesthouses familiar to subjects of the Russian Empire. Instead, there were khans and caravanserais, where pilgrims could spend the night before continuing their journey the next day, as well as Greek monasteries that served as lodging establishments and were outwardly indistinguishable from other urban buildings. The primary function of these structures should more accurately be described not as a monastery in the traditional sense, but as guest accommodations; they were entrusted to the supervision of hegumens appointed from among the monks of the Holy Sepulchre. A fixed sum was paid to the treasury of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, as the aforementioned quarters were primarily used for housing pilgrims.

The Patriarchal Monastery of Jerusalem was the first monastery of the Holy City where Russian pilgrims were received — with warmth and hospitality. They were welcomed in a spacious hall and accommo-

dated in available cells, after which the travelers were assigned to other monasteries in Jerusalem, including those of Abraham, Archangel Michael, Saint George, Saint Catherine, Saint Nicholas, Saint Theodore, and others.

Upon arrival in Jerusalem, pilgrims were received in accordance with ecclesiastical ceremonial either by the hegumen himself or by the *mirkhadji*, who escorted them to the monastery's chambers and cells designated for accommodation. Russian pilgrims described the *mirkhadji* in various ways: Meletiy referred to the *mirkhadji* as the "leader of the pilgrims"<sup>52</sup>; Veshnyakov described him as "a monk knowledgeable in many languages, appointed to receive travelers"<sup>53</sup>; Bronnikov<sup>54</sup> called the "*merkhadzhii*" a "monastic guide and host".

Pilgrim-writers provided detailed descriptions of the interiors of the guest chambers and the wall hangings. According to their accounts, the primary decorations consisted of floor and wall carpets, as well as mattresses, cushions, blankets, and other furnishings. Hieromonk Meletiy, for instance, was housed in "large guest halls"<sup>55</sup>; Veshnyakov and his companions were accommodated "in an elongated chamber, carpeted and lined with cushions along the walls"<sup>56</sup>. Sysoev and his companions also stayed "in an elongated guest chamber, which was carpeted and had cushions placed along the walls"<sup>57</sup>; the peasant Bronnikov<sup>58</sup> described a "guest hall carpeted wall to wall, with mattresses, cushions, and blankets arranged around the edges".

In keeping with tradition, pilgrims in Jerusalem were also well-fed at the Patriarchal Monastery. According to Ya. Vasiliev<sup>59</sup>, they were treated to "a rich repast in accordance with local custom", and

<sup>52</sup> Мелетий Путешествие во Иерусалим. Л. 84.

<sup>53</sup> Вешняков И.И. Путевые записки во Святой Град Иерусалим. Л. 74.

<sup>54</sup> Бронников К.И. Путешествие к Святым местам. Л. 37.

<sup>55</sup> Мелетий. Путешествие во Иерусалим. Л. 83.

<sup>56</sup> Вешняков И.И. Путевые записки во Святой Град Иерусалим. Л. 74.

<sup>57</sup> Сысоев И.С. Путевые записки во Святой Град Божий Иерусалим. Л. 20об.

<sup>58</sup> Бронников К.И. Путешествие к Святым местам. Л. 44.

<sup>59</sup> Васильев Я. Путешествие во Святой Град Иерусалим... Л. 2, Л. 19.

for the celebration of Easter, “a lavish meal was served”. Pilgrims generally offered detailed descriptions of the monastery’s refectory interiors and table settings. According to their reports, at the first meal the dishes were made of red copper, the cutlery was silver, and the table was crafted from white marble. Veshnyakov noted in particular that he and his companions had been served “vodka and aged strong wines in small silver ladles continuously”<sup>60</sup>, while Sysoev<sup>61</sup> emphasized that “grape wines had been served in small silver ladles without interruption”.

The descriptions of the monastic meals provided by pilgrim-writers are remarkably consistent. Veshnyakov observed<sup>62</sup>: “dishes stood on snow-white marble tables without tablecloths”, and “all the vessels were made of red copper, tin-plated all around”. Sysoev<sup>63</sup> recorded: “on snow-white marble tables, without tablecloths, a sufficient amount of food was already laid out”, and “all the dishes were made of red copper, tin-plated all around”. Bronnikov<sup>64</sup> noted that meals had been eaten “on plates using silver spoons of Russian craftsmanship, with tablecloths and napkins brought at various times by Russian pilgrims”.

Liturgies were usually followed by a communal monastic meal, also described by the pilgrims: Veshnyakov<sup>65</sup> wrote that dishes “were arranged on all the flat roofs of the monastery and church on long and narrow tablecloths laid over carpet”; Sysoev noted that “on the flat roofs, food was set out on spacious white tablecloth”<sup>66</sup>; Bronnikov<sup>67</sup> reported that dishes “were laid out on the monastery and church rooftops on mats and tablecloths”.

Ivan Veshnyakov, Sysoev, and Bronnikov, along with their companions, were served wheat bread, (boiled) eggs, fried eggs, cheese,

<sup>60</sup> *Вешняков И.И.* Путевые записки во Святой Град Иерусалим. Л. 75.

<sup>61</sup> *Сысоев И.С.* Путевые записки во Святой Град Божий Иерусалим. Л. 21.

<sup>62</sup> *Вешняков И.И.* Путевые записки во Святой Град Иерусалим. Л. 74–75.

<sup>63</sup> *Сысоев И.С.* Путевые записки во Святой Град Божий Иерусалим. Л. 21.

<sup>64</sup> *Бронников К.И.* Путешествие к Святым местам. Л. 81.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* Л. 136, 153.

<sup>66</sup> *Сысоев И.С.* Путевые записки во Святой Град Божий Иерусалим. Л. 58 об.

<sup>67</sup> *Бронников К.И.* Путешествие к Святым местам. Л. 160.

olives, fruits, “pilaf made from rice with butter”, “soup seasoned with aromatic herbs”, “mandja, a type of porridge made from wheat groats”, and sometimes “from rice, boiled with butter of wood (i.e., olive. – *Author*) oil and other seasonings”, “rice boiled with seasonings”, “leblebi, a type of pea” (a dish made from chickpeas. – *Author*), “fried eggs with butter”, lentils, and others.<sup>68</sup> According to Sysoev<sup>69</sup>, “the Greeks also ate lamb”, while Veshnyakov noted<sup>70</sup> that “there was neither meat nor fish”.

Pilgrims were often offered places to sleep in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem or the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem, located next to the Patriarchal Monastery. Some of them spent several nights in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Hieromonk Nikanor Moskvitin stayed<sup>71</sup> in the “Patriarchal guesthouse”. Meletiy and his companion lodged in the Church of the Resurrection, above Golgotha, in one of the three cells adjacent to the monastic refectory, next to two other cells located<sup>72</sup> near the “kitchen with a water cistern”.

In the main churches of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, the pilgrim-writers usually slept on mattresses and cushions covered with carpets and blankets. The brothers Ivan and Vasily Veshnyakov wrote<sup>73</sup> that in the Church of the Resurrection, “the beds consisted of mattresses and cushions stuffed with cotton wool, covered with carpets”, and in the Church of the Nativity they slept<sup>74</sup> “on cotton-filled mattresses, covered with carpets”. Ilya Sysoev and Pyotr Khostov stated that in the Church of the Resurrection, “the beds consisted of cotton-filled mattresses and cushions, covered with carpets”<sup>75</sup>, and in the Church of the Nativity they slept “on

<sup>68</sup> Якушев М.М. Путешествие русских паломников дворян братьев Вешняковых и крестьянина Кира Бронникова на Святую Землю в первой четверти XIX в. // Восток (Orient). 2014. № 5. С. 36–42.

<sup>69</sup> Сысоев И.С. Путевые записки во Святой Град Божий Иерусалим. Л. 21.

<sup>70</sup> Вешняков И.И. Путевые записки во Святой Град Иерусалим. Л. 74.

<sup>71</sup> Никанор. Путешествие во Иерусалим. Л. 240.

<sup>72</sup> Мелетий. Путешествие во Иерусалим. Л. 257.

<sup>73</sup> Вешняков И.И. Путевые записки во Святой Град Иерусалим. Л. 92.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. Л. 118.

<sup>75</sup> Сысоев И.С. Путевые записки во Святой Град Божий Иерусалим. Л. 35.

cotton-filled mattresses, covered with carpets, with cushions and blankets”<sup>76</sup>. Kir Bronnikov and Monk Timofey spent the night in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre “in a large guest cell, carpeted with mattresses and blankets”<sup>77</sup>.

It should be emphasized that prior to the establishment of consular missions, the pilgrimage of most Russian subjects to the Holy Land had resembled a chaotic and disorganized movement of the impoverished and destitute. The prolonged and exhausting journey from the Russian Empire to Constantinople, the equally difficult and wearying trek from the Ottoman capital to Jerusalem, severe physical exertion, multi-day marches and travels, changes in climate zones, numerous stressors and emotional strain, unsanitary conditions, dehydration, malnutrition and hunger, issues with drinking water, poor adaptation to unfamiliar food<sup>78</sup>, domestic, linguistic, and ethnic barriers, financial and bureaucratic challenges, as well as the homelessness and absence of rights faced by most Russian pilgrims in the Middle East, turned their pilgrimage into a genuine spiritual feat.

The establishment of a Russian consular institution in Jaffa was intended to provide pilgrims with comprehensive support and protect their rights<sup>79</sup>.

The travel diaries of Russian pilgrim-writers are vivid gems of Russian pilgrimage literature from the late 18th to early 19th centuries. Although these works do not fully conform to the traditional genre conventions of the Old Russian *khozhdenie*, they retain independent historical, cultural and scholarly significance, anticipating the “Golden Age of Travel” in Russian literature, and forming part of the treasure trove of global pilgrimage literature.

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid. Л. 51.

<sup>77</sup> *Бронников К.И.* Путешествие к Святым местам. Л. 47–48.

<sup>78</sup> *Кириллина С.А.* “Очарованные странники”: арабо-османский мир глазами российских паломников XVI–XVIII столетий. М., 2010. Р. 83.

<sup>79</sup> *Якушев М.М.* Из истории русского паломничества. Консульство в Яффе и русские паломники в 1820–1838 годах // *Свободная мысль*. № 1 (1620). 2011. Р. 173–184.

## Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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