

Russian Orthodox Pilgrims in Jerusalem in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century: Between the Old City and “New Jerusalem”

Elena Astafieva

Following the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1856 and in the context of the neutralization of the Black Sea, Grand Duke Constantine, minister of the Russian Navy, suggested the creation of the Russian Steam Navigation and Trading Company to his brother Tsar Alexander II in an attempt to save part of the Black Sea fleet.

To financially reinforce the new Company, Constantine suggested encouraging Russian Orthodox pilgrimages to the holy places of the “Orthodox East,” located in Jerusalem, Constantinople, and Mount Athos. He asked his assistant, Boris Pavlovich Mansurov, to write a guidebook for Russian pilgrims going to Palestine based on the model of Western European guidebooks. After his stay in Palestine and Syria during the winter of 1857, Mansurov did not write a guidebook, but rather a report to the Grand Duke, and later a book describing the lives of Orthodox-Greek, Armenian and Russian-pilgrims in Jerusalem and its surroundings. In these documents, he drew a plan of action meeting the needs of Russian pilgrims to the Holy Land. These texts marked the start of important Russian actions in Palestine after the Crimean War: large-scale land purchasing followed by the building of a structure for the Russian Consulate, hospices for pilgrims, and the Orthodox Holy Trinity Church near the Old City. In Russian sources, these buildings are defined as “Russian constructions,” “Russian properties,” or “New Jerusalem”; the local population named this compound “Moscobia.” These constructions were considered by the representatives of the Great Powers and the Christian communities as “grandiose,” “magnificent,” or as “Russia in miniature.”

In this article, I would like to show the connections between the religious, political, social, and economic spheres by working on two levels simultaneously: Russia’s domestic and international policy after the Crimean War and the local level in Jerusalem. The reason for this is that, although the question of Russian presence in Jerusalem in the nineteenth century is not new in the historiography focusing on Russian policy in the Near East,¹ it is studied less often

1 Th. G. Stavrou, *Russian Interests in Palestina, 1882–1914* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963); D. Hopwood, *The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestina. Church and Politics in the Near East* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); E. Astafieva, “La Russie en Terre Sainte: le cas de la Société Impériale Orthodoxe de Palestine (1882–1917),” *Cristianesimo nella storia* 1 (2003), pp. 41–68; E. Kane, *Pilgrims, “Holy Places, and the Multi-confessional Empire: Russian Policy Toward the Ottoman Empire under Tsar Nicolas I, 1825–1855,”* PhD dissertation, Princeton University, November 2005; N. Lisovoi, *Russkoe dukhovnoe i politicheskoe prisutstvo v Sviatoi Zemle i na Blizhnem Vostoke v XIX – nachale XX vekov* (Moscow, 2006); S.

by specialists working on the history of Jerusalem during the same period.² For this reason, this article attempts to associate these two fields of research by looking at the history of Jerusalem's development in connection with Russian actions in the Holy City after their defeat in the Crimean War. More specifically, I seek to answer certain questions: How did Constantine's idea of converting the military Black Sea fleet into a passenger fleet generate the project of large-scale land acquisition in Palestine by Russia and the creation of the "Russian constructions" in Jerusalem for Russian pilgrims? What were the daily living conditions of Russian Orthodox pilgrims immediately following the Crimean War, and how were these conditions connected with the interests, particularly financial ones, of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem? How was the daily life of Russians in the Holy City changed, or not, after the construction of "New Jerusalem"? Finally, how did this construction change Jerusalem itself?

Grand Duke Constantine's project to create the Russian Steam Navigation and Trading Company (1856), Mansurov's report to Grand Duke Constantine (December 1857, and his book published in 1858), Aleksandr Vasil'evich Eliseev's³ report to the Palestine Society (October 1884 and his book published in 1885), as well as Russian guidebooks to Jerusalem and Vasilii Nikolaevich Khitrovo's⁴ note to the Russian consul general about the itineraries of the Russian pilgrims inside and outside Jerusalem (1891) are the major sources of this article. In the future, it will be crucial to compare these Russian documents, particularly those written by Russian officials like Mansurov or Khitrovo, with other documents from different institutional actors—Ottoman governors, Greek

Kirillina, *Ocharovannnye stranniki* (Moscow, 2010); Nikolaos Chrissidis, "The Athonization of Pious Travel: Shielded Shrines, Shady Deals, and Pilgrimage Logistics in Late Nineteenth-century Odessa," *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook*, University of Minnesota, Volume 28/29 (2012–2013), pp. 169–191; K. Vakh, eds., *Velikii kniaz' Konstantin Nikolaevich i russkoe palomnichestvo v Sviatuiu Zemliu* (Moscow, 2012); O. Anisimov, *Rossia i Napoleon III* (Moscow, 2014); E. Astafieva, "How to Transfer 'Holy Russia' into the Holy Land? Russian Policy in Palestine in the Late Imperial Period," *Jerusalem Quarterly*, N. 71 (Autumn 2017): <https://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/jq-articles/Pages%20from%20JQ%2071%20-%20Astafieva.pdf>; M. M. Iakushev, *Russkoe pravoslavnoe palomnichestvo na Blizhnii Vostok v kontekste osmano-rossiiskikh otnoshenii (1774–1847)* (Moscow, 2018), and so forth.

2 See basic works by one of the specialists in the history of Jerusalem Y. Ben-Arieh, *Jerusalem in the 19th Century: The Old City* (Abingdon: Palgrave Macmillan, 1985). For example, in Vincent Lemire's work on the history of Jerusalem's modernization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, perhaps for lack of space, he does not mention Russia's immense presence and impact, as evidenced by the Russian constructions and a large number of pilgrims, particularly on the urban development of the Holy City. Vincent Lemire, *Jérusalem 1900. La ville sainte à l'âge des possibles* (Paris: Armand Colns, 2013).

3 Aleksandr Vasil'evich Eliseev (1858–1895)—Russian doctor, traveler, and writer.

4 Vasilii Nikolaevich Khitrovo (1834–1903)—Russian statesman, public figure, and writer. Founder, honorary member, and secretary of the Orthodox Palestine Society.

and Armenian patriarchates, other Christian communities, and European diplomats—as well as non-institutional actors, such as Orthodox and non-Orthodox pilgrims, travelers, and so forth.

1) WRITING A GUIDEBOOK TO SAVE THE FLEET: GRAND DUKE CONSTANTINE'S REPORT

In February 1856, Grand Duke Constantine, minister of the Russian Navy, suggested the creation of the Russian Steam Navigation and Trading Company in order to save a part of the Black Sea fleet.⁵ According to Constantine's plan, this company would be in charge of maintaining "a significant number of large vessels" which, in case of military necessity, would be "rented or purchased by the government in order to transport troops and be converted into warships."⁶ In a note written in April 1856, Grand Duke Constantine suggests that "the Company could partly replace our previous fleet in the Black Sea, at a lower cost." Moreover, the Company "could be useful" for the development of maritime trade inasmuch as it could favor the transportation of Russian goods on Russian vessels. "Finally, thanks to permanent communication with various points in the Orthodox East and the transportation of a large number of pilgrims to Palestine and Mount Athos, this company could greatly participate in our reconciliation with our coreligionists" and help Russia play an important role in "the East."⁷

In order to avoid financial losses during the first crossings, it was necessary, according to the Grand Duke, to spread the news and "draw the attention of the Russian population throughout Russia to the practical and convenient navigation conditions in the future for everyone wishing to visit the holy places in Jerusalem and Mount Athos." In order to raise the interest of the Russian people in the pilgrimage, he suggested writing an "Orthodox Pilgrim's Guidebook to the Holy Places" with information on "travel, hotels, and means of communication" and on "the prices of staple foods, crossings and accommodations." In his view, it was appropriate to use "the model of the 'Guides de voyageurs en Europe'," but to adapt it to the needs of "our nobles, merchants, bourgeois, monks, etc."⁸ According to Constantine, "the book [would be] likely

5 S. I. Illovaiskii, *Istoricheskii ocherk piat' desiatiletiia Russkogo obshchestva parokhodstva i torgovli* (Odessa, 1907); W. Mosse, "Russia and the Levant, 1856–1862: Grand Duke Constantine Nikolaevich and the Russian Steam Navigation Company," *The Journal of Modern History* 26:1 (1954), pp. 39–48; M. Barychnikov, "Russkoe obshchestvo parokhodstva i torgovli: Uchrezhdenie, funktsionirovanie, perspektivy razvitiia (1856–1864 gg)," *Terra Economics, Terra Economicus* 13:2 (2015), pp. 106–130.

6 Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (RGIA), f. 107, op. 1, d. 14, p. 1.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

8 Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Voenno-Morskogo Flota (RGA VMF), f. 410, op. 2, d. 13, pp. 3–4, quoted in K. Vakh, "Predislovie k izdaniiu," *Pis'ma B. P. Mansurova iz puteshestvii po Pravoslavnomu Vostoku, 1857* (Moscow, 2014), p. 33.

to stimulate in Russia the desire to go [to the holy places].”⁹

The Tsar approved the Grand Duke’s project, and the Russian Steam Navigation and Trading Company obtained permission to start its activity in the Black Sea and the Levant. The Company’s first crossing linking Odessa to Constantinople took place on May 21, 1857. A few weeks later, on July 4, the old warship *Khersones*, which had been transformed into a merchant ship, set sail from Odessa to reach Marseilles, via Constantinople, Mount Athos, and Messina. On board were the founders of the Company who wanted to open the first maritime line between Russia and France, joined by Mansurov who had been sent by Grand Duke Constantine to the East and Europe a few months earlier to draft the aforementioned pilgrim’s guidebook.

2) FROM GUIDEBOOK TO REPORT: MANSUROV’S DECEMBER 1857 REPORT AS AN IMPORTANT SOURCE ON RUSSIAN ORTHODOX PILGRIMS’ DAILY LIFE IN JERUSALEM AFTER THE CRIMEAN WAR

Mansurov stayed in Jerusalem and its surroundings between January 22 and March 5, 1857. There, he observed the living conditions of “ordinary Orthodox pilgrims”—Greeks, Armenians, and Russians—and how poorly the Greek clergy of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem treated them in the Holy Land. These observations altered the nature of the text that he wrote in Paris in the following summer and fall. He explained that “the results of [his] study on the lives of our pilgrims” in Palestine made it impossible to “deliver to the Russian Orthodox people” the guidebook Grand Duke Constantine had suggested,¹⁰ because “if this guidebook is successful, it might well provoke an increase in the number of pilgrims” to the holy places. However, Mansurov stressed that “it would be dishonest” to have only the Russian Steam Navigation and Trading Company’s financial profit in view and kindle interest in pilgrimages among “ordinary people,” given the bad reception of Orthodox pilgrims in Palestine by the Greek clergy of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. According to Mansurov, “ordinary pilgrims” could not even imagine “the hardships they [would] be facing during the pilgrimage.”¹¹ Thus, instead of a guidebook, Mansurov drafted in Paris a report entitled “Russian Pilgrims in Palestine,” and submitted it to Grand Duke Constantine on December 17, 1857.¹²

9 Ibid.

10 [B. Mansurov], *Pravoslavnye poklonniki v Palestine* [St. Petersburg, December 1857], p. 110.

11 Ibid.

12 [Mansurov], *Pravoslavnye poklonniki*, 209 p. Only a small number of copies (between 20 and 30) was published of this Report without the author’s name. Later, after removing some “critical” parts, Mansurov redrafted his Report as a book, published twice in 1858 under his own name and also entitled *Pravoslavnye poklonniki v Palestine*. In the present article, I use both the December Report, found at the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg, and the book’s second edition: B. Mansurov, *Russkie poklonniki v Palestine* (St. Petersburg, 1858), second edition, 123 p.

Mansurov's text provides a detailed description of the social types of the Russian pilgrims (*Russkie poklonniki*) who were a subgroup within the group of Orthodox pilgrims. He describes their daily life in Jerusalem and more generally in Palestine after the Crimean War. According to his description, "before the Crimean War, pilgrimages from Russia did not occur on a regular basis, and after the war nothing changed."¹³ Mansurov continues: "Even if the Russian people were religious, in most cases only the extremely pious people ('holy fools'), or the semi-vagabonds (*polubrodiagi*) of shady character seeking an excuse for vagrancy on pilgrimages, could undertake such a long and arduous pilgrimage to Jerusalem."¹⁴

Mansurov notes that "Russian pilgrims went through a series of trials as soon as they set foot in Jerusalem."¹⁵ They represented a small part of a larger number of Greek and Armenian pilgrims. He argues that these "newcomers" (*prishel'tsy*) drew attention due to their "rude manners": "They have got[ten] used to vagrancy and an absence of authority; willfulness, endless amusement, and debauchery are natural to them."¹⁶ Mansurov explains that by the rules of the Ottoman Empire, these people are taken care of by their own clergy. Thus, in Jerusalem there is no other authority in charge of the pilgrims because interference by the Pasha of Jerusalem in pilgrims' affairs is extremely rare and everything is resolved through bribery (*baksheeshes*). The Greek, Latin, and Armenian patriarchs are the real governors of the city, but they do not use their power because "they have to take care of all the travelers who come to the Holy City in order to draw as much money as possible from them." Moreover, "this explains why all these clergy, particularly the Greeks, were not very concerned with the pilgrims' behavior...."¹⁷

Mansurov also says that the Russian authorities had entrusted the daily life issues and religious interests of the Russian pilgrims exclusively to the Greek clergy. However, they did not consider the fact that the representatives of these clergy had no recognized political role and that they were subjects of the Ottoman sultan: "In other words, despite the extraterritoriality of the rights of the Russian pilgrims, their protection is in the hands of a subject population (*rai*) under the Turkish yoke."¹⁸ Moreover, according to Mansurov, the Greek clergy considered Russia's financial aid more important than its diplomatic assistance, but the amount of this aid was not substantial enough,¹⁹ and for

13 [Mansurov], *Pravoslavnye poklonniki*, p. 7. See also: Iakushev, *Russkoe pravoslavnoe palomnichestvo*, pp. 239–285.

14 [Mansurov], *Pravoslavnye poklonniki*, p. 9.

15 [Mansurov], *Pravoslavnye poklonniki*, p. 11.

16 [Mansurov], *Pravoslavnye poklonniki*, p. 12.

17 *Ibid.*

18 [Mansurov], *Pravoslavnye poklonniki*, p. 20.

19 "Russia sends about 38,000 rubles to Jerusalem every year, which represents 1/9 of the total income of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem (347,000 rubles). Mansurov, *Russkie poklonniki*, annex III, pp. 12–17.

this reason, the Russian government could not oblige them to take good care of Russian pilgrims.

After these general considerations on the “characteristics” of Orthodox pilgrims in Palestine and their relationships with the Greek clergy of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, Mansurov describes the pilgrims’ daily life in Greek monasteries. He says that “arrival in the Holy City strongly and positively impressed the pilgrims, because during the first twenty-four hours, they were welcomed to the territory of the Patriarchate by the Greek clergy according to ‘the ancient tradition of Christian hospitality;’ most of the time, the pilgrims were exhausted upon their arrival late in the day and were deeply moved by ‘the inexplicable, unknown feeling of being very close to Golgotha.’”²⁰ They spent their first night in Jerusalem in the reception room or Patriarchate’s arkhondarik. The second day had a major impact on the pilgrims’ imagination because they attended divine service (sluzhba) in the Patriarchal Church. There, they received the Patriarch’s or his vicar’s blessing. Later, in the center of the reception room in the Patriarchate, the oldest of the monks performed “a very Christian and moving ritual” of washing the pilgrims’ feet. According to Mansurov, “this ritual is one of the particularities of the religious and social life of Orthodoxy in Jerusalem,” as it is performed neither by the Catholics nor the Protestants.²¹

However, Mansurov continues, after these “very Christian ceremonies and rituals,” all pilgrims underwent another ritual, “very far from being touching, consoling, and sublime,” because the vicar or another bishop, directly or by allusions, asked them to deposit some money for their accommodation in the monastery and for “spiritual commemoration” (pominovenie).²²

Indeed, the Greek clergy required a sum ranging from 60 to 70 piasters (from 3 to 3.50 rubles) per person in advance for staying in “the corner” (ugol) of the monastery,²³ and this amount of money allowed pilgrims to stay in Jerusalem for no longer than one season, namely, from the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14) until Easter.²⁴ The sum that Russian pilgrims paid to the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate was about 200 piasters (10 rubles), and about 100 piasters (5 rubles) to the special treasury of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher. This allowed the pilgrims “to embrace” (potselovat’) the Holy Sepulcher.²⁵

20 Mansurov, *Russkie poklonniki*, 1858, p. 8.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid., p. 9.

23 For pilgrims wishing to stay alone, the cost was higher: between 250 and 500 piasters (between 13 and 25 rubles). Ibid., p. 10.

24 During the summer, it was free of charge because Jerusalem was deserted.

25 The pilgrims continued spending money later (for the pilgrimage to Jordan (20 piasters), to Gethsemane (25 piasters), to Bethlehem (50 piasters), and to the Saint Sava Monastery (25 piasters); in general, according to Mansurov, Russian pilgrims in Jerusalem only spent between 998 and 1438 piasters (between 50 and 72 rubles). The minimum spend of a Russian pilgrim to Palestine and Syria (including travel from Odessa to Jaffa and back, and travel to Constantinople, Smirna, Beirut, Nazareth, and Galilee) was between 130 and 152 rubles.

After paying those fees (*podati*), pilgrims were conducted to rooms prepared for them in the so-called monasteries. Mansurov notes that it is impossible to compare Jerusalem's monasteries with Russia's. In Jerusalem, monasteries were organized like a group of "Turkish houses," i.e., separate bedrooms opening onto terraces and courtyards. There were few such rooms and they did not adjoin one another. More often than not, there was no heating and no windows. Most monasteries had no refectory. In other words, as Mansurov continues, Orthodox pilgrims enjoyed only "four walls and some rugs on the floor." The buildings of these monasteries had no foundations. The vaults and walls were not very thick; the ceilings in general were in poor condition. Thus, water would drip from the ceilings and the wind would blow through; it was cold and damp in the winter.²⁶ During the summer, the heat was unbearable. There were gardens only in the Patriarchate and in two monasteries.²⁷

According to Mansurov, there were 16 Orthodox monasteries in Jerusalem in 1857: 11 for men²⁸ and 5 for women.²⁹ Among these 16 monasteries, only the Patriarchate and three female monasteries³⁰ were monastic cloisters. All other monasteries were hospices; they all had churches but no permanent clergy, and services were irregularly performed by the monks of the Patriarchate, but only when the pilgrims arrived and during religious holidays (*khramovye prazdniki*). For the Greek, Russian, and other Slavic pilgrims, the clergy of the Patriarchate provided only nine monasteries.³¹ The most important monasteries, St. Charalampos and St. Basil the Great, could accommodate up to 300 and 250 pilgrims respectively, whereas, according to the Greek clergy's estimate, the other monasteries housed between 100 and 200 persons.³² However, Mans-

26 Mansurov provides details about his own experience in the winter of 1857: "In 1857, for three weeks snow was replaced by rain, and vice-versa: the cold was so bitter that for three weeks we had to wear our fur coats inside. It was so damp that it was better not to stay in the room."

27 Mansurov, *Russkie poklonniki*, pp. 12–13.

28 These were "the Patriarchate, a house (*podvorie*) at Gethsemane, the monasteries of Saint Nicholas, John the Baptist (Ioanna Predtechii), St. Charalampos (Kharlampievskii), Archangel Michael (Arkhangelskii), Saint George (Georgievskii—which was considered, wrongly, a hospital), Saint Demetrios (Dmitrievskii), Prophet Abraham (Avraamskii), Saint Catherine (Ekaterininskii—a former female monastery), Saint George (Georgievskii—which was nicknamed the Jew because it was in the Jewish quarter)."

29 These were "the monasteries of the Presentation to the Temple (Vvedenie vo khram), Candlemas (Sretenskii), Saint Eftymios (Evfim'evskii), Saint Theodore (Fedorovskii) and Saint Basil the Great."

30 These were the monasteries of the Presentation to the Temple, Candlemas, and Saint Eftymios.

31 Male monasteries were "Archangel Michael, John the Baptist, Saint George, Saint Demetrios, Prophet Abraham and Saint Catherine," and female monasteries were those of Saint Theodore and Saint Basil the Great.

32 According to the Greek clergy, "St. Charalampos could host 300 persons, John the Baptist—250, Saint George—120, Archangel Michael—200, Demetrios—150, Prophet Abraham—100, Saint Catherine—100, Saint Theodore—100, Saint Basil—100."

urov adds, "it is very important to look at the pilgrims' living conditions in these monasteries" because "the separation of men and women is irrelevant: the Greek clergy gather everyone-men and women alike-together. Old men, old women, young men, young women and children, all these people are put together without any distinction of age or sex: on average, 5 people (children not included) are cramped in very narrow rooms."³³ However, sometimes, if a room was slightly larger, the clergy managed to squeeze up to 13 persons into it, as "was the case for Russian female pilgrims in the winter of 1857."³⁴ Most of the rooms had tiny windows and were so dark that it was necessary to open the door to the courtyard to have some light. Mansurov concludes: "In these cells, pilgrims sleep, eat, pray, rest, and recover if they fall sick."³⁵

After the Crimean War, about 3,000 people came to Jerusalem annually, but in certain years, it was up to 5,000 (excluding Russian pilgrims). Since the Greek monasteries could only house 1,200 pilgrims, and given that the Greek clergy did not want to do without the income provided by pilgrims, the Patriarchate rented "many Christian and Turkish private houses" during the "high season" (the Lenten period).³⁶ The Patriarchate would then collect rent from the pilgrims, but sometimes asked them to pay sums higher than the rent.

Thus, according to Mansurov's statistics, the Orthodox Patriarchate earned more than 19,000 francs from nine monasteries annually, independent of the income provided by the sale of candles and so forth. Additionally, the rent of private houses-between 10 and 12 houses for each pilgrimage season-yielded 20,000 francs to the Greek clergy.

Mansurov does not indicate the exact number of Russian pilgrims who stayed in Jerusalem after the Crimean War,³⁷ but he believes it was no more than 10% of Orthodox pilgrims. Overall, they were lodged in the "best Orthodox monasteries in Jerusalem-Archangel Michael and Saint Catherine, and in a house for the dignitaries of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission."³⁸ Despite this, Russian "ordinary pilgrims" suffered in Jerusalem, not only because of the difficult living conditions in these monasteries, but also because they could not satisfy their spiritual needs: "In Palestine, the absence of divine services in Russian represents the 'most sorrowful problem' (obstoiatel'stvo) for our pilgrims... Since our people believe that, in the East, Orthodoxy has been preserved in its absolute purity, the formal difference between the Greek and Russian divine services and the inexact understanding of this difference may cause

33 Ibid., p. 14.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid., p. 15.

36 Ibid.

37 Before the Crimean War, he estimates there were about 300 to 400 pilgrims from the Russian Empire.

38 Men were lodged in these two monasteries and women in Saint Theodore Monastery.

Russian pilgrims to become ever more doubtful about Eastern Orthodoxy..."³⁹

For Russian pilgrims, the Holy Sepulcher and Golgotha were the most sacred places within Jerusalem. However, as Mansurov notes, it was also crucial for them to visit the holy places that were near Jerusalem, i.e., Gethsemane, the Mount of Olives, the place of the Ascension of Christ, the Pool of Siloam (Siloamskaia kupel'), the Valley of Jehoshaphat, Mount Zion, the tombs of David and Solomon, the Cenacle, Akeldama, the cave of Jeremiah or Zedekiah's Cave (peshchera Ieremii), and the "tombs of the Kings and Judges." After a pilgrimage to these places, "Russian pilgrims went to the Monastery of the Cross, the Mar Elias Monastery (Monastyr' Sviatogo Il'i), to Bethlehem, the Jordan River, Saint Sava Monastery and Ain Karem." Finally, "some of them went to Galilee and Nazareth." Mansurov also argues that Russia must organize services in Russian in most of these holy places. Having Russian-language services was important to Mansurov, who on a number of occasions expressed his concern about the wide gap between the expectations of Russian pilgrims to the Holy Land—seen as the center of "pure," "celestial" Orthodoxy—and the harsh physical and not least spiritual reality, due also to the different languages and rituals of the Russian and Eastern Orthodox churches, among others. Following these observations about Russian pilgrims' material and religious living conditions and itineraries inside and outside Jerusalem, Mansurov suggests a "pragmatic" view of Russian interests "in the East" vis-à-vis the Ottoman authorities, the European powers, and the Greek hierarchy of Eastern patriarchates. He writes: "We need to be more selfish, we must not show that we are amicable to everyone (ne rastochat' uverenii v nashikh simpatiiakh), we must love only ourselves and show that we think little of others; we must observe [the situation in the East] with great vigilance, we must never miss an opportunity to take advantage of others' mistakes, we must abandon all ideas of sentimentality..., we must never satisfy ourselves with things already acquired, and must always try to seek more."⁴⁰

Specifically, Mansurov proposed two types of actions: first, to support the Arabs against the "Greeks" to strengthen Russia's position in the Holy Land, as was proposed by Alexander Gortchakov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs.⁴¹ However, Mansurov went further: as he saw it, if the Arabs (and Slavs) felt no hatred for the "Greeks," then that hatred had to be created; to support it required not occasional financial support (edinovremennye denezhnye posobia) for the Arabs, but a strengthening of the Arabs' parish life by ongoing payments to cover their needs. First, Gorchakov in the internal foreign ministry document, then Mansurov in his Report read by members of the Imperial family and the government, introduced and set down for the first time the idea of an ethnic distinction within the Orthodox ecumene. They then both more

39 Mansurov, *Russkie poklonniki*, pp. 17–18.

40 [Mansurov], *Pravoslavnnye poklonniki* [St. Petersburg, December 1857], p. 202.

41 Rossiiskaia gosudarstvennaia biblioteka (RGB), Manuscripts Department, f. 148, box 12, d. 12, pp. 1–11 (Verso).

broadly introduced the national principle into the management of religious affairs. Some years later this principle was put into practice via the many attempts to reconfigure Slavic, Near Eastern, and finally Russian Orthodoxy.⁴² In addition, to improve conditions for Russian pilgrims to the Holy Land and strengthen the Empire's position there, Mansurov takes up an idea expressed by the founders of the Russian Steam Navigation and Trading Company and proposes opening a consulate in Jerusalem and sending an agent of the Russian Steam Company there. This would "a) protect our interests against arbitrary actions by the Turkish government; b) combat the relentless encroachments of Western powers upon our influence and our interests."⁴³ However, he goes further in his projects by proposing the creation of "a Russian enclave" (*russkii ugol*) in Jerusalem with a Russian church at its center. This new Russian construction would welcome "ordinary Russian pilgrims" independently of the Greek clergy of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, who were, as Mansurov puts it, more concerned with their own financial interests than the spiritual needs of the Orthodox faithful. Prayer alone was not enough to build this "Russian enclave" in Jerusalem and, more generally, to "prove the sincerity of the Russians' feelings towards Orthodoxy and its glory." It was more important "to demonstrate it through action (*delo*)," and especially through financial support, not only from the imperial government, but from the whole Russian Orthodox community of believers: "If each of the 50 million Orthodox Christians donates 1 kopeck for this shared and sacred cause, these miserable alms will provide a sum of 500,000 rubles, that is, 2 million francs annually; but if everyone gives 2 kopecks, this will raise the sum to 1 million rubles, or 4 million francs...."⁴⁴

In other words, Mansurov asks the "ordinary Russian people" to help the "ordinary Russian pilgrims" transported to the holy places of Palestine, Constantinople, and Mount Athos by the Russian Steam Navigation and Trading Company, which was created under the patronage of Grand Duke Constantine to save part of the Black Sea fleet. According to Mansurov, this Company was "the best instrument for achieving everything that the dignity and the interests of the Russian Church and policy" demand, because "the interests of our government in the East perfectly meet the interests of the Russian Steam Navigation and Trading Company."⁴⁵

The importance of Mansurov's work lies in the fact that he not only presented his extensive observations concerning the material and spiritual conditions of daily life for Russian pilgrims in Jerusalem and the surrounding area after the Crimean War, but also suggested a set of commercial, religious, and

42 These include the handling of the "Greek-Bulgarian quarrel" of the 1870s, the affair of the first Arab Patriarch of Antioch (1899), and the building of the Alexander Nevsky Church on the "Russian domain" in Jerusalem.

43 Mansurov, *Russkie poklonniki*, 1858, annex 1, p. 5.

44 Mansurov, *Russkie poklonniki*, p. 105.

45 [Mansurov], *Pravoslavnye poklonniki* [St. Petersburg, December 1857], p. 160.

political measures to strengthen Russia's position in Jerusalem in opposition to the Great Powers, the Ottoman Empire, the non-Orthodox Christian faiths, and even the "Greeks" in the Jerusalem Patriarchate.

3) SHAPING AND DESCRIBING JERUSALEM À LA RUSSE: THE FIRST "RUSSIAN PROPERTIES" AND THE FIRST GUIDEBOOKS TO JERUSALEM IN RUSSIAN (1860s-1870s)

Mansurov's proposals, presented in his report, were accepted by the Grand Duke and implemented in an imperial decree published on February 27, 1858. This decree ordered that money be collected in every church of the Russian Empire (*kruzhechnyi sbor*) and a subscription opened for building hospices (*obustroistvo*) for Russian pilgrims in Palestine. The Russian Steam Navigation and Trading Company announced that it would, free of charge, take care of "the acquisition of land and the construction of the necessary facilities for the reception of pilgrims" in Palestine.⁴⁶ Grand Duke Constantine decided to once again send Mansurov to Jerusalem in the fall of 1858. Mansurov was accompanied by Vladimir Ivanovich Dorgobuzhinov, the first Russian consul in Jerusalem, who also acted as an agent of the Company. The goal of their mission was to purchase land for the construction of "the Russian enclave" in Jerusalem.

Six months after their arrival, on March 20, 1859, the Russian consul signed the first act of purchase of land belonging to the Copts⁴⁷; by this act, the "Coptic domain" became "the Russian domain" (*russkoe mesto*). It was close to the Holy Sepulcher, and according to Russian officials, on it lay the ruins of the antique basilica constructed by Emperor Constantine. Given the symbolic importance of the place, the Russians wanted to buy more land around this first acquisition in order to later build an architectural complex composed of a "hospice for pilgrims," a "consular house," and a "small church" (*domovoi khram*). However, for various reasons they did not succeed in buying additional plots and thus failed to finalize their plan.

In March 1859, Mansurov and Dorgobuzhinov not only acquired the "Coptic domain" near the Holy Sepulcher, but also land outside the Holy City: first, on Meydan, located "10 minutes' walk from the Jaffa Gate and 15-18 minutes from the Holy Sepulcher."⁴⁸ This land was acquired partly through purchase⁴⁹ and partly through "concessions" granted by the Sultan on the occasion

46 Rossiiskaia natsional'naia biblioteka (RNB), Manuscripts Department, f. 253, op. 1, d. 40, pp. 82-83.

47 RNB, Manuscripts Department, f. 253, op. 1, d. 40, pp. 210-211.

48 RGB, Manuscripts Department, f. 148, box 4, d. 13, p. 19.

49 RNB, Manuscripts Department, f. 253, op. 1, d. 40, pp. 213-215. This purchasing procedure was extremely complex because of the large number of intermediaries, including Count Nikolai Kushelev-Bezborodko (the count was the first to purchase land on Meydan Square in 1857), the Italian engineer Ermete Pierotti, and several others. For more information on Pierotti's activities, see K. Vakh, "Ermete Pierotti in the Russian Service: New Biographical Discoveries," *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* (1953-) 130: 2 (2014), pp. 194-204.

of the pilgrimage of Grand Duke Constantine to the Holy Land in May 1859.⁵⁰ The Russians were not the first to buy land outside the Old City: in 1855, financier and philanthropist Sir Moses Montefiore bought land west of the Old City to build housing for the poor Jews of Jerusalem. The Windmill was built in 1857, but construction of the first living quarters started later. The Russians' arrival on the Jerusalem market and the purchase of land in the vicinity of the Holy Sepulcher and outside the Old City triggered speculation among rich Jerusalem residents, who invested in land, particularly near the Meydan, with future building operations in mind. In early 1860, Mansurov writes, "during 1859, almost all the well-off residents of Jerusalem and the monasteries began to buy land near the Meydan, which is why prices rose so incredibly. Around Meydan it is impossible to buy a good plot and clearly the area around the square will very shortly become a new neighborhood, the best in Jerusalem."⁵¹ The purchase of land and the construction of the Russian property helped boost the eventual urban and economic development of Jerusalem outside the city walls.⁵²

The land purchased on Meydan was located on a hill dominating Jerusalem where one could "embrace a vast horizon from the Transjordan, the mountains of Arabia down to Bethlehem" and could feel like "having Jerusalem at [one's] feet." Unlike the "Russian domain" next to the Holy Sepulcher, this land, "straddling two roads" that led to Bethlehem, Nablus, Jaffa, and the Monastery of the Cross, provided an opportunity to "build on a large scale."⁵³ Inspired by the area of the acquired land, Mansurov proposed, in a text likely written in early 1860, founding a "new Russian monastery" (*lavra*) and building a Russian cathedral with a capacity of 1,000 people inside this monastery, plus a home for the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, a hospice for 300 men, another for 500 women, and finally a 60-bed hospital and service facilities.⁵⁴

50 RGB, Manuscripts Department, f. 148, box 4, d. 6.

51 RGB, Manuscripts Department, f. 148, box 4, d. 13, p. 25. Information on these price increases can be found in a number of sources, including diplomatic correspondence. For example, see Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Imperii (AVPRI), f. 180, op. 517/2, d. 3359, p. 2.

52 On the 1865 map of Jerusalem's extra-muros territories, all that can be seen is *Mishkenot Sha'ananim*, the first neighborhood built by Sir Moses Montefiore, and the first buildings of the *Russkie podvorie*; the massive extra-muros construction began some years later, as intended by Mansurov in 1860, with the foundation of the *Mea Shearim* neighborhood and after 1880, buildings for immigrants from the various Jewish communities. In the 1880s, the French also decided to follow the Russian and Jewish examples and built Notre-Dame de France outside the Old City, "to accommodate nearly 600 people." See more: Lemire, *Jérusalem 1900*, pp. 33–37 (avec les cartes); D. Trimbur, "Une présence française en Palestine-Notre-Dame de France," *Bulletin du Centre de recherche français à Jérusalem* 3 (1998), <https://journals.openedition.org/bcrfj/3962> (accessed on 24 January, 2019).

53 RGB, Manuscripts Department, f. 148, box 4, d. 13, p. 9.

54 RGB, Manuscripts Department, f. 148, box 4, d. 13, p. 18.

According to Mansurov's plans, the "Russian property" (russkie vladeniia) on Meydan Square was to "be enclosed by a stone wall," and therefore be a closed space, but the cathedral, a "central and essential element of the architectural complex," "built on the model of ancient, Byzantine-style, monastic cathedrals preserved only at Mount Athos," "was to be built on a hill overlooking all the surrounding area, thus dominating the Holy City."⁵⁵

The purchase of land on Meydan Square did not involve great expenditure, despite price increases resulting from the Russians' arrival on the Jerusalem market. However, the construction of the future "New Jerusalem" outside the "Old City" was very expensive. Mansurov estimated that the construction would amount to 755,872 rubles (over 3 million francs).⁵⁶

Despite this cost, the construction of the "Russian enclave" started in 1860. In April of that year, Russia obtained the authorization to build the Russian Orthodox church and various buildings for the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission and pilgrims. The Russian officials' first move was the construction of the stone wall around the Russian territory and only after that did they hold the consecration ceremony for the Russian church building. Initially, this compound built for Russian pilgrims and diplomatic and ecclesiastical officials was projected as a "space closed" to Jerusalem residents and other communities in the city; the absence of documents relating to Russian pilgrims or other Russian actors in the Municipal Archives of Jerusalem is very significant, indicating that "Moscobia" was not in real connection with the Holy City. However, being closed, it was bound to dominate Jerusalem, both-geographically and symbolically.

In 1864, the main buildings were erected as well as the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity.⁵⁷ However, the first Russian guidebook to Jerusalem had been published in Odessa by Pakhomii, a monk from Mount Athos,⁵⁸ in 1862, i.e., before the end of the construction of the main buildings of the "Russian properties." Thus, in this guidebook, we cannot find any information about the Russian constructions.

Even though Pakhomii's text is entitled, "Guide to the Holy City Jerusalem and Holy Places in the East," only 32 of its 172 pages are devoted to Jerusalem. The majority of these 32 pages are devoted to the Holy Sepulcher and the Greek Patriarchate. Pakhomii only wrote a few lines about the Latin and Armenian Patriarchates⁵⁹ and nothing about other communities, such as Muslims or Jews. Overall, while the guide offers a realistic description of the

55 Ibid., p. 20.

56 Ibid., p. 25.

57 It was consecrated in 1872.

58 [Pakhomii, monakh], *Putevoditel' po sviatomu Gradu Ierusalimu i voobshche po sviatym mestam Vostoka. V pol'zu Russkogo Il'inskogo skita na Afone* (Odessa, 1862). Pakhomii was likely a Russian monk living at Mount Athos.

59 Ibid., pp. 19-20.

holy places, it does not provide any useful information about distances, prices, and so forth as Grand Duke Constantine had wished. Jerusalem is viewed as an ancient biblical city. Pakhomii provides only one factual piece of information about the population: according to him, about 50,000 people, mainly Jews, were living in Jerusalem at the time.⁶⁰

A new Russian guidebook to Jerusalem was published a year later. It was written by Nikolai Vasilievich Berg, but his text was composed of elements borrowed from foreign guidebooks, particularly from *Guide en Orient*, and it was written more for “religious tourists” than for “ordinary pilgrims.”⁶¹

In 1869, Father Kavelin, one of the heads of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem after the Crimean War, wrote and published a book combining memories and useful information about his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1859, entitled “Old Jerusalem and its surroundings.”⁶² The book describes Jerusalem not only as the city of Jesus Christ, but also as a “real” city divided between “Latins” (Catholics), Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Muslims, and Protestants. At the end of the book, Father Kavelin provides practical information for Russian pilgrims about the costs of meals and religious objects ... in 1859.⁶³

Kavelin’s book is very different from the guidebooks published in the late 1870s and early 1880s, particularly in Moscow. As one observer (and reader of these guidebooks) notes, “they differ little from one another, and sometimes present the same text on the same subjects, without any variant.... The abundance of apocryphal narratives, not necessary to support the faith of the pilgrims..., the numerous quotations from the Bible, all this makes the texts of the guidebooks incomprehensible for pilgrims.”⁶⁴

The creation in 1882 of the Orthodox Palestine Society, which became Imperial in 1889, changed the situation in Russia and Jerusalem because it started its activity by preparing and publishing guidebooks with practical information for Russian pilgrims.

In general, the building of the “Russian properties,” the publication of the first guidebooks, even without useful information, and particularly the abolition of serfdom in 1861, which enabled peasants to circulate more freely than before, soon produced results. In the 1870s, the number of Russian pilgrims to Jerusalem increased dramatically: every year, some 1,500 to 2,500 people stayed in Jerusalem during the “Easter period.” In the early 1880s, before the creation of the Palestine Society, there were 3,000 to 4,000 pilgrims. Their number increased in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries thanks to the work of the Palestine Society. Indeed, one of the tasks of this private society under imperial patronage was the organization of mass pilgrimages to Jerusa-

60 Ibid., p. 14.

61 N. V. Berg, *Putevoditel' po Ierusalimu i ego blizhaishim okresnostiam* (St. Petersburg, 1863), p. VIII.

62 Arkhimandrit Leonid Kavelin, *Staryi Ierusalim i ego okrestnosti* (Moscow, 2008), p. 12.

63 Ibid., pp. 371–378.

64 A. Eliseev, *S russkimi palomnikami na Sviatoi Zemle* (St. Petersburg, 1885), p. 198.

lem and Palestine. The creation in 1883 of the “pilgrim’s card,”⁶⁵ which reduced the traveling cost to Jerusalem for men and women (and to Mount Athos for men), allowed some 6,000 to 7,000 pilgrims to go to the Holy Land by the turn of the twentieth century. The “simple people” (peasants and poor town dwellers) accounted for 90 percent of the pilgrims, with the clergy making up 3.5 percent and members of the nobility 3 percent. Most pilgrims were women (66 percent).⁶⁶

Observing the activities of Russian diplomats and other officials in Jerusalem as well as the massive presence of Russian pilgrims in the Holy Land, Mgr. Maurice Landrieux, a French bishop, wrote: “Still more formidable, the Russians have established grandiose institutions in Jerusalem: a cathedral, an episcopal palace, a consulate, schools, vast hospices, which form quite a little town on the city’s outskirts—a miniature model of Russia.”⁶⁷ Similar observations can be found in the Protestant and Catholic, both German and French, press and in the diplomatic documents of various countries present in Jerusalem.⁶⁸ These constructions and the number of pilgrims caused a stir among foreign officials and non-Orthodox communities, but what was the reality of Russian pilgrims’ daily life after the construction of Moscovia? How did this construction change the relations between Russian pilgrims (and officials) and the representatives of the Greek Patriarchate after 1864? The texts by Alexandr Eliseev and the decisions of officials of the Orthodox Palestine Society provide partial answers to these questions.

4) “TWENTY YEARS LATER”: THE DAILY LIFE OF RUSSIAN PILGRIMS AFTER 1864

In 1884, that is, 20 years after the erection of the Russian constructions, and 26 years after Mansurov’s report to Grand Duke Constantine, the Palestine Society invited Alexandr Eliseev to accompany Russian pilgrims to the Holy Land during the Lenten period to observe conditions on the ground and, above all, to find out how the Orthodox pilgrims’ living conditions could be improved.

Eliseev went through all the stages of the pilgrimage, staying at Odesa’s Athonite dependencies (Afonskie podvor’ia), setting off on the “Russian boat” like an “ordinary pilgrim,” sharing lodgings with Russian peasants in the Russian constructions, attending religious services with them at the Greek Patriarchate and Holy Sepulcher, and joining caravans to visit the holy places

65 N. Lisovoi states that pilgrims did not all use those cards. Lisovoi, *Russkoe dukhovnoe*, pp. 346–347. Archival research at the Riazan department of the Palestine Society also showed that some of the cards were not sold through official channels.

66 Astafieva, “La Russie en Terre Sainte,” p. 63.

67 M. Landrieux, *Aux pays du Christ. Etudes bibliques en Egypte et en Palestine* (Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1895), pp. 511–512.

68 Astafieva, “La Russie en Terre Sainte,” p. 66.

outside Jerusalem. The outcome of the journey was that Eliseev, like Mansurov in his time, wrote two documents, a 31-page report, "Russian Pilgrims in the Holy Land," submitted to the Palestine Society's officials on October 18, 1884,⁶⁹ and a much longer book, "With Russian Pilgrims in the Holy Land," published in 1885.⁷⁰ However, unlike Mansurov, Eliseev drew on both his own observations and those of "dozens and hundreds of Russian pilgrims."⁷¹

He offered a damning account of the situation: while Russian pilgrims enjoyed a friendly welcome from monks at Odessa's Athonite dependencies, their problems started on the "Russian boat" sailing from Odessa to Jaffa via Constantinople. The captain and even the crew considered them to be a source of dirt and "had them travel in worse conditions than Muslim pilgrims or even cattle."⁷² "Uncleanliness and boredom" plagued pilgrims during the crossing.⁷³ They encountered difficulties of a different nature in Constantinople or even Jaffa,⁷⁴ but after their long journey, reached Jerusalem, the "city of peace" (*gorod mira*), with great elation: "Their attention was drawn from afar by the stately Russian buildings dominated by the Holy Trinity Cathedral—a rallying point for all Russian pilgrims."⁷⁵ However, dirt, misery, disease, and even boredom clung to the pilgrims everywhere in the Holy Land.

The first problem they encountered was shelter, "grandiose Russian constructions" notwithstanding. According to Eliseev, the hospices could only house a maximum of 800 pilgrims when more than 2,000 people had arrived with him during the Holy Week. Therefore, up to four people had to sleep on a single plank-bed (*nary*).⁷⁶ Others slept directly on the floor in stuffy, smelly, and dirty rooms,⁷⁷ which encouraged the development of diseases and even epidemics,⁷⁸ causing many deaths among the pilgrims.⁷⁹

69 A. Eliseev, *Russkie palomniki v Sviatoj Zemle. Doklad, chitannyi A. V. Elisseyvm* (St. Petersburg, 1884), 31 p.

70 Eliseev, *S russkimi palomnikami*. The present section is based on these two works.

71 Eliseev, *Russkie palomniki*, p. 2.

72 Eliseev, *Russkie palomniki*, p. 3.

73 Ibid.

74 Eliseev mentions conflicts with representatives of the Ottoman authorities, particularly customs officials. Ibid., pp. 4–5.

75 Eliseev, *Russkie palomniki*, p. 7.

76 Ibid., p. 8.

77 This situation was not uncommon because the shelter issue had come up right after the building of hospices, particularly for women. It had initially been planned to build two-story hospices, but for various reasons, these buildings only had one floor.

78 Eliseev mentions a typhus epidemic in 1883 that posed a significant challenge to the Jerusalem authorities. The latter wanted to put the Russian constructions into quarantine, but the epidemic came to a stop when a caravan of pilgrims left for the city outskirts. Eliseev, *Russkie palomniki*, p. 10.

79 The 1883 epidemic caused the deaths of 15 percent of pilgrims visiting the Holy Land. See, Eliseev, *S russkimi palomnikami*, p. 152.

Even though male and female hospices had kitchens and laundries, these were of no use to pilgrims because of the limited space and, above all, the prohibitive price of fuelwood. Instead, pilgrims used samovars they took along with them or kettles purchased locally to cook, do their laundry, and even stay clean. The lack of traditional bathhouses (*bania*) was one of the main causes of uncleanness among Russian pilgrims. Eliseev's book, and his report to a lesser extent, point to the very sad state of toilets in the Russian constructions. They were so improperly "cleaned"⁸⁰ that European consuls petitioned their Russian counterpart to "do something about the smell and lack of hygiene" not only in "Russian territory," but in the vicinity as well.

In spite of it all, Russian pilgrims preferred to stay in the Russian constructions rather than in the Greek monasteries described above. One reason of course was their desire to be among their own, but also the fact that the Russian constructions, unlike the Greek or other premises, never ran out of water thanks to a set of tanks.⁸¹ However, Eliseev notes, water quality was very poor.

Bribing hospice concierges ranked among pilgrims' daily activities.⁸² Pilgrims had to resort to bribery to obtain theoretically free shelter in the Russian constructions to be with other Russian pilgrims, even if it meant sleeping on the floor, or even to receive mail, which often consisted of empty envelopes when money had been enclosed. Eliseev also states clearly that Russian pilgrims were "permanently exploited" by Greek monks, who "charged entrance to their holy places."⁸³ In his book, he directly calls for the "protection of pilgrims" against this exploitation and even against the "profanation of holy places."

Eliseev returned with seven essential proposals that he submitted to Palestine Society officials: "add the initially planned second floors to hospices; put in laundries, canteens, and traditional bathhouses with affordable hot water; create postal services for the Russian constructions; improve the pilgrims' spiritual lives by sending 10 missionaries who could also act as guides to both the 3,000 thousand pilgrims in Jerusalem and the caravans to Nazareth and the Jordan; write guidebooks containing correct and precise information on the Holy Land and daily life during pilgrimages; ask the Patriarchate to introduce Russian Church Slavic in the Holy Sepulcher so that pilgrims could attend services in a language they understood-most pilgrims did not understand Greek; involve pilgrims in evening spiritual 'readings on the Holy Land' officially organized by representatives of the Palestine Society or the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission."⁸⁴

80 Eliseev, *Russkie palomniki*, pp. 153–154, 158–159.

81 Eliseev, *Russkie palomniki*, p. 8.

82 Eliseev, *S russkimi palomnikami*, p. 120, and so forth.

83 *Ibid.*, 1885, pp. 202ff. He compares these Orthodox monks with Catholic monks, who remained invisible to visiting Russian pilgrims in "their" holy places. *Ibid.*, p. 207.

84 Eliseev, *Russkie palomniki*, pp. 30–31.

He concludes with the following words: “We shall not rest as long as our pilgrims (bogomol’tsy) do not find peace and tranquility by the gates of Old Jerusalem, where, with the help of God, New Jerusalem stands, whose origin (nachalo) is represented by the Russian domain (russkoe mesto),⁸⁵ the Russian constructions and the Russian Holy Trinity Cathedral.”⁸⁶

5) THE AFTERMATH OF ELISEEV’S REPORT: MORE CONSTRUCTIONS AND NEW ITINERARIES

Eliseev’s report urged the Palestine Society to act fast.⁸⁷ Its officials first implemented their envoy’s solutions by building a boiler room and opening a canteen with a cook.⁸⁸ On the spiritual level, they initiated “reading sessions” in the canteen held by the priest Anisimov.⁸⁹ The Society started publishing its own works about the Holy Land⁹⁰ and organizing “Readings on the Holy Land” in Russia to mobilize more pilgrims. However, despite the use of felt tents (voilochnye kibitki)⁹¹ to accommodate all the pilgrims in the Russian constructions, the Society failed to solve the space problem. For that reason, it was decided to build new dependencies on a newly purchased parcel of land near the Russian constructions, later called Sergievskoe Podvorie, consisting of three parts, namely, hotels (gostinitsy) for first- and second-class visitors and for the 400 third-class pilgrims.⁹² At first, Society officials asked pilgrims to use individual bathhouses but eventually built a traditional bathhouse as well as a mains system and extra tanks.

To “safeguard pilgrims from exploitation by the Greeks,” at which Eliseev took such deep offense, the Palestine Society introduced its own pilgrimage rules. Thus, in the early 1890s, it defined the stopping places and schedule of “obligatory pilgrimages”:

85 It is the parcel of land located near the Holy Sepulcher that Russia bought from the Copts in 1859. It was called the “Russian domain” (see above).

86 Eliseev, *Russkie palomniki*, p. 31.

87 Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Imperii (AVPRI), f. 337/2, op. 873/1, d. 18, pp. 108–109. Quoted in *Rossiiia v Sviatoi Zemle*, T. 1 (Moscow, 2000), pp. 479–480.

88 AVPRI, f. 337/2, op. 873/1, d. 21, pp. 110–117. Quoted in *Rossiiia v Sviatoi Zemle*, p. 493.

89 Ibid. The first session, on December 20, 1887, gathered 600 pilgrims, the second on the following day, gathered only 100, and the third, 400.

90 On the scholarly and popularizing press and pilgrims, see Astafieva, *La Russie en Terre Sainte*, pp. 53–58; Astafieva, “Das Selbstbild und das Bild des Anderen in den Veröffentlichungen der Kaiserlichen Orthodoxen Palästina-Gesellschaft (1882–1917),” in Barbara Haider-Wilson and Dominique Trimbur, eds., *Europa und Palästina 1799–1948: Religion-Politik-Gesellschaft* (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2010), pp. 157–180.

91 AVPRI, f. 337/2, op. 873/1, d. 18, pp. 108–109. Quoted in *Rossiiia v Sviatoi Zemle*, p. 480.

92 AVPRI, f. 337/2, op. 873/1, d. 23, pp. 66–72. Quoted in *Rossiiia v Sviatoi Zemle*, p. 500. See a list of the properties purchased by Russia in Jerusalem in *Rossiiia v Sviatoi Zemle*, pp. 691–696.

“—Friday, at 9 am, arrival of the pilgrims at the Patriarchate for the blessing; they remain there until noon; then, return to the Russian constructions, where they have lunch and rest.

—Friday, at 5 pm, pilgrimage to the Church of the Resurrection, where the pilgrims stay overnight.

—At dawn on Saturday, they go to the Tomb of the Mother of God; and return to the Russian constructions at around 8 am.

—On the following Monday, after lunch, the pilgrims go to Bethlehem, and arrive there in the evening, they spend the night in the Grotto of the Nativity (on the way back, they may visit Saint Elias Monastery).

—On the following Monday, they go to the Jordan River, reach Jericho at night; on Tuesday morning, they go to Saint John the Baptist Monastery, then the Jordan River, back to Jericho.

—On Thursday evening, they return to Jerusalem.”⁹³

In general, after this simplification of itineraries by the Palestine Society, many Greek monasteries and churches in Palestine were no longer visited by Russian pilgrims. As a consequence, the income of the Greek Orthodox clergy in the Holy City plummeted.

Of course, the Jerusalem Patriarchate’s loss of revenue after the Palestine Society imposed new itineraries inside and outside Jerusalem and more particularly, the construction of Russian property, had a negative impact on the relations between the Greeks and local representatives of Russian imperial authority.⁹⁴ These strained relations between the Society and the Patriarchate together with the internal regulations of the Holy Sepulcher, where the three communities, Greek, Catholic, and Armenian, shared the space, did not allow the Society to introduce Church Slavic as one of the languages of religious services, even if Russian priests sometimes dared to conduct sermons in Russian.⁹⁵

Even though most suggestions put forward by Eliseev were implemented by the Society, Russian pilgrims’ living conditions in Jerusalem did not improve. They increased in number year after year, and despite the construction of Sergievskoe Podvorie, “New Jerusalem” could not lodge all the pilgrims in

93 AVPRI, f. 337/2, op. 837/7, d. 24. Quoted in: *Rossia v Sviatoi Zemle*, pp. 271–275. According to the rules of the Palestine Society, “each group of 100 pilgrims was accompanied by officials (but no more than 4), and a group of 50 pilgrims were provided with a donkey.” Before the building of the “Russian constructions,” the pilgrimage to Nazareth and Tiberias was not compulsory for Russian pilgrims, and it was held only twice a year. It remained unchanged until the beginning of the twentieth century, but the Palestine Society introduced some rules. For example, the Society prohibited any pilgrim caravan of more than 200 people. The pilgrimage to Nazareth and Tiberias was organized around March 25. Usually, this pilgrimage organized by the Palestine Society lasted sixteen days with four different stop-offs (three in Nazareth, and one in Tiberias). A representative of the Russian Orthodox Mission and a medical representative with necessary medicine (*aptechka*) accompanied the pilgrims.

94 See more: D. Hopwood, *The Russian Presence; Lisovoi, Russkoe dukhovnoe*.

95 See more: *Centre des archives diplomatiques de Nantes*, 294PO/A/5.

conditions on par with “normal” standards. Several private and official sources from the early twentieth century, which deserve further study, attest to this.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The question of Russian pilgrims’ daily life in Jerusalem in connection with the building of “New Jerusalem” near the Holy City is very broad and cannot be studied exhaustively in one article. It requires a cross-analysis of various sources, diplomatic, ecclesiastical, and private, written in different languages: Russian, Greek, Arabic, Turkish, as well as French, English, and so forth. We may nonetheless draw a number of provisional conclusions.

After Russia’s defeat in the Crimean War, Grand Duke Constantine successfully saved part of the Russian military fleet by transforming it into a passenger fleet that took pilgrims to Mount Athos, Constantinople, and the Holy Land. The construction of “New Jerusalem,” where the Holy Trinity Church dominated the Old City, enhanced the Russian Empire’s prestige locally. It even encouraged the urban development of Jerusalem outside its walls by spreading out of the Old City. As far as we know, the local population did not have many contacts with the numerous Russian pilgrims going to Jerusalem every year. However, the latter’s presence was manifest and visible, and likely had become familiar in the city and its surroundings. Relations between the Jerusalem Orthodox Patriarchate and Russia also changed, particularly towards the end of the nineteenth century. The “regiments” of Russian pilgrims played an important role in the competition between the great powers and Christian communities; for the imperial authorities, Orthodox pilgrims became an instrument of high politics, a symbol of “actual,” material occupation of Jerusalem’s sacred space, not only through the construction of “New Jerusalem,” but also through a large human presence. As I have demonstrated in other publications, “Holy Russia” asserted its presence in the Holy Land to counter other European countries, particularly France. Thus, a great deal changed after the Crimean War, except for one essential thing: the living conditions of “ordinary pilgrims” in Jerusalem remained nearly unchanged. Despite “grandiose” and “magnificent” Russian constructions, “disease, misery and uncleanness” were still the lot of simple peasants who had travelled a long way to the Holy City.