

**DISCOVERING THE OTHER: REALIA OF THE OTTOMAN
EMPIRE IN THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX PILGRIMS' ACCOUNTS
(SIXTEENTH – EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES)**

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ÖZET

16 ve 18. yüzyıllarda Rus hacıları kutsal topraklara artan bir ilgi göstermişlerdir. Bu ilgileri, sadece geleneksel dini terminolojide yer etmiş kutsal topraklara değil, aynı zamanda bunun dışında kalan korkutucu ve heyecanlandırıcı dünyaya da yönelmiştir. Hacıların merakı; Osmanlı topraklarının tarifinden insan davranışlarına, fiziksel görünüşlerinden hükümet sistemine kadar toplumsal hayatın değişik alanlarını içermektedir. Hacıların gözlemleri, Osmanlıya dair kökleşmiş önyargılarını değiştirmiştir. Rus hacıları rivayetlerindeki gözlemlerinde, Hristiyanlıktan kaynaklanan kutsal toprak anlayışına ek olarak Osmanlı dünyasının gizemini ve seyahate değer olduğunu da göstermişlerdir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Rus hacıları, Osmanlı, Kutsal topraklar, Seyahat

Russian Orthodox pilgrims traveled to the Holy Land on a purely religious purpose to worship the Holy Sepulcher and many other venerated sites of Christianity. Therefore, a great bulk of pilgrims' accounts is devoted to the description of merely religious matters of all kinds-churches and monasteries, holy relics, rites and liturgical practices. On the other hand, Russian pilgrims from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries showed a growing interest in the *realia* of the Holy Land itself and other areas of the Ottoman Empire.

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Their attitude to the local phenomena of a secular nature which they observed was predetermined by their perception of the world through the religious prism of Russian Orthodoxy and matching values to which they were accustomed. Thus, some pilgrim-writers preferred to remain in what they believed and they demonstrated an unconcealed cultural arrogance. The pilgrims' Christian-oriented world-view, however, could be nuanced, complex and ambiguous. The more inquisitive pilgrims tried to overcome the usual fear for the unknown. They expressed their visions of the Ottoman Empire with captivating frankness and openness to what was strange and new and they even displayed a fairly good knowledge of Middle Eastern realities.

Observing the wide variety of local customs encountered along the way, Russian pilgrims did not refrain from comparisons of visited lands with their mother country. A clear awareness of cultural differences is vividly illustrated by their attitude to diverse facets of everyday culture concerning the 'heterogeneous' Ottoman world which manifested itself in culinary culture, drinking, eating and smoking habits. As time progressed, the Russian pilgrims' travelogues underwent noticeable changes in this respect. Dwelling on these particular issues, I shall take a closer look at the subjective matter conveyed in the travel accounts, i.e., I shall examine pilgrims' experiences in the visited society and their views on the multi-layered myths in addition to newly emerging stereotypes as far as the Oriental Other is concerned.

Pilgrims' writings are a relatively plentiful source of information regarding cultural, social and economic dimensions of Middle Eastern lifestyles and day-to-day hospitality in general and its essential part-food and drinking habits, in particular. For instance, when speaking about receiving and entertaining invited guests and strangers, the pilgrims-narrators mentioned sherbet. This sort of "a sweetish and fragrant drink" was admired by them as an exotic 'truly Oriental' beverage which was offered in different cultural environments during shared meals, celebrations, on solemn occasions, etc.¹ Observing Bithynian Olympus (Uludağ) from the Sea of Mar-

¹ *Peshkhodtsa Vasiliia Grigorovicha-Barskogo Plaki-Albova, Urozhentsa Kievskago, Monakha Antiokhiiskago, puteshestvie k vsiatym mestam, v Evrope, Azii i Afrike nakhodiashchimsia, predpriniatoe v 1723, i okonchennoe v 1747 godu, im samim pisannoe* (A Journey of the Foot-Passenger Vasilii Grigorovich-Barskii, Plaka-Albov, Native of Kiev, Monk of Antioch, to the Holy Places Located in Europe, Asia and Africa Begun in 1723 and Completed in 1747, Described by Himself), 2nd ed. (St. Petersburg, 1785) (hereinafter: Grigorovich-Barskii [1]), p. 496. Describing the reception given by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Arsenii Sukhanov mentioned that, at the end of the ceremony, a bowl with sherbet was

mora, the priest-monk Meletii noted in his diary that the ice from this mountain was transported to Istanbul and used for chilling sherbet – “a sweet soft drink, a mixture of grape and other juices and water”.² The pilgrim-writers of the period under study mentioned nothing about tea which became rather late, no earlier than sometime in the nineteenth century, one of the most common beverages in the Middle East,³ but they dwelt lengthily on coffee and coffee culture of the Ottoman domain.

By contrast with Middle Easterners⁴ during the reviewed period,

served round: “Proskinitarii Arseniia Sukhanova (Itinerarium of Arsenii Sukhanov)”, *Pravoslavnyi palestinskii sbornik*, vol. VII, issue 3 (St. Petersburg, 1889) (hereinafter: Sukhanov), p. 60. About sherbet, also see *ibid.*, p. 73; “Puteshestvie v Sviatuiu zemliu sviashchennika Luk’ianova (The Journey to the Holy Land of the Priest Luk’ianov)”, *Russkii arkhiv* (Russian Archive), issue 1, col. (columns) 21-64; issue 2, col. 114-159; issue 3, col. 223-264; issue 4, col. 305-343; issues 5-6, col. 385-415 (1863) (hereinafter: Luk’ianov), col. 130.

² *Puteshestvie vo Ierusalim Sarovskiiia Obshchezhitelnyia Pustyni ieromonakha Meletiiia v 1793 i 1794 godu* (The Journey to Jerusalem of Meletii, Priest-Monk of the Sarov Cenobitic Pustyn’, in 1793 and 1794) (Moscow, 1798) (hereinafter: Meletii), p. 45. According to Turkish and European sources, “in Istanbul sherbet was made from a variety of ingredients, of which the most common was lemon juice, mixed with sugar, honey and water, and sometimes with musk and ambergris, often cooled with ice or snow in summer, and served warm by itinerant vendors in the winter time”: J. Carswell, “Sherbet”, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. CD-ROM ed., 11 vols. (Leiden, 2003), vol. IX, p. 416b. About water mixed with snow and soft drinks, see J. Sadan, “Mashrubat (ar.), drinks”, *EF*, vol. VI, pp. 723a-723b.

³ Suraiya Faroqi presumes that tea came to the Ottoman Empire from China either by way of Russia or by the long route via South-East Asia and the Hejaz: S. Faroqi, *Subjects of the Sultan. Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire* (London, New York, 2000), pp. 213-214.

⁴ Coffee, which had been discovered in Yemen in perhaps the thirteenth century and was gradually introduced in the Middle East in the sixteenth century, was highly valued by local inhabitants. For details, see C. van Arendonk and K.N. Chaudhuri, “Kahwa”, *EF*, vol. IV, pp. 449a-452b; R. Tapper, “Blood, Wine and Water: Social and Symbolic Aspects of Drinks and Drinking in the Islamic Middle East”, S. Zubaida and R. Tapper, eds., *Culinary Cultures of the Middle East* (London, New York, 1994), pp. 215, 217. The priest of the Russian ambassador in Istanbul, Andrei Ignat’ev (1707–1708), marked out the Arabian Peninsula as a place from where coffee beans delivered by camels as bagged cargo were exported to Egypt: “Puteshestvie iz Konstantinopolia v Ierusalim i Sinaiskuiu goru, nakhodivshagosa pri Rossiiskom Poslannike, Grafe Petre Andreeviche Tolstom, Sviashchennika Andreia Ignat’eva i brata ego, Stefana, v 1707 godu (A Journey from Constantinople to Jerusalem and Mount Sinai by the Priest Andrei Ignat’ev, Attached to the Russian Ambassador Count Petr Andreevich Tolstoi, Together with His Brother Stefan, in 1707)”, *Palomniki-pisateli petrovskago i poslepetrovskago vremeni, ili putniki vo sviatoi grad Ierusalim* (Pilgrims-Writers from the Era of Peter [the Great] and the Later Period, or Travelers to the Holy City of Jerusalem). *Chteniia v Imperatorskom obshchestve istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh pri Moskovskom universitete* (Readings in the Imperial Society of History and Russian Antiquities, Moscow University), book 3, fasc. V (1873) (hereinafter: Ignat’ev), p. 46. According to Vasilii Grigorovitch-Barskii, coffee beans were transported by vessels from Yemen to Suez, an important trading centre on the way between Asia and Africa: *Stranstvovaniia Vasil’ia Grigorovicha-Barskago po sviatym mestam Vostoka s 1723 po 1747 g.* (The Travels of Vasilii Grigorovich-

coffee remained mostly uncommon to the ordinary people in Russia and the majority of pilgrims were simply unaware of its existence before coming to the East. A true admirer of Western culture in general and its culinary dimensions in particular, Peter the Great (1682–1725) forcefully introduced this refreshing beverage to the Russian high society which primarily was very much against this “disgusting liquid”. It took a long period of time to make it fashionable among the nobility and more or less accepted as a social beverage in other strata of the society.⁵ Thus, it is not surprising that some Russian travelers preferred to keep away from drinking coffee. While in Jaffa, the pilgrim of the early eighteenth century, Ivan Luk’ianov, was invited by the Ottoman governor of the town to his headquarters and the *pasha* offered his guest a cup of coffee. The pilgrim expressed his gratitude for a hearty welcome but refused point-blank to drink *kagve*⁶ or, as he also called it, “warm black water” saying: “This drink is not available in Russia, and, therefore, we are not accustomed to it”.⁷ Nevertheless, now and then we come across pilgrims’ remarks concerning coffee drinking by adherents of Islam and also by members of different Christian communities in the public space, for instance, in front of the gates of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem or during official ceremonies and audiences.⁸ Rather often,

Barskii to the Holy Places of the East Between 1723 and 1747), parts I–IV (St. Petersburg, 1885–1887), pt I (1885) (hereinafter: Grigorovich-Barskii [2]), p. 417; Grigorovich-Barskii [1], p. 281.

⁵ The second half of the seventeenth century was the period when coffee was introduced to Russia where it gained a medical reputation as was also the case in early modern Europe. In 1665, the court physician prescribed for the Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich (1645–1676) “boiled coffee known by Persians and Turks” as “an affective cold and headache medicine”: *Istoria kofe v Rossii* (History of Coffee in Russia) (<http://perfect-coffee.ru/info.php?l=1&part=1&are=5>) (access 30.01.2006). Nevertheless, the first Russian coffeehouses started to open only after the Patriotic War of 1812 against Napoleon. They were established primarily in St. Petersburg and thereafter in other cities in Russia. This was more than a century and a half later than, for instance, in England. According to Jürgen Habermas, around the middle of the seventeenth century, in Great Britain, “after ... chocolate and coffee had become the common beverages of at least the well-to-do strata of the population, the coachmen of a Levantine merchant opened the first coffee house. By the first decade of the eighteenth century London already had 3,000 of them, each with a group of regulars”: J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 32.

⁶ *Qahwa*, from Arabic; Turkish, *kahve*.

⁷ Luk’ianov, col. 130, 132, 389.

⁸ “Puteshestvie ieromonakha Ippolita Vishenskogo v Ierusalim, na Sinai i Afon (1707–1709 gg.) (The Journey of the Priest-Monk Ippolit Vishenskii to Jerusalem, Sinai and Mount Athos, 1707–1709)”, *Pravoslavnyi palestinskii sbornik*, issue 61 (St. Petersburg, 1914) (hereinafter: Vishenskii), p. 70; Sukhanov, pp. 60, 67.

coffee was offered to pilgrims in monasteries before, after or in the course of the monastic repast.⁹ Coffee did not elicit a great surprise to the late-eighteenth century pilgrim, Meletii, who enjoyed drinking it with Patriarch Anfim of Jerusalem in Istanbul or with the chief customs official in Jaffa, the ‘Turkish *agha*’ of Georgian origin. In the meantime, the pilgrim-gourmand did not forget to inform his unsophisticated compatriots that the Turkish way of drinking coffee differed drastically from the European one: “Turks don’t add sugar and milk to it and, in coffeehouses, it is served together with the tobacco pipe”.¹⁰ It is well known that both psychoactive stimulants became standard items in the coffeehouses which emerged all over the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the seventeenth century.¹¹

Around 1600, tobacco was introduced to the Middle East soon after coffee.¹² Sultan Ahmed I (1604–1617) was the first to proscribe tobacco in the Ottoman Empire. Following his steps, Murad IV (1623–1640) issued a strict prohibition of coffee and tobacco (1637). Only in the 1650s, smoking was declared lawful. Nothing could, however, stop the growing popularity of tobacco.¹³ While writing with disgust about the outrageous behavior of Turks during Passion Week inside one of the holiest places of Christianity, the Church of Holy Sepulcher, the merchant Vasilii Gagara, who visited Jerusalem in the 1630s, linked their weakness for potential intoxicants, tobacco and coffee, with their striving for illicit sex: “Moving freely in the Great Church, the cursed Turks smoked pipes and drank *sharap* [here presumably coffee], used foul language while talking with females and were zealous for having sexual intercourse with them”.¹⁴

As in many places around the world, during the early stages of tobacco use in the Middle East and Russia, smoking was strongly discouraged or

⁹ Meletii, pp. 85, 90; Grigorovich-Barskii [2], p. 314.

¹⁰ Meletii, pp. 13, 78, 97.

¹¹ R. Mathee, “Tutun”, *EF*², vol. X, p. 754b.

¹² Since the tobacco plant originated in America, Suraiya Faroqhi asserts that “it must have reached the Ottoman Empire via Europe, either from Italy or over the Habsburg-Ottoman border (S. Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 217).

¹³ R. Tapper, “Blood, Wine and Water”, p. 217; R. Mathee, “Tutun”, p. 755a; C. van Arendonk and K.N. Chaudhuri, “Kahwa”, p. 451b.

¹⁴ “Zhitie i khozhdenie v Ierusalim i Egipet kazantsa Vasiliia Iakovleva Gagary 1634–1637 gg. (The Life and Journey to Jerusalem and Egypt of the Man from Kazan’ Vasilii Iakovlev Gagara, 1634–1637)”, *Pravoslavnyi palestinskii sbornik*, vol. II, issue 3 (St. Petersburg, 1891) (hereinafter: Gagara), pp. 34, 73.

even often prohibited by authorities and clerics.¹⁵ Ivan Luk'ianov set out on a journey to the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Peter the Great, who was a fervent smoker himself, and did his best to make this habit an integral part of social life in his native country.¹⁶ It is not clear whether Luk'ianov was one of the puritanical Old Believers¹⁷ who outlawed smoking, considering it contrary to the true faith, and who ascribed a demoniac character to tobacco as well as to wine and spirits. Nevertheless, the Muscovite priest leveled wide-ranging critical comments at his co-regionalists, Greek members of the clergy, for their bad habits including smoking which, in his opinion, were nothing else than 'Turkish', i.e. Muslim customs. The pilgrim did not dare condemn Muslims for smoking or for giving tobacco as *baksheesh*.¹⁸ But, he fulminated against Greek patriarchs, metropolitans, archdeacons and ordinary monks who did not refrain from pipe smoking even during official ceremonies and, what was, in his view, the most atrocious, during Lent, on Good Friday. A similar pilgrim's indignation was provoked by the fact that

¹⁵ Russia was introduced to tobacco by the British merchants in the sixteenth century during the reign of Ivan IV (1533–1584). For a short period of time, smoking became popular with the nobility. The Tsar Mikhail Feodorovich Romanov (1613–1645) was the first Russian monarch who outlawed the use of tobacco and its import to Russia. As was the case in the Ottoman Empire in 1633 when the Sultan Murad IV used a huge fire in Istanbul as a pretext to ban tobacco and to close all coffee-shops, smoking was declared to be the cause of the fire of 1634 in Moscow and, thus, strictly prohibited. Offenders were to be punished by death but, in practice, the death penalty was replaced by nose slitting. As a hard-liner, the influential religious high-ranking authority, Patriarch Nikon (1652–1658), carried out draconian measures against smokers and tobacco dealers: *Istoriia tabaka v Rossii* (History of Tobacco in Russia) <http://www.medportal.ru/encyclopaedia/narcology/smoke/14/?print=True> (access 17.8.2006), p. 1.

¹⁶ The outstanding Russian ruler, the modernizing autocrat Peter I legalized the tobacco trade and set up regulations for its distribution in 1697. The strictest opponents of his reformatory undertakings and innovations of his successors, the Old Believers, placed tobacco as "an abominable venomous substance" under a rigid taboo.

¹⁷ Following the Russian historians of the nineteenth century, Theofanis G. Stavrou and Peter R. Weisensel, as well as Klaus–Dieter Seemann, identified Ivan Luk'ianov as an Old Believer. Konstantin Panchenko, in his turn, argued that Luk'ianov was an official cleric, but his traditionalistic world-view was similar to that of the Old Believers. Thus, he ignored both the Greekophilia of the adepts of Patriarch Nikon and the Westernism of Peter the Great: T.G. Stavrou and P.R. Weisensel, *Russian Travelers to the Christian East from the Twelfth to the Twentieth Century* (Columbus, 1986), pp. XXXVIII, 56; K.–D. Seemann, *Die altrussische Wallfahrts-literatur. Theorie und Geschichte eines literarischen Genres* (München, 1976), p. 374; K.A. Panchenko, "Vostochnoe Sredizemnomor'e nachala XVIII v. glazami russkogo palomnika Ivana Luk'ianova (The Eastern Mediterranean of the Early 18th Century through the Eyes of the Russian Pilgrim Ivan Luk'ianov)", The Academic Conference *Lomonosovskie chteniia* (Lomonosov Readings), April 2004, *Oriental Studies, Abstracts of papers*, 2 books (Moscow, 2004), book 2, p. 85.

¹⁸ Luk'ianov, col. 114, 386.

Istanbul Greeks including the Patriarch, elderly people and women did not hesitate sniffing powdered tobacco in public.¹⁹

It is certainly true that not all pilgrim-writers were strong opponents of tobacco, let alone alcohol which we will discuss below. On his way back to Russia, in the North Caucasus (1635), Arsenii Sukhanov was received by the local ruler, the *shavkal*.²⁰ Their conversation is of great interest to us since when interrogating his guest about different matters, the Dagestanian lord enquired about tobacco and wine. Thus, the traveler recorded it in his diary: “Question: What is written in your books about tobacco, is it sinful or not? Answer: Nothing is written [in our books] about tobacco, no sin and no salvation. Question: *ansharap* [i.e. red wine] is clean [i.e. lawful] or unclean [i.e. forbidden]? Answer: In the Old Testament, King David, Solomon and Abraham blessed wine and that is written in the Books of David and Solomon. And he [i.e. *shavkal*] said to his men: ‘He is right, in the days of old, it was so, but our Mehmet [i.e. the Prophet Muhammad] banned it’”.²¹

From the information on social and economic life, trade, markets and nutrition which was collected pell-mell, as well as from pilgrims’ passing remarks on everyday conviviality in the East and the ceremonies of hospitality in which they were involved, we have learned quite a lot about food and drinking habits as markers of religious affiliation, ethnicity and social status. The negative attitude of Islam towards alcoholic beverages was either tolerated by Russian travelers or disapproved, in some cases, in a very offensive manner. One of the pilgrims regretted that it was simply impossible in Istanbul to find his favorite drinks: bread *kvass*, beer and *mead*²² but, in the meantime, he stated as a matter of fact that “Turks hated drunkards and didn’t drink themselves”.²³ Moreover, this pilgrim admired the efficiency of the city night watch which maintained proper order and put under arrest all those who got drunk or who were involved in drunken brawls.²⁴ On the contrary, Vasilii Grigorovich-Barskii’s comments on the issue sound definitely harsher than those of his fellow traveler. Not being able to resist sentiments of nostalgia for Ukrainian taverns, he deeply deplored Muslims in Palestine who, in his mind, were so “indolent and depraved” that they

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, col. 156, 154, 143, 152.

²⁰ *Shavkal* (*shamhal*, *shauhal*): a title of the rulers of Dagestan from the end of the twelfth century till 1867.

²¹ Sukhanov, p. 117.

²² *Mead*: a traditional Russian alcoholic drink of fermented honey and water.

²³ Luk’ianov, col. 131, 130.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, col. 128.

“didn’t drink wine and didn’t produce it for those who were craving for it”.²⁵ Thus, when in Jaffa, the pilgrim expressed his thoughts insultingly: “Local Arabs, rich and poor alike, don’t have a habit of drinking wine and any other intoxicant ..., therefore, they are ugly-looking, blackish, scrawny and beast-like”.²⁶ He claimed that no other people were more vicious and wild than the Palestinian bedouins not only in their morals but also in their everyday life and habits including their “bestial foodways” and sobriety, as their basic ration – bread and oil (the latter they “eat by spoons or drink like water”) – never included alcohol.²⁷ Later on, in Rashid, in Egypt continuing to badly miss alcoholic drinks, Grigorovich-Barskii complained that “wine and *gorilka* [i.e. vodka²⁸] could be hardly found” there due to the fact that they were not manufactured on the spot and only imported in very small quantities from overseas to cover the needs of Christian and Jewish communities. His new experiences let him add nuances in his impressions about “dry” Muslim culture: “Following regulations of their religion, Turks and Ethiopians [i.e. Arabs] abstain from wine, although, one or other indulges in drinking in private infringing the rules of his faith”.²⁹

A.J. Wensinck and J. Sadan rightly stated that despite the fact that “the prohibition of wine and spirits is one of the distinctive marks of the Muslim world, its consequences can hardly be overrated”.³⁰ When staying in Jerusalem, the monk Meletii was not greatly astonished when on New Year’s Eve in the monastic cell of the Archbishop of Petra, he met a Turk, a *kaffar*³¹ collector, who was paying a courtesy visit to a high religious dignitary “to express his congratulations and to drink vodka”. The cleric handed him a glass of vodka and, setting it to his lips, the Ottoman official exclaimed rapturously “Christ resurrected!”, mixing Christmas and the New Year holiday with Easter either from ignorance or miscomprehension or even more apparently from overwhelming emotions.³²

Traveling through the Ottoman lands, the Christian pilgrims came into closest contact with non-Muslim everyday culture. Being accustomed to the consumption of alcohol in their homeland, most of the Russian pilgrims

²⁵ Grigorovich-Barskii [2], p. 288.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

²⁸ Vodka: an alcoholic spirit distilled especially in Russia from rye and wheat.

²⁹ Grigorovich-Barskii [2], pp. 420, 409.

³⁰ A.J. Wensinck and J. Sadan, “Khamr”, *ET*², vol. IV, p. 996b.

³¹ *Kaffars*: pilgrims’ fees for passing pilgrimage routes and visiting holy places.

³² Meletii, p. 98.

easily adapted themselves to local wine and food customs practiced, in general, by Eastern Christians and, in particular Greeks. The latter favored wine as a drink (the seventeenth-century cleric, Patriarch Macarios of Antioch, underscored: “The love of wine is an innate propensity of the true-born Greek”³³), valued its purifying capacities as a ‘body-washing’ substance and praised it highly due to religious reasons as a consecrated element of the sacrament of Eucharist.³⁴

Remarks on offered food and beverages, both soft and strong drinks, can usually be found in the extensive and often repeated descriptions of welcoming ceremonies in urban and rural settings where food was served. The most common occasions for drinking wine and spirits were repasts organized for pilgrims in monasteries, guest-houses and inns which were kept by Christians. The monk Varlaam described, in detail, the elaborate rituals performed in the refectory after a service in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. He also described the repast itself, listing the menu: boiled beams and rice, olives, cheese, black radish, lemons, vodka and table wine. He pointed out that some travelers drank from four to six “cups of wine”.³⁵

In different places, visited by the pilgrims, the range of offered food varied considerably and meals were either more modest or more lavish depending on the agricultural products produced in the area that they visited or concerning the possibilities of obtaining provisions from other regions.³⁶ It also depended on the local diet, as well as on special dates fixed in the Christian Orthodox calendar for feasts, fasts, etc. Apart from foodstuffs which have already been mentioned above, many pilgrims spoke about other food products such as appetizers, main course dishes and their ingredients available in monasteries: bread, dried raisins, salted or fresh fish, cooked

³³ Ch. J. Halperin, “Friend and Foe in Paul of Aleppo’s Travels of Patriarch Macarios”, *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook*, vol. 14/15 (Minneapolis, 1998/1999), p. 103.

³⁴ The church fathers reckoned hard drinking among the grave sins and approved the temperate consumption of wine. According to the canonic regulations, clerics (bishops, presbyters and deacons) should be defrocked and lay people should be anathematized if their motive for abstention from wine is “not a deed of abstinence [i.e. taking of the pledge] as such but a strong aversion to wine”: K.V. Nekliudov and A.A. Tkachenko, “Vino (Wine)”, *Pravoslavnaia entsiklopedia* (The Orthodox Encyclopedia), vol. VIII (Moscow, 2004), p. 520.

³⁵ “Peregrinatsiia ili Putnik, v nem zhe opisuet’sa put’ do sviatago Ierusalima i vsia sviataia mesta Palestinskaia, ot Ieromonakha Varlaama, byvshago tamo v 1712 g. (A Peregrination or Guide in Which is Described the Route to the Holy City of Jerusalem and All the Holy Places of Palestine, by the Priest-Monk Varlaam Who Was There in 1712)”, *Palomniki-pisateli petrovskago i poslepetrovskago vremeni* (hereinafter: Varlaam), pp. 60-61.

³⁶ S. Faroghi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, p. 204.

grain or groats with sugar, pies and pancakes, traditional sweets and pastry with honey, fresh and boiled vegetables, assorted pickles, eggs, vegetable oil, vinegar, etc.³⁷ Fairly often, food was accompanied with alcohol, either wine or hard liquors or both taken during the meal, given as ‘aperitif’, ‘digestive’, a separate welcoming drink with light snacks (for instance, raisins) or even as an ‘awakening drink’ in the morning.³⁸ In some cases, it is not possible to exactly say which type of alcohol was served because of the confusion of relevant terms in Russian: vodka could be called “hot wine”, “bread-wine”³⁹ or simply wine. Moreover, pilgrims quite often used the words ‘vodka’, ‘gorilka’ or ‘gorelka’ (the Ukrainian brand of vodka) for *raki* (arak, an aniseed-flavored spirit) and other spirituous beverages of different kinds prepared mostly from grape and dates. Frequently travelers were, on the other hand, very explicit about alcoholic drinks which were consumed. One of them wrote that in one of rather remote Sinai cloisters, wine was only used for liturgical purposes and “during the repast, instead of wine, monks got a little *gorelka* made of dates which were also used for vinegar production”.⁴⁰

After a long and exhausting trip, the pilgrims were more than happy to have a shot of liquor in order to remove fatigue, to relax and to recreate. When Ivan Luk’ianov and his fellow travelers, being more dead than alive finally arrived in Rashid, they were overwhelmingly grateful to the Greek Father-Superior who offered them “church wine”. Luk’ianov, who considered wine to be “most helpful for those who are way-worn and washed-out”, noted down: “We felt so relieved; gloom and despondency vanished in a little while and our dismal mood changed for the better”.⁴¹

Feeding their sight with the view of vineyards in the wine-producing regions (such as in Anatolia, the Greek Archipelago, and in Greater Syria), the pilgrims were full of genuine enthusiasm for the variety, good quality and cheapness of the local wines. For instance, the wine from the area of

³⁷ Luk’ianov, col. 140, 144, 145, 256; Sukhanov, pp. 37, 54, 55, 61; Vishenskii, pp. 43, 47; Grigorovich-Barskii [2], pp. 309, 319, 332, 333, 342, 357, 420; Meletii, pp. 83, 85, 97, 152; Grigorovich-Barskii [1], pp. 279, 280.

³⁸ Gagara, pp. 10, 57; Sukhanov, pp. 55-56, 37, 61, 62, 81, 88; Luk’ianov, col. 230, 255, 259, 264, 305, 310, 321, 343, 344; Vishenskii, p. 43; Varlaam, p. 61; Grigorovich-Barskii [1], pp. 279, 280, 302; Grigorovich-Barskii [2], pp. 319, 332, 333, 341, 342, 357; Meletii, pp. 83, 85, 152.

³⁹ See, for example, Sukhanov, pp. 37, 39, 55, 61.

⁴⁰ Grigorovich-Barskii [1], p. 279, see also Sukhanov, p. 39; Vishenskii, p. 43.

⁴¹ Luk’ianov, col. 386, 230.

Jebel Semaan was said to be “greenish and as thick as oil”.⁴² Smyrna was described as a city where “one could find plenty of figs, raisins and really nice wine” and Mount Athos as a place over-abundant in “vegetable gardens, vineyards and wine”.⁴³ The island Mitilini was mentioned as a center of production of Muscat, a fortified white wine made of musk-flavored grapes and Cyprus was referred to as an island famous for its “fortified, nice, sweet” white and red wines which were sold at attractive prices. In relation to this, the Cyprus wines were exported to Venice and other parts of Italy.⁴⁴ In the Island of Samos, the pilgrims appreciated the local low-priced “delicious dark wine” which was sold overseas the whole year round.⁴⁵ They also reaffirmed the importance of Chios as a center of production of “strong, superb and cheap” wine and excellent *raki*: “vodka made of grapes which was esteemed as the best brand of this kind in the whole Turkey”.⁴⁶ The Russian travelers familiarized themselves with regional types of wine and being, in fact, non-connoisseurs, yet were able to distinguish between wines of diverse origin. We should bear in mind that the Russians had no real tradition of viticulture and, in many Russian monasteries, liturgical and other church regulations related to wine were not strictly observed due to wine shortages or the evident mediocre quality of imported wine.⁴⁷

The Russian pilgrims treated the subject of alcohol both ceremonially and pragmatically. They noticed that the Christian inhabitants of Istanbul were fond of wine,⁴⁸ but drank it on the sly⁴⁹ being guided by pragmatic con-

⁴² Sukhanov, p. 94.

⁴³ “Putnik ili puteshestvie vo Sviatuiu Zemliu Matroninskogo monastyria inoka Serapiona 1749 goda (A Guide or Journey to the Holy Land by the Monk Serapion of the Matroninskii Monastery in 1749)”, *Palomniki-pisateli petrovskago i poslepetrovskago vremeni* (hereinafter: Serapion), pp. 86, 85.

⁴⁴ “Povest’ i skazanie o pokhozhenii v Ierusalim i vo Tsar’grad chernogo d’iakona Iony, po reklomu Malen’kogo, 1649–1652 (A Narrative and Tale about a Journey to Jerusalem and the Emperor City of the Black Deacon Iona, Called Malen’kii, 1649–1652)”, *Pravoslavnyi palestinskii sbornik*, vol. XIV, issue 3 (St. Petersburg, 1895) (hereinafter: Iona Malen’kii), pp. 4, 33; Grigorovich-Barskii [2], pp. 275, 397; Meletii, p. 70.

⁴⁵ Grigorovich-Barskii [1], p. 379.

⁴⁶ Sukhanov, p. 22, Meletii, p. 315.

⁴⁷ During the liturgy, wine could be replaced by similar beverages.

⁴⁸ The tradesman from Iaroslavl’, Matvei Gavrilovich Nechaev, wrote that those Christian slaves who served in the galleys in Istanbul were selling wine without any problem: “Turks didn’t put it under a ban”: “Kniga. Khozhdenie vo sviatyi grad Ierusalim Jaroslavtsa Tolchkovskoi slobody posadskago cheloveka Matveia Gavrilova syna Nechaeva (A Book. The Journey to the Holy City of Jerusalem of the Inhabitant of Iaroslavl’, Tradesman from Tolchkovskaia Sloboda Matvei Gavrilovich Nechaev)”, *Varshavskie universitetskie izvestiia* (Warsaw University Proceedings) 1 (1875) (hereinafter: Nechaev), p. 16.

siderations, namely for fear of being strongly disapproved by the followers of the Prophet Muhammad and punished by the Ottoman authorities. So, the Christians' respect for the religious feelings of Muslims was predominantly of a formal and begrudging character. However, in the regions with a substantial Christian population, for example, in Eastern Anatolia, according to Arsenii Sukhanov, Armenians "drank and sold wine openly, without fear".⁵⁰

In the Middle Eastern context of hospitality and daily life one could not deny the role of food, drink, table manners and other related customs as a marker of ethnic difference. Of special interest, in this respect, is the pilgrims' perception of the Greek co-regionalists, in general, and the Greek clerics and monks, in particular, who were praised as devout Christians and depicted as amiable, honest people of high moral standards and good manners.⁵¹ But, there were two exceptions to the rule among the pilgrim-writers known to us. Arsenii Sukhanov⁵² and Ivan Luk'ianov were ambivalent toward the Greeks and, moreover, expressed a highly negative opinion of them. Being the Tsar's envoy, Sukhanov had to conceal his ill feelings. However, at times, he failed to restrain himself as when he had been mistreated by the Istanbul Greek clerics who used various pretexts not to provide him with lodging and food. Sukhanov's emotional reaction against unfair treatment was very rough: "These elder are evil-doers, they are honey-mouthed, but you should never trust them, otherwise, you will have your share of troubles".⁵³

Luk'ianov, in his turn, as an ordinary Russian Orthodox priest, did not hesitate to openly express his straightforward critical remarks about Greeks as cunning, treacherous people "without a grain of piety". He wrote that the Istanbul Greeks were deceived and corrupted by the Franks (Catholics) headed by "the Pope-the archenemy of the Christian faith". They even enjoyed sharing meals with their 'foes'. The pilgrim wrathfully exclaimed: "They eat and drink together,...visit each other. That is not far from the [Papal] Union".⁵⁴ The pilgrim seemingly had an aversion to Palestinian

⁴⁹ See, for example, Luk'ianov, p. 131.

⁵⁰ Sukhanov, p. 99.

⁵¹ See, for instance, Meletii, pp. 101, 94, 153, 15, 96, 278, 151, 276–277.

⁵² Theofanis Stavrou and Peter Weisensel argue that the account of Sukhanov's journey "reflects the spirit of Russian religious independence, even superiority, growing in the course of the seventeenth century": T.G. Stavrou and P.R. Weisensel, *Russian Travelers to the Christian East*, p. XXXVII.

⁵³ Sukhanov, p. 15.

⁵⁴ Luk'ianov, col. 150.

Greeks for their habit of drinking strong alcoholic spirits instead of wine. Thus he wrote: “The order in that monastery [in Jerusalem] is as follows: after the liturgy all the monks rush to drink *gorelka* and the cup-bearer presents a filled *finjal*⁵⁵ to everyone. Greeks are not ashamed of drinking *gorelka* and all of them take it on an empty stomach. Those who do not drink church wine, imbibe *gorelka*. If a man rejects drinking church wine they hold him in high esteem”.⁵⁶ The pilgrim claimed that the tradition of offering drinks to pilgrims in substantial amounts during the repast was nothing else but a clever trick aimed at extorting considerable amounts of money from travelers. Each repast ended with the traditional collection of donations and those who had had a drop too much paid more.⁵⁷

Ivan Luk’ianov was not a hypocrite and narrow-minded person. But, being accustomed to a more rigorous way of ritual observance than that practiced by Middle Eastern Christians, he found it incredible that the Greeks, including clerics and monks, consumed fish during the days when it was forbidden by the canon regulations and ate heartily “horrible stinking” shellfish during regular fasts and Lent. Moreover, some Greek fellow believers, deviating from the true Christian faith, did not even abstain from meat in the period of fasting.⁵⁸ Thus, he put it: “Greeks are unlike Russians: each one eats what he wants”.⁵⁹ Additionally, the pilgrim marked out with regret that not all Russians observed the fast: “[In my homeland] during Lent, good people eat fish only twice – on Lady Day and Palm Sunday, but fools have no rules [a Russian equivalent to the proverb ‘fools rush in where angels fear to tread’], some people feel free to eat meat”.⁶⁰ Vasilii Grigorovich-Barskii’s explanation for the reason why some Eastern Christians ate meat during fasts was much more down-to-earth than that of Luk’ianov’s. Writing about the population of the barren and arid planes of Harran, he asserted that local Christians, as cattle-breeding people, ate meat and milk when it was forbidden simply because of the lack of lenten fare.⁶¹ It is worth noting that meat is rarely mentioned in the pilgrim narratives since

⁵⁵ Arabic, *finjal* or *finjan*: a cup.

⁵⁶ Luk’ianov, col. 259.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, col. 264. According to the rule, after a repast, pilgrims gave offerings to the monastery: each sum of money had to be registered in a special book (details see in *ibid.*, col. 305, 310, 320, 343, 344).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, col. 139-141, 143, 152, 154, 156, 157.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, col. 140.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, col. 143.

⁶¹ Grigorovich-Barskii [1], p. 400.

it was not part of the simple monastic diet and pilgrims, as people of modest means, were hardly able to afford it due to its sky-high market prices.⁶²

It must be added that, as might be expected, the culinary arts of recipes and cuisines as well as nutritive or therapeutic values of food and its metaphoric significance were out of the scope of pilgrim-writers' interests. Having no access to the world of the rich and mighty, the pilgrims could only fantasize about the luxury of private life in the villas of the Ottoman nobility and the Sultan's palaces. Looking at the area of the Topkapi Sarayı from outside, Ippolit Vishenskii gave free play to his vivid imagination: "It is an immense castle with an enormous beautiful garden. Just think, in the middle of the garden, in the kitchen, five thousand cooks prepare food for Janissaries and guests".⁶³

In contrast to his fellow travelers, Arsenii Sukhanov, a high-ranking Russian cleric, was invited to several formal receptions including two of them organized by the Patriarch of Jerusalem in honor of the Ottoman governor (*pasha*) of the city and Armenian religious hierarchs.⁶⁴ At both festive banquets, the guests were offered meat. For the reception of the Armenians, five sheep and thirty chickens were slaughtered and cooked by the invited Armenian chefs. Greek and Armenian patriarchs ate fish and left the meat and the poultry to the others though it was a highly prestigious and expensive food. Following Ottoman customs, those present at both receptions sat on the floor and dishes were served on a mat (*sufra*) or, as the pilgrim also called it, "the leather spread". It is apparent from the Sukhanov's *Itinerarium* that the reception for the Ottoman bureaucrat contrasted sharply with that given to the Armenians: the latter was far more lavish and pompous.

The pilgrims did not display any special attention to food delicacies and aromatic substances as "bodily and spiritual pleasures"⁶⁵ since extravagance and sophistication were luxuries of wealthier people. They mentioned, as a matter of fact, herbs and spices used in monastery cookery and they specified incense, myrrh, pepper, cinnamon and aloes among "other fragrances and aromatic roots" which were imported to the Ottoman

⁶² See, for instance, Luk'ianov, col. 132; Grigorovich-Barskii [2], p. 289. According to Grigorovich-Barskii, the French "were always eating meat and cheese" in Palestine, in Ramla (*ibid.*, p. 289).

⁶³ Vishenskii, p. 14.

⁶⁴ Sukhanov, pp. 59-60, 67-68.

⁶⁵ M. Marín, "Beyond Taste: the Complements of Colour and Smell in the Medieval Arab Culinary Tradition", *Culinary Cultures of the Middle East*, pp. 205-206.

Empire.⁶⁶ The most frequently mentioned aromatic substance was incense which was burned for perfuming churches and on various religious ceremonial and festival occasions. Incense and rosewater were important elements of the formal welcoming procedure which took place in Jerusalem for the ritual ablution of pilgrims' feet and hands by monks.⁶⁷ The monk Varlaam recorded: "After they finished washing our feet, they started to burn incense and to sprinkle rosewater on our hands; pilgrims washed their hands, eyes and faces with this water".⁶⁸ The *Journey* of Ivan Luk'ianov contains an amusing story about how incense was used by Christians as an effective means of scaring away unwelcome Muslim visitors. In one of the frontier posts, Turkish customs officials came to examine the ship. The clever Christian merchants who were praying at that time started to burn incense non-stop. "Turks, wrote the traveler, can't stand the smell of the incense and when they saw the thick smoke that covered the vessel, they started to sputter and to abuse us in Turkish, but soon disappeared".⁶⁹

Observing the daily life and everyday culture in the core of the Ottoman Empire and in Arab provinces, the pilgrims did not fail to notice 'down-to-earth' things which they found to be strange and astonishing. They were confused by dwelling-houses without stoves and baking ovens as well as by the home interiors. In the account of his stay in Istanbul, Luk'ianov recorded the following: "In the Emperor City and in the whole Turkish state they don't have baking ovens inside [dwellings]; there are no benches and tables in the rooms. They all sit or stretch themselves out on the floor covered with carpets and cushions and they eat sitting in the same manner; we were unaccustomed to all that and, thus, it was hardly bearable for us".⁷⁰ Similarly, Meletii was amazed by Palestinian dwelling-houses with flat roofs where vine and other plants were growing.⁷¹ For the Russians raised in areas with

⁶⁶ Meletii, p. 300; Grigorovich-Barskii [2], p. 417; Sukhanov, p. 39.

⁶⁷ For the description of the ritual, see Gagara, pp. 10, 57; Iona Malen'kii, pp. 7, 35; Sukhanov, p. 52; Luk'ianov, col. 259-260; "Put' nam Ieromonakhm Marakiiu i Seliverstu iz Monastyria Vsemilostivago Spasa Novgorodka Severskago do Sviatago grada Ierusalima poklonitisia grobu Gospodniu 1704 godu (The Journey of Us, Priests-Monks Makarii and Seliverst, from the Monastery of the Merciful Image in Novgorod-Severskii to the Holy City of Jerusalem to Worship at the Holy Sepulcher, [Starting from] 1704)", *Palomniki-pisateli petrovskago i poslepetrovskago vremeni* (hereinafter: Makarii and Seliverst), p. 9; Vishenskii, pp. 64, 96; Grigorovich-Barskii [2], pp. 313-314; Serapion, p. 93; p. Meletii, 85.

⁶⁸ Varlaam, p. 61.

⁶⁹ Luk'ianov, col. 406.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, col. 133. See also, *ibid.*, col. 132; Sukhanov, p. 66.

⁷¹ Meletii, p. 301.

dense forests, the evident shortage of firewood in Palestine or in Egypt and its ridiculously high price since it was transported from far-away places, or the use of dung instead of firewood were something that was worth telling readers about.⁷² The travelers frequented markets where they were particularly struck by affordable and even very cheap prices for “exotic” fruit which was delicacy in Russia. They also commented on the exorbitant and quickly changing prices for the staple foodstuff (butter, eggs, milk, fish, etc.).⁷³

It is evident from a number of pilgrim accounts that the well-known Middle Eastern hospitality of Muslims did not make a deep impression on the travelers. After four months’ sojourn in Istanbul, one of the pilgrims asserted that Turkish hospitality could not be compared with the Russian one: “There is no custom in the Emperor City to offer guests bread [i.e. food]; almost nothing is served, only black water [i.e. coffee] and then the guest retreats hastily. That is not like with us where hosts, even if they are of modest means, willingly offer their bread and salt”.⁷⁴ This statement, unfavorable to the adherents of Islam, could be explained, besides other reasons, by limited social contacts between the Christian pilgrims and Muslims and by the feelings of mutual estrangement deepened with the pilgrims’ language difficulties⁷⁵ which prevented them from understanding and from properly evaluating certain local customs. This led them to overlooking or misinterpreting the positive features of the Muslims. It is quite clear that the pilgrims gave evident preference to the hospitality of their Christian co-believers, both Greeks and Arabs, who were oft-times generous and ready to share food with strangers. Ivan Luk’ianov wrote: “If a Greek invites to dinner, he puts on the table all victuals [available at home] and everyone eats

⁷² Sukhanov, p. 39; Grigorovich-Barskii [1], p. 350; Grigorovich-Barskii [2], pp. 282, 288.

⁷³ Luk’ianov, col. 132, 133, 243, 245; Grigorovich-Barskii [1], p. 293; Meletii, pp. 306-307.

⁷⁴ Luk’ianov, col. 132.

⁷⁵ Most of the pilgrims did not speak foreign languages and only a few of them possessed knowledge of Greek (for instance, Arsenii Sukhanov and Meletii) (Sukhanov, p. 117; Meletii, pp. 169-170). There are some indications in the text of Meletii’s *Travel* that he spoke Turkish (Meletii, pp. 55, 57), but we do not know the level of his Turkish. Vasilii Grigorovich-Barskii was the only one who was proficient in languages: he learned Greek, Italian, spoken Arabic and Turkish. Thus, facing the problem of the language barrier, the pilgrims resorted to the help of interpreters, Greeks as well as Slavs, who had settled in the Middle East and spoke the local vernaculars (Nechaev, p. 17; Vishenskii, pp. 1, 13-14; Luk’ianov, col. 113, 120-122). Therefore, the Russian pilgrims often viewed what was happening through the eyes and prejudices of their *turjumans* and informants.

what he fancies”.⁷⁶

Indeed, the pilgrims’ accounts reflected a parochial Orthodox Christian world-view of their authors who, as is clear from this unavoidably elliptical overview, frequently tended to use stereotypes describing their experiences. Thereby, as is often the case with the travel literature, we should keep in mind the specific character and limitations of the sources dealt with in this study. Encountering the culture of the other, the Russian pilgrims recorded their impressions of those encounters. In their secular and religious observations about the drinking, eating and smoking habits of the peoples in the Ottoman domain the travelers revealed much about themselves, their personal cultural presumptions and values. Moreover, the pilgrims’ notion of ‘otherness’ and their own vision of the cultural variety of the Ottoman Empire, evidenced by their writings, were remarkable as an attempt to understand another ‘varicolored’ culture from their own point of view. Acting as ‘image-makers’ who represented the Orient to Russia, the pilgrim-writers endeavored to record the Other and to capture ‘the spirit of the East’.

ABSTRACT

The Russian pilgrims of the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries showed a growing interest in the realia of the Holy Land itself and other visited areas of the Middle East. They looked not only ‘inward’ upon Holy Places representing them in traditional religious terms but also ‘outward’ upon surrounding world which was alien, frightening, exotic and fascinating at one and the same time. The wide scope of pilgrims’ curiosity was expressed in descriptions of the Ottoman lands, observations of peoples, their physical appearance, occupations and ways of life, food, clothing, habitations, commodities, the system of government and political conduct, etc. The Russian pilgrims proved by their narratives that, apart from Christian – oriented outlook on the Holy Land, the Ottoman world itself remained mysterious and worth visiting.

Key words: Russian pilgrims, Holy Land, Ottoman, Travel

⁷⁶ Luk’ianov, col. 132; see also *ibid.*, col. 230, 234, 236, 256, 390, 391.