

A Russian Goes to the Holy Land

Considerations on Ioann Luk'yanov's Accounts of his Pilgrimage in the Early Eighteenth Century

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1. The itinerary

A Russian, Ioann Luk'yanov by name, traveled in Palestine from 1701 to 1703. The accounts of his pilgrimage «The Journey to the Holy Land of the Priest Luk'yanov» were first printed in fragments in the local magazines of Chernigov and Kaluga in 1862. In the following year a complete edition was published under the editorship of Sergei Sobolevsky in several numbers of the historical magazine «Russian Archive» (*Russkii arkhiv*) which was published in Moscow. A second edition of the whole text appeared in 1866 in the same magazine.

Luk'yanov's records of pilgrimage are very interesting in many respects. In this paper I would like to comment on some distinguishing features of his remarkable work. First of all, it may be necessary to sum up the itinerary of his travel according to his accounts.

Dec. 25 or later, 1701 ¹	Departure from Moscow
Dec. 30	Departure from Kaluga
Jan. 1, 1702	Arrival at Lifin. From there via Belov and Bolkhov
Jan. 6	Arrival at Orel. Stayed 5 days. From there via Kromy and Sevsk
Jan. 17	Entering the Ukraine (Little Russia according to the appellation of that time), via Glukhov, Krolevets, Baturin and Nezhin
Jan. 31	Arrival at Kiev
Feb. 3	Departure from Kiev. From there via Khvostov
Feb. 11	Arrival at Nemirov
Feb. 14	Departure from Nemirov
Feb. 17	Arrival at Soroki
Feb. 24	Arrival at Jassy. Stayed 13 days

¹ As for the date, cf. K.-D. Seemann, «Die altrussische Wallfahrtsliteratur». München, 1976, S. 366, T.G. Stavrou and P.R. Weisensel, «Russian Travelers to the Christian East from the XII to the XX Century». Columbus, 1986, p. 56.

Mar. 12	Arrival at Galati. From there by ship down along the Danube via Tulcea and through the Black Sea
Mar. 22	Arrival at Istanbul (Constantinople). Stayed about three months
Jun. 26	Arrival at Edirne (Adrianople)
Jul. 13	Departure from Edirne
Jul. 26	Sailing out from Istanbul through the Sea of Marmara, the Aegean Sea and Eastern Mediterranean Sea
Aug. 11	Arrival at Reshit, Egypt. Stayed 7 days
Aug. 17	Going by ship upstream along the Nile, then down-stream by another branch of the Nile Delta. On the fourth day arrived at Damietta
Aug. 24	Departure by ship from Damietta via Acre
Sept. 14	Arrival at Jaffa
Oct. 7	Arrival at Romel (Ramleh)
Oct. 20	Departure from Romel
Oct. 30	Arrival at Jerusalem
Jan. 21, 1703	Departure from Jerusalem. From Jaffa by ship via Acre and Damietta
[Apr. 21]	Arrival at Istanbul. From there by the same route through Galati and Jassy
[Jun. 29]	Arrival at Soroki. From there via Khvostov
[Jul. 11]	Arrival at Kiev. Stayed six weeks. From there via Nezhin

(The accounts are abruptly concluded after his departure from Nezhin.)

Pilgrims of Old Russia traveled to the Holy Land either by sea or by land. Most of them preferred to go by sea. Ioann Luk'yanov also chose to go by sea. He took the route via Kos-Lemnos-the delta of the Nile both to there and back.

He did not travel alone but in a group. Before reaching Kiev a member of his party fell sick and was obliged to return home. When he arrived at Istanbul, there were 5 persons left in his party. Just prior to their departure from Istanbul one of them, Luka by name, had to return to Moscow because of sickness. So Luk'yanov was accurate in writing that on the way home near Ephesus, his party were four in number (316²). But it is difficult to ascertain whether the number included a Polish monk or not. This monk had met Luk'yanov on the ship on their way from Galati to Istanbul and requested to join the Russian party.

2. The passport and visa

Luk'yanov's "Journey to the Holy Land" begins with the quotation from a document

² This and subsequent figures in brackets refer to the column of the text in the second edition of the «Russian Archive». 1866.

(*proezhaya gramota*) issued in the name of the Russian Tsar Peter I addressed to the Ottoman Sultan Mustapha II. The Russian autocrat requests the Turkish monarch to permit Ioann Luk'yanov, a Muscovite and a priest of the Pokrov Church, together with his companions and their belongings, to go to Jerusalem and come back "freely and without hindrance". The treaty in force at that time between the two countries stipulated that every Russian, ecclesiastic or not, might make pilgrimage to the sacred places without paying any fee or tax for himself or custom duties for their personal effects. In modern sense this document can be defined as a passport. Although Luk'yanov is called a resident of Moscow, it is clear from the text of the «Journey» that he came from Kaluga, a town about 200 kilometers southwest of Moscow.

Apparently this document was very useful for Luk'yanov. He presented it first to the authorities of Sevsk which was located on the border of Great Russia (Muscovia) with Little Russia (Ukraine); then in Soroki where the Ottoman Empire started; and in many other towns of the Balkans, such as Jassy and Istanbul. The validity of the document was genuine and its effect was tremendous: everywhere the Russian party was exempted from taxes and duties. Indeed, at the customhouse of Istanbul he was requested to pay duties of 20 talers, but he showed stern persistence in refusing to pay, and succeeded in getting the officials of the customhouse to issue a document certifying that the Russians were free from taxes and duties in any place of the Ottoman Empire (176).

It is interesting to ask, what was the content of Luk'yanov's belongings (*rukhl'yad'*)? From the standpoint of quantity, they were rather bulky and carried on the back of several pack horses (164). Luk'yanov does not give us any hints, but it goes without saying that there were in the baggage precious items, besides extra clothing and personal things. Actually Luk'yanov tells that in Istanbul he made the acquaintance of a Russian merchant from Moscow and asked to be introduced to a Greek merchant so as to sell a part of his belongings (182). Very probably there might have been in the baggage such valuable Russian products as furs. Without any costly merchandise it would have been impossible to travel to these foreign countries. For instance, when Vasilii Poznyakov, a Russian merchant, traveled to Jerusalem by the order of Ivan the Terrible in 1558-1561, he brought furs to the Holy Land as gifts from the tsar.³

Luk'yanov's passport with the name of the Russian tsar attracted attention of people of Jerusalem (253). The Turkish visa, however, was more reliable in the Ottoman Empire. So that he might call on the sultan's firman, Luk'yanov spent more than two weeks making a detour to Edirne (Adrianople), 200 kilometers west of Istanbul. At that time the sultan resided in the palace of Edirne, according to Luk'yanov's information, keeping secluded from his own bodyguard *Yanicheri*. The visa proved to be effective when Luk'yanov landed at Jaffa, the port of Jerusalem, and when he arrived in Istanbul from Egypt on the way home. By presenting both the visa and the document given by the customhouse of Istanbul, Luk'yanov did not need

³ Cf. A.N.Pypin, «Istoriya russkoj literatury». Vol. 2, SPb., 1911, p. 202.

to pay neither landing taxes, nor duties for the baggage. Only when he was leaving Jerusalem, the Turkish pasha, who was the governor of the region, charged three *chervonnyis* from each Orthodox, including the Russians, and as much as double that from each Catholic and Armenian. Each received a stamp (*pechatka*) in return for the money (300). The money levied could be considered as something like an offertory or a departure tax.

3. *The purposes of the travel*

“I was dissatisfied with everything in life and under the pressure of my thought and impatience, I made up my mind to see the Holy Town of Jerusalem in the Promised Land,” says Luk’yanov in the beginning of his *«Journey»* (131). When asked by a compatriot in Istanbul about the purpose of his travel, he answered curtly “by oath”. But he is silent on what was his oath.

No scholar has ever been satisfied with Luk’yanov’s explanation. The editors of the *«Russian Archive»*, who published the *«Journey»* in 1863, commented that the manuscript of the text had been found in the personal library of a deceased Old Believer in Orel.

Pavel Mel’nikov, a celebrated writer and one of the greatest expert officials familiar with the question of Old Believers, declares in his famous treatise, *«Historical Studies of Priestly Old Believers»*, that Luk’yanov was dispatched to the Holy Land by an Old Believer community with two purposes: the first to observe the contemporary state of the faith of the Greeks; and the second to investigate the possibility of inviting a high-ranking ecclesiastic, i.e. bishop, from Greece.⁴

Sometimes the most important things seem not to be expressed in words. Certainly, for Old Believers — who dissented in the middle of the seventeenth century from the State Orthodox Church of Russia and remained resolutely opposed to the Church reforms of the Patriarch Nikon — it was urgently important to inspect in person the actual state of the contemporary Greek Church. The Patriarchal reformer Nikon insisted he was conforming with the Greek Church. Perhaps it was necessary to create a new hierarchy of their own. The Priestly Old Believers, approving the role of priests as mediator between the God and the laymen, acutely felt the necessity of a hierarchy, in contrast to the Priestless group who denied the authority of ecclesiastical order. Only bishops were empowered to ordain priests. The fact that Luk’yanov stayed longer in Istanbul than in the Holy Land may back up Mel’nikov’s supposition. His bulky treatise was written after the publication of Luk’yanov’s *«Journey»* in the *«Russian Archive»*. He might have had time to accumulate additional materials about Ioann Luk’yanov’s purposes.

Later at the end of the century, another researcher, M. Lileev, found out that Luk’yanov was a priest of the Old Believer community of Vetka, which was located on the upper Dniepr.

⁴ P.I.Mel’nikov, *«Polnoe sobranie sochinenij»*. 2nd ed. Vol.7, SPb., 1909, p. 29.

He had his own hermitage in the forests of Meshchorsk and Zhizdra southwest of Kaluga.⁵

Luk'yanov shows his true religious devotion in several places. For example, when he visited the Kievan Lavra of the Caves, one of the most holy sanctuaries in Russia, he emphasizes that when he saw the mummy of Il'ya Muromets, a legendary hero of Old Russia, he made the sign of the cross in the Old Believer manner, with two fingers. "Thus it is clear: after death his dead flesh unmasks the error of our enemy", he proudly writes (151).

Old Believers are convinced that the greatest fallacy of Nikon's reforms lies in the change from crossing one's self with two fingers to the coercion to cross one's self with three fingers.

It was quite natural as an Old Believer that Luk'yanov fiercely denounced the corruption and degradation of the spoiled Greek reverends under the leadership of the Patriarch of Istanbul. Luk'yanov also had a personal grudge: on arriving at the capital of the Eastern Christian World, he asked for a night's lodging in the Patriarchate, but he was flatly rejected by the Greeks, saying "no cell will be given without gift" (179).

Luk'yanov compiles a long list of complaints against the coldheartedness of the Greeks. From the standpoint of practice in faith, he summarizes essential discrepancies between Russian Orthodoxy and the Greek Orthodoxy, among which the principal points were as follows: 1) in the ceremony of christening they, i.e. the Greeks, do not immerse the whole body in water, they only sprinkle water on the forehead; 2) they do not always bear the sign of cross on their neck; 3) they cross themselves in a wrong way (using three fingers); 4) they do not take off their hats in the church. Moreover, Old Believer Russians were disgusted by the shaven chins and the habit of smoking of the Greek dignitaries and their absorption in card and chess games (214).

As for the Catholic and Armenian Christians, Luk'yanov expresses greater hatred to them than to the Greeks.

Luk'yanov's religious intolerance is extended to the Ukrainian priests and the students of the Kievan Academy. As is well known, from the second half of the seventeenth century to the eighteenth century, under the influence of Catholic Poland, Kiev was culturally far superior to Moscow. The primary strength was the Academy founded in 1630's within the Kievan Lavra of the Caves. This Academy produced many people of intellect who played an active part in the reign of tsar Aleksei and his son Peter I. But in the eyes of Luk'yanov, the young students were only hot-blooded hooligans. He writes — "In Kiev there are many pupils. They steal, kill and drive out cows and sheep at night, but they are immune from punishments. It is loathsome" (150).

Here arises a question: why did the government of Peter I grant a passport to the Holy Land to Luk'yanov, an Old Believer priest? Generally speaking, tsar Peter I oppressed the Old Believers who were conservative in essence. But maybe we have to take into

⁵ M.I.Lileev. "K voprosu ob avtorstve Puteshestviya..." «Chteniya v Istoricheskom Obshchestve Nestora-Letopistsa». Vol. 9, 1895. p. 25-41.

consideration that, unlike the Priestless Old Believers who called Tsar Peter “Antichrist”, the Priest Luk’yanov did not hold an extreme attitude of opposition toward the authorities. On the contrary, he remarked in his *«Journey»* that the Christians living in the Ottoman Empire regarded the Russian ruler as their future liberator and had expectations that some day the Russian army would advance through the Balkan mountains into the Empire (201, 306).

The issue of the passport remains a riddle, but there is no doubt that, during his travel in foreign countries, Luk’yanov retained in his mind a distinct nationalistic feeling.

4. How he traveled

Thanks to the detailed descriptions of Luk’yanov’s *«Journey»*, we can learn interesting aspects of traveling in his time, in addition to the topography of the Holy Land.

Whatever the purposes of his travel, the fact remains that beyond the border of Russia, Luk’yanov’s party had no one to rely upon. The Old Believer (*lipovan*) villages on the delta of the Danube appeared only in the second half of the 18 century. The special lodging facilities for Russian pilgrims in Istanbul and Jerusalem were to be constructed yet more than two centuries later.

The Russian party must have foreseen and prepared for various difficulties. Notwithstanding, when he was seriously discouraged by loneliness in foreign lands, where not a word was understood, Luk’yanov confesses that he was inclined to return home (163). Then the Russian party left Little Russia and for the first time entered Moldavia. For some unknown reason, the Russians lost the Greek merchant who had promised to guide them as far as Istanbul. The inconvenience caused by the ignorance of foreign languages is a constant complaint. They could not afford to hire special interpreters.

In Russia, at the beginning of their travel, friends or comrades of the same faith in every town provided them with rooms and food. The network of cooperation among Old Believers worked perfectly. Also, outside of Russia, the monasteries of the Orthodox Church, if any, as a rule opened their doors to the pilgrims. But not every monastery was kind enough to supply lodging and food. In Istanbul the Russian party was refused overnight accommodations at the Patriarchate. At the Syrian Monastery (to be exact, its hostel in Istanbul), and at the Jerusalem Monastery (its hostel in the capital, too) gave them two rooms. In Rashit, the first port in Egypt, the recommendation letter of the Jerusalem Monastery of Istanbul helped the Russians, and in Damietta also, they could obtain rooms owing to the recommendation of the monastery of Rashit. In Jaffa, as well as in Jerusalem, facilities for pilgrims from all the world were sufficiently available.

More than once Russians serving slaves helped to rescue the Russian party out of the difficulties, which befell them because of misunderstandings in foreign languages. At that time Russia was a frequent source of slaves to the Mediterranean world. Once, for instance, when on the way to the Holy Land, the ship of Luk’yanov’s party entered the Golden Horn

Bay of Istanbul, the Russian pilgrims were surrounded by a huge crowd of Turks. They felt helpless as if they were prisoners of war. Some slaves working as stevedores spoke to them in Russian and very much heartened and helped them (173). It was owing to a Russian slave, Kornilii by name, that Luk'yanov succeeded in receiving his baggage in the custom house of the capital. Furthermore, Luk'yanov met a Russian slave in Sakiz (223) and Ephesus on the way home (315). One slave gave him two baskets of lemon and offered a night's lodging.

During their travel the Russian pilgrims experienced many troubles.

In the first place, they were not always favored by the weather. After their departure from Moscow in the last days of the year, it rained unseasonably. They had to take a ferry boat across the Oka and the Dniepr. The roads were muddy and the hardships of leading the pack horses were beyond description. The steppe forming the borders between the Ukraine and Poland was so desolate that the Russians met no one for five days. "The soil is fertile, but people fear the Crimean Tartars" (155) writes Luk'yanov. In Moldavia they had more difficulties walking through the mountain passes.

It is surprising that the Russians often walked at night in Russia and the Balkans. First in Russia, leaving Bolkhov in midnight, they walked through the night, arriving at Orel in early morning of January 6th (138). According to the calculation of Prof. I. Yamaguchi, it was 17th night after the New Moon.

Approaching the Prut River, the Russians were awestruck by "the high mountains of Hungary" (possibly, the Transilvanian Alps). And when they sailed out of the mouth of the Danube into the Black Sea, it was the first time in their lives that they had encountered an open sea. It is no wonder that the men of the plain were prone to the seasickness (168).

In addition to the adversities of the nature, the Russian pilgrims were twice exposed to dangerous situations. The first incident occurred on the way from Romel (Ramleh) to Jerusalem. The Turkish administrator in Romel unfortunately did not effectively control the whole route from Romel to Jerusalem. On one fine morning in October, a caravan of Christians of all dominations — Orthodox, Catholics and Armenians — numbering about 1500, started a march to the Holy Town. But a mob of the Arabs lay in wait and began attacking the peaceful travelers — "like a swarm of bees" says Luk'yanov. He continues, "Some tried to rob us of our clothes, others to drag us from the horseback" "They beat us with cudgels, crying "Give money"" and even thrust their hands into our pockets" (247).

Learning a lesson from this experience, the caravan, including the Russians, hired Arabic bodyguards for the return from Jerusalem. The guard collected 60 *paras* from each pilgrim, instead did not allow anyone to harass the pilgrims. The Arabs promised that, if any damage might inflicted upon the pilgrims, they would pay in compensation 20 times more (201). This contract is a model for security in modern times.

The second incident happened on the sea. When on the return trip, a group of ships of the pilgrims were approaching Myra of Asia Minor. Suddenly a multitude of small boats drew near from the coast and attacked the ships. The ships fled at full speed into a nearby port. But

a local boat rowed out from the town to notify them that due to the spread of an epidemic in the town, no passenger was permitted to land.

A captain of one of the ships was killed in a battle with the pirates. An epidemic broke out in another ship. However, the ship which carried the Russian party sailed out of the port under the cover of darkness, meandering through the surrounding boats. The boats did not give up their pursuit. Easter of 1703 was celebrated in the blockade of the enemy. Not long afterwards the Turkish navy came to their rescue (311-314).

We can easily imagine how the Russians, after having suffered all kinds of adversities, were overjoyed by the Holy Land. It fully atoned for all the difficulties and dangers. Luk'yanov's words have to be accepted at a face value: "Looking at the Sepulcher of our Savior, our minds were filled with joy. We forgot all the hardships of our travel. We knelt down and bowed before the Sepulcher. At that time we could not refrain from glad tears" (263).

To our regret Luk'yanov does not give us detailed records of the monetary system of the Ottoman Empire. He only writes that in Nezhin, Russia, he changed Russian money into *talers* (145), and again in Kiev he "changed money" (153).

The Ottoman Empire money is expressed in *talers* and *efimok*, and in Palestine, in *kopeika*, *chervonnyi* and *para*.

5. *What he wrote*

The most conspicuous feature of Luk'yanov's «Journey» is that it differs from any work of this genre in Russian literature. It has a character of its own.

It is widely known that in the beginning of the twelfth century, Abbot Daniil undertook a journey to the Holy Land and wrote accounts of his travel. His work was extremely popular in Old Russia and became a standard of Russian pilgrimage. In Daniil's «Journey» more than 90 percents of the text is devoted to the descriptions of the countryside and structures pertaining to the Old and New Testaments. In Luk'yanov's «Journey» only a quarter of the text is dedicated to reporting his stay in the Holy Land. There is a convincing supposition that some parts of Luk'yanov's description of sacred places are only a rehash, or borrowing of the preceding pilgrimage.⁶

Luk'yanov actually paid a visit to the Kievan Lavra of the Caves, the Sophia Cathedral in Istanbul (which was reformed into a mosque at the time). He also made a tour to a series of other noted churches and monasteries. Without doubt, each time he was filled with deep emotion. However, it is obvious that in his writings the Holy Land and the Church remain in the background. In this sense his «Journey» may be said to belong to a kind of "travelogue" genre of literature.

⁶ K.-D. Seemann, op. cit. p. 373.

First of all, he had a secret mission. Apart from the stated purposes, what struck him most and what he recognized noteworthy was, in addition to the above-mentioned hardships of the travel, the compassion shown to his party on various occasions. While Luk'yanov and his companions were moving within Russia, he called by name almost all the people who offered lodging and food and wrote down in detail how these people entertained the party and even how they fed their horses oats and hay. When they arrived at Glukhov, the first posting station of Little Russia, Luk'yanov tells thus: "Townfolk from the towns of Kaluga and Belev received us with love.....their love was fiery.....they were more kind than kindred.... [and when the party was leaving the town] they accompanied us about 2 *verstas* out of the town and they shed sincere tears. We could not let them return home. It seemed that they wanted to say us "We would like to go together with you". As at last we parted from them 2 *poprisches* away and turned around, they still kept standing, making a bow to our back"(141-142). Such a scene was repeated at every town where there were friends and co-religionists.

Luk'yanov relates what he felt when he left Russia: "We had mixed feelings. We were glad, because we started for the holy places, but sad, because we were to enter a strange country, much more a heathen land" (153-154). Few records of the pilgrimage may be more subjective and emotional. The author's style of writing did not change fundamentally in Istanbul or Egypt or Palestine. In foreign lands, expressions of wonder, besides joy and sorrow, appear more often than in the home country. The high mountains of the Balkans and the wide, churning sea made deep impressions upon the Russians. When they met the pitchblack faced Arabs, they fell into a panic: "These people seemed to be beasts wanting to eat us" (226).

We cannot but agree with Prof. K.-D.Seemann, a German scholar, that Luk'yanov's heavily sentimental and subjective style shows traces of influence of the autobiography written by Avvakum, a prominent leader of Old Believers, who suffered martyrdom some twenty years before.

But Luk'yanov was not simply an imitator of Avvakum. In almost all the towns where the Russians happened to stay, Luk'yanov mentions topographical outlines of the towns and summarizes its specific features in relation to human geography. He often noted the price of each item of provisions. His attentions are obviously detected in the following paragraph: "On October 7th [of 1702] we arrived at the town of Romel (Ramleh) and lodged at the house for pilgrims. This house belonged to the Jerusalem Monastery. A monk lived here alone. Romel is a little bigger than Jaffa. It is situated in the midst of a field, there is nearby no river, no well. It is 15 *verstas* far from the sea. The town has been ruined by the Turks. But there is plenty of all kinds of things. There are in the neighborhood many villages. A bazaar is held twice a week. You can take for a *kopeika* as much grape as you like. The date is cheap. You can get 30-40 lemons for a *kopeika*. A basket of dried figs costs a *kopeika*, 8-10 eggs also a *kopeika*, but milk is expensive.....Because of the rich soil, baked bread is cheap, but when many pilgrims come together here, all kinds of food get dearer in price....."(241)

The descriptions of such trifles of every day life had been neglected in former pilgrimages. Luk'yanov's «Journey» may be regarded as a remote forerunner of modern documentary literature.