

Svetlana V. Bliznyuk

<https://orcid.org/0002-8533-0863>

Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia

svbliznyuk@mail.ru

DOI: 10.35765/pk.2020.3003.06

Russian Pilgrims of the 12th–18th Centuries on “The sweet land of Cyprus”¹

ABSTRACT

The era of the Crusades was also the era of pilgrims and pilgrimages to Jerusalem. The Russian Orthodox world did not accept the idea of the Crusades and did not consider the Western European crusaders to be pilgrims. However, Russian people also sought to make pilgrimages, the purpose of which they saw in personal repentance and worship of the Lord. Visiting the Christian relics of Cyprus was desirable for pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. Based on the method of content analysis of a whole complex of the writings of Russian pilgrims, as well as the works of Cypriot, Byzantine, Arab and Russian chroniclers, the author explores the history of travels and pilgrimages of Russian people to Cyprus in the 12th–18th centuries, the origins of the Russian-Cypriot religious, inter-cultural and political relationships, in addition to the dynamics of their development from the first contacts in the Middle Ages to the establishment of permanent diplomatic and political relations between the two countries in the Early Modern Age. Starting with the 17th century, Russian-Cypriot relationships were developing in three fields: 1) Russians in Cyprus; 2) Cypriots in Russia; 3) knowledge of Cyprus and interest in Cyprus in Russia. Cypriots appeared in Russia (at the court of the Russian tsars) at the beginning of the 17th century. We know of constant correspondence and the exchange of embassies between the Russian tsars and the hierarchs of the Cypriot Orthodox Church that took place in the 17th–18th centuries. The presence of Cypriots in Russia, the acquisition of information, the study of Cypriot literature, and translations of some Cypriot writings into Russian all promoted interactions on both political and cultural levels. This article emphasizes the important historical, cultural, diplomatic and political functions of the pilgrimages.

KEYWORDS: pilgrimages, crusades, Cyprus, Russia, Jerusalem, Byzantium, Christian relics, Orthodox church, Turks, itinerary, history, literature

1 This article was published in Russian in: Bliznyuk, S.V. (2020). Russkie palomniki XII–XVIII vv. o “sladkoi zemle Kipr”. [Russian Pilgrims of the 12th–18th Centuries on “The Sweet Land of Cyprus”]. *Izvestia. Ural Federal University Journal. Series 2: Humanities and Arts*, 22, 1 (196), 67–83.

STRESZCZENIE

Rosyjscy pielgrzymi XII-XVIII wieku o „słodkiej cypryjskiej krainie”

Czas wypraw krzyżowych był także epoką pielgrzymowania do Jerozolimy. Rosyjski świat prawosławny nie zaakceptował idei wypraw krzyżowych i nie uważał zachodnioeuropejskich krzyżowców za pielgrzymów. Jednak Rosjanie również starali się organizować pielgrzymki, których cel upatrywali w osobistej skrusze i uwielbieniu Boga. Nawiedzanie chrześcijańskich relikwii znajdujących się na Cyprze było pożądane przez pielgrzymów udających się do Jerozolimy. Opierając się na metodzie analizy treści całego kompleksu pism pielgrzymów rosyjskich, a także pism kronikarzy cypryjskich, bizantyjskich, arabskich i rosyjskich, autorka bada historię podróży i pielgrzymek odbywanych przez Rosjan na Cypr od XII do XVIII stulecia, genezę rosyjsko-cypryjskich stosunków religijnych, międzykulturowych i politycznych, a także dynamikę ich rozwoju od pierwszych kontaktów w średniowieczu do nawiązania stałych stosunków dyplomatycznych i politycznych między oboma krajami we wczesnej epoce nowożytnej. Począwszy od XVII wieku stosunki rosyjsko-cypryjskie rozwijały się na trzech płaszczyznach: 1) Rosjanie na Cyprze; 2) Grecy Cypryjczycy w Rosji; 3) wiedza o Cyprze i zainteresowanie Cyprem w Rosji. Grecy Cypryjczycy pojawili się w Rosji (na dworze carów rosyjskich) na początku XVII wieku. Znamy stałą korespondencję i wymianę posłów pomiędzy carami rosyjskimi a hierarchami cypryjskiego Kościoła Prawosławnego, która odbywała się w XVII-XVIII wieku. Obecność greckich Cypryjczków w Rosji, zdobywanie informacji, studiowanie literatury cypryjskiej oraz przekładanie niektórych pism cypryjskich na język rosyjski sprzyjało interakcjom na płaszczyźnie zarówno politycznej, jak i kulturowej. Niniejszy artykuł podkreśla ważne historyczne, kulturowe, dyplomatyczne i polityczne funkcje pielgrzymek.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: pielgrzymki, wyprawy krzyżowe, Cypr, Rosja, Jerozolima, Bizancjum, relikwie chrześcijańskie, Cerkiew prawosławna, Turcy, trasa podróży, historia, literatura

Pilgrimage to holy sites was an integral part of the life of a believer in the quest for spiritual perfection, spiritual exploits in the name of God and for the sake of one's soul's salvation in the eternal world. The peak of Western Christian pilgrimages to the East to visit the Holy Sepulcher took place during the Crusades. Crusaders themselves were considered by the West-Europeans to be pilgrims, and the participants did not see themselves in any other way as well. However, Russian and Byzantine people did not accept the idea of the Crusades. They did not understand and did not support it. They saw the Crusaders not as pilgrims, and their wars were perceived as ordinary war. More than once I happened to write about

the reasons for this lack of understanding and alienation of the Orthodox world from the world of the Crusaders (Bliznyuk, 2006, p. 661–662; 2010, p. 80; 2014, pp. 24–25; 2017). This does not mean that Russian Orthodox Christians rejected the idea of making pilgrimages to the cradle of Christianity in Jerusalem, and to the Holy Sepulcher on their way to the God; they desired to attain salvation just as their Western European counterparts did, and they were looking for a way to salvation, too. However, the methods of its achievement chosen by the Christians were very different. Russian pilgrims did not identify themselves with the crusaders, and they did not identify with the events happening as part of the Crusades. They did not belong to any social group or community of people united by the idea of the liberation of the Holy Sepulcher. The Rusich set off onto the journey for personal repentance, for the worship of the Lord, and not for the sake of receiving a reward from the Lord for his military service in the form of an absolution of sins and, finally, salvation.

Setting off on this trip, every pilgrim, whether Russian or Westerner, had a poor understanding of where, in fact, he was going, how far he had to travel, what means of travel he needed, and where Jerusalem exactly was. And if for the Westerner, the world of the Orient was acquiring more and more clear outlines after the beginning of the Crusades, then for the Rusich, it was a distant and largely unknown territory. Information about the expeditions of the crusaders and their kingdoms in the East reached Russia fragmentarily, and would be long delayed, very brief and not always plausible. In these tales and legends, however, there was an evident desire of the Russian people to reach Jerusalem to worship the Holy Sepulcher. *The Story of a Journey of John the Archbishop of Novgorod on a Devil's Back to Jerusalem* is an especially significant example. The story was written in Novgorod in the middle of the 15th century. It tells the story of how John the Archbishop of Novgorod forced a devil carry him to Jerusalem for one night and back mid-12th century: “The saint says, ‘Behold, for thy insolence I commanded thee: this night, you shall carry me from the Great Novgorod to the holy Jerusalem, and put me in the church where the Holy Sepulcher [is] and from the Holy City of Jerusalem, you shall carry me back to my cell’” (*Žitie svjatogo otca našego Ioanna*; Maletov, p. 386).² In the 18th century, a Russian Orthodox *peshehodets* [wanderer], Vasil Grigorovich-Barsky, conveyed his feelings brightly and vividly: “When I only saw the very walls of the city, I felt madly happy and forgot about my physical weakness, for by the grace of the Lord, my wish to reach it did come true” (*Stranstvija Vasilija Grigoroviča-Barskogo...*, vol. I, p. 308). Each pilgrim compared his impression of the Holy Land with biblical stories. He

2 All translations of source text quotations into English by Karolina Socha-Duško.

searched for what he had learned from the Bible, hagiography and perhaps the rare accounts of his predecessors who had been fortunate enough to visit the holy places. Thus, the Rusich followed his dream, his joy, and his reverent happiness which overflowed his heart when he saw Jerusalem.

The path of Russian pilgrims necessarily passed through Constantinople, so dear to the heart of every Russian person it was deemed a holy city, the city of cities, the *Tsargrad*. Many followed across the sea through the Greek islands: Lesbos, Chios, Rhodes, and Cyprus. The task of the author herein was to investigate the Cypriot-Russian contacts in the Middle Ages and Early Modernity, which laid the foundations for the establishment of permanent ecclesiastical, cultural and diplomatic relations between Russia and Cyprus well into Modernity and throughout contemporary history.

What did the Rus' people of the Middle Ages know about Cyprus? What attracted them there in the first place? What did they want to see and what did they see on the island? Finally, what place did Cyprus occupy in their ideas about the world, in their system of values, i.e., and how did they learn about the world of the Mediterranean?

The first mention of a Rus' person visiting Cyprus dates back to the very beginning of the 12th century, when the island was still in Byzantine hands, while in Syria, the Kingdom of Jerusalem had just emerged. This first Rus' was Abbot Daniel, probably a native of Chernigov, who later became the Bishop of Yuryevsk. He was not a simple lonely wanderer. He arrived in Constantinople, and then traveled to Jerusalem accompanied by a large retinue comprised of Kiev and Novgorod knights: "My whole squad were sons of Rus', and then there happened to be Novgorodians and Kievans" (*Žit'e i hoženie Daniila*, p. 10; Saharov, vol. I, p. 25).

The aforementioned source is the most complete and complex one among the Russian pilgrimage accounts. Modern historians collate and compare the stories of other pilgrims from Rus' with it one way or another. Many Russian people followed in Daniel's footsteps to worship the Holy Sepulcher. Some of them also wrote down their travel accounts. However, Daniel was the first to write about Cyprus and it was he who introduced it to Russian readers, drawing their attention to the historical, cultural and sacred spaces of the island. It was he who first told the Russian people about the attractions of Cyprus. Presumably, Daniel arrived on the island in May or June of 1106 and managed to see quite a lot there. He wrote about the Christian saints and the True Cross of St. Helena centuries before Leontios Machairas did. He was amazed how great, rich and densely populated the island was. He wandered the island of Cyprus from shore to shore and he honored the relics of St. Epiphanius, St. Barnabas, St. Zeno, and St. Tryphillius. He visited the True Cross brought by St. Helena, kept at the Stavrovouni Monastery, and he told of its miracles.

He accurately described the ecclesiastical system of Cyprus, noting that there was one archdiocese and twenty bishops. He briefly informed about the natural beauty of the island, enthusiastically describing the gathering of frankincense (*Žit'e i hoženie Daniila*, p. 10–11; Saharov, vol. I, p. 25). In order to honor St. Barnabas and St. Epiphanius, he needed to go to Salamis (Cobham, p. 20; Machairas, para. 30; Bliznyuk, 2018, p. 60, para. 30³). He could find the ashes of St. Zeno, the Bishop of Kourion (Machairas, v. 30), in the south of the island, having proceeded to the Limassol area. St. Tryphillius, according to Machairas, was a Bishop of Nicosia while St. Philagrius was a Bishop of Paphos (Machairas, v. 30). To honor the True Cross and the other relics left on Cyprus by St. Helena, Abbot Daniel needed to go to Stavrovouni (Vasilopotamos) and Tokhni (Ibid., v. 67, 68). Therefore, Daniel's route must have included all these locations. The pilgrim points out some of the details that are missing in the Cyprus chronicles, namely that Philagrius was baptized by the Apostle Paul, and that Cyprus kept a nail from the Holy Cross. Machairas does not mention this at all. This means that at the turn of the 15th century, when Machairas was writing his chronicle, the last relic was not on the island anymore. It could have been moved from Cyprus after the Frankish conquest in 1191, first to Constantinople and after the Fourth Crusade it could have come to the West, thanks to the enterprise of the Venetians and the crusading activity of the French King Louis IX. Thus, the Russian pilgrim recorded the situation as it was at the beginning of the 12th century.

Daniel first presents Cyprus to the Russian people not only as a holy island, where not only Christian relics were kept, but also where many miracles happened. His story about the miracle of the True Cross, which hangs in the air “in no way attached to the ground, but just like that, suspended in the air by the Holy Spirit” (*Žit'e i hoženie Daniila*, p. 10), at first glance may seem to be the author's mystification. Undeniably, he perceived everything that happened to him as a miracle. However, it is well known that in Byzantium there was a tradition of hanging up reliquaries instead of placing them on the floor or any other surface. Most likely, this is exactly what Daniel saw. Subsequently, the miracle of the “floating” cross was also noted by another Russian pilgrim–monk Zosima, who also added that this was the cross of the Penitent Thief: “And from there I went up to where the cross of the Penitent Thief is placed, suspended in the air” (*Hoženie inoġa Zosimy*, p. 23). The foreigner interpreted everything as nothing but a miracle and manifestation of divine power. For a Byzantine,

3 Further in the text, when quoting the chronicles of Leontios Machairas, we only specify the verse number [e.g., Machairas, v. 30], so that even in the translation of the chronicle [Bliznyuk, 2018] it will be identical to the numbering in other editions.

such a way of presenting a relic it was absolutely normal. Therefore, for example, the Cypriot-Byzantine Leontios Machairas did not notice anything supernatural in it and did not bother to write about it.

In the 17th-century Russia, the *Legend of Cyprus Island and the base of the Cross of Christ* was popular, which tells the story of a theft of the relics by envoys of the Pope, the loss of the relics for years to come, and their miraculous rediscovery (Belobrova, p. 83). It is interesting that this story's outline is consistent with the account by Leontios Machairas about the return of the relic. The Cypriot chronicler also tells of the cross being stolen by a Latin priest, in an attempt to take the relic west. A great storm supposedly forced the kidnapper back to the island, which was followed by the disappearance of the cross and its miraculous rediscovery thanks to dreams and signs (Machairas, v. 67, 69–70). The difference between the two stories lies in the details: in the first case, the relic was stolen on the orders of the Pope, in the second this was done by an unknown Latin priest. In the first version, the cross was missing for forty years, in the second one, for twenty-two years. In the first account, the cross was buried in the ground, in the second one, it was hidden in the crown of a tree. The first version has it that a voice and signs revealed it to a certain old man, while the second, to a young lad. It is important to stress, however, that the story of the miracle-working Holy Cross kept in the memory of Cypriots corresponded to historical works. It was the object of special pride, handed down from generation to generation, and its story was retold to foreign visitors and pilgrims.

Daniel spent many days on the island. He was undoubtedly accompanied by a Cypriot guide, who showed him around and told him about the island. This is supported at least by the fact that he could not have watched frankincense resin being collected, if we accept the view that he did arrive on the island between May and June. Therefore, he could only have received this information from the locals. It is also not without significance what language Daniel communicated in with the locals. Most likely, he or someone in his entourage spoke Greek, which became the language of communication, since it is almost impossible that they encountered a Rusich in Cyprus who would become their escort. This event, of course, would be first of all noted in the writings of the Russian abbot. Daniel is likely to be considered a pioneer in Russian visits to Cyprus. It was he who showed that Cyprus should be passed by on one's way to the Holy Land because of its particular importance as a holy place for the whole Christian world, and marked the beginning of the "Cyprus cycle" in the old Russian literature. It was Abbot Daniel who first showed the religious significance of Cyprus to the next generations of Russian pilgrims and who described the island itself, providing vivid and memorable

sketches about its natural beauty, ecclesiastical structure, inhabitants, and relics. It is no coincidence that the notes from his journey were so popular in Russia. More than 150 copies of his writings from the 15th and 16th centuries have survived to this day. No earlier copies have been preserved, however, they undoubtedly existed and shaped the views of many generations of Russian pilgrims, having become a kind of a guide for them. Other pilgrims followed in the footsteps of Daniel: Archimandrite Agraphenius (1370); Epiphanius the Monk (1415–1417), which is probably a moniker of a monk from the Trinity Monastery, Epiphanius the Wise, one of the most educated men of his time, the author of many works, including *The Life of Sergii Radonezhsky*, whose disciple he was (Maleto, pp. 60–61, 295); the Trinity Monastery hierodeacon Zosimas (1419–1422); hieromonk Barsanuphius (1461–1462); merchant Trifon Korobeynikov (late 15th cent.), Arsenyi Sukhanov (1652); hierodeacon Little Jonah (1649–1652); Ippolit Vishenskij (1707–1708); and Vasil Grigorovich-Barsky (1723–1747).

Of course, we should not exaggerate the importance of Cyprus for Russian pilgrims. Each of them was heading for the holy city of Jerusalem. Cyprus just lay in their path. And not every Russian pilgrim who visited Jerusalem and left a written account felt obliged to explore the monuments of Cyprus. Some of the pilgrims left only short geographical notes about the distance from Cyprus to Rhodes, Yaffa or Tripoli, sometimes only briefly mentioning the wealth of the island (*Skazanie Epifanija mniha...*, p. 2; *Hoženie arhimandrita Agrefenija*, p. 2; *Hoždenie svjašennoinoka Varsonofija...*, p. 1, 15; *Hoždenie kuptza Trifona Korobejnikova*, pp. 3–4; *Proskinitarij Arsenija Suhanova*, p. 29; *Povest' i skazanie o pohoždenii...*, p. 27). Some of them, however, stayed on the island, discovered it for themselves and shared their impressions: Monk Zosima, Ippolit Vishenskiy (*Puteshestvie Ieromonaha Ippolita Vishenskago...*, pp. 27–28), and Vasil Grigorovich-Barsky. However, all of Daniel's successors tell us about the royal, Venetian and Turkish Cyprus, but not the Byzantine one.

In the 13th century, with the beginning of the Tatar-Mongol invasion of Rus', the flow of Rusich pilgrims dropped sharply. The political situation was not conducive to long-haul travel across the land occupied by the Tatars. Ruthenian pilgrims did not reappear in Cyprus until around the turn of the 15th century which is when the new accounts of it date back from. The first of them was the Archimandrite of the Monastery of the Holy Virgin of Smolensk, Agraphenius, who visited Cyprus in 1370. His message seems to be too short and not worthy of attention at first glance: “From Rhodes to Cyprus 300. Cross of the Good Thief in the Cyprus island, and here much sugar is harvested. And from here sailed along Cilician and Pamphylian coast. From Cyprus to Yaffa 60” (*Hoženie arhimandrita Agrefenija*, p. 2).

Agraphenius says that they came to Cyprus from Rhodes, worked their way along the coast of Asia Minor to the Cilician waters. If they were sailing along the coast of Cilicia, then, most likely, they stopped in Cyprus in Famagusta. The pilgrims came to Cyprus shortly before the Cypriot-Genoese war of 1373–1374. They encountered absolutely no political complications in this respect. Consequently, Agraphenius and his companions arrived on the island before the coronation of Peter II of Cyprus as the king of Jerusalem, which was held in Famagusta in October 1370. It was then that violent clashes between the Venetians and Genoese took place, which soon led to the full-scale Cypriot-Genoese war of 1373–1374. They were aware of the existence of the Penitent Thief's cross in Cyprus. However, they hardly traveled outside of Famagusta to venerate it, since Agraphenius does not say a word about a trip around the island. In the 14th and 15th centuries, the cross of the Penitent Thief, the relics of St. Lazarus and St. Mammes of Caesarea were known to each pilgrim. Everyone who wrote about Cyprus in the Middle Ages and early modern times mentions them. But Agraphenius' note about the production of sugar in Cyprus deserves special attention. First of all, it is fully consistent with the data from the Cypriot and Italian sources. It was in the mid-14th century that Cyprus became one of the most important producers and exporters of sugar in the Eastern Mediterranean (Bliznyuk, 1998; Wartburg, 2000). Agraphenius was the only Ruthenian author who mentioned the Cypriot sugar. Moreover, if my assumption is correct, and Agraphenius did not travel outside of Famagusta, he saw the sugar on the market, and there he learned about his Cypriot origin. This means that Agraphenius indirectly confirms that Famagusta was the largest market for the sales of Cypriot products. He must have been greatly shocked to see in what quantities the sugar were sold, and hence produced in Cyprus; because in Rus' it was a product of exceptional rarity at that time.

Gradually, an idea began to form in Rus' of the rich Cyprus and its heroic history. In Russian annals there is a story of the capture of Alexandria by the king of Cyprus, Pierre I Lusignan in 1365, which all Cypriots were proud of, and which caused a storm of emotion and delight in all Western Europe (*Nikonovskaja letopis'*, p. 7; Priselkov, p. 382–383). The Russian historian says that in response to the capture of Alexandria by the Crusaders, the Sultan of Egypt gathered a large army and hit Antioch, Jerusalem, and other cities and regions of the Holy Land and Sinai, with all his might. According to the chronicles, this was followed by harsh persecution of Christians. Many churches and monasteries were pillaged, many Orthodox Christians killed, the patriarch of Antioch, Mikhail, lost his life, as did many bishops, archbishops and abbots. Many monks and clergymen were captured and enslaved. Of course, this was not at military

takeover of these cities. After the Roman Christians lost their lands in Syria and Palestine in 1291, they were under the rule of the Sultan of Egypt. The persecution afflicted Christians living in these areas. The strong oppression of Christians, the closure of Christian churches and the obligation of local Christians to pay ransoms to the Muslims, and people taken prisoner in Alexandria were reported by Arab authors (Mansouri, p. 6, 118, 119). Only the intervention of the Byzantine emperor, John V Palaiologos, who sent an embassy to the Sultan and paid a huge ransom for the captive Christians, amounting to 20,000 rubles, that defused the situation. Orthodox prisoners were released, and Christian churches re-opened throughout the country. The Sultan’s invasion of the Holy Land coincided with the total solar eclipse of August 7, 1366. Eyewitnesses, of course, saw this natural phenomenon as an omen, as it was recorded in chronicles (*Nikounovskaja letopis’*, p. 7; Priselkov, s. 383; Schreiner).

The Cypriot chronicles are silent on all these dramatic events. Russian chroniclers could get information about these events only from their compatriots who had visited Cyprus and the Holy Land as they happened. Such a pilgrim-informant for the Russian chroniclers could well be, if not Agraphenius himself, who was focused almost exclusively on the biblical and ecclesiastical history of the holy sites, but one of his companions. After all, they had visited Cyprus, spent a long time in Jerusalem, the Holy Land, in the Sinai and Egypt exactly at that time and must have witnessed these events. Thus, we see a vivid example of pilgrimage-making as being of not only the most informative, but also cultural and historical importance.

The history of contacts between Russia and Cyprus in the 15th century was most clearly reflected in the writings of another Russian pilgrim: the monk Zosima. Zosima made his journey to the Holy Land in 1419–1422. One can hardly agree with the hypothesis that V.G. Chentsova put forward that Zosima performed a specific official church mission and was sent for the sake of a resolution on the canonization from the Patriarch of Constantinople (Chentsova, 1997). Firstly, his destination was not Constantinople, it was only that his route went through the Byzantine capital, where he spent almost the entire winter of 1419–1420. Secondly, Zosima’s travel took a long time. He was clearly not in a hurry and was not dependent on anyone. He traveled all the Holy Land, where he stayed for nearly a year. Thirdly, his familiarity with Cyprus, which he visited in 1421 on his way back from Jerusalem to Constantinople, could not possibly enter that official mission plans. He allowed himself to remain in Cyprus as long as month and a half to calmly enjoy its cities and monuments.

He first arrived in Larnaca (Kition). Having honored St. Lazarus, the Penitent Thief’s cross and marvel, like his predecessor, Abbot Daniel, at

the incense collection technology, Zosima went to the capital of the kingdom of Cyprus, Nicosia. The text makes it immediately clear that he spent more than one day in Cyprus, and that he perfectly understood the political, ecclesiastical, and economic system of the kingdom. Zosima lists all major cities of Cyprus: Nicosia, Famagusta, Limassol, Paphos, and Kition (Larnaca). Of course, he visited the holy sites of Cyprus: the monastery of Kikkos and the tomb of St. Mammes the miracle maker. He, in principle, correctly observes that the entire island was controlled by the Frankish king, even though he may not have understood that Famagusta was in the hands of the Genoese. Therefore, he personally did not go to Famagusta. Zosima noted that there were only four Greek bishops in Cyprus, two of whom belonged to the white clergy and the other two to black clergy.

The sound of the organ in the Greek churches could not have failed to surprise Zosima (*Hozhenie inoka Zosimy*, p. 24). Unknowingly, he reported on the most important result of the long synthesis of Greek and Latin cultures in Cyprus, the interpenetration, and mutual infiltration of the two cultures in the state of the Lusignans. His observation is fully consistent with the data of Western pilgrims of that time, as well as modern research on the adoption of some elements of the Catholic liturgy, mystery, and music of the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus (Bliznyuk, 2016, pp. 688–690; Puchner). His remark that near Kyrenia there was the richest royal estate of Morphou,⁴ where sugar was produced and fruits of the carob tree were collected, is highly significant (*Hozhenie inoka Zosimy*, pp. 23–24). The confirmation of sugar production in Morphou is also found in Western sources (Bliznyuk, 1994, p. 91). Carob fruits were valued in the international market as highly as sugar, in the Middle Ages and in modern times alike (*Hozhenie inoka Zosimy*, p. 24; *Stranstvija Vasilija Grigorovicha-Barskogo...*, vol. I, p. 275; Mogabgab, p. 42, 46; Richard, p. 339).

So, in the late Middle Ages, Ruthenians had a viable image of Cyprus. The island was a “gate” to Jerusalem for the pilgrims. It was hard to pass by from a geographical point of view, and it was difficult not to notice, not to meet with the Christian relics and holy sites, that it was so rich that it caused a feeling of pride among the Cypriots themselves. It is no accident the most famous Cypriot chronicler, Leontios Machairas, begins his narrative with the story about the shrines, the many saints and the miracles of his native island. Thus, the worship of the Christian shrines of the island of Cyprus was a mandatory part of the “program” for many pilgrims on their way to the Holy Sepulcher and Jerusalem.

4 Morphou was in fact part of the royal domain.

Philippe de Mézières suggested a very accurate allegory of Cyprus. For him, Cyprus was a “bulwark of Christianity,” the gates of the East, the gateway to heaven, a purgatory (*Purgatoire*) before Paradise (Mézières, vol. I, pp. 109, 257–259), but not yet paradise itself. In order to enter into this paradise, that is, Jerusalem, each pilgrim had to pass through Cyprus, as an immortal soul passes through purgatory, to reach heaven. Russian pilgrims did not find such a precise metaphor for Cyprus and so clear to every Christian as de Mezieres did, but for them, the island surely was an important Christian site on the way to Jerusalem.

However, we can hardly speak about any permanent Russian-Cypriot relations in the late Middle Ages whatsoever. These were just random, sporadic contacts, first encounters and first impressions of each other. But it was exactly Ruthenian pilgrims of the Middle Ages who laid the foundations for further religious, cultural and later political relations between the two countries. A relationship differs from a contact in that it is: 1) reciprocated, and 2) regular. Thus, not only Russian pilgrims, the “wanderers” would find themselves in Cyprus, but the Greek Cypriots would visit Russia as well. Purely ecclesiastical contacts would be necessary to join the political relations and political interests.

The establishment of permanent Russian-Cypriot links, oddly enough, was facilitated by the Turkish threat and the Turkish conquest of the island in 1570. Russian tsars closely observed the expansion of Turkish power, that was then directly approaching their borders. The role of the first ambassadors could well have been played by merchants, who also acted both as diplomats and pilgrims. The study of Cypriot-Russian relations from the 16th century one could be divided into three areas: 1) Russians in Cyprus; 2) Cypriots in Russia; 3) knowledge of and interest in Cyprus in Russia.

Among the Russian people of the 16th and 17th centuries, as before, there were many priests who ceased to be just pilgrims. Merchants, monks and representatives of the Church began to simultaneously perform diplomatic and representative functions. The church ties of Russia with Athos, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and Antioch were becoming permanent and regular.

One of the first Russian envoys in the East turned out to be a merchant, Trifon Korobeynikov, who was able to also visit Cyprus. In 1582, he was sent by tsar Ivan IV the Terrible to the holy sites for formal prayer for the soul of the eldest son of Tsar Ivan. According to the official version of the story, the tsar’s son died in 1581, and according to the unofficial one, widely distributed throughout Russia, he was killed by his father. The monarch generously supplied the Russian pilgrims with money, having donated 500 rubles for the construction of a church on Mount Sinai

alone. The manuscript contains an interpolation which refers to Cyprus. The text is largely congruent with the story of Abbot Daniel, the only difference is that it tells about the production of olive oil on the island and the Greek soap. In addition, Trifon notes that great ships arrived to the island and that intensive trading was conducted there (*Hozhdenie kuptza Trifona Korobejnikova*, p. 4). This observation is particularly interesting, because it was recorded only ten years after the Turkish invasion of the island. Therefore, the harbors, the international market and the production of traditional Cypriot goods continued to function as before. Vasil Grigorovich-Barsky, who visited Cyprus in the first half of the 18th century, also pointed out that the island actively exported wine and carob to Venice (*Stranstvija Vasilija Grigoroviča-Barskogo...*, vol. I, p. 275). It is not quite clear, however, whether Trifon visited Cyprus himself or if he wrote about the island as described by others. Concerning the collection of frankincense, he wrote clearly that he had only heard about it. He also reports about “nails” of the Holy Cross kept on the island, which he could not have actually seen, especially minding the plural form he uses! Did he even write the quoted text himself or was it written by an anonymous author or a copyist of manuscripts? The latter is more likely.

Whatever the truth was, the accounts about Cyprus itself and their accumulation in Russia, together with its reflection at the turn of the 18th century, are important for us here. In Russia the extraordinary importance of the geographical location of the island on the way to Jerusalem, its size and wealth were still remembered. The Turkish authorities did not interfere with visiting Cyprus or other Greek islands: Patmos, Lesbos, Chios, Crete or Rhodes (*Proskinitarij Arsenija Suhanova*, p. 20–31; *Putešestvie Ieromonaha Ippolita Višenskago...*, p. 20–26; *Stranstvija Vasilija Grigoroviča-Barskogo...*, vol. I–IV). Russia’s relations with Turkey were quite peaceful until the second half of the 18th century. Russian pilgrims experienced no problems passing through the Turkish territory. However, Arsenyi Sukhanov almost passed Cyprus on his way to Alexandria.

Let us look at the pilgrims of Peter the Great’s time: the Chernigov monk Ippolit Vishenskyi and Vasil Grigorovich-Barsky both chose to stay on Cyprus for a while and left rather detailed descriptions (*Putešestvie Ieromonaha Ippolita Višenskago...*, p. 27–29; *Stranstvija Vasilija Grigoroviča-Barskogo...*, vol. I, pp. 273–275; vol. II, pp. 243–334).

As traditional Russian pilgrims, they included details about the size of the island, the richness of its natural values and Christian shrines, about St. Lazarus and St. Spiridon, and the miracle-working icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary painted by the evangelist Luke. In the works of the mentioned authors, there is also information about the situation on Cyprus and the Cypriot population in the Ottoman Empire. Both report on the desolation

of the former Christian centers. According to Ippolit Vishenskyi, the island had only 24 monasteries, while over a hundred were abandoned. Grigorovich-Barsky counted more than 60 active monasteries. However, in many of them there were no more than 5–30 inhabitants. In the largest one, there was between 50 and 100 monks. He also confirmed the destruction and ruin of many monasteries, where the new conquerors were looking for treasures. The monks were forced to leave their monasteries and flee to the mountains and deserts (*Putešestvie Ieromonaha Ippolita Višenskago...*, p. 27; *Stranstvija Vasilija Grigoroviča-Barskogo...*, vol. II, pp. 244, 246–247, 250–252, 295, 326). A Metropolitan archbishop of Cyprus, Christodule, complained to the Russian Tsar Mikhail Romanov about the ruin of monasteries and the oppression of monks in 1626 (Belobrova, p. 89).

At the same time, Russian travelers noted significant changes in the system of ecclesiastical organization of Cyprus. Both pilgrims confirm the presence the Autocephalous Orthodox Church, controlled by the Metropolitan, on Cyprus: “To no patriarch they belong, they rule themselves” (*Putešestvie Ieromonaha Ippolita Višenskago...*, p. 27). In official letters, the Archbishop of Cyprus used red ink, he wore a purple robe, he would hold an apple and scepter as symbols of his power, and during Ecumenical Councils he would be sitting just below the Patriarchs (ibidem; *Stranstvija Vasilija Grigoroviča-Barskogo...*, vol. II, p. 315).

Thus, the Orthodox Church of Cyprus had changed dramatically compared to the Lusignan period. The Russian authors mention four metropolitans, archbishops, bishops, archimandrites and abbots of monasteries among the hierarchs of the Church. The words for *metropolitan* and *bishop* for are synonymous for Ippolit Vishenskyi: he refers to a bishop as a metropolitan and vice versa. Grigorovich-Barsky says that the Church of Cyprus was controlled by the archbishop, whose residence was in Nicosia, and three bishops of Larnaca, Paphos and Kyrenia (*Stranstvija Vasilija Grigoroviča-Barskogo...*, vol. II, p. 249). Therefore, after the Turkish conquest of the island, the terms of contracts of 1220 and 1222, according to which the office of the Greek archbishop was abolished and the number of bishops was reduced from fourteen to four (Coureas, pp. 259–287; Schabel, Nicolau-Konnari, pp. 190–198), were completely abolished. Autocephaly, the supreme power of the Greek bishopate and the ancient structure of the Cyprus church was restored. At the same time, the structure, consisting of four metropolitans (bishops) with one senior among them, is very similar to the Roman Church system of the 13th–15th centuries with three bishops and an archbishop (metropolitan) standing above them.

It would seem that the Cypriot Orthodox Church was able to feel free and independent from the new rulers of the island. However, Russian pilgrims as if advise us not to hurry with optimistic conclusions. Immediately

after his narration about the Church, Ippolit Vishenskyi speaks vividly and emotionally about the heavy tax burden and per capita taxes imposed by the new conquerors on the entire island, including the hierarchs of the Orthodox Church. “On the island of Cyprus, everyone but the wives pay tribute to the Turks, of seventeen thousand; and as soon as a male child is born, they immediately impose a tribute; this is how the Turks abuse our people. This was told to us by Metropolitan John, that he pays a tax for his monks and priests and himself of one and a half thousand levs” (*Putešestvie Ieromonaha Ippolita Višenskago...*, p. 27). The payment of tribute money to the Turks (called *harach*, from the Arabic *haraz*) and in nature by all the Greek population, including the clergy, is confirmed by Grigorovich-Barsky: “Turks do a lot of nasty things, forcibly taking away food and drink.” Not paying the tribute was possible only by renouncing Christianity and accepting Islam. According to Grigorovich-Barsky, there were cases of Islamization of the local population in Cyprus (*Stranstvija Vasilija Grigoroviča-Barskogo...*, vol. II, pp. 244, 261, 324–325). In order to keep track of the population and to collect all the due taxes, everyone, which included foreign visitors, was issued with a kind of an identity card, a special “charter,” signed and sealed with five stamps, which indicated the gender, age, social status, appearance, faith and amount of payment. It was all done so no one could pass on the charter to another person. Having such a charter the holder was allowed to move freely across the country. Curiously, the charters differed in color. They could be white, red or yellow, depending on the year of issue. In addition, each man receiving one had to pay for it, depending on his social or economic status: “But it is issued differently, according to function and rank, for the rich or merchants for fifteen thalers, for the lower ones ten, for the poor for five, and for the poorest and oldest traveling, they are sold for three thalers” (*Stranstvija Vasilija Grigoroviča-Barskogo...*, vol. II, p. 325).

Thus, we see that from the beginning of the 12th century until to the middle of the 18th century, Russians went a long way in their learning about Cyprus, established strong contacts and relations with the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, and the local population. With the strengthening of political, economic, ecclesiastical and cultural power of the Russian state, visitors from the Orient would come to Moscow: Patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem, monks of Athos, Greek churchmen and laymen. Among them there are also newcomers from Cyprus. The first Cypriots appeared in Moscow shortly after the end of the Time of Troubles (“Smuta”) in the 1620s. Only from 1623 to 1652, according to the research by A. Belobrova, eleven delegations of Cypriots arrived in Moscow. They were seeking protection, patronage and financial assistance from the Russian Tsar (Belobrova, pp. 86–88). As a rule, they were monks and representatives of

the Church. However, laymen were also among them. At the same time, there was constant correspondence between Russian tsars and hierarchs of the Cyprus Orthodox Church, and an exchange of diplomatic documents and diplomats was taking place. Some documents and letters have been preserved in the Russian manuscript collections (Belobrova, p. 50). The establishment of bilateral relations between Cyprus and Russia, no doubt, contributed to a better mutual cultural acquaintance.

In the 17th–18th centuries, written accounts by Russians concerning their travels to the Holy Land were perceived in Russian society as literary and artistic works intended for reading for leisure. This explains the large number of surviving copies. It can be argued that works of Cypriot saints were already known in Rus’ in the 11th century. Especially popular among them was St. Epiphanius. He has been portrayed among other Fathers of the Church on an 11th century mosaic in the St. Sophia Church in Kiev. His dissertation *About the Twelve Stones* was included in the Miscellany of Prince Svyatoslav back in 1073, and his *Sermon on the burial of the body of Christ* was read during Church worship. In 16th to 17th century, the author was no less popular and widely cited in Russian literature (Belobrova, pp. 13, 21–22, 30). However, in reality, the Russian reader did get acquainted with Cypriot themes in literature before the 17th through 18th centuries, when the first translations of Cypriot stories into Russian appeared. In Russian manuscript collections, official letters and records from the chronicles of Pseudo-Dorotheus and Szymon Starowolski have survived that contain information about real events of the Turkish conquest of the island by Sultan Selim II from the Venetians (Belobrova, pp. 89–90, 92). Russian writers and translators of the 17th century first of all wanted to show the reader the heroism of the Cypriot military leaders, the victories of the Cypriot army overcoming incredible obstacles, dangers and cunning enemies. They selected such collections and passages from them that helped them form a literary image of the glorious and invincible Cyprus.

Thus, pilgrims from the area of Russia who visited the island in the Middle Ages and early Modernity, made an important contribution to the shaping of a positive image of Cyprus in Russia. The pilgrimages played an important cultural, historical and political role. After the Russian-Turkish war of 1768–1774 and the signing of the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji (1774) was founded in Cyprus in 1784 the first diplomatic representation—the consulate of Russia was founded and permanent Russian-Cypriot diplomatic relations were established. Clergy and monks were gradually replaced by diplomats and politicians, but Russian people’s interest in Cyprus remained unchanged.

SOURCES

- Bliznyuk, S.V. (2018). *Leontij Mahera i ego hronika «Povest' o sladkoj zemle Kipr»*. Moscow: Academia.
- Cobham, C.D. (1908) *Excerpta Cypria. Material for a History of Cyprus*. Cambridge: University Press
- Hozhdenie kuptza Trifona Korobejnikova, 1593–1594* (1889). In Hr. M. Loparev (Ed.), *Pravoslavnyj palestinskij sbornik*; vol. X. St. Petersburg.
- Hozhdenie svjashhennoinoka Varsonofija ko sujatomu gradu Ierusalimu v 1456 i 1461–1462 gg.* (1896). In S.O. Dolgov (Ed.), *Pravoslavnyj palestinskij sbornik*; vol. XV; ed. 3. Moscow.
- Hozhenie arhimandrita Agrefenija* (1896). In L. Archimandrite (Ed.), *Pravoslavnyj palestinskij sbornik*; vol. XVI; ed. 3; X. St. Petersburg.
- Hozhenie inoka Zosimy, 1419–1422 gg.* (1889). In: H.M. Loparev (Ed.), *Pravoslavnyj palestinskij sbornik*; vol. VIII; ed. 3; XXVI. St. Petersburg.
- Machairas, L. (1932). *Recital Concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus Entitled Chronicle*. Vols. I–II. R. M. Dawkins (Ed.). Oxford: Univ. Press.
- Mansouri, M.T. (2001). *Chypre dans les sources arabes médiévales*. Nicosia: Centre de Recherche Scientifique.
- Mézières, Ph. (de) (1969). *Le songe du vieil pèlerin*. Vol. I–II. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, publ. par. G.W. Coopland.
- Mogabgab, Th.A.H. (1941-1945). *Supplementary Excerpts of Cyprus*. Nicosia: Zavalli Press.
- Nikonovskaja letopis' – Letopisnyj sbornik, imenuemyj Patriarsheju ili Nikonovskoju letopis'ju* (1862). In A.F. Bychkov (Ed.), *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*; vol. IX; VIII. St. Petersburg: Eduard Prac.
- Povest' i skazanie o pohozhdenii vo Ierusalim i vo Tzar'grad Troickogo Sergieva Monastyrja chernogo diakona Iony po reklomy Malen'kago, 1649–1652* (1985). In S.O. Dolgov (Ed.), *Pravoslavnyj palestinskij sbornik*; ed. 42. St. Petersburg.
- Priselkov, M.D. (1950). *Troickaja letopis' . Rekonstrukcija teksta*. Moscow, Leningrad: AN SSSR.
- Proskinitarij Arsenija Suhanova 1649–1653* (1889). In N.I. Ivanovskij (Ed.), *Pravoslavnyj palestinskij sbornik*; vol. VII; ed. 3. St. Petersburg.
- Puteshestvie Ieromonaha Ippolita Vishenskago v' Ierusalim', na Sinaj i Afon (1707–1709 gg.)* (1914). In S.P. Rozanov (Ed.), *Pravoslavnyj palestinskij sbornik*; ed. 61. St. Petersburg: Pravosl. palest. o-vo.
- Sakharov, I. (1839). *Puteshestvija russkikh ljudej v chuzhie zemli*. Vol. 1. St. Petersburg: Izd-vo N. Vlasova.
- Skazanie Epifanija mniha o puti k Ierusalimu* (1887). In L. Archimandrite (Ed.), *Pravoslavnyj palestinskij sbornik*; vol. V; ed. 3; VI. St. Petersburg.
- Stranstvija Vasilija Grigorovicha-Barskogo po sujatym mestam Vostoka s 1723 po 1747 gg.* (1885). In 4 volumes. Ed. N. Barsukov. St. Petersburg: Typ. of V. Kirshbaum.

- Zhit'e i hozhenie Daniila, Rus'skyja zemli igumena, 1106–1107 gg.* (1885). In M.A. Venevitinov (Ed.), *Pravoslavnyj palestinskij sbornik*; vol. 3; ed. 3; XIII. St. Petersburg.
- Zhitie svjatogo otca nashego Ioanna, arhiepiskopa Novgorodskogo. Slovo 2-oe* (1876). In *Zhitija svjatyh*. Moscow.

REFERENCES

- Belobrova, O.A. (1979). *Kiprskij tsikl v drevnerusskoj literature* [A Cypriot Cycle in the Ancient Russian Literature]. Moscow: Science.
- Bliznyuk, S.V. (1994). *Mir trgovli i politiki v korolevstve krestonostsev na Kipre* [The World of Trade and Policy in the Crusaders' Kingdom in Cyprus]. Moscow: Moscow University Press.
- Bliznyuk, S. V. (1998). “La dolce vita” dei Genovesi a Cipro nel XV sec. In G. Airaldi (Ed.), *Le vie del Mediterraneo: idee, uomini, oggetti (secoli XI–XVI)* [The Mediterranean Ways: Ideas, People, Objects] (No. 1, pp. 117–126). Genova.
- Bliznyuk, S. (2006). L'idea delle crociate e la conquista nel pensiero russo. In G. Ortalli, G. Ravegnani, & P. Schreiner (Eds.), *Quatra Crociata. Venezia – Bizanzio – Impero Latino* [The Fourth Crusade. Venice – Byzantium – Latin Empire] (pp. 653–662). Venezia: Ist. Veneto di Scienze.
- Bliznyuk, S.V. (2010). Krestovyje pohody v drevnerusskoj literature: Kipr na puti ot Konstantinopolia k Ierusalimu [The Crusades in the Ancient Russian Literature: Cyprus on the Way from Constantinople to Jerusalem]. *Rossijskij istoričeskij žurnal “Rodina”*, 74–80.
- Bliznyuk, S.V. (2014). *Koroli Kipra v epohu krestovyh pohodov* [The Kings of Cyprus in the Epoch of the Crusades]. St. Petersburg: Aleteja.
- Bliznyuk, S.V. (2016). *Korolevstvo Kipr i ital'ianskie morskije respubliky v XIII–XV vv.* [The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Italian Maritime Republics from the Thirteenth to the Fifteenth Century]. Moscow: Academia.
- Bliznyuk, S.V. (2017). Krestonostsy i ich dejaniya v Konstantinopole i Svjatoj zemle v drevnerusskoj literature [The Crusaders and their Deeds in Constantinople and in the Holy Land in the Ancient Russian Literature]. In T.V. Nikitina (Ed.), *Istorija Gretsii v MGU im. M. V. Lomonosova* [A History of Greece in the Moscow Lomonosov State University] (pp. 137–162). Moscow: Izdatelstvo istoričeskogo fakulteta Moskovskogo universiteta.
- Chentsova, V. G. (1997). O prichinakh puteshestvija russkogo palomnika XV v. Zosimy na Khristianskij Vostok [On the reasons of Travel of a Russian Pilgrim Zosima to the Christian Orient]. In *Inostrantsy v Vizantii. Vizantijtsy za rubezhami svojego otechestva* [Foreigners in Byzantium. Byzantines in Abroad] (pp. 52–54). Moscow: Indrik.
- Coureas, N. (1997) *The Latin Church in Cyprus, 1195–1312*. Aldershot-Brookfield, Vermont.

- Maleto, E.I. (2005). *Antologija khozhenij russkih puteshestvennikov XII–XV vv.* [An Anthology of the Pilgrimages of the Russian Travelers in the 12–15th centuries]. Moscow: Science.
- Puchner, W. (2006). *The Crusader Kingdom of Cyprus – a Theatre Province of Medieval Europe?* Athens: Academy of Athens.
- Richard, J. (1977). Une économie coloniale? Chypre et ses ressources agricoles au Moyen Âge. In *Byzantinische Forschungen* V (pp. 331–352).
- Schabel, Ch. & Nicolau-Konnari, A. (Eds.) (2005). *Cyprus: Society and Culture 1191–1374*. Leiden, Boston: Brill.
- Schreiner, P. (2013). Byzanz und die Mamluken in der 2. Hälfte des 14. Jahrhunderts. In A. Simon, & Ch. Spinei (Eds.), *Orbis Byzantinus. Byzanz und seine Nachbarn* (pp. 363–369). București; Brăila: Academiei Române.
- Wartburg, M-L. (2000). Cane Sugar Production Sites in Cyprus. Real and Imagined. In *Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus 2000* (pp. 381–401).

Svetlana V. Bliznyuk – Dr hab., graduated from Lomonosov Moscow State University in 1985. In 1990 she defended her PhD thesis, and in 2016 her habilitation. Now she works as an associate professor of the Faculty of History of the Lomonosov Moscow State University, is an author of six monographies and numerous articles on the history of Cyprus and the Crusader states in Orient in the Late Middle Ages in Russian, Italian, English and German languages. She was a Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (Germany), a participant in numerous international and Russian scientific projects on the history of international relations and international trade in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Late Middle Ages.