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# THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CLERIC LEONTY (1726–1807) ABOUT HIS LIFE WITHIN THE BORDERS OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

SVETLANA KIRILLINA\*

In the last, the thirteenth volume of his memoirs, entitled “The Withered Wreath of Life” the Russian priest-monk Leonty wrote: “There is a time for things, ... and I found it necessary to crown my work of many years with a wreath of various flowers, i.e. the last book ... which I dedicate to the wise, pious, lenient, honest and assiduous reader. ... I hate to think that my work will remain unread as it happens with books which deject readers’ spirit and drag them into sheer boredom”.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately the author’s apprehensions regarding the fate of his writings were fulfilled. The name of Leonty whose life was closely connected with the Ottoman Empire is not well known to scholars let alone ordinary readers. His extensive autobiography has never been published<sup>2</sup> and is among the least utilized sources for historians in general and experts on the Middle East in particular.<sup>3</sup>

This paper focuses on the author and his autobiography as a historical and literary source with special attention to its four volumes – the first three containing the description of Leonty’s trip to Egypt and Palestine and the last one which sums up his long and exciting life.

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1 The thirteenth volume of Leonty’s autobiography: Leonty, *Uvyjadshij venec zhizni (The Withered Wreath of Life)*. Rossijskij gosudarstvennyj arhiv drevnih aktov (RGADA) (Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts), fond 188, inventory 1, file 377, 1, 3b, 95a.

2 Leonty (archimandrite), *Portret mladshego Grigorovicha (Portrait of Grigorovich the Junior)*. Arhiv vneshnej politiki Rossijskoj Imperii (AVPRI) (Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire), fond 152, Biblioteka Aziatskogo departamenta (Library of Asiatic Department), inventory 505, file 4 (vol. 1), files 7–14 (volumes 2–9).

3 At the beginning of the twentieth century, the church historian A.P. Popov came across Leonty’s work in the archives. He wrote a modest information booklet about the cleric and included into it several excerpts from the manuscript: A.P. Popov, *Mladshij Grigorovich. Novootkrytyj palomnik po sv. mestam XVIII veka (Grigorovich the Junior. A Newly Discovered Pilgrim to the Holy Places of the Eighteenth Century)*. Kronstadt, 1911. Eighty years later the Russian Ottomanist Pyotr Stegny republished part of the extracts from Popov’s brochure along with an introductory article and short commentaries: P.V. Perminov (pen name of P.V. Stegny), ‘Istorija zhizni mladshego Grigorovicha (otryvki)’ (‘History of the Life of Grigorovich the Junior [Fragments]’), *Puteshestviya v Svjatuju Zemlju. Zapiski russkikh puteshestvennikov XII – XX vv. (Travels to the Holy Land. Accounts of Russian Travellers of the Eleventh to Twentieth Centuries)*. Moscow, 1994, 300–318.

Leonty's memoirs as well as the scattered materials from the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire allow us to reconstruct his biography in detail. The future archimandrite Leonty, known before admission to monastic vows as Luka Zelensky, was born in 1726 in a Polish-Ukrainian family in the small settlement near the town of Poltava (currently in Ukraine). His village childhood and boyhood and his further life before the journey to the East was rather monotonous and unexciting. At the age of eighteen, looking for the possibilities of a better living and education he entered the Monastery of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in Poltava as a monastic novice. Three years later he took monastic vows and nine years after that he was ordained to the ministry as a priest-monk with the monastic name of Leonty.

In the eighteenth year of Leonty's stay in the convent his boring life made a sharp turn and became stormy. In 1763 he was sent to track down two runaway monks. He caught them before they reached the Black Sea shore, but instead of returning back to his home monastery he spontaneously decided to join them in the trip to Mount Athos. In spring 1764 Leonty left the place, boarded a Greek vessel and nine days later arrived in Alexandria. That was the beginning of his thrilling journey through the renowned holy places of Christianity in the Middle East and his face to face acquaintance with the Arab-Ottoman world. His Egyptian itinerary included Cairo, Rashid (Rosetta), Suez, the Sinai Peninsula with its famous St. Catherine's Monastery and Dumyat (Damietta). The same year Leonty was in Jerusalem.

When in Palestine, he followed the usual pilgrims' routes including the dangerous trip to the baptism site of Jesus Christ on the River Jordan. After his trip to the Levant, in autumn 1765, the Russian cleric arrived in Istanbul being quite sure that his homesickness would make him leave the city sooner rather than later. Anyhow, fate decreed otherwise. The chaplain of the church attached to the Russian Embassy had been stricken with paralysis and upon recommendation of the secretary of the Embassy Stepan Melnikov, Leonty was offered to replace the sick cleric. Leonty accepted the offer after getting the blessing of the superior Church dignitary – Metropolitan of Kiev and Galychyna and of All Minor Rus, Arseny Mogilyansky (1704–1770). Being deputy head priest of the church in the beginning, Leonty later, in 1775, became priest-in-charge.

That decisive move effected his life in every way. Leonty settled in the Ottoman capital which became his home for the rest of his days. He only left Istanbul for Russia twice and in both cases was forced to do that by the circumstances of wartime. During the first Russo-Turkish war of the era of Catherine the Great, the war of 1768–1774, he survived a short imprisonment in the Yedikule Fortress which was used by the Ottoman authorities as a place of confinement for members of the diplomatic staff of the enemy's country. Released from prison Leonty left for Russia and then returned to Istanbul in 1775 after signing the notable Kuchuk Kainarji peace treaty of 1774 which marked a defeat of the Ottomans. His second stay in Russia coincided with the Russo-Turkish war of 1787–1792. In 1788, when in St.

Petersburg, Leonty was honored with the title of archimandrite. As a matter of fact, it was certainly pleasing but a much delayed action because long before that, in 1767, Leonty got the same title from the Patriarch of Jerusalem Ephraim II (1766–1771).

In 1793 Leonty was back in the Ottoman capital, and six years later, in 1799, after 42 years of monastic and pastoral service he resigned with a decent pension from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and permission to live where he liked. Leonty's old friend from the Monastery of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in Poltava tried to persuade the cleric to return home and spend the rest of his days in the cloister, but Leonty preferred to stay in Istanbul.

He rented a modest flat and lived within his means. In case of financial difficulties he sometimes petitioned the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for material aid. In the last volume of his memoirs Leonty mentioned with profound gratitude two prominent state figures of that time who helped him to survive when he was short of money – the Russian Envoy Extraordinary in Istanbul Victor Kochubey (1768–1834) who held this post from 1792 till 1797 and the outstanding diplomat and State Chancellor Alexander Goloborodko (1747–1799).<sup>4</sup> The data derived from Leonty's financial register from 1803 show that the cleric, who was definitely not wealthy, did his best to support poor people: he donated alms for the old and needy, gave charity to the monasteries in Mount Athos and Istanbul. He also loaned money, gave presents to his goddaughters and didn't forget about his bodily needs sending servants to purchase tobacco and wine.<sup>5</sup> At the end of his life Leonty compared his existence with "a ship which was saved by God from sinking and led to a quiet harbour where it lay at anchor in smooth waters".<sup>6</sup>

When the new Russo-Turkish war of 1806–1812 broke out, Leonty was at his death's door. His last will and testament written by his legal representatives was if not falsified then heavily edited. It only bears the archimandrite's seal and there is no signature of his on it (the executors claimed that Leonty's right hand was paralyzed). None of his books and manuscripts was mentioned in his last will. Leonty passed away in Pera in 1807 at the age of eighty.

It is worth noting that the Russian Orthodox cleric was buried as a Protestant. An intricate story behind this unusual situation involved the Patriarch of Constantinople Gregory V (1745 or 1746 – 1821) and the Ambassador of Denmark Joseph Hübsch von Grostahl who represented the interests of Russian citizens in the Ottoman Empire during the war. The mercantile Patriarch claimed the inheritance of the deceased and didn't allow clerics to conduct the funeral ceremony until getting Leonty's belongings. The Danish diplomat didn't agree to the bargain and persisted in preventing the high-ranking cleric from reaching his aim. Since the wrangling

4 Leonty, *Uvjadshij venec zhizni*, 2a, 23b.

5 The Excerpt from Leonty's income and expenditure accounts (January 1, 1800–January 1, 1807) in Popov, *Mladshij Grigorovich*, 32–33.

6 Leonty, *Uvjadshij venec zhizni*, 27a.

over that issue led to a deadlock, he ordered to bury the monastic priest of the Russian Orthodox Church as a Danish citizen. Thanks to Hübsch's firm and principled stand Leonty's collection of books and manuscripts was handed to the Russian Embassy and in the late 1820s it was shipped to Russia.

Going back to the last twenty years of Leonty's life, it must be mentioned that in his advanced age the cleric painstakingly worked on his multivolume autobiography which he started to write in the mid-1780s. Leonty's literary hobby was warmly encouraged by the Envoy Extraordinary of the Russian Empire in Istanbul (from 1781 till 1789) Yakov Bulgakov (1743–1809), a connoisseur of literature and a skilful translator, who advised the cleric "to write persistently and with due diligence" and offered him his help in pre-reading and finding a publishing house.<sup>7</sup>

It took Leonty 18 years to complete 13 volumes of his memoirs from which only 10 volumes survived. The first three volumes are dedicated to the detailed and vivid description of Leonty's pilgrimage to the Holy Land. At the beginning of the thirteenth volume Leonty recollected with nostalgia that turbulent period of his life, retraced in his mind his dangerous and exciting journey to the holy places of Egypt and Palestine and thanked God for the chance to achieve the dream of his life.<sup>8</sup>

Two volumes (fourth and sixth) contain an account of his life in Istanbul. In these volumes Leonty provides us with useful information about the life and activities of the Russian Embassy in Istanbul and its connections with the Ottoman authorities. He also portrays the distinguished Russian diplomats of that time including the above mentioned Yakov Bulgakov and Sergey Lashkarev (1739–1814), a member of the Asiatic Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His entire diplomatic career was connected with the Ottoman Empire and started from 1767 when he arrived in Istanbul as an interpreter. Leonty also wrote about Alexey Obreskov (1720–1787), Russian chief-resident in Istanbul in the years between 1751 and 1772 and Pavel Levashev (d. in 1820), a member of the Russian diplomatic mission in Istanbul and the right hand of Alexey Obreskov. The latter is known to the Russian reading audience as the author of "Letters from Tsargrad",<sup>9</sup> an overview of Ottoman history and the state of affairs in the Ottoman Empire published in 1789. It was fairly often criticized in Leonty's memoirs for its glaring inaccuracies and biased interpretations of the events.

Another four extant volumes (fifth, seventh, eighth and ninth) cover Leonty's above mentioned stays in Russia. The next three volumes (tenth, eleventh and twelfth) disappeared without a trace.

The last, thirteenth volume of Leonty's memoirs bears the date of 1803. Unlike other extant volumes which came down to us in handwritten copies, edited and prepared for publication, the last one is a rough draft with corrections and additions.

7 Popov, *Mladshij Grigorovich*, 61.

8 Leonty, *Uvjadshij venec zhizni*, 11b–12a.

9 P.A. Levashov, 'Caregradskie pis'ma' ('Letters from Tsargrad'), *Puteshestviya po Vostoku v jepohu Ekateriny II* (Travels to the East in the Era of Catherine II). Moscow, 1995.

Leonty's hand was involuntarily shaking while writing because of his age and the ink occasionally dripped from his pen leaving huge spots on the paper. Anyhow, his mind stayed clear and his faith remained deep and strong. It is obvious that sorrows and mishaps of Leonty's life as a traveller and a settled man wouldn't shake his belief in God and his pragmatic approach to the varieties of fortune as well as they didn't effect his irrepressible sense of humour which he retained throughout his life.

In one of the sections of the thirteenth volume entitled "About Old Age and Youth"<sup>10</sup> Leonty, a sentimental old man, recollected the innocent ignorance, irresistible temptations, unintentional misdeeds and foolish mistakes of careless and light-headed youth. Anyhow, nostalgia for his young days did not mean that Leonty failed to appreciate, as he put it, the "mature wisdom" of the advanced age which replaced the "illusory happiness of youth". Accustomed to the hectic public life in the diplomatic circles, retired Leonty at first felt at a loose end, but it didn't last long. He wrote: "A private life of a lonely man seems very dull, at least from the beginning, but time, brain work and patience are the best cure for boredom".<sup>11</sup> He pointed out that in spite of hardships of old age and deteriorating health which at times made him feel miserable he found in his writings the way to overcome the "idleness of existence". Further on he noted: "I am fully content with my current state. I could think of nothing else but writing day and night".<sup>12</sup>

Characterizing his autobiography, Leonty compares his work with "a trade fair" which is full of varied goods and where one can buy almost everything and at a reasonable price.<sup>13</sup> This metaphor gives insight into the style of Leonty's work which is both miscellaneous and excursive. It is a picturesque mixture of various facts and accurate observations, psychological sketches and verbose inner dialogues which provide a scholar with a lot of material about the writer's impressions and experiences in the Middle East. In his narration which is at times gripping and at times unbearably boring Leonty easily switches from one topic to another and from his usual flowery style to a plain manner of writing. What should be emphasized in the first place is that Leonty's writings are largely based on numerous fragmentary records which he was making during his lifetime.

Throughout his memoirs Leonty continuously calls himself "Grigorovich the Junior" seeing himself as a natural successor to the famous Russian traveller Vasily Grigorovich-Barsky who in the 1720s – 1740s travelled mostly about the Middle East. It is evident that Leonty's idea of writing an account of his life was largely inspired by the extensive diaries of Vasily Grigorovich-Barsky.<sup>14</sup> This travel account

10 Leonty, *Uvjadshij venec zhizni*, 48a–67a.

11 Leonty, *Uvjadshij venec zhizni*, 28b.

12 Leonty, *Uvjadshij venec zhizni*, 14b.

13 Leonty, *Portret mladshogo Grigorovicha*, vol. 2, 1, 2, 5, 140; Leonty, *Uvjadshij venec zhizni*, 86b, 94b.

14 V.G. Grigorovich-Barsky, *Stranstvovaniia po svyatym mestam Vostoka (The Travels to the Holy Places of the East)*. Part I, 1723–1727. Moscow, 2004; Part II, 1728–1744. Moscow, 2005.

was eagerly copied by voracious readers before it was published in 1778.<sup>15</sup> Long before it was published Leonty became familiar with its hand-written copy which was kept at that time in the library of the Monastery of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in Poltava. It is quite clear why Leonty entitled his autobiography "The Portrait of Grigorovich the Junior" and often called his distinguished predecessor "my big brother". Anyhow, a closer look at particular parts of Leonty's biographical opus allows us to assert that at least in the first volumes of his memoirs Leonty was hardly influenced by his "elder brother" in terms of Grigorovich-Barsky's exaggerative mode of writing and found pleasure in making fun of Grigorovich's addiction to the Old Church Slavonic language. Nevertheless, the last volume of Leonty's memoirs, written in his later years, is full of florid Church Slavonic phrases – a clear evidence of the author's long-term experience of preaching.

Leonty's range of duties in the church and his involvement in the life of the Embassy predetermined his wide network within and outside the diplomatic circles and provided him with multiple colourful and often unusual experiences significant for shaping his personality. A cleric he certainly was, in the very bone and centre of his soul, Leonty didn't display a colourable piety and blind devotion to his faith. His biographical opus reflects his cheerful disposition and sanguine temperament (he often calls himself a sanguine person), an incurably optimistic outlook on life and what is more, the spirit of the time born by the Age of Enlightenment. No wonder, Leonty's only biographer A.P. Popov, being a clergyman himself, blamed him for lack of a deep and solemn respect for "objects, persons and events dear to the heart of any Christian Orthodox".<sup>16</sup> Popov firmly believed that Leonty's irreverent attitude towards religious matters was due to the pernicious influence of the French Encyclopaedists on the writer as they "infected him with a spirit of an unforgivable thoughtlessness".<sup>17</sup>

In the course of time Leonty developed an evident interest in the ideas of the Enlightenment with its tolerance, rationality and open-mindedness.<sup>18</sup> During the

15 Vasily Grigorovich-Barsky, *Peshehodca Vasiliia Grigorovicha-Barskago-Plaki-Albova, Urozhenca Kievskago, Monaha Antiohijskago, puteshestvie k svjatym mestam, v Evrope, Azii i Afrike nahodjashhimsja, predprinjatoe v 1723, i okonchennoe v 1747 godu, im samim pisanoe* (A Journey of the Pedestrian 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). St. Petersburg, 1778.

16 Popov, *Mladshij Grigorovich*, 155.

17 Popov, *Mladshij Grigorovich*, 66–67.

18 The topic "Leonty and the French Encyclopaedists" attracted the attention of the Russian historian Tatyana Bakhareva. See T.A. Bakhareva, 'Leonty Zelensky o Vol'tere (idei francuzskogo Prosveshhenija v vosprijatii russkogo religioznogo myslitelja)' ('Leonty Zelensky about Voltaire [Ideas of the French Enlightenment in the Perception of the Russian Religious Thinker]'), *Mnogoobrazie religioznogo opyta i problemy sakralizacii i desakralizacii vlasti v hristianskom i musul'manskom mire* (Diversity of Religious Experience and a Problem of Sacralization and Desacralization of Power in the Christian and Muslim World). Saratov, 2005, part 2, 127–134; T.A. Bakhareva, 'Sud nad Vol'terom Leontija Zelenskogo' ('Trial of



decades of living in Istanbul, he learned Turkish, Modern Greek, French and Italian and could read books in the original. He devoted much time to reading the treatises of Voltaire, Diderot, Claude Adrien Helvetius and other key figures of the age of Enlightenment. According to Leonty, “he was a philosopher, i.e. an ardent lover of learning”.<sup>19</sup> In his old age he regularly continued to read the philosophical literature. An extensive passage of the thirteenth volume contains a review of the literary monument of the German Enlightenment – a book of the German essayist and translator Luise Adelgunde Victorie Gottsched (1713–1762) “The Triumph of Philosophy” (“Triumph der Weltweisheit”) (Leipzig, 1739)<sup>20</sup> as well as a sharp criticism of the quality of its Russian translation done by Andrey Nartov,<sup>21</sup> writer and famous statesman of the second half of the eighteenth – early nineteenth century.<sup>22</sup>

Following the steps of Grigorovich-Barsky in his journey to the East, Leonty, nevertheless, didn’t share his predecessor’s affectionate love for venerable antiquity and holy places of Eastern Christianity. He never displayed an avid interest in monuments and artefacts of the past. In the description of his journey through Egypt Leonty left a significant note: “To tell the truth, I am not looking for the statue of Cleopatra or its remnants, ... since I don’t find antiquities appealing”.<sup>23</sup> Mapping verbally the Holy Land Leonty drew a sketch rather than a detailed picture of the area with its multiple relics which inevitably attracted the attention of pilgrims. Both in the Holy Land and in Istanbul he mainly focuses on the phenomena that go far beyond typical, axiomatic travellers’ interests. His first priority is not material objects, ancient buildings and ruins but the daily life of the locals, the “ethnography” in its multifarious manifestations.

Anyhow, it took him some time to adjust to the new and alien world. At the beginning of his journey, when the priest-monk could only understand bits and pieces of Greek and Bulgarian, it didn’t take him long to become aware of enormous problems created by the language barrier. When in Mount Athos, preparing for the trip to the Levant, the priest-monk crammed a few dozen frequently used Arabic words and expressions. In Egypt he painstakingly enlarged his Arabic vocabulary despite evident difficulties with pronunciation of emphatic consonants. Leonty’s interest in communication with the local Arab speaking population was an exception to the rule. Most Russian pilgrims had no intention to pick up a smattering of

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Voltaire by Leonty Zelensky’), *Rossija i Francija: XVIII–XX veka (Russia and France: Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries)*. Moscow, 2009, 56–68.

19 Leonty, *Uvjadshij venec zhizni*, 171a.

20 Leonty, *Uvjadshij venec zhizni*, 115a–122a.

21 L.A.V. Gottsched, *Torzhestvo filosofii (The Triumph of Philosophy)*. A.A. Nartov (tr.), St. Petersburg, 1765.

22 Leonty, *Uvjadshij venec zhizni*, 115a–115b.

23 Leonty, *Portret mladshogo Grigorovicha*, vol. 1, 85.

Arabic, the language which, according to one of the travellers, "grated upon their ears like a dog's barking".<sup>24</sup>

As it was the case with many other pilgrim-writers of the previous generations, Leonty suffered a severe cultural shock when he came into contact with the Arab-Muslim world. When the Arab captain kicked him out of the vessel onto the wharf of Rashid and left him face-to-face with the locals, Leonty was horrified by their strange or, as he put it, "barbarous" appearance.<sup>25</sup> That is how later the priest-monk described a crowd of Bedouins that gathered at the foot of the walls of the Sinai St. Catherine's Monastery waiting for leftovers of the monastic meal: "These idlers were all ugly looking, scraggy, dark-skinned and blackish, with bare feet and bareheaded, a lot without belts and all of them without pants".<sup>26</sup>

When Leonty was more or less adapted to the Arab surroundings, he started to differentiate Arabs in accordance with their confessional affiliation by distinguishing Arabs, adherents of Christianity, from Arabs, the followers of the Prophet Muhammad. The traveller devoted special attention to Arab nomads who, in his frank opinion, were impoverished and humble but cunning and dodgy people. He made a comparison between Bedouins and gypsies bearing in mind a number of negative traits attributed to the latter. Anyhow, unlike other Russian pilgrims who sewed on Arab nomads a label of ungrateful beggars, shameless thieves and charlatans, Leonty was less straightforward and much accentuated in his statements. One of the leitmotifs of pilgrims' writings about Arabs, the theme of beggary and swindle can often be found in Leonty's memoir. Anyway, the priest-monk even tried to find justification for this improper conduct saying that Arabs "were thievish and inclined to robbery" because they lived in destitution.<sup>27</sup>

In contrast with the majority of Russian pilgrims who rarely if at all socialized with the nomads, Leonty spent a lot of time with Arab cameleers who accompanied him and his fellow travellers in their arduous trip to Mount Sinai. Leonty palled up with the chief-cameleer Mahmud, a Bedouin from one of the Sinai vagrant tribes. According to the traveller, Mahmud was not only a sly fox, but also a wise, helpful, amiable and good-natured person.<sup>28</sup> When in Sinai, Leonty spent some time in Mahmud's tribe and was fascinated by the innocence, simple-heartedness and hospitality of its members who acted as generous hosts. Summarizing his impressions, the Russian cleric wrote: "My lucid mind urges me to pay a tribute of respect to the Arabs for their goodness, open-heartedness, and hospitality. It doesn't mean that I am not aware of their vices. Anyway, when I was in Egypt, I didn't

24 I. Lukyanov, *Hozhdenie v Svjatuju zemlju moskovskogo svjashhennika Ioanna Lukyanova: 1701–1703* (*The Journey to the Holy Land of the Priest Ioann Lukyanov: 1701–1703*). Moscow, 2008, 305.

25 Leonty, *Portret mladshogo Grigorovicha*, vol. 1, 69.

26 Leonty, *Portret mladshogo Grigorovicha*, vol. 1, 197.

27 Leonty, *Portret mladshogo Grigorovicha*, vol. 1, 300.

28 Leonty, *Portret mladshogo Grigorovicha*, vol. 1, 169, 171, 275.

notice in these common people unblessed by the light of the New Testament a moral turpitude that I've found in some enlightened Christians".<sup>29</sup>

It is most likely that Leonty's pilgrimage record is the sole Russian pilgrim account which contains lengthy passages with colourful descriptions of the life in the nomadic hinterland. He wrote on this subject without a trace of antipathy or disgust and pictured the Bedouin mode of life in the tradition of pastoral bucolic writings. It goes without saying that Leonty's depiction of the Bedouins echoed the concept of the "noble savage" ("le bon sauvage" with a meaning of a man unencumbered by civilization) which was frequently used in the European literature of the eighteenth century.<sup>30</sup> It is rather peculiar that the above mentioned complimentary remarks regarding the human qualities of Arabs differ greatly from those which were made by other Russian pilgrim-writers.

In the same way, Leonty gave praise to those Turks who helped him to survive in the nasty circumstances of his exhausting journey. One of them shared bread with the traveller when he was starving to death on the ship which was lost in the sea on the way from Dumyat to Alexandria. "I will remember the kindness of my benefactor to the end of my life", wrote the pilgrim expressing gratitude for this good deed.<sup>31</sup>

The image of the Turks in Leonty's pilgrimage record is tightly bound to the theme of the Ottomans' ability to keep order in their domain as well as their competence and capability of local administration in the Arab lands. The cleric recollected how his vessel was saved by the Ottoman squadron from the attack of the Maltese pirates and without a shadow of any doubt he compared the Ottoman admiral, kapudan pasha, to St. Konstantin.<sup>32</sup> As the other Russian pilgrims, Leonty highly appreciated the role of the Turks in the organization of ceremonial processions and public worship in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. As he put it, the guards of the sanctuary, Janissaries, were fighters with muscles of steel; they possessed a good knowledge of Arabic and Greek and didn't hesitate to use their wips when it was needed. The cleric witnessed that without the help of the Turks it was impossible to properly conduct ceremonies in the overcrowded church and without them it could have turned into the "shelter of bandits".<sup>33</sup>

Expressing his approval of Ottoman efficiency in maintaining order in Jerusalem, Leonty, at the same time, didn't conceal his hard feelings when it came to

29 Leonty, *Portret mladshego Grigorovicha*, vol. 1, 300.

30 On the image of the "noble savage" in European literature and narrative sources of Modern times see, for example, F. Lestringant, *Le Huguenot et le Sauvage: L'Amérique et la controverse coloniale, en France, au temps des Guerres de Religion (1555–1589)*. Paris, 1990; W. Washburn, 'A Comparative View of the "Noble Savage" in English, Spanish, Portuguese and French Eyes', *La France – Amérique (XVIe – XVIIIe siècles). Actes du XXXVe colloque international d'études humanistes*. Paris, 1998, 531–538.

31 Leonty, *Portret mladshego Grigorovicha*, vol. 1, 390.

32 Leonty, *Portret mladshego Grigorovicha*, vol. 2, 436–440.

33 Leonty, *Portret mladshego Grigorovicha*, vol. 2, 281–282.

the restrictions imposed on Rum milleti by the Ottoman rulers. He expressed a burning indignation about the ban on building of new churches and multiple bureaucratic impediments to the reconstruction of the Christian houses of worship. He wrote: "All Greek churches ... are of sheer old age and most of them are in the state of decay and in need of renovation ... since the Greek pious hope is confronted with the Turkish fatuity for the reason that Muhammedan law prohibits to erect new churches on the site of those which collapsed or were destroyed by fire".<sup>34</sup>

For obvious reasons, Leonty had only a marginal interest in Islam. Dogmas and rituals of the alien religion were not among his major concerns. In the first three volumes of his memoirs Leonty did not write about any peculiarities of the Islamic doctrine as such, but mentioned the Muslim rituals which he himself eye-witnessed. For instance, describing the prayer of his Arab companion in the climb of Mont Sinai, the traveller mentioned qiblah mistakenly adding Medina to Mecca.<sup>35</sup> Being accustomed to the lavish decoration of churches, Leonty was astonished at the simplicity and minimalism of mosque interiors. As he wrote, he paid a visit to a tiny mosque on the top of Mont Sinai "out of curiosity" and, to his surprise, found only bare walls there.<sup>36</sup>

It is of interest to note that the traveller happened to take a look at a mosque which irritated Christians greatly despite its compact size. It is a small mosque located inside St. Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai Peninsula. Originally it seemed to have served as a monastery refectory which was converted into a mosque in the early eleventh century during the reign of the notorious Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim (996–1021). The monastery dwellers agreed to do that for fear of destruction of their abode. In the time of Leonty's stay in the Holy Monastery of Sinai, that mosque was not functioning and nobody was allowed to visit it. The curious cleric sneaked in, but he didn't realize at first that he was inside a mosque, or, as he put it, the "church of infidels". So, he took out a pencil and put his autograph on the wall, following the established pilgrims' custom to leave their names on the holy places. It was a profound shock for him to find out soon that he was "in the Turkish mosque, a chamber covered with Egyptian rugs and Persian carpets and hung with oil glass lamps none of which was burning". Horror-stricken at God's punishment, the fan of graffiti swore never to put his name on the walls of sanctuaries again.<sup>37</sup>

The Christian religious tradition is implicitly reflected in Leonty's travel account and this tradition expresses itself by the reproduction of stereotypes related to the perception of the image of the followers of different creeds. Defining the confessional and ethnic plurality of the Ottoman society, the cleric was as bigoted about the world beyond his homeland as were his Russian fellow travellers and Western European counterparts. Yet in Leonty's description, the image of the

34 Leonty, *Portret mladshogo Grigorovicha*, vol. 3, 386.

35 Leonty, *Portret mladshogo Grigorovicha*, vol. 1, 154–255.

36 Leonty, *Portret mladshogo Grigorovicha*, vol. 1, 257.

37 Leonty, *Portret mladshogo Grigorovicha*, vol. 1, 251–252.

Muslims is not transformed beyond recognition by the “distorting mirror” of Christianocentrism. The most common terms applied by Leonty to the adherents of Islam are neutral “Muslims”, “Muhammedans” and “slaves of the Prophet”.

It is significant to note that the Russian monk mentions the word “Saracens” (a term which was widely used by Western European travellers as a distinctively pejorative term) only in the historical context. For instance, he wrote about a certain “Saracen” who miraculously came to believe in Christ after watching the ceremony of the descent of the Holy Fire (sabt al-nur) in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and was burnt to death by his former co-believers. Leonty correlated that legendary episode with the rule of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem Sophronius IV (1579–1608).<sup>38</sup>

Leonty avoided predisposed epithets which were aimed at proving Muslims’ “moral and religious imperfection”. Unlike Russian pilgrim-writers who “demonized” Muslims, calling them “deuces”, “devils” and “sons of Satan”,<sup>39</sup> he used the comparison with “evil spirits” without any negative connotation. He jocularly called his Egyptian guide “un bon diable”<sup>40</sup> having in mind that the Muslim Arab was not a bad fellow, his qualities on the whole outweighed his defects and one could rely on him.

Being born and raised in the country where the Christian Orthodox community was the largest and prevalent over other confessions, Leonty was astonished by the multiplicity of Christian communities in the Holy Land. Defining the religious features of life in the Ottoman Empire and the ethnic plurality of its population, Leonty now and again turned his attention to the “Greek” theme. His adoration of Greeks was no exception from the standpoint of the majority of Russian pilgrim-writers who were pro-Greek orientated, spoke about their fellow believers with great respect and praised them highly for bearing and protecting the true Orthodoxy. At the same time, Leonty was unsurprisingly ambivalent about Arabs of the Greek Orthodox faith and their manners and customs. Speaking about non-orthodox Christians, especially Catholics and Armenians, the cleric usually expressed his critical stance rather harshly, willingly insulted them with hostile and sometimes very harsh characteristics and made biting and derisive remarks on the activities of non-Orthodox ‘heretic’ sects and their religious practices.

In the thirteenth volume Leonty didn’t specifically dwell upon the question of the confessional plurality of the Ottoman society. Anyhow, here and there he dropped broad hints of his extreme views regarding the abhorred Catholics. He

38 Leonty, *Portret mladshego Grigorovicha*, vol. 2, 329–330, 324.

39 For details see my article ‘Islam and its Adherents as they are represented in Russian Pilgrims’ Reports of the Eighteenth Century’, *Society and Economy in Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean 1600–1900. Essays in Honor of André Raymond*. Cairo-New York, 2005, 217–245.

40 Leonty, *Portret mladshego Grigorovicha*, vol. 1, 299.

labelled Islam a "Turkish stupid belief built on sand"<sup>41</sup> but he continued to be much gentler with Muslims than with his non-Orthodox Christian opponents. In any circumstances, his undisguised aversion to some of his religious antagonists or his ambivalent attitude towards other adversaries in matters of faith was inevitably predetermined by the Russian Orthodox perception of the world.

Leonty, an inquisitive person, a keen observer and an enthusiastic collector of new experiences, demonstrated a fairly good knowledge of the Middle East realities and recorded a wide range of personal observations of local inhabitants, their occupations and lifestyles, established beliefs, manners and customs. The Russian cleric expressed his avid curiosity towards the Ottoman lands with captivating frankness and openness. His curiosity and keenness of observation allowed him to see and depict the Ottoman society in its diversity.

The long saga about Leonty's life in the Ottoman Empire appears insightful, peculiarly ornate yet at times deliciously naive and, so as far as the Ottoman realm is concerned, it is a rich source of information regarding social, cultural and confessional issues. The latter is clearly evidenced by the contents of the 'Egyptian' and 'Palestinian' parts of Leonty's work.

All in all, two of Leonty's vital decisions, the first one – to go to the Mount Athos and then to undertake the pilgrimage to the Holy Land instead of going back to his home monastery, and the second one – to serve in the church of the Russian Embassy in Istanbul, shaped his further career, which was in many ways unique for a cleric of the Russian Orthodox Church of the eighteenth century. An unsophisticated provincial guy in the beginning, he rose to a higher position in the ecclesiastic hierarchy and became a man with a broad mental outlook and a wide range of interests due to his natural endowments, desire for knowledge and irresistible urge to satisfy his curiosity about everything new and unusual. Here we should bear in mind that an ecclesiastic career is not simply an ordinary occupation but in its broad sense it is a mode of life dominated by the major goal to serve God. And it's not surprising that monastic priest Leonty ended the last volume of the account of his long and remarkable life with praising God and an 'Amen'.<sup>42</sup>

41 Leonty, *Uvjadshij venec zhizni*, 110b.

42 Leonty, *Uvjadshij venec zhizni*, 177a–177b.