Master Thesis:

RUSSIA IN THE HOLY LAND:

ACTING UPON IMPERIAL RUSSIA'S SOFT POWER IN THE SCHOOLS OF THE IMPERIAL ORTHODOX PALESTINE SOCIETY (1882-1914)

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To my loving family

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Abstract

The decision of Ibrahim Pascha to allow foreign powers to open consulates in Jerusalem in the 1830s transformed the Holy Land into yet another scenario where the rivalries among the Great Powers for influence over the decaying Ottoman Empire could unfold. The pretext: the Great Powers' 'historical' and 'moral' role as protectors of Christian minorities under Muslim rule. Imperial Russia, as part of its self-understanding as the traditional benefactor of Orthodoxy in the Arab provinces and the heir of the demised Byzantine Empire, became engaged, through several institutions and with varied degrees of success, in the protection of Russian pilgrims and the wellbeing of local Orthodox Christian Arab communities in Palestine and the Levant throughout the long 19th century. Yet, the creation of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society in 1882 marked the beginning of a new chapter in Russo-Arab relations, by sponsoring, for the first time, the establishment of a strong network of schools that provided access to basic education to previously neglected communities and offered them the possibility to learn Russian. As tools for the projection of Imperial Russia's soft power across the Levant, the schools welcomed a diversity of students and teachers from the territories of modern-day Israel/Palestine, Lebanon and Syria. By analyzing the biographies of three individuals (Maria Cherkasova, Mikhail Naimy and Kulthum Ode-Vasil'yeva) my master thesis seeks to unravel the variety of perceptions and experiences of Imperial Russia's soft power among teachers and students of the schools, thus stressing the agency and capacity of negotiation of Arab subjects in the pursual of their own personal and collective goals.

Introduction

During the 19th century the Holy Land became the center of the attention of the Great Powers. On the surface, the 'Peaceful Crusade' of Western and Eastern European missionaries, scholars and archaeologists was precipitated by the growing interest in Bible studies, that often viewed the Bible as a historical source more than a religious text.[1] In practice, the opening of Jerusalem to European Christian powers in the 1830s, first under the rule of the rebellious Ibrahim Pascha and later tolerated by the Sultans,[2] allowed the Great Powers to project their rivalries onto their relations with local Christian communities and in the process transformed the Holy Land into a significant scenario of the so-called 'Eastern Question' over the Ottoman Empire,[3] famously dubbed as the 'sick man of Europe' by Nicholas I.

While the activities of all European powers in the Holy Land have so far received some scholarly attention, perhaps the case of Russia has been studied the least.[4] Even less studied have been the perceptions of local communities in the Holy Land of the missionary and charitable works undertaken by different European powers.[5] Consequently, almost no studies exist that address the question of the reception among Arab Christian communities of Imperial Russia's institutions and self-legitimizing discourses in Palestine, with the exception of Sadia

[1] The Invention of the Holy Land: " In *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations: From the Origins to the Present Day* edited by Abdelwahab Meddeb and Benjamin Stora. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013): 292. Available at:. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400849130-023
[2] Henry Laurens. *La question Palestine: l'invention de la Terre sainte (1799-1922)*. (Paris: Fayard, 2016): 65.
[3] John Broadus. 'Church Conflict in Palestine: the Opening of the Holy Places Question during the Period Preceding the Crimean War' *Canadian Journal of History 14*, n. 3 (1979): 407-409. Doi: 10.3138/cjh.14.3.395
[4] Elena Astafieva. 'Russian Orthodox Pilgrims in Jerusalem in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century: Between the Old City and "New Jerusalem"' *Acta Slavica Iaponica 40* (2020): 149–150. Available at: https://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/publictn/acta/40/pp.149-168.pdf
[5] Karène Sanchez Summerer and Sary Zananiri. Introduction to *European Cultural Diplomacy and Arab Christians in Palestine, 1918–1948: Between Contention and Connection.* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillian, 2021): 7-9.

Agsous' recent research on the former students of the schools of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society.[6]

My master thesis would like to fill this gap in academic literature, by analyzing the period in which Russian interests in the Holy Land were represented mainly by the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (1882-1914). In contrast to previous Imperial Russian institutions serving in the Holy Land, such as the Russian Consulate in Jerusalem (founded in 1858) or the Russian Ecclesiastical Missions (1847-1853 and 1858-1881) the Society became involved in the creation of a significant number of schools that served Orthodox Christian communities across Palestine and thus had more opportunities for interacting with local Palestinians than its predecessor institutions.

Remarkably, some of the members of this Society contributed to the development of Arab Studies, as part of Oriental Studies, later on in the Soviet Union, while other members remained in Palestine and helped preserve the real estate properties owned by the Society during the British Mandate, a contribution that has been greatly revalorized under Putin's regime.[7] [8]

Crucially, the schools of the Society, by providing basic education to young Christian Arab pupils, both male and female, rather unintendedly, enabled the emergence of a generation of scholars and intellectuals perfectly fluent in Russian and fully conversant with Russian literature and philosophy that, at the same time, still wanted to fulfill their aspirations for

[6] Sadia Agsous. 'The Palestinian graduates of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (IOPS) and the making of the native cultural Nahḍa' *Contemporary Levant 6*, n.1 (2021): 35-50. DOI: 10.1080/20581831.2021.1881714
[7] Nir Hasson and Barak Ravid. 'Israel Vacates Sergei Courtyard Ahead of Netanyahu's Moscow Visit This Week' March 22, 2011. *Haaretz*. Available at: https://www.haaretz.com/1.5140068 [Last accessed: August 31, 2021]
[8] Elena Agapova. 'Interview with Sergey Lavrov. Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society'. Moscow, July 25, 2016. Available at: https://www.ippo.ru/news/article/ministr-inostrannyh-del-rossii-sergey-lavrov-dal-i-402035 [Last accessed February 24, 2021]

national and literary autonomy from the decaying Ottoman Empire.[9] It is among these former students and teachers of the schools of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society that I would like to ask the question about their understanding of Imperial Russia's 'soft power', a concept developed by the political scientist Joseph Nye[10] and first applied to the diverse institutions that made up the 'Russian presence' in the Holy Land by Lora Gerd.[11] This will be the central question of my master thesis.

Methodologically and theoretically, in my thesis I would also like to consider the framework of 'histoire croisée', as described by Werner& Zimmermann (2006)[12] to make sense of the nature and timing of the exchanges between different Arab and Russian actors enabled by the schools of the Society. Thus I intend to show that the schools of the Society were a site of, yes, imperial and ethnocentric Russian aspirations, but also encounters capable of generating substantial and not necessarily unidirectional exchanges, where the agency and creativeness of the former Arab students and teachers cannot go unaddressed, but neither the possibilities for re-thinking and projecting Russian national and religious identity on the side of the founders of the Society and other Russian actors present in the Holy Land.

My argument will proceed as follows. Firstly, in Chapter 1, in order to contextualize the Foundation of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (1882) and the decision to create schools serving local Orthodox Christian communities I will present a chronology of the activities of different European powers and their sources of legitimization, followed by a

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[9] Agsous, "*The Palestinian graduates of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society*", 35-36.
[10] Joseph Nye. 'Public Diplomacy and Soft Power.' *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 616* (2008): 94-109. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/25097996.
[11] Lora Gerd. 'The Palestine Society: Cultural Diplomacy and Scholarship inLate Tsarist Russia andthe Soviet State' In *European Cultural Diplomacy and Arab Christians in Palestine, 1918–1948* ed. Karène Sanchez Summerer and Sary Zananiri- Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. (2021): 273-302. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-55540-5_15
[12] Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann. 'Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity.' *History and Theory 45*, no. 1 (2006): 30-50. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3590723.

discussion of the diverse Russian actors present in the Holy Land, as well as, very briefly, other areas of the Levant and the Christian Orient. Keeping an eye on all these previous developments is important to understand the inertias and biases, but also the innovations of the Society in respect to previous religious and state Russian enterprises and other European actors. Additionally, I think it is also interesting to situate the schools of the Society in relation to the political and social transformations that marked the transition from tsar Alexander II to Alexander III back home, in the Russian Empire. After all, the Society, in its membership, scholarship and organization was undoubtedly well connected to events and institutions in the Empire.

Having addressed these concerns I will then try to sketch the traits of Arab nationalism in the Levant provinces of the Ottoman Empire in Chapter 2, with a particular focus on the late 19th century and the early 20th century phenomenon of the 'Nahda' or Arab Renaissance, before the establishment of the British Mandate, in which Arab/Palestinian identity was being negotiated and students and teachers of the schools of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society resolutely participated.

After having discussed a vast amount of secondary literature and already introduced a few primary sources in the previous introductory sections, I will then proceed to analyze the work and biographies of three individuals, my case-studies, for which ample documentation exists in digital form, and whose lives were deeply influenced by their experience of the schools: Maria Chersakova (in Chapter 3), Mikhail Naimy (Chapter 4) and Kulthum Ode-Vasil'yeva (Chapter 5) . When interpreting their complex identities and biographies I will also introduce the biographies and works of other individuals that were connected more or less closely to them, as their collaborators, critics, classmates or professors, thus unravelling a wide polyphony of

often little studied voices. Besides fitting my travel limitations as a result of the ongoing Coronavirus Pandemic,[13] this choice of case-studies will hopefully help visualize the malleability of the categories 'student' and 'teacher' in the context of the schools of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society. At this point, I hope to be able to draw some meaningful conclusions and point out potential questions and approaches for the future, as well as make sense of the limitations of my master thesis.

Throughout this master thesis, the BGN-PCGN 1947 system will be used to transliterate Russian names and words in the footnotes and the main text.

[13] This master thesis has been written relying on mostly digital sources while the author resided in Japan, Germany and Spain. Sadly, under the current situation, it is extremely difficult to travel to Israel, the Palestinian Territories and the Russian Federation, where the majority of relevant physical archives are located.

Chapter 1: The Invention of the Holy Land

During the long 19th century the so-called 'Eastern Question' concerning the fate of the vast and weak Ottoman Empire preoccupied European state strongmen and ordinary observers alike. Though perhaps not framed as such until the aftermath of the Congress of Vienna (1815), with the rise of Egypt's provincial governor Muhammad Ali[14] and the Greek revolution (1821),[15] concise plans to conquer and divide the Ottoman Empire among European empires and states can be found as early as 1736 in the writings of Cardinal Alberoni of Spain.[16]

Yet, nowadays, historians still don't agree on the exact nature or even the start of the broad 'Eastern Question'. While Matthew Anderson, in his seminal work *The Eastern Question* published in 1960 understood the Eastern Question to have started already with the Russo-Ottoman War of 1768-74,[17] more recent historians like Malcolm Yapp in *The Making of the Modern Near East* (1987) see the Eastern Question primarily as the concern of Great Powers to keep their prestige and position of power, where it was recovery, and not decline, that was desired from the Ottoman Empire in order to stimulate 'national oppositions'.[18]

Among the many scenarios where the 'Eastern Question' unfolded perhaps one of the most enduring and where most European actors, not only Great Powers, could participate was the

[14] Huseyin Yilmaz. "The Eastern Question and the Ottoman Empire: The Genesis of the Near and Middle East in the Nineteenth Century" In *Is There a Middle East?: The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept* ed. Michael Bonine et al. (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2020): 12. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1515/9780804782654-006

[15] Lucien Frary and Mara Kozelsky. 'Introduction: the Eastern Question Reconsidered' in *Russian-Ottoman Borderlands: The Eastern Question Reconsidered* ed. Frary, Lucien & Kozelsky, Mara (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2014) 8.

[16] Frary& Kozelsky "*Introduction: the Eastern Question Reconsidered*", 3.

[17] Alec Lawrence Macfie. *The Eastern Question 1774–1923*: Revised Edition (2nd ed.). (Oxon: Routledge, 2014): 3-4. Digital version available at: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315841946

[18] Macfie, *The Eastern Question 1774–1923*, 3-4.

struggle for influence over the Holy Land, that is in the areas corresponding to the sanjak of Jerusalem, established in 1841.[19] While interest in the Holy Land, and the Levant[20] more generally, can be traced back to the time of the Crusaders (11th to 13th century) with some remarkable episodes during the 18th century,[21] the real catalyzer for missionary and charitable work in Palestine was without doubt the Egyptian Occupation, under the leadership of Ibrahim Pacha (1789-1848), son of Muhammad Ali (1770-1849). After Ibrahim Pacha gained effective control over all Syria and Palestine in 1832, he started a number of ambitious political reforms, including the granting of equal rights between Muslims and non-Muslims and the defeat of the nomadic Bedouin tribes that attacked local villages regularly.[22] Most importantly, under Egyptian rule, it became possible for Europeans to open consulates in Jerusalem and visit the Holy sites freely.[23] [24] Though by 1840 the Great Powers had sided with the Ottoman Empire

[19] It is important to note that while the term 'Palestine', a derivation of 'Philistine' was already used in the times of Herodotus (484-425 BC), the Crusaders preferred to refer to the area as 'The Holy Land', while later Mamluks and Ottoman administrations never used the term in daily life nor in their territorial organization. For Jewish communities the areas remained 'Eretz Israel', land of Israel. See Bernard Lewis. "Palestine: On the History and Geography of a Name." *The International History Review 2*, no. 1 (1980): 5-6. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40105058.
The sanjak of Jerusalem became independent from the eyalet of Dimashq al-Sham, centered around Damascus, in 1872, thus being renamed as Mutasharrifate of Jerusalem. This was a consequence of its commercial and geopolitical relevance. See Maria Chiara Rioli. "Prologue Nostalgia for an Invented Past and Concern for the Future: the Latin Diocese of Jerusalem from Its Reestablishment to the Second World War (1847–1945)". In *A Liminal Church* ed. Rioli, Maria Chiara. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2020: 26. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004423718_003
It also allowed its inhabitants to send one deputy to the Ottoman parliament in 1877-78 and three in 1908. The Mutasharrifate of Jerusalem plus the sanjaks of Nablus and Acre would later become part of the British Mandate after 1920. See Rashid Khalidi. *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010): 35.
[20] As a region, the 'Levant' was not identified until the late Middle Ages by Venetian merchants, that established trading operations in cities in what is nowadays Lebanon thanks to the Crusades. 'Levant' comes from 'lever', French for 'rise', sunrise and it is comparable to the Arab designation 'Al-Mashriq' ("Where the Sun Rises"). See Adam Zeidan. 'Levant' Entry in Encyclopedia Britannica .Available at: https://www.britannica.com/place/Levant [Last accessed: August 25, 2021]
[21] Besides the important and well-studied Invasion of Egypt by Napoleon (1798-1801) it is interesting to note that during the Russo-Ottoman War (1768-74) Russian troops temporarily occupied Beirut (1772-73). Beirut, a city on its way to become an important port of the Eastern Mediterranean, had already seen an increase in trade between Christian communities and European merchants during the 1750s and 1760s based on silk. Russia, with the aid of Greek rebels, tried to side with the Palestinian insurgent leader Zahir al-Umar (1689-1775) and the Egyptian leader Ali Bey al-Kabir (1728-1773) to establish an anti-Ottoman coalition. See Taras Yur'evich Kobishchanov. "Beyrut pod rossiyskim pravlenyem" *RUDN Journal of World History 10*, n. 4 (2018): 341-43. Doi: 10.22363/2312-8127-2018-10-4-338-354
[22] Henry Laurens. *La question Palestine: l'invention de la Terre sainte (1799-1922)*. (Paris: Fayard, 2016): 57-58.
[23] Laurens, *La question Palestine*, 57-58.
[24] The Russian Empire already enjoyed this right by virtue of the Peace Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774) that marked the end of the Russo-Ottoman War. In fact, Russia was authorized by the Ottoman Porte to open consulates

to stop Ali and Pacha's ambitions, and Ali was forced to content himself with the title of vice-king of Egypt, the consequences of the reforms introduced by the Egyptian rebels were had a long-lasting effect.[25]

At the same time, Christian minorities across the Ottoman Empire were gradually improving their rights and getting more official recognition. Marking the beginning of the Tanzimat Reforms (1839-1876) in 1839 the Hatt-i sherif (Noble Rescript) of Gülhane emphasized the need to pay taxes and the responsibility of all citizens of military conscription, thus recognizing for the first time, even of only implicitly, the equality of Muslims and non-Muslims and the right of non-Muslims peoples and their goods to be protected.[26] The rights of non-Muslims to organize themselves in religious communities, participate in Ottoman public life and have mixed tribunals not only guided by the shari'a (Islamic law) was ratified again by a *firman* (decree) of 1856.[27] By that time, Ottoman authorities were gradually becoming more tolerant of conversions to different religions within the empire and involving Ottoman subjects, influenced by the belief that the Ottoman Empire ought not to have a state religion.[28] Only apostasy from Islam (*irtidad*), which according to shari'a made apostates liable to execution, remained a contentious issue; still in the year 1843 there was a public officially sanctioned execution of an apostate of Islam, that caused concern among European observers at that time

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across the Ottoman Empire, not just Jerusalem, which she did in 1839 when a Russian consulate for Syria and Palestine was opened in Beirut. In what later ensured endless debates and controversies the treaty granted Russia the right to protect Christianity in the Ottoman Empire and build an Orthodox Church in Constantinople, thus becoming an example of 'Russian Skill and Turkish Imbecility' according to historian Roderic Davidson. It would later be invoked during the Crimean War (1853-56) to justify Russia's decision to enter the war. See Roderic H. Davidson. ""Russian Skill and Turkish Imbecility": The Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji Reconsidered." *Slavic Review 35*, no. 3 (1976): 463.Doi:10.2307/2495120.

[25] Laurens, *La question Palestine*, 61.

[26] Laura Robson. *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine.* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011):18.

[27] Robson, *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine*, 19.

[28] Selim Deringil. '"There Is No Compulsion in Religion": On Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire: 1839-1856' *Comparative Studies in Society and History 42*, n. 3 (2000): 551-557. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/2696645

and jeopardized Ottoman authorities strategy to present themselves as a modernizing force.[29] [30] For this reason, a strategy of converting Muslims to Christianity *en masse* was never pursued by any Great Power. Not even Muslim orphan children could benefit from Christian missionary efforts, as, under shari'a law, governors and laymen were expected to give properties and funds to create elementary schools for orphans near local mosques or madrasas.[31]

An important consequence of these developments and change in attitudes, added to the formal permission to be present in Jerusalem since 1839, meant that part of the strategy of European Powers to increase their influence in the Holy Land and indirectly over the Ottoman Empire consisted of defending Christianity and the interests of Christian communities, in all their diversity, across the Ottoman Empire and specifically in the areas of the Holy Land.[32] Such a strategy allowed Great Powers to re-read their history and religious convictions to justify their role as protectors of certain Christian communities, while at the same time the discipline of Biblical Studies, encompassing surveys of geology and biblical chronology, boomed across Europe, in a process that historian Henry Laurens has described as 'the invention of the Holy Land'.[33]

France, for example, was proclaimed as the protector of all Catholic religious men, regardless of their nationality, as early as the 1740 in a permanent capitulation[34] of the Ottoman authorities,

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[29] Shortly after the incident, the British ambassador at Constantinople at the time, Sir Stratford Canning, contacted Ottoman authorities warning that the incident was upsetting the Great Powers. See note 28 above.
[30] Selim Deringil. '"*There Is No Compulsion in Religion*", 550-551.
[31] Mahmoud Yazbak. "Muslim Orphans and the Sharīʿa in Ottoman Palestine According to Sijill Records." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient 44,* no. 2 (2001): 127. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3632324.
[32] Dominique Trimbur. 'A French Presence in Palestine – Notre-Dame de France', *Bulletin du Centre de recherche français à Jérusalem 3* (1998): 118. Digital version published June 11, 2008. Available at: http://journals.openedition.org/bcrfj/4122 [Last accessed: August 22, 2021]
[33] Laurens, *La question Palestine*, 57-58.
[34] In the Ottoman Empire a 'capitulation' was a special treaty that the Sultan signed with a foreign country to protect some rights of its subjects (rights to trade or to travel, for example) and exempt them from the shari'a. They were only responsible to the consuls of their countries. Thus, capitulations offered a sort of extraterritoriality

following a number of capitulations since the year 1536.[35] After the liberal policies of Muhammad Ali, France opened its delegation in Jerusalem in 1843 and a number of French Catholic Institutions were set up, such as the Sisters of St. Joseph (1851), the Frères des écoles chrétiennes (1867) and the Carmelites (1873) and the first group of French pilgrims to visit Palestine was created with the support of the diplomat Marquis de Vogüé in 1853.[36] The pilgrimage movement reached its climax during the 1870s, in a context of growing conservative values that sought to restore the social order after France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871).[37] These organizations emerged and succeeded thanks to the support of the newly founded Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem (1847) [38] led by Giuseppe Valerga (1813-1872).[39] [40]

At the same time, France still had a say on events unfolding in other areas of the Levant, such as Mount Lebanon and the sanjak of Damascus (modern-day Syria) thanks to its good relations to certain Christian sects, like the Maronites, who resided mostly in Mount Lebanon and were in communion with Roman Catholics since the 16th century, and the Syrian Catholics, usually

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that operated on the expectation of reciprocity. The capitulation system officially started in 1536 when the first capitulation was granted to France and after 1740, capitulations were made permanent, that is, it was no longer necessary that they were proclaimed again every time that a new Sultan came to power. See note 35 below.

[35] Buğra Poyraz. "The Definition and the Development of the Religious Protectorate of France in the Ottoman Lands", *Eskişehir Osmangazi Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi 8*, n.1 (2021): 285-292. Available at: .http://doi.org/1051702/esoguifd.812250

[36] Trimbur, "*A French Presence in Palestine*", 118-119.

[37] Trimbur, "*A French Presence in Palestine*", 118-119.

[38] Catholic communities in the Holy Land were usually referred to as 'Latins', as most of their religious services were delivered in Latin. In contrast, Orthodox communities following the Greek rite (not Armenians or Ethiopians) were often referred to as 'Greeks'.

[39] Valerga, who was appointed by Pope Pius IX, besides training future priests and co-operating with other 'Latin' organizations on the ground played an important role in the revival of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem, that originated during the First Crusade as an order that protected Popes and the sacred site of the Holy Sepulcher. See Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. '*History of Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem'* Website of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Available at: https://www.lpj.org/diocese/history.html [Last accessed: August 25, 2021]

[40] Rioli. " *Latin Diocese of Jerusalem from Its Reestablishment to the Second World War*", 27-28.

referred to as 'Uniates' following their 'Union' to the Roman Pope.[4142] Under the reign of Muhammad Ali, Maxim Mazloum's (1833–1856) was proclaimed Melkite patriarch of Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria, while he was based in Damascus, so that the Uniate movement grew stronger across the Levant, to Russia's and Greece's dismay.[43]

Missionary and archaeological work was also conducted by British actors in the Holy Land but, unlike other Great Powers, these emerged largely as an enterprise of evangelical Protestants, operating outside the structures of state power and clerical structures.[44] The first missionary group to arrive in Palestine was the Church Missionary Society, founded in 1799 by the 'Clapham Sect' within the Church of England, sought to evangelize local Christian populations, make them embrace 'true Christian beliefs' and abandon 'popish' Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity.[45] Another important British organization to reach Jerusalem was the *London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews*, founded in 1809 by a German who had converted from Judaism. After a period of intense planning and negotiation it started its proselytizing work among Jewish communities in Jerusalem.[46] This Society was responsible, with the support of Prussian missionaries and the Prussian state, of the creation of the first

[41] Lora Gerd. " Russia and the Melkites of Syria: Attempts at Reconverting into Orthodoxy in the 1850-s and 1860-s", *Scrinium 17* (published online ahead of print 2021): 2-3, Doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/18177565-BJA10038

[42] The 'Uniate Movement' gradually expanded among Syrian Christian Orthodox, following waves of missionary and proselytizing work by Jesuits, Capuchins, and Carmelites throughout the 17th and 18th century. In 1724 for the first time the position of Patriarch of Antioch was served by a Greek Orthodox Christian who had entered in communion with the Catholic Church, Patriarch Cyril Tanas with the support of the then French ambassador in Constantinople (See note 41 above). It is interesting to note that during Napoleon's Invasion of Egypt Maronite Christians in Mount Lebanon co-operated with the French Army, considering them their natural allies, and thus antagonizing their Druze neighbors, who chose to resist the invasion efforts. This is one of the reasons behind the rivalries between the two religious sects during the 19th century. See Alfred Schlicht. 'The Role of Foreign Powers in the History of Lebanon and Syria from 1799 to 1861' *Journal of Asian History 14*, no. 2 (1980): 98-99. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/41930375.

[43] Gerd, " *Russia and the Melkites of Syria*", 5-6.

[44] Laura Robson. 'Archaeology and Mission: the British Presence in Nineteenth- Century Jerusalem' *Jerusalem Quarterly 40,* n. (2009): 6-7. Available at: https://oldwebsite.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/jq-articles/40_Archeology_10.pdf

[45] Robson, '*Archaeology and Mission: the British Presence in Nineteenth- Century Jerusalem'*, 6-7.

[46] Robson, '*Archaeology and Mission: the British Presence in Nineteenth- Century Jerusalem'*, 8.

Protestant Bishopric in Jerusalem in 1841,[47] led by a rabbi that had converted to Protestantism.[48] In the world of academia, the 'Palestine Association' (founded in 1804) focused on the study of Palestine's biblical history and nature while the '*Biblical Archeological Society'* (founded in the 1840s) focused exclusively on Biblical Studies.[49] Finally, in 1865, the famous 'Palestine Exploration Fund' was founded. It performed relevant archaeologic and archival research, with a strong focus on the history of ancient Israel, while at the same time also serving British state and military interests by, for example, elaborating accurate maps of Palestine to be used in the defense of the Suez Canal.[50]

The Habsburg Monarchy, though governing over a large multi-confessional population, was perceived by external powers as a defender of Catholicism abroad.[51] After opening a consulate in Jerusalem in 1852 its presence in the Holy Land consisted mostly of the Austrian hospice in the Old City of Jerusalem, opened in 1863, and the Maltese hospice in Tantur, close to Bethlehem, opened in 1877.[52]

While not a Great Power at the time, Greece also deserves to be mentioned as a relevant actor in the Holy Land during the 19th century. Though the recently created Hellenic Monarchy[53] did not open a consulate in Jerusalem until 1862, Greek interests were strong and well-represented

[47] Yaron Perry. 'Anglo-German Cooperation in Nineteenth-Century Jerusalem: The London Jews' Society and the Protestant Bishopric' *Jewish Culture and History 4*, n, 1 (2001): 65-66. Doi:10.1080/1462169X.2001.10511953
[48] Perry, "*Anglo-German Cooperation in Nineteenth-Century Jerusalem*", 72.
[49] Robson, '*Archaeology and Mission: the British Presence in Nineteenth- Century Jerusalem'*, 9.
[50] Robson, '*Archaeology and Mission: the British Presence in Nineteenth- Century Jerusalem'*, 14.
[51] Barbara Haider-Wilson, 'Continuities and Discontinuities in the Austrian Catholic Orient Mission to Palestine, 1915–1938'. In *European Cultural Diplomacy and Arab Christians in Palestine, 1918–1948* ed. by ed. Karhène Sanchez Summerer and Sary Zananiri. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021. 305-306. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-55540-5_15
[52] Haider-Wilson, "*Austrian Catholic Orient Mission to Palestine, 1915–1938*", 305-306.
[53] It must be noted that Russia played a crucial role in ensuring that Greece was given autonomy and later full independence after invading Turkey and forcing Ottoman authorities to sign the Treaty of Adrianople (1829). This conflict, followed by the Crimean War (1853-56) and later on the Russo-Turkish War over the freedom of the Balkan nations (1877-78) helped strengthen Russia's self-proclaimed role as Europe's ultimate defender of Orthodoxy. See note 54 below.

in the Holy Land thanks to the Greek Patriarchs of Jerusalem, that throughout their history under Ottoman rule strove to retain a strong Greek charecter.[54] The language used among the members of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem was always Greek, despite the fact that the majority of Orthodox communities in Palestine were Arabic-speaking, [55] and all the religious leaders of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem were exclusively ethnic Greeks, something that naturally infuriated the non-Greek Orthodox, causing the so-called 'Orthodox Issue' (*al-qaḍy a al-urthudhuksiyya* in Arabic). [56] Occasionally, Greek clergymen would even ask the Greek government for financial and political support, [57] presenting their requests as a crucial contribution to Pan-Hellenist irredentism and 'the Great Idea' movement that sought to reclaim the territories of the former Byzantine Empire for Greece during the 19th century.[58] Interestingly, while denying Arab Orthodox their share of authority within the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and Constantinople, Greek irredentists, after the Greek War of Independence, started arguing that Orthodox Christian Arabs were no more than Arab-speaking Greeks (*al-yunan al-muta- 'arrabun* or Arabized Greeks in Arabic) , who had forgotten their native language, not ethnic Arabs, while the Christian Arabs contended they were descendants of Christian kingdoms of Hira and Ghassan or even descendants of Arameans.[59]

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[54] Konstantinos Papastathis. "Chapter 11 Arabic vs. Greek: the Linguistic Aspect of the Jerusalem Orthodox Church Controversy in Late Ottoman Times and the British Mandate". In *Arabic and its Alternatives* ed. Heleen Murre-van den Berg et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2020): 261. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004423220_012

[55] Papastathis, "*Arabic vs. Greek*", 262-263.

[56] Anna Hager. 'The Orthodox Issue in Jordan: The Struggle for an Arab and Orthodox Identity' *Studies in World Christianity 24*, n. 3 (2018): 212. DOI: 10.3366/swc.2018.0228

[57] For example during the 1880s after the creation of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, supported by the Russian Tsardom, whom they accused of plotting against the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem. See note 58 below.

[58] Denis Vovchenko."Creating Arab Nationalism? Russia and Greece in Ottoman Syria and Palestine (1840–1909)." *Middle Eastern Studies 49*, no. 6 (2013): 908-913. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/24585951.

[59] Derek Hopwood. *The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914: Church and Politics in the Near East.*(London: Oxford University Press, 1969): 27-28.

All these disputes had the understandable effect of alienating Arab-speaking Orthodox Christians in the Arab provinces and encouraging their identification with other Arab-speaking subjects, regardless of their religious identity. In the process, Ottoman authorities also proved their inability to mediate and manage the ethnoreligious diversity of their vast empire, and Arab nationalism, that challenged Ottomanism, gained momentum. The intellectual trajectory of Khalil Sakakini, briefly mentioned later in Chapter 4, can serve as a textbook example of this trend.

Last but not least there was Russia, perhaps the last Great Power to 'officially' join the game. It wasn't until 1858 that a formal Russian Consulate was opened in Jerusalem, more than ten years later than Britain (1838), Prussia (1842) or the US (1844).[60] Before that, between 1820 and 1838 only a vice-consulate in Jaffa, dependent on the Russian Embassy in Alexandria, represented Russian interests in the region. After 1838 Jerusalem fell under the jurisdiction of the Russian Consulate General in Beirut led by Konstantin Mikhailovich Bazili (1809- 1884).[61] Jaffa was chosen because it was the port through which most Russian pilgrims reached Palestine.[62] [63] As for the decision to relocate the consulate to Beirut the reason had most likely to do with commercial interests. During the revolt of Muhammad Ali in the 1830s the port of

[60] Irina Mironenko-Marenkova and Kirill Vakh. "Chapter 10 An Institution, Its People and Its Documents: The Russian Consulate in Jerusalem through the Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Empire, 1858–1914". In *Ordinary Jerusalem 1840–1940*. ed. Lemire, Vincent & Dalachanis, Angelos (Leiden: Brill, 2018): 202. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004375741_014

[61] Mironenlo-Marenkova& Vakh, "*The Russian Consulate in Jerusalem 1858-1914*", 202.

[62] Hopwood, "*The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914",* 15.

[63] A good primary source that can help understand the situation in Palestine during the 1820s and 1830s is the report by Dmitri V. Dashkov (1784-1839), adviser of the Russian Embassy in Constantinople, who arrived in Jerusalem via Jaffa in 1820. Upon his arrival in Jaffa, Dashkov noted the arbitrary rule of the pasha of Damascus Abdullah against all religious minorities, and particularly Jews, and the protection his mission enjoyed as Russian subjects from sheiks (local warlords) and abusive taxes, unlike other foreigners. Interestingly, Dashkov notes that there were barely any Catholic pilgrims in Jerusalem, despite their protection being assured by France. See Theophilus C. Prousis 'A Russian Pilgrim in Ottoman Jerusalem' *History Faculty Publications University of North Florida 32* (2017): 4-9.
Available at: https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1028&context=ahis_facpub

Beirut started trading more intensively with European countries, leading to a creation of a wealthy merchant class and the bypassing of Damascus as the center of Syria's international trade.[64] Damascus, that served as the nexus to Asia minor, lost in relevance after the 1840s, leading to more social unrest among the different ethnoreligious communities living there.[65]

From this delayed and hesitant 'official' Russian response it can be deduced that during the first decades of the 19th century, before the establishment of the First Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in 1847, the top concern of Russian authorities, led by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Count Nesselrode (1816- 1856) and chief architect of the Holy Alliance with Prussia and Austria, were pilgrims and commercial interests in the Eastern Mediterranean, not the weakening of the Ottoman Empire or a direct confrontation with other European powers, though this would change over the 1840s and 1850s, culminating in the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1853.

This is not to say, though, that Russia did not have any interests in the Holy Land and the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire previous to the Crimean War. On the contrary, claiming to be the historical protector of Eastern Christianity, Russian presence had been more less consistent for centuries across the Levant and the Russian Empire enjoyed a number of privileges in its relations to the Ottoman Empire that other Great Powers did not.

Lacking a 'Crusader' past to justify its role as guardian of Christianity,[66] Russia claimed instead that Moscow had become the 'Third Rome', the heir of Byzantium after Constantinople,

[64] Leïla Fawaz.'The changing Balance of forces between Beirut and Damascus in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée: Villes au Levant*, n°55-56 (1990): pp. 209-210. DOI : https://doi.org/10.3406/remmm.1990.2344

[65] Fawaz, "*The changing Balance of forces between Beirut and Damascus*", 209-210.

[66] In fact, during the 12th and 13th century the Northern-Eastern territories of the Kievan Rus', in what is nowadays Russia, were the target of the *Northern* Crusades, fought by an alliance of Catholic powers against the pagans in

the 'Second Rome', fell to the Turks in 1453.[67] The Tsars of the Grand Duchy of Muscovy, the only Eastern Christian dynasty not under Turkish rule at the time, came to see themselves as the successors of the Byzantine emperors, a claim they (and later historiography)[68] backed by citing the marriage between Grand Prince Ivan III (1462-1502) and Sophia Palaiologina (1449-1503), the niece of the last Byzantine emperor Constantine XI Palaiologos (1449–1453).[69]

All the while, the rise of the Grand Duchy of Muscovy as a center of political power went hand in hand with the development of Moscow as a center of religious authority following the creation of the Patriarch of Moscow in 1589, that contested the supremacy of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople over Eastern Orthodoxy.[70] [71] Seeing Slavs as somewhat

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the Baltic. This historical chapter has later been used and misused in later historiography, in Russian nationalist glorifications of the Knight Aleksander Nevskii (1220-1263) or attempts of projecting the Nazi ideology of 'Drang nach Osten' into the past. See Anti Selart. *Livonia, Rus' and the Baltic Crusades in the Thirteenth Century.* Translated by Fiona Robb. (Leiden: Brill, 2015): 2. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004284753
Also, it is very important to note that during the time of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, created by the Crusaders, the Orthodox Patriarchates of Jerusalem and Antioch were forcibly abolished and the patriarch were forced to relocate to Constantinople, thus exacerbating the friction between Western and Eastern Christianity after the Great Schism of 1054. See Hopwood, "*The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914",* 20-22.

[67] Theofanis George Stavrou. *Russian Interests in Palestine, 1882-1914: A Study of Religious and Educational Enterprise*. (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963): 7-8.

[68] In the 19th century the Russian thinker and monk Konstantin Leontiev (1831- 1891) played a crucial role in re-popularizing the myth of 'Moscow as the Third Rome' by arguing that the legacy of Byzantium, 'Byzantinism' based on the values of autocracy, orthodoxy and Roman law, had been crucial for sustaining Russian civilization and creating a true Russian identity, as opposed to 'Slavism', that lacked substance . See Julia Zlatkova. 2015. 'Byzantism and Slavdom: Political Ideology of Constantine Leontiev' International Scientific Conference: Cyril and Methodius: Byzantium and the World of the Slavs, Thessaloniki. Thessprint: Thessaloniki. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/37923396/Byzantism_and_Slavdom_Political_Ideology_of_Constantine_Leontiev [Last accessed: August 20, 2021]
Some authors argue that under Putin's regime we might be witnessing yet another revival of the myth of 'Holy Russia'. See Anna N. Klimenko and Vladimir I. Yurtaev 'The "Moscow as the Third Rome" Concept: Its Nature and Interpretations since the 19th to Early 21st Centuries' *Geopolítica(s) 9*, n. 2 (2018): 231-251. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/GEOP.58910

[69] Dana Picková. 'Roman and Byzantine Motifs in сказания о князях Владимире (the Tales of the Princes of Vladimir)' *Acta Universitatis Carolinae: Graecolatina Pragensia*, n. 2 (2017): 254. Available at: https://doi.org/10.14712/24646830.2017.23

[70] Stavrou," *Russian Interests in Palestine, 1882-1914*" ,9-10.

[71] The Ottoman conquest of Byzantium actually had the paradoxical effect of strengthening, and not diminishing, the political power of the Greek Patriarch of Constantinople by awarding him the title of *millet-bachi,* that is, head of the Christian millet across the Ottoman Empire responsible for taxing and administering justice. See John Meyendorff. 'Eastern Orthodoxy: Orthodoxy under the Ottomans (1453-1821)'. Entry at Encyclopedia Britannica. Available at: https://www.britannica.com/topic/Eastern-Orthodoxy/Orthodoxy-under-the-Ottomans-1453-1821#ref60460 [Last accessed: August 24, 2021]
This allowed Greek-speaking clergymen to dominate the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, at the expense of Arab-speaking clergymen. See Hopwood, "*The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914",* 20-22.

inferior and in need of education, the Greek Patriarchs were reluctant to acknowledge the Russian Patriarchs as equals, though the Greek Patriarchs of Jerusalem managed to maintain good relations with Moscow after the 17th century as a strategy to receive political and financial support while under Ottoman rule.[72] Russians, in turn, saw Greek Patriarchs with suspicion, particularly after the events surrounding the 'Raskol', when under the leadership of the then Patriarch of Moscow Nikon the so-called 'Old Believers' split from the Russian Orthodox Church in an effort to preserve pure ancient Greek rituals and counter Catholic influences in Russian Orthodoxy.[73] Nevertheless, throughout the 17th and 18th century Russian ordinary people continued to support Eastern Christian Churches in the Ottoman Empire through donations and by organizing pilgrimages[74] [75] while in Syria, the Russian Orthodox Church gave financial and spiritual support to Orthodox Christians and urged them, with varying degrees of success, to resist the 'Uniate movement'.[76]

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[72] Stavrou," *Russian Interests in Palestine, 1882-1914*", 11-12.
[73] Stavrou," *Russian Interests in Palestine, 1882-1914*", 10-11.
[74] Stavrou," *Russian Interests in Palestine, 1882-1914*", 16.
[75] The first Russian pilgrim to ever reach the Holy Land was Abbot Daniil in 1106-1108, followed by many more in the coming centuries. See Yoshikazu Nakamura. 'Some Aspects of the Russian Pilgrimage to the Mediterranean Sacred Places' *Mediterranean Studies Research Gruoup at Hitotsubashi University* (1988): 28. Available at: https://hermes-ir.lib.hit-u.ac.jp/hermes/ir/re/14800/?lang=1
In fact, as early as 1682 an agreement between the Ottoman Empire and Russia was reached to protect the safety of Russian pilgrims. See John Broadus. 'Church Conflict in Palestine: the Opening of the Holy Places Question during the Period Preceding the Crimean War' *Canadian Journal of History 14*, n. 3 (1979): 396. Doi: 10.3138/cjh.14.3.395
These pilgrimages, undertaken by people of all walks of life left an important literary legacy in Russian literature: the *bylinas* that romanticized the lives of the pilgrims and the landscapes of the Eastern Mediterranean, creating what Yoshikazu Nakamura has described as '*the only outer world that they* (Russians) *regarded with respect and aspiration*'. See Nakamura, "*Some aspects of Russian Pilgrimage*", 35.
It must be noted that after the abolition of serfdom in 1861 the number of Russian pilgrims traveling to Palestine acquired increased dramatically, up to 7,000 each year by the early 1900s. See Elena Astafieva. 'Russian Orthodox Pilgrims in Jerusalem in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century: Between the Old City and "New Jerusalem"' *Acta Slavica Iaponica 40* (2020): 163. Available at: https://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/publictn/acta/40/pp.149-168.pdf
[76] Unlike the Patriarch of Jerusalem, the Orthodox Patriarchates of Antioch and Alexandria offered religious services in Arab to the local communities and on diverse occasions asked foreign powers support to pay off their debts. Throughout the 17th and 18th century, the Patriarchate of Antioch struggled to pay for printing machines to produce liturgical texts and the jizya (poll tax) on behalf of indigent Christians, who otherwise risked converting to Islam. See Nikolaj Serikoff. "Chapter 11. Patriarch Macarius Ibn al-Zaʿim ميعزلانباسويراكمكريرطبلا: " In *The Orthodox Church in the Arab World, 700–1700: An Anthology of Sources* ed. Samuel Noble and Alexander Treiger (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014): 236-237. https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501751301-014
As a consequence of this, from 1652 to 1659 and from 1664 to 1670, Yuhanna Ibn al-Zaʿim (1600-1672) or Meletius, the metropolitan of Aleppo and later enthroned Patriarch of Antioch and All the East (as Macarius III, 1647–72) started a long journey through Eastern Europe to Russia to collect funds from the Tsar, accompanied

Before the creation of a proper Russian Consulate in Jerusalem, consistent with Russia's self-proclaimed role as the protector of Orthodoxy home and abroad, Russian state interests were represented in the Holy Land between the 1840s and the 1870s by another sort of institution that had no counterpart in any of the secular Great Powers: the Ecclesiastical Missions, that not only received orders from the Holy Synod,[77] but also potentially from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Asian Department of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Russian ambassador in Constantinople.[78] This should not come as a surprise, given the nature of the Russian state and its relations to the Orthodox Church until the outbreak of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. In fact, since 1824, the Procurator of the Holy Synod was awarded a Ministry and thus could attend the Council of Ministers and request imperial consent for Church decrees directly to the Tsar.[79]

The first of these Ecclesiastical Missions was established in 1847 under the leadership of Porfiriy Uspenskiy (1804-1885), who had previously had the chance to visit the Holy Land disguised as a pilgrim in 1843.[80] Uspenskiy in his report back to Russia described the neglect of Arab Orthodox communities at the hands of the Greek hierarchy, lacking schools, hospices and even churches in sanitary conditions, and the corruption of Greek clergymen while at the same time noting the advances made by Protestant and French Catholic missionaries converting

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by his son, Paul of Aleppo. Besides making contact with the Russian Tsar and meeting Nikon, the starter of the controversial 'Raskol' movement, Macarius and Paul also sought the support of some Romanian Principalities, like Wallachia. See Ioana Feodotov. "Chapter 12. Paul of Aleppo بيلحلا سلو: " In *The Orthodox Church in the Arab World, 700–1700: An Anthology of Sources* ed. Samuel Noble and Alexander Treiger (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014): 252-256. https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501751301-015
At the same time Macarius kept a secret correspondence with the Pope and the King of France and allowed Uniates to secretly perform their rituals in his church. See Serikoff, "*Patriarch Macarius Ibn al-Zaʿim ميعزلانباسويراكمكريرطبلا*", 237-238.

[77] The Holy Synod is the highest authority of the Russian Orthodox Church. It was created during the reign of Peter I (1672-1725), shortly after the Russian Empire was formally proclaimed in 1721.

[78] Mironenlo-Marenkova& Vakh, "*The Russian Consulate in Jerusalem 1858-1914*", 202.

[79] Hopwood, "*The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914",* 4.

[80] Stavrou," *Russian Interests in Palestine, 1882-1914*", 99-102.

former Orthodox Christians to other religions.[81] Upon the formal establishment of the Ecclesiastical Mission, Uspenskiy befriended the newly appointed Patriarch of Jerusalem, Cyrill II, in 1848 and founded a religious seminary for young boys that eventually failed, as the pupils that attended it later never had a chance of being accepted as full members of the Patriarchate[82] Uspenskiy's Mission, though being very unsuccessful in improving the conditions of Arab Orthodox and the life standards of Russian pilgrims in the Holy Land, influenced future Russian enterprises in the Holy Land by emphasizing the need to cooperate with Orthodox Christian Arabs directly and bypass the Greek hierarchy.[83]

The outbreak of the Crimean War (1853-1856) marked the end of the First Ecclesiastical Mission and also brought to the forefront the issue of the *Status Quo* over the Holy Sites, particularly the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem and the Basilica of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher,[84] though as has been argued by many historians, the War had more to do with France and Britain's interest in limiting Russian encroachment and, on the side of Russia, stopping a potential ideological revival of Napoleonic France.[85]

After Russia's disastrous defeat in the War, the strategy to extend Russia's influence over the Holy Land was reformulated to match the new geopolitical realities of a demilitarized Black

[81] Stavrou," *Russian Interests in Palestine, 1882-1914*", 99-102.
[82] Stavrou," *Russian Interests in Palestine, 1882-1914*", 99-102.
[83] Stavrou," *Russian Interests in Palestine, 1882-1914*", 99-102.
[84] The Church of Nativity in Bethlehem had been subject to disputes between Greeks and Latins since the time of the Crusades, when Greeks lost their privileged role among all the sects performing rituals in this Holy Site. A silver star containing inscriptions in Latin was at the origin of the conflict over the Church of Nativity. As for the Holy Sepulcher, the controversy was centered on a certain tapestry that was presumably stolen by the Greeks and the reparations of the rooftop, following a fire in 1808, that allowed the Greeks to claim ownership of the Basilica, which was previously claimed by the Latins. All the while, the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Majid tried to compromise between the two parties, to no avail, and France used the conflict to gain political leverage in its role of protector of the Latins and even threaten to send armed ships, even though the very Catholics she was supposed to protect, the Franciscan orders operating in Palestine, often suspected of her actual hidden goals. See Broadus, "*Church Conflict in Palestine: the Opening of the Holy Places Question*" 401-413.
[85] Brison. D. Gooch. 'A Century of Historiography on the Origins of the Crimean War.' *The American Historical Review* 62, no. 1 (1956): 33-38. Doi:10.2307/1848511.

Sea, in which Russia could no longer exercise any control. This did not imply, by any means, that Russian interests in the Holy Land became more modest. Rather, the start of the Second Ecclesiastical Mission (1857) initially led by Kirill Naumov alongside the 'Jerusalem Project' led by Boris Pavlovich Mansurov (1828-1910), at the service of the Naval Ministry was characterized by the emergence and expansion of a 'Russian Palestine',[86] best exemplified by the construction of the 'Russian Compound' outside the walls of Old Jerusalem.[87]

With the aim of keeping a remarkable Russian presence in the Holy Land but not upsetting the Great Powers, at the initiative of Grand Duke Konstantin, brother of the Tsar Alexander II, plans were made to transform the remaining military Black Sea fleet into a passenger fleet that could transport Russian pilgrims to the Holy Land under the newly created 'Russian Steam Navigation and Trading Company' (1856).[88] Seeing the potential for Russian pilgrims to become a source of non-military influence over the Holy Land and the Ottoman Empire, Boris Mansurov, at the service of the Grand Duke, became actively involved in the acquisition of large farm plots in Jerusalem and other locations to house pilgrims and start different forms of charitable work,[89] while also promoting the creation of a proper Russian consulate in Jerusalem and managing a Palestinian Committee specifically created to assist Russian pilgrims.[90]. It was precisely during the early 1860s that some of the most emblematic buildings symbolizing Imperial Russia were built in Jerusalem, such as the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity and some

[86] This concept, first coined by the historian Nikolai Lisovoy, is used to designate all the properties and institutions in which different Russian actors, religious and civil, became involved. See Nikolay Lisovoy "Palestinskoye Obshchestvo XIX-XX-XXI vv", Website of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society. Available at: https://www.ippo.ru/historyippo/article/imperatorskoe-pravoslavnoe-palestinskoe-obschestvo-200428 [Last accessed: August 18, 2021]

[87] Kirill A. Vakh. 'Ermete Pierotti in the Russian Service: New Biographical Discoveries' *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins 130*, n. 2 (2014): 194. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/43664933

[88] Elena Astafieva. 'Russian Orthodox Pilgrims in Jerusalem in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century: Between the Old City and "New Jerusalem"' *Acta Slavica Iaponica 40* (2020): 150. Available at: https://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/publictn/acta/40/pp.149-168.pdf

[89] Artyom Gravin. "B.P. Mansurov i sozdaniye Russkoy Palestiny (1857-1864) *Vestnik Tambovskogo universiteta Seriya Gumanitarnye nauki 14,* n. 183 (2019): 254. DOI 10.20310/1810-0201-2019-24-183-252-258

[90] Astafieva, "*Russian Orthodox Pilgrims in Jerusalem*", 160-161.

hospices in the Meydan plot near Jaffa Gate,[91] that soon became known as 'Moscobia' among locals.[92] [93]

Besides cooperating with the acquisition of lands, the Second Russian Ecclesiastical Mission also contributed to antagonizing Greek authorities and supporting Orthodox Arab clerics: already the unannounced arrival of the leader of the Mission, Kirill Naumov, in Jerusalem bypassed canonical laws.[94] The rivalries increased even further when in 1873, the then Russian Consul at Constantinople, the Pan-Slavist Nikolai Pavlovich Ignatyev (1832-1908) groundlessly confiscated the properties of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Bessarabia as a punishment for having dismissed Patriarch Cyril, who was often regarded as a Russophile, from his post at the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.[95]

Yet, despite the similarity of their objectives, the leaders of the Palestinian Committee (later renamed Commission) and the Ecclesiastical Mission had problems working together, due to their strong and uncompromising personalities, and as a result, the wellbeing of Russian pilgrims and local Orthodox Arab communities was often neglected.[96]

On a touristic trip to the Holy Land in 1871, Vasiliy Nikolaevich Khitrovo (1834-1903), the future founder and secretary of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, was greatly disappointed after observing the lack of political leadership among the official institutions

[91] Vakh, "*Ermete Pierotti in the Russian Service*", 197-198
[92] Astafieva, "*Russian Orthodox Pilgrims in Jerusalem*", 149.
[93] The construction of these very impressive buildings re-activated the myth that 'Moscobia' was an extraordinarily rich land among the local Arabs, a myth that had originated in the 16th century after the visit of the Patriarch of Antioch Joachim Doc in 1586 to Moscow. See Leonid Issaev and Serafim Yuriev. "The Christian Dimension of Russia's Middle East Policy" *Alsharq: ExpertBrief* (March 2017): 2 Available at: https://www.hse.ru/mirror/pubs/share/217045866
[94] Stavrou," *Russian Interests in Palestine, 1882-1914*", 43.
[95] Stavrou," *Russian Interests in Palestine, 1882-1914*", 52.
[96] Stavrou," *Russian Interests in Palestine, 1882-1914*", 54-55.

supposed to be serving Russian interests in the region.[97] Khitrovo also resented their narrow focus on just acquiring as many real estate properties as possible, as it brought little benefits to the majority of poor Russian pilgrims that traveled to the Holy Land and left local Orthodox Christian Arab communities unserved and at the mercy of the corruption of the Greek clergy.[98]

His impressions were so bad that Khitrovo decided to become personally involved in the creation of an organization that could serve Russian interests and values better in the Holy Land, as well as foster its academic and archaeologic study. To this aim, he began to read in depth about the history of the Holy Land and establish good relations with the last leader of the Second Ecclesiastical Mission, Antonin Kapustin (1817-1894)[99] Hearing that his Ecclesiastical Mission might be terminated in 1879, the initially reluctant Kapustin started to show more interest in Khitrovo's plans[100] and in 1880 accompanied him on his trip to the Holy sites, which resulted on the report "Orthodoxy in the Holy Land", published in Saint Petersburg in 1881.[101] Khitrovo was quick to realize that while in the 1840s 90% of all Christians in Palestine were Orthodox, by the year 1880 the percentage was around 67% only.[102] In the meantime, Khitrovo and Kapustin kept ongoing discussions on what the nature of this new organization should be; while Khitrovo envisaged a private committee based on the model of the British Palestine Exploration Fund, Kapustin thought that a Society inspired in the German Deutscher Palästina-Verein, comprising not only outstanding scholars but also members of the imperial family,

[97] Hopwood, "*The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914",* 100-101.
[98] Hopwood, "*The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914",* 100-101.
[99] Hopwood, "*The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914",* 101-102.
[100] Hopwood, "*The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914",* 101-102.
[101] Stavrou," *Russian Interests in Palestine, 1882-1914*", 60-62.
[102] Hannah Kildani. *Modern Christianity in the Holy Land.* Translated by George Musleh. (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2010): 128.

would have less trouble securing economic support and ultimately succeeding in its tasks in Palestine.[103]

Ultimately, it was a matter of luck what allowed Khitrovo's plans to prosper. After the assassination of Tsar Alexander II at the hands of members of the group Narodnaya Volya in 1881, Russian society and politics became increasingly more conservative, obsessed with Autocracy and Orthodoxy, and anti-Semitic.[104] The new Tsar, Alexander III, was surrounded by very conservative elements, most notably Constantin Pobedonostsev (1827-1907), the tutor of Alexander III and the procurator of the Holy Synod.[105] When Grand Duke Sergey Alexandrovich (1857-1905), brother of the former tsar Alexander II, visited Palestine to mourn his brother he became acquainted with Khitrovo and Kapustin and even took an edition of the journal that Khitrovo had created for the future Society, the '*Palestinski Sbornik'* (Palestinian Collection in Russian), that he showed to Pobedonostsev.[106] This unlike turn of events helped Khitrovo override the initial opposition of Boris Mansurov, leader of the Palestinian Commission at that time, who opposed the presence of any new Russian institution in the Holy Land other than his own.[107]

Thus, in 1882, the Society was formally established in Saint Petersburg and its leader became Grand Duke Sergey Alexandrovich. Khitrovo remained the secretary of the Society until his death in 1903. He was followed by Alexei Petrovich Belyaev (1849-1906) and eventually by

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[103] Elena Astafieva. ' How to Transfer "Holy Russia" into the Holy Land? Russian Policy in Palestine in the Late Imperial Period' *Jerusalem Quarterly,* n. *71* (Autumn 2017): 8. Available at: https://oldwebsite.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/jq-articles/Pages%20from%20JQ%2071%20-%20Astafieva.pdf

[104] After the assassination, the rise in anti-Jewish programs and the proclamation of the so-called 'May Laws' of 1882 forced many Jews to escape from Russia to the US, and to a lesser extent, Palestine. See Gregory Jenks. "Pilgrims and Powerbrokers: The Russian Fascination with Jerusalem." In *Postcolonial Voices from Down Under: Aboriginal and Migrant Roots, Religions, and Readings*. ed. Jione Havea. (Eugene: Pickwick, 2017): 86–87. Digital version available at:
https://www.academia.edu/9937722/Pilgrims_and_Powerbrokers_The_Russian_Fascination_with_Jerusalem
[Last accessed: September 7, 2021]

[105] Stavrou," *Russian Interests in Palestine, 1882-1914*", 102-106.

[106] Stavrou," *Russian Interests in Palestine, 1882-1914*", 102-106.

[107] Stavrou," *Russian Interests in Palestine, 1882-1914*", 102-106.

Alexei Dmitrievskiy (1856-1929), who also served as the official Chronicler of the Society until his retirement in the 1920s.[108] The Society was divided into three departments; the historian Dmitri Fomich Kobeko (1837-1918) was responsible for research and works related to the Holy Land, Feodor Petrovich Kornilov became involved in giving logistic and financial support to Russian pilgrims and Peter Alekseevich Vasilchikov was responsible for the support and creation of churches, parish schools and the protection of Orthodox interests in the Holy Sites.[109] Additionally, the Society opened several branches across the Russian Empire after 1885 that organized meetings and distributed brochures to inform peasants about the history of the Holy Land and Russian pilgrimage.[110] Some branches organized pilgrimages for Russian peasants living as far as Western Siberia![111]

Despite its imperial backing, the Society was independent from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Holy Synod, in contrast to previous Russian organizations in the Holy Land, and consequently, it did not get any material support from the Russian government, initially.[112] This forced the leaders of the Society to look for alternative sources of funding, such as the subscription fees of its members[113] and donations in all Russian churches on Palm Sunday, after getting the approval of the Holy Synod.[114] As the Society proved to be much more effective than the Palestinian Commission, led by Boris Mansurov, and the Ecclesiastical Mission, led by Antonin Kapustin, in its support of Russian pilgrims and the provision of education to Orthodox Christians in Palestine, eventually these two institutions were dissolved

[108] Kildani, "*Modern Christianity in the Holy Land"* 139-140.
[109] Hopwood, "*The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914",* 79.
[110] Astafieva, "*How to Transfer 'Holy Russia' into the Holy Land?"*, 12.
[111]Olga Petrovna Tsys' and Valeriy Valentinovich Tsys'. "Palomnichestvo zhiteley zapadnoy Sibiri v Palestinu v kontse XIX- nachale XX v." *Bulletin of the Orthodox St. Tikhon's University of Humanities 6*, n. 61 (2014): 73-90. Available at: https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/palomnichestvo-zhiteley-zapadnoy-sibiri-v-palestinu-v-kontse-xix-nachale-hh-v
[112] Kildani, "*Modern Christianity in the Holy Land"* 129-131.
[113] Which included prominent figures of the Russian aristocracy but also government officials such as surprisingly Boris Mansurov. See note 112 above.
[114] Kildani, "*Modern Christianity in the Holy Land"* 134.

and their functions were transferred in 1889 to the now *Imperial* Orthodox Palestine Society, following an Edict by the Tsar Alexander III.[115]

But in the process, the Society, so to speak, became a victim of its own success, as the change in name also affected its organization and inner workings. The Tsar now had the right to appoint the vice president of the Society and members of the Holy Synod and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had to be present in the councils of the Society.[116] The involvement of the Russian State in the organization of the Society only increased during the following years, as the Society became more accustomed to government loans and grants.[117] It also forced the Society to partially give up on its ideals, for instance, when it became involved in the construction of a Faustian hospice known as the Sergievskoe Podvorie (Sergei's Courtyard) in the Russian Compound in Jerusalem during the 1890s, which used up much of its space to welcome aristocratic Russian visitors, and not ordinary Russian pilgrims as Khitrovo would have hoped.[118]

Shortly after the foundation of the Orthodox Palestine Society (after 1889, Imperial) the first schools for local Orthodox Christian Arab communities were opened, nearly 40 years after Porfiriy Uspenskiy had tried (and failed) to do so, during the First Russian Ecclesiastical Mission. Starting almost from zero, by the outbreak of WWI about 11,000 Arab pupils had or were attending schools of the Society, spread among a total of 113 schools, across modern-day Palestine, Lebanon and Syria.[119] But the road to this astonishing success was not easy and it involved a lot of careful planning and compromises.

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[115] Kildani, "*Modern Christianity in the Holy Land"* 136-137.
[116] Kildani, "*Modern Christianity in the Holy Land"* 136-137
[117]. Kildani, "*Modern Christianity in the Holy Land"* 138-139
[118] Astafieva, "*Russian Orthodox Pilgrims in Jerusalem*", 166.
[119] Roman Alexandrovich Bliznyakov, and Sergey Stefanovich Shchevelev. "Prosvetitel'skaya deyatel'nost' imperatorskogo pravoslavnogo palestinskogo obshchestva na territorii palestiny v 1882-1917 gg." *Uchenye zapiski Krymskogo federal'nogo universiteta im. V. I. Vernadskogo Seriya 'Istoricheskye nauki' 67*, n. 4 (2015): 4. Digital version available at: https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/prosvetitelskaya-deyatelnost-imperatorskogo-

From the very beginning it became clear to Khitrovo and the other members of the Society that it was wiser to open schools relatively far from Jerusalem to escape the negative influence of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, that saw the schools and the Society in general as a continuation of the Second Russian Ecclesiastical Mission and therefore a threat to Greek interests in the Holy Land.[120] In contrast, the Patriarchate of Antioch, traditionally enjoying better relations with the Russian Empire, was much more welcoming, and encouraged the Society to open schools in Beirut and after 1895 in Damascus and rural Syria.[121] Though initially the Society tried to recruit teachers from Russia only, after 1886 Khitrovo and the rest of members of the Society, seeing how hard it was to convince experienced teachers from Russia to move to the semi-arid weather of Palestine, decided to train some of the students of the schools to become teachers at the Teachers' Seminary in Nazareth (for boys) and in Beyt Jala (for girls), with the consequence that in many rural schools, only Arab teachers, who taught mostly in Arabic, could be employed.[122] The school system was organized and supervised by Alexander Gavrilovich (Iskandir) Kezma (1860-1935), a former student of the Saint Petersburg Theological Academy.[123] Kezma also coordinated the translation and composition of Russian textbooks into Arabic, as well the acquisition of unbiased translations into Arabic of foreign textbooks by Western missionaries, in cooperation with other teachers, like Khalil Beydas.[124]

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pravoslavnogo-palestinskogo-obschestva-na-territorii-palestiny-v-1882-1917-gg/viewer [Last accessed: September 3, 2021]

[120] Bliznyakov& Shchevelev, "*Prosvetitel'skaya deyatel'nost' imperatorskogo pravoslavnogo palestinskogo obshchestva*", 5.

[121] Bliznyakov& Shchevelev, "*Prosvetitel'skaya deyatel'nost' imperatorskogo pravoslavnogo palestinskogo obshchestva*", 6.

[122] Hopwood, "*The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914",* 149-150.

[123] Hopwood, "*The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914",* 149-150.

[124] Abdul Latif Tibawi. "Russian cultural penetration of Syria — Palestine in the nineteenth century (Part II)" *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society 53*, n.3 (1966): 316-317. DOI: 10.1080/03068376608731962

Children aged three to six years could be admitted at elementary schools, where they were taught how to read and write, count and learn Russian and Arabic while playing. Once they became older, their curriculum included geography, drawing, singing, Orthodox religion and in the case of girls, sewing, as well as occasional non-gender-segregated classes of gardening and floriculture.[125] The school year lasted between six and seven months to avoid the extreme heat of summer[126] and, unlike the missionary schools of other Great Powers, textbooks and other school materials were free of charge.[127] In the Teachers' Seminary in Nazareth and in Beyt Jala additional subjects were taught, depending on the year and the available teachers, such as History, Religion, Arithmetic, Arabic, Russian, Greek, English and Turkish.[128]

In this, the network of schools created by the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society differed very little from the existing education system in the Russian Empire, after Dmitri Tolstoy's reforms in the 1860s. Tolstoy, concerned about the potential influx of subversive ideas, encouraged teachers of elementary schools to be selected among peasants trained in Teachers' Seminaries.[129] Religion class or the 'Law of God' was, in Palestine as in Russia, at the core of the curriculum of elementary schools.[130] Back in Russia, female education was tolerated, more than encouraged, and usually was intended as a preparation for girls to become future wives, so classes in needlework and house work were included.[131] Khitrovo in no way intended to

[125] Bliznyakov& Shchevelev, "*Prosvetitel'skaya deyatel'nost' imperatorskogo pravoslavnogo palestinskogo obshchestva*", 6-7.
[126] Bliznyakov& Shchevelev, "*Prosvetitel'skaya deyatel'nost' imperatorskogo pravoslavnogo palestinskogo obshchestva*", 6-7.
[127] Bliznyakov& Shchevelev, "*Prosvetitel'skaya deyatel'nost' imperatorskogo pravoslavnogo palestinskogo obshchestva*", 6-7.
[128] Bliznyakov& Shchevelev, "*Prosvetitel'skaya deyatel'nost' imperatorskogo pravoslavnogo palestinskogo obshchestva*", 6-8.
[129] Allen Sinel. "Educating the Russian Peasantry: The Elementary School Reforms of Count Dmitrii Tolstoi." *Slavic Review 27*, no. 1 (1968): 63. Doi:10.2307/2493912
[130] Sinel, "*Educating the Russian Peasantry*", 61-62.
[131] Christine Ruane Hinshaw. 'A source for the social history of late Imperial Russia: The 1895 primary school survey conducted by the Free Economic Society'. *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique 25*, n°4 (1984): 459. Doi : https://doi.org/10.3406/cmr.1984.2024

depart from this traditional roles but, after failing to recruit enough teachers from Russia for the school in Beyt Jala, a decision was made to create a Teachers' Seminary for girls with the same standards and requirements as the Teachers' Seminary in Nazareth for male students.[132] By doing so, Orthodox Christian Arab girls had more possibilities than attending secondary education than their Muslim counterparts, who accounted for the majority of the population in pre-Mandate Palestine and were not constrained by the milled system. In fact, there is only evidence of one state-owned secondary education school (*rushdiyya*) for women in pre-Mandate Palestine located in Acre, that opened in 1900, as well as few elementary education schools scattered across Palestine, both public and private.[133] The Society was thus involuntarily contributing to female emancipation among communities characterized by female seclusion.

[132] Hopwood, "*The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914",* 147.
[133] Ela Greenberg. "Educating Muslim Girls in Mandatory Jerusalem." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36, no. 1 (2004): 3-4. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3880135.

Chapter 2: Approaching the Emergence of Arab Nationalism in the Arab Provinces and the Reception of Imperial Russia's Soft Power

Having heard so far only about the ambitions of the Great Powers and their self-legitimizing discourses there remains the important question of what the 'beneficiaries' actually thought of the Great Powers and how they could work on all the attention (and instrumentalization) they were being subject to achieve their own political goals and aspirations.

This is indeed an emerging field of research, in which barely a few articles exist, compared to the academic literature that explores the intersect of Russia's geopolitical and religious interests in the Holy Land, which though recent, is receiving a lot of attention among Russian-speaking scholars.

With the exception of five academic articles published during the Soviet Period on Russo-Arab relations, mostly by former members or affiliates of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, no academic articles were published by Russian scholars in relation to the deeds of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society or Russian institutions in the Holy Land and its interactions with local Arab populations until the 1990s. The reason was a lack of available sources: it was only in 1991 that relevant archives in Moscow and Saint Petersburg could be visited freely by scholars.[134] Among them: the Archives of the Former Academy of Sciences in Saint Petersburg (containing writings by Porfiriy Uspenskiy and Alexei Dmitrievskiy, the chronicler of the

[134] Aleksandr Gavrilovich Grushevoy "Imperatorskoye pravoslavnoye Palestinskoye obshchestvo: obzor istorii s momenta osnovaniya do 1917 goda" *Vspomogatel'nye istoricheskiye distsipliny,* n. 32 (2013): 474. Digital version available at: http://www.spbiiran.nw.ru/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/%D0%B3%D1%80%D1%83%D1%88%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B9-32.pdf [Last accessed: August, 20, 2021]

Society and its schools), the Historical Archives in Saint Petersburg (containing the diaries of Antonin Kapustin) and the Russian State Library.[135] While a small collection of primary sources found in archives in Saint Petersburg were published under the title '*Syria, Lebanon and Palestine in the descriptions of Russian travelers, consular and military reviews of the first half of the XIX century*' in 1991 in Moscow, it took nine more years, until 2000, for a comprehensive collection of sources of all Russian institutions and organizations operating in Palestine to be published under the title '*Russia in the Holy Land. Documents and Materials'* by historian Nikolai Lisovoy, so that scholars that could not visit the archives in person could actually read relevant primary sources.[136] And they are still to be translated into any Western European language![137]

While finding primary sources in Russia might be challenging, trying to do research on Palestinian soil is an even harder enterprise, due to the circumstances in which the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society and its members were forced to stop their activities after 1914.

After the outbreak of WWI all members of the Society left Palestine either voluntarily or as prisoners of war and all real estate properties were left unattended.[138] Those that had not been sealed by the Italian ambassador were confiscated by Ottoman authorities and used for military

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[135] Yann Potin. 'Digging Jerusalem History in Russia' Open Jerusalem. September 10, 2016. Open Archives Jerusalem. Available at: https://openjlem.hypotheses.org/1061 [Last accessed: August 24, 2021]
[136] Grushevoy, "*Imperatorskoye pravoslavnoye Palestinskoye obshchestvo: obzor istorii*", 474.
[137] This makes the publication in 1963 of Theofanis George Stavrou's '*Russian Interests in Palestine 1882-1914: A Study of Religious and Educational Enterprise'* and his disciple Derek Hopwood's *'The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914: Church and Politics in the Near East'* in 1969 all the more exceptional. Often relying on personal connections with Soviet scholars, members of the former Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, and Russian émigrés living in the Jordanian part of Jerusalem, later part of the West Bank, that tried to preserve the former Society's real estate properties, Stavrou and Hopwood's pioneering works remain the most quoted among scholars trying to make sense of the works of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society and its schools, both inside and outside Russia, and by far the most outstanding contributions in the field by Western scholars.
[138] Lora Gerd. 'The Palestine Society: Cultural Diplomacy and Scholarship in Late Tsarist Russia and the Soviet State' In *European Cultural Diplomacy and Arab Christians in Palestine, 1918–1948* ed. Karène Sanchez Summerer and Sary Zananiri. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. (2021): 285-286. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-55540-5_15

purposes.[139] Once the British Mandate was established, the ownership of all the real estate became contested, as both the Soviet Union and the Russian Church Abroad claimed it for themselves and as British authorities were reluctant to settle for any of the two and preferred to rent them to Russian pilgrims and monks living in the area.[140] When the State of Israel was proclaimed in 1948, part of the real estate was returned to the Soviet Union and the Patriarchate of Moscow,[141] with whom it had good relations. As a consequence, when some secret archives were found in the Sergey Compound they were not given to the remaining members of the Orthodox Palestine Society still living in Palestine until 1948, who afterwards were expelled from the country, but kept by Israeli authorities and partly returned to the Soviet Union.[142] Though a major political victory for the Soviet Union against anti-Bolshevik forces, Stalin and later Khrushchev had little interest in the real estate properties of the former Society and in 1964 Khrushchev was ready to sold many of them (including the Russian Compound in Jerusalem or the buildings of the Nazareth Seminary and Sergey's Compound) to the state of Israel in exchange of oranges worth $3.5 million.[143] The Hostel for Women Marianskya Courtyard within the Russian Compound in Jerusalem was used as a prison under the British Mandate, where both Jews and Arabs were imprisoned. Later on, after the creation of the State of Israel, a Israeli Police detention center was opened and it still works today. It is known among Palestinians as 'Al-Musqubiya'.[144] Only the Sergey Imperial Hospice within the Russian Compound was returned as a real estate property to the Russian Federation in 2011,

[139] Gerd, '*The Palestine Society: Cultural Diplomacy and Scholarship*", 285-296
[140] Gerd, '*The Palestine Society: Cultural Diplomacy and Scholarship*", 287-289.
[141] Gerd, '*The Palestine Society: Cultural Diplomacy and Scholarship*", 290.
[142] Orthodox Palestine Society. 'History of the (Imperial) Orthodox Palestine Society'. Website of the Historical Orthodox Palestine Society in Jerusalem. Available at: https://ippo-jerusalem.info/item/show/299 [Last accessed: September 6, 2021]
[143] Russia in Colors. 'Orange Deal 1964'. Russian Palestine after 1917. Website Russia in Colors (January, 10, 2005) Available at: http://ricolor.org/russia/me/12/ [Last accessed: August 28, 2021]
[144] Lahav Harkov. 'Israel bought this land for $3.5 million in oranges, Russia wants it back', December 28, 2019, *The Jerusalem Post*. Available at: https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/israel-bought-this-land-for-35-million-in-oranges-russia-wants-it-back-612392 [Last accessed: August 28, 2021]

after being owned by British authorities and later Israeli authorities.[145] Needless to say, in the process of changing hands and being reused whatever primary sources these buildings could contain went lost forever, forcing scholars to rely solely on the few archives left outside Palestine or oral interviews.

Perhaps the only comprehensive study, so far available in English,[146] that has managed to overcome these severe limitations and tries to illustrate the situation of Christian Orthodox Arabs under the influence of Russia in Palestine and other areas of the Levant, is that of the scholar Sadia Agsous, who in her recent research has tried to translate from Arabic and update the fieldwork conducted by the Palestinian poet and scholar Ḥanā abū Ḥanā (1928-).[147]

By revisiting abū Ḥanā's fieldwork and consulting the little primary sources left referring to the schools of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society across modern-day Israel and Lebanon, Agsous has concluded that, despite being a little known fact among contemporary Palestinians, some former students of the schools of the Society actually played a crucial role in the development of the Nahda, 'rebirth', of Arabic-speaking literature and printed press in pre-Mandate Palestine.[148] Paradoxically, according to abū Ḥanā, while Muslim Arabs were forced

[145] Nir Hasson Barak Ravid. 'Israel Vacates Sergei Courtyard Ahead of Netanyahu's Moscow Visit This Week' March 22, 2011. *Haaretz*. Available at: https://www.haaretz.com/1.5140068 [Last accessed: August 31, 2021]
[146] Some Russian-speaking scholars have also studied the fate of former students of the schools of the Society, both during Soviet times and afterwards, yet casted the work and biographies of these individuals under a very different light. Rather than emphasizing their role as promoters of the Nahda, like Agsous does, scholars such as Sharafutdinova (1978), Krachkovskaya (1954) and the more recent Imangulieva (2009), Ali-Zade (2015), Kostryukov (2010) and Smirnova (2017), who will be quoted in this master thesis later on, tend to focus on the capacity of these individuals to serve as bridges between Russia and Russian literature and the Arab world exclusively. They also tend to situate former students of the schools of the Society as being the last chapter of a longer chronology of exchanges between Russia and the Christian Orient. Such an approach, though in itself not bad, risks overlooking the role of former students of the schools in contributing consciously or unconsciously to the creation of national identity among wider Arab-speaking audiences, including Orthodox Christians, alongside the emergence of Arabic-speaking literature and press at the turn of the 20th century; in short, they take their Arab identity for granted. By doing so, these studies also fail to explore how this emerging Arab nationalism interacted and reacted against other strong movements at the time, such as Ottomanism, and political Islam.
[147] Sadia Agsous. 'The Palestinian graduates of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (IOPS) and the making of the native cultural Nahḍa' , *Contemporary Levant 6*, n.1 (2021): 35-36. DOI: 10.1080/20581831.2021.1881714
[148] Agsous, "*Palestinian Graduates of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society"*, 35-36.

to attend public Ottoman schools that only taught in Turkish, Orthodox Christians, as part of the millet system, could attend schools organized by the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society that taught classes in Arab and popularized the use of Arabic textbooks, which at the time were rare.[149] Benefitting from this unique education, some former students of the schools of the Society later became involved in the field of literary translations, often from Russian and Russian-speaking authors, and, after the Young Turk Constitution of 1908 that allowed freedom of press, in the creation of Arabic printed newspapers in Palestine.[150] Among the former students she surveys there is the case of Kulthum Ode-Vasil'yeva, who contributed to the development of the field of Oriental Studies in the Soviet Union and will be devoted an entire chapter in this master thesis, and Ilīā Zakā (1865–1928), who helped launch the newspaper *An-Nafir* in 1908.[151] [152]

The Nahda in turn was in many ways connected with the process of a 'Palestinian' national awakening among Ottoman Arab subjects, a point that more scholars besides Agsous have noted. As the influential Palestinian historian Rashid Khalidi explains in his book '*Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness'* the emergence of Arabic-speaking printed press in Palestine played a crucial role in helping shape '*both Arab views of Zionism, and the conception of Palestine as a land under threat*'[153] and, in the creation of such a press, Arab Christians (though not always Orthodox Christians) played a significant role.[154]

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[149] Agsous, "*Palestinian Graduates of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society"*, 39.
[150] Agsous, "*Palestinian Graduates of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society"*, 39.
[151] Agsous, "*Palestinian Graduates of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society"*, 44.
[152] Zaka is a rare case of a pro-Zionist Christian Arab that advocated peaceful co-existence and not conflict between Arabs and Jews. Consistent with his political ideals he promoted the creation of a Hebrew-speaking supplement for *An-Nafir* in 1913 and was, as a result of that, often accused of being a 'mercenary journalist' (See the previous note). Zaka's case is remarkably absent in the work of all the scholars mentioned in Note 133, showing that there might be some ideological biases in some studies.
[153] Rashid Khalidi. *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010): 154.
[154] Most of the first printed newspapers in Palestine were owned by Arab in pre- and post- Mandate Palestine, but what is little known (and herein lies the originality of Agsous' research) is that a few of them had actually attended a school of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society. The first such newspaper was *al-Quds*, established by Jurji

Important among these emerging media outlets was the *Filastin,* which as early as 1914 referred to all Arabs living in Palestine as members of a 'Palestinian nation' (*al-umma al-filistiniyya* in Arabic) and urged them to beware the Zionist threat, shortly after the owners of the newspaper had been summoned in an Ottoman Court for their attacks on Zionist leaders.[155] Before that, the geographical term 'Palestine' was rarely used in Arabic and even less as a means of self-identification.

Yet, for all the innovation and quality of Agsous' research, her approach risks offering little theoretical and methodological insights, beyond affirming the role of former students of the schools in producing Arabic-speaking media and literature, that contributed to the enrichment of the cultural life of Palestine, before the British Mandate and the Nakba.[156] While I don't dispute the important contribution this author has made, it seems to me that her approach presumes that most students of schools of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society inevitably participated in one way or another in the development of the Palestinian movement later on, during the British Mandate. Her approach leaves little room for individual agency and, as I will discuss later in Chapter 5, in the case of Kulthum Ode-Vasil'yeva entirely misses the point. Kulthum, as can be deduced from her writings, was more interested in escaping

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Habib Hanania in 1908, a self-educated man that nevertheless spoke seven and half languages, including Russian, later followed by *al-Carmel* founded by Najīb al-Khūrī Nasār (1862–1948) in 1909 and finally the *Filastin* founded by 'Issa al 'Issa in 1911. See Mary Hanania. 'Jurji Habib Hanania: History of the Earliest History of the Earliest Press in Palestine, 1908-1914' *Jerusalem Quarterly 32,* n.1 (2007): 51-69. Available at: https://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/jq-articles/Jurji_Habib_Hanania_-_Mary_Hanania_-_pp_51-69_-_JQ_32_0.pdf

Besides Zaka, the other former student of the Nazareth Seminary that had ended up in the printed press business was Khalil Beydas, editor of the literary journal *an-Nafais al-Assriah* (1908-1924), whom we will meet in the following chapters. The role of Christian Arabs in articulating a pan-Arab and an Arab Palestinian nationalist movement against political Zionism at the turn of the 20th century has also been stressed by some notable Israeli historians, who contrast it to the situation in Lebanon, where sectarian conflicts have persisted up to the present day. See Moshe Ma'oz. . *Middle Eastern Minorities: Between Integration and Conflict.* (Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1999): xi-xii. Digital version available at: https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/media/3583?disposition=inline

[155] Khalidi, "*Palestinian Identity*", 155-156.

[156] Nakba in Arabic means 'catastrophe' and is used among modern-day Palestinians to refer to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent exodus of thousands of Palestinian Arabs to Jordan and Lebanon.

heteropatriarchal control in her community than fighting for Palestinian nationalism when she left for Russia in 1914.

It is not only Agsous' research that risks situating the unique and short-lived existence of the schools of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society as part of large narratives, be it as the last chapter of Imperial Russian presence in the Holy Land, be it as part of the process of national awakening of the Palestinian nation.

Much of the academic research that has been done during the past two decades on Russo-Arab exchanges in the context of the schools of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society still remains very descriptive, often just enumerating names and primary sources, and very Russo-centric, written from the perspective of Russian (contemporary) interests. I would go as far as to suggest that much of the available contemporary Russian-speaking research seems to be trying to provide an 'academic' backing to the political strategy under the Putin regime, of bringing the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society back to forefront as a key tool for Russian foreign policy in the Middle East.[157]

The only exception to this pattern is the work of historian Lora Gerd,[158] who has successfully applied the notion of 'soft power', first coined by political scientist Joseph Nye, to describe the

[157] Under the Putin regime, it should be remarked, the Imperial Orthodox Palestine has been revived and re-interpreted as an important tool for Russian foreign policy in the Middle East. In an interview in 2016, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov affirmed: '*The fact that we are energetically restoring the Society's position after the Soviet-era pause is, I believe, meeting the fundamental interests of the Russian state and the noble goal of preserving the continuity of our history. Apart from the spiritual aspects, "Russian Palestine" today is an essential instrument for consolidating Russia's positions, which adds another dimension to our diplomacy in this important area.*' See Elena Agapova 'Interview with Sergey Lavrov. Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society'. Moscow, July 25, 2016. Available at: https://www.ippo.ru/news/article/ministr-inostrannyh-del-rossii-sergey-lavrov-dal-i-402035 [Last accessed February 24, 2021].

[158] Gerd, '*The Palestine Society: Cultural Diplomacy and Scholarship*"

activities of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society across Palestine and Syria.[159] Gerd argues that late-19th century Imperial Russia in Palestine managed to reframe the demands of local Orthodox Christian Arabs of access to education and religious services in Arabic, not Greek, to coincide with Russian interests in the region. By performing charitable works, Imperial Russia's influence and prestige in the region could be enhanced and its role as protector and leader of Orthodoxy be more than proven,[160] thus exploiting the three resources that Joseph Nye has identified as sources for 'soft power': culture, political values and foreign policies.[161] Interestingly, as Gerd has documented extensively, that soft power could, at some point, potentially transform into 'hard power', just like the other 'imperialist nations' Britain and France.[162]

Gerd's work, though innovative, still leaves important questions unresolved. If, following Gerd's rationale, we understand the schools of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society to be a site from which Russia's soft power could be projected onto Orthodox Christian Arab subjects, then it seems almost unavoidable to ask, what variety of responses and actions did it trigger among Orthodox Christian Arab communities? And when and how did these responses connect to the emerging feeling of Palestinian/ Arab national awakening?

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[159] Nye's concept of *soft power* was developed in the 90s to describe an alternative to coercive material power of modern nation states based on the capacity of international actors to get other countries '*want what it* (they) *wants'*. This theory was developed in the 1990s at the height of the 'unipolar' moment of American hegemony, when liberal-inspired political scientists encouraged political leaders to take into account the perception of America among peoples in foreign countries and not just American military supremacy as a benchmark for the success of American foreign policy. Since then, scholars working in different disciplines and time periods have found the concept useful to describe developments elsewhere. See Joseph Nye. "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 616* (2008): 94. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/25097996.

[160] Gerd, '*The Palestine Society: Cultural Diplomacy and Scholarship*", 275.

[161] Nye, "*Public Diplomacy and Soft Power*", 96.

[162] While studying the discussions among different members of the Society and the wider Russian public after the outbreak of WWI, Gerd has found that, for example, during a conference in 1915 at the Slavonic Benevolent Society in Petrograd, Alexei Dmitrievskiy, the secretary and chronicler of the Society seriously considered the possibility of establishing a 'Russian Protectorate' alongside Britain and France over the Holy Land, though this never materialized after the outbreak of the Bolshevik revolution. See Gerd, '*The Palestine Society: Cultural Diplomacy and Scholarship*", 283.

Perhaps the best way to answer these questions is by exploring individual biographies and relying on texts written by individuals under no coercion rather than official chronicles, like the famous texts by Alexei Dmitrievskiy, the official chronicler of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, that can be politically biased. Reading individual's biographies and memories, as well as contrasting them to accounts of their personality by other people, can perhaps give a more complete picture of their experience of the schools of the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society and how it affected their lives, rather than relying on secondary literature or primary sources that treat individuals as a collective. Additionally, I think that adding the perspective of a teacher of the schools of the Society from Russia, not part of the administration of the Society, can also provide an interesting counterpoint and offer an insight into how the 'purveyors' of a certain soft power viewed and participated from such an enterprise. I will therefore study three individuals: Maria Alexandrovna Cherkasova, Mikhail Naimy and Kulthum Klaudia Ode-Vasil'yeva.

By doing so, I hope that my research will try not to fall prey to a diffusionist model, a one that assumes a lineal and unidirectional projection of Russia's soft power, as represented by Russian writers and the charitable works of Russian institutions. Instead, I would like to use an approach inspired by the emerging field of 'histoire croisée' or 'Verpflechtungsgeschichte' in German that '*acknowledges plurality and the complex configurations that result from it*' (intersections)[163] and considers that '*entities and objects of research are not merely considered in relation to one another but also through one another, in terms of relationships, interactions, and circulation'*.[164] Such an approach, it cannot be stressed enough, seeks to study the processual and dynamic nature of intersections of the entities, persons, practices and objects

[163] Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann. "Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity." *History and Theory 45*, no. 1 (2006): 38. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3590723.
[164] Werner& Zimmermann, "*Histoire Croisée*", 38.

involved. It also includes the possibility of crisscrossing and interweaving intrinsic to the object of study.[165]

The fate of the former students of the schools of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society forces scholars to look at the intersection of multiple scales in which several forms of intercrossing may have taken place. Politics were unfolding at different levels in the Holy Land at the turn of the 20th century; while a 'Palestine', as an imagined community in Anderson's sense[166] was emerging within the Ottoman Empire, Christian Arabs were also being mobilized by the Great Powers as part of their rivalries over 'Eastern Question', while in the meantime being in dispute within their own 'millet' over the control of the Holy Places. Thus, members of Orthodox Christian Arab communities could intersect with certain elements of Russia's soft power at different scales, activating and in the process creating certain aspects of their identity.

[165] Werner& Zimmermann, "*Histoire Croisée*", 38.
[166] Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Capitalism.* London: Verso Books, 2006.

Chapter 3: Maria Cherkasova and the Global Reach of Russian Orthodoxy

This chapter will explore the life and works of Maria Cherkasova (1841 – 1918) as well as some available records of her encounters with other individuals, thus offering us a unique insight into the complex process of setting up schools in the Levant provinces of the Ottoman empire as well as how this was perceived by Russian observers of very different occupations and worldviews. Crucially, Cherkasova's biography also illustrates the vast geographical reach and aspirations of Russian Orthodoxy and the mobility this could give to individuals and ideas.

Maria Alexandrovna Cherkasova was born in 1841 in Saint Petersburg and attended the famous Pavlovskiy Institute in Saint Petersburg.[167] [168] After a short experience teaching as a volunteer at a school in Borovichi (province of Novgorod), in 1879 Cherkasova became involved in the administration of a girls' school in the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission to Tokyo, following the steps of Father Nikolai (Ivan Dimitrievich Kasatkin) who leaded the Ecclesiastical Mission in Japan.[169]

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[167] Nataliya Semaan, Elena Demesheva and Tatyana Baher (2020). "The history of teaching the Russian language in Lebanon: A chronological overview starting with the 'Moscow school' of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society until present times". *Russian Language Studies, 18*, n.3 (2020): 273-274. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.22363/2618-8163-2020-18-3-271-294

[168] During the second half of the 19th century, the Pavlovskiy Institute of Noble Maidens (*Pavlovskiy Institut blagorodnykh devits*) was a quite well-known institution in Saint-Petersburg. Named after the Emperor Paul the first, the Institute targeted young girls born to engineers, officials of the Military and impoverished noble families, as well as orphans (the case of Maria) and once a year received a visit of the Tsars. Following the beliefs of the time, the Institute prevented the students from ever leaving the building to avoid them coming in contact to 'bad influences' (until the 60s girls weren't even allowed to visit their families during the Eastern holidays!) and special attention was paid to their Christian upbringing. Their contemporaries would refer to them with the nickname 'pavlushkami'. Later, in Soviet times, an offensive way of calling a girl 'prudish' was to compare her to one of the 'girls of Charskoy's books', referring to Lydia Alexeevna Charskoy, a former student of the Pavlovskiy Institute (*ty pokhozha na Institutku iz knig Charkoy!*). See Tatyana Trefilova. "Pavlovskiy Institut Blagorodnykh Devnits. Ulitsa Vosstaniya, Dom 8". Website of Radio Station Petrograd. Available at: https://www.grad-petrov.ru/broadcast/pavlovskij-institut-blagorodnyh-dev/ [Last accessed: July 30, 2021]

[169] Semaan et al. , "*The history of teaching the Russian language in Lebanon",* 273-274.

Kasatkin, still a hieromonk, arrived in Hakodate (Hokkaido, North Japan) in June 1861 at the request of the then Russian consul Iosif Goshkevich (1814-1875)[170] to offer religious services at the consulate and start missionary work in the newly opened country of Japan.[171] [172].Though at that time Christianity was still banned in Japan, following the two-century-old laws that expelled European Christian missionaries in the 17th century and that were not revoked until 1873, Kasatkin managed to baptize three Japanese converts, Pavel Sawabe, Ioan Sakai and Iosiv Urano in 1868.[173] Kasatkin, hereafter Father Nikolai, also managed to translate several liturgical books into Japanese, often by translating Chinese versions, available from the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in China[174] into Japanese using the kanbun system.[175] Most of Father Nikolai's disciples were able to help him in the translation process, because being from the samurai class almost all of them could read and write in classical Chinese.[176]

[170] Goshkevich had previously been active in the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing, China, in the 1840s, and later served Yevfimy Putyatin (1803-1883) as a translator of Chinese and Japanese in his early diplomatic mission to Japan. Putyatin's mission resulted in the opening of trade between Russia and Japan under the Treaty of Shimoda (1855) and as a result he attained the title of 'count'. Putyatin was also responsible for the signing of the Treaty of Tientsin (1857) that granted the Russian Empire trade benefits in China, during the times of the unequal treaties. See Presidential Library of Boris Yeltsin. 'Birthday Anniversary of Count Yevfimy V. Putyatin, Statesman and Military'. Website article of Presidential Library of Boris Yeltsin. Available at: https://www.prlib.ru/en/history/619737 [Last accessed: August 30, 2021]

[171] Japan under the rule of the Tokugawa shoguns opened its borders to foreign countries in 1854 after a period of more than 200 years of *sakoku* or national seclusion with the signing of the Treaty of Kanagawa, after the famous Commodore Perry reached Edo with his 'Black Ships' in 1853.

[172] Oleg Anatol'evich Kurbatov."Osnovaniye Russkoy Pravoslavnoy Dukhovnoy Missii v Yaponii" *Gramota 6*, n. 56 (2015): 103-104. Available at: https://www.gramota.net/articles/issn_1997-292X_2015_6-2_27.pdf

[173] Maria Junko Matsushima. "St. Nikolai of Japan and the Japanese Church Singing" *The Orthodox Church Singing in Japan*. Available at: http://www.orthodox-jp.com/maria/Nikolai-JAPAN.htm [Last accessed: July 30, 2021]

[174] The Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in China has a much longer history behind it. Though it wasn't formally established until 1713, since 1685 a Russian priest Maxim Leontyev had offered religious services in Beijing to captive Cossacks of the Chinese Emperor Kangxi, following armed conflicts along the Amur river in the late 17th century. Between 1728 and 1863 the Mission was also under the jurisdiction of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, later on only under the supervision of the Holy Synod. See Dmitri Petrovsky. "Perspectives and Experiences of the Russian Orthodox Church Regarding Evangelization in Russia and China" *Religions & Christianity in Today's China 6,* n. 1 (2016): 35. Available at: https://www.china-zentrum.de/fileadmin/PDF-Dateien/E-Journal_RCTC/RCTC_2016-1.34-46_Petrovsky_Perspecives_and_Experiences_of_the_Russian_Orthodox_Church.pdf

[175] Matsushima, *"St. Nikolai of Japan and the Japanese Church Singing"*

[176] Matsushima, *"St. Nikolai of Japan and the Japanese Church Singing"*

After his return to Russia in 1869, Pavel Sawabe was left in charge of the Orthodox flock in Japan.[177] While in Russia, in 1870 Father Nikolai managed to get the tsar's approval (Alexander II at that time) to his petition to the Holy Synod to accept the establishment of an official Ecclesiastical Mission in Japan and having attained the status of Archimandrite that same year, Father Nikolai became the head of the new Mission to Japan .[178]

On his way back to Japan in 1870 Father Nikolai decided to take an unconventional route and reach the Holy Land from Odessa.[179] There, shortly before the year ended, Father Nikolai had the chance to meet his counterpart in Palestine at that time, Antonin Kapustin and Grigori Ivanovich Vorontsov (1838-1885), who had recently graduated from the Kazan Ecclesiastical Academy and would in the very near future join Nikolai in the organization of Orthodox missionary schools in Japan.[180] Kapustin and Nikolai became good friends and though Father Nikolai never returned to Palestine ever again, he did keep an eye on the events ongoing around the Holy Land during the coming decades, while he was devoted to the growth of Orthodoxy in Japan.[181]

Thus, when he returned to Russia for a second time in 1879 with the intention of collecting funds for the construction of a cathedral in Tokyo and his consecration as a bishop, Father Nikolai seized the chance to meet Vasily Nikolaevich Khitrovo in early 1880.[182] After hearing rumors that the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in the Holy Land might be terminated, Father Nikolai tried to talk to Count Putyatin, founder of the Russian consulate in Hakodate, to see if

[177] He would later manage to become Bishop of Kamchatka in 1875, thus becoming the first Japanese Orthodox priest ever. See note 179 below.
[178] Kurbatov, *"Osnovaniye Russkoy Pravoslavnoy Dukhovnoy Missii v Yaponii",* 103-104.
[179] Galina Evgen'yevna Besstremyannaya. "Iz Yaponii v Iyerusalim" *Alfa and Omega 1*, n. 48 (2007). Digital version available at: http://aliom.orthodoxy.ru/arch/048/besstr48.htm#_ftn22
[180] Besstremyannaya, *"Iz Yaponii v Iyerusalim"*
[181] Besstremyannaya, *"Iz Yaponii v Iyerusalim"*
[182] Besstremyannaya, *"Iz Yaponii v Iyerusalim"*

he could use his connections in the imperial court to support the Ecclesiastical Mission in Palestine, led by Kapustin.[183]

It was around that time that the protagonist of this chapter, Maria Cherkasova, left for Yokohama from Odessa in a steamer.[184] On her way to Japan in 1879, Cherkasova did not miss the chance to visit the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. While in Japan, she diligently studied Japanese and became the principal of the first Orthodox girls' school in Tokyo.[185] It must have been already while in Japan that Cherkasova, via Father Nikolai, heard of Kapustin's aactivities in Palestine. In 1882, after having some disagreements with Father Nikolai, she decided to return to Russia.[186] Cherkasova travelled again by sea over the Suez Canal and tried to make contact with Kapustin while in Palestine.[187] She was particularly interested in teaching at a girls' school recently founded in Beyt Jala but Kapustin, sensing her stubborn character, preferred to recommend her to Khitrovo and find another suitable location for her to develop her pedagogical skills.[188] Cherkasova would indeed spend a few years in Russia making up her mind and exchanging letters with several ecclesiastical leaders[189] until she arrived in the Holy Land in 1887.[190]

Unimpressed by the schools operated by the then Russian Consul in Beirut Konstantin Petkovich (1824-1898), Cherkasova negotiated with Petkovich the creation of her own school and eventually a house was rented in the area of Musaytbah, in 1887, in Beirut, where many

[183] Besstremyannaya, *"Iz Yaponii v Iyerusalim"*
[184] Besstremyannaya, *"Iz Yaponii v Iyerusalim"*
[185] Besstremyannaya, *"Iz Yaponii v Iyerusalim"*
[186] Larisa Nikolaevna Blinova. "XXV-letiye russkikh shkol v Beyrute I sluzheniye v nikh M. A. Cherkasovoy" *Russia and the Christian Orient* Available at: https://ros-vos.net/history/school/s/7/ [Last accessed: August 1, 2021]
[187] Besstremyannaya, *"Iz Yaponii v Iyerusalim"*
[188] Blinova, *"XXV-letiye russkikh shkol v Beyrute I sluzheniye v nikh M. A. Cherkasovoy"*
[189] Among them Archimandrite Mikhail Gribanovskiy in the Ecclesiastical Academy in Saint Petersburg, later dispatched to Greece in 1894. See note 186 above.
[190] Besstremyannaya, *"Iz Yaponii v Iyerusalim"*

poor Orthodox families lived and lacked access to education.[191] The newly founded school led by Cherkasova would nevertheless remain affiliated to the Society, despite not being located in the sanjak of Jerusalem. At the height of its foundation, the school was blessed by the Bishop of Beirut at that time Ghufra'il Shatilah,[192] who himself spoke Russian fluently and had had the chance to visit Russia before.[193]

Crucial to the opening of the schools was the aid of Afifa Dmitrievna Abdo (1864-?), a young devout Orthodox woman born and raised in Beirut that helped Cherkasova to learn Arabic and attract new students to the school.[194] Abdo resented her education at a local Catholic school, where she was taught mostly in French and Arabic, for she wanted to remain an Orthodox Christian and not convert to Catholicism.[195] The encounter between the two women proved to be very enriching, as Abdo managed to learn Russian and fulfill her dream of creating an Orthodox religious schools in her city.[196]

The first school founded by Cherkasova counted around 120 students after less than a year, despite the difficulties in finding suitable textbooks in both Russian and Arabic during the first

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[191] Souad Abou el-Rousse Slim. "The Russian Schools in Beirut in the End of the 19th century" in *Entangled Education: Foreign and Local Schools in Ottoman Syria and Mandate Lebanon (19-20th Centuries)* ed. Julia, Hauser; Christine Linder & Esther Mölle: 201-210. (Beirut: Ergon Verlag Würzburg, 2016): 204-205.

[192] Ghufrail Shatilah (1825-1901) served as a 'metochion' or representative of the Patriarch of Antioch in Moscow between 1862 and 1869 and in 1870 he was elevated to the rank of Metropolitan of Beirut, after the demands of several families in Beirut that an Arab and not a Greek bishop be nominated that could offer religious services in their mother tongue. The position of 'metochion' was created in 1848 after the Russian Holy Synod (and the Russian tsar!) accepted to grant the Church of Ascension and Saint Hypatius in Moscow, near the Kremlin, to the Patriarch of Antioch and other Orthodox authorities in the Levant. This followed the decision of the then Patriarch of Antioch, Methodios, in 1842 to send several ecclesiastical figures across the Patriarchy of Antioch to visit Russia to ask for funds, in the light of the expanding presence and influence of Catholic and Protestant missionaries. See A. Alekseev "Antiokhiyskoye patriarsheye podvor'ye v Moskve" *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, n.6 (1954): 59-63. Digital version available at: http://archive.e-vestnik.ru/page/index/195406470.html. The role of 'metochion' would be served during the later years of the 19th century, among others by the Syrian Archimandrite Raphael Hawaweeny (1860-1915) who would later be consecrated as Bishop of Brooklyn in 1904.

[193] Slim, *The Russian Schools in Beirut in the End of the 19th century"*, 204-205.

[194] Blinova, *"XXV-letiye russkikh shkol v Beyrute I sluzheniye v nikh M. A. Cherkasovoy"*

[195] Blinova, *"XXV-letiye russkikh shkol v Beyrute I sluzheniye v nikh M. A. Cherkasovoy"*

[196] Blinova, *"XXV-letiye russkikh shkol v Beyrute I sluzheniye v nikh M. A. Cherkasovoy"*

months.[197] In 1888 Count Duke Sergey Alexandrovich, at that time the president of the Society, his brother Grand Duke Paul and his wife visited Cherkasova's school and, impressed by the achievements of her pupils, some of whom had managed to learn how to speak Russian fluently in just a few months, gave her some monetary gifts, that Cherkasova used to open a second school in Beirut, close to the Church of St. Michael in the Mazra'ah quarter in 1890.[198]A third school followed in 1891 around St. Nicholas Church in the quarter of Ramyl, a fourth in Ras Beirut quarter in 1893 and at the request of the Metropolitan of Beirut Ghufrail Shatilah a fifth school close to St. George Church in 1897. By 1912 it was estimated that Cherkasova's schools served more than 1,100 pupils across Beirut.[199]

The schools enjoyed a lot of respect among the general public in Beirut and Cherkasova was often referred to as 'al-mama al-Muskubiyyah' (mother Muskovite) for her maternal care and religious devotion. Another thing that added prestige to Cherkasova's schools and to herself was the fact that she went at great lengths to learn Arabic and teach it to her pupils, while at the same time offering them the chance to learn Russian.[200]

Indeed, Cherkasova came up with a very creative system to teach kids how to read and write in Arabic alphabet. For each combination of consonant and vowel in Arabic Cherkasova created a different sound, pitched from the lowest to the highest treble, that she would sing to her students in order to teach them how to recognize each syllable.[201] [202] By using this method, Cherkasova estimated that her students were able to read any text in one month, though they

[197] Slim, *The Russian Schools in Beirut in the End of the 19th century"*, 204-205.
[198] Slim, *The Russian Schools in Beirut in the End of the 19th century"*, 204-205.
[199] Slim, *The Russian Schools in Beirut in the End of the 19th century"*, 204-205.
[200] Semaan et al. , "*The history of teaching the Russian language in Lebanon",* 273-274.
[201] While Khitrovo and other members of the Society approved of her method they would never try to use it in other schools elsewhere in Palestine and Syria. See note 202 below.
[202] Slim, *The Russian Schools in Beirut in the End of the 19th century"*, 207.

still faced difficulties in speaking and pronouncing all Arabic sounds afterwards.[203] Cherkasova also taught her pupils about Arabic literature using an Arabic translation of Vladimir Fedorovich Girgas' (1835-1887) '*Survey of the History of Arabic Literature'*, published in 1875 in Russia and translated into Arabic by Iskandar Jibrail Kezma[204] and Jibran Futiyyah in Homs.[205] This decision was well appreciated by her pupils and their families, who welcomed her attempts at teaching not only European history but also the achievement of notable Arabs, yet it was clearly insufficient to deliver all the instruction that pupils needed, particularly when contrasted with the rich academic program that the Society's schools offered in Palestine. All the schools of the Society in Palestine, and later Syria, every once in a while received the visit of inspectors, always members of the Society, and on occasions even welcomed orientalists from Moscow and Saint Petersburg[206] to guarantee that educational and pedagogic standards were met. Whenever these inspectors visited Cherkasova's schools they noticed shortcomings in contrast to the schools in Palestine and Syria.[207] The teachers of Cherkasova's schools in Beirut for instance often lacked sufficient training and had not passed any form of examination, unlike their counterparts at the Teachers Seminary in Nazareth and Beyt Jala. This explains why their salaries were consistently lower than other teachers

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[203] Slim, *The Russian Schools in Beirut in the End of the 19th century"*, 207.

[204] Izkandir Jibrail Kezma adopted the Russian name Alexander Gabrilovich (1860-1935) after studying in Russia during his youth and later return to Palestine and contributed to the establishment of the Teachers' Seminary in Nazareth in 1886. He also taught for a very brief period of time in Beirut at one of the schools organized by the Russian Consul there, Petkovich, which explains how the translation might have ended in Cherkasova's hands. His brother, Taufik Gabrilovich (1882-1958) had the chance after attending the Teachers' Seminary to travel to the Religious Seminary in Kiev and became a citizen of the Russian Empire in 1907 and later taught Arabic and Greek at Kiev University. See Natalya Sukhova. "Uroki Vzaimosti: Siriyskiye i palestinskiye studenty v Rossiyskikh Dukhovnykh Akademiyakh" *Russkoye Voskreseniye*. Available at: http://voskres.ru/school/suchova.htm Last accessed: August 1, 2021]

[205] Slim, *The Russian Schools in Beirut in the End of the 19th century"*, 207-208.

[206] In 1899, in one of her inspections Nikolai Milievich Anichkov (1844-1916) was accompanied by the leading Oriental Studies scholar Mikhail Osipovich Attaya (1852-1924). Scholars, like the historian Nikolay Aleksandrovich Mednikov (1855-1918), affiliated to the Society also cooperated in the pedagogical activities of the Society, by helping in the elaboration of textbooks, for example. See Rukiya Sheykhutdinovna Sharafutdinova " Russko-arabskiye kul'turnyye svyazi na Blizhnem Vostoke (Stranichka iz istorii russko-arabskikh shkol)" Palestinski Sbornik 26, n. 89 (1978): 56-57. Digital version available at: http://www.orientalstudies.ru/rus/images/pdf/journals/PPS_26_89_1978_05_sharafutdinova.pdf [Last accessed: August 30, 2021]

[207] Blinova, *"XXV-letiye russkikh shkol v Beyrute I sluzheniye v nikh M. A. Cherkasovoy"*

employed in the schools of the Society, something that Cherkasova resented very much.[208] When compared to other schools of the Society elsewhere in Palestine, Cherkasova's schools were often located in unsuitable settings, such as old rental houses that occasionally did not even guarantee basic hygienic requirements for lessons to be held in them.[209] The inspectors of the Society nevertheless appreciated Cherkasova's efforts and encouraged her to keep up with her good work.[210]

Significantly, these shortcomings did not prevent local communities from appreciating Cherkasova's contribution, perhaps also because they felt that Cherkasova's schools, despite their limitations, already met the basic educational requirements.[211] Beirut and its surrounding areas were at that time still under the influence of very patriarchal and conservative values, where learning how to do embroideries and sewing was more relevant than mastering arithmetic or Russian language for young girls.[212] In this context, Cherkasova's schools offered an ideal program of gender-segregated education based on traditional religious values that matched local demands perfectly.[213]

Complementing this strict religious upbringing, the pupils in the schools also had many chances to practice Russian language, as Cherkasova liked to welcome pilgrims and travelers from Russia.[214] As a result of these encounters, several accounts survive up to this date of travelers that describe Maria Cherkasova and her schools.

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[208] Blinova, *"XXV-letiye russkikh shkol v Beyrute I sluzheniye v nikh M. A. Cherkasovoy"*
[209] Blinova, *"XXV-letiye russkikh shkol v Beyrute I sluzheniye v nikh M. A. Cherkasovoy"*
[210] Blinova, *"XXV-letiye russkikh shkol v Beyrute I sluzheniye v nikh M. A. Cherkasovoy"*
[211] Slim, *The Russian Schools in Beirut in the End of the 19th century"*, 209-210
[212] Slim, *The Russian Schools in Beirut in the End of the 19th century"*, 209-210
[213] Slim, *The Russian Schools in Beirut in the End of the 19th century"*, 209-210
[214] Semaan et al. , "*The history of teaching the Russian language in Lebanon",* 275.

One such visitors was Mikhail Petrovich Solovëv (1841-1901), who between 1881 and 1896 served the Ministry of War and in 1891 had the chance to take a trip to the Holy Land. Leaving from Odessa Solovëv had the chance to visit Istanbul, Tripoli, Smyrna (modern-day Izmir) and Beirut, before reaching Jaffa.[215] Having heard of Maria Cherkasova's activities, Solovëv did not hesitate to visit her schools and meet her personally.

Upon visiting one of her schools in South Beirut, Solovyov observed that the lack of Arabic textbooks forced, just as in the case of the first schools of the Society in Palestine, teachers and students to learn Russian: *Arabic reading, writing, counting, the main prayers and the initial catechism make up the school's teaching program. But even these modest tasks are carried out with great difficulties due to the lack of Arabic educational books for the Orthodox and the tendentiousness of textbooks compiled by Latins and Protestants.* [216]

Solovëv was also concerned about the potential risk of alienating young Arab Orthodox students from their original rites by forcing them to adopt Russian melodies during their prayers:

> *Prayers were sung in the Russian style, so much enjoyable than Greek church singing, at least for a Russian ear like mine. Of course one can ask: should our more melodical chants be imposed on local Christians instead of favoring the styles and ways they have been accustomed to since ancient times and to which their worship rituals are intimately tied to? Latins and Protestants bring with them religious innovations; it is therefore not surprising if they introduce new forms of singing, but we, Russians, are defenders of the Orthodox Antiquity, the existing order, and it is very questionable that our way of singing, completely new to the natives, will not appear to be an attempt to change the church ranks, something incompatible with the task we have assumed. It is well known how stubbornly the Old Believers hold on to their traditional melodies, from which our new church music developed in the XVIII century, and the singing of the Greeks and Arabs, without a doubt, has an older tradition behind it. It is unpleasant for us, there is no doubt, but they have become akin to it and changes in this regard require extreme*

[215]Mikhail Petrovich Solovëv. "Po svyatoy Zemle" Saint Petersburg: Russkoye obozreniye 12, 1891. Digital version available at: http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Turk/XIX/1880-1900/Solovjev_M/text1.htm [Last accessed: August 30, 2021]
[216] Solovëv, "Po svyatoy Zemle".

> *caution. For the vast majority of the people, the traditional ritual has an enormous significance, at least equal to the teaching of sacred laws.*[217]

Also, while never questioning the efforts and the energy that Cherkasova put into instructing both teachers and students, Solovëv commented on the lack of real opportunities for both the pupils and the Arab teachers at Cherkasova's schools.[218] Most teachers, being aged around 14 or 15, made little money compared to teachers in Russia and lacked sufficient training to find a position as primary school teachers elsewhere.[219]Thus, Solovëv predicted, their most likely fate would be to end up marrying members of their community and becoming housewives, just as if they had not attended school at all, unlike young pupils in French and Italian schools in the area that usually served the schools they studied in for the rest of their lives.[220]

Finally, Solovëv also commented on the futility of teaching Russian to the students in the schools:

> *I believe that teaching Russian in them is a completely unnecessary burden for children. Even if they learn Russian, our language will be inapplicable and useless for them in practical life for a long time; and they will probably not master it enough to speak or read fluently. Their memory is unnecessarily burdened with the assimilation of alphabetic signs that are too different from Arabic letters, and words that will be immediately forgotten upon leaving school. Not to mention the originality of the method, recently invented and now already used in the Arabic school. It is necessary that the Syrians remain strong in their Orthodoxy, and for this Russian is not needed.* [221]

Another detailed description of Maria Cherkasova and the nature of her activities in Beirut is that of the writer and political thinker Ivan Pavlovich Juvachev (1860-1940), who on his way to Jerusalem in 1900, did not want to miss the chance to meet Cherkasova in Beirut.

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[217] Solovëv, "Po svyatoy Zemle".
[218] Solovëv, "Po svyatoy Zemle".
[219] Solovëv, "Po svyatoy Zemle".
[220] Solovëv, "Po svyatoy Zemle".
[221] Solovëv, "Po svyatoy Zemle".

Juvachev served the imperial army during the Russo-Turkish War in the 1870s but later, his support for the Narodniki movement and his active cooperation with the 'Narodnaya Volya' movement meant that he was sent to exile in 1884, first to the fortress of Schlüsselburg (in the outskirts of St. Petersburg) and after a few months, in 1886 to the Sakhalin Islands.[222] During his exile, Juvachev underwent a profound transformation and developed a strong religious feeling. At the same time, he also started writing short novels under the pen name Ivan Mirolyubov.[223] His life and persona would later serve as inspiration for Anton Chekhov's '*Story of an Unkown Man'*, published in 1893, after they met in the Sakhalin Islands.[224] After being released from forced work in 1895, Juvachev travelled back to European Russia and in 1900 initiated a pilgrimage to the Holy Land (published in 1904 under the title '*Pilgrimage to the Holy Land*' in which he describes his encounter with Cherkasova,[225] while she was in a religious service with her pupils:

> *The priest spoke in Greek, and the girls sang in Russian. It seemed to me that they were singing for us in a language that we understood. "May my prayer be corrected" was sung by the priest himself in turn with the clergy. The proceedings of service were almost no different from what you would expect in Russia.*
>
> *At the end of the mass, the boys hurried out through the western doors, while the girls and the praying people remained. An original divine service, which was established by Maria Alexandrovna after each mass, began.*
>
> *Without changing cloths, Maria Alexandrovna read a series of prayers for the Tsar and Russia, for the Arabs and the Palestinian Society. After that, the girls sang in Russian: "Save, Lord", "It is worthy to eat" and other church songs. Then Maria Alexandrovna walked around the entire church and stopped at the pulpit. Here she read a long prayer in Arabic. The priest, as if in response to this, said a prayer. One could say small divine service was held inside the official service, lasting for a quarter of an hour, if not more.*

[222] Valery Shubinsky. "Pyat' zhizney Ivana Pavlovicha" Vokrug Sveta, October 31, 2010. Available at: https://www.vokrugsveta.ru/vs/article/7247/
[223] Shubinsky, *"Pyat' zhizney Ivana Pavlovicha"*
[224] Shubinsky, *"Pyat' zhizney Ivana Pavlovicha"*
[225] Shubinsky, *"Pyat' zhizney Ivana Pavlovicha"*

> *I looked at this short woman, reading prayers with such firmness, acting with such self-confidence, and was very impressed. Yes, it is true, one just needs to look at Maria Alexandrovna in the church to understand why her name is so honored in Syria, why the Arabs treat her with such reverence.*
>
> *Right now, people are probably tired of the long mass, combined with the evening mass, but no one is thinking of leaving. Everyone listens to the prayers of Maria Alexandrovna with decorum and reverence. And this happens, as I later learned, every Sunday, every holiday; in addition, during the lent*[226] *– every Wednesday and Friday.*
>
> *Many Russian said that it was strange for some of them to see a woman reading prayers in Russian and Arabic on behalf of the whole church in the presence of a priest. But in Beirut, who could replace her at the moment? And most importantly, who would put so much spiritual strength, so much cordiality and fervent faith into their prayer?!* [227]

Cherkasova, in Juvachev' eyes, must have been a local celebrity with a lot of charisma. In fact, Maria Cherkasova was so cherished among the natives of Beirut that, at the onset of WWI, when due to the hostilities between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, all Russian citizens were expelled from Lebanon and all foreign religious schools nationalized by the Ottoman government, her former pupils and their relatives helped her stay undercover until her death, in 1918. Posthumously, the road along the former building of one of her schools, nowadays the site of the Russian embassy in Lebanon, was re-named as 'shari al-mama' (street of the mama).[228]

[226] The Great Fast or Lent, meaning spring, is the fasting season that precedes the Holy Week in the Orthodox world and it lasts around 40 days.
[227] Juvachev, Ivan Pavlovich. Palomnichestvo v Palestinu. Saint Petersburg: Slovo, 1904. Digital version available at: https://www.libfox.ru/411711-ivan-yuvachev-palomnichestvo-v-palestinu.html
[228] Semaan et al. , "*The history of teaching the Russian language in Lebanon",* 275.

Chapter 4: Mikhail Naimy and the Influence of Russian Literature across the Arab-speaking world

In this section, I would like to explore the biography of the leading literary figure Mikhail Naimy (1889-1988), in Arabic ميخائيل نعيمة, who was born in Baskinta, modern-day Lebanon.

Mikhail Naimy is perhaps one of the most illustrious students of the schools of the Society, thanks to his prominent role in the so-called 'Mahjar' literary movement of Arabic-speaking authors from the Mashriq[229] living outside their homelands, as refugees or migrants, that were one of the pillars of the *Nahda* or literary Arab Renaissance. At the young age of 22, Naimy left Palestine for the US, following the steps of his father and older brothers. Later on, in 1916, after finishing a degree in Law at the University of Washington, Naimy moved to New York and became involved to the creation of the famous "Pen Bond" (*al-Rābiṭa al-Qalamiyya*) literary group, together with the Syrian Khalīl Jubrān.[230] He also contributed to the Arabic-speaking literary journal published in the US *Al- Funoun*, edited by his colleague Nasīb ʿArīḍa, in which he introduced several important concepts for literary criticism and occasionally expressed his political views.[231] In 1918, he was even enlisted to fight on the side of the American Army.[232] [233]

[229] This is a term deriving from the Arabic verb 'sharaqa' meaning to shine and to rise to refer to the Eastern part of the Arab world, what in the English speaking world is referred to as Western Asia and Eastern North Africa. It is contraposed to the 'Maghrib', where the sun 'sets'.
[230] Gregory J. Bell 'A contribution to the literature of the First World War by Mikhail Naimy: an analysis of the short story "Shorty"'. *Middle Eastern Literatures 20*,3 (2017): 288-289. DOI: 10.1080/1475262X.2017.1385696
[231] Edmund Ghareeb and Jenab Tutunji. "Arab American Writers, the Mahjar Press, and the Palestine Issue." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (2016): 418-419. Doi:10.13169/arabstudquar.38.1.0418.
[232] He was called in arms already in 1917 but was given an exemption, given his involvement as a Russian translator for Bethlehem Steel, a Company supplying armaments to the at that time allied nation Russia.After the Bolshevik Revolution and Russia's withdrawal from the war, he was forced to join the American Army. See note 230 above.
[233] Bell, '*A contribution to the literature of the First World War by Mikhail Naimy: an analysis of the short story "Shorty*"', 288-289.

Naimy studied in a school of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society in his home town, Baskinta, and later moved to Nazareth to attend classes at the Teacher's Seminary, established by the Society, in 1886. Because of his good grades and self-disciplined spirit, Naimy was given the chance to study at the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Poltava, Ukraine, until 1911, and afterwards he went to the US.[234] Remembering his days at the elementary school set up by the Society in Baskinta in his autobiographic text 'Saboon: Seventy', written when he turned 70 years old, Naimy would say:

> "*The news quickly spread throughout the city and the Orthodox community was extremely thrilled and enthusiastic. And this is not surprising. For the Lebanese of the Mutassarifiya era,it was taken for granted that the Russians were the usual protectors of the Orthodox, France of the Maronites, England of the Protestants and the Druze and the Turks of the Muslims. However, Russia won its competition by deciding to open schools free of charge for the Orthodox in Palestine, Syrian and Lebanon. Its schools had the most modern curriculum and management. And Russia did not require any conditions for the Orthodox who were interested to have a Russian school in their villages, only to make donations to build a suitable building. As for the teachers, the books, the textbooks, the ink, the pens, the furniture and the administration, everything but really everything was free of charge*." [235]

The year was 1899 when for the first time an elementary 'model school' was set up by the '*al-Miskub*'[236] in co-operation with the local inhabitants of the area for kids in the area. Apparently, the school enjoyed such a popularity that even Maronites were not ashamed of sending their kids to study with the offspring of Orthodox families. Just three years later, after proving his

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[234] Bell, '*A contribution to the literature of the First World War by Mikhail Naimy: an analysis of the short story "Shorty"*', 288-289.

[235] Mikhail Naimy. *Sabu'n (Seventy).* Beirut: Dār al-Ṣadr, 1964: 74. Quoted in Sadia Agsous. "The Palestinian graduates of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (IOPS) and the making of the native cultural Nahḍa" Contemporary Levant 6, n.1 (2021):38. DOI: 10.1080/20581831.2021.1881714

[236] This is the colloquial Arab term that was used to refer to Russians. The word itself makes reference to Moskobiyyah or '*al-mūskūvī*' to refer to the country of Mūskfā or Moscow (mūskbī in colloquial language). Thus Russia was referred to as the country of the Muscovites '*bilād al-Miskub'*(See note 235 above) It is interesting to see how Russia seemed to be deliberately confused with Moscow by Arab-speakers, thus becoming oblivious of the diversity of religious and national identities within the Russian Empire at that time. As Naimy still remembered after many years, in the main hall of the school there was a portrait of the tsar Nicholas II and his wife. These were perhaps the first '*al-Miskub'* the young Naimy had ever met. See note 238 below.

worth as a diligent student, Naimy traveled to Palestine, to the Teacher's Seminar of Nazareth,[237] alongside other exceptionally talented Arab boys and girls, where he was able to meet members of other religious communities, such as Muslims and Jews, for the first time in his life.[238]

Though this is not something that Naimy explicitly refers to in his biography it is known that shortly before he moved to Palestine in 1902 the school in his hometown hosted as teacher of Arabic Khalil Beydas (1875-1949),[239] who taught in diverse schools in Lebanon (Baskinta, Suq al-Gharb and Jdaidet Marja'uyun schools) before moving to Haifa, in Palestine, in 1908.[240] It is very likely that Beydas influenced Naimy's transfer to the Teacher's Seminar in Nazareth, thus contributing to his successful career.[241] [242]

Beydas, himself a former student of the Teachers' Seminar in Nazareth, was also a prominent figure of the Nahda Movement. In 1908, he started editing the literary journal *an-Nafais al-Assriah* (1908–1924) from Haifa, while being employed at one of the schools of the Society there.[243] The journal was published from Jerusalem after 1911.[244] After having the chance to

[237] Suha Naimy. "The Conflicts that Pave the Way for Peace: Lebanese Poet and Philosopher Mikhail Naimy" The Journal of Social Encounters 3: n. 1 (2019): 14. Available at: https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1024&context=social_encounters

[238] Hussein Muhammad Ali Dabbagh. 'Mikhail Naimy: some aspects of his thought as revealed in his writings'. PhD Dissertation(Durham University, 1968): 5-8.

[239] Interesting to note, Beydas was actually a cousin of Edward Said's father. These personal connections are perhaps behind Said's silence in his work *Orientalism* (1978) on the Russian presence in the Middle East.

[240]Mahdi Abdul Hadi. 'Khalil Baydas' ed. Palestinian Personalities: A Biographic Dictionary. 2nd ed. , revised and updated. Jerusalem: Passia Publication, 2006. Digital version available at: https://www.paljourneys.org/en/biography/9853/khalil-baidas

[241] The School would later receive the visit of the leading Orientalist Ignaty Krachkovskiy a few years later, around 1909, when he visited the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire as part of his academic training, and in fact left a long-lasting good impression in the scholar, among all the schools he had the chance to visit. See Ignatiy Yulianovich Krachkovskiy. "Nad arabskimi rukopisyami" (Moscow: Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union, 1946): 49-50.

[242] Matti Moosa. *The Origins of Modern Arab Fiction.* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc. , 1997): 101-102.

[243] Alyn Desmond Hine"Russian literature in the works of Mikhail Naimy". PhD Dissertation. (SOAS University of London, 2011): 199-201.

[244] Hine, "*Russian literature in the works of Mikhail Naimy*", 199-201.

visit Russia in 1892, Beydas went on translating a few Russian classics, among them most notably Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter* in 1899 and a serialized version of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* under the tittle *al-Nafa'is al-Asriyya* (1913). He also translated the work of Emilio Salgari *The Disguised Beautiful Woman* from a Russian version in 1911. Significantly, Beydas participated after 1911 as a representative of Christian Orthodox Arabs in the Mixed Council organized by the Ottoman Authorities to manage the *waqf* (religious property) of the Orthodox community in Palestine and Transjordan and negotiate with the rest of the Orthodox community in Palestine.[245]

Compared to Beydas, Naimy's biography is striking, for despite attending the Teacher's Seminar in Nazareth, he did not become a teacher at one of the schools of the Society. Instead, given his outstanding skills and good knowledge of Russian, he was awarded a scholarship to travel to Orthodox Theological Seminary in Poltava, Ukraine (at that time, part of the Russian Empire), where he started developing his literary skills. There he adopted the nickname of 'Mischa' and started writing poems in Russian, in which his conflicted feelings to Varia, a married woman he had fallen in love with, occupied a central role. The most famous piece of this early work by Naimy is "The Frozen River".[246] Yet, after a failed attempt to escape with Varia, Naimy's life and career took an unexpected twist. It was then that Naimy decided to leave Ukraine forever and start his journey to another country, eventually settling for the US, following the experience of his older brothers and father.[247]

During his stay in the US until the year 1932, when he finally returned to Lebanon, Naimy experienced two tormented relationships with married women again, Bella and Nyounia. These,

[245] Moosa. *The Origins of Modern Arab Fiction,* 101-102.
[246] Naimy, *"The Conflicts that Pave the Way for Peace: Lebanese Poet and Philosopher Mikhail Naimy"*, 16-18.
[247] Naimy, *"The Conflicts that Pave the Way for Peace: Lebanese Poet and Philosopher Mikhail Naimy"*, 16-18

together with his experience as a soldier at the American Army in the Normandy to fight the Germans, affected him deeply and served as inspiration for his book *Memoirs of a Vagrant Soul, The Pitted Face* published in 1917.[248]

As Maria L. Swanson (2018), among other scholars, has noted Naimy's *Memoirs* show, in its plot and moral tribulations, notable parallelisms with Lev Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889), which he most likely read for the first time while in Ukraine. As in Tolstoy's *Sonata*, the main character, al-Arqash, takes the live of his wife after realizing that he cannot dissociate his sexual lust for her from their marriage, forcing him to give up on his ideals of platonic and chaste love.[249] The dagger that perpetrates the crime serves in both novels as a phallic and Orientalizing symbol, culminating the pathologic impulses of Pozdynishev (arguably, Tolstoy's alter ego) and al-Arqash (perhaps, also Naimy's alter ego).

The structure of Naimy's *Memoirs of a Vagrant Soul* also show strong similarities with Tolstoy's *Sonata,* thus another evidence that Naimy was being influenced by Tolstoy while writing his novel. In both works, the text starts with multiple characters and the story of the male protagonist is slowly revealed, in the case of Tolstoy to a small audience of fellow travelers in a train and in the case of Naimy as an anonymous diary. [250]

Far from exerting an influence on Mikhail Naimy alone, Tolstoy's *Kreutzer Sonata* became, shortly after its publication, one of Tolstoy's most popular (and controversial) works in Russia and abroad. In Russia, the book started circulating in illegal publications already by 1890,

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[248] Naimy, *"The Conflicts that Pave the Way for Peace: Lebanese Poet and Philosopher Mikhail Naimy"*, 16-18
[249] Maria L. Swanson "'Slew My Love with My Own Hand': On Tolstoy's Influence on Mikhail Naimy and the Similarity Between their Moral Concerns" *Al-'Arabiyya 51* (2018): 73-75. Available at http://www.jstor.org/stable/26578118.
[250] Swanson, "*Slew My Love with My Own Hand: On Tolstoy's Influence on Mikhail Naimy and the Similarity Between their Moral Concerns'*, 73-75.

though it was later banned from public reading. In fact, it was the procurator of the Holy Synod and tutor of Alexander III, the conservative Pobedonostsev, that, after reading a manuscript encouraged its ban, concluding that Tolstoy must be an insane man, despite his immense popularity across Russia at that time.[251] In the US too as soon as a translation of the unfinished *Sonata* started circulating in 1890 the United States Post Office censored its distribution through printed newspapers and later, Roosevelt would refer to Tolstoy as a 'sexual moral pervert'.[252]

In the Levant, a translation in Arabic language from the original in Russian appeared as early as 1903 by Selim Kobein in Egypt and a year later, as a reprinted version of Rafail Sa'ds translation from a French edition, done in 1902 in Rio de Janeiro, in Cairo.[253] It immediately became a sensation. As Margaret Litvin explains, Tolstoy's *Sonata* opened the door to discussions on feminism and the role of women in Arab and Muslim countries. As she notes, shortly after a translation was available the editors and readers of the Egyptian journal *Al-Sayyidatwa-l-Banat* (Ladies and Girls) edited by Rose Antun Haddad were quick to pick up on it, thus contributing to debates on feminism within the Nahda literary movement.[254] In 1910, upon hearing of Tolstoy's departure to start a pilgrimage, the famous Egyptian writer Mustafa Lufti al-Manfaluti (1876-1924) devoted a newspaper column to him noting that Tolstoy, as a

[251] Arthur E. Adams. "Pobedonostsev's Thought Control." The Russian Review 11, no. 4 (1952): 242. Doi:10.2307/125559.
[252] Alexandra Guzeva. "How Tolstoy's banned novella started a sexual revolution in Russia" Russia Beyond Available at: https://www.rbth.com/arts/333317-tolstoys-kreutzer-sonata [Last accessed: September 6, 2021]
[253] Moosa. *The Origins of Modern Arab Fiction,* 101-104.
[254] Margaret Litvin. "Arabic Rewritings of Tolstoy's 'Kreutzer's Sonata'", June 13, 2018. Forum Transregionale Studien. Podcast audio, 43:26. Available at: https://www.eume-berlin.de/veranstaltungen/kalender/details/arabic-rewritings-of-tolstoys-kreutzer-sonata-1.html

great figure like Luther and Calvin, Galileo Galilei, Voltaire, Nietzsche, people could not help having strong and divided opinions.[255] [256]

It is no coincidence that it was precisely the Syrian Selim Kobein (1870-1951) who first wrote a direct translation from Russian into Arabic of this work of Tolstoy. Kobein attended the Teacher's Seminar in Nazareth, founded by the Society, and moved to Egypt in 1897.[257] Kobein probably left his native Syria and Palestine for Egypt (since 1882, under British occupation), attracted by a greater number of economic and professional opportunities, in commerce and working for newspapers and literary journals, as well as the existence of well-established networks of Syrian intellectuals and translators. Not long before Kobein arrived in Cairo, an exodus of Syrian Christians, of different congregations, had taken place around the 1870s, in search of better opportunities in Egypt and fleeing religious conflicts in their hometowns. [258] [259]

Kobein was in fact the first Arab-speaking author to publish a book on Tolstoy's biography and works, the '*Mazhab tulsti'* or *Textbook on Tolstoy* in 1901 and translated several works by Tolstoy including his autobiographic books *Childhood, Boyhood and Youth* (1852-56) and *The Power of Darkness* (1909), *The Destruction of Hell and its Restoration* (1909), and '*The*

[255] It would be around this time that Beydas would also, in a polarizing mood, start referring to Tolstoy as a 'philosopher' (*al-failasuf*) and not as a 'writer' (al-katib) in his biographies. See note 243 above

[256] El'mira Ali-Zade. "L. Tolstoy i arabskoye literaturovedenie" in ed. Ali-Zade, E.A. Trudy Instituta Vostokovedeniya RAN Vypusk 18: Arabskaya filologiya: Traditsii i sovremennost'
36-63. (Moscow: Russian Academy of Sciences, 2018): 40.

[257] Vitaly Ali-Zade. "O perevode Selima Kobeyna broshory Akhmed-beka Agaeva pod arabskim hazvaniem 'Prava Zhenshchiny v Islame" *Bostok (oriens)*, n. 6 (2015): 151-152. Available at: https://vostokoriens.jes.su/s086919080000616-4-1-ru-63/

[258] Moosa. *The Origins of Modern Arab Fiction,* 17-18

[259] Here it is important to note the following armed conflicts that had an enduring effect on Christian communities throughout the Levant: first the Massacre of Aleppo in 1850 mostly targeting Syrian Catholic urban communities by Muslim individuals and later the Maronite- Druze conflict between the Lebanese-Syrian border in 1860 (See note 258 above).The Maronites are Eastern Christians in communion with the Catholic Pope, whereas the Druze are a sect of Shia Islam, considered as heretics by most Muslims. Another reason motivating many young Syrians to migrate to Egypt was the possibility to work as translators for French companies operating there, these being often a legacy of the French Occupation of Egypt in the times of Napoleon. The long-standing presence of Latin Catholic missionaries in Syria (starting from the 17th century) had offered the possibility to many Syrians to learn French in schools, that could later be turned into an asset in Egypt (See note 258 above).

Sayings of Mohammed, not included in the Koran' (1912).[260] Knowledge of Russian also allowed Kobein to translate other texts into Arabic, most notably the work of the Azerbaijani author Ahmed-Bey Agayev's "Woman in Islam and the Islamic World" written around 1901 and presented in 1906 at the opening of a school for girls, St. Nina's school, in Tiflis. [261] [262] Kobein published his translation under the title "Rights of Women in Islam*"* ('*Hukuk al-mar'a fi-l-islam*') in Cairo in 1905. [263]

The fact that this text was dedicated to Qāsim Amīn (1863-1908), a prominent feminist and reformer Egyptian writer, should not be overlooked either.[264] In fact, some scholars have argued that Kobein's translation of *Kreutzer Sonata* was very often not entirely faithful to Tolstoy's original text and instead included passages that were clearly reminding of Amin's feminist understandings of women's quest for autonomy and freedom in the institution of marriage.[265] [266] [267]This by no means should be understood as a deliberate attempt to distort Tolstoy's narrative on the side of Kobein but rather, as argued by some scholars, a result of the widespread perception among Arab-speaking intellectuals that Russian classics, of the likes of

[260] This was published after Tolstoy's death in 1910, during his attempted pilgrimage.
[261] At that time, the area was under Russian control and in fact, the wife of the Russian governor countess Y.A.Vorontsova- Dashkova was financially heavily involved in supporting the creation of the school. The event was held in presence of the governor and the mufti as well as some Azerbaijani intellectuals that were invited, such as Agayev. The pamphlet was intended to highlight the important role played by women historically for religious and political life in Muslim countries, intended to legitimize a form of slightly 'islamized' education for girls in the Caucasus, including teachings of the sharia alongside Russian and arithmetic. For that time this was already a pioneering enterprising, becoming the first school for girls to be opened in the region. See note 262 below.
[262] Ayten Merdan Hacilar. "General View on Education of Muslim Women in the Beginning of XX Century in Tiflis" *International Journal of Turkish Literature*, *Culture and Education 1*, n.2 (2012): 86-87. Available at: http://www.tekedergisi.com/Makaleler/1132881476_7-Ayten%20Merdan%20Hac%c4%b1lar.pdf
[263] Ali-Zade, "*O perevode Selima Kobeyna broshory Akhmed-beka Agaeva pod arabskim hazvaniem 'Prava Zhenshchiny v Islame*", 151-152.
[264] Ali-Zade, El'mira. *Russian Literature and the Arab World: On History of Arabo-Russian Literary Networks* ed. I.E. Bilyk (Moscow: Russian Academy of Sciences, 2020): 40-41.
[265] Ali-Zade, *Russian Literature and the Arab World: On History of Arabo-Russian Literary Networks,* 40-41.
[266] The biography of the scholar studying these literary exchanges, Ali-Zade is also worth noting, for she is the first female scholar from Azerbaijan to ever hold a chair in the Russian (formerly Soviet) Academy of Sciences.
[267] Litvin, "Arabic Rewritings of Tolstoy's 'Kreutzer's Sonata'".

Turgenev, Gogol or Chekhov shared the same anxieties and weaknesses that Arab subjects in the Ottoman provinces at the turn of the 20th century.[268]

Remembering his education in the schools of the Society, Naimy would even go further and suggest that the Russian classics, alongside other Western classics, not only provided a source of inspiration or identification for young aspiring Arab writers but the very foundations of Arab literature:

> *Let us translate. The beggar begs, when he cannot support himself by the work of his own hands. The thirsty man begs his neighbor for water when his well dries up. We are poor, though we brag about our abundant wealth. Why, then, should we not attempt to satisfy our needs from the abundance of others which is available to us? Our wells have no water to quench our thirst. Why should we, then, not obtain water from the wells of our neighbors, which are not forbidden to us? We are in a stage of literary and social development in which we have become aware of many intellectual needs. These needs were never known to us before our contact with the West. We haven't a sufficient number of pens or brains to satisfy these intellectual needs. Therefore, let us translate.* [269] [270]

For, just as Tolstoy's books were being translated by many of the former students of the schools of the Society,[271] so were the works of Jules Verne and Alexandre Dumas[272] and in English, Jonathan Swift and Wilkie Collin's works.[273] A translation of *Werthers Leiden* by Goethe also

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[268] Hine, "*Russian literature in the works of Mikhail Naimy*", 11.
[269] Mikhail Naimy. *Al-Ghirbal*. 7th edition (Beirut, 1964): 126. Quoted in Matti Moosa *The Origins of Modern Arab Fiction*. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc. , 1997: 93.
[270] In this passage of his collection of critical literary essays published in 1923, while he was still in New York, Naimy echoes the letter he would later send to the scholar I. Yu Krachkovsky in 1932. See also Martin Sprengling. "Mikhail Naimy and the Syrian Americans in Modern Arabic Literature" *The Open Court 3*, n. 8 (1932). Available at: https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/ocj/vol1932/iss8/3
[271] Besides the already mentioned cases of Beydas and Kobein, it is worth recalling the work of Anton Ballan in *Rawai al-khayal* (Masterpieces of fiction) including major works by Tolstoy, published in 1922, and Bebbawi Ghali al-Duwayri, who translated Tolstoy's *Family Happiness* in 1915.
[272] Yusuf Sarkis translated *Voyage en ballon* by Jules Verne as *al-Rhila al-Jawwiyya fi al-Markaba al-Hawaiyya* in Beirut in 1875 and Yusuf Assaf published *le tour du monde en 80 jours* in Cairo in 1889. An Arabic version of *the Three Musketeers* by Alexandre Dumas was available as early as 1888 in Cairo, thanks to Najib Haddad.
[273] Muhammad al-Siba'i translated *The Woman in White* and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* in 1909. He also translated Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* in 1912, to name a few. See note 253 above.

appeared, as a translation of its French version, thanks to Ahmad Hasan al-Zayyat, often praised for its style and considered to be a masterpiece on its own.[274]

It is worth noting that most of the aforementioned translations took place in Egypt, and more specifically Cairo. The number of translated Western works in Palestine was in comparison much smaller, owing to the fact that there were almost no journals and independent publishing houses Holy Land than in Egypt until 1908, when the new Constitution of the Ottoman Empire was proclaimed and more freedom of press was granted.[275] Among these, Beydas' literary journal *an-Nafais al-Assriah* (1908–1924) was one of the most prominent and was later followed by *al-Quds* owned by George-Habib and *al-Asma'I* published by the al-Issa family in Jerusalem. Later in 1911, Isa Daud and his cousin Yusuf Hana al-Issa brothers launched the famous newspaper *Filastin* from Jaffa. [276] [277]

Because Beydas' journal was one of the first and most influential literary publications on Palestinian soil and it included a number of translations of Russian classics some scholars consider that Arabic-Russian translation marked the genesis of modern translations in Palestine.[278]

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[274] Moosa. *The Origins of Modern Arab Fiction,* 101-104.
[275] Salim Tamari. *Mountain against the Sea Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture*. (Berkeley and LA: University of California Press, 2009): 176.
[276] Laura Robson. *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011): 33-34.
[277] Later on, after a break between 1914 and 1921 forced by the Ottoman authorities, the *Filastin* (meaning 'Palestine' in Arabic) would become one of the most critical voices against British rule and the Zionist movement, but also a chief defender of pan-Arabism and inter-religious solidarity. It also opposed the hegemony of Greek clergies in the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem. In 1930, in a very famous incident, Albert Einstein sent a letter to the Filastin criticizing its anti-Zionist tendencies.
[278] Spencer Dan Scoville. 'The Agency of the Translator: Khalil Baydas' Literary Translations' Phd Dissertation. (University of Michigan, 2012): 5-6.

Russian officials and observers at the time were of course not indifferent to these events. In his report on the workings of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society of 1895/6, the assistant secretary[279] and inspector Dmitriy Veniaminovich Istomin shrewdly remarked that:

> *The serious attention that is being paid in the Boarding Schools of Beyt Jala and Nazareth to the study of Russian language is rooted in the desire to acquaint the local students to our literature. Cultivating and developing the interest in our literary and spiritual works, closely and carefully selected, has undoubtedly awakened for the first time a desire in natives, who had hitherto lived with an extremely narrow outlook of concepts, to expand their knowledge and only our literature can serve the Orthodox native populations for that purpose, as they don't have yet their own national literature, especially among the younger people.* [280]

Additionally, the emergence of written press and the spread of literacy during the first decade of the 20th century encouraged the creation of literary cafés in Palestine, just as it had happened in other areas of the Levant, like Cairo.[281] In Jerusalem, for example, the area surrounding Jaffa Gate and the Russian Compound came in time to host a number of cafés and cabarets, offering a space in which Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and Armenian populations could interact, as well as Russian, Greek, and Balkan pilgrims during the Easter celebrations. Most of them appeared before WWI and survived up to the times of the British Mandate. Among these cafés, the most famous was Qahwat al Mukhtar or Vagabond Café, founded in 1918 by Issa Michael al-Toubbeh and later owned by the intellectual Khalil Sakakini, both Orthodox Christian Arabs.[282]

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[279] In the original Russian sources referred to as assistant secretary gentleman of the monarch's bed-chamber (*pomoshnik sekretarya kamer-yunker*). See Ivan Ivanovich Sokolov "Yubileynye torzhestva Imperatorskogo Pravoslavnogo Palestinskogo Obshchestva v Petergofe i Peterburge" Website of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society. Available at: https://www.ippo.ru/news/article/yubileynye-torzhestva-imperatorskogo-pravoslavnogo-202766 [Last accessed: July 29, 2021]

[280] Dmitriy Veniaminovich Istomin. "*Uchrezhdeniya im. Pravoslavnogo Palestinskogo Obshchestva v 1895/96 g. Otchet po komandirovske*".(Saint Petersburg: Unknown, 1897): 21-25. Quoted in Sharafutdinova, Rukiyna Sheykhutdinovna."Russko-Arabskiye kult'turnyye svyazi na blizhnem vostoke" *Palestinski Sbornik 26,* n. 89 (1978): 57. Available at: http://www.orientalstudies.ru/rus/images/pdf/journals/PPS_26_89_1978_05_sharafutdinova.pdf

[281] Salim Tamari, *Mountain against the Sea Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture*, 176-177.

[282] Sakakini would later become renowned for his 'Party of the Vagabonds' that encouraged an hedonistic philosophy and criticism of power. Other members of the Party were Adel Jaber, Is_af al Nashashibi, Issa al Issa (editor of *Alif ba*), Issa al Issa, Ishaq Musa al Husseini, Khalil Nakhleh, and, from abroad, Ahmad Zaki Pasha and

Najati Sidqi, later a prominent member of the Palestinian Communist Party in the 1920s, in his diaries, offers us a glimpse into the vibrant life of the cafés in the neighborhood of the Russian Compound shortly after WWI, which, unlike their counterparts in Cairo or Beirut, hosted a large number of Russian visitors:

> *Every afternoon I used to sit in this café* (the Postal Café close to Jaffa gate and the already mentioned Café of the Vagabonds), *where we used to encounter its cosmopolitan clientele. Among these were a tsarist officer with a white beard who claimed that he was a captain of a Russian battleship before the Bolsheviks seized his boat in Odessa; a young clerk working for the municipality, whose father was Russian and his mother was Arab; an immigrant painter who used to sketch the café customers for a few qurush; an elegant lady who kept talking about her properties in the Ukraine; and many young men and women immigrants who would chat and drink sodas. The discussion was always on the same themes: Jewish migration, Arab resistance, Jabotinsky's insurrection, the battle of Tel Hai in northern Palestine, the rebellion in Jaffa* [1921], *and the clashes between Arabs and Jews. These discussions included ideological debates, which were translated to us in the vernacular. From them we became familiar with the basic tenets of socialism, anarchism, and Bolshevist doctrines.* [283]

By the time our protagonist, Mikhail Naimy, returned to Lebanon from the US in 1932 he encountered a totally different reality. The Ottoman Empire he grew up in had disappeared without leaving any traces, as if it never had existed, but neither had an Arab state emerged to replace it. Instead, Palestine had been reunified and become a semi-colonial possession under

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Khalil Mutra. Sakakini himself unlike most of the intellectuals mentioned in this chapter during his adulthood severed all his links to missionary and religious-affiliated schools and invested in the creation of an Arab secular school, the Al-Dusturiyyah College. Throughout his life, perhaps inspired by his education at a Greek Orthodox school, he opposed the Hellenization of the Orthodox Patriarchy of Jerusalem. See Tamari, *Mountain against the Sea: Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture,* 183-188.

Thus, Sakakini was never under the sphere of influence of the Society and Russian culture, more broadly, unlike the case of many of the Christian Arab intellectuals surveyed in this chapter though he did have the chance to interact with Russian pilgrims and other travelers in his café.

[283] Najati Sidqi. *Mudhakkarat Najati Sidqi*, ed. Hanna Abu Hanna (Beirut:Mu'assasat al Dirasat al Filastiniyya, 2002), p. 19. Quoted in Salim Tamari *Mountain against the Sea Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture.* Berkeley and LA: University of California Press, 2009: 181-182.

British rule while Lebanon and Syria were now under the control of France. At the same time, though, the days when almost no literary production existed in Arabic were long gone.

In these times of confusion and suppressed discontent Naimy, already an acclaimed and successful writer, decided to settle in the rural hinterlands he grew up in, in a solitary and frugal lifestyle. He vehemently opposed Western control over the Levant and Zionist plans to create a Jewish state and encouraged inter-religious dialogue to make Arab nationalism stronger.[284]

As some scholars have noted, Naimy's final years, as much of his life, in many ways echoed those of his hero, Lev Tolstoy, after he was excommunicated from the Orthodox Church in 1901 and suffering severe moral and emotional crises.[285] Naimy, looking back at his youth, in his autobiography identified *the Yasnaya Polyana* [286] as his lighthouse, illuminating the path to come.[287]

[284] Ahmed Hamzah Ibtisam. "L. N. Tolstoy and Mikhail Nuaime. On the Problem of the Effect of Philosophical and Religious Ideas of the Russian Writer on Arabic Literature" Histo*rical and social educational idea's 7*, n. 1 (2015): 45. Doi: 10.17748/2075-9908.2015.7.1.043-046
[285] Ibtisam, *"L. N. Tolstoy and Mikhail Nuaime. On the Problem of the Effect of Philosophical and Religious Ideas of the Russian Writer on Arabic Literature'*, 45.
[286] In Russia the '*Yasnaya Polyana'* was known as Tolstoy's birthplace and residence for much of his life until he departed shortly before his death for a pilgrimage.
[287] Ibtisam, *"L. N. Tolstoy and Mikhail Nuaime. On the Problem of the Effect of Philosophical and Religious Ideas of the Russian Writer on Arabic Literature'*, 45

Chapter 5: Ode-Vasil'yeva and the Role of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society in the Emergence of Arab Studies in pre- and post-revolutionary Russia

This chapter will explore the biography and work of Kulthum Ode-Vasil'yeva and present it as an instance of transcultural biography. In doing so, this chapter will also show the connections and path dependencies between the works of the Society and pre- and post-revolutionary Russian Oriental Studies.

Kulthum Ode was born in 1892 in Nazareth and attended a girls school of the Society in Beyt Jala until she graduated in 1908. Afterwards she trained and taught at diverse schools of the Society in Nazareth until 1914, when she left for Russia. During those early years in Nazareth, Kulthum Ode had the chance to publish Arabic translations of little known Russian authors[288] in the recently founded literary journal *al-Nafa'is al-c'Asriyyah* by Khalil Beydas.[289] It was also during her stay at the Teachers' Seminary that Kulthum Ode met the leading Oriental Studies scholar Ignatiy Yulyanovich Krachkovskiy (1883-1951), an encounter that would reverberate throughout her entire academic career afterwards.

This Krachkovskiy, after finishing his studies in Saint Petersburg in 1906 travelled to the Middle East (modern-day Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine) between 1908 and 1910 with the aim of improving his knowledge of Arabic dialects and the history and folklore of the Levant,

[288] During the first decade of the 20th century Gothic inspired novels became very popular among Arabic-speaking readers and in some cases were based on Russian novels but also Russian translations of British novels or short stories. Kulthum Ode, for the issue of 1910, published an Arabic translation of *The Martyr to Paternal Love* (Shahidatu-l-hubb al-walidi) by an unknown Russian author. See note 289 below.

[289] Alyn Desmond Hine. 'The Influence of Russian Literature in Two Twentieth Century Arabic Periodicals' *Eras 12*, n. 1 (2010): 9-10. Available at: https://www.ippo.ru/uploads/rus-lit.pdf

following the steps of previous leading Oriental Studies scholars like Agafangel Yefimovich Krymsky (1871-1942)[290] and Vladimir Fedorovich Girgas (1835-1887)[291]. Before reaching Palestine, in 1908 Krachkovskiy attended classes at St. Joseph University in Beirut and later visited Tripoli. In all places he had the opportunity to speak to teachers of schools of the Society. Once in Palestine, Krachkovsky had the chance to meet teachers from the girls' school in Beyt Jala and their graduates in the Teachers' Seminary in Nazareth, though he was not a member of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society. Among the first it is very likely that he met Anna Alekseevna Solovëv (born Studenkova) mother of the future writer Leonid Vasil'yevich Solovëv,[292] indeed another example of transcultural biography.[293]

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[290] Throughout his academic career, Krymsky was able to combine his passion for Arabic language and the Levant provinces with his patriotic spirit of researching and promoting Ukrainian language and culture. Alongside his seminal works 'An Outline of the Development of Sufism" (published in Moscow in 1895) and 'History of Islam' (published in different volumes in Moscow in 1903-1904) he published 'Some Criteria for Classification of Dialects of Old Russian' (published in 1905 in Lviv, Ukraine) and encouraged many students to develop an interest in Arab language. See Pavel Gusterin 'Pamyati Agafangela Efimovicha Krymskogo'. Proza.Ru Available at: https://proza.ru/2017/04/28/1839 [Last accesed: August 30, 2021]

[291] Vera Alexandrovna Krachkovskaya. "I. Yu. Krachkovskiy na Livane i v Palestine" *Palestinski Sbornik 1*, n. 64 (1954): 105. Digital version available at: http://www.orientalstudies.ru/rus/images/pdf/journals/PPS_01_63_1954_06_krachkovskaya.pdf

[292] Petr Fedotov. 'Russian Employees of School Inspectorates of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society in Syria and Lebanon in the 1895−1914s: Motivation and Achievements' Bylye Gody 56, n.2 (2020): 802-803. DOI: 10.13187/bg.2020.2.796

[293] Indeed Leonid Solovëv's case is also a good instance of how the schools of the Society could enable lot of trans- and extra- imperial mobility. Leonid was born to Vasily Andreevich Solovëv and Anna Alekseevna Studenkova while both worked for the schools of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society in Palestine and Syria. They met in Nazareth while he worked in the Teachers' Seminary of Nazareth and she in a girls' school in Nazareth too. Shortly before Leonid was born, in 1904, Vasily started working as an assistant to the inspectors of the Society schools in Northern Syria, around Tripoli, while Anna worked in the girls' school in Beyt Jala (See note 292 above). In 1906, Leonid was born in Tripoli and just a few years later the family returned to Russia, where they worked in different occupations and different places. For a while the family lived in Buguruslan and later in Pokhvistnevo station of the Samara-Zlatoust railway. After 1921 the family moved to Kokand, in the new Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan. See Tatyana Volokhova. V. "On mechtal stat' dervishem: biografiya Leonida Solovyeva" in *Neuzheli kto-to vspomnil, chto ty my byli… Zabytye Pisateli* ed. Eleonora Shafranskaya (Saint Petersburg: Self-published, 2019): 186.
His childhood memories of the cultural and linguistic richness of Kokand would become a source of inspiration for his major work *Tales of Khodja Nasreddin*. Its first part was published in 1941 and it attracted the attention of Maxim Gorki while it was still being written earlier in 1934. See Valer'evna Lyubov' Sumatokhina. "Maksim Gork'kiy o voploshchenii natsional'nogo kharaktera kak osobom tile literaturnogo geroya*" Publication of Kostroma State University 24*, n.1 (2018): 17. Available at: https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/maksim-gorkiy-o-voploschenii-natsionalnogo-haraktera-kak-osobom-tipe-literaturnogo-geroya/viewer
Solovëv would later keep traveling and during the Great Patriotic War, that is WWII, he served as a correspondent in the Black Sea for the newspaper 'Red Fleet'. Solovëv also participated in state-sponsored expeditions to research the folklore of native peoples in Uzbekistan and their understanding of communism and Marx and Lenin's doctrines, leading to his work *Lenin and the Creativity of the Peoples of the East*, published in 1930. See Volokhova, "*On mechtal stat' dervishem: biografiya Leonida Solovyeva"*, 195.

Krachkovskiy, whom locals referred to as 'the Russian wanderer' (*russkiy skitalets*)[294] had a very good impression of the schools of the Society and commented that:

> '*These small, often poorly furnished schools were of great significance. Through the teachers in the schools of the Palestinian Society, the great precepts of Pirogov and Ushinsky were brought from Russia and also penetrated here. In their pedagogical goals, the Russian schools were often superior to the richly equipped American or Western missions. Though the graduates rarely found a practical application to their knowledge of Russian the touch of Russian culture and literature left an irreplaceable mark on their whole life. The power of the books were revealed in all their might. And it is not a coincidence that so many of the writers of the now older generation have come out of the schools of the Palestine Society. This environment doted of modest teachers especially attracted me. Many teachers and students back then already tried to pursue careers as writers and journalists, for the doors were still closed for them in any jobs as public servants for the Ottoman administration. In this emerging intelligentsia of the mind I saw many opportunities and a lot of talent. The history of the Arab countries after the First World War justified my thoughts.*' [295]

In his commentary, Krachkovskiy was referring to Nikolai Ivanovich Pirogov (1810-1881) and Constantin Dmitrievich Ushinski (1823-1873), two prominent thinkers and pedagogues that enjoyed a wide reputation in the Russian Empire during the 1850s and 1860s until Count Dmitri A. Tolstoy became the Minister of Education in 1866, marking a conservative turn.[296]

Pirogov, besides becoming a leading surgeon and anatomist on his own right, played an influential role in changing the education system in Russia during that period by urging an increase in the educational level of future school teachers and improving the conditions of Jewish and Tatar schools across the Empire.[297] In his famous book *Questions of Life*, published in 1856 and coinciding with his appointment as a curator of the Odessa school district, Pirogov

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[294] He also liked to be called 'Gantus ar-Rus' in Arabic meaning Ignasha from Russia. See note 295 below.
[295] Ignatiy Yulianovich Krachkovskiy. "Nad arabskimi rukopisyami" (Moscow: Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union, 1946): 50.
[296] Yuri Leonidovich Shevchenko. 'Nikolai Ivanovich Pirogov: Theacher by the Grace of God' *Bulletin of the National Medical and Surgical Center 15,* no. 3 (2020): 4. Doi 10.25881/BPNMSC.2020.24.36.001
[297] Shevchenko "*Nikolai Ivanovich Pirogov: Theacher by the Grace of God*", 4.

advocated for the creation of an education system that helped develop humans' inherent curiosity and thirst for knowledge, not just prepare youngsters for successful bureaucratic careers.[298] This included the creation of a university in Odessa that would educate Southern Slaves and was eventually opened in 1865 under the name of Novorossiisk University in Odessa, shortly after his forced removal by Count Tolstoy. [299] [300] Finally, Pirogov was also one of the architects of the university reform in 1863, during the reign of Alexander II, that advocated the autonomy from state power of public Russian universities and the elimination of any forms of nepotism and favoritism in the appointment of university professors.[301]

Constantin Dmitrievich Ushinski in turn has come to be considered in time as the 'father of Russian Pedagogy'.[302] Dubbed 'politically unreliable' early in his career, Ushinski struggled to find a stable job as a school teacher and worked as a publicist and journalist focusing on topics of education and upbringing until he became employed in the progressive Gatchina Orphans Institute in 1854.[303] There he was able to put in practice his ideals of promoting education in Russian and improving the education of girls to became schools teachers and even sent a letter with suggestions to Empress Maria Aleksandrovna on how to raise her kids.[304] After being dismissed from his post in 1861, for being too progressive for his times, Ushinski

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[298] William L. N. Mathes 'I. Pirogov and the Reform of University Government, 1856-1866' *Slavic Review 31*, No. 1 (1972): 30-31. Doi:10.2307/2494143.
[299] Mathes, "*I. Pirogov and the Reform of University Government, 1856-1866",* 30-31.
[300] Odessa had also received a lot of attention by several Russian actors with a wish to expand in Palestine. Grand Duke Constantin had already entertained the possibility of opening a training school for future civil servants sent to the Ottoman Empire in Odessa in the 1850s and later Vasiliy Khitrovo
, founder of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, also thought of Odessa as the right location to open one of the first schools of the Society to escape a boycott by the Greek patriarchs in Jerusalem in the 1880s. Both plans were vetoed by Procurator Pobedonostsev that was resentful of the experience of Pirogov and the risk of transmission of revolutionary ideals. See Derek Hopwood. *The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914: Church and Politics in the Near East.* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969): 143-144.
[301] Mathes, "*I. Pirogov and the Reform of University Government, 1856-1866",* 29-30.
[302] Mikhail Viktorovich Boguslavsky and Konstantin Yur'evich Milovanov. "Pedagogicheskaya Sud'ba K. D. Ushinskogo' *Otechestvennaya I zarubezhnaya pedagogika 2*, n. 17 (2014): 10. Digital version available at: https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/pedagogicheskaya-sudba-k-d-ushinskogo/viewer
[303] Boguslavsky& Milovanov, "*Pedagogicheskaya Sud'ba K. D. Ushinskogo"* ,8-9.
[304] Boguslavsky& Milovanov, "*Pedagogicheskaya Sud'ba K. D. Ushinskogo"*, 11.

published two important textbooks for young children '*Native World'* and '*Children's World*' in 1864 that became extremely popular.[305]

Krachkovskiy's comparison of the work done at the Teachers' Seminary in Nazareth of the Palestine Society with the ideals of Ushinski and Pirogov can be read as a sign of honest praise. The decision of the Society to train local Arabs alongside Russians in the Seminary, including women, to become well trained teachers must have struck him from the very beginning, alongside the high command Arab teachers had of the Russian language.

Just as Krachkovskiy took notice of the schools of the Palestine Society, so did the teachers of the schools take notice of him. In an article remembering her childhood and teenage years in the schools and later the Teachers' Seminary in Nazareth published in 1956 in the Soviet Union our Kulthum Ode still had vivid memories of the first time Krachkovskiy visited the school where she taught in Nazareth:

> '*On April 16, 1910, a prose poem was published in the Arabic magazine* "al-Nafa'is al-c'Asriyyah*" under the title "*Oh, if I had wings, I would fly on them*" . The author was unusual, it was written by a certain "*Russian wanderer*". I only recalled poems written like that by an emerging young Arab writer called ar-Reyhani. Indeed, this new genre required a deep knowledge of the Arabic language, which made me think who could be the person behind this pen name. Who could be this Russian wanderer be who speaks Arabic almost perfectly? Among the Arabist Europeans we know, I could not remember anyone who spoke and wrote in Arabic so well. But my astonishment did not last long. On an April evening, when the subtle aroma of flowers, sweet pepper, roses and jasmine filled the air, the church bell struck, startling the silence, and bliss spread around. The bell announced the arrival of Russian pilgrims from Jerusalem. I was sitting on the balcony of the "Russian house", where the school where I taught was located. Russian pilgrims, including two intellectuals, entered the courtyard of the house. A little later I went to the dining room, where, while getting acquainted with them, I heard the words "*Russian wanderer*" in the purest Arabic. I looked up, and there was a young man standing in front of me with a friendly, intelligent face, bordered by a beard. His beard*

[305] Boguslavsky& Milovanov, "*Pedagogicheskaya Sud'ba K. D. Ushinskogo"*, 12.

> *gave him a particularly solid appearance. The most remarkable thing about his face were his eyes. They radiated a special light that illuminated the whole face. "*The wanderer*" immediately began to speak in Arabic, breaking the ice very quickly. He spoke the Syriac dialect perfectly. This"* wanderer *" was I. Yu. Krachkovskiy. The extent to which Ignatiy Yulianovich mastered the folk Arabic language can be proved by the following incident. I asked my father for permission to come with these two Russians to visit him. My father, who did not like Europeans in general, sometimes made an exception for Russians. After school, I went with them and a friend to my father. I. Y. talked to him in Arabic, whereas I preferred to talk them in Russian to practice. I was afraid of my father, despite the fact that I no longer lived with him and I had a home of my own. I noticed that during his conversation with Ignatiy his face was darkening and he was throwing displeased glances in my direction. I worried that he might be unhappy that I was talking to a Russian man, in a language that he did not understand. But to my surprise, after the guests left, my father told me that I was a liar and that I had introduced an Arab into the house under the guise of a Russian*.' [306]

Reading Ode's testimony a number of things become apparent, beyond the initial surprise of meeting a Russian man capable of speaking fluent in several dialects of Arabic. First, we can see the extent to which Khalil Beyda's literary journal circulated, *al-Nafa'is al-c'Asriyyah*, at least among those related in some way to the schools of the Society. Ode must have checked the publications in this journal regularly and therefore was surprised to read an unusual name.

Secondly, and as already seen in the case of Maria Cherkasova's schools in Beirut, Ode's description shows that it was common for the schools of the Palestine Society to welcome Russian pilgrims, who very often knew of the existence of the Society's schools before reaching Palestine or if not shortly after their arrival and understood these to function almost as some form of informal Russian cultural centers. It was indeed Khitrovo's main goal, when he founded the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, to protect Russian and other Orthodox pilgrims to the Holy Land who traveled to sacred sites in Jerusalem and Nazareth,[307] while the

[306] Klaudia Kulthum Ode-Vasil'yeva. " Moi vospominaniya ob akademike I. Yu. Krachkovskom" *Palestinski Sbornik 2,* n. 64-65 (1956): 127-128. Digital version available at: http://www.orientalstudies.ru/rus/images/pdf/journals/PPS_02_64-65_1956_12_ode-vasilyeva.pdf

[307] In the case of Nazareth most pilgrims visited the Church of Archangel Gabriel, considered as the true church of Annunciation, in the outskirts of Nazareth. This is indeed another source of contention between Greeks and

creation of schools was not considered seriously until the Society was officially founded in 1882. Another piece of evidence that pilgrims knew of the Society and its works while in Palestine can be found in Stephen Graham's[308] description of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in his book '*With the Russian Pilgrims to Jerusalem*' published in 1913. It was precisely when he reached Nazareth that he noted in his diaries:

> *"The Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society has control over the hostelry at Nazareth, and its provision is part of the Society's good work; it has also instituted schools for the boys and girls of the district, and has consequently a definite missionary influence. Russian is taught, there are Russian masters and mistresses, and a great number of the rising generation speak Russian as well as Syrian. It should be mentioned that one-third of the population belongs to the Holy Orthodox Church, either to the Russian branch of it or to the Greek."* [309]

From Ode's description, though by no means representative of the entire Arab community in Palestine, it is also interesting to note how Ode's father, who according to Ode was not always friendly to foreigners, was willing to make concessions only to Russians. Again, if Graham's description is to be used as a comparison, he noted that upon disembarking from the ship from Constantinople in Jaffa:

„*Arab boys ran alongside as we filed into the cloisters and they shouted in Russian "Moskof khorosh, moskof khorosh! (The Muscovites are good, the Muscovites are good!)"* [310]

Latins, as Latins contend that the Annunciation took place somewhere else, in the big Catholic Basilica of Annunciation, also in Nazareth. Some scholars compromise by arguing there might have been two annunciations in different spots of Nazareth. See Yuri Vlasov "Khram Blagoveshcheniya". Proza.Ru Available at: https://proza.ru/2015/12/29/1207 [Last accessed: August 30, 2021]

[308] Stephen Graham (1884-1975) was a Scottish journalist who travelled extensively across the Russian Empire before the October Revolution and wrote several books on the country. Fascinated by Tolstoy and a distinctive spirituality of Russian peasants, Graham popularized the myth of 'Holy Russia', that is, Russia as the heir and center of Orthodox Christianity, among British intellectuals and romantics. See Michael Hughes. *Beyond the Holy Land: The Life and Times of Stephen Graham*. (Cambridge: Open Books, 2014): 4.

[309] Stephen Graham. *With the Russian Pilgrims to Jerusalem* (London: MacMillan and Co. , 2015): 179.

[310] Graham, *With the Russian Pilgrims to Jerusalem*, 68-69.

Finally and most importantly, another observation that can be made on the basis of Ode's description is the number of unintended possibilities for female emancipation for local Arab women employed as teachers or aspiring to become teachers at a school of the Palestine Society. The existence of boarding schools in Beyt Jala for female students and other facilities around Palestine intended to house pilgrims, that could also house students and teachers,[311] meant that in a society characterized by female seclusion young women suddenly had the chance to live autonomously and have their own source of income, as well as move to other cities within the Levant.[312]

Yet, sadly, it is worth mentioning that, while there were seemingly many opportunities open to all female students of the schools, in practice very few benefitted from them. In an article published in the *Palestinski Sbornik* years later, in 1965, Ode reflected again on her past biography, and provided a clearer (and more critical) description of her relations to her family and the opportunities that working as a teacher in a school for the Palestine Society offered to her. At that time it was understood that the choice for women in Christian Orthodox Arab communities in Palestine was between marrying or becoming a housemaid at her parents' house as finding employing was not well regarded. As a consequence, Ode reasoned, it was mostly '*girls with a physical disability or those who were very ugly'*, i.e. those that hadn't

[311] In the case of Nazareth, the 'Russian House' that Ode mentioned in her memories was most likely the Russian Sergievskiy Compound in Nazareth built in 1904 by the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society on land plots that the Society had inherited decades earlier from the former Palestinian Committee . The development in those lands had not taken place earlier due to the fact that some local inhabitants had appropriated some of the land and since there was no fence surrounding the plots it had taken decades of strenuous legal action to recover the lands. See Nikolay Nikolaevich Lisovoy. "Opisaniye podvor'ya IPPO v Nazarete' (Chapter 11) in Rossiya v Svyatoy Zemle. Dokumenty I materialy Moscow: International Relations Publishing House, 2000. [Digital version of a book] Available at: https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Nikolaj_Lisovoj/rossija-v-svjatoj-zemle-dokumenty-i-materialy-tom-1/11_15 [Last accessed: August 25, 2021]

[312] In a later article, Ode explained that one of her former teachers at the Beyt Jala Female Teachers' Seminary (equivalent to the Teachers' Seminar in Nazareth for future male teachers) was actually from Lebanon and had studied in Beirut. See Klaudia Kulthum Ode-Vasil'yeva. "Vzglyad v proshloe" *Palestinski Sbornik 13*, n. 76 (1965): 173.Digital version available at: http://www.orientalstudies.ru/rus/images/pdf/journals/PPS_13_76_1965_14_ode-vasilyeva.pdf

managed to marry early, that decided (and were allowed by their families!) to become teachers.[313] Arab women, regardless of their religion, remained, after all, 'under the veil' (*pod chardoy*) and there was little the Society could and was willing to do to change their situation.[314]

Aware that her successful career as a teacher of one of the 'Moscow Schools' owed to her intelligence but also to her little chances of settling for a good marriage within her religious community in Nazareth[315] it is little surprising that when Ode met the Russian doctor Ivan Vasil'yev[316] while working as a nurse in Nazareth in 1913, she did not hesitate to follow him to Russia, leaving everything behind, at the onset of WWI.

Vasil'yev worked in the Nazareth Ambulatory, created in 1888 with the sponsorship of Countess Olga Evfim'evna Putyatina (1848-1890)[317]and supervised by the Yakubovich couple, as part of the strategy of Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society to provide medical assistance in the territories of the Levant .[318] [319] The Ambulatory served Russian pilgrims and students and

[313] Ode-Vasil'yeva, "*Vzglyad v proshloe*", 171.
[314] Ode-Vasil'yeva, "*Vzglyad v proshloe*", 171.
[315] In the same article of 1965 Ode recalls her mother's unequivocal words '*And who will marry you, little flower, you will end up being the servant of your future daughter-in-law for the rest of your life!*' See note 313 above.
[316] Hence her double surname Ode-Vasil'yeva. While in Russia she adopted the name Claudia and the patronymic Viktorovna.
[317] Putyatina, 'The Christian Countess', was the daughter of the famous admiral Evfimi Vasil'yevich Putyatin (1803-1883) who played a crucial role in establishing diplomatic relations with Japan during the end of the Sakoku period after 1853. See note 170 in Chapter 3.
[318] Dmitri Alekseevich Balalykin and Larisa Evgen'evna Gorelova. "Meditsinskaya deyatel'nost' Imperatorskogo Pravoslavnogo Palestinskogo Obshchestva na Blizhnem Vostoke: K 130- letiyu cozdaniya" *Uchenye zapiski: elektronny nauchny zhurnal Kurskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta 23*, n.1 (2012): 43-44. Available at: https://ros-vos.net/uploads/med_ippo_025-007.pdf
[319] Other ambulatories would follow in Bethlehem (1896), Damascus (1897) and Homs (1904), among others, to assist pilgrims and local population. The famous Russian doctor and traveler Alexander Vasil'yevich Eliseev (1858-1895) partnered with the Palestine Society and its ambulatories and hospitals to conduct research on transmittable diseases in the Levant and Ethiopia, as well as observing the customs of the local inhabitants. Eliseev died shortly after arriving in Russia from an expedition to Ethiopia, at a time when Russian interests in the Horn of Africa were expanding. Following a failed ecclesiastical mission in 1888 to establish good relations between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church, Russian interests had expanded in the Horn of Africa, sensing the possibility of antagonizing Italian imperialist ambitions in the area and becoming allies of the Ethiopian monarchy. See Tatyana Denisova. 'The First Russian Religious Missions to Ethiopia' *Politics and*

teachers of the schools and seminaries of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society in Nazareth.[320] What's more, aspiring teachers at the Male Teachers' Seminary in Nazareth and graduates of the Beyt Jala Seminary for Female teachers, among them Kulthum Ode, were required to do an internship at the reception of the Ambulatory before being appointed as teachers in rural schools of the Society, as a measure to guarantee that they could take care of their students in case of an emergency.[321]

Shortly before the start of WWI, Ode-Vasil'yeva left to Russia with his husband for two months and, while in Russia, they found out about the start of the war. [322] Nevertheless, Ode-Vasil'yeva decided to remain in Russia and there she managed to see in person again Prof. Krachkovskiy. When her husband was dispatched to Ukraine during the Bolshevik Revolution Ode-Vasil'yeva followed him and served as a nurse.[323] In 1924, after the death of her husband, Ode-Vasil'yeva moved to Leningrad, despite calls by her relatives to return to Palestine, under the British Mandate, at that time.[324]

By doing all of this, Ode-Vasil'yeva very much went against the expectations for students of the schools of the Palestine Society, and more generally Orthodox Arabs. Rather than just stay as a teacher in Palestine at a school of the Society and contribute to the translation of Russian literature and diffusion of Russian interests in her region Ode- Vasil'yeva went to Russia (later Soviet Union) and never returned to Palestine. She did not profess a strong faith in Orthodox

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Religion Journal 15, n. 1 (2021): 57-58. Available at: http://www.politicsandreligionjournal.com/index.php/prj/article/view/474

[320] Balalykin& Gorelova, "*Meditsinskaya deyatel'nost' Imperatorskogo Pravoslavnogo Palestinskogo Obshchestva na Blizhnem Vostoke*", 43-44.

[321] Balalykin& Gorelova, "*Meditsinskaya deyatel'nost' Imperatorskogo Pravoslavnogo Palestinskogo Obshchestva na Blizhnem Vostoke*", 43-44.

[322] Klaudia Kulthum Ode-Vasil'yeva. " Moi vospominaniya ob akademike I. Yu. Krachkovskom" Palestinski Sbornik 2, n. 64-65 (1956): 129-130. Digital version available at: http://www.orientalstudies.ru/rus/images/pdf/journals/PPS_02_64-65_1956_12_ode-vasilyeva.pdf

[323] Ode-Vasil'yeva, *" Moi vospominaniya ob akademike I. Yu. Krachkovskom"*, 129-130.

[324] Ode-Vasil'yeva, *" Moi vospominaniya ob akademike I. Yu. Krachkovskom"*, 129-130.

Christianity either nor tried to propagate it wherever she went. Thus, she adapted very well to the transition of power and ideology after the October Revolution in 1917. Rather than serving 'Holy Russia' as she was intended to, as a mix of accidental contingencies and ideological conviction Ode- Vasil'yeva ended up making great contributions to the Soviet Union, first as nurse and later as university professor. One of her daughters, Galina Ivanovna (1919-1994) even married to a soldier of the Soviet Navy, Anatoly Ivanovich Kisov (1918-2009).[325]

In 1924 upon arriving in Leningrad, Prof. Krachkovskiy offered her a position to work as a teacher of Arabic at the newly founded Leningrad Institute of Modern Languages[326], which Ode-Vasil'yeva accepted[327].

In the meantime, the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society was undergoing a total transformation. After 1918 it was neither *imperial* nor *orthodox* and most of its previous members, expelled from Palestine by the Ottoman authorities after the outbreak of the war, had either perished during the revolutionary years or died of old age.[328] [329] By 1923, the former chronicler and secretary of the Society, Alexei Dmitrievskiy had retired from the Society and lived in Petrograd[330] and the Society had taken an exclusively research focus, now also including scholars focusing on geology and biology of Palestine.[331] This alone did not stop Soviet authorities from remaining suspicious of the Society's tsarist and reactionary origins

[325] Vladimir Svetlov and Stanislav Lebedev. 'Kulthum Ode-Vasil'yeva' Novodevichy Nekropol Available at: http://novodevichiynecropol.narod.ru/06/kisov_ai.htm [Last accessed: August 25, 2021]
[326] It followed shortly after the Petrograd Institute of Modern Languages had been established in 1922.
[327] Ode-Vasil'yeva, *" Moi vospominaniya ob akademike I. Yu. Krachkovskom"*, 129-130.
[328] Lora Gerd. "The Palestine Society: Cultural Diplomacy and Scholarship" in *Late Tsarist Russia and the Soviet State in European Cultural Diplomacy and Arab Christians in Palestine, 1918-1948* ed. Karène Sanchez Summerer & Sary Zananiri (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2021): 290-291.
[329] Only Ivan Ivanovich Spasskii, a former inspector of the schools of the Society, had managed to remain by working as an employee of the British administration in Jerusalem and in 1926 sent a report back to the Soviet Union explaining in detail the situation of the Society's real estate under the British Mandate. See Gerd, '*The Palestine Society: Cultural Diplomacy and Scholarship*", 288.
[330] Gerd, "*The Palestine Society: Cultural Diplomacy and Scholarship*", 288.
[331] Gerd, "*The Palestine Society: Cultural Diplomacy and Scholarship*", 288-290.

and in fact the status and physical location of the Society remained uncertain for much of the 1920s after in 1922 the Soviet authorities had confiscated the original archives in the former headquarters of the Society in Saint Petersburg, transported them to Moscow and eventually lost them as well as transferring most church items to the Metropolitan of Saint Petersburg.[332]

It was around 1929 that seeing the hardships that the Society was facing, not just financial but also academic, for most of its members had not been able to visit in person Palestine for a decade, that Prof. Krachkovskiy intervened and invited some of the former students of the schools of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society living in Soviet territories, like Ode-Vasil'yeva, Taufik Kezma (in Ukraine at the time) and Panteleimon Zhuze[333](in Baku) to support the Palestine Society.[334] It is in this context that Ode-Vasil'yeva decided to publish an article in 1930 in the *Palestinski Sbornik,* the journal of the Palestine Society entitled '*Reflections on the life of the modern Arab Women in Novels'*[335]. Ode-Vasil'yeva would publish two more articles in the *Palestinski Sbornik* until she passed away in 1965. During the last two decades of her life, Ode-Vasil'yeva worked teaching Arabic at diverse Soviet Universities, after a brief period of arrest following Stalin's mass purges, following her opposition to the official Stalinist strategy at that time of using Jewish colonies to spread communism in Mandate Palestine.[336]

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[332] Gerd, "*The Palestine Society: Cultural Diplomacy and Scholarship*", 292.

[333] Panteleimon Krestovich Zhuze (1871-1942), a former student of the Teachers' Seminary in Nazareth studied in the Kazan's Ecclesiastical Seminary thanks to a scholarship of the Society and later taught Arabic-speaking literature and history of the Arab provinces at the University of Baku. While in Palestine he created one of the first Arab-Russian dictionaries and published several Arabic textbooks for children. See Rukiya Sheykhutdinovna Sharafutdinova. " Russko-arabskiye kul'turnyye svyazi na Blizhnem Vostoke (Stranichka iz istorii russko-arabskikh shkol)" Palestinski Sbornik 26, n. 89 (1978): 56. Digital version available at: http://www.orientalstudies.ru/rus/images/pdf/journals/PPS_26_89_1978_05_sharafutdinova.pdf

[334] Gerd, "*The Palestine Society: Cultural Diplomacy and Scholarship*", 297.

[335] Klaudia Kulthum Ode-Vasil'yeva. "Otrazheniye byta sovremennoy arabskoy zhenshchiny v novelle" in Zapiski Kollegi Vostokovedov RAN Volume V. L.eningrad: Publishing House of the USSR Academy of Sciences, 1930: 293-306. Digital version available at: http://www.orientalstudies.ru/rus/images/pdf/journals/zkv_5_1930_18_ode-vasilyeva.pdf

[336] Sadia Agsous. "The Palestinian graduates of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (IOPS) and the making of the native cultural Nahḍa", *Contemporary Levant 6*, n.1 (2021): 46. DOI: 10.1080/20581831.2021.1881714

One of her most famous quotes remained ‘The Arabs need Russia, and Russia needs the Arabs’. Her life was definitely a good example of that.

Final Remarks

Conclusions

After reading about the lives of many former students of the schools of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society it is easy to see that the schools very often did serve as sites where Imperial Russia's 'soft power' could be projected onto local Orthodox Christian Arab communities, by means of popularizing prominent Russian-speaking writers like Pushkin and Tolstoy or fostering the use of Russian language, for example. Lora Gerd's hypothesis is thus confirmed.

Yet, our study has shown that there were many ways in which individuals could act and react upon this inflow of ideas, values and cultural artifacts. As a consequence, teachers and students of the schools found themselves leading very diverse lives after their involvement with the schools. It's hard to describe what a prototype student of the Society, and even teacher, looked like. For this reason, I argue that the schools of the Society can be understood as sites of multidirectional exchange of ideas and not 'normalizing' institutions in Foucault's sense.[337]

This is indeed **not** because of a deliberate policy of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society but rather a consequence of the precarity of the schools and the Society itself, that despite receiving 'imperial' sponsorship, lacked funds and an actual institutional backing. In fact, under Vasiliy Khitrovo and Alexander Gavrilovich Kezma's leadership significant efforts were made to standardize the curriculum across the schools and in several occasions inspectors were sent to evaluate the quality of teaching and the organization of the schools, as discussed in

[337] For a description and discussion of how to interpret schools as normalizing institutions See James Ryan. "Observing and Normalizing: Foucault, Discipline, and Inequality in Schooling: Big Brother is watching you!." *The Journal of Educational Thought (JET) / Revue De La Pensée Éducative* 25, no. 2 (1991): 104-19. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/23767268.

Chapter 1. The Society also went at great lengths to produce updated textbooks in Arabic to improve the quality of teaching in the schools, something that not all missionary schools in Palestine did. But, after all, the Society was a non-for-profit organization that had taken upon tasks resembling those of a government. After being created with the aim of improving the conditions of Russian pilgrims in the Holy Land, the Society had very quickly expanded its scope of activities and responsibilities, eventually including that of taking care of the education of the Christian millet, despite having little material resources (such as real estate or economic funds) and available staff. What this shows is the perhaps greatest contradiction of Russian foreign policy in the Holy Land during the 19th and the early 20th century; for all of its grandiloquent ambitions of being the protector of 'Orthodoxy' across the Ottoman Empire and all the myth of 'Moscow, the Third Rome', the Russian state showed a shortage of funds and very little political will in its strategy for the Holy Land. The history of the Russian presence in the Holy Land, more than anything else, proves the inability of the leaders of its institutions, like the Ecclesiastical Missions, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its Consulate and Palestinian Commission and eventually the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, to reach compromises and act as one block.

Besides these general remarks, our study of the lives and deeds of some of the teachers and students of the schools of the Society can allow us to draw more conclusions.

After exploring Maria Aleksandrovna Cherkasova's biography one can deduce that her decision of opening a girls' school in Beirut had more to do with her dream of becoming the principal of her own school than an actual desire of representing Russian interests specifically in the Levant. Had conditions been rife, Cherkasova might have stayed in the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission of Edo (Tokyo) and organized her school there, just as she had already

tried to back in Russia. Hers is a story of an intelligent and independent woman who was able to make her personal aspirations fit the official Russian interests across the Ottoman Empire using what she knew best thanks to her upbringing: Orthodox faith.

Thus, Cherkasova's case illustrates the heterogeneity within teachers, and not only students, that participated in the schools of the Society and their management. Her teaching methods, though tolerated, were never applied in other schools of the Society and her schools never became 'model schools'.

At the same time, her story make clear that the involvement of members of the local community was indispensable for the success of the schools. It was only with the aid of Afifa Dmitrievna Abdo, a native of Beirut, that she managed to reach out potential students and their families as well as master Arabic. The encounter, in turn, was only possible thanks to an already existing interest on the side of Abdo, who resented her education in a Catholic school. Thus in the process of projecting 'soft power' some of its potential recipients were already involved…

Most importantly, as Slim has already argued,[338] the success of Cherkasova's schools owed to the fact that they provided an education that in no way contradicted the gender roles prevalent among the local communities, that tended to be poor and illiterate. Importantly, Cherkasova's schools rarely antagonized French or Italian missionary schools, that catered wealthier Maronite families, and it is perhaps for this reason that close to no mention is made in her writings about the 'Latins' or the 'Uniate Movement' that other members of the Society dreaded and confronted.

[338] Souad Abou el-Rousse Slim. "The Russian Schools in Beirut in the End of the 19th century" in *Entangled Education: Foreign and Local Schools in Ottoman Syria and Mandate Lebanon (19-20th Centuries)* ed. Julia, Hauser; Christine Linder & Esther Möller: 201-210. (Beirut: Ergon Verlag Würzburg, 2016): 209-210.

Moving now to the writer and intellectual Mikhail Naimy. As discussed in Chapter 4, Naimy is a clear example where individual feelings and aspirations preceded the Society's expectations. As an outstanding student of the Nazareth Teachers' Seminary, Naimy could have easily followed the steps of Alexander Kezma or Khalil Beydas and become involved in the organization of the schools of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, as well as contributed to the translation of Russian classics into Arabic, thus becoming a 'Russophile Arab' that served the interests of Imperial Russia abroad. Instead, he chose to move to the US following his brother's example and even served the American army for a few months. Naimy didn't return to Lebanon until much later, in the 1930s, only to retire in a rural area. All of this left him little time to represent Imperial Russia and Orthodoxy in Palestine…

Instead, Naimy's life and career seem to support Agsous' hypothesis that the schools of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society played a crucial role in the emergence of the 'Nahda' or Arab Renaissance much more.[339] Naimy was heavily involved in the modernization of Arabic language and the production of literature and literary journals in Arabic and on Arabic literature outside the Mashriq, as seen in Chapter 4. For this, as Naimy noted in his early literary essays in the 1920s, the translation of Russian classics provided a unique and much-needed impetus.

Among all the Russian authors Naimy read, Tolstoy, an author banned in Russia, was the one that seduced him the most. His fascination with Tolstoy and more precisely his religiosity, which is not the same as Orthodoxy, can be understood in a context of growing interest and appreciation of Tolstoy's literature and moral thought across the Arab-speaking world, that

[339] Sadia Agsous. The Palestinian graduates of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (IOPS) and the making of the native cultural Nahḍa , *Contemporary Levant 6*, n.1 (2021): 35-50. DOI: 10.1080/20581831.2021.1881714

speaks to the selective nature of the reception of Imperial Russia's 'soft power' across the Arab-speaking world. This is perhaps the clearest concrete example of the intersections at the core Werner& Zimmerman's definition of 'histoire croisée'[340] that this master thesis has shed light on, in which Arab identity was being constructed in the process of interpreting, translating and valuing the works of a controversial Russian author.

The Society and its schools contributed to Naimy's approachment to the Nahda movement not only by offering him an education in Arabic but crucially by bringing him closer to the vibrant urban centers where literary and press production was taking place in Palestine. If he had not left his rural homeland in Baskinta to go to Nazareth with a scholarship of the Society, Naimy might not have ever met any members of other religious communities, like Muslims and Jews, in Palestine. Such an experience was in fact key for him to start developing a strong non-sectarian identification with Arab nationalism, that was later reinforced by his experience as a migrant in the US. At the same time, Naimy always showed an appreciation of the variety of missionary schools available in Palestine and yet still valued the Schools of the Society above all, because of their decision to teach Arabic, though as it is nowadays known about the foundation of the Society and its schools, this was more of an accidental virtue than an actual blueprint plan by Khitrovo and the rest of members of the Society.

Another factor that I think was key to Naimy's appreciation of the schools of the Society in contrast to other schools set up by the Great Powers was the fact that the teachers hired by the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, despite being occasionally under the influence of certain Byzantinist and chauvinistic ideas, were never missionaries but plain employees of the Russian

[340] Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann. "Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity." *History and Theory 45*, no. 1 (2006): 38. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3590723.

state, which meant that it was not unusual for some of them to stay tuned to the latest pedagogical innovations back in Russia. This perhaps explains why Professor Krachkovskiy, who was otherwise ideologically not close to the conservative founders of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, gave very good reviews of some schools, as seen in Chapter 5. Paradoxically, the fact that some teachers with very progressist views on education could be hired by the religious-motivated *Imperial Orthodox* Palestine Society was enabled by the ultra-conservative character of the Russian government, that did not separate State from Church. On the contrary, the schools sponsored by secular states like France, for example, were organized by strictly Catholic organizations, a point that has not gone unnoticed among some scholars[341].

Finally, the case of Kulthum Klaudia Ode-Vasil'yeva shows another example of a 'divergent' biography of a former student of the Beyt Jala female Teachers' Seminary. Though presented by some scholars like Agsous as a leading Palestinian intellectual to my understanding Ode-Vasil'yeva's experienced her education at a school of the Society and later employment in a medical facility of the Society as basically a means of escaping (and not subverting,) heteropatriarchal control within her family. Her trip to Russia, unlike most of her peers, did not follow a scholarship to study at a religious seminary or attend a university but was entirely out of personal reasons. Also, she showed very little interest in Orthodoxy and was quick to embrace the ideals of the Bolshevik revolution and even serve the Red Army later on, during the Russian Civil War. Her quick rehabilitation after the death of Stalin[342] also gives faith to her political views.

[341] Denis Vovchenko."Creating Arab Nationalism? Russia and Greece in Ottoman Syria and Palestine (1840–1909)." *Middle Eastern Studies 49*, no. 6 (2013): 915. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/24585951.
[342] By 1956 she was publishing academic articles again.

Like Naimy, Ode-Vasil'yeva did not meet the expectations that the Society had placed on its students, as Ode-Vasil'yeva never returned to Palestine after her departure to Russia and always showed a very critical stand on the treatment on women in her homeland in all of her articles in the *Palestinski Sbornik*, published while she lived in the Soviet Union. As discussed in Chapter 5, she did not maintain any relations with former members of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society and only cooperated with its journal, *Palestinski Sbornik*, at the request of Professor Krachkovskiy, with whom she kept a very good relation after they had met in 1910 during his fieldwork across the Levant.

Her contribution to the Nahda remains ambiguous, in my view, for she spent much of her life in the Soviet Union and all the academic articles she published were in Russian. Rather, she played a pivotal role in the development of the field of 'Oriental Studies' and specifically Arab Studies in the Soviet Union, especially between the 1920s and the early 1930s, when barely no Soviet scholars could travel to Palestine and there wasn't a big community of Arab-speaking students residing in the Soviet Union that could provide information and primary sources either.

Striking from Ode-Vasil'yeva's writings, and also seen by other contemporary observers, was the naturally good disposition of local Arab communities, regardless of their religious affiliation, towards Russians compared to other European visitors. Though I may risk making an overstatement here, I am inclined to say that besides the historical role played by Russia as a sponsor of Orthodox Christian Patriarchs in Antioch and Jerusalem, as well as the corruption of Greek clergymen that made Russians next side appear to be more benevolent, perhaps the strong presence of Russian pilgrims across the Holy Land also played a role. Some Russian pilgrims, in contrast to American and Western European 'modern tourist pilgrims' that

travelled in full comfort,[343] became homeless beggars while others were happy to visit the energic literary cafés, like Khalil Sakakini's 'Vagabond Café', that were emerging across Jerusalem's New City and Nazareth, as seen in Chapter 4. All of this provided more chances for interacting with the local population on an equal basis than organized touristic tours.

Another thing that can be noticed in many primary sources of the late 19th and early 20th century is the use of 'Muscovy' and other words deriving from 'Moscow' among Arabic-speakers to refer to the whole of the Russian Empire at the time and the institutions it sponsored across the Levant, such as the 'Moscow schools' in Beirut and 'al-Moscobia' or Russian Compound in Jerusalem. Though on the surface this may appear a trivial anachronism[344] I think this trend had important consequences for Russian 'soft power' across the Holy Land and the Levant. By tolerating the identification of Imperial Russia as 'Muscovy' among Arabs, the distinction between 'russki' (referring to ethnic Russian populations) and 'rossiskii' (referring to the 'Russian state') went lost, and so was the acknowledgement that many non-Russian and non-Christian communities also lived in the Russian Empire at the turn of the 20th century.[345] On the Russian side, this most likely served the purpose of strengthening the almost messianic message that Russia, heir of Byzantium, was again the center of Orthodoxy and protector of Christians across the Orient, as well as fantasizing with the possibility of an exclusively Orthodox Russian Empire that had no traces of Islam or the Golden Horde.

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[343] Doron Bar, and Kobi Cohen-Hattab. "A New Kind of Pilgrimage: The Modern Tourist Pilgrim of Nineteenth-Century and Early Twentieth-Century Palestine." Middle Eastern Studies 39, no. 2 (2003): 133-134. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4284295.

[344] As it is well known, the Russian Empire, first proclaimed during the reign of Peter the Great (1682-1725) in 1721, emerged out of the expansion of the Grand Duchy of Muscovy, centered in Moscow.

[345] A survey of 1897, the first of its kind across the Russian Empire, revealed that, for example, at least 16 million Muslim Tatars resided in the empire, which local sources estimated to be as high as 40 million. See Juliette Cadiot "Searching for Nationality: Statistics and National Categories at the End of the Russian Empire (1897-1917)." *The Russian Review* 64, no. 3 (2005): 449. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3664603.

Among Arab-speakers the metonymic relation between Moscow and the Russian Empire was most likely due to the fact that historically the Christian Patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem had since the late 16th century travelled to the city of Moscow in particular to ask Russian religious authorities for funds and political support. It nevertheless opened the door to misunderstandings and ignorance of the role of Islam and Judaism across the Russian Empire, where indeed some of its subjects also undertook pilgrimages to the Mecca.[346]

Last but not least, I would like to discuss the impact of the expansion of Imperial Russia's soft power through the schools of the Society for the gender question. Though this is not at the center of this master thesis, and perhaps deserves more research in the future, the analysis of our case-studies can allow us to draw some conclusions. As already mentioned, the case of Ode-Vasil'yeva illustrates how the involvement in the schools of the Society, and consequently, with other non-educational institutions organized by the Society (such as medical facilities) offered the chance to some young Arab students to become financially independent and move out from their parents' house despite not being married. Importantly, with the aim of training them to become future teachers at the schools of the Society, it allowed some women to receive a higher level of training beyond primary education at the Beyt Jala Teachers' Seminary, while the offer for their Muslim counterparts was more reduced.

Maybe less conspicuous due to her strong religious and conservative beliefs, but nonetheless remarkable, is the case of Maria Aleksandrovna Cherkasova, an orphan and unmarried woman, who throughout her life traveled independently across the world and managed to attain a position of responsibility without requiring the moral or financial support of any male. This

[346] Eileen Kane. *Russian Hajj: Empire and the Pilgrimage to Mecca*. (Ithaca London: Cornell University Press, 2015): 1. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt20d88tf.

was not usual even among members of the Russian aristocracy at the time and definitely not within the organization of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, that besides the honorific membership of the Tsaritsa Maria Federovna and other aristocrats had not enlisted any female scholar or female school principal. Yet, sadly, her life did not serve as an example to her students and coworkers, who very often ended up marrying men within their religious communities in Beirut.

Finally, by exploring the personal connections of Mikhail Naimy, one can get a glimpse at the discussions that were taking place across the Arab-speaking world about the role of women in modernity and the emergence of female intellectuals that participated from the Nahda as well. Though Naimy himself did not adopt any particular position on the matter, the translation work undertaken of the former student of the Nazareth Teachers' Seminary Selim Kobein and his correspondence with Qāsim Amīn shows a deep interest in the question of female emancipation and the usefulness of Lev Tolstoy's work and philosophy in navigating the issues and challenges surrounding it in the 'Orient'. In this way, the expansion of Russia's soft power across the Arab-speaking world, by encouraging the learning of Russian language and the translation of the works of Russian authors, had the unintended consequence of generating feminist re-readings of Lev Tolstoy's work, like the *Kreutzer Sonata,* that were regarded as misogynist across Western Europe and North America, and also connecting debates across Muslim regions, from the Caucasus to the Mashriq, thanks to Kobein's translation of Ahmed-Bey Agayev's '*Woman in Islam and the Islamic World*'.

Potential Lines of Research

While writing this master thesis, it has become clear to me that the scope and variety of exchanges between actors from Russia and actors of the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire is a huge and yet understudied field of research, with many potential directions and approaches of research for emerging scholars. What follows is by no means an exhaustive list but just some question that I have come up with while writing my thesis and that I would personally want to study more in depth in the future.

There are, to begin with, questions that concern the schools of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society and their organization, for which the experiences of Ode-Vasil'yeva, Cherkasova and Naimy do not offer any clue. From the case of Leonid Solovëv, son of two teachers at the schools of the Society,[347] we can deduce that occasionally Russian children, usually the children of Russian staff of the Society, attended the schools alongside Arab children. But did these children receive the same education and treatment than their Arab classmates? What was the impact of this experience later on in their lives?

From Mikhail Naimy's writtings it can be deduced that sometimes children from non-Orthodox Christian Arab communities also attended the schools of the Society, like Maronites in the area of Mount Lebanon.[348] Again, it seems fair to ask, what was their treatment in the schools? And what motivated their parents to send them to the 'Russian schools' instead of schools sponsored by other Great Powers? Did this contribute in any way to a dialogue between the different religious communities?

[347] See note 293 in Chapter 5.
[348] Hussein Muhammad Ali Dabbagh. 'Mikhail Naimy: some aspects of his thought as revealed in his writings'. PhD Dissertation. (Durham University, 1968): 5.

Additionally, from Ode-Vasil'yeva's accounts we see that it was not unusual for Russian pilgrims to visit the schools of the Society and even talk to teachers. This is something that can be observed, from the experience of Maria Cherkasova and the description the clerk of the Ministry of War Mikhail Petrovich Solovëv did about her. It would be interesting to see the extent to which visits by Russian pilgrims and other travelers were organized and staged or just came about unplanned. As the peak in Russian pilgrims always occurred between the Great Lent (usually around march) and Pascha (usually around may) did the schools adapt their calendar to these important Orthodox festivities?

Scholars might also want to research the fate of the schools after the outbreak of WWI and the forced expulsion of all Russian nationals from Palestine. The outbreak of the Great War and later the Bolshevik revolution meant an irreversible turning point for the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, that hereafter was divided into the Soviet Palestine Society, operating from the Soviet Union and whose members could not set foot on Palestine again, and the Orthodox Palestine Society, based in Jerusalem, made up of anti-revolutionary elements living in the few real estate properties that the British authorities were willing to rent to them. While the whole dispute between the two Societies over the real estate properties across Palestine and the Levant is, on its own, a fascinating research question that is still not properly addressed by academics, I think the fate of the Society's schools is even more understudied. Because most studies on the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, Russian-speaking or not, tend to rely on Alexey Dmitrievskiy's chronicles, who had already retired by the 1920s, little is known of the evolution of the schools under British rule. It is most likely that the schools disappeared just like many land plots where Orthodox churches and courts were located were acquired by

European Jewish buyers.[349] But how did the process exactly unfold? Did the (remaining) schools acquire any new nationalist connotations during the British Mandate? Perhaps a clue to this question could be found in Alexander Gavrilovich Kezma's writings, if possible to locate in an archive in Russia or owned by his grandchildren, as currently there seems to be no digitalized primary sources available online. Kezma played a crucial role in organizing the schools of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society and in composing textbooks in Arabic for local kids. Most importantly, Kezma stayed in Palestine after the end of WWI, unlike his brother Taufik who never came back from Ukraine, and was actively involved in the preservation of the Society's real estate in Palestine.[350]

The question about the fate of the schools of the Society after WWI and the Bolshevik revolution also deserves some attention in the French Mandate of Syria and Lebanon. After the death of Maria Cherkasova in 1918 it is not entirely clear, from the secondary academic literature available, whether her schools kept working or not and whether later on, in the 1920s, they served the growing community of Russian émigrés escaping the Bolsheviks that grew around Beirut. These refugees created the 'Russian Technical Association' to organize themselves and help each other.[351] Most importantly, currently there are no English-speaking academic books or articles that deal with Maria Cherkasova's life and legacy among Orthodox Christian communities in Lebanon, even though she was such a cherished person among the local peoples. Also, little is known about the treatment of these communities and the fate of the former workers of the schools that Cherkasova organized by French authorities.

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[349] Laura Robson. *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine.* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011): 83.

[350] Igor Raufovich Ashurbeili. 'Vstrecha c vnuchkoy rukovoditeliya IPPO v Palestine Aleksandra Kezmy' Website of Igor Raufovich Ashurbeili. Available at: https://www.ashurbeyli.ru/media/article/vstrecha-s-vnuchkoy-rukovoditelya--ippo-v-palestin-16190 [Last accessed: September 1, 2021]

[351] Nataliya Semaan, Elena Demesheva& Tatyana Baher (2020). "The history of teaching the Russian language in Lebanon: A chronological overview starting with the 'Moscow school' of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society until present times". *Russian Language Studies, 18*, n.3 (2020): 276. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.22363/2618-8163-2020-18-3-271-294

Just as scholars should ask about the fate of schools in Palestine across the Levant after WWI it might also be interesting to study the relations between the schools of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society and the few Orthodox Christian schools available prior the establishment of the Society. In his monographic, Hopwood mentions that in the 1860s Antonin Kapustin, head of the second Russian Ecclesiastical Mission to the Holy Land, was involved in the creation of a boarding school for Orthodox Arab girls in Beyt Jala previously led by a Russian mistress, near Bethlehem. Later this school was transferred to the Society and became a women's Teacher Seminary training college in 1886.[352] But how was the process of transferring ownership and integrating the school into the network of schools of the Society? Were there any disputes or conflicts? What about other schools founded prior the creation of the Society, like the schools Uspenskiy organized during the First Ecclesiastical Mission in the 1850s?[353]

So far, this master thesis has given a lot of attention to the mobility of literary compositions and academic exchanges enabled in the context of the schools of the Society. Yet, another important dimension of exchanges and mobility taking place in the schools is still waiting for detailed research; the mobility of religious practices. While Cherkasova's biography and descriptions of Russian travelers of her can give insights into the diffusion of Russian Orthodox Christian religious singing in Beirut little is known about the situation in the schools of the Society in Palestine, as well as in parish schools founded or sponsored earlier by other Russian actors, like Uspenskiy or Kapustin. To what extent did Orthodox Christian Arabs adopt rituals and religious practices from Russia and Ukraine that challenged or were superposed onto existing Greek rituals? How were these transformations, if they did occur, negotiated within local communities?

[352] Derek Hopwood. *The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914: Church and Politics in the Near East*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1969): 94.
[353] Hopwood, "*The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914*" 44-45.

Besides its focus on education scholars might be interested in exploring the academic activities of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society and how it interacted with other Russian academic enterprises operating in Palestine at the time. During the initial years of the Society, more specifically between 1885 and 1887, a prominent Russian scholar specializing in Islam and the Muslim world, from the renowned Kazan Theological Seminary, travelled across the Levant: Mikhail Aleksandrovich Mashanov (1852-1924).[354] Did members of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society interact formally or informally with this scholar and others, despite having an interest in Orthodoxy and not Islam in the region? What about Judaism, why was there barely any academic interest in Judaism or Jews residing in Palestine at that time among members of the Society? Also, what about the relations between Russian Orthodoxy and other Christian Churches present in Jerusalem, like the Copts or the Ethiopian Orthodox, with whom ownership over the Holy Sepulcher was shared?

Another important aspect to study about the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society would be to compare the level of funds it managed to collect as well as the publications it managed to distribute among the local communities in its departments across Russia, from Astrakhan to Odessa.[355]

Looking beyond the works of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society there is, for instance, the question of the relationship between Russian Orthodoxy and the Armenian Church. As Paul Werth explains, the annexation of Eastern Armenia in 1828 meant that the seat of the Catholicos in the monastery of Echmiadzin, the highest authority over all Armenians, became

[354]Mars Zabirovich Kabibullin. 'Mikhail Aleksandrovich Mashanov: missioner i islamoved" PhD Dissertation, Kazan State University, 2003: 20. Available at: https://dspace.kpfu.ru/xmlui/bitstream/handle/net/32108/735703.pdf

[355] Tatyana Chumakova, Marianna M. Shakhnovich and Ekaterina A. Terukova 'Collections of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society in the State Museum of the History of Religion (Saint-Petersburg, Russia)*' European Researcher. Series A 107*, n. 6 (2016): 321. Doi: 10.13187/er.2016.107.318

a subject of the Tsars, thus allowing Russian officials to win alliances across Persia and the Ottoman Empire[356]. How did the different Russian actors present in the Holy Land, including the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, interact with the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and which side did the Armenian Church take in the Greek-Arab dispute within the Patriarchate of Jerusalem? Did relations with the Georgian Orthodox Church follow a similar pattern?

Last but not least, scholars could try to analyze critically the use that is being made under Putin's regime of the past of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society to justify contemporary policies, particularly in the context of the still ongoing Syrian Civil War,[357] that started in 2011. Putin's Russia plays the role of being the ally of Al-Assad while at the same time prides itself of being the only party in the conflict working to prevent a 'Christian genocide'.[358] In this self-legitimizing discourses, the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society plays an important role. For example, a school was opened under the supervision and funding of the Society in Damascus in 2018, advertised as an example of charitable work [359] but in practice established with the intention of training military cadets of the Syrian army who are fluent in Russian.[360] During that same year, presumably aid was sent by the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society at the request of Christian communities of different sects, including Armenians and Evangelical Christians besides Greek Orthodox Christians, living under the Kurdish-administered

[356] Paul Werth. "Imperial Russia and the Armenian Catholicos at Home and Abroad." *Slavic Eurasian Studies*, no. 10 (2006): 204. Available at: https://kronadaran.am/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Imperial-Russia-and-the-Armenian-Catholicos-at-Home-and-Abroad.-Paul-WERTH..pdf

[357] Despite the de-intensification of the conflict attacks by Russian warplanes in support of Baschar al-Assad's regime against rebels based around Idlib, close to the Turkish border, have been reported as recently as July 2021, often involving deaths among civilians. See Sara Firth. 'Civilians bear the brunt of escalating violence in Syria's Idlib' August 23, 2021. *Aljazeera News*. Available at: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/23/civilians-escalating-violence-syria-idlib-russia [Last accessed: September 1, 2021]

[358] Leonid Issaev and Serafim Yuriev. 'The Christian Dimension of Russia's Middle East Policy', *Alsharq: ExpertBrief* (March 2017): 6. Available at: https://www.hse.ru/mirror/pubs/share/217045866

[359] H. Al-Frieh, M. and H. Said. 'Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society to open school and mobile hospital in Syria' April 4, 2017 . *Syrian Arab News Agency*.Available at: http://sana.sy/en/?p=103536 [Last accessed: September 1, 2021]

[360] Sami Moubayed 'Russia bolsters its outreach in Syria amid struggle for influence' December 9, 2018. *The Arab Weekly* Available at: https://thearabweekly.com/russia-bolsters-its-outreach-syria-amid-struggle-influence [Last accessed: September 1, 2021]

'Democratic Federation of Northern Syria'.[361] [362] Besides comparing the activities of the 21th-century version of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society to its 19th-century predecessor, it would be interesting to explore how the contemporary Society has been able to overcome sectarian divides among Christians, like the ancient rivalry between Greeks and Latins and the fear of the Uniate movement, that informed Russian interests in the Levant at the turn of the 20th century.

When it comes to the relations between Russia and its former 'rivals', the Greek Orthodox, perhaps one could see the antagonism to be resurfacing again, this time amid accusations that the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society might be bribing officials to expand Russian influence in Greece and meddle in the negotiations with Macedonia to end the political dispute over its name.[363] It is definitely worth asking the extent to which 19th and 20th century religious and political rivalries in the Holy Land can influence modern-day politics between the Russian Federation and Greece and whether the general public in both countries is aware at all of the existence of institutions such as the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society or the Patriarchate of Jerusalem at all.

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[361] Kirill Gulov. "Podat' ruku osazhdennym: xristiane Sirii poprosili Rossiyu o pomoshchi" October 4, 2018 *Izvestya.Ru.* Available at: https://iz.ru/793381/kirill-gulov/podat-ruku-osazhdennym-khristiane-sirii-poprosili-rossiiu-o-pomoshchi [Last accessed: September 1, 2021]

[362] Since the establishment of a de-escalation zone agreed between Turkey and Russia in March 2020 some scholars contend that rather than the lack of respect of human rights by the Kurdish authorities of the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria what Christians living in the area fear is the expansion of Turkey and the forced resettlement of millions of former Sunni Arab refugees, as well as the expansion of ISIS and similarly minded radical Islamist groups. See Otmar Oehring. 'The Situation and Prospects for Christians in North and North-East Syria'. (Berlin: Konrad Adenauar Stiftung, 2019): 20-21. Digital version available at: https://www.kas.de/documents/252038/4521287/The+Situation+and+Prospects+of+Christians+in+North+and+North-East+Syria.pdf/b2a2e1b4-2427-10d4-a9a2-d0eb2bd578e9?version=1.0&t=1569924961335 [Last accessed: September 1, 2021]
Russian secondary sources, though, apparently prefer to describe the situation in an ambiguous tone.

[363] Vassilis Nedos. 'Greece decides to expel Russian diplomats' July 11, 2018 *Ekathimerini News.* Available at: https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/230551/greece-decides-to-expel-russian-diplomats/ [Last accessed: September 1, 2021]

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