

*'Brief conversations for pilgrims':  
Rasputin, Russian-speaking travellers and  
the pilgrim experience in Jerusalem in  
1911-1912*

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## 'Brief Conversations for Pilgrims': Rasputin, Russian-speaking travellers and the pilgrim experience in Jerusalem in 1911–1912

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### ABSTRACT

In 1911, Grigorii Rasputin undertook a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. That same year, the Katanov brothers published a quadrilingual phrasebook in Jerusalem – in Russian, Greek, Turkish and Arabic – designed for Russian pilgrims. The Russian pilgrim market was a very different one to the western tourist and pilgrim market typically catered to by phrasebook and guidebook authors in Palestine. Russian pilgrims tended to be poorer, of lower socio-economic status, to travel in large groups, and to have limited contact with people and places in Palestine outside the churches and religious sites which were their goal – all of which made their linguistic needs very different. Using Rasputin's own account of his pilgrimage, the Katanov brothers' phrasebook and another contemporary account by English journalist Stephan Graham, this paper explores the Russian pilgrim experience in Jerusalem and how it contrasted with that of the elite western tourists who are most prominent in our written sources.

### KEYWORDS

Russians; Jerusalem; Orthodox church; Rasputin; phrasebooks; Arabic language; Russian language

### Introduction

This article examines the accounts of two very different pilgrims to Jerusalem in 1911–1912 – an English journalist and a notorious Russian holy man – alongside a language instruction book that was notionally written to help them, but which neither would actually have used. Stephen Graham (1884–1975) was a Russophile who had already published several books on his travels on foot through the Russian Empire. Grigorii Yefimovich Rasputin (1869–1916) requires little introduction, although his account of his journey to Jerusalem – his only published written work – is less well known. Graham and Rasputin both travelled as members of large parties of Russian pilgrims, who had a very different profile to the European travellers through whose eyes we are accustomed to seeing early

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twentieth-century Palestine (for the contrast between the attitudes and behaviour of British Protestant and Russian Orthodox pilgrims, see Hummel & Hummel 1995). These Russian pilgrims were mostly poor, elderly, and travelling for the first time. Faith was their primary reason for travel, and they had little interest in the secular tourist sites along the way. Unlike western European visitors to Palestine, on whom there is a substantial body of scholarly literature (see e.g. Bar & Cohen-Hattab 2003; Cohen-Hattab & Noam 2015; Gibson, Shapira, & Chapman 2013), Russian Orthodox pilgrims, and the linguistic aspect of their experience in Jerusalem, have received little attention.

A phrasebook published in Palestine in 1911 is directed expressly at these pilgrims. It gives religious texts and everyday words and phrases in Russian, Greek, Turkish, and Arabic, all in Cyrillic script. It was sold at the shop of the Katanov brothers in Jerusalem, but much about the circumstances of its composition and publication remain obscure, and must be inferred from the book itself. In the following discussion, I will examine the Russian pilgrims' experience and how it differed from the elite European one, and the effectiveness of the Katanov phrasebook in the context of Graham's and Rasputin's journeys.

### Managing Russian pilgrims in Jerusalem

By 1911–1912, Russian pilgrims were visiting Palestine every year in vast numbers. Jerusalem, and other sites such as Bethlehem and Nazareth, had always attracted Russian Orthodox Christian visitors, and in the latter part of the nineteenth century the pilgrimage became still more popular (on earlier pilgrims, see e.g. Nakamura 1988). There are many reasons for this, including faster transportation connections (especially the advent of railways and steamships), organised group travel, and the high-profile pilgrimages of several members of the Imperial family. The usual pilgrim route involved taking a ship from a Black Sea port and included visits to Orthodox churches and monasteries at Mount Athos and Constantinople along the way.

Grand Duke Konstantin (1827–1892; son of Nikolai I) was not a pilgrim, but his actions indirectly had a significant impact on Russian official encouragement and management of the pilgrimage. In the aftermath of the Crimean War (1853–1856), Konstantin was keen to develop civilian maritime trade on the Black Sea by increasing pilgrim traffic, and commissioned Boris Pavlovich Mansurov (1828–1910) to write a guidebook along the lines of existing western European works, such as the volumes on Palestine in the famous Baedeker or Murray's guidebooks series. The guidebook was never written, because Mansurov was appalled at the conditions he found among Russian pilgrims to Jerusalem. Instead, he submitted

a report to the Grand Duke outlining their privations in detail. Mansurov argued that it would be irresponsible to encourage greater numbers of pilgrims unless conditions were improved (this report is discussed by Astafieva 2020). A succession of Russian official organisations were thus established to support the pilgrimage and other endeavours (education, archaeology) in Palestine, culminating in the creation of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (IOPS) in 1882 (Gerd 2020; for a collection of Russian documentary sources on Russian presence in Holy Land, including the pilgrimages of members of the Imperial family, see; Lisovoi 2000). The IOPS came to take on the supervision of the pilgrimage, managing every aspect of it (Tibawi 1966, 180; on Ottoman taxation and management of the pilgrimage, see; Gölpinar 2019). By the outbreak of the First World War, Russian pilgrims came to Jerusalem in huge numbers, and greatly outnumbered other nationalities. Drawing on the official figures of the IOPS, Theofanis Stavrou reports that 'In 1910 out of a total 15,000 persons who visited Jerusalem, 9,000 were Russians. The last Russian pilgrimage before the outbreak of the war was in 1913, when 12,000 Russian pilgrims came' (Stavrou 1963, 184).

Despite these numbers, there were very few Russian-language guidebooks for Palestine. Descriptive travellers' accounts, of which there were many, tended not to include up-to-date, practical information on things like prices and travel logistics (e.g. Arsenii 1896; Pakhomii 1862; see also Astafieva 2020, 161–162). Other reports and studies on the Russian pilgrimage that followed Mansurov's likewise recommended that practical guidebooks be published, but to little effect (Astafieva 2020, 165). A rare exception to this general rule is *Russkiye palomniki Svyatoi zemli: sputnik pravoslavnago palomnika v Svyatuiyu zemlyu* (*Russian Pilgrims in the Holy Land: An Orthodox Pilgrim's Companion to the Holy Land*), published by IOPS founder Vasilii Nikolayevich Khitrovo (1834–1903) in 1905 (Khitrovo 1905). Most of Khitrovo's book is composed of the usual descriptions of holy sites, but at the end he includes some useful information for pilgrims, such as the price of food and lodging in IOPS establishments, and the rules and regulations to be followed by pilgrims travelling from Russia with the IOPS (some of Khitrovo's practical material is reproduced in another, otherwise mostly descriptive, guide: Anonymous 1908).

Although Russian pilgrims were characterised by contemporary western European travel writers as poor (Hummel 2010), it would be fairer to say that they were of a broader socio-economic profile, with more extremes of rich and poor, than other foreign visitors. Russian aristocrats visited Palestine just like their western European counterparts. This socio-economic polarisation helps explain why Russian guidebooks for Palestine were so few and far between, when tourist guidebooks and phrasebooks in other European languages were so plentiful. Wealthy, educated Russians

tended to know western European languages, especially French (Offord, Rjéoutski, & Argent 2018), and could therefore use existing guidebooks such as those published by Baedeker, or Levantine Arabic phrasebooks such as those of Harfouch (Harfouch 1894) or Spoer and Haddad (Spoer & Haddad 1909). The sole Russian guidebook to Palestine that could really be characterised as such is Nikolai Vasiliyevich Berg's *Putyevoditel' po Jerusalimu i yego blizhashim' okrestnostyam'* (*Guide to Jerusalem and its Surroundings*; Berg 1863) and, as Elena Astafieva has identified, this is a composite work made up of passages 'borrowed' from other guidebooks in western European languages (Astafieva 2020, 162). This was a very common practice in guidebooks and phrasebooks of the period.

At the other end of the spectrum, we find Russian pilgrims for whom books were beyond both their means and their capabilities, and for whom the pilgrimage was a purely religious rather than touristic experience. The majority of pilgrims were poor, although as Graham observed (1913, 17), this did not mean that they did not have money. They had saved, often for many years, for the pilgrimage and for donations to the church – but they did not choose to spend their money on luxuries, or even on comfort. Books were not a priority, nor were the activities (sightseeing, shopping, leisure) that guidebooks and phrasebooks were designed to facilitate. It is difficult to quantify how many pilgrims were illiterate, but it was many or most – this is certainly what Graham reported (see below). Rasputin himself was only semi-literate, and wrote with difficulty (see samples of his handwriting in Rasputin 2013, unpaginated ebook). Using Graham's and Rasputin's accounts, I will explore further below how the Russian pilgrim experience differed from the typical European guidebook- and phrasebook-led tourist experience in Palestine.

### Brief conversations

Russian pilgrims, then, were not a promising market for Arabic phrasebooks. The Katanov brothers' attempt at creating a market, *Kratkie razgovory dlya palomnikov' na Russkom' Grecheskom', Turetskom' i Arabskom' Yazykakh'* (*Brief Conversations for Pilgrims in the Russian, Greek, Turkish and Arabic Languages*) is a paperback booklet of only 17 pages, measuring 145 × 220 millimetres. Very few copies survive. Other than my own (purchased on eBay from a seller in Israel), I am aware only of copies in the National Library of Israel and at Harvard University. I have not been able to identify any copies in Russian libraries. It is flimsy and it is likely that most copies have simply disintegrated over time, but it seems probable that it was also published in only a small print run. The only information given on the cover about its place of publication is that it is sold 'at the shop of

the Katanov brothers in the holy city of Jerusalem'. Frustratingly, I have been unable to identify the Katanov brothers in any contemporary source or later scholarship. Although there is a Russian name 'Katanov', it may be that they were not, in fact, Russian, but have Cyrillicised the Arabic name Qattān – a possibility I shall return to below. No author's name is given, nor is the price.

The first page of the book gives cardinal and ordinal numbers, in the four-column format (Russian, Greek, Turkish, Arabic) which is maintained through most of the book. The four languages are ones which pilgrims would encounter on their journey from Russia, via Constantinople and Athos, to Palestine. The next two pages give the Easter gospel (most Russian pilgrims went specifically for Easter) and a hymn to Mary (*Axion estin*) in Russian, Greek and Arabic, but not Turkish. There follow seven pages of words and six of phrases in the four languages, before the booklet concludes with more prayers and hymns in Russian, Greek and Arabic. The Christian portions are presumably given in only three languages because these were used by Christians and in church services in Palestine, whereas Turkish was not. The back page has a view of Jerusalem.

The nature of the vocabulary is practical: simple words to make questions and sentences (yes and no), people and professions, parts of the body, clothing, equipment (especially for travelling), geographical terms and common adjectives, adverbs and prepositions. The phrases cover greetings, shopping, eating, illness, travelling, the weather and telling the time.

The whole book is in the Cyrillic script, in its pre-reform orthography. This means that the author(s) have had to make choices about how to render graphemes and phonemes that do not exist in Russian. The general principle has been to reflect pronunciation rather than orthography. For example, the Greek word αὐτό ‘it’, which is written *<auto>* but pronounced [afto], is rendered as *афто* *<afto>*. I am not qualified to assess the Turkish portions, but these seem to be broadly correct. Arabic consonants that have no straightforward equivalent in Russian are rendered as follows:

չ <i>khā'</i>	Russian x, but x is also used for չ (рахебъ <i>rakheb</i> for راهب <i>rāhib</i> 'monk') and ՞ (исхалъ <i>iskhal'</i> for ایسحال <i>ishāl</i> 'diarrhoea').
չ <i>'ayn</i>	Omitted at the start of a word (атель <i>atel'</i> for عطل <i>'utl</i> 'holidays'). Represented as two vowels in the middle or end of a word (наамъ <i>naam</i> for نعم <i>na'am</i> 'yes').
չ <i>ghayn</i>	Russian г (гассале <i>gassale</i> for غسالة <i>ghassāla</i> 'washerwoman').
ڏ <i>dhāl</i>	Russian д (драа <i>draa</i> for دراع <i>dhirā</i> 'arm') or з (алази <i>allazi</i> for الظى <i>aladhi</i> 'which'). Note that <i>dhāl</i> would have been pronounced as 'd' or 'z' in local dialectal Arabic pronunciation.

Emphatic consonants are rendered by the non-emphatic equivalent (тайбъ *taib* for طيّب *tayyib* ‘good’; саби *sabi* for صبي *sabi* ‘boy’; бейдъ *beid*’ for بيض *bayd* ‘eggs’).

ق *qāf* Russian к (баккаль *bakkal*’ for بقال *baqāl* ‘grocer’) or г (гурушъ *gurush* for فروش *qurūsh* ‘pennies’). As with *dhāl*, these variants sometimes express local pronunciation.

و *wāw* ي or в for consonantal *wāw* (عالادъ *ualad*’ for عالاد *walad* ‘boy’; Франсави *Fransavi* for فرانساوی *faransāwī* ‘French’) and y or ю for the long vowel (южадъ *yuzhad*’ for يوجاد *yūjad* ‘there is’).

Geminate consonants and long vowels are not rendered consistently. Sun and moon letters are respected (e.g. الْيَمْنَى *al’ishmāl*’ for على الشَّمَاءلِ *ala al-shamāl* ‘on the left’, where in Arabic pronunciation the ‘sun letter’ *shīn* assimilates the *lām* of the definite article *al*).

On the whole, this transliteration system is a good one, certainly as good if not better than that of other contemporary Arabic phrasebooks. Many of these – like the *Brief Conversations* – have no actual pronunciation guide, or describe Arabic phonemes that do not exist in the language of their user in confusing ways. Spoer and Haddad, for example, describe ‘ayn as ‘a guttural for which there exists no equivalent in the Indo-Germanic languages’ (Spoer & Haddad 1909, 1) which must have left their readers mystified. The author of the *Brief Conversations* has taken the decision to map ‘difficult’ Arabic consonants onto the nearest Russian equivalent, trusting that the reader will produce a sound close enough to be understood. A Russian speaker who used this book will have come across as overly raspy in their pronunciation of fricatives, but for the most part, reading the Cyrillic Arabic sections of the book aloud produces something that is vaguely recognisable as the intended Arabic. If this seems a fairly low standard to hold a phrasebook to, then readers should be aware that most historical Arabic phrasebooks do not achieve even that (see the numerous shoddily-produced Arabic phrasebooks discussed in Mairs 2024).

Another way in which *Brief Conversations* stands out from its contemporaries is in its representation of authentic local speech. Even in their Cyrillic guise, the words and phrases are recognisably Levantine Arabic.<sup>1</sup> We have already seen, above, how dialectal pronunciation is reflected in some of the transliteration choices (especially of *qāf* and *dhāl*). Some of the book’s vocabulary is typically Levantine (e.g. the negative particle *mush*, the verb *fāqa* for ‘wake up’), including loanwords of Ottoman Turkish origin (e.g. *kamche* from *kamçı* ‘whip’, *dughrī* from *doğru* ‘straight ahead’, *ikhtiyār*

<sup>1</sup>Historical Arabic dialectology is a complex field which I do not intend to broach here, so I will not get into more localised regional differences. See (Magidow 2021) and also the studies of Liesbeth Zack on the Egyptian dialect as represented in historical phrasebooks (Zack 2004, 2016, 2017).

from *ihtiyar* ‘old man’). Verbal morphology is also Levantine. The *bi-*imperfect is used. In some cases, *biddī* ‘I want’ is used as an auxiliary verb to form the future tense, and *sāra* to indicate action begun in the past but continuing into the present. The Arabic of the prayers and hymns is slightly more formal in grammar and vocabulary – as befits standard texts used in religious contexts – but is not Classical Arabic, with full case endings (*’i'rāb*). Many phrasebooks of the period, in contrast, equipped their users with a style of Arabic that was either too formal for everyday use, or mixed registers and dialects indiscriminately (e.g. Harder 1898; Hassam 1883).

Overall, *Brief Conversations* is an accurate and well-presented phrasebook for dialectal Levantine Arabic. Given the deficiencies of its contemporaries, how did this come to be? Part of the answer must be that a native speaker of Arabic, from Palestine or a neighbouring part of the Levant, was involved in its composition. This was at a period when Palestinian contributors to Arabic phrasebooks were seldom given credit. Elias Nasrallah Haddad, for example, as Sarah Irving has explored, was presented as the ‘junior partner’ in his phrasebooks with H. H. Spoer (Spoer and Haddad, 1909) and William F. Albright (Haddad & Albright 1927), even though the bulk of the work was his (Irving 2017, 122–128). It is only a couple of decades later that we begin to find Palestinian authors of Arabic phrasebooks not only establishing their own authorship, but using phrasebooks as a vehicle for expressing ideas about Palestine and Palestinian identity (Irving 2017, 2018). If *Brief Conversations* had a Palestinian (or other Arab) author, then it is not surprising that he is not named on the cover.

We might suggest that *Brief Conversations* was written in collaboration between a Russian and a Palestinian – since the Russian is perfectly good – but there is a more economical solution. It makes most sense, in my view, for the phrasebook to have been written by a Palestinian educated at one of the many schools run by the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society. Graduates of these schools were prominent contributors to the Palestinian *Nahda* (Arab cultural ‘renaissance’: Agsous 2021), and some went on to study or teach in Russia. Greek was taught at the Russian boarding school in Nazareth (Agsous 2021) and was widely used in the Greek Orthodox Church in Palestine. Turkish was, of course, the language of the ruling power, and was taught in Ottoman state primary and secondary schools. The Katanov brothers, then, I take to be the Qattān brothers, and they were either Russian-educated themselves, or recruited a Palestinian associate who had been to a Russian school to produce a phrasebook that they could market to Russian pilgrims at their shop in Jerusalem.

The author of *Brief Conversations* was certainly familiar with other phrasebooks. If he was familiar with existing Russian scholarship on Arabic, then this is not visible in the book. Arab émigrés in Russia had by this date produced several works to help Russian speakers learn Arabic. The earliest is in French and was printed in Germany (Al-Tantawī 1848), but Russian-

греч.		араб.		араб.	
западъ	тиреи <sup>1</sup>	гарбъ	тиреи <sup>2</sup>	харба	тиреи <sup>3</sup>
и дисисъ	гарбъ, магруб	ардъ,	тиреи <sup>4</sup>	куде	диме
гусъ	тиреи <sup>5</sup>	эль-бахръ	лимини	бурагъ	бухайра
море	денизъ	шатъ за бахръ	потамосъ	нахръ	нахръ
берегъ	арадъ	джеане	нахлъстъ	гадиръ	гадиръ
островъ	керфезъ	бугарь	иракъ	нахръ — сакъ	нахръ — сакъ
валль	дагури, бурикъ	расъ	иракъливъсъ	жараинъ, санъ	жараинъ, санъ
мысъ	тагъ	жадаль	с(е)иль	джистъ	джистъ
гора	дер	вадъ	кюпру	наебъ, сабиль	наебъ, сабиль
долина	дербендъ	дэзутъ	зепле (фиске)	биръ	биръ
ущелье, тѣснина	стеномъ	тадъль	тигъади	бунаръ	бунаръ
холмъ	льбфосъ	сааръ, ахажаръ	настъ	такунъ	такунъ
скала (утесъ)	врахосъ, петра	кыръ	мълодъсъ	сахрижъ	сахрижъ
равнина	пеласъ	орманъ	стерна	айнъ	айнъ
жѣсъ	дасосъ	пшеманъ	источникъ	бунаръ	бунаръ
городъ	полисъ	гей (цифранъ)	стрина	агачъ	агачъ
деревня (ферма)	хорю	дэй (карие)	брон	каимъ, аткъ	каимъ, аткъ
прѣстанъ	скала	эль искели	дэндара	жеддѣтъ	жеддѣтъ
дверь (ворота),	лімена	марса	гладенъ	кадисъ, уалий	кадисъ, уалий
таванъ	пухта	лиманъ	неотъ	юни	юни
крайъстъ	фуруонъ	хисаръ, кале	зато	вели	вели
домъ	спити	бейтъ	зато	аа	аа
гостиница	кесенодохонъ	лукъада	орани (аучунъ)	таебъ (ахсанъ)	таебъ (ахсанъ)
ханъ <sup>4</sup>	ханъ	ханъ	иаковъ (дага-эани)	ради	ради
хижина	кулиба	кулибе	иаковъ	ширрѣръ	ширрѣръ
пальата	чадри	чадри	харюсъ	хабиръ	хабиръ
улица	дромосъ одосъ	сукъакъ	иегасъ	сатаръ	сатаръ
агора	чарпъ, базаръ	чарпъ, базаръ	иогасъ	кононъ	кононъ
рынокъ	иѣдзинъ	иѣдзинъ	иогасъ	тавиль	тавиль
площадь	малатъ	макале	иильный	касиръ	касиръ
кваргаль	макалъ	полистъ	иильный	куветы	куветы
полиція	астамомія	полистъ	полинъ	данаръ	данаръ
консулѣтъво	проксеноионъ	консулато	арристосъ	састанъ	састанъ
томожна	канчедария	канчедария	иинисъ	мабутъ	мабутъ
погта	гумрухъ	гумрухъ	иинисъ	сыджа	сыджа
церковь	такидомонъ	поста	иинисъ	соукъ	соукъ
монастырь	аккисия	к(е)лисе	иинисъ	искъ	искъ
дворецъ	манастыръ	манастыръ	иинисъ	куру	куру
мечеть	пальтои	сарай	иинисъ	тимизъ	тимизъ
гробница	тгами	лакамъ	иинисъ	тишъ	тишъ
старый замокъ	тафосъ	тиорбе	иинисъ	аъзатъ	аъзатъ
развалины	иаљео кастро	асин (истрикале)	иинисъ	асвадъ	асвадъ
	археологъ	асары	иадиме	асадаръ	асадаръ

Figure 1. The Katanov brothers' Brief Conversations for Pilgrims.

language grammars and dictionaries of Arabic began to be produced in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Some were printed in Kazan, an important centre of Oriental studies, rather than in Moscow or St. Peterburg. The author of *Brief Conversations* could in theory have used works like 'Abdalla Kalzī al-Halabi's *Russian-Arabic Social Conversations* (Al-Halabī 1863), Bandalī Jawzī's *Complete Russian-Arabic Dictionary* (Zhuze 1903), or Mikhail Osipovich Attaya's *Practical Guide to Learning Arabic* (Attaya 1884), but these works use the Arabic script, and a formal register of written Arabic. The Arabic portion of *Brief Conversations* is original.

*Brief Conversations* may not be part of the Russian tradition of Arabic studies, but there is a hybrid Ottoman-European genre to which it more securely belongs, and of which its multi-column format is reminiscent (Figure 1: The Katanov brothers' *Brief Conversations for Pilgrims*). Polyglot phrasebooks and vocabularies had a long history in both Europe (Sumillera 2014, 63–64; Gallagher 2019, 70–72) and the Middle East. The tradition of Ottoman education in the *elsine-i selase* – the 'three languages' of Turkish, Arabic and Persian (İhsanoğlu 2011, 44–45) – also resulted in the publication of many trilingual dictionaries and language instruction books (e.g. Anonymous 1889; Aynî 1826; Rida 1857; Ziya 1889). The model was adapted to include European languages (e.g. Al-Misrī 1850; Naci 1893; Nuri 1875; P'ap'azyan 1900).

European authors of polyglot phrasebooks often had difficulty supplying text for Middle Eastern languages. Charles Slack turned to Habib Anthony Salmoné, a professor at University College London, for the Arabic of his *Tourist's and Student's Manual of Languages* (Slack 1886;

SENTENCES.		SENTENCES.	
<i>English.</i>	<i>Arabic.</i>	<i>Turkish.</i>	<i>Persian.*</i>
Are you going to Constantinople ?	Bitaruh ilē el İstanbūl ?	İstanbul gideleminizin ?	Shouma miravid be İstambul ?
No, I am going to Cairo.	La, Ana raih ilē Miṣr . . .	Khanīz, Misserē giderim.	Na, be Ghaherah miravam, [tid ?
Are you English (Italian, Persian ?	Ant. Ingiliz (İtalian, Fars) ? . . .	İngiliz (İtalian, Ajem) mi-siniz.	Shahom miravid (Gherah, İran) has-
I am Greek.	Tayib. Anta hadir ? . . .	Ben Yonanji-im.	Man Youmān hāzir.
All right. Are you ready ?	Jib-li ! [In Egypt, gib-li] (Qaīwa) . . .	Peç eyl. Harekem iminiz ?	Bisyar khoub. Shouma hazer hastid?
Break me (some coffee).	Bitzatū inn adkir ? Ta'al huna . . .	Bilim-ı im ? Guel bourayé.	Beyar be man (Kadry kahveh).
Can I ? Come here.	Janib el Khawaga . . .	Aziz Efendim ?	Aziz Agha.
Do we change carriages here ?	Mi-nugħayir el kurruun huna ? . . .	Burada andis-mi ?	Aya ma kaliska ha ra injas avaz
Do you understand ?	Fahim ? . . .	Ammañ andis-mi ?	Shouma fahmeded ? [miknnim
Do you know ?	Bitarif? . . .	Bilir-mi-siniz ?	shouma fahmeded ?
Do you sell ?	Bitakdir ? . . .	Satar-mi-siniz ?	Aya shouma mifroushid — ?
Do you speak English (French, Turkish, Arabic) ?	Bi takdir an tatakkil bil İngilizi (Fransawi, Turki, Arabi) ?	İngilizce (Fransista, Turkiye, Arabi) seülerlernizin ?	Aya shouma Ingilizi (Fransa,
Follow me.	İbtanî . . .	Ardim-sin güeliniz.	Turki, Arabi) half mizanid ?
Give me — . . .	At-tanbi . . .	Bana ver . . . (Cevap, p.t.)	Akademik, mizanid, seya . . .
Give me a postage stamp (glass of water, newspaper).	Tanbi tanburd . . . (mijan moy, jaridet).	Bana şerîta puli (fıngan su, şerzete).	Bedeb man — . . .
Good morning.	Sabah el khair . . .	Sabalariñiz khair oloun.	Yek tamri post (glassé ab, rouz-namne) be mizanid bedahid.
Good evening.	Mas'el el khair . . .	Aksahar olas khasir oloun.	Sabah shouma khair.
Good bye. Go away.	Fi aman Allah. Buh minn huna . . .	Ali ol ismarladik. Haydi, git.	Khoda hafez. Bero biroon.
Have you — ?	Indak ? . . .	Sendé var mi — ? orsirdi mi dir — ?	Hilé shouma barayā man darid ?
Have you a letter for me ?	Indak moktoub min shani ? . . .	Benim ijoban bir mekteub var mi ?	Aya ta kay ma injas myestim ?
How are you ?	Kaf halid . . .	Nasli ?	Didi kaf halid . . . ?
How long do we stop here ?	Kam wakt nakti huna ? . . .	Besurda rē kadar wakit doruriz ?	Chand ? Che kadar ?
Two minutes. Half an hour.	Asħara dakaik. Nis' sa'ah . . .	Ok dakeri. Yawm u aṭ-ṭarāt.	Shanza (16) shahi.
How much ? How many ?	Bikam ? Kam ? . . .	Nekdik. Kadar dand . . .	Haşt (8) keran.
Five shillings.	Tekdik . . .	Utbu għur (3 piastre).	Sih sad o paŋħaj (350) keran.
Ten pounds.	‘Arba'a wa isbrin għursh (24 p.).	Yirmi sekkju għursh (30 p.).	
I am thirsty (hungry, tired).	Tidha għadha (għadha ta'bhan) . . .	Or bi medjed (ET.11).	
I beg your pardon.	Ana atħsen (Jiġi ja ta'bhan) . . .	Sus (aħħiġ, yorel) mishim.	
I have. I have not.	El-fa'fu ya seid . . .	Istagh ferulla.	
I like — . . .	Indi. Ma indiħ . . .	Var. Bissi yek dir.	
I understand. I love you.	Daxi . . .	Qħali qed im . . .	
I do not understand.	Atħam. Nasħekb . . .	Annadim. Sizi sevverum.	
I do not like.	Ma feħimtish . . .	Annadim.	
I want some hot water.	Aiz . . .	Isterim.	
I want some clothes washed.	Aiz mox-sukha . . .	Sijak u isterim.	
I want a guide who speaks English.	Aiz dalil ilazi yatakallam b'il Ingilizi.	Chamashirum yikam aħġu muħtaej dir.	
I want a quiet bed-room.	Aiz ouda kħalha min dajja . . .	Inglizi kononha bilen kila għużi isterim.	

Figure 2. Charles Slack's *Tourist's and Student's Manual of Languages*

\* Revised by Professor H. A. Salmoné, of University College, London.

\* Translated by Mohammed Ali Khan, Persian Legation, London.

**Figure 3.** Nouveau guide de conversation: arménien, russe, allemand, italien, grec, français, anglais, turc by Z. D. S. Papazyan: Páp'ázyan 1900

**Figure 4.** Muallim Naci's Külliyyat-i müküleme-yi elsine: Türkçe, Arapça, Farisi, Ermenice, Rumca, Yahudice, Rusça, Fransızca, İtalyanca, Almanca, İngilizce, lisanelerini hâli mükülemedir

**Figure 2:** Charles Slack's *Tourist's and Student's Manual of Languages*). The combination of languages in *Brief Conversations* is more typical, however, of works published in Constantinople. The Armenian Z.D.S. P'ap'azyan, for example, published a multi-column phrasebook in Armenian, Russian, German, Italian, Greek, French, English and Turkish. It looks more towards Europe than the Levant and is poorly adapted to life outside the metropolis, since it includes references to Paris and the Jungfrau in the Swiss Alps, and teaches the user to order 'some old Sauterne' [sic] instead of 'ordinary wine' (**Figure 3:** *Nouveau guide de conversation: arménien, russe, allemand, italien, grec, français, anglais, turc* by Z. D. S. P'ap'azyan: P'ap'azyan 1900). A phrasebook by Muallim Naci (né Ömer Ali, 1850–1893) is closer in spirit to *Brief Conversations*, especially since it uses only one script, the Arabic script (Naci 1893). Naci provides twelve languages, including Russian and Arabic (**Figure 4:** Muallim Naci's *Külliyyat-i mükaleme-yi elsine: Türkçe, Arapça, Farisî, Ermenice, Rumca, Yahudice, Rusça, Fransızca, İtalyanca, Almanca, İngilizca, lisanlerini havi mükalemedir*). English speakers who read Arabic may find it entertaining to read down the far left-hand column and see how the English numbers are rendered in Arabic script.<sup>2</sup>

The balance of probability, then, is I think in favour of *Brief Conversations* being authored by a Russian-educated Palestinian who was familiar with polyglot phrasebooks published in Constantinople, whether through travel or through local circulation. The 'Katanov brothers' – who may or may not also have been the authors – would therefore be Palestinian shopkeepers who attracted Russian pilgrim clients by using a Russified version of their name, and producing works designed to appeal to them. I turn now to the book's potential users.

## Rasputin in Palestine

There is, perhaps surprisingly, little scholarship on Rasputin in Palestine (exceptions include Dudakov 2003). Part of the reason for this is that his book about his journey, *Moi mysli i razmyshleniya: Kratkoe opisanie puteshestviya po svyatym' mestam' i vyzvannyya im' razmyshleniya po religioznym' voprosam'* (*Thoughts and Reflections: A Brief Description of Travel to Holy Places and Reflections it Provoked on Religious Questions*), grants few insights into either Rasputin or Palestine. But my interest here is principally in the Russian pilgrim experience (especially linguistic), not in Rasputin

<sup>2</sup>For a similar quadrilingual phrasebook published in the Russian Empire, see I. L. Tsilossani, *Новые Разговоры На Российскомъ Французскомъ, Турецкомъ, И Татарскомъ Языкахъ Съ Русскимъ Произношениемъ Двухъ Послѣднихъ = Nouveaux Dialogues Russes, Français, Turcs Et Tartares Avec La Prononciation Des Deux Dernières Langues En Russe* (Tbilisi: Office of the Viceroy of the Caucasus, 1856).

himself or in his writing as a source of accurate reportage on Palestine in 1911. Viewed through this lens, it becomes considerably more informative.

Rasputin's pilgrimage took place at a time when he had been ordered out of St Petersburg by Nikolai II, because of the scandal caused by his close association with the imperial family, especially the Empress and Grand Duchesses. *Thoughts and Reflections* was printed in 1915, in only fifty copies, and seems to have been intended for circulation at court (Bledeau, introduction to Rasputin 2013, unpaginated ebook). Rasputin was not well educated, but this very simplicity is what gave him religious credibility. The anonymous 1915 preface to *Thoughts and Reflections* explicitly contrasts Rasputin's work with the tourist literature on Palestine:

Each of us is familiar with at least two or three masterful works by famous authors who have journeyed around Palestine, where hundreds upon thousands of Russian pilgrims of simple birth, like Rasputin, gather each year. In particular, many people are familiar with the voluminous French literary corpus describing Palestine. Amid this refined, occasionally pompous, frequently cloying literature, *Thoughts and Reflections* stands out completely independent and noteworthy in its originality and characteristic manner of thinking; yet it has much in common with the masses and is comprehensible to them. (Rasputin 2013, unpaginated ebook.)

Rasputin's points of interest are icons and relics, or locations associated with saints or with stories from the Bible. He gives no description of the people, cultures and languages he encountered, nor of scenery or architecture. His constant refrain is the inadequacy of words on a page to capture what he is seeing and experiencing. The section on Smyrna – a city described at length by other travellers – reads as follows in its entirety:

Smyrna is located on the Asia Minor coast, at the tip of the large Bay of Smyrna. There are several beautiful Greek temples there, one of them located on the spot where the Samaritan woman Fetiñ'ia spoke with Jacob about the Saviour and came to believe in Him.

The Turks have preserved such places, and thus the memory of the events. How can one cope with the fact that the Turks have all of this – all antiquity? What can be said other than that it would be better for them to have a single spirit, and a single Orthodox church, together with us.

In addition to the temple founded on the spot where the Samaritan woman preached, there is in Smyrna a temple where the Mother of God herself preached. Here also are to be found the remains of St George the Victory-Bearer (a part of his leg) and the relics of St Cosmas the Unmercenary.

Further on we passed the island of Mytilene, where Bishop Gregory (whose feast day is celebrated on November 7) lived. The preaching of the saints is very clear, and shines in the hearts of the true believers on this island.

In Smyrna there is a mountain on which there used to be a amphitheatre, where the disciples of John the Baptist and many others with them were martyred.

Where are there not martyrs for Christ? All crowns were begotten through blood.

And not far from Smyrna, the ruins of the ancient city of Ephesus are preserved. Here the Apostle John the Baptist lived for a long time and finished his Gospel, the deepest of all wisdom; that is why the very sea along this coast is so alive, as if awakened from slumber (Rasputin 2013, unpaginated ebook.).

The pilgrim's personal religious reflections are prioritised over erudition or description, even at locations like the ancient Greek cities of Mytilene and Ephesus where other travellers mused on their Classical past. The 1905 Baedeker guide *Konstantinopel und das westliche Kleinasien: Handbuch für Reisende*, for example, dwells at length on the topography and ancient history of Ephesus, with a plan of the ancient city for archaeologically-inclined tourists. At Bethany, Rasputin reflects:

You ride past these places, sigh, and think, 'O God, resurrect my soul from the depths of wickedness. Every person imagines Thy resurrection over the whole earth, and transports himself as well, in spirit—it is something accessible to all believers'. We think of how many marvellous events took place here, and of the necessity of feeling that the resurrection of Lazarus is for everyone—and everything—the whole world over. (Rasputin 2013, unpaginated ebook.)

Rasputin's experiences and priorities are quite a long way from those of the intended users of *Brief Conversations*. At no point does he describe any sustained interaction with non-Russians. Even if we suppose that he could read more easily than he could write, he did not view Palestine through books, but through the lens of his own Orthodox faith. It is highly unlikely that he would have bought a copy if he visited the shop of the Katanov brothers.

That said, elements of Rasputin's experience do conform to that anticipated by the authors of the phrasebook. He often describes Russian pilgrims praying and singing the kinds of hymns contained in *Brief Conversations*. At the Church of the Dormition in Jerusalem:

the whole crowd began to sing, 'In giving birth Thou didst preserve Thy virginity, and in dormition Thou didst not forsake the World', a troparion to the Birthgiver of God. Everyone kissed Her tomb and sang and revelled in Her joy, that the Lord had taken Her body to Himself. (Rasputin 2013, unpaginated ebook.)

While pilgrims will most probably have known the Russian by heart, providing the Greek and Arabic could have allowed them to understand the same hymns being sung by other Orthodox Christians alongside them, or to attempt to join in. One of the rare moments in *Thoughts and Reflections* where Rasputin turns to the temporal over the spiritual is to complain about the (IOPS) facilities for pilgrims, especially overcrowding and overcharging: 'They treat pilgrims like cattle and demand money for hot water, for barracks, and for everything!' (Rasputin 2013, unpaginated ebook). These same crowded pilgrim dormitories are described by

Graham, who also thought charging for hot water and baths was a step too far, since ‘the dirtiest pilgrims were often those who had least money’ (Graham 1913, 91). *Brief Conversations* would have equipped Rasputin to dispute prices and talk about food and lodging, but the amenities it describes are beyond the budget of most Russian pilgrims. Users learn how to ask for a ‘good bed’ with ‘clean sheets’ (Anonymous 1911, 12) and to summon a laundress. At the IOPS hostel in Jerusalem, in contrast, ‘there were no beds, no bedding. Over the unvarnished, unpainted wood was spread a rather muddy straw pallet, one for each pilgrim’ (Graham 1913, 85). There was a laundry, but pilgrims took their clothes there themselves. In any case, Russian was spoken at IOPS facilities, and no phrasebook would have been needed to do any of this.

### **Stephen Graham**

Rasputin and Graham tell the story of the same journey, a year apart, in very different ways (on Graham’s life, see Hughes 2014). Graham joined a Russian pilgrim ship at Constantinople for the Easter 1912 pilgrimage, and remained in disguise as a Russian peasant throughout his journey. Although Graham lived in the same sometimes primitive conditions as the Russian pilgrims with whom he travelled, he did not belong to their socio-economic class, and the account he writes for an English audience is heavily romanticised. He had previously published books of his travels on foot through the Russian Empire, and later ‘embedded’ himself as a participant-observer with poor immigrants to America (Graham 1914), as he had done with Russian pilgrims. Despite his sometimes rose-tinted, faux-naïf presentation of simple, salt-of-the-earth Russian peasants practising their faith, Graham had in fact done his research on the pilgrimage. References in his book *With the Russian Pilgrims to Jerusalem* show that he had read works by Khitrovo, the founder of the IOPS.

Graham is more interested in practical, logistical details than Rasputin, and he explains for his reader exactly how the IOPS-managed pilgrimage worked, from the perspective of a pilgrim. Pilgrims were at no point in any situation where they would need a phrasebook. At Constantinople, a few pilgrims went ashore to visit shrines, but were escorted by monks who had come on board the ship to help them (Graham 1913, 34). Vendors at Constantinople spoke broken Russian. At Jaffa, Arab boys shouted Russian words at them in the street (Graham 1913, 68–69). Shopkeepers who served pilgrims spoke Russian. Even the beggars in Jerusalem were able to waylay pilgrims in their own language, such was the potential financial reward of the Russian pilgrim market. While previously many Orthodox services in Jerusalem had been conducted in Greek, by the time of Graham’s

visit pilgrims were able to, and preferred to, attend the Russian Orthodox cathedral 'where the clergy all spoke Russian, and everything was done in a language comprehensible to them' (Graham 1913, 274). Add to this that Russian pilgrims could rely on the services of the IOPS for everything from food to accommodation to laundry, and the need to communicate in Arabic becomes virtually non-existent.

*Brief Conversations*, as noted above, also fails to provide for how and with what means most Russian pilgrims actually lived. It contains words and phrases for food, but Graham and other observers recounted how many pilgrims would save crusts of stale bread in anticipation of their journey. En route, the mould could be scraped off, and the bread soaked in liquid to make it, if not palatable, then at least chewable. The food listed in *Brief Conversations* includes luxuries like ice-cream (*dondurma*), and also alcoholic drinks, which were forbidden to pilgrims during Lent, the time when the vast majority travelled. As with Rasputin's journey, on the other hand, Graham records that communal prayer and hymn-singing was an important part of the pilgrimage, supporting the inclusion of such texts in the phrasebook.

Graham tells us that Russian guidebooks (or rather, travelogues) were available in shops in Jerusalem, 'but very few pilgrims bought them. They used their Bibles, and they found the sacred places by asking one another' (Graham 1913, 22). Illiteracy and poverty were certainly factors in pilgrims not using guidebooks, but above and beyond this Graham identifies a preference for a different way of approaching and engaging with holy sites than that of richer and more secular tourists:

When a new boy comes to school, some other boy or boys take charge of him and show him round . . . he is served with no printed guide at the gate as he enters the school. There are no guides but the boys themselves.

It is much the same at Jerusalem where these different children are the Russian pilgrims; when a new pilgrim comes the old ones show him round they take him about and show him everything. The pilgrims have no Baedeker, indeed no such thing exists in the Russian language, though even if there did, the 60 per cent of the pilgrims who are illiterate could not profit by it.

When I saw the English and American tourists, hundreds of them, with their Arab guides and red handbooks, I could not but be struck with the contrast between the ways of our nation and those of the peasant. Why could not the English and Americans show one another what is to be seen? Why do the visitors fail to become intimate with the settled colony of English and Americans there? Why do they think the guide with his absurd patter is more authority than a chance acquaintance who has been in Jerusalem some weeks already? Jerusalem is worth visiting by every one, even by rich commercial pagans, but not in this style, and not for these ends. What is necessary is 'the personal touch', that which the mercenary and cunning Arab has not. So artificial is the relationship between the guide and his rich customer, that all the jokes, all the Arab's seeming naivete, the things for which you

laugh at him and over him, are learnt by him beforehand, together with his guide-book recitation. Personally the Arab guide is something quite different, as I know, who have spoken to him in English, French, and Russian, and found his outward manner change completely as I seemed to change nationality. Not that guide-books or even Arab guides are utterly superfluous; they certainly may be an aid; but what is necessary is an introduction to the Holy City on altogether more intimate terms. (Graham 1913, 112–113)

Graham's notion of engaging with Jerusalem on 'more intimate terms' does not involve interaction with local people, especially not those in the tourist industry. The fact that his Russian pilgrim companions experience the city solely in Russian company and through the Russian language does not preclude an 'authentic' encounter.

## Conclusion

Both Rasputin and Graham present the journey to Jerusalem as a fundamentally Russian experience, culturally and linguistically. Although they certainly suffer many discomforts, pilgrims move in a culturally Russian bubble throughout. They speak Russian, eat Russian food (including bread brought all the way from Russia) and are constantly accompanied by a large group of other Russians. Ironically, they were served by one of the best contemporary phrasebooks, at least as far as its well-presented, accurate, local dialectal Arabic is concerned. The accounts of Graham and Rasputin show that Russian pilgrims explicitly rejected engagement with Jerusalem through any book other than the Bible (which most of them probably knew only in oral form, from hearing it read in church) or through the well-established mechanisms of the local tourist trade, such as guidebooks and dragomans. Richer Russian tourists were well catered for by phrasebooks and guidebooks in other European languages in which they were conversant. Jewish Russian émigrés from the Pale of Settlement could in theory have used parts of the Katanov phrasebook,<sup>3</sup> but this group were also catered for by Yiddish-Arabic phrasebooks (for example, Zilberman 1882, or Zelikovits 1918).

The Easter pilgrimages of 1911 and 1912, on which Rasputin and Graham respectively travelled, were some of the last before the outbreak of the First World War and the Russian Revolution put an end to the pilgrimage in its long-established form. It is impossible to know how many copies of *Brief Conversations* were originally produced or sold, but the small number of surviving copies, and the fact that two out of three of them are or were until very recently still in Israel, suggests that it was not many, and that it did not circulate much beyond Jerusalem. It is still less possible to infer anything about the book's success. In theory, a Russian-speaking user, as I have discussed, would have been able to use it to make themselves understood in

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<sup>3</sup>I am grateful to Sarah Irving for this suggestion.

Arabic. Rasputin's and Graham's accounts, however, indicate most Russian-speaking visitors to Jerusalem would have little or no occasion to do so.

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