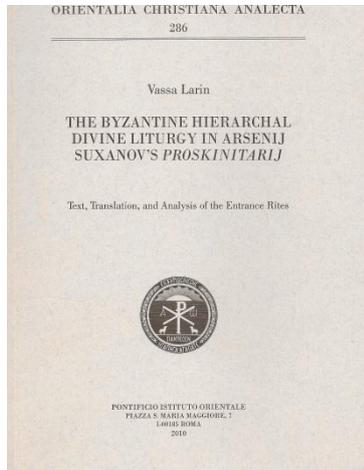


Vassa Larin



# The Byzantine Hierarchical Divine Liturgy in Arsenij Suxanov's Proskinitarij. Text, Translation and Analysis of the Entrance Rites

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*Reviewed by Job Getcha*

This book was elaborated upon the basis of a doctoral thesis defended in 2008 at the Institute of Orthodox theology at the University of Munich. Its origin is rooted in the childhood wonder of the author –the daughter of a Russian Orthodox priest –before pomp and complexity entered into the rites of the celebration of the Pontifical Divine Liturgy in the Russian Orthodox Church. Her curiosity led her to investigate the testimony of a Russian monk of the 17th

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century, Arsenij Sukhanov, about the celebration of the Pontifical Byzantine Divine Liturgy in Jerusalem in his pilgrimage account (1649-1653) entitled "Proskinitarij."

After a substantial introduction presenting the *status questionis* and introducing the issue of the order of the pontifical celebration (pp. 27-39), the study is structured into four parts. The first (pp. 41-58) deals with the life and times of the Russian pilgrim. The second (pp. 59-73) is a presentation and an introduction to the description given by the monk Arsenij of the pontifical celebration. The third (pp. 75-131) is a critical edition of the Slavonic text (which improves the 1889 edition of N. I. Ivanovskij) and a partial translation into English of the third and final part of Sukhanov's "Proskinitarij" entitled "Taktikon" which describes the hagiopolite pontifical celebration at the time of the Patriarch of Jerusalem Paisios Lambardis (1645-1660). The fourth part of the book (pp. 133-250) is a historico-liturgical analysis of the edited text focusing on the rites of the entrance of the bishop in the church and his solemn vesting. Following the conclusion (pp. 251-256), the book includes a chronological list of the many liturgical manuscripts consulted (pp. 257-268), an index of manuscripts and printed sources used (pp. 269-272) and a general index (pp. 273-283). The complete bibliography on the subject is found at the beginning of the study (pp. 13-23).

The book's value is in fact that it imparts to a larger public an important testimony about the evolution and the development of the Pontifical rite between the 14th and 17th century. The description of the hagiopolite patriarchal office delivered by Sukhanov is based on the perspective of the Russian pilgrim who is attentive to note any difference in comparison with the Moscow ritual of which he was familiar. It is therefore not surprising that V. Larin, a disciple of R. Taft, focuses also her study on the characteristics of the Pontifical rite in Russia before and after the reform of the Russian Patriarch Nikon (1652-1658) who introduced in Moscow the ritual of the Patriarch of Constantinople Athanasios Patellarios (+1654). But the author also compares the hagiopolite usages observed by Arsenij, with Constantinopolitan usages, applying other similar descriptions, such as the contemporary testimony of Paul of Aleppo about the patriarchal celebration in St. George at the Phanar, or liturgical commentaries by Symeon of Thessaloniki in the 14th-15th c. But the historical-liturgical detailed analysis of the author is also based on the comparison of various liturgical manuscripts, among which are included many Arkhieratika, Greek and Slavic (including Ruthenian and Serbian manuscripts).

The detailed commentary of the Proskinitarij by the author focuses on the rituals and prayers associated with the entry of the Patriarch into the

church prior to the commencement of the Divine Liturgy. However, we can discuss the distinction the author makes of "two" entries of the patriarch (p. 147-149). Indeed, he merely enters only once in the church and only prays and blesses the congregation twice in the middle of the church – once before accessing his stall, and a second time after stepping down from his stall to get ready to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. Being familiar with the Russian Pontifical rite, the author wonders about the silence of Sukhanov regarding the Marian hymn "*Axion estin*" accompanying the Russians entering the bishop in the church and suggests that this practice takes its origin in an ancient imperial acclamation (*Aesquum is iustum is*) (p. 176-179). The author is also interested in the use and origin of mandyas and two pastoral staff (the staff and the cane without the two "horns"), highlights the absence of "eagles" in the pontifical rite in Jerusalem, but the presence of "three" thrones of the bishop (in the synthronon, his stall in the nave and the chair in the middle of the church). This book gives us also an interesting excursus on the origin of the dikerion and the trikerion (p. 240-250) whose use could have been, like other episcopal liturgical vestments, first an imperial privilege before being widespread in the episcopal ritual as suggested by sources dating back to the 12th century. It is interesting to note that in the Proskinitarij, Sukhanov describes the use of the trikerion, also called "blessing candle," but does not mention the dikerion, while Simeon of Thessalonica makes a commentary about the use of the dikerion and the trikerion by the bishop for the Trisagion at the Divine Liturgy as symbolizing respectively the two natures of Christ and the three hypostases of the Trinity (PG 155, 293B). The author stresses that the dikerion is still absent in many sources of the mid-17th century (pp. 246-247), which would suggest that the use of the dikerion and the trikerion as a pair became widespread only later.

The analysis of the rites of entry of the Patriarch by the author presents also in detail the historical development of the episcopal liturgical vestments and of the prayers accompanying their vesting. She stresses that the Proskinitarij speaks of only one omophorion (p. 217-218) and repeats R. Taft's theory considering that the "big" omophorion appeared prior to the "small" one, the latter may arise from the use to wear the "big" omophorion folded in half after reading the Epistle, as it appears in the description given by Sukhanov. The Proskinitarij also certifies that in the 17th century, the Patriarch of Jerusalem wore the cross and the encolpion (referred to as "Panagia" in Slavonic), but that only one prayer was said when the patriarch put them on (p. 228-230). Sukhanov also testifies that wearing the mitre is the prerogative of the patriarch only as the testimony he gives us says that when the bishops celebrate alone, they then wear the sakkos (instead of phelonion) but never the mitre (p. 100, 233). Thus, the

book provides an interesting study on the origin and the rather late development of episcopal liturgical vestments (pp. 199-238).

Overall, V. Larin's study shows that a multiplicity of usages has existed in the Pontifical rite of the Divine Liturgy in the Byzantine world and the Slavic periphery between the 14th and 17th century, and that only later, at the time the Turkish rule, many of its characteristic features (such as the wearing of the sakkos and the mitre or the use of the dikerion and the trikerion) became widespread. Therefore, this book, which is sure to attract attention not only of specialists in Byzantine liturgy but of all those interested in Byzantine art and history, admirably illustrates the fact that, contrary to a popular belief, the Byzantine liturgy has not been fixed with the fall of Byzantium and has not been preserved in formalin since then until today, but has continued to live and evolve through the later centuries.