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# *Slavia Unita* – the Cultural and Religious Model of the Archdiocese of Kiev in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries



(the Discussion on Christian Heritage  
of the Nations of Eastern Europe)

The old Archdiocese of Kiev may be viewed as a classic research ground for the interdisciplinary construction of the discourse of encounter, confrontation and merging of two cultural models – *Slavia Latina* and *Slavia Orthodoxa* – that were dominant in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and for centuries had shaped its form. Contrary to the lands that were under the influence of Ruthenia and Greek-Byzantine world ruled by the Muslim Porte, where the “East-West” dialogue came to a standstill in its “primaeval” (primordial) state, in Russian lands of the Crown of the Polish Kingdom and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania “the culture of the frontier” had been shaped also by the third party – *Slavia Unita*. The inculturation of this fact into the multiethnic and multireligious mosaic of the Commonwealth led to the rise of a number of local phenomena that developed mostly as a part of the prevailing Christian culture.

The meeting of three ecclesiastic denominations – Latin, Orthodox, and Uniat – in one geographical and temporal space

had redefined the synthesis of the culture of Ruthenia (Ukraine-Byelorussian) East and Polish West, bringing closer together two very different “circles of civilization” and giving rise to new local religious mentalities, the identity of which was based not only on reaffirming “the same” within the borders of a cultural ghetto, but also on creative assimilation of “the Other”, which secured the possibility of „adaptation without absorption” within one’s own group. The main role in this dialogue of civilizations was played by the Orthodox Church, whose communicative and symbolic function may be clearly seen on Ukraine-Byelorussian lands where the phenomenon of “creative tension” during the times of difficult Orthodox-Uniat, Latin-Orthodox, and Latin-Uniat dialogues of the end of the sixteenth century is especially telling.

Ecclesiastic changes at the turn of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries were decisive for the formulation of new cultural situation in this region of East-Central Europe. The Uniats, being the dominant religious community on the Ukraine-Byelorussian lands and facing difficult and, to some extent, dramatic political, religious and social conditions, proposed a new formula of “modernity” and “Catholicism” of Kiev’s Orthodox church. Challenges of modernization forced Catholic Rusyns to “rewrite” the religious program of Kiev’s Catholic Christianity using not only the “codes” of Polish-Latin culture, but also to work in accordance with the patterns borrowed by the alumni of papal colleges – the future hierarchs and Basilian monks – directly from Rome, where the Uniats had strong, multileveled relations. However, in order to understand the degree of changes that fell upon the Rusyns we must reveal the mechanisms inside the Orthodox church that made the reception of those cultural and ecclesiastic “codes” possible, and unravel their effectiveness in construing the early-modern Catholic identity of the Uniats. One of the disciplinary institutions whose aim was to discipline and indoctrinate Ruthenian religious community – in the more general spirit of *Slavia Unita* – were canonical visitations and diocesan councils, the latter being one of the main administrative organs in the Orthodox church, the basis of its administration and canonical structure.

In the political reality of the Commonwealth, where the commonly shared conviction of the superiority of the Latin order resulted in the legal and social inferiority of the Uniats, the structures of organization of the Archdiocese of Kiev were reshaped into essential public spheres where the Rusyns could articulate their cultural, religious, and even social agenda. In that particular ecclesiastic and cultural reality the Archdiocese of Kiev had started the codification of its liturgical, pastoral, and administrative experiences being the result of a hundred-years-old-long unity with Rome, the unity that took into account local, regional particularisms.

During the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries the Archdiocese of Kiev was focused on formulating a new religious program of the union that would include: 1) the examination of liturgical and sacramental practices; 2) institutional modernization of the clergy; 3) the introduction of disciplinary measures in the congregation and Christianization of Russian religious community; 4) the reform of church's administration and its diocesan's organs; 5) the regulation of relations between the rites and, finally; 6) the regulation of political legitimization. As a result a new, Uniat identity would be formed, Ruthenian culture would be united, the community would be made aware of its Catholic origins, and the regional specificity of the Polish-Ukrainian land would be assimilated; and all that as a part of a quest for the place in the discourse of Uniat universalism.

Lasting discussion among the Uniats concerning Latin practices that should be introduced to the rite was crowned especially with the appearance of liturgical "innovations". At the same time it was not yet decided to what extent should the rites of the Ruthenians undergo the occidentalisation and which East-Christian traditions should be kept. One of the main themes discussed as a part of *Slavia Unita* concerned the clergy – its education, wealth, social status and pastoral work. It seems that one hundred years after the proclamation of the Union of Brest a priest was still considered a person responsible mainly for celebrating Mass, leading the congregation during the Eucharist. The Uniat metropolitans explained

that the consolidation of the Union depended directly on cultural and theological level of the clergy – and to raise this level was one of the objectives of the Union of Brest. This objective was still accurate at the end of the eighteenth century.

What may be at first viewed as “peculiar” requirements of diocesan councils, forbidding a parish priest travelling on the same wagon as his wife, attending parishioner’s christening parties, or ordering admirable behavior during church holidays, is in fact a literal imitation of the resolutions made during the councils of Lviv’s eparchy in the second half of the sixteenth and seventeenth century and Józef Szumlański’s *Nauka dla kapłanów* (1687). The necessity to raise social and material level of the clergy had forced Ruthenian hierarchy to look into the wide spectrum of related problems. In long instructions directed to the clergy and concerning their social attitude, appearance, an attempt was made to establish a dressing code (for example, a diocesan councils that took place in May, 1685, forbade priests wearing scarves on their necks and stressed that they should not “swing hands while walking”), voicing a clear wish to introduce the clergy to the Polish Sarmatian culture, to make it “recognizable” in a society that had, at that time, a very clear class structure.

Another aspect of religious program of *Slavia Unita* was an attempt to discipline the congregation and to conclude the process of its Christianization. Although the issue of the Uniat population’s religiousness and their devout practices in the seventeenth century has been researched only superficially, there are reasons to believe that the level of awareness concerning articles of faith and catechism was rather low among the congregation.

A very painful problem that affected the Archdiocese of Kiev, situated at the ethnical and religious frontier, were its relations with Rome. The radicalization of this problem in the particular situation of the seventeenth century was influenced by the demand of Rome’s authorities for the Russian clergy to pay tithe. In practicing what may be viewed as “cultural imperialism” the Catholic Church in the Commonwealth often openly accused Russian Catholics of heresy and insulted their rituals. The purpose of those

actions was the unification of religious rituals of the Uniats with standards dictated by Rome. Those accusations may be explained by the specificity of theological thought that at that time had seen in Russian rituals a threat for the integrity of Catholic faith and its unity with the Holy Father. At the same time those accusations give grounds to the statements that, in spite of a long-lasting cultural dialogue and shared and centuries-old experience of proximity, two major ethnical-religious communities of the region – Ruthenian and Polish – were still developing separately, as if in an internal ghetto, although it was not an isolationism as we see it nowadays, where long-lasting influences and everyday interactions do not occur.

The problem of relation between the rites concerned not only the Polish hierarchy, among whom during the seventeenth century the idea of Latin rite's superiority prevailed, but was also dictated by the pastoral reality the priests of both Roman and Uniat's Church had to face when ministering to their parishes. The organizational structures of the Uniat Church were much more advanced than those of the Roman Catholic Church. That is why local Roman Catholics often turned to Russian priests for ministry. At the same time sources prove not only the tensions between the Uniats and the Roman Catholics, but also a deep-rooted position of the Orthodox Church in Polish culture and political life, which, seen in the broader context, is one of the signs of the confessionalization of the Uniat community. These processes, known in Western Europe as *Konfessionsbuilding*, are here best exemplified by the strangeness of Eastern Christians of different ecclesiastic jurisdictions, the codification of faith, social-disciplining of religious practices, the reinforcement of Orthodox and Uniat exclusivism, and stressing a faith-oriented sense of identity.

Other examples also prove that the ethnical and religious identity of Ruthenian Uniats at that time, ambivalent in its nature, had been leaning towards Polish regional patriotism and the recognition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as the Great Homeland, the part of which was the Uniats' Little Homeland – the Rus' or, in a narrower, religious sense – *Slavia Unita*. A telling confirma-

tion of those tendencies was the stay of the painting of Madonna of Chełm during the whole war campaign of 1651 in John Casimir's camp. The cult of that icon fitted perfectly into the new Catholic identity of the Rus', since it embodied a few themes – Ruthenian deep-rooted Kiev-Christian tradition and the presence of its “own” historical memory; political devotion of the Commonwealth at the same time rejecting Cossacks' project of Ruthenian Ukraine; regionalism of the Uniat Church and the exclusive nature of its Christian cult.

In the seventeenth century the Archdiocese of Kiev was still focused on retaining the Byzantine-Slavic rite in its “pure” shape and the codification of its cultural heritage. References to Old Ruthenian tradition anticipated the fragile balance between Catholic universalism, Uniat particularism, and ethnical filetism that even Rome could not afford to ignore. The external manifestation of the Byzantine-Slavic identity had been the use of Church Slavonic in the internal life of the Uniat Church till the seventeenth century. The Russian language had remained the major sacral and spoken language of the Uniat community of that region and it dominated and functioned on all ecclesiastic levels – starting with a parish church and ending with a bishop's consistory. What is more, it was used by the clergy both in public and family life. At the same time it cannot be denied that the Polish language was penetrating everyday life, administration and church services of the Uniat Church. It in a way “served” professional culture's needs, but it was also a socializing factor and it played the role of *sacrum* in the Uniat religion which, as Jarosław Isajewycz claimed, “was only one of the manifestations of the change of a cultural code”.

Also the Uniats' religious elite complained in 1685 about the growing influence of the Polish language: “It is common among them that they do not know how to read in Ruthenian... They find the Ruthenian language so repulsive that one cannot hear a sermon in Ruthenian in the whole Commonwealth; only a few can speak Polish; everybody speaks Uniat [...] – Polish mixed with Ruthenian”. This linguistic Polonization was a very complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon, yet it directly influenced the process

of narrowing the use of Church Slavic language strictly to the ritual sphere, which transformed it into a kind of Ruthenian relic.

Another source that together with the myth of old Ruthenian times revived the Uniat identity of the Archdiocese of Kiev were Latin “innovations” that gradually and seemingly imperceptibly for one generation to notice were being introduced on different ecclesiastic levels. Diocesan councils show that the Uniat Church, in response to the cultural and intellectual requirements of the contemporary world, used mainly foreign categories and criteria. The occidentalisation of the Archdiocese of Kiev, in spite of the Church’s skepticism, was intentionally organized by the Church’s elites as a means of communication and a part of a broader strategy of “building-in” Latin “innovations” into the context of Ruthenian Catholicism. An example of the gradual occidentalisation of the Rus’ was the growing popularity of indulgences that were being granted by the Holy Father to all those who took part in war campaigns defending Christianity against the Turkish onslaught. Although the indulgences had been known in the Archdiocese of Kiev long before the Union of Brest, it was the Holy See that sanctioned their common use among the Uniats, making them similar to the Latin Catholics. This new cultural code unified Ruthenian religious community and at the same time revealed new opportunities for the dialogue between the Uniats and Western Catholics. The emergence of “innovations” in the Uniat Church was caused not only by the necessity of the codification of experience of one hundred years of unity with the Holy See and the pressure put by Latin Catholics on the Uniats, but also by the historical development of Christian culture; it was an adjustment to the requirements of the age – the congregation needed to be taught in contemporary language. In the reality of the Archdiocese of Kiev in the seventeenth century each bishopric could realize its own religious program, supported mainly by triumphant Rome.

We may also suspect that all the occidental borrowings were not introduced in a chaotic way, but were monitored by the hierarchs of the Kievan church. “Innovations” served a double pur-

pose: 1) they were a “defensive wall” against cultural assimilation and the loss of the Kiev-Christian identity in the Polish-Latin space; 2) they were used as an external manifestation of the unity with Rome. The “innovations” were, therefore, successfully used as a means of institutionalization of the early modern Ruthenian Uniat identity, and the Uniats themselves were not merely passive consumers and retransmitters of the Catholic post-Trent theology. As the resolutions of the Union of Brest show, Ruthenian Catholics turned out to be capable of modernizing their Church, turning to their own, Kiev-Uniat identity, which was not, however, rooted in the same source as the Orthodox Church. As a well-known liturgist, Petro Gaładza states, the susceptibility of the Uniats to Latin borrowings was “conditioned by the theological and moral decline of the Orthodox Church”, since its leaders turned out to be unable to “properly assess the importance of their Byzantine theology”. It is also doubtful whether they perceived their mission as a “bridge” between the East and the West, which in fact pointed to their border status, the “abnormality” and “artificiality” of being. That is why the theories of cultural dialogue and of the multiculturalism of the Uniat Church must be reinterpreted, since they assume the existence of a dominant group (culture) that always aspires to assimilate a weaker minority (denomination). “Innovations” were meant to form new religious emblematics of the Uniats, for whom the references to their unity with the Orthodox Church were not as important at the end of the seventeenth century as they were in the first years that followed the Union of Brest. At the same time the Uniats still took heed to the reactions of the Orthodox Church and did not prevent its entering *Slavia Unita* – that is why in the seventeenth-century legislation of the Archdiocese of Kiev there are no allusions to the anti-Orthodox rhetoric.

The Roman model of ecclesiology as a Western “proposition” for the Kiev’s Christianity did not assume the assimilation of Eastern tradition, but its rejection, which resulted in a “creative tension” between the “modernization” and “tradition” that could be felt both in religious and secular Ruthenian circles. The examination of the problem from this point of view allows us to propose



a thesis that the modernization of the Ukraine-Byelorussian lands of the Commonwealth proceeded slowly, and its characteristic sign was the gradual absorption of the Latin tradition as a means of communication with Catholic Europe. After adapting this ecclesiastic symbol to the Ruthenian tradition, one could be finally recognized both by Rome and Sarmatian Poland as “modern”, “normal”, and “Catholic”. The regulatory measures, introduced by the Uniat Church, became the institutional background for the “Latin rites” and the instruments through which Russian Christianity built its new consciousness. It must be stressed that it was not only through the well-known “Polish trace”, but also through Rome that the Uniats received Latin values.

Nevertheless, the ecclesiastic development of the Archdiocese of Kiev in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries proves that on the eve of the synod in Zamość the hierarchs of the Kievan church still had not associated Catholicism with Rome and opposed the tendencies that in their conviction would lead to the transformation of the Rus’ into a local variant of the Commonwealth. In spite of that, the idea that the Uniat Church should become more Catholic was gaining popularity, and to achieve this goal it was necessary to create a new ecclesiastic – especially liturgical and ritual – identity which, we must admit, would include only the religious experience of the West, omitting the experience of the Slavic East.

Scholars are usually too critical of the changes that the Uniats’ culture had undergone in the seventeenth century. They focus mainly on the spreading of the elements of Western culture to the Kiev-Christian ethos, which resulted in the division of the Ruthenian (Ukraine – Byelorussian) community into the Uniat and Orthodox segments. These phenomena, however, called by Aleksander Naumow “papo-Slavism” (the acceptance of the Roman, incompatible with Eastern sacramental concepts, vision of the Church by the Uniats; the allegiance to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth equaled with the devotion to the Holy See) and, when juxtaposed with other orthodox religious centers of the East, seen by Naumow as “the disunion of Russian Orthodox culture”, were symptomatic mainly for the “high”, elite discourse; these phenomena, as Nau-

mow stresses, were responsible for shaping the early-modern, Ukraine-Byelorussian culture.

The visible changes in the Ruthenian, Christian world, manifested among the elites, in ideology and on the level of church's jurisdiction (after the projects of forming one Ruthenian patriarchy had been definitively abandoned) became religiously inevitable soon after the colloquium in Lublin (1680), and politically – after the acceptance of the Eternal Peace Treaty of 1686 between the Commonwealth and the Tsardom of Muscovy. The bearers of traditional Ruthenian identity were well aware of these fractures: “Ninety years ago the present Uniats were as Ruhenian as we are; by uniting with the Roman Church they have changed their ceremonies and obligations to such an extent that common people see the advent of a new religion that is neither Ruthenian nor secular, but is something mixed”.

The deepening of religious dissimilarities among the Ruthenians, the dominance in the West of soteriological exclusivism and Roman institutional ecclesiology of conversion made it impossible for the Uniats and the members of the Orthodox Church to attend the same religious ceremonies (*communication in sacris*). What was still informal at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was made official by the decree of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1729. The decree prohibited the Uniats from any Communion with the members of the Orthodox Church.

In order to understand these beliefs, we must remember that the period after the Council of Trent was in the West an era of exclusivism, confessionalism, and the rival way of thinking, which, in turn, resulted in developing a rival model of theology's development. These all-European tendencies, when applied in the Tsardom after the Khmelnytsky Uprising, caused internal consolidation of various Christian communities, deepened the isolation of particular ecclesiastical jurisdictions and resulted in forming closed, confessional religiousness. It seems that after the Khmelnytsky Uprising the Uniats had started the systematic process of building new religious symbolism, aiming to stress their identity, different from the identity of the members of the Orthodox Church. Many docu-

ments from that period prove that after their churches had been ravaged by the Cossacks, the Uniats (or at least the clergy) were less eager to identify with the Orthodox Rus', calling the time when Khmelnytsky's army had stationed at the Uniats' lands "Tyrannica Cosacorum pro Sanctae Unione". It is doubtful, however, whether the members of the Archdiocese of Kiev looked with sympathy on Roman formula *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*. On the other hand, the examination of religious lives of the Rusyns in the paradigms of "long duration" and "history seen from below" unravels astonishing perspectives of studies in terms of the unity of Kiev-Christian culture of the Commonwealth, where in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was natural (at least on the level of a parish) to respect the everyday presence of "alien" religious symbols.

The cultural and religious program of *Slavia Unita*, originated in the Commonwealth and approved by the Archdiocese of Kiev, was in its very nature ambivalent, trying to find a balance between the Catholic "face" of the Orthodox Church and its Byzantine-Slavonic heritage. It gave the Uniat Church the opportunity to, on the one hand, remain a part of the Ukraine-Byelorussian Rus', and, on the other, realize its affiliation with the Catholic Church. The model of *Slavia Unita* of the Archdiocese of Kiev in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries bears testimony to quite successful attempts of the hierarchs of the Uniat Church to form a new, Uniat identity or, if we examine the matter in a broader context, to form a new religious program of an union with Rome. Apart from retaining national heritage, it included an identification with Catholic Christianity through careful introduction to Uniat's liturgy Latin confessional emblematic (the "innovations") and broader unification of religious life of the Ruthenians. The aim of this program was to revive ethnical and confessional homogeneity of the Uniat Rus' that had been lost since 1596. It must be noted, however, that existing research is insufficient to draw final conclusion whether the Ruthenians had managed to unify their religious community by the end of the seventeenth century, especially on the level of a parish.

Due to the above mentioned reasons it is difficult to present the whole spectrum of notions the Uniats had on the Ruthenian

autonomy as the relic of the past and the role they played in the creation of early-modern, Ruthenian identity. Nevertheless, we may assume that in the '80s-'90s of the seventeenth century *Uniat triumphalism* had started, stressing religious and ethnical unity of the Rus', although only in the discourse of *Slavia Unita*, outside the frame of the Orthodox culture of the Commonwealth. This issue, however, calls for further interdisciplinary studies. In times of national and religious delimitations that had stimulated the formation of modern nations of Western Europe, the interdependence between confessional and ethnical factors was one of the most complex issues the Uniat Church had to face; yet we must not forget that national identity bears at the same time significant and ambivalent meaning for ecclesiastic identity. That is why the problem of split identity of the Uniats, who "did not understand that there is a major contradiction in retaining Byzantine rite and at the same time following Roman Catholic theology and Western spiritual traditions", had not been solved for a long time.

Unfortunately, church's documents do not mention the degree to which Uniat identity opposed Roman centralism; we cannot also establish when in the Archdiocese of Kiev terms such as a "member of the Orthodox Church", an "Uniat", or a "Catholic" began to be used as identifying symbols, separating one's identity from "the Other's". More effective, taking into consideration the ecclesiastic context of Ruthenian lands, seems to be the application of the theory of the influence of a double-confessional reality on the ethnos within the borders of one country. Orthodox-Uniat and Uniat-Latin conflicts during the seventeenth century (that we believe to be consciously exaggerated) could be the positive stimulus that was crystallizing religious and ethnical identity of the Ruthenians united with Rome, making their confessional sameness one of the most distinctive and articulated in the whole Archdiocese of Kiev. This assumption allows us to connect the phenomenon of "two faces of the Rus'" with the advancement of Christianization of the East-Christian community of the Commonwealth.