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**“Not the Ukrainian Church, but the Church of Christ in Ukraine”: (supra)national memory of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church**

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which has retained its unity with the Moscow Patriarchate (*hereinafter* – UOC MP), faced a number of challenges during the period of independence of the Ukrainian nation-state.

The primary challenge is that UOC MP remained a part of the Russian Church after 1991 despite the fact that both the Ukrainian public and part of the country’s political elite believed that it should have become independent like the Ukrainian state.

The second challenge is that this church was and still is the largest religious organization in Ukraine. It unites more than twelve thousand communities and monasteries and dominates across almost all regions of the country. Significant differences in the identity of these regions, such as different collective memory, different national sentiments, make UOC MP into an extremely decentralized and heterogeneous institution.

In a country where religious and national identities converge<sup>1</sup>, the Orthodox Church has to some extent become a national institution that legitimizes the nation-state. The recent campaign of the Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko to create an “independent, united, local Ukrainian Orthodox Church” as the “spiritual backbone of the Ukrainian state”<sup>2</sup> is the most recent example of such conversion.

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\* *Many examples provided in this paper have been drawn from my forthcoming article Fert, A. (forthcoming in Routledge in 2019). Equivocal Memory: What Does the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate Remember? In E. A. Clark, D. Vovk (Eds.), Religion during Russian-Ukrainian conflict.*

<sup>1</sup> Pew Research Center, 2017, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Fert, 2018.

For a long period of time, the UOC MP has been trying to “mix national identity and spiritual values”<sup>3</sup> in order to transform its’ public perception from the “Metropolis of the Moscow Patriarchate” into a genuine Ukrainian Church. During the 28 years that have passed since Ukraine declared independence from the USSR, this Church has experienced several periods of co-optation and even more periods of ostracism.

Throughout the years preceding the collapse of the USSR and immediately afterwards, part of the Orthodox clergy and laity in Ukraine have separated themselves from the UOC MP. They believed that under new conditions Ukrainian Orthodoxy was to become independent — or, to use the church terminology, autocephalous — from Moscow. The growing influence of the pro-independent movement forced Kyiv Metropolitan Filaret Denysenko, Head of the UOC MP, together with his bishops, to appeal to the Moscow Patriarch for autocephaly. His request was refused and Denysenko was forced to resign.

The new metropolitan Volodymyr Sabodan (1992-2014) was far more cautious. Having started as a “pro-Moscow metropolitan”<sup>4</sup>, he experienced a profound transformation and became “pro-Ukrainian” as early as 2007. His cautious policy of trying to make the UOC MP “truly Ukrainian and truly autonomous” was very well named *dmukhaty na kholodne* (trying to melt the ice by blowing on it)<sup>5</sup>.

With the help of his enormous authority among believers and the clergy metropolitan was taking the UOC MP towards independence in baby steps. However, Volodymyr did not dare to ask the ROC for autocephaly. Perhaps his apprehension was that the UOC MP was not yet ready for this. “Ukraine is a divided country with two different cultures,” he stated repeatedly on different occasions, and therefore, “it does not have a consensus” about autocephaly<sup>6</sup>. It is also possible that he expected that the ROC would not grant autocephaly to his Church under any pretext.

But Volodymyr did managed to make the UOC MP equally credible across all segments of the Ukrainian ruling class, the “pro-Western” / “pro-Ukrainian” Viktor Yushchenko or the “pro-Russian”

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<sup>3</sup> Ramet, 1989, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Hromadske, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Shlikhta, 2016, p. 128.

<sup>6</sup> Drabinko, 2015, p. 258-269; *also, in: Ukrayins’ka Pravoslavna Tserkva, 2017.*

Viktor Yanukovich alike. At a certain point after 2008, the UOC MP, as Viktor Yelensky notes, became “our own church with a displayed Ukrainian identity”<sup>7</sup>.

Everything changed in 2013/2014. The lack of unequivocal support for the protesters on the Maidan, and then a lack of clear opinion about what was happening in Crimea and in Donbas, made this Church in the Ukrainian public space into the “fifth column of the Kremlin”, “the Russian Church in Ukraine”<sup>8</sup>. The successor of Metropolitan Volodymyr, Onufrii Berezovskiy, who headed the UOC MP in 2014, became the anti-hero in Ukrainian media along with Russian President Putin and Moscow Patriarch Kirill.

This paper analyzes how the UOC MP has been legitimizing itself with the help of historical narratives throughout the period of Ukrainian independence. How history and memory about certain events and persons of the past represent this church as “the true church of the Ukrainian people”, which maintains “thousand-year spiritual ties” with the Russian Church.

My point is this. After the proclamation of Ukrainian independence, the main task of the UOC MP was to legitimize the unity with Moscow and to prove that the claim of autocephalous movement was nothing but nationalism being placed above spirituality.

The historical narrative employed to emphasize this point argues that there is no Ukrainian or Russian Church but only the “Church of Christ in Ukraine” or “The Church of Christ in Russia”. The Orthodox Church which unites Orthodox Ukrainians and Russians is a supranational church and it shall not be divided into parts along national borderlines. These supranational narratives, however, are rooted in the concepts and myths from the Russian national grand narrative.

At the same time, taking into account the beliefs and expectations of a significant part of his flock, Metropolitan Volodymyr came up with the concept of “Kyivan Church” in 2007/2009. He claimed that a certain Kyivan Church had a thousand-year-long history and a “special path that does not coincide with the path of the Russian Orthodoxy”. This new narrative reflected Volodymyr’s aspiration to greater independence from the ROC and almost disappeared after his death in 2014.

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<sup>7</sup> Yelensky, 2013, p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> Fert, 2018.

The main focus of this paper has been on the discourse produced by the ecclesiastical authorities of the UOC MP – namely Kyiv Metropolitan, Holy Synod and Synodal Departments. So, the material for it has been drawn from the UOC MP publications such as the official press and official web-page, annual calendars, books, movies, lives of the saints, history textbooks for seminaries, as well as open reports about the UOC MP editorial activities/canonizations.

Collecting materials for this research I did not have access to the internal documents of the Church. So, when I argue that some narrative for example was supposed to legitimize the unity of the UOC MP with Moscow – how could I be sure that the Church leaders themselves meant the same thing? I could answer unequivocally only when author him- or herself said about his or her intentions straightforwardly. In other cases, any messages were reconstructed from the narrative structure of the given source.

The idea behind my approach is that national grand-narratives inflect religious discourse<sup>9</sup>, so historical narratives employed by the Church inevitably reflect concepts, interpretations and general structures of national grand-narratives. This happens because national and religious identities in the region “are closely entwined”<sup>10</sup>. As a consequence, ecclesiastical leaders should consider that the historical imagination of their parishioners/clergy is limited by national *repertoire of cultural (mnemonic) forms and themes*. Thus, when they appeal to the Church public, they “are free to construct their narratives out of the available national repertoire but are limited in their choices by its boundaries. If they choose elements outside this repertoire, they appear to be alien and not credible to their potential constituents”<sup>11</sup>.

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The UOC MP legitimizes its unity with the ROC through the concept of “supranational Moscow Patriarchate”. Other Orthodox churches in Ukraine are represented as groups affected by the sin of “ethnophyletism”, or, having put national sentiments above spiritual values. Unlike these ostensible sinners, the UOC MP claims it accomplishes its mission regardless of nationality<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> See more in Brubaker, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Pew Research Center, 2017, p. 5-6.

<sup>11</sup> *According to* Kubik, & Bernhard, 2014, p. 22-23.

<sup>12</sup> *Ukrayins'ka Pravoslavna Tserkva*, 2017.

“There are national and supranational Orthodox churches in the world... The determining factor of the church is not that it is “Russian” or “Ukrainian” but that it is the Church of Christ in Russia or in Ukraine,”<sup>13</sup> - stress the authors of the film *Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Faith and Truth*, which was produced by the Synodal Department for Information in 2017.

The supranational nature of the Russian Church is a sacred category, which is emphasized in every possible way: “Do not call us “Moscow Church” just because we keep the millennial spiritual tradition that originates from Volodymyr's Baptism of Kyivan Rus' in the blessed waters of Dnipro and unites the millions of faithful living today in Moscow, Minsk, Chisinau and in many other cities and states around the world,” - this is how the Holy Synod of the UOC MP addressed the flock in 2017 for instance<sup>14</sup>.

The key concept that supranationalism is built around is the memory about Kyivan Rus' – the “common cradle of baptism for Ukraine, Belarus and Russia” which testifies to the “spiritual unity of fraternal peoples”<sup>15</sup>.

When teaching church history to the flock and to the future priests at the seminaries, the UOC MP is doing this with the help of narratives that emphasize that a/ Ukrainians and Russians are “fraternal peoples” (Soviet version) or “one people” (imperial version), b/ these people(s) are united by the Russian Church, of which the UOC MP is a part; c/ in the past, Orthodox Ukrainians always wanted to reunite with their Russian brothers in faith and suffered from separation with them.

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In the theological seminaries of the UOC MP there are two courses dedicated the church history. These are “The General Church History” and “The History of Orthodoxy in Rus’”. “The history of the Rus' Church as a science... depicts the course of the gradual development of the Christ Church in Rus'... It also finds out... how the Rus' Church guided the people of Rus' (Russky narod) toward moral progress” – this phrase opens the textbook for theological seminaries of the UOC MP<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>14</sup> Holy Synod of UOC, 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Bishop's Council of the ROC, 2013, June, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Vlodek, 1989, p. 1.

This textbook compiled as early as 1989 and republished several times since then with imprimatur of Kyiv Metropolis, offers students the history of a common Rus' Church. The narrative is built in such a way that most of the events take place in the North – In Moscow and St. Petersburg. Moreover, the administration of Kyiv Theological academy of the UOC MP composes the programme of entrance exam on Church history in full accordance with this narrative<sup>17</sup>.

The textbook history is divided into four periods. The first in Kyiv – “common cradle” – before the Mongol invasion. Then Moscow period, when Metropolitan see moves to the North and subsequently the metropolis is divided into two. Author emphasizes that during this period “For the Moscow metropolis a time of internal prosperity had come... and the Kyiv Metropolis suffered disasters from hands of non-Orthodox”<sup>18</sup>. The third is St. Petersburg, when “the Rus’ Church was under the strong pressure and influence of the state”, and finally – the Soviet one.

“History of Orthodoxy in Rus” used tropes of sufferings of Ukrainians until the moment of reunification with Russia, anti-Greek-Catholics / anti-autocephalous sentiments and so on. Above all, this narrative had as its cornerstone the concept of “one people” (odin narod) – it could be a people of Rus', an Orthodox people, or simply “our people”. And this people had only one true Church – Russian (Russkaya) Orthodox.

Both the people and the Church could have been divided either by different states or metropolis, but against the all odds they remained a whole, albeit temporarily separated by state or administrative borders. This approach, as can be seen in the footnotes to the textbook, was based on the writings of historians of the Church of the late Russian Empire<sup>19</sup>.

Also, from the interviews conducted with seminarists in Kyiv and Kharkiv, we can find out what books are used in teaching the course “The History of Orthodoxy in Rus”. The most popular are the books of Piotr Znamenskiy (1836-1917) and Evgeniy Golubinskiy (1834-1912)<sup>20</sup> – both written during

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<sup>17</sup> The programme is available here: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1G\\_yKDm0dkcZozzy7Hooc-9ygnOwtKyjF/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1G_yKDm0dkcZozzy7Hooc-9ygnOwtKyjF/view)

<sup>18</sup> Vlodek, 1989, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>20</sup> See more at the official web-page of seminary in Kharkiv: <http://seminary.kharkov.ua/1-class.html>

the late Russian empire in line with Russian national grand narrative – and hence the concept of “one people” and “common cradle” of baptism.

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In 2010 the publishing department of the UOC MP issued a book titled “The Law of God”. This book is supposed for laity. Among other things, it contains two chapters on history.

The first chapter – “History of Orthodoxy in Rus’” - covers events from Apostle Andrew's trip to the present days. The storyline of the second one – “The History of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church” - starts in 1990s, when amidst schisms and revival of Greek-Catholic Church in Western Ukraine an institution entitled “Ukrainian Orthodox Church” was established by Moscow Patriarchate to handle these troubles<sup>21</sup>.

In this book history is told exactly the same way as in the textbook for seminaries: after the Mongol invasion in the XIII century the Kyiv metropolis, being the heart of the Rus' lands, moved up to the North – to the territory of modern Russia – and all the main events take place there. The reader returns to “South-West Rus’” – modern Ukraine – only when “Orthodox people suffers” from Catholics, or when they “reunite with Russia” and “Rus' Church”.

The Ukrainian Church appears in the narrative no earlier than in 1990, when the Moscow Patriarch granted to Kyiv Metropolis “independence and self-governance”<sup>22</sup>. But the real birth to this Church was given in 1992, when Metropolitan Filaret was deposed from his see. And the whole history after consisted of just a struggle against schisms of Filaret at alia.

In the official newspaper “Tserkovna” one can also find a lot of publications devoted to the history of Orthodoxy in certain “historical regions” of modern Ukraine. These episodes are written so as to show the need to preserve the unity with the ROC because of the “common cradle of baptism” - Kyivan Rus'.

These episodes usually start with alleged trip of Apostle Andrew to Kyiv (modern Ukraine) and Novgorod in North Rus' (modern Russia) – to implicitly justify the unity of the apostolate heritage on these territories. Description of the Christianization of Rus’ by Kyiv prince Volodymyr necessarily

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<sup>21</sup> Drabinko, 2010, p. 767.

<sup>22</sup> Drabinko, 2010, p. 769-770.

emphasizes that “all of the lands of Rus” were baptized and not “some other entity that is now called “Rus’-Ukraine”” (the concept from contemporary Ukrainian national historiography claiming that Kyivan Rus’ was first Ukrainian state)<sup>23</sup>.

After the oppression of the Ukrainian orthodox people in Lithuania that conquered Ukrainian lands from mongols, the Constantinople “pseudo-Patriarch” Gregory Mammis, who had recognized the supremacy of Roman Pope and therefore “betrayed” orthodoxy, “divided Common Rus’ Church” into two Metropolitanates – one in Moscow and the other – schismatic – in Kyiv<sup>24</sup>.

And it was precisely because of this division that all subsequent troubles became possible: even greater oppression, increasing of catholic influence and the union of 1596 – when part of Ukrainian orthodox hierarchy subordinated to Rome and like Mammis betrayed the “faith of their ancestors”<sup>25</sup>.

Heads of a separate Kyiv Metropolis “did not have much of any credibility and their moral fiber was low”<sup>26</sup>, and “the Polish pany, wishing to tear Orthodox Ukrainians away from their brother in faith in Russian state, acquired Jesuits and other Catholic monks... to discredit the Orthodox hierarchy”<sup>27</sup>.

Union of 1596 with Rome apace with “national and religious oppression” of orthodox Ukrainians in Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth caused “the national liberation war of the Ukrainian people”. This war ended with “the reunification of Ukraine with Russia”, as well as “the reunification of the Rus' Church”<sup>28</sup>.

In dioceses not reunited with Russia, as, for example, in Volhynia, “persecutions continued... fanatic crowds thundered temples and even killed Orthodox priests”, and “only with the accession of most of the Ukrainian lands to Russia, things began to gradually improve”<sup>29</sup>.

The idea of ecclesiastical independence from Moscow and autocephalous movement in Ukraine in XX century – according to these stories – became possible due to the nationalistic rule and Nazi

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<sup>23</sup> Moiseyenko, 2010b, July, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> Moiseyenko, 2010a, July, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> Moiseyenko, 2010, May, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> Moiseyenko, 2010a, July, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> Moiseyenko, 2010, August, p. 12.

<sup>28</sup> Moiseyenko, 2011, p. 8-9.

<sup>29</sup> Moiseyenko, 2010, September, p. 9.



occupation<sup>30</sup>. And the “schismatics” – the supporters of autocephaly – in 1990s started to take over Orthodox parishes in Ukraine, which “everywhere was accompanied by violence”<sup>31</sup>.

The revival of Orthodoxy began with election of Metropolitan Volodymyr in 1992, and all these stories conclude with the same summary claiming the need to overcome schisms and “firmly cherish the spiritual heritage of three fraternal peoples, growing from the same root – Kyivan Rus”<sup>32</sup>.

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Public commemorations conducted by ecclesiastical leadership of the UOC MP also contribute greatly to the legitimization of such narratives. Among these events, I would like to draw attention to the commemorations of anniversaries of the Council in Kharkiv and the Day of the Baptism of Rus’.

The Council in Kharkiv was a meeting of the UOC MP bishops in 1992 which deposed Metropolitan Filaret, who was demanding independence from the Russian Orthodox Church, and elected Metropolitan Volodymyr instead. Since then, the Church annually celebrates May 27-28 as days, which “marked the victory of the conciliar mind (*soborny razum*) of the Church”<sup>33</sup>, and defined “a brand-new way of Church service in the new social and political conditions”<sup>34</sup>.

The key message about that Council in 1992 is that the UOC MP did not dance to the tune of the Ukrainian politicians who wanted to make this church “a state puppet”<sup>35</sup>, and did not allow to split the unity of the Church – this “last force which has not yet been torn apart by people with big plans and Napoleonic dreams”<sup>36</sup>.

Even more, “by retaining a spiritual connection with the Russian Orthodox Church, (UOC MP) has become a true Church of the Ukrainian people... (that) respects national history and traditions”, - as Metropolitan Volodymyr stressed several times<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>32</sup> Moiseyenko, 2011, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> Kievo-Pecherskaya Lavra, 2012b.

<sup>34</sup> Ukrayins’ka Pravoslavna Tserkva, 2017.

<sup>35</sup> Kievo-Pecherskaya Lavra, 2012b.

<sup>36</sup> Kievo-Pecherskaya Lavra, 2012a.

<sup>37</sup> Volodymyr, Metropolitan of Kyiv, 2008, p. 14.

The story about the Council gradually turned into a central episode in the history of the UOC MP. It was the Council in Kharkiv precisely that became a certain milestone that caused the flourishing of Ukrainian Orthodoxy. Due to the Council, “the spiritual revival of our Church began”, Metropolitan Volodymyr repeatedly recalled<sup>38</sup>. The period immediately after the Council was the “time of unprecedented flourish in Ukrainian Orthodoxy”, echoed the authors of the film *Council of Kharkiv – 25 years*<sup>39</sup>.

It is of primary importance that a considerable number of films, books, memoirs, documents telling about the importance of unity with the Russian Orthodox Church and condemning the “sin of schism” were prepared and spread on the occasion of the of the Council’s anniversaries<sup>40</sup>.

For example, on the eve of the 10-year anniversary of the Council in 2002, the film *Anatomy of a Schism* was released<sup>41</sup>. It covers the Autocephalous movement in Ukraine. The film, among other things, emphasized the role of the state that always wants to divide the Church – namely the Soviet state, which in 1921 contributed to the creation of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church in order to weaken the Russian Orthodox Church; and the contemporary Ukrainian state with its support of schismatics to “take over orthodox parishes” from the UOC MP.

In 2017, following the 15-year anniversary of the Council, the film *UOC in Faith and Truth* was shot. This film tells not so much about the Council itself as about the structure of World Orthodoxy and the “supranational Moscow patriarchate”. The authors emphasize that the idea of separating the UOC MP from the ROC is “a pseudo-national ideology” that does not have much support among the churchgoers, because “Ukraine is a divided country with two different cultures” and this division “does not give us the opportunity to find common ground about the problem of autocephaly.”<sup>42</sup>

The commemorations of the baptism of Rus' are anniversaries of the 1020/25/30 years Jubilees, celebrated in 2008/13/18 respectively, as well as St. Volodymyr Day on July 28. The latter has become

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<sup>38</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>39</sup> Press Service of the Kyiv Theologian Academy and Seminary, 2017.

<sup>40</sup> The most popular book was written by Alexandr Drabinko, a secretary of Metropolitan Volodymyr Sabodan, in 2002 under the title “Pravoslavie v posttotalitarnoi Ukraine” [Orthodoxy in Post-totalitarian Ukraine].

<sup>41</sup> Kievo-Pecherskaya Lavra, 2012a.

<sup>42</sup> Ukrayins’ka Pravoslavna Tserkva, 2017.

widely celebrated by the leadership of the UOC MP since 2007. However, with the symbolic meaning of these commemorations, things are a little more complicated than with the Council in Kharkiv.

First of all, this is due to the fact that Metropolitan Volodymyr, who came up with the idea to celebrate these holidays in 2007, put into them his concept of the special Ukrainian Orthodox Church - a “cradle of Orthodox Rus’.”<sup>43</sup> The celebrations in 2007-9 were one of the outward manifestations of his course, aimed at the expanding autonomy of the UOC MP.

On the other hand, the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church and part of the bishops of the UOC MP tried their best to re-interpret these celebrations with concepts such as “common cradle of baptism”, “spiritual unity of fraternal peoples (Ukrainians, Russians and Belarusians – AF),”<sup>44</sup> and last but not least – “Ukraine, Russia and Belarus together make up the Holy Rus’”<sup>45</sup>. Therefore, if you look, for example, at sermons that Metropolitan Volodymyr and Moscow Patriarchs (once Alexii and then Kirill) delivered one after another, it is difficult not to notice the obvious dissonance.

The former would always stress that UOC MP “is the successor of the Volodymyr the Great baptism, the guardian of the centuries-old spiritual tradition connecting the East Slavic nations with the Orthodox East”<sup>46</sup>, he even called Prince Volodymyr the patron of the Ukrainian Army<sup>47</sup>. Patriarchs, however, would put forward the necessity to preserve the “unity of Historical Rus’” and the “cradle of baptism” common for Russians and Ukrainians. Although different nations may have sprung from this cradle, all of them were nevertheless ostensibly united by a common “basic culture”<sup>48</sup> or even turned into “spiritually one people”.

Since the beginning of the conflict with Russia in 2014, Moscow Patriarchs no longer attended the celebrations, and the new leadership of the UOC MP had made the theme of the unity into the key message of the celebrations, although it did not repeat the patriarchal theses about “fraternal peoples” and “Holy Rus’”.

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<sup>43</sup> Read more about “special path” of Ukrainian Orthodoxy in *Yelensky, 2013 & Drabinko, 2015*.

<sup>44</sup> Bishop’s Council of the ROC, 2013, p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> Suslov, 2014, p. 70.

<sup>46</sup> Holy Synod of the UOC, 2008.

<sup>47</sup> Tserkva, Derzhava, Suspil'stvo, 2013.

<sup>48</sup> Suslov, 2014, p. 74.

In 2017, the celebrations of the Council in Kharkiv and the Baptism of Rus' were merged into one, to legitimize the unity with the ROC. This unity was rooted in the concept of the "common cradle of baptism" and was preserved by the Council in Kharkiv. "Do not call us Moscow Church simply because we guard the millennial spiritual tradition beginning with Baptism of Rus'", - Metropolitan Onufrii wrote in his appeal<sup>49</sup>.

And in 2018, when President Petro Poroshenko launched a campaign aimed at creating an independent Orthodox Church in Ukraine, the celebrations of the 1030<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Baptism were aimed at showing how the UOC MP stands strong against "the efforts of external forces to turn the Church into a component of geopolitics, ideology and state security".<sup>50</sup>

This time, the topic of unity was brought into a somewhat different context. For example, the address of the UOC MP Bishops Council to the flock contains the following passage: "One of the most important consequences of the adoption of faith in the One True God for Ukraine was the strengthening of the unity of Rus' society, the unity between the tribes that were part of the Kyivan state. The basis of this unity was the Kyiv Metropolis, the legal heir of which is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church."<sup>51</sup>

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In addition to holidays and anniversaries, the collective identity of Orthodox believers and clergy is shaped with the help of the cults of saints. The veneration of certain saints, the canonization of heroes from a certain national narrative, the manner of narration and language employed to depict the life of a saint – this is what we will focus on here.

In the case of the saints, supranationalism is transmitted through the concept of "Rus'" (*russkoje*). If one read the publications in the official newspaper or watched Orthodox Calendar, a – TV show aired by Church television channel Glas – one would notice that almost always a saint is represented as the "Rus' saint," or "Rus' ascetic," regardless of which part of the ROC he or she comes from.

For example, the saint of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Dimitry of Rostov – he lived most of his life on the territory of modern Ukraine and spent only his last few years in Rostov, which now is in modern Russia.

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<sup>49</sup> Holy Synod of UOC, 2017.

<sup>50</sup> Bishops of the UOC, 2018.

<sup>51</sup> Ibidem.

His cult is very popular among Ukrainian Orthodox. So, no surprise that the *Tserkovna* newspaper has devoted a whole series of articles to him in 2009 under the title “Rus' Chrysostom”<sup>52</sup>. Kyiv prince Yaroslav the Wise canonized as a saint by UOC MP is a “Saint Prince of Rus”<sup>53</sup>. And Kyiv Metropolitan of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Petro Mohyla is called “Holy Father of Rus”<sup>54</sup>. Thus, no national distinction is made between saints from different parts of the Russian Orthodox Church: St. Petro Mohyla from Kyiv and Patriarch of Moscow St. Hermogenes are equally “Saints of the Land of Rus”<sup>54</sup>.

On the other hand, under Metropolitan Volodymyr's reign and especially alongside his attempts to make UOC MP “truly autonomous and truly Ukrainian”<sup>55</sup>, a certain practice which I call *nationalization* became widely spread. Nationalization was supposed to make common “Rus saint” more Ukrainian. Such effect was achieved with the help of a specific narrative structure of the Life of Saint.

Let's take another look at St. Dimitry of Rostov. This is how the description of his Life started in the official press of the UOC MP: “St. Dmitry is called “of Rostov” because of the ancient Rus' city of Rostov, which is in the present Yaroslavl region of Russia. In Rostov (he) had occupied the episcopal chair for eight years, until his death... However, the previous half-century, from the moment of his birth, the saint of God spent in his native Ukraine – the spiritual heiress of the ancient South Rus”<sup>56</sup>.

And then his Life was built in such a way as to tell as much as possible about his ministry in the “spiritual heiress of the ancient South Rus” and as little as possible about Rostov. A similar example – St. John of Tobolsk. In 2012 his Life was also written in such a way as to tell as much as possible about his ministry on the territory of modern Ukraine – in Chernihiv, and virtually no word about Tobolsk<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> Dyatlov, 2009, October.

<sup>53</sup> Volodymyr, Metropolitan of Kyiv, 2013.

<sup>54</sup> Patriarch of Moscow Kirill repeatedly pointed out that “it is inconceivable to talk about “Ukrainian” Equal-to-the-Apostles Prince Vladimir the Great, “Russian” Rev. Sergius of Radonezh, “Russian” St. Prince Alexander Nevsky and “Belarusian” St. Euphrosyne of Polotsk... It just looks like a joke. All these are the saints of the land of Rus” (read more here: <http://archive.orthodox.org.ua/ru/node/6031>)

<sup>55</sup> Shlikhta, 2016, p. 128.

<sup>56</sup> Dyatlov, 2009, October, p. 6.

<sup>57</sup> Hor, 2012.

The authors of the Saints Lives explained this approach quite inventively: “If in the last place of his earthly ministry the ascetic spent less time than in other places, and this last place subsequently became associated with (his) works... people usually add this place to the ascetic’s name, “overshadowing” other places of his life and ministry. Is it not a kind of a “restraint”? ... It is necessary not only to know the names of saints, but also to read their lives”<sup>58</sup>.

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*Nationalization of the saints* was not just one indirect consequence of Metropolitan Volodymyr's autonomous aspirations. Metropolitan's new course also affected historical narratives of the UOC MP and, before long, the official press published several articles claiming that Ukrainian Church had existed since the day of St. Volodymyr's Baptism in 988.

Until 2008/9, all events in the church history before the 1990s were called and described exclusively as “The History of Orthodoxy in Rus’” or “The History of the Rus' Church”. And the history focusing only on Ukrainian Church covered events from 1990 (when Patriarch of Moscow Alexii II granted Ukrainian dioceses of the ROC “independence and self-governance”) to the present days.

However, in the process of preparing for the celebration of the 1020<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Baptism of Rus’, in the circle of Metropolitan Volodymyr, the concept of “Kyivan idea” arises. Its meaning consisted in that Ukrainian Orthodoxy has its own “special path”, which “does not always coincide with the path of Russian Orthodoxy”<sup>59</sup>.

This approach came at an opportune moment – President Yushchenko had just begun attempts to create a united Ukrainian Orthodox church, which should have been independent from Moscow. And although the UOC MP did not officially support the president, it nevertheless took several steps towards his plans – for example, it began negotiations with other Orthodox Churches in Ukraine<sup>60</sup>.

And in early 2009, an article about the history of the Ukrainian Church appeared in the official newspaper of the UOC MP. An article which cautiously and indirectly called the unity with the Russian Orthodox Church into question. This article was the first to tell the history of the Ukrainian Church,

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<sup>58</sup> Dyatlov, 2009, October, p 6.

<sup>59</sup> Yelensky, 2013, p. 34.

<sup>60</sup> Kirill (Hovorun), archpriest, 2009.

starting not from the 1990s, but from the journey of Saint Apostle Andrew through the territory of modern Ukraine<sup>61</sup>.

This history began in Crimea. It was “the first ambo... the Gospel Truth had been proclaimed from in the lands of the future Ukraine”<sup>62</sup>. From there Apostle Andrew went to the North to bless the mountains on which the city of Kyiv would have been found a few centuries after. Interestingly, the article did not mention a word about Andrew visiting the place of the future Novgorod in modern Russia – however this part of his trip was an important detail legitimating the apostolate and unity of the Rus’ Church as I showed above.

In addition, the narrative of this article did not follow the abovementioned principles. There was no “reunification of Ukraine with Russia”; Orthodox Ukrainians did not suffer from separation with their “brothers in faith” in Russia; it also paid great attention to the flourishing of Kyiv Christianity under Metropolitan Petro Mohyla – the period before Ukrainian lands became part of the Moscow kingdom.

It is worth noting that instead of the usual episode about “Mazepa's betrayal” (the episode about the Ukrainian hetman of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, who, from the point of view of Russian historiography, betrayed the Russian tsar), the narrative focuses on the ill-conceived policy of Russian Tsar Peter I causing “decline of the resurgent economy in Ukraine” and pushing Mazepa, a “patron of Orthodox Churches”<sup>63</sup>, into an alliance with Tsar enemy – Charles XII of Sweden. Such a description sounded almost in unison with the way these events were told in history textbooks in Ukrainian schools.

Talking about the twentieth century, the article said nothing about schisms, avoiding the hate speech that was so usual for the UOC-MP in relation to other Orthodox churches of Ukraine. Moreover, granting “independence and self-governance” by Patriarch Alexii II in 1990 was represented as restoration of genuine rights that Ukrainian Church had “prior to becoming a part of the Moscow Patriarchate”<sup>64</sup>.

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<sup>61</sup> Dyatlov, 2009a, p. 8.

<sup>62</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>63</sup> Dyatlov, 2009b, p. 9.

<sup>64</sup> Dyatlov, 2009, December, p. 9.

Such narratives were employed by Metropolitan Volodymyr and so-called “pro-Ukrainian wing” of the UOC MP along with the narratives legitimizing the unity of “Orthodoxy in Rus’”. However, they did not receive such distribution. And after the death of Metropolitan in 2014, these narratives ceased to appear at all in the public discourse of the UOC MP. The new leadership of the Church, instead of continuing Volodymyr's course, put on agenda the need to preserve their unity with the Russian Orthodox Church in the time of war.

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The main challenge for the UOC MP throughout the entire period of Ukraine’s independence was – and still is – a request for autocephaly. Autocephaly in public space has become somewhat a synonym of national belonging and cultural independence of the Ukrainian nation from Russia. The inability of the UOC MP to unconditionally subscribe to this point of view turns it into a “fifth column of the Kremlin”.

To address this challenge the leadership of the UOC MP represent their Church as an unalienable part of the *supranational* Russian Church, whose origins date back to the “common cradle of baptism” in the times of Kyivan Rus’. From this cradle came out the “fraternal peoples” - Ukrainians, Russians and Belarusians, who remain “spiritually united”. And the church of these “fraternal peoples” is a “supranational church”, not Ukrainian, but the Church of Christ in Ukraine.

The narratives with which this “supranationalism” is communicated – primarily historical narratives, commemorations and cults of saints – are built around the idea that Rus’ (ruskoje) is a category devoid of national separations. The central episode of such narratives is Kyivan Rus’ – a medieval state in which “fraternal peoples” lived together in the united church. The division of this state and the division of the Church led to the suffering of Orthodox Ukrainians; these sufferings ceased when the divided church and divided “brothers in faith” reunited among themselves.

At the same time, in 2008-14, the head of the UOC MP Volodymyr tried to make his Church more autonomous and – in the long run – independent of the Russian Orthodox Church. The consequence of this was the emergence of other narratives that told the history of the Ukrainian church with the help of the Ukrainian national grand narrative. However, these narratives almost completely disappeared from the public space of the UOC MP with the death of Metropolitan Volodymyr.



For some time, the leadership of the UOC MP communicated narratives about the unity of the supranational Russian Orthodox Church and about a separate Ukrainian Church with its own history and saints. For the leadership of the UOC MP, Ukraine was a “divided country with two different cultures” – perhaps to these “different cultures” the different narratives were supposed to appeal.

The supranational narratives of the UOC MP at one time provided a good ground for the ideas of “Holy Rus” and “Russian World”, which were promoted by the Moscow Patriarch Kirill. In very similar way, these ideas appeal to the common baptism of Ukrainians, Belarusians and Russians, use the concept of Rus’ (*ruskoje*) as a supranational category, and also speak of a common “basic culture” for “fraternal peoples” – Rus’ Orthodoxy.

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