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Uniate Convents in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the Early Modern Period

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Abstract. The article focuses on the development of the network of convents (female monasteries) in the Kyivan Uniate Metropolitanate from the time of the Union of Brest (1596) to the first half of the 19th century. The first communities of Uniate nuns appeared within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania at the beginning of the 17th century. Unlike the men, they were not united in a single Order but were subordinated to the local bishop. The second half of the 17th century, with its almost continuous wars and internal conflicts in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, negatively impacted the development of monastic communities. Favourable circumstances for the Uniate Church and its monasticism emerged only in the late 17th and 18th centuries. During this period, three eparchies (dioceses) of the Kyivan Orthodox Metropolitanate joined the Union. Along with the bishops, numerous monastic communities located in these areas accepted the Union. However, between the 1730s and 1760s, there was a gradual dissolution of small convents. One of the main reasons for this was the implementation of the decisions of the Synod of Zamość (1720). The suppression of the Uniate female communities after the three partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was continued by the Russian authorities, albeit for different reasons. At the end of the 18th century and in the first half of the 19th century, all convents in the Russian Empire were suppressed.

Keywords: *convents, nuns, Uniate Church, Kyivan Metropolitanate, foundation, suppression of the convents.*

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Anotacija. Straipsnyje daugiausia dėmesio skiriama moterų vienuolynų tinklo raidai Kyjivo unitų metropolijoje nuo 1596 m. Bresto bažnytinės unijos iki XIX a. pirmosios pusės. Pirmosios unitų vienuolių bendruomenės Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje atsirado XVII a. pradžioje. Skirtingai nei vyrų atveju, jos nesudarė vieno ordino ir buvo pavaldžios vietos vyskupui. XVII a. antroje pusėje nenutrūkstantys karai ir vidaus konfliktai Abiejų Tautų Respublikoje neigiamai paveikė unitų vienuolynų raidą. Palankios sąlygos Unitų Bažnyčiai ir jos vienuolynams susiklostė tik nuo XVII a. pabaigos. Per šį laikotarpį prie Unitų Bažnyčios prisijungė trys Kyjivo ortodoksų metropolijos eparchijos (vyskupijos). Kartu su vyskupais prie Unitų Bažnyčios prisijungė ir daugybė šiose vietose įsikūrusių vienuolynų. Tačiau nuo 1730 iki 1760 m. maži vienuolynai pamažu nyko. Viena iš pagrindinių to priežasčių buvo 1720 m. įvykusio Zamostės sinodo sprendimų įgyvendinimas. Unitų moterų vienuolynų slopinimą po trijų Abiejų Tautų Respublikos padalijimų tęsė Rusijos imperijos valdžia, tiesa, dėl skirtingų priežasčių. XVIII a. pabaigoje ir XIX a. pirmojoje pusėje Rusijos imperijoje buvo likviduoti visi unitų vienuolynai.

Esminiai žodžiai: *vienuolynai, vienuolės, Unitų Bažnyčia, Kyjivo metropolija, vienuolynų fundacijos, vienuolynų uždarymas.*

Introduction

In the early modern period, there were numerous religious houses (both Roman Catholic and Uniate) existing in the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which after the Union of Lublin (1569) became an integral part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. These communities were an important part of the sacred space of many cities in those lands. However, our knowledge about the convents (female monasteries) of the Kyivan Uniate Metropolitanate in the modern Lithuanian and Belarusian lands is still quite limited.

In the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries, researchers, mainly church historians, paid attention to these religious houses for the first time. There are brief sketches of the history of these convents contained in popular historical and statistical studies of the time (Nikolai Truskovskiy, Vasiliy Zverinskiy, and Leonid Denisov).¹ Unfortunately, none of these monastic centres received a separate historical monograph. For example, Joseph Shcherbitskiy, in his study of the Holy Trinity Monastery

¹ ТРУСКОВСКИЙ, Николай. *Историко-статистическое описание Минской епархии*. Санктпетербургъ: Типографія духовнаго журнала „Странникъ“, 1864; ЗВѢРИНСКИЙ, Василий. *Матеріаль для историко-топографическаго изслѣдованія о православныхъ монастыряхъ въ Россійской имперіи*. С.-Петербургъ: Типографія В. Безобразова, 1890, т. 1; ДЕНИСОВЪ, Леонидъ. *Православные монастыри Россійской имперіи*. Москва: изданіе А. Д. Ступина, 1908.

in Vilnius, focused on the men's community, and mentioned the nuns only in passing.² At the beginning of the 20th century, Jan Marek Giżycki, also known by his pseudonym "Wołyniak", in his essay "Z przeszłości Zakonu Bazylińskiego na Litwie i Rusi" briefly presented the history of the most famous Uniate convents in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania – in Hrodna, Minsk (Holy Spirit), Minsk (Holy Trinity), Vilnius, Orsha, Polatsk, Vitsyebsk, and Pinsk.³ Paradoxically, this work has not yet lost its relevance.

The first synthesis specifically devoted to female monasticism of the Kyivan-Christi-anity tradition in the early modern period was the monograph of Sofia Senyk "Women's Monasteries in Ukraine and Belorussia to the Period of Suppressions" (1983).⁴ Unable to conduct a source heuristic in the archives of the Communist Bloc countries, the authoress was forced to use only published documents. Relying primarily on Russian archaeographical publications of the 19th and early 20th centuries, Sofia Senyk inevitably had to focus on Orthodox and Uniate convents from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Her monograph, as well as previously published studies, were based primarily on documents issued during the existence of the Russian Empire. Among them, it is worth noting "Акты, издаваемые Виленскою Археографическою комиссией" and "Историко-юридические материалы, извлеченные из актов книг губерний Витебской и Могилевской".⁵

As shown by the study of the contemporary Belarusian historian Fedor Charniavsky, which concerned the foundation of the Holy Trinity convent in Minsk,⁶ only a thorough study of archival materials will allow researchers to present a more complete picture of the functioning of Uniate convents in these territories in the early modern period. In our opinion, the most promising for further study are the fonds of castle and land court files, magistrates, and church consistory, which are stored in the National Historical Archives of Belarus in Minsk, the National Historical Archives of Belarus in Hrodna, the Lithuanian State Historical Archives, and the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts. Unfortunately, with the exception of the Lithuanian archival collections, the fonds from the archives of Belarus and Russia are not available to Ukrainian researchers. Therefore,

² ЩЕРБИЦКІЙ, Осип. *Виленскій Свято-Троїцкій монастырь*. Вильна: типографія Губернскаго правленія, 1885.

³ WOŁYNIAK (GIŻYCKI, Jan Marek). *Z przeszłości Zakonu Bazylińskiego na Litwie i Rusi. Przewodnik Naukowy i Literacki. Dodatek miesięczny do „Gazety Lwowskiej”*, 1904, t. 32, p. 65–82, 157–172, 249–268, 353–360, 449–463.

⁴ SENYK, Sophia. *Women's Monasteries in Ukraine and Belorussia to the Period of Suppressions*. Roma: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1983.

⁵ *Акты, издаваемые Виленскою Археографическою комиссией*. Вильна: Типографія А. С. Сыркина, 1878, т. 9; Вильна: Типографія А. С. Сыркина, 1889, т. 16; *Историко-юридические материалы, извлеченные из актов книг губерний Витебской и Могилевской*. Ред. Александр Сазонов. Витебскъ: Типографія губернскаго правленія, 1871, вып. 2; Ред. Дмитрий Довгялло. Витебскъ: Губернская Типо-Литографія, 1901, вып. 29.

⁶ ЧАРНЯЎСКІ, Федор. Заснаванне Менскага Свята-Траецкага жаночага манастыра ў кантэксце фундацыйнай дзейнасці жонкі менскага земскага пісара Марыны Вяжэвіч (1630–1650-я гг.). *Архіварыус. Зборнік навуковых паведамленняў і артыкулаў*, 2022, вып. 20, с. 201–210.

a discovery for us was the collection of documents on the history of the Vilnius convent, which is kept in the Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Lviv.⁷

Given certain limitations in access to archival sources, the purpose of this publication is only to present a general overview of the development of the network of Uniate convents in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from the Union of Brest (1596) to the suppression of monastic communities in the Russian Empire in the first half of the 19th century. We hope that this article will be an impetus for further research on women's monasticism in these lands.

Female Orthodox monasticism on the Ruthenian lands in the Middle Ages

The first Orthodox monasteries in Kyivan Rus' appeared soon after Prince Volodymyr the Great adopted Christianity (988); however, monasticism became deeply rooted during the reign of his son, Prince Yaroslav the Wise (1019–1054). At this time, in particular, the Kyiv-Pechersk Monastery was founded, and female monastic communities also emerged.⁸ Kyiv was one of the main centres of monastic life in Rus'. According to the sources, there were at least four convents in the city during the 11th to 14th centuries: St. Irene, St. Andrew ("Yanchyn"), St. Nicholas, and St. Lazarus.⁹

Female Orthodox monasticism was also widespread in the northern part of Kyivan Rus', specifically in the modern Belarusian lands. According to later written tradition, at the end of the 10th century, Ragneda, the wife of Prince Volodymyr the Great and mother of Prince Iziaslav of Polatsk, took the veil and accepted the name Anastasia.¹⁰ One of the most famous monastic centres in the modern Belarusian lands during the

⁷ ШЕСТАКОВА, Ніна. Колекція архіву історії унії у фонді „Греко-католицька митрополічна консисторія у Львові“ в ЦДІАЛІ України. *Студії з архівної справи та документознавства*, 2001, т. 7, с. 61–65.

⁸ SENYK, Sophia. *A History of the Church in Ukraine*. Roma: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1993, Vol. 1, p. 242–297.

⁹ *Полное собрание русских летописей, изданное по высочайшему повелению Императорскою Археографическою комиссією*. Ред. Алексей Шахматов. С.-Петербург: Типографія М. А. Александрова, 1908, т. 2, стб. 139, 197; БОБРИНЕВА, Светлана. Сведения источников о женских монастырях Киева и Юго-Западной Руси в XI–XIII вв. In: *Четвертий міжнародний конгрес українців (Одеса, 26–29 серпня 1999 р.): Доп. та повідомл. Історія*. Одеса, Київ, Львів, 1999, т. 1, с. 42; БЪЛХОВА, Мария. Монастыри на Руси XI – середины XIV века. In: *Монашество и монастыри в России. XI–XX века: Исторические очерки*. Ред. Нина Синицина. Москва: Наука, 2005, с. 28; КОТЛЯР, Микола. Анна Всеволодівна. In: *Енциклопедія історії України*. Ред. Валерій Смолій і інші. Київ: Наукова думка, 2003, т. 1, с. 90.

¹⁰ ВОЙТОВИЧ, Леонтій. *Княжа доба: портрети еліти*. Біла Церква: Видавець Олександр Пшонківський, 2006, с. 247; ЧАМЯРЫЦКІ, Вячаслаў. Летапісныя рэдакцыі падання пра Рагнеду. In: *Беларусіка=Albaruthenica*. Ред. Адам Мальдзіс і інші. Мінск: Рэд. газ. „Голас Радзімы“, 1998, кн. 9, с. 163–169.

Middle Ages was the convent of the Holy Saviour in Polatsk, founded by St. Euphrosyne of Polatsk around 1127/1128. At the beginning of the 12th century, there was another nunnery in this city, next to St. Sophia Cathedral, where Euphrosyne took her monastic vows.¹¹ Numerous convents also functioned in the northeastern lands of Kyivan Rus'. An important centre of female monasticism was Novgorod.¹²

In sources dated to the second half of the 15th century through the late 16th century, there are only a few references to female monastic communities in the territory of the Kyivan Orthodox Metropolitanate.¹³ However, it is quite obvious that the tradition of monastic life in the lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was not interrupted at that time. The convent of the Holy Saviour in Polatsk, founded by St. Euphrosyne, did not cease functioning. There are also preserved references to the convents in Kyiv, Ovruch, Peresopnytsia, Pinsk, Vitsyebsk, and Mahilyow, as well as in the capital, Vilnius.¹⁴

The beginnings of Uniate female monasticism. Religious houses in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the first half of the 17th century

The first Uniate convents in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, particularly in its Lithuanian part, appeared after 1596, when the majority of the bishops of the Kyivan Orthodox Metropolitanate entered into union with the Roman Catholic Church in Brest. The "cradle" of Uniate monasticism (both male and female) on the territory of the Commonwealth is considered to be the monastic centre in Vilnius. The key figure in these processes was the superioress (hegumena) Vasilissa Sapieha, daughter of the palatine (voivode) of Minsk, Bohdan Sapieha, and his first wife, Princess Maryna Kapusta, a relative of the Grand Chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Lew Sapieha.¹⁵ In 1609, she was first mentioned as the superioress of the Uniate convent of the Holy Trinity in the capital of Lithuania. The beginning of her administration coincided with the years of confrontation in Vilnius between supporters and opponents of the

¹¹ CHOMIK, Piotr. Święta Eufrozyna Połocka i początki monastycyzmu na ziemiach białoruskich. *Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne*, 2010, Nr. 33, p. 5–16; АРЛОЎ, Уладзімер. *Асветніца з роду Усяслава: Ефрасіння Полацкая*. Мінск: Навука і тэхніка, 1989.

¹² ЕМЧЕНКО, Елена. Женские монастыри в России. In: *Монашество и монастыри в России. XI–XX века, Исторические очерки*. Ред. Нина Синицина. Москва: Наука, 2005, с. 248–249.

¹³ Since 1458 it covered only the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; Muscovite Metropolitanate appeared in the modern.

¹⁴ CHOMIK, Piotr. *Życie monastyczne w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w XVI wieku*. Kraków: Avalon, 2013, p. 83, 338, 344–349, 379–384, 389; SENYK, Sophia. *Women's Monasteries in Ukraine and Belorussia to the Period of Suppressions*. Roma: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1983, p. 30–31, 37, 40.

¹⁵ ЩЕРБИЦКИЙ, Осип. *Виленский Свято-Троицкий монастырь*. Вильна: типография Губернского правления, 1885, с. 130.

Union, one of the centres of which was the Holy Trinity Monastery.¹⁶ She supported the metropolitan's vicar and archimandrite Joseph Velamin Rutski, who later became the head of the Uniate Church.¹⁷ The normalisation of the religious situation in Vilnius contributed to the development of the convent. In 1633, Chancellor Lew Sapieha granted the nuns a manor house (folwark) in Daukshyshki (Oszmiany Naruszewiczowskie).¹⁸

Metropolitan Rutski's monastic reforms also concerned female monastic communities. The rules written by this hierarch for Basilian monks were adapted for the needs of nuns, primarily those of the Vilnius convent, and later subsequently to other communities of the Kyivan Uniate Metropolitanate.¹⁹ The reformed centre on Trinity Hill in Vilnius, headed by the Senator's daughter Vasilissa Sapieha, attracted the heiresses of many influential Lithuanian noble families. Catherine Sapieha, Euphrosyne Sapieha, and Marta Korsak took their monastic vows there.²⁰ The reformed Vilnius convent became, without a doubt, one of the main centres for Basilian nuns within the Kyivan Uniate Metropolitanate.

In the second quarter of the 17th century, four Uniate convents were founded within the Lithuanian part of the Kyivan Uniate Metropolitanate. In the late 1620s, a female monastic community was founded next to the church of Sts. Borys and Hlib in Navahrudak.²¹ The first mention of it dates back to 1629. It is mentioned in the document regarding the receipt of funds from the metropolitan's possessions in Navahrudak, which were to be used for the needs of the army that participated in the Polish-Swedish War (1626–1629):

съ 6 избушекъ на предмѣстьи, 1 рѣзника, 1 пекаря, 4 перекупищиковъ и 2 ремесленниковъ: съ однихъ, за обращеніемъ тѣхъ мѣстъ, гдѣ они

¹⁶ *Kultūrų kryžkelė: Vilniaus Švč. Trejybės šventovė ir vienuolynas. Kolektyvinė monografija*. Moksliniai redaktoriai: Alfredas Bumblauskas, Salvijus Kulevičius, Ihoris Skočiliasas. Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2017, p. 69–73.

¹⁷ ТАТАРЕНКО, Лорен. Жалоба игуменьи Василисы Сапежанки перед судом Виленской Магдебургии в марте 1609 года: несколько замечаний по истории женского монашества восточного обряда в первые годы Брестской Унии. In: *Między Rzymem a Nowosybirskiem. Księga Jubileuszowa dedykowana Ks. Marianowi Radwanowi SCJ*. Red. Irena Wodzianowska i Hubert Łaskiewicz. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2012, p. 689–700.

¹⁸ Центральний державний історичний архів України, м. Львів (*Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Lviv*, hereafter – ЦДІАЛ), ф. 201, оп. 46, спр. 429, арк. 35–35 зв.

¹⁹ ДУХ, Олег. Превелебні панни: Жіночі чернечі спільноти Львівської та Перемишльської єпархій у ранньому дерний період. Львів: Видавництво УКУ, 2017, с. 130–132.

²⁰ SENYK, Sophia. *Women's Monasteries in Ukraine and Belorussia to the Period of Suppressions*. Roma: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1983, p. 129.

²¹ At the beginning of the 16th century, the church was built with the support of Prince Kostiantyn Ostrozky (Konstantinas Ostrogiškis) and Metropolitan Joseph Soltan (КУШНЯРЭВІЧ, Аляксандр. Новагародская Барысаглебская царква, In: *Вялікае княства Літоўскае: Энцыклапедыя*. Ред. Генадзь Пашкоў і інш. Мінск: Беларуская Энцыклапедыя, 2005, т. 2, с. 359).

*проживали, на женскій монастырь, а съ другихъ – за взятіемъ въ военную службу, – ничего не взято.*²²

There is an assumption that the female monastic centre was founded by the sub-chamberlain of Navahrudak, Adam Chreptowicz, who was also the founder of a men's monastery in this city.²³ Metropolitan Rutski played an important role in the foundation, granting the nuns a plot of land next to the church of St. Borys and Hlib.²⁴ Thanks to his efforts, the foundation was approved in 1635 by the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.²⁵

In the mid-1630s, the Holy Trinity convent was founded in Minsk. It was the first of two Uniate female communities in the city. Its foundress was Maryna Wiażewicz née Jacynicz, the wife of the clerk of the land court of Minsk, Mikołaj Wiażewicz. We know that the couple had two sons: Piotr Kazimierz and Jerzy. The elder of them received a good education and joined the court of Prince Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł. The pinnacle of his career was the office of palatine (voivode) of Navahrudak from 1653 to 1658. The younger son, Jerzy, dedicated his life to military affairs and died in 1628 near Riga during the Polish-Swedish War. Maryna's husband died in the first half of 1633. Probably, the deaths of her son and husband were the reason for the noblewoman to found the Holy Trinity convent in Minsk.²⁶

On October 21, 1635, Maryna Wiażewicz received permission from Metropolitan Rutski to transfer several plots of land to the suburban Holy Trinity church in Minsk, where a convent was soon to be established.²⁷ In June 1636, the noblewoman sent a letter to the participants of the General Chapter of the Basilian Order, which took place in Vilnius, requesting the appointment of a chaplain for the “dopiero nowo” (“just recently”) founded convent, and received consent.²⁸ On September 5, 1636, the foundation was approved by King Władysław IV, who exempted the monastic community

²² *Описание документовъ архива западнорусскихъ униатскихъ митрополитовъ.* С.-Петербургъ: Синодальная типографія, 1897, т. 1, с. 211.

²³ ТРУСКОВСКИЙ, Николай. *Историко-статистическое описание Минской епархіи.* Санктпетербургъ: Типографія духовнаго журнала „Странникъ“, 1864, с. 128; RYŻEWSKI, Grzegoż. *Sztabin: dzieje obszaru gminy Sztabin od czasów najdawniejszych do współczesności.* Białystok, Sztabin: Zakład Poligraficzny Offset Print, 2002, p. 76–77.

²⁴ *Описание документовъ архива западнорусскихъ униатскихъ митрополитовъ.* С.-Петербургъ: Синодальная типографія, 1907, т. 2, с. 183.

²⁵ *Documenta Pontificum Romanorum Historiam Ucrainae Illustrantia (1075–1953).* Ed. P. Athanasius Welykyj, OSBM. Romae: PP. Basiliani, 1953, Vol. 1, p. 499–500.

²⁶ ЧАРНЯЎСКИ, Федор. Заснаванне Менскага Свята-Траецкага жаночага манастыра ў кантэксце фундацыйнай дзейнасці жонкі менскага земскага пісара Марыны Вяжэвіч (1630–1650-я гг.). *Архіварыус. Зборнік навуковых наведамленняў і артыкулаў*, 2022, вып. 20, с. 201–203.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, с. 203.

²⁸ *Археографическій сборникъ документовъ, относящихся къ исторіи Сѣверо-Западной Руси.* Вильна: Типографія А. С. Сыркина, 1900, т. 12, с. 40–41.

from the jurisdiction of secular courts.²⁹ Soon after, the foundress contributed funds for the construction of the convent buildings, and in 1645, she transferred the estate in Hrynevychi, along with the manor houses (folwarks) in Chornoruchchia and Derevyna, to the convent, which she had acquired from the descendants of Maryna Mamonicz,³⁰ the daughter of the famous Vilnius book publisher Łukasz Mamonicz. The first Minsk superioresses were relatives of the foundress or previous owners of the estate: Olympiada Mamonicz (1637–1640), Euphrosyne Jacynicz (1641–1643), and Marianna Wicka (1645–1688).³¹

The other two religious houses were founded on the initiative of the metropolitans of Kyiv and with the participation of the nuns from the Vilnius convent. In 1635, according to the will of Metropolitan Rutski, four nuns, led by superioress Justina Syrucivna, arrived in Hrodna from Vilnius and settled in one of the buildings next to the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.³² In October 1642, Metropolitan Anthony Selyava visited Hrodna and determined that the convent was located “in a very cramped” area, and ordered that the Basilian nuns be given the uninhabited plot of land to the west of the church, in the direction of “the royal castle”. Metropolitan Selyava’s decision was approbated by King Władysław IV in 1646.³³

In the late 1640s, on the initiative of this hierarchy, another convent was founded in Minsk, next to the Church of the Holy Spirit, which had been under the care of the Basilian monks. The foundress of this religious house was Susanna Wilczek, the wife of Jan Anzelm Wilczek, the castellan of Trakai, and the daughter of Alexander Korwin Gosiewski, the former palatine (voivode) of Smolensk and Lithuanian Field Quartermaster. On November 6, 1649, Metropolitan Selyava granted permission to found a convent next to the Church of the Holy Spirit and to transfer several nuns from Vilnius, led by superioress Catherine (Eudoxia) Sapieha. In 1651, the foundress gave the nuns a plot of land in Minsk, which she had purchased from the burgomaster of Minsk, Philip Zembrytsky. In the same year, the convent also became the owner of a plot of land purchased from the Minsk burghers Jadwiga Polovynchyna and her daughter Regina Rożkowska. On March 4, 1652, these grants were confirmed by King John II

²⁹ *Беларускі архіў*. Ред. Зьміцер Даўгяла. Менск: Выданьне Беларускае акадэміі навук, 1931, т. 3, вып. 1, с. 162–163.

³⁰ Her first husband was the former estate owner, Jarosz Vovchok, and her second husband was Krzysztof Wicky.

³¹ ЧАРНЯЎСКИ, Федор. Заснаванне Менскага Свята-Траецкага жаночага манастыра ў кантэксце фундацыйнай дзейнасці жонкі менскага земскага пісара Марыны Вяжэвіч (1630–1650-я гг.). *Архіварыус. Зборнік навуковых паведамленняў і артыкулаў*, 2022, вып. 20, с. 204.

³² WOŁYNIAK (GIŻYCKI, Jan Marek). Z przeszłości Zakonu Bazylińskiego na Litwie i Rusi. *Przewodnik Naukowy i Literacki. Dodatek miesięczny do „Gazety Lwowskiej“*, 1904, t. 32, p. 67–68; ГАРДЗЕЕЎ, Юры. Магдэбургская Гародня. Гародня, Вроцлав: Wrocławskа Drukarnia Naukowa PAN im. S. Kulczyńskiego, 2008, с. 77.

³³ WOŁYNIAK (GIŻYCKI, Jan Marek). Z przeszłości Zakonu Bazylińskiego na Litwie i Rusi. *Przewodnik Naukowy i Literacki. Dodatek miesięczny do „Gazety Lwowskiej“*, 1904, t. 32, p. 68.

Casimir.³⁴ The document states that the request for royal approbation was made by Kazimierz Leon Sapieha, the Vice-Chancellor of Lithuania and son of Lew Sapieha.³⁵ As noted earlier, the first superioress of this convent was Catherine Sapieha, the former hegumena of the Vilnius Trinity convent, niece of Vasilissa Sapieha and daughter of her brother, Paweł Stefan Sapieha, the Vice-Chancellor of Lithuania. She led the convent until her death in 1676.³⁶

In the first half of the 17th century, the first Uniate convent in the archeparchy of Polatsk was founded next to St. Sophia Cathedral in Polatsk. We do not have precise data on the beginnings of the religious house. Uniate Bishop of Chełm Jacob Susza, in his hagiographic work “Cursus vitae et certamen martyrii B. Josaphat Kuncevicii”, stated that this convent was founded on the initiative of Archbishop of Polatsk Josaphat Kuncewicz: “Virginum monasterium Polociae pauperrimum, propriis adiectis reformavit et dotavit sumptibus”. According to the same author, during this time, the number of nuns in the community increased from 12 to 23 over six years.³⁷ Jacob Susza also mentioned Agata Rusowska, a nun of this convent, who recovered thanks to her prayers to this hierarch shortly after his martyrdom.³⁸ However, the first documented mention of the community dates back to 1626, when a Polatsk burgher, Yakiv Fedorovych Khodyka, in his will ordered to give “the castle nuns” a measure of rye and a kopa of money.³⁹ In 1637, Jan Pniewski, a court summons clerk (woźny) of the Polatsk voivodeship, issued a statement declaring that he introduced Superioress Anastasia Aleksandra Wołkowna and the nuns to the ownership of the convent next to St. Sophia Cathedral at the Polatsk castle.⁴⁰ In the middle of the 17th century, Metropolitan Selyava’s niece, nun Teresa Dubieniecka, was living in this convent, and the hierarch mentioned her in his will.⁴¹

Sources reveal a single case of an Orthodox monastic community joining the Union. Probably in the 1610s, a convent in Pinsk, located in the southern part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, became Uniate. This occurred during the years of the rule

³⁴ *Беларускі архіў*. Ред. Зьміцер Даўтяла. Менск: Выданьне Беларускае акадэміі навук, 1931, т. 3, вып. 1, с. 170–171.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, с. 171.

³⁶ WOŁYNIAK (GIŻYCKI, Jan Marek). Z przeszłości Zakonu Bazylikańskiego na Litwie i Rusi. *Przewodnik Naukowy i Literacki. Dodatek miesięczny do „Gazety Lwowskiej”*, 1904, т. 32, p. 71–72.

³⁷ SUSZA, Jacobus. *Cursus vitae et certamen martyrii B. Iosaphat Kuncevicii, Archiepiscopi Polocen., Episcopi Vitepscen. et Miscislavien., Ord. D. Basilij Magni. Romae*, 1655, p. 53.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

³⁹ *Акты, издаваемые Виленскою Археографическою комиссією*. Вільна: Типографія А. С. Сыркина, 1878, т. 9, с. 469.

⁴⁰ *Историко-юридические материалы, извлеченные из актовых книг губерний Витебской и Могилевской*. Ред. Дмитрий Довгялло. Витебскъ: Губернская Типо-Литографія, 1901, вып. 29, с. 16–21.

⁴¹ *Историко-юридические материалы, извлеченные из актовых книг губерний Витебской и Могилевской*. Ред. Александр Сазонов. Витебскъ: Типографія губернскаго правленія, 1871, вып. 2, с. 265.

of Superioress Euphrosyne (Helena) Tryzna, daughter of Hrehory Tryzna, marshal of the Slonim district, and Regina, née Sapieha, sister of the aforementioned Vasilissa Sapieha. After the death of hegumena Lyudmila Wojna, she became the superioress of the convent in 1617. In 1633, she received a privilege from King Władysław IV, in which the monarch confirmed her election as hegumena and allowed the community to freely elect her successor after her death, provided that the convent remained in Union.⁴²

Thus, by the middle of the 17th century, there were seven Uniate convents within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Most of them were founded as Uniate religious houses, with the exception of the Pinsk convent, which was Orthodox and joined the Union. The peculiarity of the organisation of Uniate female monasticism was that women's communities, unlike men's monasteries, were not united into a single order, and were subsequently subordinated only to the local bishop.

Uniate female monasticism in the second half of the 17th and 18th centuries

The second half of the 17th century in the history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a time of almost incessant wars and internal conflicts that did not spare the territory of the Kyivan Uniate Metropolitanate. Those were Khmelnytsky Uprising, the Swedish Deluge, and the Muscovite-Polish war. The military actions had a negative impact not only on the political, social, and economic life of the country but also on the development of religious communities, including monastic ones. Nuns from the area of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were forced to abandon their convents, fleeing the offensive of Muscovite troops. In 1655, after the capture of Hrodna by Muscovite and Cossack troops, the local Basilian convent and its church burnt down.⁴³ The nuns from Vilnius were also unfortunate. In August 1655, on the eve of the capture of Vilnius by the troops of Tsar Alexey Mikhaylovich, the nuns decided to leave the city. Fleeing, they took their most valuable belongings, including "a considerable chest, covered in iron" with various documents for the Vilnius convent, as well as their manor house in Oszmiany Naruszewiczowskie. However, the boat in which the sisters were travelling was fired upon by one of the Muscovite detachments, causing the chest with the privileges

⁴² Нацыянальны гістарычны архіў Беларусі (*National Historical Archives of Belarus*), ф. 1323, воп. 1, спр. 4, арк. 1–3 адв.

⁴³ СЛІЖ, Наталля. 3 гісторыі Прысценскай царквы ў Гародні. XVI–XVIII ст. In: *Гродзенскі палімпсест XII–XX ст. ст. Матэрыялы міжнароднай навуковай канферэнцыі (Гродна, 7 лістапада 2008 г.)*. Ред. Аляксандра Смаленчук і Наталля Сліж. Гродна, Беласток: ІГДБ (ЕГУ), 2008, с. 82.

to sink in the Neris River.⁴⁴ Little is known about the fate of the community during this occupation. Some of the nuns found refuge in the Duchy of Prussia.⁴⁵

The favourable circumstances for the Uniate Church and its monasticism took place only in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. At that time, two convents appeared in the eastern lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, within the archeparchy of Polatsk. The first mention of the convent in Orsha dates back to 1671.⁴⁶ In 1697, with the permission of the Archbishop of Polatsk, Markian Bilozor, and the will of clerk of the land court of Vitsyebsk, Prince Theodor Łukomski, a convent was founded next to the Church of the Holy Spirit in Vitsyebsk.⁴⁷ At the same time, three eparchies of the Kyivan Orthodox Metropolitanate, which existed within the Crown of Poland, joined the Union: Przemyśl (1691), L'viv (1700) and Lutsk (1702). Along with bishops, numerous monastic communities located in those lands also joined the Union. As a result, there was an increase in the number of convents of the Kyivan Uniate Metropolitanate.⁴⁸

However, during the 1730s to 1760s, there was a process of gradual dissolution of small religious houses in those areas. The implementation of the decisions of the Synod of Zamość (1720) was one of the main reasons for this. "If there are smaller convents in the eparchies that don't have a foundation, then they should be closed, and the nuns themselves with all their property and money should be transferred to larger convents."⁴⁹ In the post-Zamość period, the Uniate hierarchs paid special attention to the nuns' compliance with the synod's decisions regarding enclosure. Ignoring these norms, combined with the poor financial situation of the convents, often led to their suppression. For example, during the 1750s and 1760s, at least seven female monastic communities in the eparchy of L'viv ceased to function at the initiative of the local bishop's court.⁵⁰ At the same time, there is no evidence of the dissolution of convents

⁴⁴ ЦДІАЛ, ф. 201, оп. 46, спр. 429, арк. 16–16 зв.

⁴⁵ AUGUSIEWICZ, Sławomir. Spis uchodźców z Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w Prusach Książęcych w latach 1655–1656 w zbiorach Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz w Berlinie. *Komunikaty Mazursko-Warmińskie*. 2011, t. 1 (271), p. 108, 114, 125, 126, 151, 152, 166.

⁴⁶ *Epistolae Metropolitae Kiovensium Catholicorum Raphaelis Korsak, Antonii Sielava, Gabreelis Kolenda (1637–1674)*. Ed. P. Athanasius G. Welykyj, OSBM. Romae: PP. Basiliani, 1956, p. 321.

⁴⁷ *Витебская старина*. Ред. Алексей Сапунов. Витебскъ, 1883, т. 1, с. 175; ЦЬОРОХ, Саломія. *Погляд на історію та виховну діяльність СС. Василянко*. Львів, 1934, с. 59; WOŁYŃIAK (GIŻYCKI, Jan Marek). Z przeszłości Zakonu Bazylińskiego na Litwie i Rusi. *Przewodnik Naukowy i Literacki. Dodatek miesięczny do „Gazety Lwowskiej”*, 1904, t. 32, p. 165.

⁴⁸ ДУХ, Олег. *Превелебні панни: Жіночі чернечі спільноти Львівської та Перемишльської єпархій у ранньому дерний період*. Львів: Видавництво УКУ, 2017, с. 75.

⁴⁹ *Synodus provincialis ruthenorum habita in civitate Zamosciae Anno MDCCXX Sanctissimo Domino Nostro Benedicto P. P. XIII dicata*. Romae, 1724, p. 111; *Замойський провінційний собор Руської Унійної Церкви 1720 року*. Упоряд. Ростислав Паранько, Ігор Скочилиас, Ірина Скочилиас. Львів: Український католицький університет, 2021, кн. 1: *Діяння та постанови*, p. 294.

⁵⁰ ДУХ, Олег. *Превелебні панни: Жіночі чернечі спільноти Львівської та Перемишльської єпархій у ранньому дерний період*. Львів: Видавництво УКУ, 2017, с. 76–79.

in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In our opinion, this is due to the better material support of these communities.

Dissolution of convents under the rule of the Romanovs

The second (1793) and third (1795) partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which resulted in significant territories of the Kyivan Uniate Metropolitanate becoming part of the Russian Empire, had a considerable impact on the situation of convents in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In 1793, the following Uniate female communities existed on the territories occupied by Russia: Hrodna, Yasnohorod, Minsk (Holy Spirit), Minsk (Holy Trinity), Rzhok, Navahrudak, Nemyriv, Vilnius, Vinnytsia (Metropolitanate Archeparchy of Kyiv), Vitsyebsk, Polatsk, Orsha (Archeparchy of Polatsk), Pinsk (Eparchy of Turav-Pinsk), Volodymyr (Eparchy of Volodymyr-Brest), Dubno, and Korets' (Eparchy of Lutsk).⁵¹ The number of convents may have been somewhat higher, but the current state of the source base does not yet allow for this to be presented.

By the middle of the 19th century, all of them had ceased to exist as Uniate convents, either being converted to Orthodoxy or suppressed. There are two stages in the dissolution of the Uniate convents within the Russian Empire. The first attempt to suppress them or convert them to Orthodoxy occurred in 1795 or shortly thereafter. The second stage was closely connected with the processes of liquidation of the Uniate Church in the Russian Empire in the 1830s and 1840s.⁵²

The first wave of dissolution of Uniate male and female communities primarily occurred outside the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, in the Volhynia and Podolia governorates, at the end of the 18th century, shortly after these lands were annexed to the Russian Empire. In that time, the nunnery in Korets' (eparchy of Lutsk) was suppressed and became Orthodox.⁵³ In 1795–1796, three convents on Podolia (Vinnytsia, Rzhok, and Nemyriv) were also converted to Orthodoxy.⁵⁴ In contrast, only one religious community ceased to exist on the lands of former Lithuania: in 1795, the Russian local authorities closed one of the two Uniate religious houses in Minsk, the

⁵¹ SENYK, Sophia. *Women's Monasteries in Ukraine and Belorussia to the Period of Suppressions*. Roma: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1983, p. 11–49.

⁵² ЛОСЬ, Валентина. Репресивна політика царської Росії щодо Унійної Церкви на Правобережній Україні (кінець XVIII – перша половина XIX ст.). *Ковчег. Науковий збірник з церковної історії*, 2012, № 6, с. 60, 63.

⁵³ БІЛИК, Вікторія. Урегулювання правового становища василіанських монастирів у Правобережній Україні наприкінці XVIII – у 30-х рр. XIX ст. *Науковий вісник Волинського національного університету імені Лесі Українки*, 2011, № 23, с. 39.

⁵⁴ WOŁYNIAK (GIŻYCKI, Jan Marek). Z przeszłości Zakonu Bazylińskiego na Litwie i Rusi. *Przewodnik Naukowy i Literacki. Dodatek miesięczny do „Gazety Lwowskiej”*, 1904, t. 32, p. 77, 160, 164.

Holy Spirit, for practical reasons. The nuns were relocated to the Holy Trinity convent, which was situated in the same city.⁵⁵

After these events, according to the report of the Roman Catholic Ecclesiastical College of January 12, 1805, there were twelve Basilian nuns' communities within the three newly created Uniate eparchies within the borders of the Russian Empire: Vitsyebsk, Polatsk, Orsha (Eparchy of Polatsk), Volodymyr, Dubno / Pidbirtsi, Polonne, Yasnohorod (Eparchy of Lutsk), Vilnius, Navahrudak, Minsk, Pinsk, and Hrodna (Eparchy of Brest).⁵⁶ Obviously, shortly after that, a small religious house in Yasnohorod, near Chudniv (Ukraine), ceased to exist, and is not mentioned in the sources.

The final dissolution of the Basilian sisters' convents took place in the 1830s and 1840s during the suppression of the Uniate Church in these areas. As a result of these processes, Uniate female monastic communities in the Russian Empire ceased to exist altogether. One of the first to close was the convent in Volodymyr. After a fire in 1833, the nuns were relocated to Polonne, and the nunnery itself was closed.⁵⁷ Apparently, the religious community in Dubno ceased to exist at the same time.⁵⁸ In 1834, the convent in Navahrudak was suppressed, and the nuns were relocated to the former Basilian monastery in Volna, where they resided for a period.⁵⁹ In the same year, the Holy Trinity convent in Minsk was dissolved, its buildings repurposed for the city hospital, and the nuns were relocated to a temporary centre at the former monastery of the Discalced Carmelites in Myadzyel.⁶⁰ After the Synod of Polatsk (1839), which decided the dissolution of the Uniate Church in Russian Empire, the last Uniate convents on modern Belarusian and Lithuanian lands ceased to exist: in Vitsyebsk (1839), Orsha (1839), Polatsk (1839), Vilnius (1839), Pinsk (1841), and Hrodna (1843).⁶¹ The only active Uniate (Greek-Catholic) convents remained in Galicia, within the Austrian monarchy.

⁵⁵ ТРУСКОВСКИЙ, Николай. *Историко-статистическое описание Минской епархии*. Санктпетербургъ: Типографія духовнаго журнала „Странникъ“, 1864, с. 98.

⁵⁶ RADWAN, Marian. *Carat wobec Kościoła greckokatolickiego w zaborze rosyjskim 1796–1839*. Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 2004, p. 84–97; Акты, издаваемые Виленскою Археогрaфическою комиссією. Вильна: Типографія А. С. Сыркина, 1889, т. 16, с. 74.

⁵⁷ WOŁYNIAK (GIŻYCKI, Jan Marek). Z przeszłości Zakonu Bazylińskiego na Litwie i Rusi. *Przewodnik Naukowy i Literacki. Dodatek miesięczny do „Gazety Lwowskiej“*, 1904, t. 32, p. 166.

⁵⁸ БЛИК, Вікторія. Урегулювання правового становища василіанських монастирів у Правобережній Україні наприкінці XVIII – у 30-х рр. XIX ст. *Науковий вісник Волинського національного університету імені Лесі Українки*, 2011, Nr. 23, с. 42.

⁵⁹ RADWAN, Marian. *Carat wobec Kościoła greckokatolickiego w zaborze rosyjskim 1796–1839*. Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 2004, p. 140; Wołyniak (Giżycki, Jan Marek). Z przeszłości Zakonu Bazylińskiego na Litwie i Rusi. *Przewodnik Naukowy i Literacki. Dodatek miesięczny do „Gazety Lwowskiej“*, 1904, t. 32, p. 166–167.

⁶⁰ ТРУСКОВСКИЙ, Николай. *Историко-статистическое описание Минской епархии*. Санктпетербургъ: Типографія духовнаго журнала „Странникъ“, 1864, с. 98–99; WOŁYNIAK (GIŻYCKI, Jan Marek). Z przeszłości Zakonu Bazylińskiego na Litwie i Rusi. *Przewodnik Naukowy i Literacki. Dodatek miesięczny do „Gazety Lwowskiej“*, 1904, t. 32, p. 73–77.

⁶¹ WOŁYNIAK (GIŻYCKI, Jan Marek). Z przeszłości Zakonu Bazylińskiego na Litwie i Rusi. *Przewodnik Naukowy i Literacki. Dodatek miesięczny do „Gazety Lwowskiej“*, 1904, t. 32, p. 68, 80, 158, 163, 165–166.

Conclusions

To summarise, the first convents of the Kyivan Uniate Metropolitanate appeared shortly after the Union of Brest. The “cradle” of Uniate monasticism (both male and female) was the religious house in Vilnius. In 1609, the superioress of this local community of the “venerable ladies” who recognised the authority of the Roman Pope was Vasilissa Sapieha, a relative of the influential magnate Lew Sapieha. By the middle of the 17th century, six more Uniate convents had appeared on the modern Belarusian lands, all in large cities, the centres of the palatinates or districts of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Most often, church hierarchs (Kyiv metropolitans or local bishops) initiated their founding. Unlike men’s monasteries, female communities were not united into a single order but remained subordinate to the local bishop, which was a continuation of the ancient tradition of monastic life.

The second half of the 17th century, with its almost continuous wars and internal conflicts, had a negative impact not only on the political, social, and economic life of the Commonwealth but also on the development of religious communities, including monastic ones. The events of the Muscovite-Polish War (1654–1667) had the most negative impact on the life of Uniate convents. Many nuns from Lithuania were forced to abandon their convents, fleeing the offensive of Muscovite troops. Favourable circumstances for the Uniate Church and its monasticism came only in the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

After the second and third partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Russian authorities began suppressing female Uniate communities. By the middle of the 19th century, all Uniate convents within the borders of the Russian Empire also ceased to exist. Two stages of their dissolution can be distinguished. The first attempt to suppress them or convert them to Orthodoxy occurred in 1795 or shortly thereafter. At that time, most religious houses on the modern Ukrainian lands were suppressed. The second stage was closely connected with the processes of liquidation of the Uniate Church in the Russian Empire in the 1830s and 1840s and covered primarily the territory of modern Belarus and Lithuania. At that time, all convents that had existed before were suppressed.

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Unitų vienuolynai Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje ankstyvaisiais naujaisiais laikais

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Santrauka

Ankstyvaisiais naujaisiais laikais Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės teritorijoje egzistavo daugybė vienuolių ordinų, kurie po Liublino unijos tapo neatsiejama Abiejų Tautų Respublikos dalimi. Tačiau istoriografija apie Kyjivo unitų metropolijos moterų vienuolynus dabartinėse Lietuvos ir Baltarusijos teritorijose yra gana ribota.

Vyrų ir moterų unitų vienuolynų religinis centras buvo Vilniuje. Iki XVII a. vidurio dabartinės Baltarusijos teritorijoje įsikūrė dar šeši unitų vienuolynai, visi dideliuose miestuose: Gardine, Minske (Šv. Trejybės ir Šventosios Dvasios), Naugarduke, Polocke ir Pinske. Skirtingai nei vyrų vienuolynai, moterų unitų vienuolynai nebuvo sujungti į vieną ordiną ir liko pavaldūs vietos vyskupui – tai buvo senos vienuolynų tradicijos tęsia.

XVII a. antroje pusėje nenutrūkstantys karai ir vidaus konfliktai Abiejų Tautų Respublikoje (Chmelnickio sukilimas, ATR–Švedijos karas ir ATR–Maskvos karas) neigiamai paveikė ne tik ATR politinį, socialinį ir ekonominį gyvenimą, bet ir religinių bendruomenių, tarp jų ir vienuolynų, raidą. Palankios sąlygos Unitų Bažnyčiai ir jos vienuolynams susiklostė tik nuo XVII a. pabaigos.

Po antrojo ir trečiojo Abiejų Tautų Respublikos padalijimo Rusijos imperijos valdžia pradėjo slopinti moterų unitų vienuolynus. Iki XIX a. vidurio visi unitų vienuolynai Rusijos imperijos ribose nustojo veikti. Pirmieji bandymai pavesti juos ortodoksams įvyko 1795 m. arba netrukus po to. Antrasis etapas buvo glaudžiai susijęs su Unitų Bažnyčios likvidavimu Rusijos imperijoje ketvirtajame ir penktajame XIX a. dešimtmečiuose ir pirmiausia apėmė dabartinę Lietuvos ir Baltarusijos teritoriją.

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