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TRANSFORMATION OF THE MONASTIC COMPLEX "TSERKOVSHCHYNA" IN INDEPENDENT UKRAINE

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The article examines the organizational and structural development of the monastic complex "Tserkovshchyna" in independent Ukraine. Attention is drawn to the necessity that emerged during historical development for active interaction between monasteries and secular structures in the settlements where they were located. It was found that monastic complexes became active participants in socio-economic and socio-cultural relations, as Orthodox clergy did not limit themselves to spiritual practices. This approach helped monasteries meet their social needs. It was determined that the main idea behind the creation of monastic institutions required monks to fully renounce worldly matters, typical for laypeople, while deeply studying all aspects of Christianity and engaging in personal communication with the supernatural through constant prayer reading. It is proven that the monastic complex "Tserkovshchyna", as a social institution, cannot exist in isolation from the surrounding world, leading Orthodox monasticism to a new stage in its development. This allowed it to maintain control not only over spiritual and cultural matters but also over the socio-political paradigm of its time. Normative and legal acts of state and local authorities that determined the direction of cooperation between modern monastic communities and state institutions are analyzed. It is established that the structuring of state and local bodies responsible for the development of religious policy in Ukraine has taken insufficient measures to regulate church-state relations in the field of preserving monastic building ensembles recognized as cultural monuments. It is concluded that spiritual needs, in accordance with existential challenges of today, actualize existential problems and lead to the rapid adaptation of Orthodox institutions to objective realities based on ecclesiology, rethinking, and often a new interpretation of the main issues of ritual practices, which monasteries serve as the bearers.

Key words: *philosophy of religion, church, Orthodoxy, religious cult, identity, social uncertainty, everyday life, social values, social risks, human trials.*

ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЯ МОНАСТИРСЬКОГО ЧЕРНЕЧОГО КОМПЛЕКСУ "ЦЕРКОВЩИНА" В НЕЗАЛЕЖНІЙ УКРАЇНІ

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У статті досліджується організаційно-структурна розбудова монастирського чернечого комплексу "Церковщина" у незалежній Україні. Звернута увагу, що в процесі історичного

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розвитку сформувалась необхідність активної взаємодії монастирів зі світськими структурами тих населених пунктів, де вони розташовувались. Встановлено, що монастирські чернечі комплекси ставали активними учасниками соціально-економічних та соціально культурних відносин, оскільки православне священство не обмежувалось лише духовними практиками. Такий підхід допомагав монастирям задовольняти власні соціальні потреби. З'ясовано, що головна ідея виникнення чернечих обителей вимагала від монахів повного зречення від світського, що властиве мирянам, досконалого вивчення всіх аспектів християнства та особистого спілкування з надприродним через постійне читання молитов. Доведено, що монастирський чернечий комплекс "Церковщина" як суспільна інституція, не може існувати в ізоляції від навколишнього світу, що зумовило вихід православного чернецтва на новий щабель свого розвитку. Це дозволило йому зберігати контроль не лише над духовно-культурною, але й суспільно-політичною парадигмою свого часу. Проаналізовано нормативно-правові акти державних і місцевих органів влади, які визначали напрям співпраці сучасних монастирських громад з державними інституціями. З'ясовано, що структуризація державних і місцевих органів, які відповідають за розвиток релігійної політики в Україні, вжили не достатніх заходів для врегулювання церковно-державних відносин у галузі охорони ансамблів монастирських споруд, визнаних пам'ятками культури. Встановлено, що духовні потреби, відповідно з екзистенційними викликами сьогодення, актуалізують екзистенційні проблеми та зумовлюють швидке пристосування православних інституцій до об'єктивних реалій на засадах еклезіології, переосмислення, а нерідко й нового тлумачення основних питань ритуальної практики носіями якої є монастирі.

Ключові слова: філософія релігії, церква, православ'я, релігійний культ, ідентичність, соціальна невизначеність, повсякденність, соціальні цінності, соціальні ризики, випробування людини.

Formulation of the problem. Socio-cultural transformations in post-Soviet Ukraine signal the emergence of new features and elements in institutional structures and systems of social relations. The monastic complex, as a systematic collection of organizationally structured church and religious institutions, is one of the first to react to such processes. As a result, new religious institutions appear, the institutional structure changes, and there are conflicts and inter-denominational disputes. All of this testifies, on the one hand, to the social presence and functionality of religion, and on the other, to active institutional transformations caused by endogenous and exogenous determinants. Thus, understanding the religious-church complex as a complex social phenomenon in the context of institutional changes during periods of socio-political transformations, when some institutions lose influence, others change and adapt, and still others emerge, is now of particular relevance.

The struggle between opposing projects for the renewal of Orthodoxy in Ukraine creates grounds for the ambivalence of regional identity, which manifests to some extent beyond Orthodoxy in other religious

organizations. Considering the regional features of religious processes is important for understanding the specifics of modern institutional transformations of the religious-church complex in Ukraine, studying the development dynamics of certain denominations or churches, or determining lines of transformational shifts in the denominational sphere. From this perspective, the complex dynamics of modern religious development bring the study of problems related to the history and prospects of functioning of the regional socio-religious space into sharp focus. In the 20th century, beginning with the first Sovietization of the region, the religious and church complex of the Kyiv region underwent irreversible institutional transformations due to a range of factors (World War II, anti-religious campaigns, the "return" of religion to public life, the identity crisis in Orthodoxy, the influence of postmodern philosophy, and others). These transformations led to numerous problems in the functioning of religious institutions. Therefore, the practical task of maintaining the necessary level of stability in social-religious relations, tolerance, and pluralism, which would ensure the harmonization of social coexistence processes and eliminate the

threat of conflict situations in the religious sphere, has become increasingly relevant.

The purpose of the article is to study the transformation and development of the monastic complex "Tserkovshchyna" in independent Ukraine.

Discussion and results. The monastic complex "Tserkovshchyna" has its own stable identity and develops according to immanent laws. Initially, it was a part of the Hnylets Monastery, but after its desolation, it was transformed into a church memorial to Theodosius of Pechersk and a "visualization" of the ascetic cave life depicted in the "Kievo-Pechersk Paterikon". The memorialization of the Hnylets caves initially took the form of popularizing the monument in church narratives and organizing visits to the sacred site. Later, the underground structure was supplemented, and in the early 21st century, it was turned into a museum [1: 180–181]. All stages of the memorialization of the monument had specific features compared to other similar centers in Ukraine. In particular, at the turn of the 20th to the 21st century, the museification of the Hnylets caves took place within a dialogical discourse between the public and the Orthodox clergy.

In 1988, the Soviet government announced a radical change in its policy regarding relations between the state and religious denominations, allowing for the celebration of the "1,000th Anniversary of the Baptism of Rus". Following this, a mass revival of abandoned church buildings began in the country. That same year, a decision was made to construct a high-rise building in the Kyiv Zvirynets district. However, local residents formed an informal organization called "Zvirynets Hill" and appealed to the city council with a letter of protest against the construction, reminding them of the existence of ancient caves beneath the Zvirynets slopes. As early as 1969, the Zvirynets and Kytaiv caves had been designated as archaeological monuments according to a resolution by the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR, and in 1973, the Kyiv City Council announced the establishment of archaeological zones in the city, including Zvirynets Hill and the Kytaiv settlement. After considering

the appeal from "Zvirynets Hill", signed by several dozen Kyiv residents, the Kyiv City Council decided in December 1988 to transfer the Zvirynets caves to the Kyiv History Museum for the purpose of museification. In 1989, the museum signed an agreement with the Institute of Geology of the National Academy of USSR to conduct research on the Zvirynets caves to justify measures for their exploitation and preservation. The museum developed a comprehensive program to create the Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve "Zvirynets Caves". It was planned that the exploration of the Zvirynets caves would initiate the formation of a larger Historical and Cultural Reserve "Underground Kyiv", which would include the Kytaiv and Hnylets caves, as well as other underground monuments in Kyiv. In 1990, a specialized department called "Kyiv Underground" was established within the museum, which launched systematic architectural and archaeological research in the Kyiv caves. In particular, staff from this department worked in the Zvirynets caves for three archaeological seasons (1990-1993) [2: 34–36].

At the beginning of 1991, at the initiative of S. Lipavsky, changes occurred in the organizational formation of the monastic complex "Tserkovshchyna", which established a local history club aimed at preserving the religious monument. On February 12, 1991, club members raised awareness about the condition of the Hnylets caves in the media. In particular, the newspaper "Vechirniy Kyiv" published an article dedicated to the monument by V. Dyatlov. In March 1991, the "club members" began clearing the main sacred site in the labyrinth—the Church of St. Theodosius. After several trips to "Tserkovshchyna" on weekends, by the end of April 1991, the "club members" had cleared the nave [3: 330].

Later, work had to be suspended due to the personal matters of each of the "club members" During the lengthy break, the "Kyiv Underground" expedition worked in the caves [4: 13]. As the archaeologists returned home on weekends while the "club members" found time to work in the caves, the two groups were unable to meet

for an extended period. However, realizing that the situation had changed and the labyrinth was now under the control of specialists, the "club members", upon resuming work on the temple's clearing, reported their actions to V. Kharlamov and the head of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, Archimandrite Eleutherius (Didenko). Consequently, on October 6, 1991, the clearing of the church was completed.

Contemplating how to protect the temple from vandalism and as a symbolic gesture to honor the completion of the church's clearing, V. Dyatlov proposed placing a cross atop the cave hill – a sign of the first victory over the neglect of the cave, a testament to the church's guardianship over the shrine, and a "coded" request to other visitors not to damage the monument. At that time, Lavra monk Father Damian (Davidov) was working on the revival of the neglected cemetery near the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin at the Distant Caves. He renewed tombstones on some graves. While at this site, V. Dyatlov noticed a cross taken from the grave of Archimandrite Dimitriyan. Engaging in conversation with Father Damian, the volunteer learned that he had not yet decided what to do with the old cross. After hearing V. Dyatlov's account of "Tserkovshchyna", the abbot agreed to give the old cross from Dimitriyan's grave for installation over the Hnylets caves. To avoid shocking passersby with the removal of the grave cross from the Lavra, V. Dyatlov took it out through the gate under the bell tower of the Distant Caves.

Thus, the removal of the cross on the evening of October 19, 1991, though unofficial, was accompanied by bell ringing and occurred from the area closest to "Tserkovshchyna" – from the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin and the Distant Theodosian Caves. The cross removed from the Lavra was hidden in the Pechersk Landscape Park, and the next morning, it was transported by V. Dyatlov to "Tserkovshchyna" and installed in the altar of the Church of St. Theodosius. By November 8, the cross crowned the cave hill. In the underground church, the "club members" left two oil

lamps brought from the Lavra and a note addressed to visitors requesting them to respect the shrine. It seems the note made an impression, as the lamps remained in the church for over six months.

When, after the cross had been installed on the hilltop, the archaeologists from "Kyiv Underground" made another working trip to "Tserkovshchyna" and found the note from the "club members", the specialists were filled with mixed feelings. The presence of volunteers involved in the revival of the Hnylets caves was perceived unambiguously. The lack of information about the legal authority and qualifications of these unknown volunteers was concerning. The archaeologists left a response letter in the cave, inviting contact, but the "club members" did not visit "Tserkovshchyna" for another year. Only in early 1992, when a private conversation between expedition member T. Bobrovsky and S. Lipavsky revealed that the latter knew the volunteers personally and vouched for their proper attitude toward the monument and adherence to legal requirements, did the possibility of direct contact arise.

On February 5, 1992 – on the third anniversary of the visit to "Tserkovshchyna", which V. Dyatlov considered the starting date of the volunteers' "movement" – he had a phone conversation with T. Bobrovsky. The next day, both participants in the cave revival met for the first time at the work site near the Zvirynets caves and continued their communication in the "Kyiv Underground" department, where T. Bobrovsky introduced V. Dyatlov to his colleagues. At that time, another misunderstanding was resolved. In a publication in "Vechirniy Kyiv", V. Dyatlov criticized the installation of concrete reinforcements by archaeologists in the entrance gallery of the Kytaiv caves, and he learned that this technical solution had been regarded by "Kyiv Underground" as temporary. V. Dyatlov soon described the history of his acquaintance with "Kyiv Underground" in a new article for "Vechirniy Kyiv", and in the summer of 1992, the "club members" participated in a new archaeological season, clearing the

sacristy of the Church of St. Theodosius. From that time onward, through V. Dyatlov's mediation, the expeditions of "Kyiv Underground" were repeatedly assisted by the monastic community of the Lavra, which provided archaeologists with large candle stubs.

At the time of the beginning of the volunteer clearing of the Church of St. Theodosius and the work of the "Kyiv Underground" expedition, the cave labyrinth represented a three-level system of corridors, churches, cells, crypts, chapels, and several rooms of unclear purpose. Around the perimeter of the hill, in cavities close to the surface of the labyrinth, several large collapses formed during the Soviet era, causing soil to slide into adjacent sections of the caves. The walls of the underground passages were covered in many places with inscriptions left by spontaneous visitors. Three small openings led into the labyrinth – two narrow passages and a break in the vault of one of the lower-level corridors. It was urgent to stop the uncontrolled visitation of the monument, but even with the technical assistance of the hospital, the archaeologists struggled to resolve this problem for a long time. One passage (at the site of the eastern exit from the caves) and the break in the vault of one of the lower-level corridors were bricked up, while the second passage (in another lower-level corridor) remained open as a ventilation channel. Nearby, unknown individuals had reopened the break leading to a room in the northern burial section. In this break, the hospital's technical staff, together with expedition members, fortified the openings at the end of the archaeological seasons, but "adventure seekers" found ways to bypass these barriers.

In 1992, the expedition established the existence of another level of cave structures beneath the hilltop (separate from the labyrinth and relatively small in area) [5: 240]. They found a foundation cross from the early 20th century at the base of the altar of the Church of St. Theodosius [6: 16] and several ancient storage pits [5: 225–227]. It turned out that one of the crypts in the labyrinth was

architecturally unique [5: 207–208]. Between 1992 and 1993, the northern complex of caves was studied; it comprised disconnected caves, one of which connected several cells and chapels [7: 57]. Based on the data obtained by the expedition, T. Bobrovsky developed a hypothesis regarding the sequence of formation of the cave complexes of "Tserkovshchyna" [5: 35–42].

On July 27, 1993, the Holy Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church decided to canonize five ascetics of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra and its sketes from the 18th to early 20th centuries. The biographies of these individuals were compiled during the same period and published in the 19th to early 20th centuries [8: 786–787]. The canonization of the "Newly Glorified Pechersk Saints" led to a demand for the re-publication of their biographies, and in 1994, the Publishing Department of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church released a book series titled "Kyiv Saints of Piety", in the last, third volume of which was published a book by S. Nilus about Abbot Manuel, a text from one of the brochures by Priest Ioann Troitsky about the "Hermitage of the Blessed Virgin", and an excerpt from the memoirs of M. Zhevakhov. The cover of this volume featured a replica of the first project for St. Nicholas Church.

Although Father Manuel was not among the canonized, the re-publication of the works about him and the "Hermitage of the Blessed Virgin" was met with interest by the church audience, who were also curious about the location of "Tserkovshchyna" and its fate during Soviet times. Most readers were unaware of the exact location of the site because, unlike the Kytaiv and Hosiiv Desert monasteries mentioned in other biographies in the book series, the monastery had not been revived. Rumors circulated in Kyiv about excavations in the Hnylets caves near Pyrohiv on the "Free Farmstead", but far from everyone understood that "Free Farmstead" was an alternative name for "Tserkovshchyna".

Meanwhile, the absence of reliable protection for the monument led to further losses and damages: demonic

symbols appeared on the walls of the labyrinth, and new man-made deformations of the altars of the underground churches were observed. Between the archaeological seasons of 1997 and 1998, a deep collapse formed from the surface into the caves at the site of an old "dome" that had developed throughout the 20th century. During the 1998 season, this collapse was eliminated by the expedition's efforts.

Given that the combined efforts of the archaeologists and the hospital, in the absence of regular volunteer participation, V. Dyatlov, who worked in "Kyiv Underground" after graduating from the Faculty of History at NPU named after M. Drahomanov, founded and officially registered the Orthodox parish community of the underground Church of St. Theodosius of Pechersk in 1998. The invaluable legal and advisory support was provided by V. Zakharov, a parishioner of the Holy Trinity Ioninsky Monastery in Kyiv. This monastery also provided spiritual oversight for the community. The community saw its mission as involving all interested Orthodox Kyivans in the revival of the "Tserkovshchyna" caves and coordinating volunteer efforts.

The formation of the community made it possible to legally collect donations for the construction of strong metal doors at the entrance to the underground, which had previously been protected by sturdy metal shutters capable of withstanding the use of crowbars, logs, or other tools for breaking into the labyrinth. The choice of location for the doors was dictated by the topography of the cave entrances that had developed by the late 1990 s. The historical western entrance had been securely bricked up during Soviet times, and a landslide had destroyed the terrace near it, so there was no longer a convenient approach to it. Furthermore, unblocking this entrance would require significant funds and would increase moisture penetration from the surface into a nearby junction of two levels with an ancient vertical opening from the "lower level", which could lead to the destruction of a unique "knot" of cave communications. Two other ancient

entrances, located on the lower level and facing the altar wall of St. Nicholas Church (which stood above ground and served as a retaining wall for the slope), had been bricked up – one completely and the other two-thirds full. If unblocked, they would open into an inconvenient space for observation and visiting along the back Soviet wall of the church building.

Restoring the old eastern entrance did not seem appropriate due to the thick layer of collapsed soil and debris in the "serpentine" between this entrance and the Church of St. Theodosius, the lack of a convenient approach from the surface, the absence of an open brick arch, and the distance of the entrance from the more or less controlled section of St. Nicholas Church, which housed a club, accounting office, and the hospital administration. The choice of location for the main functioning entrance to the underground was also influenced by the presence of a spacious room immediately behind the doors, necessary for introductory conversations between the guide and visitors. Interestingly and even surprisingly, while in previous times the described entrance had been shaded by the crowns of tall trees whose trunks rose directly opposite it from the floor of the valley, due to two storms that occurred in the summer and autumn of 1998 during the door installation, several trunks were felled [9: 39]. The doors, designed with a complex locking system, were crafted by engineer Anatoliy Sharovolskyi, a parishioner of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra and an employee of the E. Paton Institute of Electric Welding. He installed his creation at the entrance to the caves together with parishioner Serhiy Popov from the Ascension Church in Demiivka, with the participation of staff from "Kyiv Underground" and members of the Theodosian community. Some of the necessary materials and tools for the installation were provided by the Lavra monastery and the hospital, while other materials were purchased with donations from parishioners of the Lavra and Demiivka.

The hospital's equipment was involved in improving the cave entrance. Simultaneously, "Kyiv Underground", with the participation of community

members and other volunteers, cleared the entire small circular route between the newly adorned entrance and the Church of St. Theodosius (the clearing of the first sections of this route began in the 1997 season with the efforts of the expedition and volunteers). On September 21, 1998 – on the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin (the patronal feast for the "Hermitage of the Blessed Virgin") – the consecration of the spring located to the northwest of the abandoned "Well of Anthony" took place. A religious procession walked from the consecrated spring to the cave entrance. Gratefully responding to the hospital's assistance, the staff of "Kyiv Underground" regularly conducted tours for patients, showing them the caves. The hospital administration allowed "Kyiv Underground" to set up a temporary exhibition about Kyiv's underground monasteries in one of the unused rooms of St. Nicholas Church.

The outcomes of the activities in 1998 demonstrated the effectiveness of cooperation among archaeologists, volunteers, hospital staff, and the faithful: collectively, the efforts and resources of the participants in the revival of the Hnylets caves ultimately produced significant results, raising hopes for a better future.

Starting in 1998, the caves began to receive pilgrims, accompanied by staff from "Kyiv Underground". In Kyiv, there even arose a false rumor about the revival of a monastery in "Tserkovshchyna". A well-known Kyiv parish priest, Archimandrite Pimen (Sobolev), who built the first large Orthodox church in Kyiv during the independence of Ukraine – the Holy Trinity Cathedral in the Troieshchyna area – reached out to the parish of St. Theodosius and "Kyiv Underground". Father Pimen was personally acquainted with some of the last inhabitants of the "Hermitage of the Blessed Virgin". He informed V. Dyatlov about the reburial of Abbot Manuel due to the looting of the elder's original grave by colonists and confirmed that the small parish church in "Troieshchyna" was built in 1961 according to a plan similar to that

of the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin from 1900-1902 in "Tserkovshchyna". In 1999, he also gave V. Dyatlov a collection of previously unknown photos of the "Hermitage of the Blessed Virgin" – the legacy of its "last of the Mohicans" [10: 103].

At the end of the 2000 archaeological season, the hospital was visited by the Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, Yuriy Kravchenko. Upon learning with surprise that the building housing the club and hospital administration was an unfinished church connected to the history of an ancient monastery, he expressed a desire to restore historical justice and return the church to the faithful. The church's intended use was supported by published architectural plans. After consultations with the Kyiv History Museum, which confirmed the building's purpose through these plans, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine transferred the church to the Holsiiv Monastery. The monks received the keys to the building on January 6, 2001, the day before the feast of the Nativity of Christ. Part of the building was designated for cells and a refectory. On January 9, the first monks from the Holsiiv brotherhood moved in. Since the building had been returned in a remodeled condition, the monks initially set up only a small house church. Thus, a skete (branch) of the Holsiiv Desert monastery was formed in "Tserkovshchyna". One could say that, for the third time in its history, the caves served as the root for the growth of a monastic "tree" on the surface. This event occurred in the "era" of the 2000th anniversary of the Nativity of Christ, the 900th anniversary of the founding of the Hnylets Monastery, and the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the "Hermitage of the Blessed Virgin".

In the summer of 2001, archaeologists cleared the lower level of the caves: the underground space, freed from the collapsed soil and debris, steadily expanded. Given the monks' 24-hour presence near the caves, it seemed reasonable to expect gradual

improvements in the situation surrounding the monument from then on.

Unfortunately, "Tserkovshchyna" was not immune to the problematic processes characteristic of the broader situation in Ukraine regarding relationships between heritage protection institutions, museums of historical sacred structures on one side, and religious communities on the other. However, in "Tserkovshchyna", the emergence and resolution of these problems followed a specific scenario worthy of scholarly documentation due to its uniqueness.

Conclusions. The revival of an active monastery at the Hnylets caves, in the absence of state funding for the monument, resolved the long-standing task of providing 24-hour protection against unauthorized visits and securing vulnerable areas along the main circular route with the most significant structures. The specificity of the interaction between the monastery and

the archaeological expedition and volunteers (after the expedition closed) was that, despite going through several conflicts – which reflected the overall disorganized relationships between state heritage protection institutions and religious communities of the UOC—the parties reached a compromise that protected the labyrinth from destructive transformations and exploitation, while also allowing for a limited exhibition. In making strategic decisions (such as the construction of St. Nicholas Church in the protected zone of the caves), the monastery managed, on one hand, to refrain from fatal mistakes while also permitting limited unapproved construction. The combined efforts of the expedition, volunteers, and the monastery returned "Tserkovshchyna" to the circle of popular visited religious shrines and monuments of the ancient tradition of cave monasticism.

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