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The Role of the Cult of Josaphat Kuntsevych in Biała Podlaska in Creating Intercultural Space

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Abstract: *The article describes the history of the relics and cult of Josaphat Kuntsevych in Biała Podlaska (ca. 1705-1915) in terms of their significance for the creation of cultural space. After the relics had been transported from Polatsk to Biała Podlaska, they were kept in the chapel of Radziwill Castle, and then from 1764 they were displayed in the Basilian Orthodox church. The analysis of visual forms, musical culture, and religious practices demonstrated the readiness of the Uniate community to adapt and absorb cultural phenomena. The activity of the Basilians contributed to the transmission of elite culture to the whole society. The creation of the cult did not cause barriers for any groups to act either as creators or as recipients. Josaphat Kuntsevych gained popularity among people of different social status, believers of Greek and Latin rites; he was not identified with any ethnic group or nationality.*

Key words: Josaphat Kuntsevych; Biała Podlaska; Uniate Orthodox Church; interculturalism; cult of relics; *Slavia unita*

Introduction

The cult of Josaphat Kuntsevych,¹ Bishop of the Uniate Archdiocese of Polatsk,² who died in 1623 at the hands of the faithful Orthodox inhabitants of Vicebsk, and beatified by the Holy See in 1643, is considered to be a fundamental

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¹ Jan Josaphat Kuntsevych (ca. 1580-1623), a Basilian, co-founder of the reform of the Basilian Order in 1617, from 1618 the Archbishop of the Polatsk Diocese. He carried out many reforms in the diocese. In the atmosphere of conflicts between the Uniate and the Orthodox followers in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, he was an ardent supporter of the Union of Brest. During an attempt to regain episcopal authority in Vicebsk on 12 September 1623, he was murdered by the townspeople. After the process that had already begun in 1624, he was beatified in 1642. In 1867 he was canonized. The first Uniate saint in the Catholic Church.

² The Uniate Church is a religious community in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which was established after the Orthodox hierarchs recognized the supremacy of the Pope at the Union Synod in Brest in 1596. The administrative structures of the Uniate Church in the 18th century numbered about 10 thousand parishes in 8 dioceses of the Kyiv an Metropolis located in the eastern areas of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The 4 million-strong community of the Uniate Orthodox Church constituted about 40% of the total population.

determinant in creating the identity of the Uniate Church in the Commonwealth of Both Nations.

The hierarchs of the Uniate Kyivan Metropolis and the Basilian congregation (*Ordo Sancti Basilii Magni*) took measures to promote the cult of Josaphat Kuntsevych.³ The cult was to be intensified by the foundations of Basilian monasteries in the second half of the 17th century in places connected with the life and death of the Blessed one: Vicebsk, Vladimir, and the creation of cult around the relics deposited in the chapel of the Orthodox church in Polatsk – a city whose eparchy he was a bishop. Biała Radziwiłłowska [Podlaska] became another centre of the cult of Blessed Josaphat Kuntsevych in the 18th and 19th centuries. Situated on the western border with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the town belonged to the Radziwiłł princely family.

Many aspects of the cult of Josaphat Kuntsevych have already been analysed.⁴ At the present stage of research, the least known aspect of the history of the cult is the time after the relics had been transferred to Biała Podlaska. The aim of this article is to present the processes of creation of the cult of Josaphat Kuntsevych in the court of the Radziwiłł princes and in the Basilian church. In the historiography related to the cult and relics, this period of more than two centuries has not yet been described. Analyses of cultural transformations will be presented in terms of their role in communication and in the creation of intercultural space at the interface of the Latin and Byzantine cultural circles shaping the identity of the community *Slavia unita*.⁵

The Circumstances of bringing the relics

The Basilian outpost in Biała was founded by Katarzyna Radziwiłł née Sobieska, sister of King John III Sobieski and wife of Karol Radziwiłł – Lithuanian Deputy Chancellor at that time. Established in 1690, it was to consist of 6 monks, who were obliged to carry out pastoral activity among the inhabitants of Radziwiłł's estates in Biała Podlaska, and to cultivate prayer memory for the founders. Many noble families established similar Basilian foundations in the second half of the 17th century. The relics of Blessed Josaphat Kuntsevych brought from Polatsk to Biała added a new dimension to the Basilians' activity. Placing the relics in the Radziwiłł princely residence was supposed to protect them from the danger resulting both from the political situation in which the Commonwealth of Both Nations found itself at the beginning of the 18th century and the crisis in the hierarchy of the Kyivan Metropolis. A threat was posed by marches of Russian and Swedish troops during the Third Northern War.

The weakening of the church was fostered by the attitude of Polatsk Archbishop Marcjan Białłozor, who, in the light of the opinion of the Uniate Metropolitan of Kyiv Leon Załęski, presented to the papal nuncio to the Commonwealth of Both Nations Giovanni Davia on 28 July 1699, neglected

³ A religious congregation based on the rule of Saint Basil. The only male congregation functioning in the Uniate Kyivan Metropolis. In the 18th century, the monks conducted pastoral, educational, publishing and missionary activities in nearly 150 facilities. The order formed the elite of the Uniate Church.

⁴ WEREDA, 2009: 85-97; ROHDEWALD, 2010; GIL, 2010: 147-169; RAČIŪNAITĖ, 2011: 127-147; JOBST, 2012: 1-19; JOBST, 2013: 726-735; JOBST, 2015: 156-173, LISEICHYKOV, 2020: 256-269.

⁵ ROHDEWALD, WIEDERKEHR, FRICK, 2007: 7-33.

liturgical life in the Orthodox Cathedral in Polatsk, appropriated documents from the cathedral's resources, and for at least a year did not reside in his house near the cathedral; he did not surround the faithful with pastoral care, maintained contacts with the Orthodox, and allowed the relics of Josaphat Kuntsevych to be touched, not only in a Catholic but also in a schismatic manner, which was considered a scandal by the Uniate community.⁶ The Basilians from the Polatsk Monastery were the target of attacks. The scale of tensions was demonstrated by the beating of a monk from the Polatsk Monastery.⁷ Conflicts with the Jesuits were an additional aggravating factor. Inspired by Archbishop Białozor, the Jesuits from the monastery in Polatsk raided the Basilian Monastery and took the image of St Basil, which they then ragged and trampled on. During these incidents, two Basilians were beaten with sticks and one tried to be drown in the Daugava River.⁸ The space filled with conflicts did not always allow for the cult of the martyr. Porfiriusz Kulczycki, Protoconsulor of the Order, in his correspondence of 20 September 1701 warned Leon Kiszka – the then superior of the Polatsk Basilians (later Metropolitan) – to exercise extraordinary care over the organisation of the Blessed Josaphat indulgence celebrations on 26 September in order to celebrate it without scandal and tumult – “so that schism would not mock us, for we have heard enough of various misfortunes.”⁹ Concerns about the fate of the relics appeared already in the year 1700. On 7 October of that year, Vicebsk Chamberlain Adam Kisiel, expecting a march of the Russian army, based on the previous experience of troops robbing noblemen's manors, appealed to Leon Kiszka to transport the relics from Polatsk to Vilnius secretly and without publicity.¹⁰

The Basilians were looking for a protector who would secure the monastery and the property of the Polatsk convent. From the Order's consultorium in Byten on 9 September 1702, the monks sent a request for protection to Field Hetman of Lithuania Michał Serwacy Wiśniowiecki.¹¹ It is difficult to assess the circumstances in which the protector of the relics, Great Chancellor of Lithuania Karol Stanisław Radziwiłł, was finally chosen by Leon Kiszka – who at that time held the position of Protoarchimandrite of the Basilian Order.¹² At the present stage of research we do not know the course of events and the chronology of moving the relics from Polatsk to Biała. It seems unlikely that the Prince would travel with them in a military camp.¹³ Karol Stanisław Radziwiłł was active as an official and diplomat during the Northern War. In March 1705, in Vilnius, he chaired the Treasury Tribunal; in August, in Brest, he signed the manifesto against the adversaries of August II; in September and November, in Grodno, he chaired negotiations with the Russian delegation.¹⁴ Probably the relics were taken out of Polatsk before 1705. Janusz Antoni Wiśniowiecki, Vilnius District Governor in the years 1704-1706, describing the course of the raid

⁶ ÖN 3244: 12.

⁷ ÖN 3244: 20-26.

⁸ ÖN 3244: 62-76.

⁹ ÖN 3244: 20.

¹⁰ ÖN 3244: 28.

¹¹ ÖN 3244: 17.

¹² DERUGA, 1936: 226.

¹³ S. Josaphat Hieromartyr, II, 1955: 331-333.

¹⁴ RACHUBA, 1987: 240-248.

on the Basilian Monastery by Tsar Peter I on 11 July 1705 remarked: “the body moved out a long time ago.”¹⁵

The relics certainly reached Biała before the middle of 1709. During a session of the 26th Congregation, which took place in Biała Podlaska between 26 August and 5 September 1709 the representatives of its participants: Bishops of Pińsk Porfiriusz Kulczycki and Bishop of Chełm Gedeon Woyna-Orański and Protoarchimandrite Leon Kiszka were delegated to Prince Karol Stanisław Radziwiłł in order to express him their gratitude for securing the relics of Blessed Josaphat. The status of the relics was unspecified and caused concern among the Basilians. The delegates asked the prince to keep the relics in Biała Podlaska temporarily and return them to the Order. Prince Radziwiłł proposed that the decision where to place the relics should be left to the Sejm’s discretion.¹⁶ Radziwiłł’s response could have indicated that he was trying to give the appropriation of relics the status of a legal settlement. He knew the mechanisms of decision-making in the Sejm and the possibilities of his influence very well. It was not the prerogative of the Sejm to decide such matters. The relics were placed at the castle in the princely chapel where one of the altars was dedicated to Josaphat Kuntsevych.

In the Radziwiłł Castle

After the situation in the Uniate Church had stabilized and the wars had ended, the Basilians strove to regain the relics that remained closed in the princely chapel and unavailable to the general public. The Basilian Order sued the Radziwiłłs before the Holy See for their return. Georgius Maria Lascaris, appointed to consider the matter, led to a compromise, the terms of which were confirmed at the General Chapter of the Order held in 1743 in Dubno. The condition for keeping the relics in Biała was to build a new temple for their storage and to furnish the Basilian monastery.

The compromise was not considered, at least by part of the Unitarian elite, a final solution. In his report to Rome, drafted on 5 March 1756, Florian Hrebnicki, Archbishop of Polatsk and Metropolitan of Kyiv, informed about the achievements in construction and furnishing of the new edifice of the cathedral in Polatsk and about the plans to bring the relics of Blessed Josaphat there, which he planned to place in the Basilian tomb chapel.¹⁷

In response to the Basilians’ plans to recover the relics, the Radziwiłłs took steps to revive the cult of Kuntsevych. In 1743, Anna Radziwiłł established a fund for the maintenance of 6 singers for liturgy and service in the castle chapel. The foundation envisaged providing the singers with victuals (rye, wheat, barley, buckwheat, butter, cheese, fish and oil) and paying them 500 zloty a year, in quarterly instalments, for clothing and other needs. The foundation was confirmed on 2 September 1760 by the next owner of Biała Podlaska Michał Kazimierz Radziwiłł called ‘Rybeńko’, but he limited its validity to the transfer of the relics of Blessed Josaphat Kuntsevych from the chapel to the church. After the relics were placed in the Basilian church, another fund confirmation, however on amended

¹⁵ Janusz Antoni Wiśniowiecki, 2018: 188-189.

¹⁶ Arheografičeskij sbornik, 1900: 167-168.

¹⁷ Epistolae metropolitaram..., 1959: 371.

conditions, was declared on 13 February 1773 by Karol Stanisław Radziwiłł, also known as ‘Panie Kochanku’ (My Beloved Sir). Only victuals from the Radziwiłłs’ income from Biała were used to support the singers. Compared to the previous documents, the fund was depleted by cash payments for singers’ needs. It is likely that the singers’ duties included the setting of the liturgy in the Greek rite at the relics in the princely chapel. The Basilians were the organisers of religious life connected with the cult of Josaphat Kuntsevych. The monks introduced the religious culture of the Greek rite to the elite circles, but also became participants of the Radziwiłłs’ court life and familiarised themselves with the culture of the elite circles. An occasion for this might have been indulgence feasts celebrated at the relics. Their participants were probably the princely court and guests. In September 1745, the future Bishop of Warmia Ignacy Krasicki, staying with his uncle Ignacy Sapieha in nearby Kodeń, together with his sons, was a guest of Hieronim Radziwiłł in Biała at the indulgence feast of St Josaphat connected with Hieronymus’ name day. During the indulgence feast liturgy, Krasicki gave a sermon.¹⁸ On 27 September 1748, the numerous guests who had come to celebrate the indulgence feast of St Josaphat Kuntsevych had the opportunity to listen to a concert performed by musicians newly engaged by Hieronim Florian in Vienna: harpist Michael Götz, singer-tenor Franz Wittman and violinist Hilverding. The artists’ performance was very much enjoyed by the audience and left a positive impression: “with the approbation of all of us who know it and others who have knowledge of music.”¹⁹ The indulgence feast celebrations were honoured by bursts of cannon fire. The content of a letter sent by Magdalena Radziwiłł née Czapska to her husband Hieronim on 15 September 1749 confirms the organization of indulgence feast celebrations in the princely chapel in the subsequent years.²⁰ The placement of the relics in the Radziwiłł princely seat contributed to the spread of the cult of Josaphat Kuntsevych among the social elite. The setting of religious ceremonies imitated the lavish and spectacular Baroque ceremonial of magnate courts. The fact that the organisers and participants belonged to the Roman Catholic Church did not prove to be a barrier to promoting and participating in various forms of worship.

Josaphat Kuntsevych was considered to be a mediator for the princely family in difficult matters. Magdalena Radziwiłł née Czapska in her letter (January 1749) recommended her husband Hieronim Radziwiłł to organise prayers for the health of his mother Konstancja Czapska: “please order, my lovely Master, before Saint Josaphat to have a mass, asking that the Lord God comfort her in her sorrows.”²¹ In the princely chapel, St Josaphat Kuntsevych was seen as a patron saint saving in health problems. Magdalena Radziwiłł née Czapska, during her stay in Biała in 1745-1750, described the healing she experienced after reciting the litany “before the holy body” and “in a deadly illness suffering unbearable pains when all medicines did not help.”²² Through the intercession of Blessed Josaphat, the Duchess and the maidens who accompanied her at court had their toothaches relieved, and her husband was cured of a fatal disease.

¹⁸ GOLIŃSKI, 2002: 60-62.

¹⁹ BIENKOWSKA, 2013: 420.

²⁰ *Gdybym Cię...*, 2016: 191.

²¹ *Gdybym Cię...*, 2016: 162-163.

²² APL ChKGGK 15: 13.

The family members also shared the graces. In her correspondence dated 29 August 1749, the Duchess reported to her husband: “at the same time I report that my saint Josaphat greatly helped the castellan”.²³ The content of the correspondence confirms the reception of the cult among elite circles. The social status and the Greek rite practised by the venerated Blessed Josaphat did not prove to be a barrier.

In the Basilian church

The display of the relics: Visual culture

The relics were brought to Biała together with a reliquary in the form of a silver coffin founded in 1650 by Kazimierz Leon Sapieha and exhibited in Polatsk. The form and ideological message of the Polatsk reliquary referred to the patron saints of the Commonwealth of Both Nations.²⁴

The Radziwiłłs gave this reliquary to Metropolitan Leon Kiszka, who placed it in Żyrowice (where it remained until at least 1777). At the present stage of research there is no information proving the artistic initiatives of the Radziwiłłs founding of the reliquary. The relics in the castle were kept in a coffin/sarcophagus. During the invasion of the Russian army on the princely castle in 1764, the Basilians, fearing robbery, put the relics in a coffin, took them out of the princely chapel, and walled them up in the castle.²⁵ When the relics were moved in 1769 to the new brick baroque edifice of the church, they were deposited in a place of honour, in a coffin decorated with silver roses and silver, ‘radiance’ [probably a ray] two inches wide covering the coffin.²⁶ The care of the relics became the domain of the Basilians. No information is available about the involvement of the Radziwiłł family in religious practices, ceremonies or the creation of visual settings. In the Basilian Orthodox Church, the relics were displayed in a manner that allowed their visual contact with the faithful. In the opinion of the Basilians of Biała, “the corpse of Blessed Josaphat receives decent veneration in this house of God. They are always on public display. The pious people of this area, experienced in their needs, have a patron saint in this martyr and used to gather in large numbers to pay him the homage due.”²⁷

In order to spread devotion to Blessed Josaphat, the monks made it possible to share his mortal remains with other Basilian institutions and with the laymen and clergy. In the 70s of the 18th century, the superior of the Biała monastery, Teofil Serafinowicz, organised the peregrination of the relics through Orthodox parishes and private homes. The Holy See intervened to put an end to these practices. In 1780, Pope Pius VI issued a letter recommending that Josaphat Kuntsevych’s remains be placed in the church under lock and key, one of which was to be kept by the superior of the Basilian Monastery in Biała, and the other by the Radziwiłłs. In the same year, the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide changed the instructions and recommended that Kuntsevych’s remains in Biała be locked with two keys, one of

²³ *Gdybym Cię...*, 2016: 176; in improving Barbara Czapska’s health, who was seriously ill, (she was a daughter of the Castellan of Gdańsk, who came to the court in Biała after her father’s death in 1746).

²⁴ KRASNY, 2000: 121-140.

²⁵ APL ChKGK 15: 14.

²⁶ CDIAL 1083: 3.

²⁷ APL ChKGK 294: 21.

which was to remain with the Biała Superior and the other with the Protoarchimandrite of the Basilian congregation who, personally or through proxies appointed at the provincial convention, had the right, independent of the Father Superior of the Biała Monastery, to visit, exhume, expose to the public and change his clothes.²⁸ This decision excluded the representatives of the Radziwiłł family from the right to dispose of the relics. No one from the princely family protested against these restrictions. The transformation of the Age of Enlightenment changed the markers of prestige of the princely seat. The Basilian congregation became the disposers of the relics.

The condition of the relics was regularly monitored by the religious authorities. In 1785, the then Father Superior Tymoteusz Szczurowski described the condition of the relics as follows:

“The corpse of St Josaphat in a coffin made of wood, silver plated, with woodcarving, closed with 3 locks and sealed ... The body of the saint lies in a golden llama mitre with a cross, in an alb and a red sakoss, in a golden homophor, with a cross and a chain on his chest, one ring on his fingers, a signet ring with a sapphire, silk stockings on his feet, and shoes embroidered with gold.”²⁹

Probably the relics were covered during the time outside holy masses. In 1780, the Basilians of Biała purchased a cloth embroidered with crimson silk for the curtains of the St Josafat,³⁰ and in 1789 there were expenses for the purchase of cloth embroidered silk for St Josaphat's robe.

The provincial who visited Biała in 1795 noted that the body of the martyr was in a wooden sarcophagus, which was hand-made with a great effort. The reliquary was decorated by Bishop of Przemyśl Maksymilian Ryłło with silk fabric and coloured stones. The reliquary was wrapped around with a silver ribbon. On the front of this sarcophagus there are double locks and double seals of the current superior and the present Bishop of Chełm. They remained closed, stamped and secured with a seal.³¹ Probably for a better exposition the Basilians ordered a glass coffin.³² The display in the glass coffin was probably the reason for putting on the new robes. On 24 September 1800, Bishop of Chełm Porfiry Ważyński and Bishop of Przemyśl Antoni Angelowicz came to Biała and put a new chasuble on the relics of Blessed Kuntsevych.³³

The Basilians chose to display the relics in a coffin in the altar reliquary inside the Orthodox church in Biała. It was a continuation of the form of display in Polatsk referring to the “elevation to the altars” of the relics in the Roman Catholic Church.

The appropriate lighting of the relics was ensured by Bishop of Chełm Maksymilian Ryłło (1756-1784). On his initiative ‘a burning lamp’ placed in front of the relics was founded in 1772. The ‘burning lamp’ placed in front of the relics was

²⁸ *Audientiae Sanctissimi*..., 1965: 293-295; S. Josaphat Hieromartyr, III, 1967: 240.

²⁹ APL ChKGK 285: 290; APL ChKGK 9: 85-87.

³⁰ ADS: 73v.

³¹ ÖN 3849: 381v.

³² APL ChKGK 15: 14 .

³³ ADS: no pag.

founded on his initiative in 1772. In the years 1772-1786, the bishop donated 100 zloty each year for tallow.³⁴ Ryłło did not stop donating the unchanged sum of 100 zloty for the lamp even after his transition to the Bishopric of Przemyśl (1784-1793). The amount was handed over by the visitor to Biała in January 1786.³⁵ The tradition of illuminating the place where the relics were displayed lingered on. At the beginning of the 19th century, representatives of the local nobility funded candelabras and a glass candlestick for the altar, judged by the monks to be ‘a great ornament’.³⁶

The next information about changes in the display of relics comes from 1860. By virtue of a last will dated 5/17 December 1848, drawn up by Paweł Szymański, Canon of the Uniate Diocese of Chełm, a gold chain from the canon’s cross and an emerald ring were assigned to adorn the relics. On the instruction of Jan Teraszkiewicz, Bishop of Chełm, the ceremony of placing the precious jewels by the canons: the dean of Włodawa Adam Jankowski and Jan Szymanski took place on January 1/13, 1860, on the Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord (according to the Gregorian calendar) and St Basil (according to the Julian calendar). The installation of decorations made from precious jewels took place in the presence of “a great number of clergy of both rites gathered in a crowd,” estimated at 5 thousand people, of the municipal authorities of Biała Podlaska. After putting on decorative jewels, the coffin with the relics was sealed and the seal was returned to the bishop.³⁷

In Eastern Churches, the introduction of canonical chapters caused discussions among the hierarchy of the Kyivan Metropolis in the 70s of the 18th century. In the circles of the Kyivan Metropolis, until the mid-18th century, the term ‘canon’ known in the Roman Catholic Church was not used, and no such office was known. The ornamentation of the bishop’s relics with the canonical distinctorium from the 17th century was contrary to the realities of the historical epoch in which Josaphat Kuntsevych lived and was alien to the ecclesiastic tradition of the Uniate Church. The appointment of canons by some Unitarian circles in the 18th century was perceived as an interference in the previous customs. The organisation of a grandiose ceremony of the imposition of a distinctorium may testify to transformations in the reception of the ecclesiastic culture of the Latin cultural circle.

Another reliquary in the form of a coffin was purchased from the offerings of the faithful. The ceremony for the moving of the relics was scheduled for 1861.³⁸ On the instruction of the Bishop of the Uniate Diocese of Chełm, the ceremony was to be carried out during service in the presence of the clergy and the faithful by Canons Jan Szymański and Mikołaj Kalinowski, Dean of Biała. Probably due to political circumstances, the transfer of the relics to a new coffin did not take place.³⁹

In the nineteenth century there is a noticeable decrease in the Basilians’ activities. The initiative in the organization of worship is taken by the authorities and clergy of the Uniate Diocese of Chełm and the Latin Diocese of Podlasie.

³⁴ ADS: 3a, 9a.

³⁵ ADS: 29a.

³⁶ ADS: 109.

³⁷ APL ChKGK 285: 290-292.

³⁸ APL ChKGK 285: 304.

³⁹ APL ChKGK 285: 312.

Images

The visual message in the interior of the Biała Orthodox church was complemented by images of Josaphat Kuntsevych. After transferring the relics to the church, the Basilians placed the image of the martyr decorated with a gilded pontifical robe.⁴⁰ In 1764, the monks paid an unknown painter (5 zloty) to correct the painting.⁴¹ The painting, along with the bishop's silver robe, remained there until at least 1810.⁴²

In the 19th century by order of the Government Commission of the Interior and Clergy of the Kingdom of Poland an iconostasis was placed in the interior of the church in Biała. The author of 23 icons was Bonawentura Dąbrowski – a recognised painter from Warsaw. In the bottom row, first on the right side, there is an icon of Blessed Josaphat.⁴³ The figure of the bishop is depicted wearing an archbishop's mantia with a goose feather in his right hand and a book in his left. After the dissolution of the Basilians, this image remained in the collection taken over by the Orthodox church. The image was changed by painting over a n axe – the symbol of death.⁴⁴ We can assume that this icon was painted in the convention accepted in the interiors of the Orthodox church. On 26 September 1861, Piotr Paweł Beniamin Szymański, Bishop of the Latin Diocese of Janów that is Podlasie, in the interior of the Biała church placed a painting by Józef Simmler depicting the death of Josaphat Kuntsevych. The event was given a solemn setting gathering many of the faithful of the Latin and Greek rites⁴⁵. The initiator of this event came from outside the circle of the Uniate community. The new painting was painted in the style of history painting. It did not conform to the conventions of icon painting. This did not turn out to be a barrier to it being placed in the Orthodox church interiors.

Religious culture: Indulgences

The relics of Josaphat Kuntsevych were a factor in the animation of religious life. The indulgence feast celebrations in honour of the martyr were very popular and well attended. The Biała Monastery received indulgence privileges. In 1776, Pope Pius VI granted the Basilian Monastery in Biała the right to a two-month indulgence.⁴⁶ Another indulgence privilege of 1782 granted the Biała institution a two-month plenary indulgence for two months on the occasion of the feast of Blessed Josaphat. The indulgence covered the time from September 16/28 to November 2/14.⁴⁷ The indulgence celebrations gathered many believers. The exception was when the troops were marching. In September 1805, the celebrations of the indulgence feast were interrupted by the accommodation of the Russian army, which was troublesome

⁴⁰ CDIAL 1083: 3.

⁴¹ ADS: 15v.

⁴² APL ChKGK 139: 46-47.

⁴³ APL ChKGK 285: 238, 247.

⁴⁴ Holmsko-Varšavskij Eparhialnyj Věstnik, 1883: 277.

⁴⁵ APL ChKGK 215: 51-52.

⁴⁶ CDIAL 3062: 29.

⁴⁷ APR: 75.

for the monastery and the monks.⁴⁸ In 1812, due to the march of the armies fighting in the Napoleonic wars, the months of August and September were ‘a constant worry’. A year later, also due to the presence of the army, the indulgence celebrations were attended by a much smaller number of the faithful, but the indulgence was held with the participation of many “renowned citizens”.⁴⁹ The indulgence feast ceremonies included a liturgy (mass) with a sermon, processions and vespers with a sermon. For the indulgence feast liturgies sermons are prepared by the Basilians. In 1804-1809, Joachim Dołbieński was a respected preacher. Among the invited guests there were also monks from the Biała Reformation Monastery, who presided over the annual indulgence feast practices from 1800 to 1814. The indulgence feast summits were presided over and sermons were preached by priests of the Latin rite (among others by the Dean of Biała Adam Dabrowski – 1800; the Latin official and Canon of Chełm Komorowski – 1804; Fr. Józef Mleczek Gruszecki, parish priest of Biała; canon – 1815; Fr. Banaszewski, vicar of the parish church; parish priest of Biała – the 60s of the 19th century)⁵⁰ and Greek (among others, the official of Brześć – 1802; Fr. Halicki, parish priest from Dobrynia – 1815). The indulgence ceremonies included processions, probably inside and outside the temple building. The provincial visiting the Biała Monastery in 1795 noted that in the Biała church there is no procession around the altar, but it is led from the altar to another altar and through the Orthodox church cemetery. During the indulgence feast celebrations in September 1800 there were 3 processions,⁵¹ in 1802 because of a smaller number of participants there were 2 processions. It is possible that a reliquary with a part of St Josaphat’s cross was used in these processions (recorded in the resources of the Orthodox church in 1810).⁵²

During the indulgence feast ceremonies the presence of the relics was emphasised. In the 2nd half of the 18th century the coffin was opened for the time of the indulgence feast. The relics were assisted by five clergymen and the ‘local police’, that is, probably the magistrate army from the Radziwiłłs’ court. The practice of foot kissing by delegated representatives of the clergy and local elite was practised. The other faithful were allowed to place a kiss through the glass. A blessing was given to the gathered people by the hand of the martyr.⁵³ In the 19th century the opening of the coffin with the relics was abandoned. During the indulgence feasts the relics were moved, probably to the main nave. In 1810, the chronicle noted: “For the feast the relics have been displayed.”⁵⁴

Written communication culture

The Basilians used the feast celebrations to distribute religious publications connected with the cult of Kuntsevych. The monastery invested in printing a publication on Josaphat Kuntsevych (1780).⁵⁵ The small sums received by

⁴⁸ ADS: no pag.

⁴⁹ ADS: no pag.

⁵⁰ APL ChKGK 285: 302.

⁵¹ ADS, no pag.

⁵² APL ChKGK 139: 46-47.

⁵³ APL ChKGK 285: 302.

⁵⁴ ADS, no pag.

⁵⁵ ADS: 72v.

the monastery treasury from the sale of books suggest that they did not find many buyers (in 1784 – for the booklet of Josaphat 7 groszy,⁵⁶ in 1782 – for 10 booklets of St Josaphat 2 zloty 15 groszy,⁵⁷ in 1783 – 3 booklets of St Josaphat for 22 groszy⁵⁸). A slight increase in publication interest is noted in the early 19th century. In 1802, the profit from the sale of St Josaphat’s booklet increased to 22 zloty.⁵⁹ The recipients of Basilian religious offerings remained outside the circle of scriptural culture in the 18th century. A wider circle of buyers had pictures with the image of the Blessed. The monastery chronicle only records expenses for the purchase of pictures. The amounts attest to the large print runs purchased by the monks and distributed among the visiting faithful (in 1764 – 8 zloty,⁶⁰ in 1765 – 10 zloty,⁶¹ in 1767 – for “three hundred pictures” 24 zloty⁶²). The lack of annotations about profits indicates that the pictures were probably distributed free of charge or with voluntary donations. In their choice of methods for perpetuating the memory of Blessed Josaphat, the Basilians diversified the methods, increasing their effectiveness for the faithful who had the ability to read as well as those who remained outside the culture of writing.

Musical culture

In the Eastern Churches vocal singing was traditionally practised in the Orthodox liturgy. The Basilians in the Biała Orthodox Church introduced instrumental music. The Biała church was equipped with organs already at the stage of interior finishing works. The monks paid an organ player, who was also provided with clothes in the style of an Old-Polish split-sleeve overcoat.⁶³ In 1766, the monks also purchased a clavichord,⁶⁴ for which they systematically bought new strings.⁶⁵ The Basilians hosted musical events with visiting musicians. To add splendour to the church fairs, ‘a Leśna music band’ was probably brought from the Pauline Monastery in Leśna Podlaska (1769). We may assume that the musical setting of the indulgence feast ceremonies provided publicity which attracted interested people, which may be confirmed by the note in the monastery chronicle about the alms paid to ‘a wandering organ player’ for the accompaniment of the litany to Blessed Josaphat.⁶⁶

Cannon gun salutes also belonged to the setting of the indulgence feast celebrations in the second half of the 18th century. For this purpose, the monks hired soldiers, probably from the Radziwiłłs’ court,⁶⁷ and purchased gunpowder (this is confirmed by the expenses from 1765, 1767, 1768, 1776).⁶⁸ In the last decades of the 18th century, the Basilians increased their stock of instruments and hired

⁵⁶ ADS: 25.

⁵⁷ ADS: 18a.

⁵⁸ ADS: 25a.

⁵⁹ ADS: 42.

⁶⁰ ADS: 13.

⁶¹ ADS: 20.

⁶² ADS: 26v.

⁶³ ADS: 90v.

⁶⁴ ADS: 22v.

⁶⁵ ADS: 22v, 32v, 66, 84, 94.

⁶⁶ ADS: 80.

⁶⁷ ADS: 29.

⁶⁸ ADS: 24, 25, 56v.

a bandleader to lead the musical ensemble.⁶⁹ The setting of religious ceremonies in the 2nd half of the 18th century was modelled on the Baroque ceremonial of the magnate courts. As the Age of Enlightenment changed, the Basilians also modified the program. The recitation of Horace's works was introduced into the celebration program in the early 19th century.⁷⁰

At the monastery in the 18th century, a singing group of six boys cantors was still maintained, singing psalms during church ceremonies in three languages: Ruthenian, Latin and Polish. The cantors were dressed in livery and gules at the monastery's expense.⁷¹ For the needs of the singing group, Superior Tymoteusz Szczurowski added balconies on two levels inside the church. The use of architectural solutions added grandness to the musical setting. Introducing various forms of musical culture into their pastoral activities, the Basilians offered the possibility of participation in elite culture to a wide audience.

The cult of Josaphat Kuntsevych developed in two rites. Already in 1795 the provincial visiting the monastery in Biała Podlaska, while visiting liturgies at the martyr's relics in both rites, expressed his opinion that it was admirable to train the habit of kneeling among the faithful coming to Latin vespers. In Biała the Basilian temple liturgy was celebrated in both the Greek and Latin rites. The sacraments were also administered in both rites. Probably due to this custom of religious practices in both rites, the Basilian Monastery in Biała Podlaska was chosen by people of different rites to celebrate the sacrament of marriage.⁷² Paraliturgical prayers from both the Greek and Latin traditions were said before the relics of Blessed Josaphat. Offerings to discuss the Angelic Salutation (1784)⁷³ may testify to the practice of praying the Rosary.

Ideological content

The cult of relics gained various ideological contexts. After moving the relics from the princely chapel to the new edifice of the Josaphat Kuntsevych church, the Basilians continued to promote Blessed Josaphat as the patron of difficult health conditions. This is confirmed by the collected documentation attesting to the truthfulness of the testimonies of those who experienced the healing. As a result of an inquisition carried out in 1769 at the behest of an official of the Vladimir-Brest diocese, the sight of a resident of Bukowica, Konrad Koszulka, who came from the bourgeoisie, recovered in the Basilian church on the day of the Nativity of the Mother of God in 1768 after 12 years, was confirmed. In 1776, the Superior of Biała monastery, Teofil Serafinowicz, owed his recovery from a chronic leg illness to the intercession of Blessed Josaphat Kuntsevych. Among those healed through the intercession of Blessed Josaphat were Bazyl Polatało and Konstantin Kazimierz Brzostowski, Bishop of the Vilnius Diocese of the Latin rite (from an illness of the hand).⁷⁴ The miracles recorded confirm the development of the cult of Blessed

⁶⁹ ADS: 22, 42.

⁷⁰ ADS: no pag.

⁷¹ ADS: 102, 107.

⁷² ADS: no pag.

⁷³ ADS: 25.

⁷⁴ APL ChKGK 15: 11-14.

Josaphat both among the clerical hierarchy of the Greek and Latin rites and among the townspeople. The miracles recorded confirm the development of the cult of Blessed Josaphat both among the clerical hierarchy of the Greek and Latin rites and among the townspeople.

The Basilians formed an ideological program around the relic and the person referring to the political situation. The monks used the figure of the Blessed to convey religious, social (e.g. as a model of abstinence from alcohol) and political (symbol of the unity of the Commonwealth of Both Nations and religious unity) contents.⁷⁵ In the times of crisis of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth since the end of the 18th century, Blessed Josaphat was created as “Patron of the Polish Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania” and “the adornment of the Slavic peoples”, “the pillar of holy unity”.⁷⁶

The cult of Josaphat Kuntsevych consolidated local circles supporting the modernisation of the Polish-Lithuanian state, and the Basilian church in Biala was a place of patriotic demonstrations. In the church in Biala before the relics of Blessed Josaphat a thanksgiving service for the Constitution of May 3 was celebrated. The ceremony was held “in the presence of numerous clergy, citizens, officials of the Podlasie and Brest Provinces, and the people, numbering up to two thousand, gathered.”⁷⁷

In the 2nd half of the 19th century the bishop, who was murdered by the Orthodox inhabitants of Vicebsk, was promoted as a hero in the fight against the ‘Muscovites’. This idea, popular in wide social circles in the Polish lands and emigration circles, was against the *raison d’être* of Russian politics. Russian historiography of the 19th century discredited the actions and figure of Josaphat Kuntsevych, and the Russian administration destroyed manifestations of his memory and cult. The authorities of the Kingdom of Poland issued a ban on any processions or ceremonies relating to the canonization of Bishop Josaphat, which took place in 1867.⁷⁸ The implementation of these recommendations was facilitated by the dissolution of the Basilians in the Kingdom of Poland in 1864 and the removal of monks from pastoral work. Elimination cult was to be eliminated by the decision to renovate the church in Biala, during which Kuntsevych's relics were removed from the interior of the church and moved to crypts, which were walled up.⁷⁹

When the relics of Josaphat Kuntsevych remained hidden, the cult of the saint gained new dimensions. In the local communities of Roman Catholics and Uniates forced to convert to the Orthodox Church, he was created as a model of faithfulness to the union and resistance against the influence of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The cult of the saint gained a new dimension in the Greek Catholic community under the Habsburg rule.

After the Russians left the city during World War I, the relics of St Josaphat Kuntsevych were transported from Biala in 1917 to Vienna. The local Roman Catholic

⁷⁵ APL KGK: 52

⁷⁶ Tymoteusz Szczurowski, 2009: 254-255.

⁷⁷ SZYBIAK, 1973: 212.

⁷⁸ MORAWIEC, 2018: 80-97.

⁷⁹ WEREDA, 2020: 109-125.

community and Jewish residents in Biała protested against the removal of the relics. In 1949, the relics were transferred to Rome, where they rest in St Peter's Basilica.⁸⁰

Conclusions

The relics of Josaphat Kuntsevych, which remained in Biała Podlaska for more than 210 years (ca. 1705-1916), are an example of the cultural transformation of the Uniate community and the transformation of religiousness in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In the 18th century both in the Radziwiłł court circles and in the circles of Basilians Josaphat Kuntsevych was not created a martyr. In safe times for the Uniate Church, there was no need to appeal to an idea that created a sense of threat of conflict and confrontation. The demand for baroque lavishness and a message appealing to the emotions was realized: music, visual and theatrical. After the collapse of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the initiative of creating the cult was taken by the clergy of dioceses of both Greek and Latin rites referring to Josaphat Kuntsevych as a patron of the idea of the former multinational Republic remaining in opposition to the policy of Russia.

The Biała episode in the history of the relics of the first martyr of the Uniate Church of the Kyivan Metropolis reflects the dynamics of transformation in the liturgical setting, visual and musical culture of this community. The absorption of new cultural phenomena created a new quality of the ecclesial culture of *Slavia unita*. The creation of cult did not cause barriers for any groups either as creators or as recipients. Josaphat Kuntsevych gained popularity among people of different social status, believers of Greek and Latin rites alike; he was not identified with an ethnic group, a nationality, or a rite.

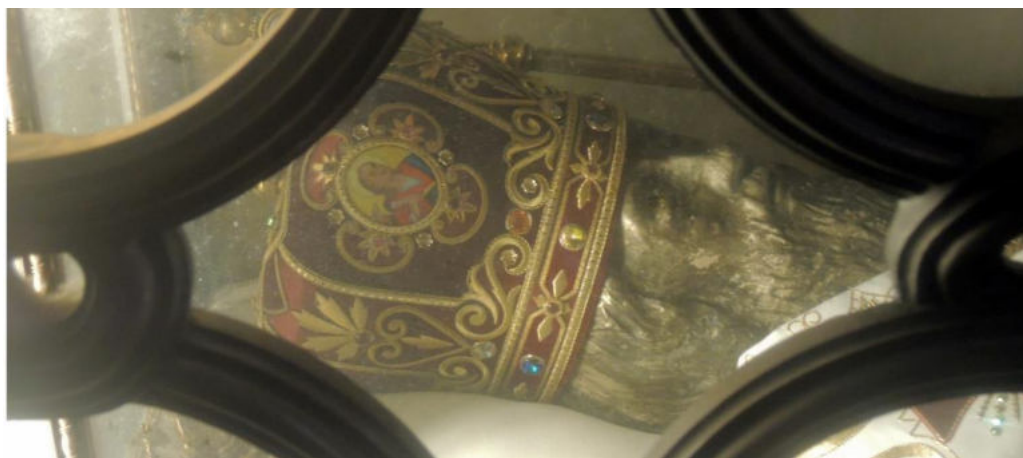


Fig. The relics of Josaphat Kuntsevych in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome (by author)

⁸⁰ JOBST, 2012: 1-18; JOBST, 2015: 156-173.

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APL KGK: Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, Zespół: Klasztory greckokatolickie, sygn. 1.

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