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Andriy Maiovets*

Postgraduate Student

Ukrainian Catholic University

79011, 17 Ilarion Svetsitsky Str., Lviv, Ukraine

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3311-9350>

The architectural arrangement of the 18th-century Uniate church: Tradition and Western borrowings

Abstract. The aim of this study was to identify the architectural characteristics of the 18th-century Uniate church in Right-Bank Ukraine, with a focus on its confessional, spatial, and structural specificity. The research employed a comprehensive interdisciplinary methodology, combining historical-architectural, spatial-analytical, typological and comparative-stylistic methods. The source base included historical maps, ecclesiastical-administrative descriptions, graphic representations and aggregated statistical data on the confessional structure of 18th-century of Right-Bank Ukraine. The findings demonstrated that the architectural landscape of the Uniate church evolved within a complex confessional environment, wherein the Uniate tradition functioned as a synthetic phenomenon, integrating elements of the Byzantine rite, vernacular timber construction and Baroque influences drawn from the Latin sacred heritage. This interplay fostered the emergence of a distinctive spatial-visual model that affirmed the Uniate church's confessional identity in a region marked by intense religious competition. The Kyiv Uniate Metropolis encompassed the regions of Volhynia, Podillia, Kyiv and Bratslav, where the presence of Uniate churches varied considerably: the highest concentration was recorded in Volhynia and Podillia and the lowest in Kyiv and Bratslav, reflecting political changes and jurisdictional shifts. In the middle of the 18th century, the number of Uniate churches reached approximately 1,500–1,700, decreasing to 1,200–1,300 by the end of the 18th century. The analysis of single-nave, tripartite, and triconch architectural types revealed that Uniate church interiors were characterised by multi-tiered iconostases with carving and gilding, wall reliefs, frescoes and decorative motifs blending sacred symbolism with local ornamental traditions. Baroque elements – such as vine scrolls, palmettes, and acanthus leaves – played a prominent role in enhancing the ceremonial visual expressiveness of the sacred space. The practical value of the study lies in its potential application to the reconstruction of the 18th-century sacred environment, the preservation of the architectural heritage and the development of scientifically grounded restoration approaches

Keywords: sacred space; church typology; confessional dynamics; iconostasis; Baroque stylistics; spatial zoning; log construction technique

INTRODUCTION

The architectural configuration of the 18th-century Uniate church in Right-Bank Ukraine reflected a multi-layered process of cultural transformation, shaped by confessional coexistence and the aesthetic influence of broader

European trends. The Uniate architecture not only assimilated traditional Byzantine-Slavic forms, but also remained open to Western borrowings – most notably from the Baroque style. However, the scholarly discourse has lacked

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*Corresponding author



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a comprehensive examination of Uniate church design through the lens of this symbiosis between the local and Western, traditional and innovative elements. This gap underscored the relevance of a study aimed at elucidating the distinctive features of the architectural landscape of Uniate churches within the regional framework of Right-Bank Ukraine, based on the analysis of the 18th-century sources and the mechanisms of external architectural model integration. The core problem addressed by this research was the limited representation of the 18th-century Uniate ecclesiastical architecture in contemporary interdisciplinary studies. While numerous scholarly works have examined the Baroque style in the broader Ukrainian context, they often neglected Uniate churches and their specific forms of sacred architecture. Moreover, statistical and visitation materials – offering descriptive insights into church buildings – remain only partially explored. This situation necessitated an investigation of the Uniate church's architecture as a distinct phenomenon in terms of spatial planning, decoration, materials used and its role within the administrative framework of the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis.

The iconographic and decorative components shaping the artistic language of Basilian sacred art in the 18th century have been explored by M. Levytska (2021), who demonstrated how the activities of Basilian monasteries contributed to the formation of a coherent aesthetic environment combining traditional forms with the stylistics of European Baroque. The author's findings confirmed that Basilian art was closely linked to the religious identity and the confessional politics of the 18th century. A. Urakina (2022) systematised the evolution of spatial-compositional solutions in the church architecture from the 10th to the 18th century, tracing transformations in volumetric-spatial structures, including changes in plans, vaulting systems and church terminations. Researcher's work highlighted the development of a synthetic approach to church design by the 18th century, harmonising the structural functionality with the stylistic expressiveness. The preservation, loss and reconstruction of Baroque-era decorative elements in Kyiv's architectural monuments were the focus of K. Tretiak (2024), who analysed authentic sources and proposed reconstructions of lost details – such as façade décor, bell towers and pediments – emphasising the role of architectural memory in the national identity.

Scientist J. Casanova (2022) analysed models of Christian sacred geography in Kyiv by examining three major churches through the theological concept of Kyiv as the "Third Rome". The author's study illustrated, how the architecture symbolised a continuity linking Rome, Constantinople and Kyiv, thus constructing a sacred topography of strategic and symbolic significance. The role of natural landscape in the perception of sacred architecture was explored by D. Chernyshev *et al.* (2020), who demonstrated that topography, elevation and panoramic positioning were crucial to the visual dominance and symbolic resonance of churches within the sacralised space. O. Gorbuk (2024) examined the fusion of European architectural

forms with vernacular building traditions in Baroque sacred architecture, revealing that Baroque elements were adapted to local conditions and technical capacities – evident in plans, façades and construction techniques that combined professional and folk practices. The iconographic system of the Ukrainian Baroque sacred book was studied by O. Kurhanova (2023), who investigated visual metaphors, compositional solutions and the symbolism of book design, underlining the importance of graphic language as a medium of spiritual communication reflecting the Baroque worldview and the church's visual culture.

S. Olianina (2023) addressed the functional organisation of monastic church spaces and the iconostasis as an architectural-liturgical element, showing that the iconostasis served both decorative and spatial-semantic purposes by structuring the liturgical space and marking the sacred hierarchy within the interior. L. Miliayeva (2023) analysed the historical and stylistic development of the Ukrainian icon from its Byzantine origins to the Baroque period, examining changes in composition, colour schemes, themes and linking iconography to the architectural context – especially the placement of iconostases, mural paintings and interior aesthetics. The interpretations of Ukrainian Baroque in the national art of the historical discourse were discussed by I. Levchenko (2024), who explored how Baroque style was incorporated into historiographical narratives and became the part of the national artistic canon, integrating architecture, visual art, and liturgical space into representations of national identity. Thus, the research in the field of the 18th-century sacred art and architecture has addressed a wide range of issues, including stylistic transformations, the iconographic language, spatial semiotics, the landscape interaction and the historiographical interpretation. These works provided a theoretical foundation for the further analysis of Uniate Church architecture as a distinctive phenomenon that synthesised traditional sacred architectural models with elements of Western European origin.

The aim of the study was to identify the architectural characteristics of the 18th-century Uniate churches in Right-Bank Ukraine by analysing the regional architectural landscape, statistical records, general visitation reports and the incorporation of both traditional and Western architectural elements. The objectives included: examining the architectural landscape of the 18th-century Uniate churches within the territorial structure of the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis; analysing statistical data on the number of Uniate churches in Right-Bank Ukraine throughout the 18th century; identifying traditional architectural elements specific to the Uniate context.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study of the architectural configuration of the 18th-century Uniate church in Right-Bank Ukraine was conducted using the comprehensive methodological approach, grounded in historical-architectural, source-based and spatial-analytical analyses. The material basis included

archival sources, historical-confessional descriptions, illustrative and cartographic materials, as well as the contemporary academic literature on early modern Ukrainian sacred architecture. The territorial structure of the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis was examined using the historical-geographical method, which enabled the reconstruction of the regional scope of the Uniate network across the main ecclesiastical-administrative zones – Volhynia, Podillia, Kyiv and Bratslav. This involved the use of historical maps obtained through the analysis of the source Kyiv Metropolis and Other Orthodox Churches before 1686 (MAPS) (Mayorov, 2018) and analytical data from the works of I. Skochilyas (2004; 2009), which facilitated the correlation between parish distribution and the geography of local cultural centres. The spatial characteristics of the network were recorded with consideration of settlement structures, local patronage and administrative divisions.

To reconstruct the number of Uniate churches and the dynamics of their changes throughout the 18th century, the quantitative-descriptive approach was employed. Data on the number of churches and their distribution among parishes, monastic centres and missions were drawn from aggregated ecclesiastical descriptions, inventories and general visitation protocols, available via the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine (n.d.). The study also utilised the work of Yu. Legun (2004), which analysed the 18th–19th-century ecclesiastical visitations as a source for examining the number of parishes, clergy, material provision and jurisdictional affiliation of churches. A comparison of quantitative data from the mid- and late 18th century allowed for the identification of general trends and the consequences of political and confessional transformations.

The comparative-stylistic method was used to trace borrowings from the Latin tradition and to identify Baroque and Rococo stylistic elements in the architecture of Uniate churches. Observations on façade compositions,

portal forms, symmetry, decorative finishes and the use of Western European motifs were made through the correlation of textual descriptions with the visual repertoire of preserved buildings, were also discussed in the works of I. Skochilyas (2004; 2009). The research included the comparative analysis with analogous structures in the Orthodox and Roman Catholic contexts. The contextual analysis method allowed for the consideration of political and cultural factors influencing the confessional and architectural transformation. It was applied in studying changes in confessional jurisdiction that affected the operation of parishes, the transformation of the architectural landscape and the adaptation of churches to new conditions. This ensured the alignment of historical processes with architectural changes, examined in their dynamic and regional specificity.

RESULTS

Throughout the 18th century, the architectural image of the Uniate Church in Right-Bank Ukraine was shaped within the context of political instability, inter-confessional tension and sociocultural polyphony, all of which determined the spatial and stylistic specificities of sacred construction. The coexistence of Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Uniate traditions produced the distinctive religious environment in which the architecture served as a key medium for expressing the confessional identity. The Kyiv Uniate Metropolis, established the following of the Union of Brest, gradually consolidated its structure from the early 17th century, encompassing a significant portion of Right-Bank Ukraine, including Volhynia, Podillia, Kyiv and Bratslav. Its development was closely linked to local conditions – such as the social composition of parishes, the cultural policy of the nobility, the activities of monastic institutions and educational centres – which collectively contributed to the diversity of architectural manifestations (Fig. 1).

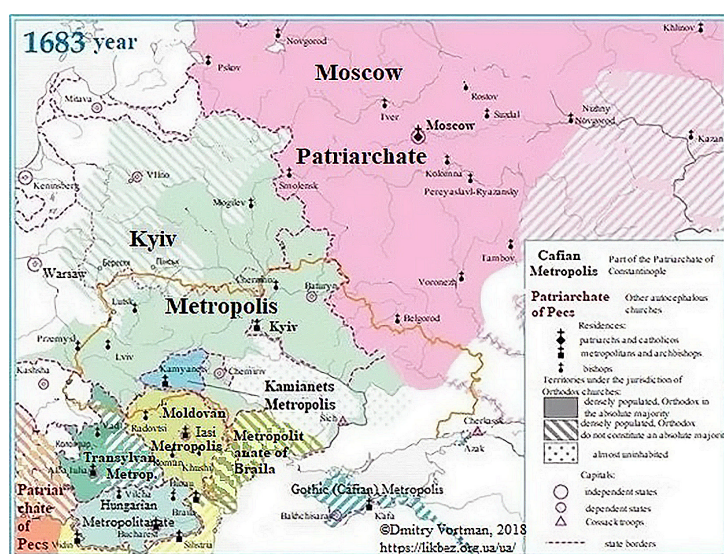


Figure 1. Map of the territorial coverage of the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis in the 17th–18th century

Source: based on M. Mayorov (2018)

Its architectural landscape simultaneously reflected the enduring influence of the ancient Eastern Christian tradition and the transformative processes shaped by the confessional status of the Uniate Church as a mediator between East and West. Archival data, including acts of general visitations, indicated that the highest concentration of Uniate parishes in the 18th century was found in Volhynia and Podillia, whereas in Kyiv and Bratslav regions, the influence of the Union declined due to political changes and the growing dominance of Orthodox and Catholic factors (Skochilyas, 2004). In Volhynia, which encompassed the Lutsk and partly the Kremenets districts, the developed network of Uniate churches was recorded, particularly within Basilian monasteries.

Their architecture preserved constructive features of the Eastern tradition, notably the tripartite layout, while simultaneously displaying Baroque influences in the decorative design of façades and rooflines. In Podillia, covering the Kamianets and Bratslav dioceses, the architectural environment evolved under the influence of Latin Baroque, especially in parishes closely linked to Catholic educational and monastic centres. Uniate churches in this region were often built of masonry, featured with more complex spatial layouts and exhibited symmetrical façade compositions. In Kyiv and Bratslav regions, the Uniate architecture in the 18th century was developed less intensively, which can be attributed to administrative changes resulting from the policies of the Russian Empire, as well as the return of many parishes to Orthodox jurisdiction. Nonetheless, certain sites in this region retained architectural continuity, particularly through the preservation of log-constructed wooden churches that maintained early modern features typical of Ukrainian sacred architecture (Skochilyas, 2004).

In the context of political transformations following the Union of Brest in 1596, the architectural development of the Uniate Church acquired a new significance (Full text of..., n.d.). The Union, which officially recognised the primacy of the Pope, while retaining the Byzantine rite, created conditions for the emergence of a hybrid architectural language. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, the Uniate Church underwent the institutional consolidation, accompanied by the extensive construction of churches, monasteries and episcopal residences. The architecture of Uniate churches reflected not only their liturgical function, but also served as a visual marker of the Union's presence in the local landscape. The political climate of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 18th century – including reformist initiatives, the influence of Catholic orders and educational policy – fostered the integration of European architectural trends into the ecclesiastical construction. This was particularly evident in Basilian monasteries, which served as key centres for the dissemination of Baroque stylistics adapted to local traditions. At the same time, adherence to the liturgical structure of the Byzantine rite was maintained, requiring the inclusion of a narthex, nave and sanctuary, as well as the iconostasis as a spatial separator of the sacred interior.

The Uniate ecclesiastical architecture of Right-Bank Ukraine emerged under the conditions of inter-confessional competition, which was reflected not only in the religious discourse, but also in visual representation. On the one hand, the architectural presence of the Union underscored its autonomy from the Latin rite; on the other hand, the stylistic proximity to Roman Catholic models reinforced a sense of unity within the religious space of the Commonwealth. Certain elements of Uniate church planning – such as symmetrical façades, towers and portals with semicircular arches – testified to the influence of Western European building traditions. A widespread type of Uniate church in the region remained the triconch plan with a dominant nave and log construction, particularly evident in wooden architecture (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Holy Trinity Cathedral in Radomyshl (1730)

Source: Echoes of the past: Radomyshl as a center of Uniate traditions (2025)

In more urbanised centres, Uniate churches were constructed in masonry, featuring a composite structure that combined a Basilican layout with Baroque decorative elements. An important role in this process was played by educated architects and monastic builders, many of whom had studied in Jesuit schools and possessed experience in realising Latin-rite ecclesiastical projects. As a result, the architecture of the Uniate Church acquired features intelligible to both Orthodox and Catholic communities, thus fulfilling a communicative function within the multi-confessional environment. Special attention in the 18th-century architectural landscape of Right-Bank Ukraine was warranted by Uniate monasteries – particularly Basilian ones – which played not only a spiritual, but also a significant cultural, educational and social role. They served as centres of enlightenment, spiritual formation and clerical training, as well as hubs of book production, religious polemics and schooling. Basilian monastic complexes were designed with long-term functioning in mind and their architecture was characterised by a high degree of planning sophistication, compositional coherence and functional zoning. The key architectural dominant of the monastic ensemble remained the church, around which the entire complex was organised – comprising residential quarters, refectories, utility buildings, schools, libraries, printing houses and hospitals (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Basilian Monastery of St. Nicholas in Krekhiv village

Source: Basilian Monastery of St. Nicholas (n.d.)

Monasteries were often designed in the form of enclosed courtyards, a layout borrowed from the Latin tradition of organising cloisters. At the same time, the internal structure of the churches and the organisation of the liturgical space remained faithful to the Byzantine canon, as evidenced by the preservation of ritual zones, iconostases and the eastward orientation of the altar. This interaction between architectural and liturgical models shaped a distinct typology of Uniate monastic complexes, combining functionality, stylistic representativeness and ritual integrity. In the context of the 18th century, the Uniate Church gradually acquired the features of a formally institutionalised confessional system, complete with its own theological doctrine, administrative structure and spatial organisation. This development manifested itself not only in the church governance, but also in the emergence of a recognisable architectural style. The distribution of Uniate churches across Right-Bank Ukraine was uneven, shaped by geopolitical conditions and the extent of support from the local nobility. The presence of Basilian monasteries, which served as centres of religious, cultural, and educational life, played a crucial role. As a result, the local architectural landscape consisted of a combination of major sacral centres and numerous rural wooden churches with tripartite layouts.

Thus, the architectural landscape of the Uniate Church in the 18th-century of Right-Bank Ukraine was defined by the territorial structure of the Kyiv Metropolis, politico-confessional factors and adaptation to local architectural practices. Uniate churches constituted a distinct type of sacred architecture, blending elements of the Eastern rite with formal features of Western European style. Through this synthesis of building traditions, functional planning and visual codes, the architecture of the Uniate Church asserted its presence within the religious and cultural space of the region, leaving a significant imprint on the sacred image of the 18th-century Right-Bank Ukraine. During the 18th century, the number of Uniate churches in Right-Bank

Ukraine underwent considerable transformations, driven both by internal confessional dynamics and broader political changes within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The quantitative analysis of the development of the Uniate ecclesiastical infrastructure was based on a comprehensive study of archival sources, including general visitation records, church inventories, and descriptive documents (Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine, n.d.). These documents provided detailed information about parish conditions, clergy numbers, the material state of churches and their confessional affiliation. Particularly valuable were the general visitation protocols of the Lviv Eparchy, which served as sources of information on the pastoral activity, internal parish organisation, liturgical function distribution and the degree of institutional integration of the Uniate Church into the local context. Yu. Legun (2004) analysed inventories and descriptions documenting the number of parishes, clergy and the material condition of churches in Volhynia, thus enabling the reconstruction of spatial dynamics in the development of the Uniate presence. A synthesis of these data revealed a growth in the number of Uniate parishes during the first half of the 18th century, particularly in the Volhynian and Podilian eparchies and the regression in the second half, caused by political transformations – especially the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the transfer of territories under Russian imperial jurisdiction. As a result, the Uniate infrastructure suffered significant reductions, particularly in Kyiv and Bratslav regions, where the number of functioning churches declined, many parishes were lost, and their confessional affiliation was changed.

According to archival descriptions and general visitation records covering a significant portion of the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis, there were approximately 1,500–1,700 Uniate churches in Right-Bank Ukraine by the mid-18th century. These sources, thoroughly documented in the research of I. Skochilyas (2009), included numerous visitation records of parishes in Volhynia, Podillia, Kyiv and Bratslav. The highest concentration was recorded in the Volhynian Eparchy, with over 600 active parishes, representing around 35–40% of the total number within the Metropolis. In Podillia, visitation data from the Kamianets Eparchy indicated that the number of Uniate churches reached 400–450, the majority being parish churches, with fewer monastic churches, mostly under the Basilian jurisdiction. The situation in Kyiv and Bratslav regions was less stable, with visitation records noting 300–350 active churches, some of which were partially ruined or lacked a full clerical staff. Many parishes suffered from a shortage of clergy, limiting regular liturgical services. In numerous cases, Basilian missions served as replacements (Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine, n.d.).

In general, the mid-18th century was marked by the stable functioning of the Uniate church network, which comprised not only churches, but also schools, monastic cells and printing houses, thereby forming a fully developed cultural environment. After the 1760s, the confessional

landscape of Right-Bank Ukraine began to change gradually due to several factors: the political weakening of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, increasing Russian imperial influence and the intensification of Orthodox reaction, including the forced transfer of parishes to the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church. Following the First Partition of Poland in 1772 and the Second in 1793, much of Right-Bank Ukraine was incorporated into the Russian Empire, profoundly affecting the functioning of the Uniate Church. Visitation records from the late 18th century note a decrease in the number of Uniate churches in the region to 1,200–1,300, of which only 900–1,000 remained fully operational; the rest were either non-functioning or had been transferred to other confessions (Shlikhta, 2025).

The decline of the Uniate presence was particularly acute in the Kyiv region, where the number of active churches had halved by the 1790s. In some cases, local communities – lacking administrative support – chose to convert to Orthodoxy or the Latin rite. Greater stability was maintained in Volhynia and Podillia, partly due to the support of Uniate nobility and the network of Basilian monasteries, which assumed responsibility for clergy provision and material support. Alongside the Uniate Church, Latin (Catholic) and Orthodox structures remained active in Right-Bank Ukraine. According to consolidated statistics

from the second half of the 18th century, the number of Latin churches (including monastic ones) was approximately 1,000–1,100, with over 70% under the patronage of religious orders (Jesuits, Dominicans, Franciscans), primarily concentrated in towns and noble estates. The Orthodox network experienced revitalisation in the latter half of the century due to the policies of the Russian Empire. By the 1790s, there were around 900–1,000 Orthodox churches in Right-Bank Ukraine, many of them either re-registered Uniate churches or newly constructed with state support, particularly in Kyiv and Bratslav regions. Consequently, while the Uniate Church outnumbered both Orthodox and Latin structures in the mid-18th century, by the end of the century it had been surpassed in some areas due to political circumstances (Ketola, 2023).

The official ecclesiastical documentation of the 18th century – including general visitation acts, church descriptions, inventories, and statistical reports of Basilian structures – provided invaluable data on the number, condition, functioning and typological characteristics of Uniate church architecture in Right-Bank Ukraine. These documents served not only an administrative and supervisory role, but also preserved a wealth of empirical evidence, enabling a reconstruction of the confessional and spatial structure of the sacred landscape of the time (Fig. 4).

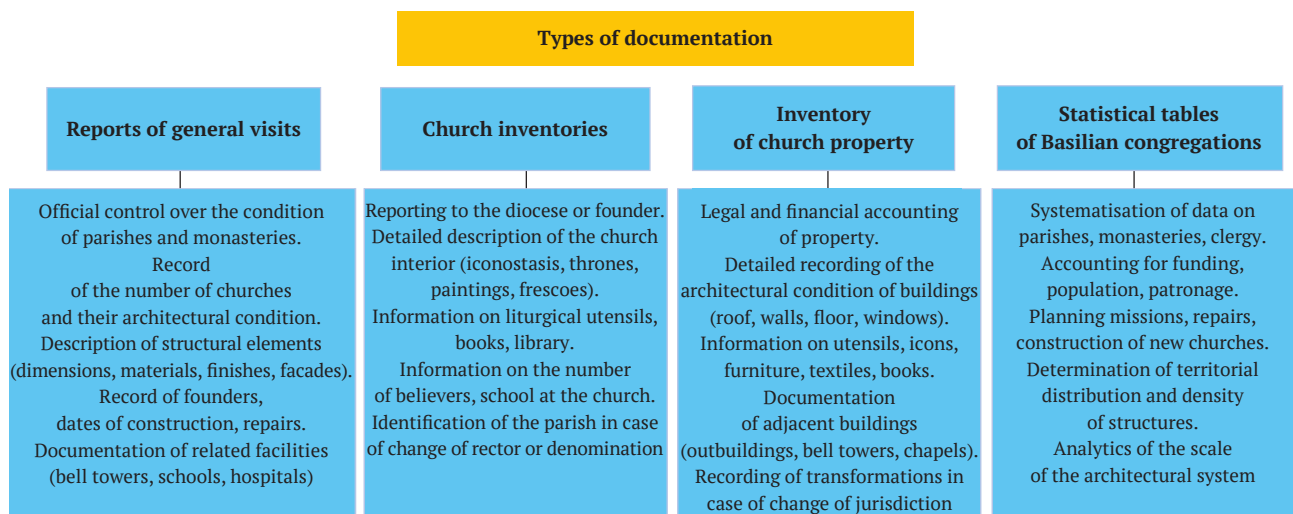


Figure 4. Types of documents and their functions in the context of 18th century Uniate architecture

Source: based on A. Upart (2021), G. Guidarelli (2024)

These documents, taken together, not only outlined the quantitative structure of the Uniate ecclesiastical network, but also enabled the tracing of the functional logic of architectural development – from the ritual core (altar, sanctuaries, iconostasis) to spatial organisation (zones for prayer, schoolchildren, women and men) and further to the complex of ancillary buildings surrounding the church. Thanks to such documentation, it was possible not only to reconstruct the number of structures, but also to identify regional features of church construction, the degree of Baroque influence, the extent to which traditional forms

were preserved, and the transformations that occurred due to political and confessional pressures. In this way, the official ecclesiastical documentation of the 18th century served as a unique source not only for analysing the demographic or confessional situation, but also for studying the architectural dynamics of Uniate churches in Right-Bank Ukraine. It captured the material, spatial and cultural dimensions of the functioning of the Uniate sacred environment during the Late Baroque period (1730–1790).

The architectural specificity of Uniate churches in the 18th-century Right-Bank Ukraine was shaped by the

influence of long-standing regional building traditions that integrated elements of the Byzantine-Christian heritage, local artisanal techniques, and typical constructive and decorative features of vernacular wooden architecture. Despite the gradual penetration of European styles – in particular, the Baroque – the majority of Uniate churches retained traditional construction solutions, typological models and ornamentation in their structure, reflecting the continuity of national architectural forms. The overwhelming majority of Uniate churches in Right-Bank Ukraine in the 18th century were built according to a single-nave or tripartite layout, reflecting continuity with the traditional Eastern Christian architectural model. One of the most striking examples of the tripartite structural organisation of sacred space in Ukrainian 18th-century ecclesiastical architecture was the Church of St. Nicholas in Buchach, Ternopil region (Fig. 5).

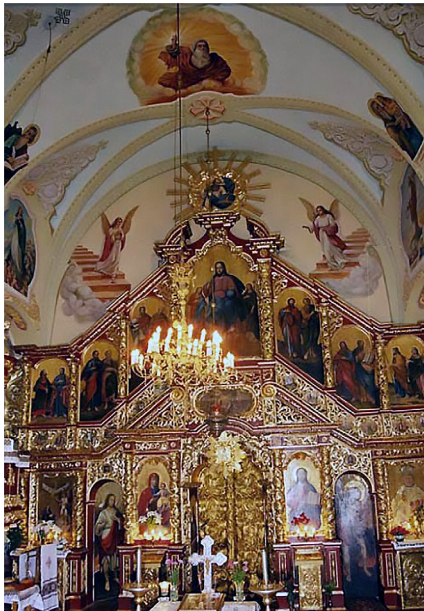


Figure 5. Modern photo of St. Nicholas Church

Source: St. Nicholas Church (2008)

The Church of St. Nicholas is the oldest surviving masonry church in Buchach, erected in 1610 with the patronage of Maria Amalia Mohylianka and Stefan Potocki. Its architecture combined the Ukrainian tripartite layout with Moldavian conch elements: the nave was flanked by an altar section and two semicircular lateral apses. Above the narthex once stood a defensive tower with loopholes, which, unfortunately, has not survived. The church was enclosed by a stone wall that served to protect local inhabitants during attacks. A particular treasure of the church was its 18th-century iconostasis, presumably created by masters of the Zhovkva school of wood carving and painting. Executed in the Baroque style, it was adorned with elaborate vine-motif carvings and gilding. The iconostasis was installed in 1743 under the patronage of Mykola Potocki. This church was a vivid example

of Uniate ecclesiastical architecture in the 18th-century Right-Bank Ukraine, combining the traditional Eastern Christian architecture with elements of Western European style. Its tripartite layout and the decorative richness of the iconostasis reflected the influences of Ukrainian Baroque and Western architectural traditions. Typologically, the dominant form in church architecture was the rectangular log structure, serving as the core constructive unit. Its main components – the base (walls), roof and superstructure – conformed to the canons of traditional wooden architecture (Fig. 6).



Figure 6. A chapel in the city of Slavuta, Zaslav district

Source: based on B. Voron (2021)

The single-nave structure of Uniate churches in the 18th century was characterised by compact proportions and an overall symmetry of volumes, which allowed for a balanced interplay between the horizontal layout and vertical organisation of space. This composition ensured not only the aesthetic coherence of the building, but also enhanced the functionality of liturgical practices, with the central axis directing focus towards the altar and iconostasis. In the case of tripartite variants, a clear vertical hierarchy was evident: the central nave typically rose above the narthex and sanctuary, creating a visual dominant and enabling the placement of a lantern or skylight for the natural illumination. Some examples also employed structures with light towers or an opening in the roof ridge, thereby enhancing the dramatic quality of the church interior (Fig. 7).

The roofs of the churches typically featured gable, broken-gable or multi-broken forms, often characterised by distinctive angular outlines that created a pyramidal silhouette. This design was functionally justified: such shapes ensured efficient drainage of rainwater and melting snow, suited to the climatic conditions of the region. The gable ends, usually triangular, were decorated with wooden ornamental boards, carved cornices, sunburst rosettes and other elements serving both artistic and symbolic purposes. In masonry churches, these same forms were interpreted through stone or brickwork techniques:

architectural belts, stucco mouldings, applied pilasters and plaster decoration echoed stylistic motifs drawn from wooden prototypes. The framework structures, built from locally sourced timber species (oak, pine, larch), were constructed using traditional joinery methods – “lap joints” or “dovetail joints” – which ensured the strength and durability of the log constructions (Fig. 8).



Figure 7. Church of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary in Drukhiv

Source: Wooden temples of Ukraine: The most interesting, most beautiful, oldest, largest (n.d.)



Figure 8. Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the village of Pechera

Source: Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Pechera village, Vinnytsia region): Map, photo, description (n.d.)

Such a technical solution allowed for the creation of an open interior space without numerous supports, thereby promoting good acoustics for worship. An integral element of the external appearance of many churches was the bell

tower – either two-tiered or three-tiered – constructed in the same structural style. It could be a separate structure positioned adjacent to the main volume or integrated into the composition through a vestibule or gallery. Bell towers not only served the function of sound signalling, but also acted as vertical accents in the church’s silhouette, reflecting the architectural tradition of Cossack Baroque. Their presence emphasised the solemnity of the sacred building and strengthened its visual prominence within the settlement’s landscape. The Uniate church architecture maintained the continuity with the vernacular wooden architecture of Central and Western Ukraine, which had developed over the course of the 17th and 18th centuries. This was evident in the methods of log construction, roof organisation, the shape of the domes, the lighting system and the composition of the church interior (Fig. 9).

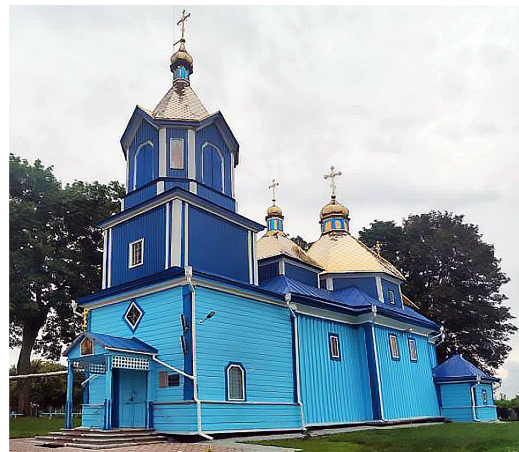


Figure 9. St. George’s Church in Hrabiv village

Source: Church of Saint George (2025)

The Volhynia and Podillia zones were characterised by the presence of wooden churches with a three-log (three-part) composition, which essentially reproduced models known from the era of medieval architecture (14th–16th centuries). These churches were distinguished by their compactness, proportionality and restraint in detail. A distinctive feature was the complex multi-tiered roof, which combined decorative qualities with functionality, ensuring effective water runoff and acoustic insulation. The folk tradition also widely employed the technique of shingle roofing, which persisted in Uniate churches until the early 19th century. In some cases, the roof was double-layered: the first layer made of boards, the second of shingles. Such structural solutions ensured durability and were suited to the climatic conditions of the region. Particular mention should be made of the use of ventilation openings, light apertures and roof breaks, which had both practical significance and an aesthetic function. The windows were arranged symmetrically, often in a single row, and featured simple rectangular or arched shapes, sometimes with carved surrounds. They were framed with wooden casings painted in natural colours – ochre, dark brown or lime

white. In later examples of Uniate architecture, specifically between 1760 and 1790, the influence of Polish and Lithuanian Baroque was felt, particularly in the expansion of the transept, the inclusion of side chapels, and the appearance of internal vaulting in masonry churches. All these elements were integrated into the preserved traditional form, creating a synthetic model of the sacred building (Kuryliak *et al.*, 2022).

The decoration of the 18th-century Uniate churches in Right-Bank Ukraine was shaped by a deeply rooted icon-painting tradition, skilled woodcarving and local ornamental motifs, which simultaneously carried sacred, didactic and aesthetic meanings. These elements functioned as a visual mediator between the faithful and theological truths, especially important in rural communities with low literacy levels. The central compositional element of the interior was the iconostasis – a four-tiered structure combining an iconographic programme with an architectural sculpture. In most cases, it was created by local carvers, who adapted Baroque symmetry to the canonical structure of the Eastern rite, emphasising the hierarchy of sacred images and the sacred perspective of the church interior. The carving was done by hand, featuring geometric and floral motifs (Fig. 10).



Figure 10. The iconostasis of the Trinity Gate Church

Source: Iconostasis of the Trinity Gate Church (n.d.)

The main subjects depicted were scenes from the Holy Scripture, lives of the saints, as well as themes of Uniate apologetics (such as scenes of Church unification and images of hierarchs like Basil the Great, Josaphat Kuntsevych and others). The backgrounds of the icons were executed using the traditional technique of tempera painting on gesso. In some churches, gilding and silvering were employed, particularly for halos, icon covers and decorative insets. The colour palette remained

within a restrained Baroque range: warm ochre tones, blue, dark green and red. In the interiors of the 18th-century Uniate churches, carved elements and the technique of inlay were widely used, covering not only the main architectural structures, but also numerous decorative objects. Wall carvings adorned the inner surfaces of doors, arched openings, choir lofts, altar railings and elements of the iconostasis (Fig. 11).



Figure 11. Decoration of the Trinity Gate Church in the Kyiv Cave Monastery

Source: based on A. Kondratyuk (2020)

Traditional ornamentation was dominated by stylised floral compositions, grapevines, acanthus leaves, palmettes and geometric elements imbued with deep symbolic meaning. These motifs were associated with the Garden of Eden, spiritual fertility, the unity of the faithful and the continuity of church tradition. The symbolic content of the visual decoration was directly linked to the dogmatic aspects of faith and the liturgical function of the church. Floors were generally made from solid wooden planks, while in masonry buildings ceramic or stone tiles were used, sometimes featuring simple patterns. The altar area was raised by several steps, emphasising its sacred status. Textile elements were actively employed in the decoration – embroidered coverings, towels and woven icon frames crafted by women of the community, thereby preserving the continuity of local artisanal traditions. Thus, the architectural and decorative environment of the Uniate church not only fulfilled a sacred function, but also visually and ritually affirmed confessional identity within the Right-Bank Ukraine region. The study of the architectural arrangement of the 18th-century Uniate churches in Right-Bank Ukraine revealed a complex structural dynamic of the church network, spatial planning features and stylistic transformations of sacred buildings.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrated that the architectural language of Uniate churches was formed as a synthesis of Byzantine tradition, local building practices and Baroque stylistics. Similar trends were observed in the work of S. DeLouche (2021), who emphasised that the architecture of 18th-century sacred buildings in Europe generally reflected a rethinking of stylistic codes to strengthen confessional identity. According to this study, Uniate churches served as carriers of the symbolic presence of the Union, which aligns with the author's conclusions about the symbolic function of architecture in the religiously fragmented space. The study also established that the highest concentration of Uniate parishes in the 18th century was found in the Volyn and Podillia dioceses. This correlated with the results of M. Jakubowski (2024), who examined the architectural mechanisms of Uniate presence in the Polish-Lithuanian context. Researcher emphasised that patronage strategies of the local nobility played a decisive role in supporting the Uniate infrastructure. This research confirmed that the support of noble families was pivotal for the preservation and functioning of Uniate churches in these regions.

The typological analysis of single-nave and three-part churches conducted in the study demonstrated a correspondence between the architectural form of Uniate buildings and the functional level of parish organisation. This differentiation directly aligns with the conclusions of A. Buczyło (2025), who argued that the architectural forms of 18th-century Uniate churches were not only expressions of stylistic preferences or technical capabilities, but also reflected the internal structure of diocesan administration. Specifically, the researcher noted that larger, architecturally complex churches functioned as institutional markers of deanery or protopresbyterate levels, whereas smaller parish churches tended to have simplified forms, indicating their peripheral role in the confessional landscape.

The statistical decrease in the number of Uniate churches during the second half of the 18th century, documented in this study, confirmed the broader trend of the Uniate Church losing its institutional positions in Right-Bank Ukraine. This coincided with the findings of F.E. Sysyn (2021), who investigated the consequences of the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth for the Uniate Church. Scientist pointed out that the incorporation of Ukrainian territories into the Russian Empire led to the systematic dismantling of Uniate structures, forced transfer of parishes to Orthodox jurisdiction, restrictions on Basilian monasteries' activities and destruction of sacred infrastructure. The study evidenced similar phenomena, notably in the Kyiv and Bratslav regions, where between 1770 and 1790 the number of active Uniate churches nearly halved and many communities lost their clergy or were compelled to transfer to different confessional oversight. In the context of continuity with Byzantine architectural tradition and gradual Baroque influence on churches, a comparison with the work of F.E. Sysyn (2023) was appropriate, as researcher highlighted the difficulties

in accepting the Union and the related architectural compromise strategies. The Uniate architecture, according to this research, indeed exhibited mixed features – on the one hand preserving the Eastern liturgical space and on the other presenting a Baroque façade embodying the idea of integration into the religious space of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This fully accords with researcher's assertion about the Uniate identity's striving to balance fidelity to tradition with the adaptation to new conditions.

Within the symbolic design of sacred space, special attention in the study was given to architectural and decorative elements that shaped the visual identity of the Uniate church within the confessional environment of Right-Bank Ukraine. The analysis confirmed the leading role of Baroque decoration, iconostases, elaborate wood-carving and iconography not only as aesthetic, but also theologically charged elements. This interpretation aligns with the conclusions of P. Goyret (2022), who emphasised the importance of Eucharistic unity as the main ecclesiological idea of Eastern Catholicism. According to author's observations, the iconostasis in Eastern Catholic churches served as a material embodiment of the synthesis between Latin universality and Byzantine sacred heritage, visually and performatively modelling communion.

Jurisdictional tensions between Eastern Catholics and Orthodox, as well as their architectural manifestations found in this study, correspond with the findings of A. Kap-tijn (2020), who analysed the legal foundations of Eastern Catholic churches' functioning in the context of ecumenical dialogue. The Uniate churches recorded in the research combined adherence to Eastern liturgical discipline (zonal division, orientation, iconostasis) with openness to visual borrowings from Latin architecture (Baroque façades, symmetry, portals). This confirmed the hybrid nature of Uniate architecture, which operated at the intersection of confessional and canonical systems, forming a spatial model capable of adapting to a multiconfessional environment and the political challenges of the 18th century. The reconstruction of the typology of monastic complexes conducted in the study revealed the systematic planning of Basilian monasteries with inner courtyards and clear functional zoning. This approach was supported by the work of D. Bains (2021), who examined the secularisation of sacred space and the transformation of its functions. Uniate monasteries, like their Latin counterparts, stood at the intersection of sacred and educational spaces, as evidenced by the presence of educational buildings, printing houses and utility structures described in the study.

Within the scope of the study of the architectural arrangement of the 18th-century Uniate Church, one of the key aspects was the examination of the spatial integrity of the sacred landscape amid political instability and confessional pressure. The spatial transformations recorded in the Uniate churches of Right-Bank Ukraine were associated with the need to preserve the sacred order against external challenges, particularly from Orthodox and Latin jurisdictions. These observations align with the conclusions of M. van der Tol &

P. Gorski (2022), who interpreted the fragmentation of sacred space as a symptom of modernisation and secularisation shifts occurring in the European religious landscape of the 18th century. They argued that under conditions of weakening institutional stability of the Church, the sacred space began to lose its unity, splitting into separate symbolic and functional zones. Thus, a parallel was revealed between the findings of this authors concerning changes in the sacred landscape of Europe and the transformative tendencies observed in the Uniate architecture of Right-Bank Ukraine.

Another important line of discussion was the issue of confessional syncretism, which defined the architectural identity of Uniate churches. The study noted that typical architectural solutions – particularly the combination of Baroque symmetry of façades with Byzantine internal zoning, the use of vernacular construction techniques alongside elements of European decoration – formed a distinctive visual code of the Union, understandable to communities with diverse cultural and ritual affiliations. This corresponded with the analysis by Ž. Buržinskas (2021), who described the Uniate architecture of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as a product of confessional synthesis functioning within a milieu of religious polyphony. Scientist emphasised that the architectural form of Uniate churches served not only a cultic, but also a symbolic function – demonstrating the possibility of visual reconciliation between the canonical heritage of Byzantium and the cultural tradition of the West. The results of the study traced similar processes in the architectural environment of Volhynia and Podillia, where wooden churches with Baroque elements combined the symbolism of Eastern Christianity with the representativeness of the Latin style.

Regarding the decoration and iconographic content of Uniate churches, the study highlighted the preservation of the organisation of iconostases, traditional carving techniques, and the use of local ornamental motifs. These observations resonate with the conclusions of R. Kosiv (2022), who investigated the iconography of wooden churches in Central Europe. The author stressed the importance of interaction between regional artistic traditions and pan-European styles, manifested in decorative practices, adaptation of Baroque schemes to local materials and the preservation of the national iconographic canon. The study confirmed that decorative solutions in Uniate churches of Right-Bank Ukraine did not copy the Latin model, but interpreted it through the prism of local technical and aesthetic traditions. The use of colours, compositional rhythms, ornaments, and carving techniques demonstrated a synthesis within the material space, reflecting the identity of the Union as a ritual and cultural system.

The conclusions of W. Zielecka-Mikołajczyk (2022) regarding the archives of the Greek Catholic episcopate confirmed the high informational value of visitation acts, descriptions, and inventories for analysing both quantitative and spatial-functional characteristics of the church network. This corresponded with the approach of the present study, which utilised generalised data from

historical-church documentation, including indirect references to visitation practices. Such an approach allowed the reconstruction of parish population dynamics, the identification of typical church planning models and the detection of features of sacred environment organisation of the Uniate Church at various levels of its functioning. In the study by G. Pidgrushnyi *et al.* (2021), it was established that the spatial structure of the Kyiv metropolitan region was determined by historical factors, socio-economic ties and cultural heterogeneity. The authors emphasised that the lack of unified criteria for defining the boundaries of the agglomeration complicated its functional planning and certain territories remained outside institutional integration due to weak administrative linkage. The results of this study confirmed a similar tendency: the Uniate church network in Right-Bank Ukraine was also characterised by unevenness, caused by political influence, patronage and monastic presence. In both cases, spatial organisation was shaped not only by geographical factors, but also by a complex network of functional and cultural-historical connections. The obtained results correlated with theoretical approaches and empirical observations presented in the analysed sources, attesting to the appropriateness of the chosen methodology, the validity of the analytical conclusions and the significance of the architectural heritage as a tool for representing religious identity in the multi-confessional environment of the 18th-century Right-Bank Ukraine.

CONCLUSIONS

As a result of the study of the architectural arrangement of the 18th-century Uniate Church in Right-Bank Ukraine, key features of its territorial structure, quantitative dynamics and spatial-constructive characteristics have been established. It was determined that the architectural landscape of the Uniate Church was formed in a complex religious-political environment, within which the Uniate tradition combined elements of the Byzantine rite with local construction forms and certain features of the Western European style. Geographically, the jurisdiction of the Kyiv Uniate Metropolis in the 18th century included four regions – Volhynia, Podillia, Kyiv region and Bratslav region – with uneven intensity of Uniate presence. The highest concentration of parishes was observed in Volhynia and Podillia, accompanied by the development of an extensive church-monastic infrastructure. In Kyiv and Bratslav regions, a gradual decline in Uniate influence was observed due to political pressure and jurisdictional changes.

Statistical review established that the number of Uniate churches in Right-Bank Ukraine reached 1,500–1,700 units by the mid-18th century, most of which were parish churches. The largest number of churches was recorded in the Volhynian and Podolian dioceses. In the second half of the 18th century, a gradual decrease in the number of active churches to 1,200–1,300 was noted, caused by the transition of some parishes to Orthodox or Latin jurisdiction. Comparison with data on Catholic and Orthodox structures showed that by the mid-18th century, the Uniate Church held a quantitative

advantage, which gradually diminished by the end of the 18th century. It was found that the traditional architectural arrangement of Uniate churches was based on the continuity with Ukrainian wooden church architecture and adapted forms of the Eastern rite. The most common types were single-nave and three-part churches using log construction, gable and multi-sloped roofs, triangular pediments, and symmetrical façades. The interior preserved the classic structure – narthex, nave and altar, often with a Baroque iconostasis. The decoration was dominated by wooden carving, local ornaments and icon painting, ensuring visual and theological integrity of the sacred space. The study outlined the specifics of Uniate architecture as a synthetic phenomenon formed at the intersection of tradition, style and identity.

Among the limitations of the study, the fragmentary nature of source material should be noted, which complicated the accurate reconstruction of the quantitative dynamics of the Uniate network and the full reconstruction

of individual architectural objects in the absence of visual documentation. Prospective directions for further research include archival cataloguing and digital processing of general visitation acts, church descriptions, and inventories to create databases of the 18th-century Uniate church network. Field architectural and ethnographic expeditions documenting preserved Uniate heritage objects, particularly wooden churches, are also advisable to refine typological models and regional features.

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Андрій Майовець

Аспірант

Український католицький університет

79011, вул. Іларіона Свенціцького, 17, м. Львів, Україна

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3311-9350>

Архітектурне облаштування унійної церкви XVIII століття: традиція і західні запозичення

Анотація. Метою дослідження було виявити архітектурні особливості унійної церкви XVIII століття на Правобережній Україні в контексті її конфесійної, просторової та конструктивної специфіки. У роботі застосовано комплексний міждисциплінарний підхід, що поєднував методи історико-архітектурного, просторово-аналітичного, типологічного та порівняльно-стилістичного аналізу. Джерельну базу склали історичні карти, церковно-адміністративні описи, графічні зображення, а також узагальнені статистичні дані щодо конфесійної структури Правобережної України у XVIII столітті. У ході дослідження було встановлено, що архітектурний ландшафт унійної церкви сформувався в умовах складного конфесійного середовища, в якому унійна традиція виступала синтетичним явищем, поєднуючи елементи візантійського обряду, народної дерев'яної архітектури та барокових впливів латинської сакральної спадщини. Така взаємодія забезпечувала формування виразної просторово-візуальної моделі, що утверджувала конфесійну ідентичність унії в регіоні з високим рівнем релігійної конкуренції. Київська унійна митрополія охоплювала території Волині, Поділля, Київщини та Брацлавщини, де унійна присутність була нерівномірною: найбільше храмів зафіксовано на Волині й Поділлі, найменше – на Київщині та Брацлавщині, що було зумовлено політичними змінами та юрисдикційними зрушеннями. У середині XVIII століття кількість унійних церков сягала 1500–1700, однак до кінця XVIII століття зменшилася до 1200–1300. У межах аналізу однонавових, тридільних та триконхових архітектурних типів храмів було встановлено, що інтер'єри унійних храмів оформлювалися багатоярусними іконостасами з різьбленням і позолотою, стінною різьбою, фресками та декоративними мотивами, які поєднували сакральну символіку з локальними орнаментальними традиціями. Особливу роль відігравали барокові елементи – виноградна лоза, пальмети, акантове листя – що підсилювали візуальну урочистість храмового простору. Практичне значення дослідження полягає в можливості використання його результатів для реконструкції сакрального середовища XVIII століття, збереження архітектурної спадщини та формування науково обґрунтованих реставраційних підходів.

Ключові слова: сакральний простір; типологія храмів; конфесійна динаміка; іконостас; барокова стилістика; просторове зонування; зрубна техніка
