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Theophanes III, Patriarch of Jerusalem, and Aspects of his Journey to Muscovy and Ruthenia, 1617-1621

The reason why I turned my attention to Theophanes was his antimension, found in 1978 during archaeological excavations in the Near Caves of the Kyiv Lavra. This is one of the earliest antimensia from Ukraine which has survived in good condition; after restoration it has been shown recently in various exhibitions. In comparison with other antimensia of the 16th to 17th centuries, which are mostly of linen with modest decoration in one or two colours, Theophanes' is a splendid production, painted in tempera on silk, looking more like a portable icon or a miniature in a manuscript. To understand the importance of this unique object, it has to be examined first as a document of church history, connected with the Patriarch Theophanes, whose visit to Muscovy and Ruthenia in 1617-1621 had long-lasting effects on the history of their churches. Theophanes' visit was supported by Timotheos, Patriarch of Constantinople, Athanasios, Patriarch of Antioch, and Cyril Lucaris, Patriarch of Alexandria, in the hope that he might be able to alleviate the problems of the orthodox population of Eastern Europe. He bore a charter issued by Patriarch Timotheos in Istanbul which appointed him as a plenipotentiary, and he was escorted by the exarch, archimandrite Arsenios. He left Istanbul for Moldavia in March 1617, but was delayed by the Tatars and later by the Polish siege of Moscow, and finally arrived in the Russian capital in February 1619. The most important event during his stay was the consecration of the new Patriarch of Moscow. Metropolitan Filaret Nikitich, father of Mikhail Fedorovich, the first Russian Tsar of the Romanov dynasty, was consecrated on June 24, 1619 in the Uspensky Sobor of the Moscow Kremlin by Theophanes, assisted by Russian church dignitaries. Filaret Nikitich in later years retained a great regard for Theophanes, who became for some time the best-known and most respected representative of the Greek Orthodox church for the Russians.

It is also known that during his stay in Russia, Theophanes noticed some discrepancies in liturgical practice compared with that of the Greek church, and using his authority as Patriarch tried tactfully to correct them. According to the words of contemporaries, his advice was "do not abandon uniformity of thought, and adhere to the old laws of Greek orthodoxy and the ancient decrees of the four Patriarchates".

After receiving many presents, Theophanes set out on his return journey in February 1620. His way lay through Ruthenia, which was then part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The biggest problem facing the orthodox community in the Commonwealth at this time was the absence of their own hierarchy, since the Synod of Brest in 1596. Numerous attempts by orthodox delegates at the Sejm to resolve the problem by legal means had failed, and the Ukrainian elite, supported by the Cossack army, decided to use the visit of Theophanes to restore the

Metropolitanate, even without the official approval of King Sigismund III Vasa and the Sejm.

During the autumn and winter of 1620/21 Theophanes consecrated five bishops as well as the Metropolitan in Kyiv and on his return journey. As a result of this, the orthodox hierarchy was completely restored in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, even if the recognition of the new bishops by the King and the Sejm was still a long way away.

From this time in Polish official documents the Patriarch was known as a “Turkish spy” and a “pretender” who was acting illegally, but for the orthodox community he became one of the most highly honoured members of the church hierarchy. This is confirmed, for example, by court records from 1624, in which the Vilnius Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit were accused of having a portrait of Theophanes painted like a saint on the outside wall of their building. At the same time Eustrati Zialowski, a member of the Brotherhood, took a portrait of Theophanes to the “German lands” and commissioned a print, which included the words “Apostolicae Sedis”. The court documents give no further information about this portrait, but it is very likely that it is the engraving made in 1622 by the Augsburg artist Lukas Kilian (1579-1637). This portrait has a Latin inscription emphasising the legitimacy of Theophanes’ restoration of the orthodox hierarchy.

To summarize, it is clear that Theophanes and everything connected with him, his charters, letters, and in our case the antimensia consecrated by him were highly regarded and valued. We do not know whether it was the Patriarch or an assistant who decided on the design and the inscriptions of the antimensia, but it is certain that before the consecration he himself would have checked and approved them. Considering Theophanes’ authority and his eagerness to correct faults which had crept into the liturgical practices of the Orthodox churches in Eastern Europe, it can be assumed that his antimensia were also intended to provide a correct pattern for future use.

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Administration as a means of integration in early modern Russia

The local population in Muscovy included various social, professional, and cultural groups, which could or could not interact with each other. During the creation of their state, the princes of Moscow faced the problem of integrating a diverse local population into coherent communities. Unification of these communities required a variety of integration techniques, but most of them had their own limits. Every socially active Muscovite, however, was in contact with one element of the Muscovite

autocracy; its administration. Receiving or buying a real estate, paying duties and acquiring tax privileges, protecting personal security, honor, and possessions, settling conflicts with neighbors – all these everyday activities required contacts with the local officials. Participation in the local administration brought together local agents of the central power and various members of local communities, which thereby became more cohesive.

The center thus responded to the challenges of integration by creating a system of local administration which functioned on the basis of centrally appointed officials and elected bodies with strong local affiliations. Though the central authorities ostensibly created local elective bodies in response to the petitions of local communities, this administration eventually served the needs of the center too. The state considered local interests, but it penetrated local social structures, transformed them and utilized them for its own needs and for the needs of the province.

It is well known that the state's priorities were its finances and military power. At the same time, the local communities were also interested in keeping up lively connections with the center through participation in the local administration. Through its local officials, the state distributed real estates among members of urban and rural communities. The provincial government also guaranteed the landownership of the locals; confiscations were rare and involved a considerable degree of give-and-take even during the Oprichnina.

As it was part of a pre-modern state, Muscovite local administration was often sluggish and inefficient. However, these setbacks do not diminish the integrative role played by local government in Muscovy. The center created a local administration, which was all-inclusive, flexible, and generally functional. It survived through periods of political turmoil, like the Oprichnina and the Time of Troubles and contributed to the durability of Muscovite autocracy. Local administration became a place of interaction between the center and various local groups of interests. It was largely thanks to local government that the Muscovite state was able to accommodate localism. Muscovite localism thus can be explained through modern concepts of regionalism which emphasize the relativism of regional designations, the impact of external factors on regional identities, the role center in defining regional boundaries and local institutional structures for articulating local needs. As in the modern world, where globalization and regionalism often work in the same direction, integration and localism in Muscovy were complementary processes. They occurred simultaneously and fed on each other.