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THE RECEPTION OF ATHONITE HERITAGE IN UKRAINE (10th–16th CENTURIES)

Background. This article is dedicated to a comprehensive study of the reception of Athonite heritage in Ukraine during the period from the 10th to the 16th centuries, which is a crucial element in understanding the spiritual, cultural, and social development of Ukrainian lands. Athos, as a center of Eastern Orthodoxy, played a key role in shaping monastic traditions that became the foundation for the development of monastic life in Kyivan Rus'. The author meticulously examines how the Athonite tradition, deeply rooted in Eastern Christian monasticism, influenced the establishment and functioning of Ukrainian monasteries, particularly the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, which became a center of spiritual life and the spread of hesychasm in Ukrainian lands.

Methods. The article analyzes two main aspects of the reception of Athonite heritage: monastic and scholarly. The monastic aspect pertains to the influence of Athonite traditions on the organization and spiritual life of Ukrainian monasteries. The author demonstrates how Athonite practices, especially anchoritism, were transplanted to Ukrainian soil and adapted to local conditions. Special attention is given to the role of St. Anthony of Pechersk, who, having been tonsured on Athos, brought the core principles of Athonite monasticism to Rus', which shaped the subsequent development of ascetic traditions in Ukraine.

Results. The scholarly aspect encompasses the impact of Athonite spiritual ideas on Ukrainian philosophical and aesthetic thought. The author explores how the ideas of hesychasm, which originated on Athos, permeated Ukrainian lands through translated literature written by Athonite and Ukrainian monks. Significant attention is devoted to the influence of the works of Gregory Palamas and Gregory of Sinai, as well as other mystical-ascetic literature, on the formation of the spiritual worldview of Ukrainian scholars and theologians. The Kyiv Pechersk Lavra played a vital role in this process, being closely connected with Athos and becoming a center for the dissemination of hesychast ideas in Ukraine.

Conclusions. It is emphasized that the influx of the Athonite fall into the development of Cossack piety deserves special respect. It is shown how the Athonite monks, who arrived on the Ukrainian lands, molded the religious traditions of the Cossacks, promoting the ideas of twinning, lovelessness and the cult of the Virgin Mary as the patroness of Sich. Athonite ideals found their expression in the established Cossack monasteries and monasteries, which fueled the development of a special type of "Cossack piety", which became an invisible part of the national identity of Ukrainians.

Keywords: Athonite heritage, hesychasm, Ukrainian Orthodoxy, Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, monasticism, spiritual tradition, cultural influence, Cossack piety.

Background

Relevance of the Topic The study of the reception of the Athonite heritage in Ukraine from the 10th to the 16th centuries holds significant importance in understanding the spiritual and cultural development of the region. The Athonite tradition, deeply rooted in Eastern Orthodox monasticism, played a crucial role in shaping the religious and social fabric of medieval Ukraine. By examining the transmission and adaptation of Athonite practices and teachings, scholars can gain insights into the broader processes of religious influence and the integration of Byzantine ecclesiastical traditions in the Slavic world. This topic is particularly relevant today as it provides a historical perspective on the enduring influence of Athonite spirituality in Ukrainian Orthodoxy and its role in shaping the national identity.

Methods

Analysis of Recent Publications Recent research on the reception of Athonite heritage has highlighted the complexity of its adaptation in various cultural and political contexts. Studies by scholars such as I. Kutashov & H. Tsytsenko emphasized the role of Athonite monks in the dissemination of Orthodox Christian teachings across Eastern Europe, particularly focusing on the transmission of spiritual texts and monastic practices. Other researchers, including as I. Isichenko (2009), O. Matytsyn (2012), Yu. Peleshenko (2004), S. Shumylo (2021) have explored the influence of Athonite art and architecture on the development of Ukrainian ecclesiastical structures, noting the interplay between local traditions and imported Byzantine elements. These publications underscore the multifaceted nature of Athonite heritage and its significance in the religious and cultural evolution of Ukraine.

Purpose of the Article The primary aim of this article is to analyze the unique characteristics of the reception of Athonite heritage on the territory of Ukraine during the 10th to 16th centuries. The study seeks to identify the key factors that influenced the adaptation and integration of Athonite traditions in the Ukrainian context, exploring how these elements contributed to the development of a distinct religious and cultural identity. Additionally, the article aims to contribute to the broader scholarly discourse by providing a nuanced understanding of the historical and theological implications of Athonite influence in medieval Ukraine.

Results

Presenting of main material. As the Ukrainian scholar and religious figure I. Isichenko aptly notes, "The Medieval era establishes a new system of spatial measurements, with Jerusalem becoming its sacred center. The earthly, tangible Jerusalem, as the city where Jesus Christ's salvific mission was fulfilled, served as a spiritual reflection of the heavenly Jerusalem, the Heavenly Kingdom. The sacred space of Jerusalem was perceived by the medieval consciousness as the center of the cosmos. Golgotha was imagined as the world's center, where Adam was once created and later buried. The sanctifying presence of the heavenly Jerusalem in ecclesiastical life manifests in the creation of the Holy Land beyond the geographical borders of Palestine. Simultaneously, the Holy Mountain Athos becomes the second "pole of attraction", where in the 11th–13th centuries, the hesychastic doctrine was formed, seen as an exemplary environment for the creation and existence of literary texts, where the ideal's proclamation and the way of life were harmoniously aligned. The pivotal role of St. Anthony in creating the domestic ascetic culture, centered and sourced at the

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Kyiv Pechersk Monastery, is linked by the chronicler to the blessing of Athos, brought by the saint to his abode on the Kyiv hills" (Isichenko (Ihor), 2009, p. 14).

In this regard, it is conceptually important, in our view, to highlight two of the most significant aspects of the reception of Athonite heritage on the territory of modern Ukraine, from the times of Kyivan Rus' up until the establishment of the Kyiv Mohyla Academy:

1) the ascetic aspect;

2) the scholarly aspect (which includes the influence on the philosophical, aesthetic, and socio-political reflection of domestic artists and figures).

Let us examine each of these aspects in more detail moving forward.

When discussing the first aspect, it is important to note that "the formation of monastic tradition began as early as the 4th and 5th centuries. Two main approaches can be distinguished: solitary and communal asceticism. The well-known Orthodox theologian and patrologist Archimandrite Cyprian (Kern) wrote: "In the 4th-5th centuries, Egyptian monasticism followed two paths: the anchoritic and the communal. This delineates two types of life, two types of salvation, and two types of attitude toward the individual. These two types persisted throughout the entire history of monasticism and were vividly manifested in the monastic realm—on Mount Athos, in Ukraine, in Greece, and throughout the East. The anchoritic path is an individual path, which later transformed into the idiorhythmic type of monasteries; the communal path is a collective path, less prominent for the individual, which largely suppresses personal expression, yet is more strongly organized for ecclesiastical construction; this is the path of mass organization of monastic salvation" (Tsytsenko, 2011, p. 19).

In Byzantium, the center of the hesychast movement was Mount Athos. Since ancient times, this mountain was home to hermits—anchorites. Almost all the ascetics of this mountain primarily led an anchoritic way of life. They settled in caves, forests, huts, and semi-ruined cells. However, with the arrival of St. Athanasius the Great on Mount Athos, the situation changed drastically. He fundamentally altered the autonomous character of the ascetics on Athos. At the request of Emperor Nicephorus, St. Athanasius the Great built the Lavra and wrote a rule for it. According to this rule, all monks were required to reside in the monastery, with the exception of five of the most experienced anchorites. Even these anchorites were still subject to the monastery, as they were fully supported by it and were under the authority of the abbot. This situation provoked resistance among the hermits of the Holy Mountain, as the primary philosophical-theological idea of hesychasm—withdrawal from the world—was losing its meaning. Living in a communal monastery compelled them to engage in material relations with the world, which was considered the business of the worldly and not fitting for hermits. Therefore, for the Athonite anchorites, the communal monastery was seen as an obstacle to achieving their goal of salvation (Peleshenko, 2004, p. 178).

To resolve the conflicts that arose on Mount Athos, another emperor, John Tzimiskes, approved the unified Athonite rule, known as the Typikon or Tragos, in 971. This rule consisted of 28 articles that equalized the rights between the cenobites and the anchorites. However, solitary hermitage was permitted only for those monks who had undergone training in the monastery and were capable of complete anchoritism. Additionally, the authority of the anchorites was

preserved, and a principle of non-possession with respect to the monasteries was introduced.

In terms of our own historical context, Hilarion is considered one of the first hermits of Rus', having settled in a cave. Anthony of Pechersk also led a cave-based anchoritic life, albeit at a later time. Since Anthony of Pechersk was tonsured and spent a significant amount of time on Mount Athos, it is entirely plausible that upon his return to Rus', he continued his ascetic practices in the form that was familiar to him—namely, anchoritism. This form of monasticism was the most prevalent among the ascetics of Athos. As Ivan Sokolov notes, anchoritism was the foundational and elementary form of the Byzantine monastic world. Despite certain conditions under which anchoritism was practiced in Byzantium, it remained the most widespread form of monasticism, attracting the largest number of adherents.

Archaeological evidence further supports the presence of anchoritism. In the collection "Archaeological Research of Lviv University in 1995", authors provide information about cave cells of anchorites in Halychyna. These cave cells possess certain characteristics that identify them as anchoritic dwellings. Primarily, anchorites in Ukraine tended to settle in hard-to-reach, secluded places. Their cells were often caves, grottoes, tree hollows, rock shelters, and dugouts. These cells were narrow and low, a deliberate choice by the hermits, symbolizing their asceticism and dedication. The harsh climate of Ukraine made these cells not places of comfort from the cold or wind but rather sites of spiritual trial. However, anchoritism was not confined to Halychyna. All of medieval Ukraine was dotted with such cave cells. Anchorites lived on the outskirts of Kyiv, digging caves in the hills (such as in Kitaiv Hermitage and Zvirynetski Hills). Even the famous Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra initially consisted of individual cave cells inhabited by anchorites.

According to the renowned researcher of Athonite heritage, S. Shumylo, this anchoritic tradition contributed to the fact that "after the Mongol-Tatar invasion and the devastation of Kyivan Rus' by the hordes of Khan Batu, although the spiritual and cultural ties with Athos weakened after the 1240s, they did not break completely. These ties were revitalized in the 14th and the first half of the 15th century, thanks to the so-called "hesychast revival" and the influence of the South Slavic lands on the territories of the former Kyivan Rus'. These connections were crucial for the spiritual and cultural reawakening and development in the post-Mongol period. It was Athonite monks who were involved in the restoration and spread of hesychastic traditions within the Kyiv Metropolis, making a significant contribution to the formation of early Ukrainian culture, literature, and art" (Shumylo, 2021, p. 113).

Thus, not only the ascetic tradition of the Athonites was central to the reception by local figures, but practical aspects inspired by representatives of Eastern Patristic and Byzantine thought also played a significant role.

The emergence of hesychastic ideas in Ukraine was closely linked to the spread of Byzantine original and translated literature. Ukrainian monastic scholars played a crucial role in bringing the mystical-ascetic worldview of Gregory of Sinai and Gregory Palamas to Ukrainian lands. These scholars visited Athos, Constantinople, and Bulgaria, where they familiarized themselves with Greek and Slavic literature, often bringing books back to their homeland or working there as scribes. For instance, the scribe Tymofiy in 1420 made a copy of the works of Isaac the Syrian for Bishop Gerasim of Volodymyr.

Among the works resonant with hesychastic views, those of St. Dionysius the Areopagite stand out, significantly influencing Gregory Palamas. These works appeared in their entirety among the Eastern Slavs at the end of the 14th century, brought by Metropolitan Cyprian in a copy made from a South Slavic translation by the Serbian monk Isaiah on Athos in 1371. The writings of Dionysius the Areopagite, widely popular in Ukraine, were a rich source of philosophical ideas from late antique Neoplatonism. In the 14th–16th centuries, Athos – Holy Mountain – experienced its period of greatest renown and served as a model for the entire Orthodox Slavic world, with hesychasm emerging as the ideology of Athos. This also explains the popularity of this teaching among the Eastern Slavs. Since the Kyiv Pechersk Monastery was closely connected with the Holy Mountain during this period, it became the center of hesychastic ideology in Ukraine. However, in the Eastern Slavic lands, the adoption of hesychasm was mainly practical ("silence", a form of individual asceticism); the doctrine itself did not develop further (Matytsyn, 2012, p. 227).

Evidence that the rules of Athonite monasteries and the popular hesychast Jesus Prayer were known in Kyiv is provided by a letter from Archimandrite Dositheus of Pechersk to the priest-monk Pachomius in the Monastery of the Savior "in Vologda in Priluki". This work is dated to the late 14th or early 15th century.

Simultaneously, we can speak not only of the purely ecclesiastical and ascetic influence of the Athonites but also of their broader sociocultural impact. For example, the political and statehood ideal of Ivan Vyshensky – a society composed of communities similar to early Christian ones, built on the principles of primitive communism, without private property or with very limited property earned through personal labor, without lords, kings, or rulers – reflects this influence. Vyshensky opposed autocratic rule, expressing antipapal views, as he saw the Pope of Rome as the embodiment of absolute power, given that popes granted crowns to contemporary kings. He also criticized the rulers of the Orthodox Church. Therefore, Vyshensky's only societal ideal was the organization of monasticism in its Athonite form (the Athonite monastic republic). He proposed the idea of purgatorium, where life itself serves as a purgatory. He understood the Church as an earthly heaven, resembling the heavenly heaven, composed of free and equal people, morally purified and capable of fighting against evil (Kutashov, 2008, p. 239).

When discussing the aesthetic reception, it is essential to analyze the connection between the theological-aesthetic tradition of Ukraine and Orthodox Christianity, as represented in the theological-aesthetic tradition of Athos. This analysis requires the involvement of the works of Ivan Vyshensky, a direct representative of the Athonite spiritual-aesthetic tradition in Ukrainian literature of the 15th–16th centuries. His apologies for spiritual simplicity ("The Rebuttals of the Wise Latin Against the Foolish Ruthenian", "Letters to Domnikia") and monastic asceticism ("The Little Book") fit within the context of Orthodox Christian morality and introduce elements of restraint and asceticism into contemporary Ukrainian literature, which are partially reflected in the iconography of the time. This close relationship and deep affinity between theological-aesthetic literature and the iconographic tradition persisted throughout their coexistence (Matytsyn, 2012, pp. 18–19).

This active reception of Athonite religious-philosophical thought, in all its diversity, contributed to the fact that "Ukrainian monks from Athos initiated the reform of

Ukrainian Orthodox monasteries, supported polemical, literary, and spiritual-educational activities, and bolstered the Orthodox movement in Ukrainian lands, involving the Ukrainian Cossacks in this process. Athonite and Ukrainian monasticism, oriented toward the hesychast tradition, significantly influenced the formation of religious traditions and the lifestyle of the Cossacks. In turn, under the influence of monastic traditions, the Cossacks adopted ideas of brotherhood and celibacy among the Sich members, the veneration of the Virgin Mary as the "Patroness of the Sich", the taking of personal religious vows, and the establishment of their own "Cossack" monasteries and sketes. Moreover, individual Cossacks often took monastic vows, became priests, engaged in charity, and undertook pilgrimages to Orthodox monasteries and shrines, including Athos. Such close ties with (Shumylo, 2012, p. 93).

Discussion and conclusions

The article offers a comprehensive exploration of the reception of Athonite heritage in Ukraine from the 10th to the 16th centuries, a period that was pivotal in shaping the spiritual and cultural landscape of Ukrainian lands. The study emphasizes how the Athonite tradition, deeply embedded in Eastern Orthodox monasticism, significantly influenced the development of monastic life, particularly through the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, which emerged as a central hub for spiritual life and the dissemination of hesychasm in Ukraine. By analyzing the monastic and scholarly aspects of this reception, the article reveals the profound impact of Athonite practices on Ukrainian monastic traditions, highlighting the role of key figures like St. Anthony of Pechersk in transplanting and adapting these traditions to the local context.

Moreover, the article delves into the scholarly influence of Athonite spiritual ideas on Ukrainian philosophical and aesthetic thought. It illustrates how the teachings of hesychasm, propagated through translated literature and the works of Gregory Palamas and Gregory of Sinai, permeated Ukrainian intellectual circles. This transmission of ideas not only shaped the spiritual worldview of Ukrainian scholars and theologians but also contributed to the broader religious and cultural evolution of Ukraine. The influence of Athonite heritage extended beyond the ecclesiastical realm, impacting the social and political ideals of the time, as seen in the Cossack piety and the communal monastic ideals proposed by figures like Ivan Vyshensky.

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ОСОБЛИВОСТІ РЕЦЕПЦІЇ АФОНСЬКОГО СПАДКУ НА ТЕРИТОРІЇ УКРАЇНИ (X–XVI ст.)

Вступ. Присвячено всебічному дослідженню рецепції афонської спадщини на території України в період з X до XVI ст. включно, що є важливим елементом у розумінні духовного, культурного та соціального розвитку українських земель. Афон як осередок східного православ'я, відіграє ключову роль у формуванні чернечих традицій, які стали фундаментом для розвитку монастирського життя в Київській Русі. Детально розглянуто, як афонська традиція, глибоко вкорінена у східнохристиянському монашесстві, вплинула на створення та функціонування українських монастирів, зокрема Києво-Печерської лаври, яка стала центром духовного життя та поширення ісихазму на українських землях.

Методи. Проаналізовано два основні аспекти рецепції афонської спадщини: монастирський та науковий. Монастирський аспект стосується впливу афонських традицій на організацію та духовне життя українських монастирів. Показано, як афонські практики, зокрема анахоретство, було перенесено на український ґрунт і адаптовано до місцевих умов. Особливу увагу приділено ролі преподобного Антонія Печерського, який, будучи постриженим на Афоні, переніс на Русь основні принципи афонського чернецтва, що визначило подальший розвиток аскетичних традицій в Україні.

Результати. Розглянуто науковий аспект, що охоплює вплив афонських духовних ідей на українську філософську та естетичну думку. Досліджено, як ідеї ісихазму, що виникли на Афоні, проникали в українські землі через перекладну літературу, написану афонськими та українськими ченцями. Значну увагу приділено впливу творів Григорія Палами та Григорія Синаїта, а також іншої містично-аскетичної літератури, на формування духовного світогляду українських книжників і богословів. Важливу роль у цьому процесі відіграв Києво-Печерський монастир, який був тісно пов'язаний з Афоном і став осередком поширення ісихастських ідей в Україні.

Висновки. Акцентовано, що на особливу увагу заслуговує вплив афонської спадщини на розвиток козацького благочестя. Показано, як афонські монахи, що перебували на українській землі, сприяли формуванню релігійних традицій серед козацтва, впроваджуючи ідеї побратимства, безшлюбності та культу Богородиці як покровительки Січі. Афонські ідеали знайшли своє відображення у створенні козацьких монастирів і скитів, що сприяло розвитку особливого типу "козацького благочестя", яке стало невід'ємною частиною національної ідентичності українців.

Ключові слова: Афонська спадщина, ісихазм, українське православ'я, Києво-Печерська лавра, монашество, духовна традиція, культурний вплив, козацьке благочестя.

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