

Church Slavonic or Ukrainian?

Liturgical Language, Tradition, and Politics

When the president of the independent Ukraine is officially sworn in, he is required to place his hand on the Ukrainian constitution. The Russian president, likewise, is inaugurated with his right hand placed on the Russian constitution. In the Ukrainian ceremony, there is, however, a second book besides the constitution. Two different books have occupied this position, depending on the preference of the president in question. One is the Ostrog Bible, which was the first Bible printed in Church Slavonic, dating back to 1581. The other is the original of the Peresopnytsia Gospel, which is written in an early Ukrainian or Ruthenian vernacular, and dates back to 1561. Ruthenian is a group of varieties of East Slavic spoken in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and later in the East Slavic territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. What languages were actually spoken in this region, including the question of whether there existed a special Ruthenian language, is a matter of much scholarly debate.

These two books, written in related but different languages, offer an insight into the Ukrainian understanding of the origins of

the nation. They reflect Ukrainian relationships with the past and the shape of historical memory in today's Ukraine. They are mapping different geographic spaces and different pasts, different presents, and different futures.

Church Slavonic is the traditional liturgical language of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine, Russia, and across the whole Slavic Orthodox world, sometimes called *Slavia orthodoxa* by scholars. The language belongs to the group of South Slavonic languages and was created by the two Greek brothers Cyrill and Methodius in the middle of the 9th century mainly as a Biblical and liturgical language. The language's hegemonic status in divine services is questioned in both countries, but for different reasons. The language is often perceived as difficult to understand and outdated, and in the newly independent Ukraine it is considered to be both difficult to understand and a manifestation of Russian imperialism. The newly founded Orthodox Church of Ukraine, given autocephaly by the Ecumenical Patriarch, uses primarily Ukrainian, which is viewed as the national language also in this ecclesiastical context. The Ukrain-

ian Orthodox Church, under the patronage of Moscow, on the other hand, increasingly rejects the use of the vernacular and regards Church Slavonic as the common and sacred language for *Slavia orthodoxa*. Autocephaly refers to those orthodox churches which are not, in any way, dependent upon any other church, or churches, for their life and mission.¹ The question of autocephaly has been and remains much disputed in the Orthodox world.

Positions on the question of which language to use in liturgical contexts – like positions on many other issues – are becoming increasingly polarized in present-day Ukraine, but the contours and front lines of this are somewhat different, mirroring different aspects of the history of Slavic languages. The aim of this article is to outline the use of different liturgical languages in the major churches in Ukraine which use the Byzantine rite. I will analyze the understanding of historical memory and geographical space which underpins these choices, and the consequences these choices have today. The religious, geographic and linguistic issues at play here are influential on the positions taken by today's politicians in Ukraine, Russia, and Europe.

CHURCH HISTORY

Following the baptism of Kievan Rus' in 988, its church leaders, the metropolitans of Kiev, were consecrated in Constantinople. They often came from Rus', however, rather than Byzantium. Around the year 1370, the Lithuanian Great Prince Olgerd, who was himself a pagan and fire worshipper, wrote a letter to the patriarch of Constantinople begging him to "give us another metropolitan."² Kievan Rus' was then divided between the area under the rule of the Golden Horde, and the Western part subjected to the Great Duchy of Lithuania and Poland. The Ukrainian Church's ongoing struggle for autocephaly has deep historical roots. This

new metropolitan was eventually appointed, despite many complications. Moscow in turn gained full independence from Constantinople and the ecumenical patriarch in 1589, at which point it consecrated its own patriarch.

Another important year in Ukrainian church history is 1596, the year of the union in Brest, when parts of the Orthodox Church in Rzeczpospolita (Poland and the Great Duchy of Lithuania) merged in a union with the Catholic Church, accepting the pope in Rome as its leader while preserving the Byzantine rite. Today this church is called the Greek Catholic, or sometimes, from an external perspective, the Uniate Church. It has been banned during various periods of Russian hegemony in the area. In 1686, the patriarch of Constantinople decided that the metropolitan of Kiev would be designated by the patriarch of Moscow. The basis for this decision was the fact that the area of present Ukraine that lies east of the river Dnipro had become part of Russia following the war against Poland.

Russia, and later the Soviet Union, annexed ever larger tracts of land that had belonged to Rzeczpospolita. After the revolution of 1917, a further attempt was made in the independent Ukrainian state to establish autocephaly in the Ukrainian Church. This existed for only a few years, and after the Bolshevik takeover, it became an emigrant church. It returned to Ukraine in the wake of the Declaration of Independence in 1991, but never received any broad recognition from World Orthodoxy, although it called itself The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. During the Soviet era, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church belonged to the

1 The definition comes from orghodoxwiki, <https://orthodoxwiki.org/Autocephaly>.

2 Meyendorff 1981, 194.

Moscow Patriarchate. In the 1920s, the Renovators sought to reform the Orthodox Church and introduce the vernacular as a liturgical language. They were aligned with the same movement in Russia.³

Galicia and Volhynia were parts of interwar Poland, and Orthodox believers there belonged to the Polish Orthodox Church, which was subordinated to Constantinople at that time. Both the Greek Catholic and the Orthodox believers in this area were viewed with suspicion by the Polish political leadership.

THE SITUATION TODAY

From the late 1980s and especially after independence in 1991, great changes took place in the field of religion: The Greek-Catholic Church was allowed to resume its activity and the Ukrainian exile church was returned to the country (that is The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church). A new Ukrainian national church was established in 1992 under the leadership of the metropolitan Filaret, who in Soviet times was a metropolitan of Kiev under the Moscow Patriarchate. Some years later, he appointed himself patriarch, but this act was not recognized by any other Orthodox Church in the world. It called itself (and calls itself) The Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate. The only Ukrainian Orthodox Church recognized by world orthodoxy was, until early 2019, the Moscow Patriarchate Church in Ukraine, under the official name of The Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Altogether there were four church organization existing during that time using the Byzantine ritual.

This state of affairs was transformed at the end of 2018, when Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople contributed to establish a Ukrainian national church at the request of the then president Petro Poroshenko (as the grand Prince Olgerd had done). On December 15, a

unification council was held in Kiev consisting of representatives of the two national Ukrainian orthodox churches – the church of Filaret and the former exile church. This council jointly founded a new church and elected metropolitan Epifanii as its leader. The formal decision was made on January 5, 2019, when Bartholomew signed a document in Istanbul in the presence of Poroshenko and the newly appointed leader of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. The *tomos*, the document that recognizes the Church's independence, was handed over the next day, on January 6, thereby abrogating the document from 1686. These two churches had become one and were given a new leader and autocephaly. This means that today there are two competing Orthodox Church organizations in Ukraine, one under Moscow calling itself the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the other given autocephaly by Constantinople. The latter calls itself the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. There is also a recent conflict evolving inside this newly founded church. As is the situation in April 2020 there exist three churches in Ukraine using the Byzantine rite, or because Filaret wants to recant his signature on the tomos, there will be four, and adding the Old Believers, one more group that I will return to, there will be five.

UKRAINIAN AS LITURGICAL LANGUAGE

Following the Ukrainian Declaration of Independence, the two national Ukrainian Orthodox (that is the church led by the patriarch Filaret and the former emigrant church) churches decided to use Ukrainian as their main liturgical language in divine services. This was implemented even stronger as a result of the achievement of autocephaly. Patriarch Filaret describes the choice of language as follows:

Богослужбова мова принципово повинна бути українською. І проповідь українською. Але ми будемо допускати й церковнослов'янську мову, і проповідь російською мовою. Тобто не буде такого, знаєте, утиску щодо богослужбової мови.⁴

Liturgical language should, in principle, be Ukrainian. And the sermon should also be in Ukrainian. But we will allow both the Church Slavonic language and the preaching in Russian. That is, there will be no, what one might call, oppression in the case of liturgical language.

Filaret is thus open to the performance of the divine service in Church Slavonic as a second choice, and confirms that the sermons might be delivered in Ukrainian or Russian. The decision to employ Ukrainian as a liturgical language is part of the Ukrainian national project, and the long history of the struggle for national identity and independence. Today the use of Ukrainian is encouraged in all areas of society, in preference to the use of other languages, especially Russian, and Ukrainian is the only state language according to the Constitution.

The metropolitan Epifanii subscribes to this preference. In an interview, he refers to Ukrainian as the state language and therefore concludes that the liturgical language ought to be Ukrainian as well. He places Church Slavonic in the same category as other “minority languages,” together with Russian, Romanian and Hungarian.⁵

Modern Ukrainian contains few Slavonic elements. They were removed when the Ukrainian literary language was created in the nineteenth century and replaced by words from various dialects, as well as from Polish and from Latin. The Russian language, on the contrary, has retained almost all Slavonic loan words, which in some cases have become a stylistically

marked higher variant than the corresponding East Slavic word. For this reason, it is more difficult for Ukrainians than for Russians to understand Church Slavonic. This is especially acute in the Western part of the country, as is noted in the debate:

А в Украине, служение на славянском языке, в западных регионах, воспринимается не просто, как что-то архаичное и неясное, а ещё и непатриотичное, «москальское».⁶

And in Ukraine, services performed in the Slavonic language are regarded in the western regions not just as something archaic and obscure, but also unpatriotic, “muscovitic”.

Worshippers must be able to understand what the priest is saying and the choir is singing. The Ukrainian national church summarizes its position on this question as follows:

В незалежній державі повинна бути незалежна Церква, й мова богослужіння повинна бути національна, тобто доступна для сприйняття кожним громадянином держави.⁷

In an independent state there must be an independent Church and the language of worship must be national, that is, accessible to every citizen of the state.

Ukrainian is used as a liturgical language not

3 Pashkov 2017, 131–141.

4 Pislia ob'ednannia pravoslavnoi tserkvy v Ukraïni.

5 ”Parafii prosiat!”. Epifaniy rozpoviv, iakoiu movoiu mozhna molytysia v PTsU, Obozrevatel'.

6 Kliushev, Problemy bogoslužhebnogo iazyka v Ukraine.

7 Religiiia v Ukraine, Chomu v Ukraïni moliat'sia tserkovnoslov'ians'koiu movoiu, a rozmovliaut' ukraïns'koiu.

only by the autocephalic Ukrainian church, but also by the Greek-Catholic Church. Up to the Second Vatican Council in Rome in 1962–1965, this denomination used Church Slavonic in the same manner as the rest of the Catholic world used Latin. The Greek Catholics indeed utilized the same texts as the Russian Orthodox Church, although they included the commemoration of the pope in Rome in the litanies, while continuing to omit *filioque* in the creed in the Orthodox manner. After the Second Vatican Council, it was permitted in the Catholic Church to use the vernacular, and nowadays almost all Greek Catholic liturgical services are delivered in Ukrainian. The use of Ukrainian has thus paradoxically acquired a Catholic and Western flavor in this context.

ON TRANSLATING INTO UKRAINIAN

Ukrainian is considered in the Russian context as somewhat rural, much like Norwegian in the consciousness of a common Swede. Modern Ukrainian is indeed in this sense comparable to New Norwegian, one of two standard languages in Norway. It makes it particularly challenging to translate into this language. There are all sorts of jokes about how different sacred texts have been translated into Ukrainian. They are intended to illustrate how ridiculous and mundane Ukrainian makes the texts seem, and to therefore reinforce arguments for the use of Church Slavic:

Відтак переклад із церковнослов'янської на українську неможливий в силу нерозв'язності філологічних проблем, а намагання обійти їх ведуть до пародіювання богословської термінології.⁸

Therefore, translation from Church Slavonic into Ukrainian is impossible because of the insolubility of philological problems, and attempts to circum-

vent them lead to a parody of theological terminology.

The theological vocabulary is still Slavonic. This dilemma is manifested by the existence of mock translations ridiculing attempts to create a functioning liturgical and Biblical vernacular in Ukraine:

Mock Ukrainian: Хай дуфає Сруль на Пана
 Church Slavonic: Да уповаєт Израиль на Господа
 psalm 130
 Ukrainian: Вповай, Израїлю, на Господа!
 English: Let Israel hope in the Lord

The verb “dufaty” comes from Polish, and the word “Srul” is a Jewish forename, being a short form of Israel and Pan, derived from Polish, which makes the parody translation a sort of macaroni speech. Another example is the mock translation of the refrain of the *Akathistos*-hymn:

Mock Ukrainian: Грегочи, Дівко Непросватанная
 Church Slavonic: Радуйся, Невесто Невестная.
 Ukrainian: Радуйся, Невісто неневісна!
 English: Rejoice, thou Bride unwed

“Divko”, “girl” is understood as too colloquial to convey the real meaning of “virgin.” “Neprosvatannaia” means “not having been married”, again a mixture of styles parodying the Ukrainian language.

In the first three decades of the twentieth century in Poland, including both Galicia and Volhynia, several translations of the divine service to Ukrainian were made. This was the beginning of efforts to render the orthodox liturgical texts into the Ukrainian language. It has in its origin a Western, sometimes Protestant inflection.

Today each church has one or more trans-

lations of the liturgy, that is, the communion service. There appear to be seven renderings of the liturgy into Ukrainian, most of which are not made from the Greek original, but from the Slavonic text, and more are on their way. There are for example various translations into Ukrainian of the prayer formula “let us pray”:

Gospodevi pomolimos’.

Gospodevi pomolimsia.

Gspodu pomolimos’.

Gspodu pomolimsia.

In Church Slavonic it is translated as:

Gspodi pomolimsia.

The divergence between Church Slavonic and Ukrainian is thus greater than that between Church Slavonic and Russian. The liturgical texts in Ukraine may not only have a Western inflection but also a rural Ukrainian one, as they are influenced by the development of Ukrainian literary language from different rural dialects in the nineteenth century. This further complicates the question of language in the Ukraine churches with Byzantine rite. The problems and nuances involved in the use of Ukrainian make a Bible written in modern Ukrainian an inappropriate choice for the presidential inauguration ceremony: The use of modern spoken and written Ukrainian as a liturgical language is not fully entrenched yet. The employment of the texts of the Greek Catholics (having a longer and broader relationship with Ukrainian) in the use of the vernacular in the Ukrainian orthodox churches is hampered by some formulations that seem to be Latin or Catholic in their contents.

We must now return to the first choice for a would-be president in Ukraine: the Peresopnytsia Gospel. The western part of present-day

Ukraine has its own complex story of historical, political, and linguistic development. When this area became part of the Polish-Lithuanian Empire in the sixteenth century, attempts were made to create a religious language that would be closer to the spoken language: “prosta mowa”, influenced by Protestant groups in the area. The language is heavily influenced by Polish, and several texts are preserved from that time. Another example of “prosta mowa”, besides the Peresopnytsia Gospel, is the Bible of Francysk Skoryna, published in 1517, containing only the Old Testament. This language disappeared after a couple of centuries, and today’s Ukrainian literary language was created in the nineteenth century under different, national romantic auspices. “Prosta mowa” is often understood today as old Ukrainian but it is, in fact, more complicated.

CHURCH SLAVONIC

Ukrainian is not the first choice for Russians living in Ukraine, not as a liturgical language and often not even as a second vernacular. Nor is Russian an option as a liturgical language, as this is more or less prohibited in Russia. Church Slavonic must be used, and Russian, if it is used in liturgical practice, has a very modernistic and Western feel. The use of Russian in the liturgy is regarded as quite modern in Russia as well as by Russian speakers in Ukraine.

Church Slavonic was the liturgical language of all Orthodox Slavs in the Middle Ages and it has remained so more or less to the present day. What was originally a South Slavonic language developed into different variants in different parts of the Slavic Orthodox world.

As Moscow emerged as Kiev’s replacement as the center of East Slavic influence, the Mos-

8 Tserkovnoslov’ians’ka mova — ne Rosiis’ka

cow variant, and especially the “Russian” pronunciation, spread throughout today’s Ukraine and Belarus. This was a result of the annexation of the East Bank of contemporary Ukraine into the Russian Empire in the seventeenth century, the West Bank in the eighteenth century, and Galicia and Volhynia following the Second World War. This Russian form of Church Slavonic also exists in different historical variants. The form used today is called New Church Slavonic.⁹

The Russian pronunciation with “g” as a Latin “g” and not as “h” with iat’ (ѣ) as “e” (and not “i”), and the palatalization of consonants according to the rules of modern Russian language and sometimes even with akan’ e, that is the phoneme “o” is realized as “a” in unstressed positions, are traits of this version of Church Slavonic. This language is increasingly looked on by the Ukrainians as the fruit of Russian imperialism, rather than as a language with strong domestic roots dating back to the days of Kievan Rus’, which, in fact, it is. This use of Church Slavonic, in its Russian form, is referred to by the American scholar Harvey Goldblatt as Russian ecumenical imperialism.¹⁰ This view also reflects the present political and military conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

Church Slavonic is therefore seen in Ukraine as having negative connotations of Russian empire, having “impersko-velikoderzhavnye konnotatsii”, imperial-superpower connotations. In the Ukrainian context the variant may be associated with 1686 and the subordination of the church to Moscow.¹¹ The Ukrainian national church, however, could have chosen another way to refer to the legacy of the Kievan Rus’. In Kievan Rus’, the liturgical language was, as we know, in fact precisely the Slavonic one, but in an earlier variant. This variant seems to be seldom referred to by the leaders of the two Orthodox churches in Ukraine. The choice of

Ukrainian weakens the claim that Ukraine is the only legitimate heir of Rus’, that is, the Kievan State. The new national church has not retained the use of ‘Rus’ in its name. The title of the former leader Filaret was patriarch of Kiev and all of Rus’, which challenged the title of patriarch Kirill as the patriarch of Moscow and all of Rus’. Epifaniis’ title is read out as “metropolitan of Kiev and all of Ukraine” without any reference to Rus’. The transition to Ukrainian in the new Church of Ukraine, however, entails a rapprochement with the Greek Catholic Church, and to a Protestant view of the service as a pedagogical and not primarily a sacred phenomenon. Thus, Ukrainian is seen to represent a liturgical language for modernity, for the West, for the non-imperial, the non-Russian, for the proximity to Protestantism, and now also to the Catholic Church. It is perhaps even a matter of democracy itself, as is claimed in an article in a Ukrainian Russian-language newspaper in April 2019, which somewhat exaggerates: *V khram – v shortakh i mini-iubki* – “Go to church in shorts and miniskirts.”¹²

THE STANCE OF THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH UNDER MOSCOW

For the Russians in Ukraine, and for the older Soviet generation, Church Slavonic is viewed as the familiar liturgical language. The current leader of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under Moscow, the metropolitan Onufrii, strongly opposes any use of Ukrainian in liturgical practice. In a recent interview, he emphasized that he himself has two mother tongues: Ukrainian and Church Slavonic. He believes that Church Slavonic alone must be used as the liturgical language. He states, uncompromisingly:

Богослужебный язык Украинской Православной Церкви - это язык церковнославянский. Мы ничего не будем менять.¹³

The liturgical language of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is the Church Slavonic language. We will not change anything.

His predecessor until 2014, the metropolitan Vladimir, had a much more open-minded view on the use of Ukrainian as a liturgical language and considered it to be acceptable if parishioners favored it.¹⁴ There is, however, broad agreement that the service could not be celebrated in Russian, even in the eastern parts of the country. Both languages are currently banned as liturgical ones in the Ukrainian Church subject to Moscow. Preaching, on the other hand, never takes place in Church Slavonic. Instead, it is delivered in the vernacular in both the Ukrainian Orthodox Churches and in the Greek Catholic Church. Church Slavonic is seen to represent continuity with *Slavia orthodoxa*, and it is seen as the correct language of heavenly worship. The difficulty for Ukrainian speakers to understand the divine service in Church Slavonic is trivialized and often framed simply as a problem they could resolve by being closer to the church and attending services more frequently. This schooling in Orthodox practices is termed “votserkovlenie” in Russian and “votserkovlennia” in Ukrainian, *verbatim* “churching”

In some urban areas of Eastern Ukraine, a Ukraino-Russian language called “surzhyk” is widely in use as the vernacular. It combines a Russian vocabulary with grammatical structures from the Ukrainian. “Surzhyk” is viewed with some contempt by both Ukrainian and Russian speaking intellectuals, but looked upon with interest and curiosity by linguists. Church Slavonic is in fact easier for “surzhyk” speakers than for the Ukrainian-speakers to understand due to its Russian vocabulary, The Ukrainian used in liturgical texts also has a flavor of “surzhyk” in its combination of Ukrainian

with some Slavonic elements, sometimes echoing Russian words. There is in fact a notable absence of Orthodox ecclesiastical words in Ukrainian and in Russian. They are, as already noted, mostly Church Slavonic.

TWO OTHER CHURCH SLAVONIC LANGUAGES: THE OLD BELIEVERS VERSION AND THE RUTHENIAN ONE

Another notable case here is that of the Old Believers, a group who did not accept the reforms to church and language introduced by patriarch Nikon in the middle of the seventeenth century. Many of them fled to what are now the southern and western borders of today’s Ukraine. The village of Belaia Krynytsa in Western Ukraine, near the border with Romania, is, or rather was, one of their centers, and is sometimes called the mecca of the Old Believers. There is also a group of them, called Lipovans, who live in Romania, where the local bishop also resides. Over the years, the Old Believers have split into various groups, but all of them still use Church Slavonic as their liturgical language, in an older version, Old Church Slavonic. New Church Slavonic is understood by this group to be heretical and imperialistic.

Old Believers use the Ostróg Bible and do not accept any later version used by the Russian Orthodox Church, including, for example, the eighteenth-century Elisabeth Bible, which is the official text used in the Russian Orthodox Church today. The Ostróg Bible is, thus, not

9 Danylenko & Naienko 2019, 19–39.

10 Goldblatt 1986, 336–354.

11 Ukrainskii tserkovnoslavianskii iazyk: mudrost’ v ottenkakh.

12 V shortakh i mini-iubkakh: PCU ob’iavila gromkie demokraticheskie peremeny <https://www.facenews.ua/articles/2019/326767/>

13 Glava UPC MP vystupil protiv bogosluzhenii na ukrainskom iazyke.

used by the Moscow patriarchate in either Russia or Ukraine. However, the Ostróg Bible, which was printed in present-day Ukraine in 1581 and contains elements of Ruthenian, is one of two religious texts a Ukrainian president-elect can choose between for the inauguration. In fact, there seems to be only two uses of this Bible today: as the liturgical text of the Old Believers and as a possible ceremonial text at the presidential inauguration. I do not believe that any of the parties involved have ever reflected on this connection.

There exists, as I have hinted already, a domestic version of the Church Slavonic language, a Ruthenian variety. It has been retained as a liturgical language. It is used in Ukrainian and Ruthenian speaking areas by Greek Catholics (and partly by Orthodox believers) that were not under the jurisdiction of the Russian Empire or the Soviet Union before the Second World War. This version differs slightly in vocabulary, in grammar, and above all, in pronunciation from New Church Slavonic (in the Russian version). The pronunciation includes a clearer o-kan' e, a pronunciation of "g" as "h" and a pronunciation of hard consonants before the vowel – "e," the keeping of the voice in words ending with a voiced plosive ("b," "d," "g") turning voiceless both in Russian and in New Church Slavonic – and above all "i" in many church Slavonic words where the Moscow variant has "e" (originally from an Old Slavonic "iat", ѣ).¹⁵

This Ruthenian Church Slavonic is used in the far West of Ukraine among the Ruthenians, especially in the Mukacheva eparchy, which is a Greek Catholic uniate group independent of the main Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine but also by some orthodox parishes in the same area. Sometimes it is even used in other parts of Ukraine. This form of Church Slavonic is not perceived in Ukraine to be an instrument of

Russian imperialism, but as a domestic, albeit almost extinct language, one that is not an option today for the majority of the parishes in Ukraine using the Byzantine rite.

THE CYRILLO-METHODIAN TRADITION

All the Churches adopting the Byzantine rite in Ukraine embrace the Cyrillo-Methodian heritage, according to which the two brothers from Saloniki who created the written form of Church Slavonic in the middle of the ninth century for use in mission work in Moravia, decided to use the vernacular and not Latin or Greek. For believers using Church Slavonic, this decision justifies their continued preference for it. For believers who use Ukrainian, the vernacular is evidence that they are continuing that tradition.

The Ukrainian liturgical texts are published with the use of the Ukrainian alphabet, but in editions meant for liturgical use, there are also publications with the traditional Slavonic letters. The first translation of the liturgy was published in Poland with the use of Slavonic letters. The use of Slavonic letters in the Russian translations is however not an option, but to publish Church Slavonic texts with Russian letters is rather common. The Slavonic letters are firmly linked to the old Cyrillo-Methodian tradition and are used in the Orthodox Church of Ukraine as a means of reiterating its belonging to this tradition, even together with the use of Ukrainian. The Russian Church does not allow the use of Russian but is somewhat tolerant of the use of Russian letters being much easier to read than the Slavonic ones. A practical argument is unexpectedly introduced in the debate.

The map of the usage of Slavonic letters does not correlate directly with the map of the use of different liturgical languages. All groups refer to the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition: for the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, the core of

this tradition is the use of the vernacular and for the groups using the Church Slavonic, this language is the core of the tradition.¹⁶

The use of Russian as a liturgical language is disputed in Russia, but as a part of the wider conservative turn in the country, the conservative side seems to have won on more or less all fronts. Only a few parishes in the entire country use Russian. The leaders of the movement advocating the use of Russian, with the priest Georgii Kochetkov as a leading figure, remain marginalized in Russian church life today.¹⁷ In Ukraine, where the use of the Russian language in society is a huge cause of disagreement, its use in liturgical contexts is paradoxically not advocated, even for Russian speakers. Russian is only used in sermons where Church Slavonic itself is never used. The mapping of liturgical languages in today's Ukraine is quite complicated, quite intriguing and quite important for understanding what is happening in this part of the world.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL SPACE OF THE LANGUAGES

As we have seen, these different Slavonic languages bear the imprint of the geographical spaces in which they were formed. My discussion has so far included Ukrainian and Church Slavonic, in three versions, as well as Russian, "prosta mowa" and "surzhyk".

Let us sum up. Each of these different churches represents and creates a special and different relationship with historical memory and understanding of geographical space as follows:

- The Orthodox Church of Ukraine uses Ukrainian and reflects the geographic extension of contemporary Ukraine.
- The Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow patriarchate) uses New Church

Slavonic, mapping *Slavia Orthodoxa*, the Russian Empire and, sometimes, paradoxically, the Soviet Union.

- The Old Believers use Old Church Slavonic, mapping Moscow Rus' before the reforms of the seventeenth century, and sometimes mapping a whole world of Old Believers living not only in the three East Slavic countries, but nowadays also in Romania and other neighboring countries, as well as in the broader diaspora.¹⁸
- The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church uses Ukrainian, mapping contemporary Ukraine and a modern multilingual Catholic universal world.
- Orthodox parishes far in the west as well as the Greek Catholic church especially in the Mukachevo eparchy use Ruthenian Church Slavonic, mapping a Ukrainian-Galician geographic space.

And in the end, what choice did President Zelenskyi make when he was sworn in in May 2019? He chose to place his hand on the constitution and on the Peresopnytsia Gospel at his ceremony. However, some time before the inauguration, a photo of him was taken where he

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- 14 V kievskom khrame UPC MP nachali sluzhit' na ukrainskom iazyke.
- 15 Bogosluzhbova Mova, Bogosluzhbova mova. v khristiians'kikh khramah mista Ternopolia,
- 16 Aleksandr (Drabinko), mitropolit, K diskussii o bogosluzhebnoy iazyke.
- 17 See, e. g., van den Bercken 2014, 37–55; Bordin 2009, 43–86.
- 18 The Old Believer metropolitan Leontii, for example, uses the title of metropolitan of Belaia Krynytsa and all Old Believer Christians, without any more geographic definition of his diocese. https://ruvera.ru/articles/sobor_breila_2018

received a facsimile of the Ostrog Bible as a gift from the metropolitan Epifanii. A significant diplomatic gesture of hospitality to different traditions, and a gesture that offers hope for political reconciliation in today's Ukraine.

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