

The Appropriation of a Confessional Saint: The Image of Josaphat Kuntsevych in Engravings from Basilian Monasteries in the Second Half of the 18th Century

Nataliia Fedyshyn

Ukrainian Catholic University (Ukraine)

E-mail: fedyshyn@ucu.edu.ua

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-0046-1615>

Summary. This article explores how the image and cult of Josaphat Kuntsevych were appropriated by Basilian monasteries in the second half of the 18th century to shape the Uniate confessional identity within the Ukrainian territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Through an analysis of Basilian-produced engravings, such as *The Apotheosis of the Virgin of Pochaiv*, and depictions alongside the miraculous icons of *Terebovlya* and *Piddubtsi*, the study demonstrates how Josaphat's martyrdom was visually framed to reinforce Uniate religious and cultural narratives. The Basilians employed iconography, relics, and commemorative rituals not only to promote Kuntsevych's veneration but also to position him as a confessional saint, representing the distinctiveness and confessional character of the Uniate Church. The article suggests that these efforts may have contributed to elevating Josaphat's role within Uniate devotional practices and to shaping a more defined religious identity in the Ruthenian Basilian Province.

Keywords: Josaphat Kuntsevych; Uniate Church; Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; Confessional Identity; Iconography; miraculous icons; Pochaiv Monastery; Terebovlya Icon; Piddubtsi Icon; Union of Brest; Cult of Saint.

1. Introduction

Josaphat Kuntsevych's tenure as the Uniate Archbishop of Polatsk from 1618 until his martyrdom in 1623 marks him as a pivotal religious figure whose fervent support for the Union of Brest branded him a controversial religious personality for both Orthodox and Uniate believers. His death at the hands of an Orthodox mob elevated his prominence, leading to his beatification in 1643 and, after more than two centuries, his eventual canonization in 1867. Scholars have scrutinized the delay in his sainthood, and have debated Kuntsevych's complex persona: he is seen variously as a saint, a martyr, the 'Apostle of the Union', a reformer, and

a patron of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The intricate evolution of his cult has been a focal point of recent research, which has dissected the nuances of the beatification process, his pastoral work, and the cultivation of public devotion through the commemoration of St. Josaphat's feast day, along with the veneration of his relics and icons, all contributing to a multifaceted narrative within the broader context of Catholic saint veneration.

Stefan Rohdewald's exploration of the 17th-century veneration of Josaphat Kuntsevych, especially the period after his beatification, reveals the story of a saint whose veneration transcended conventional religious and cultural boundaries, and established a transconfessional presence throughout Ruthenia. This phenomenon, in which Uniate priests and Roman Catholic *szlakhta* rallied behind Josaphat, reporting miracles and integrating new converts, illustrates a dynamic process of cultural and religious assimilation within the framework of the Polish-Lithuanian statehood. The beatification of Josaphat not only sanctified his person, but also confirmed his role as a central mediator in the promotion of Catholic unity, underscoring the political utility of his cult in achieving state-political and Catholic integration.¹

Kerstin S. Jobst explores the "transnational and trans-confessional aspects of the veneration of Josaphat Kuntsevych", highlighting the enduring appeal of Josaphat across confessional and national lines. Jobst's focus on the inclusiveness of Blessed Josaphat's cult of Greek Catholic Ukrainians and Roman Catholic Poles, both at home and across the diaspora, underscores the saint's role as a unifying symbol of piety. Moreover, the evolution of this cult into an emblem which is used against Orthodox, Russian, and Soviet influences demonstrates not only its religious significance but also its political and cultural resonance.²

The intricate ways in which the veneration of Josaphat Kuntsevych serves as a transconfessional bridge, as suggested by these scholars, offer an understanding of how the cults of saints can transcend ethnic, territorial, and confessional boundaries. The cult of Josaphat, initiated in the 17th century, emerges as a testament to the enduring capacity of religious practices to foster coexistence and shared veneration among diverse groups. Moreover, the transformation of the veneration of Josaphat into a symbol of opposition to Orthodox Christianity reveals the complex interplay between religious devotion and political narratives.

1 S. Rohdewald, 2010.

2 K. S. Jobst, 2012.

The examination of the role of Josaphat Kuntsevych in creating an intercultural space in Biała Podlaska further illustrates the saint's influence in facilitating cultural and religious synthesis.³ This aspect of Josaphat's cult, as detailed in an analysis of the Basilian Order's activities and the adaptability of the cult, highlights its contribution to fostering a communal identity which transcends ethnic and confessional divides. The cultivation of such an intercultural space underscores the multifaceted impact of Josaphat's veneration, not only in religious practices, but also in the broader social and cultural landscapes of Eastern Europe.

The researchers have asserted that, instead of the cult of Josaphat evolving into a distinct confessional Uniate identity, it continued to exist more broadly within the context of the state and as a unifying link between the Uniate Church and the Roman Catholic Church.

This article aims to address a question which considers the multifaceted discussions presented above. How did the iconography and commemorative rituals for St. Josaphat Kuntsevych contribute to the construction and reinforcement of a Uniate confessional identity within the Ukrainian territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and, in particular, the Congregation of the Holy Protection of the Blessed Mother of God of the Basilian Order (known also as the Ruthenian (Crown) Province)? What was the role of the Basilian monks in this process? And what approaches did the Basilian monastic order employ to disseminate and establish the cult of Josaphat Kuntsevych? The research aims to critically examine how these visual and ritual expressions contributed to the broader phenomena of confessionalization.

2. The Kyivan Uniate Metropolitanate during the 17th and 18th Centuries

The conclusion of the Union of Brest in 1596 marked a pivotal turning point in the religious landscape of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by giving birth to the Uniate Church, now known as the *Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church*. This historic agreement sought to merge the Eastern Orthodox Churches with the See of Rome, and promised to preserve liturgical rites and traditions while advocating *communicatio in sacris* with the Catholic Church.

The 1596 council in Brest provoked active debate between Uniates and Orthodox believers. Proponents hailed the Union as a bridge between tradition and

3 D. Wereda, 2021. See also the chapter by Dorota Wereda in this volume.

communion, ensuring the continuation of Eastern rites within the Catholic Church. Opponents, however, denounced it as a dilution of Orthodox purity, a compromise which alienated Eastern Christians from their heritage. Beyond theological debates, the Union reshaped church hierarchies, property rights, and the allegiances of the faithful, and wove itself deeply into the socio-religious fabric of the region.

Ihor Skochyliias identifies the late 17th century as a period of significant revival within the Kyivan Uniate Metropolitanate,⁴ calling it the ‘Ruthenian Union Revival’. This revival set the stage for the so-called ‘Uniate triumphalism’ which characterized the 18th century. The activities of the Basilian order were central to this period of revival, marking and facilitating the formation of a distinct identity and piety specific to Basilian selfhood. The revival culminated in the accession of the remaining eparchies of Przemyśl, Lviv, and Lutsk to the Kyivan Uniate Metropolitanate, symbolizing the unification of the ‘Ruthenian nation’ under the Uniate Church.⁵

According to Skochyliias’ interpretation, the late 17th and early 18th centuries were geographically and confessionally constrained – yet remarkably receptive to external cultural influences, including those from Orthodox centres in Kyiv. This led to the creation of its own cultural paradigm known as *Slavia Unita* – though no changes were made to the fundamental elements of the tradition. This cultural model, rooted in the Union of Brest of 1596, integrated three key elements: ‘Ruthenian antiquity’, ‘Latin innovation’, and ‘Uniate triumphalism’, as highlighted by Skochyliias. These components were equally vital to the identity and sustainability of *Slavia Unita*.⁶ The term ‘Ruthenian antiquity’ encompasses the Eastern Byzantine liturgy, the Slavic-Byzantine rite, and the collective memory of a shared history, serving as foundational pillars of this cultural model.

The Council of Zamość, held in 1720, epitomized this transformation, aligning the Kyivan Uniate Metropolitanate more closely with Roman traditions while retaining its Eastern essence.⁷ This council and the subsequent correspondence between Ruthenian metropolitans and papal clerics underscores the delicate balance between autonomy and allegiance within the Uniate Church, a theme which resonates throughout its history.⁸

4 For more about the Kyivan Metropolitanate of Early Modern times, see A. Gil et al., 2014.

5 I. Скочиляс, 2020.

6 I. Skoczyłaś, 2009.

7 I. Скочиляс, 2020, с. 342–366.; for a more detailed discussion of the resolutions of the Zamość Council, see: *Замойський провінційний собор*, 2021.

8 I. Almes, 2023.

The concepts discussed above reveal that the Uniates desired to have their own identity, separate from the Roman Catholics. This identity is reflected in their liturgy and art, and their practices of honouring saints' cults. The term 'confessional culture' aptly describes these phenomena. Confessional culture refers to a social and cultural environment which is deeply influenced by the practices, ethics, and beliefs of a particular religious confession (such as the Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed Churches, among others). It not only dictates religious life but also informs social norms, political structures, educational practices, and the overall behaviour of individuals within that community. Confessional culture permeates the private and public lives of people, reinforcing group identities and often shaping the relationship between the Church and the State, as well as between different confessional communities. In the context of the Early Modern period, confessional culture came about as a result of the processes referred to as confessionalization⁹ – this played a significant role in the formation of territorial, political, and cultural identities, and contributed to the discipline and control which societies exercised over their members. Through mechanisms like catechism, schooling, ecclesiastical ordinances, moral discipline, and social regulations, confessional culture aimed to create a uniform religious identity which aligned with the doctrinal positions of the ruling confession of a territory. It formed a basis for individual and collective identities, and often led to a strengthened cohesion within confessional states.

Incorporating the concept of confessionalization into our analysis enables us to examine the emergence and implementation of the cult of Josaphat Kuntsevych who, as a confessional saint, played a crucial role in introducing a unified religious identity. This approach reveals the strategies employed by the organizers of his cult.

This paper concentrates on the iconographic veneration of Josaphat Kuntsevych in the 18th century, a subject which has captivated some Polish¹⁰ and Belarusian¹¹ scholars. Andrzej Gil has examined the development of the iconography prior to the beatification in the 17th century, while Aliaksiei Khadyka has highlighted both its dissemination in Belarus and its significant impact on Belarusian art. Ukrainian scholars,¹² though late to the field, have contributed valuable insights by bringing Ukrainian icons into the scholarly discussion. An examination of the

9 For a detailed analysis of the paradigm of confessionalization in historiography, see: U. Lötze-Heumann, 2018.

10 A. Gil, 2005.

11 А. Хадька, 2004.

12 Р. Зілінко, 2012.

collection held by the National Museum in Lviv sheds light on the cultivation of the cult of Josaphat Kuntsevych in Ukraine, offering a rich tapestry of historical interpretation and veneration.

The veneration of sacred icons is a cornerstone of Eastern Christian religious practice, serving not only as a channel for personal devotion, but also as a symbol of collective identity and faith. Within this rich tapestry of religious tradition, the cult of Josaphat Kuntsevych emerges as a unique phenomenon which intertwines the spiritual with the political and marks a significant chapter in the history of the Uniate Church. Canonized for his martyrdom and unwavering commitment to the Union of Brest, Josaphat Kuntsevych transcends his historical role to become a symbol of Uniate resilience and identity.

3. The Cult of Blessed Josaphat Kuntsevych

Across various Christian traditions, saints have been portrayed in order to support the development of a collective identity – serving as martyrs or iconic figures for a nation, town, or religious confession – often for purposes of defence, and also to claim a distinct identity within a confessional setting. The veneration of saints played a strategic role in the post-Tridentine era's move toward confessional distinction, delineating the boundaries of what constitutes authentic faith in contrast to heresy and non-belief, be they ancient or emergent.¹³ Willem Frijhoff suggests that the model of the saint-martyr plays a significant role in shaping confessional identities. This is because the 'martyr model' delineates the contours of a denomination with utmost clarity by portraying the saint as a steadfast martyr who has sacrificed themselves for particular convictions.

The introduction of the cult of Josaphat Kuntsevych resulted from his esteemed status as a martyr, which is a narrative firmly rooted in the account of his demise and the honour of beatification. Both his role and his martyrdom were pivotal in sustaining and developing the Uniate Church during its formative years. This examination will elucidate the methods by which his cult was established, exploring the varying degrees of its success and the challenges it encountered. Through this exploration, we will uncover the historical, sociopolitical, and religious elements which influenced the perpetuation and reception of the legacy of Josaphat Kuntsevych within Kyiv Uniate Metropolitanate.

13 W. Frijhoff, 2003.

Josaphat Kuntsevych, born into a merchant family in 1580 in Volodymyr¹⁴ (in today's Volhyn Oblast, Ukraine), emerged as an ardent supporter of the Brest Union. As a Basilian monk, and later, as the Archbishop of Polatsk, his zeal for unity with Rome was matched only by his devotion to the pastoral and administrative reform. Josaphat joined the Basilian monastery in Vilnius in 1604 and became a member of the Brotherhood of St. Basil the Great. He became a hieromonk in 1609 and headed the novitiate, later becoming the Archimandrite. Beginning in 1607, together with Yosyf Veliamyn Rutsky, he embarked on a mission to reform monastic life in the Basilian monasteries by introducing strict discipline.

The cult of Josaphat Kuntsevych began to develop partly before and then after his beatification by Pope Urban VIII in 1643. The Kyivan Uniate Metropolitanate began celebrating Josaphat Kuntsevych and connected this celebration deeply with his historical roots in Volodymyr. At the local level, in 1715, the Volodymyr Council proclaimed the veneration of Josaphat Kuntsevych to be obligatory.¹⁵ The Council's decision to observe the 'Solemnity of St. Josaphat' on the first Sunday following 27 September, according to the new calendar, marked a deviation from the initial date of 12 November set by Pope Urban VIII. This decision also preserved the tradition of other celebrations conducted in Volodymyr Eparchy. The September veneration had become popular in the Kyivan Metropolitanate by the end of the 17th century.

This directive to venerate Josaphat, as mandated by the Volodymyr Council, was part of a broader effort to encourage new expressions of Uniate devotion,¹⁶ with Blessed Josaphat emerging as a prominent symbol. Additionally, the external expression of his veneration, particularly through icons and relics, has had a significant influence. This parallels the expansive embrace of Marian devotion within both Latin and Eastern Christianities.¹⁷

As a latecomer to the Union, Przemyśl Eparchy serves as an example of the challenges encountered in establishing the cult of Kuntsevych as a symbol of the Ruthenian Catholic identity. Despite ecclesiastical mandates, local efforts to intensify his veneration were met with resistance, as demonstrated by the situation in Drohobych. The hesitation of Hryhorii Strelbytsky, a father at Drohobych Monastery, regarding the consistory's directive to dedicate the Church of the Transfiguration to St. Josaphat and to introduce his icon, resulted in him being

14 The biography of Josaphat Kuntsevych is described in more detail in M. M. Соловій et al., 1967.

15 І. Скочиляс et al., 2011, с. 104–106.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

dismissed and censured for his lack of commitment to the veneration of Josaphat Kuntsevych.¹⁸ This incident exemplifies the general hesitancy of parishioners to replace traditional devotions with newer ones, thus emphasizing the delicate balance between preserving the already established religious practices and introducing new elements of piety within the Kyivan Uniate Metropolitanate.

The significance of relics, and those places associated with Blessed Josaphat Kuntsevych, was pivotal in amplifying the influence of the Union of Brest, particularly within the Podlachia region during the 18th and 19th centuries, as highlighted in Piotr Sęczyk's study.¹⁹ The Basilian monastery church in Biała Podlaska, which housed St. Josaphat Kuntsevych's relics from 1765, emerged as a vital centre for spiritual veneration, attracting both Uniate and Roman Catholic believers. The biannual festivities dedicated to Josaphat on 26 September and 12 November became grand occasions marked by musical performances and fireworks, with the saint's relics prominently displayed in an ornately decorated casket. The veneration of Josaphat's relics, along with the sites he had visited and where his relics had been kept, underscored a tangible connection to the saint and fostered a stronger presence of the cult in those areas.

Dzianis Liseichykau's research further delves into the societal impact of Josaphat's veneration, examining the distribution of his name within various social strata. Initially favoured by the upper classes and the Belarusian *szlachta*, the name 'Josaphat' gradually permeated the lower social echelons, indicating that the cult's influence was growing across the different segments of society. This diffusion of veneration contributed to shaping the Uniate confessional identity within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, thereby showcasing the cult's evolution and regional variances in both development and impact.²⁰

Despite attempts to expand the influence of the Union through Josaphat's martyrdom, his veneration remained largely confined to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania until the early 18th century.²¹ The beginning of the 18th century marked a new branch in the development of Church identity. This was connected with a reformation carried out by the Council of Zamość and the creation of the Congregation of the Holy Protection of the Blessed Mother of God of the Basilian Order, also known as the Ruthenian (Crown) Province, which mostly covered the

18 Б. Балик, 1973.

19 P. Sęczyk, 2016.

20 Д. Лісейчыкаў, 2020.

21 В. Лось et al., 2020.

territories of Rus', Podolia, Bratslav, and parts of Belz, Lublin, Volhyn, as well as part of Kyiv voivodeships. On the one hand, this was an opportunity to increase the density of the Basilian network in the territory to facilitate the spread of the Union; on the other hand, it was a new challenge to introduce cults which had already spread throughout the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In particular, the cult of Josaphat Kuntsevych had to be developed from the very beginning in the province of Rus'. It was, therefore, necessary for the Basilians to use different methods there.

4. Basilian Monasteries and Miraculous Icons of the Mother of God

The foundation of Eastern monasticism served as the cornerstone of the Basilian Order, which Pope Urban VIII formally recognized as the Congregation of the Holy Trinity in 1631, upon the initiative of Metropolitan Yosyf Veliamyn Rutsky of Kyiv. This period marked the fulfilment of significant monastic reforms, which were implemented in 1617.²² Historiography often refers to this development as a *revival*;²³ however, it represented the establishment of a new order, diverging from the Eastern tradition in which monasteries operated autonomously and without being unified into orders. This distinction underscores a noteworthy point: the founders perceived the Basilian Order as the revival or adaptation of an existing tradition, despite the absence of a unified and ordered structure in the Eastern monastic tradition.

The papal endorsement of this new order signified the alignment of monastic communities with the Apostolic See, introducing centralization and hierarchical subordination under the Archimandrite's authority. Previously, monastic communities had been autonomous, answering only to their local diocese. The shift towards more centralized control facilitated the unification of monastic life and marked the onset of active socio-cultural endeavours.²⁴ This strategic move, which had been envisioned by Veliamyn Rutsky, aimed to bolster organized monasticism, significantly contributing to reform efforts,²⁵ with Josaphat Kuntsevych also participating in the transformation of Basilian monasticism.

The reform of 1617 primarily focused on organizational restructuring, establishing an administrative hierarchy to instil discipline within monasticism.

22 *Нарис історії Василянського чину*, 1992, с. 117.

23 П. Підручний, 1992, с. 96–97.

24 В. Ададуров et al., 2017, с. 472.

25 П. Підручний, 1992, с. 233.

This overhaul, spearheaded by Veliamyn Rutsky, made monasticism a catalyst for broader changes in the Metropolitanate, and these extended beyond the Congregation of Monasteries. The reform embraced the Latin post-Tridentine Catholicism experience while preserving Eastern monasticism's core aspects, including its liturgical tradition and ascetic practices.²⁶

Post-reform, the Holy Trinity Monastery in Vilnius emerged as the Basilian epicentre, with Basilian monastic centres primarily situated within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This era witnessed the flourishing of the Holy Trinity Monastery and the establishment of a new model of piety. Vilnius itself exemplified a multicultural and multi-confessional urban model, facilitating the coexistence of various Christian rites alongside Tatar and Jewish communities.

The 17th-century's tumultuous period of the 'Deluge' prompted the Basilians to forge a distinct identity which was embedded in the culture of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. However, it was not until the decision taken in the Council of Zamość²⁷ in 1720 that significant reorganizational efforts materialized, culminating in the establishment of the Holy Protection Province of monks in 1739. This congregation, known as the Congregation of the Holy Protection of the Blessed Mother of God of the Basilian Order, and also as the Ruthenian (Crown) Province, encompassed Pochaiv Monastery, positioning it as the province's central administrative and spiritual hub. Pochaiv Monastery was notable for its printing house, and a Baroque monastery complex funded by Mikołaj Potocki.²⁸ Established through the efforts of the Bishop Teodosii Rudnytsky-Lubienietsky and sanctioned by the Polish king in 1732, the printing house produced around 283 books between 1735 and 1830. At its inception, it published the *Service Book* in 1735, which exhibited detailed decorations. Initially focusing on reprints of Orthodox texts, the printing house later broadened its repertoire to include Polish works and materials for a wider audience, thus reflecting the evolving demands of the era.²⁹

The venture into single-sheet devotional prints by Pochaiv Monastery, which likely began before the formal establishment of the printing house, catered to pilgrims by supplying modest-quality prints. The contributions of Pochaiv engravers, people such as Yosyf and Adam Hochemsky, among others, were instrumental in

26 I. Альмес, 2025.

27 See *Замойський провінційний собор*, 2021, с. 374–381.

28 A detailed account of the cultural activities carried out by the Pochaiv cultural center is provided in В. Бочковська, 2018.

29 Я. Ісаєвич, 2011, с. 12.

the proliferation and development of Pochaiv icons.³⁰ The printing house's capabilities, evidenced by its comprehensive set of woodcuts and the use of a machine for printing images, up until 1831, facilitated this artistic output.

The Baroque aesthetic, epitomized in the works of Theodor Strelbytsky, especially after the coronation of the Pochaiv Icon of the Mother of God, highlighted solemnity and intricate ornamentation. These graphic works played a significant role in popularizing the Pochaiv Icon, not only in Volhyn but also beyond, as evidenced by the many icons found in Ukrainian museums today. The Pochaiv printing house produced images not only of the Pochaiv Icon of the Mother of God, but also of other icons, including the Piddubtsi and Terebovlya miraculous icons of the Mother of God. These images were created by the masters Yosyf Hochemsky, Andrii Holota, and Ivan Masievsky, mostly in the second half of the 18th century.³¹

Images of the Mother of God rank among the pre-eminent outputs of the Pochaiv printing house, their prominence owing to the resurgent veneration of the Mother of God in Europe during the Early Modern period – an upsurge which, indeed, permeated the Kyivan Uniate Metropolitanate. This phenomenon reflected a broader devotional trend, wherein Marian iconography became a central focus of religious artistry and cultural expression.

The 'revival' of the cult of the Mother of God in Early Modern Europe was due to several factors: the reaction of Catholics to the Protestants' denial of the cult of the Mother of God, the 'nationalization' of the Virgin's protection of certain ethno-confessional communities, and the spread of the idea of St. Anne's Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God by the Jesuits.³² Finally, the Marian cult, along with Latin influences, spread to Kyiv Metropolitanate, where a 'theology of fear' of the Baroque culture was also prescribed.³³

The institutional dimension of the spread of the Marian cult can be found in the emergence of sanctuaries, which were run by monasteries located in Kyiv Metropolitanate, such as those located in Zhyrovichy and Pochaiv. According to an Eastern Christian *topos*, these monasteries were founded by the Blessed Mother of God for the vigil held for miraculous icons. These Uniate sanctuaries attracted believers and created a special spiritual atmosphere and a sense of the closeness of the presence of God in the world, where the direct action of the miracle revealed

30 О. Сидор, 2009, с. 162.

31 Ibid., с. 173.

32 Н. Яковенко, 2011.

33 A. J. Zakrzewski, 1995, s. 86–88.

the will of God – this, according to Thomas Aquinas, led a Christian to personal contact with the Lord.³⁴

All in all, more than 30 miraculous icons of the Mother of God are known to have been venerated in Basilian monasteries of the Ruthenian province.³⁵ Not all of these had been crowned, but it should be emphasized that the miraculous work of the icon of the Mother of God had, in a certain way, already created its own authority. Copies of such icons, as we have already mentioned, were actively distributed among the faithful.

5. Creating a Uniate Confessional Identity: The Roles of Josaphat Kuntsevych and the Pochaiv Icon

The development of a distinct Uniate identity within the Kyivan Uniate Metropolitanate and the Basilian Order was a strategic endeavour focused on the organization and promotion of specific cults, including those of Orthodox saints, the Mother of God, Job of Pochaiv, and, notably, their own martyr, Josaphat Kuntsevych. This initiative was deeply rooted in tradition, aiming to establish a confessional identity which both reflected their religious heritage and was uniquely Uniate.

The beatification of Josaphat Kuntsevych gave rise to a rich tradition of iconography³⁶ which portrayed him as a martyr. Early representations highlighted his episcopal status and the traditional symbols of his office, evolving over time to emphasize his martyrdom through symbols like the palm branch, crown, axe, and a distinctive pose with crossed arms. This iconography, drawing parallels with other martyred saints in the Christian tradition, notably, St. Peter (Verona) Martyr,³⁷ suggests a deliberate alignment between the imagery of Josaphat Kuntsevych and the established symbols of sanctity and sacrifice.

34 M. Rusiecki, 1995, s. 125–140.

35 B. Lorens, 2014, s. 289–291.

36 For more about the development of iconography, see A. Gil, 2010, s. 147–169; P. Зілінко, 2012. See also chapters by Rūta Janonienė and Anatole Upart in this volume.

37 Saint Peter Martyr (also known as Saint Peter of Verona) was an early Dominican friar, preacher, and inquisitor during the 13th century, who was notable for his efforts to combat heresy during his lifetime. Saint Peter Martyr was assassinated by heretics; according to tradition, he was struck on the head with an axe. This violent act of martyrdom is why he is frequently depicted in art and iconography with a sword or an axe in his head. His death occurred on 6 April 1252, and he was canonized by Pope Innocent IV in March 1253, making his canonization one of the fastest in history.

The earliest depictions of Josaphat Kuntsevych – which are believed to accurately reflect his features – were instrumental in shaping his cult's iconography. Following his beatification in 1643, his portrayal as a martyr, replete with a palm branch, a crown, and an axe, became emblematic, and were influenced by early engravings like those by Antonio Gerardi. The 17th century's tumultuous political and military landscape momentarily interrupted the development of this cult, but, by the 18th century, St. Josaphat's iconography had incorporated Baroque features, further evolving his representation and solidifying his role as a martyr for the Uniate cause.

This iconographic development was not just about religious devotion but was intricately linked to the broader effort of defining the Uniate confessional identity. The imagery associated with Kuntsevych, especially the recurring motif of the axe, became a potent symbol of his sacrifice and a focal point for Uniate veneration.

6. Visual Analysis of the Representations of Josaphat Kuntsevych and the Pochaiv Icon

After a brief examination of the development of iconography in the 17th and 18th centuries, we saw that these icons consisted mostly of, so-called, individual or portrait images of Josaphat. These images mainly show him alone, without any additional figures, and they existed in the form of paintings on board and in the form of engravings, though it is worth mentioning that there were other types of images as well. These are the so-called collective icons, which contain other figures in addition to the image of St. Josaphat.

6.1. The Apotheosis of the Virgin of Pochaiv

The multi-figure composition *The Apotheosis of the Virgin of Pochaiv* is the first image we will analyse.

The *Apotheosis of the Virgin of Pochaiv*, an engraving published in 1775 by the Pochaiv Monastery's printing house, epitomizes the Kyivan Uniate Metropolitan's efforts to define its confessional identity through art. This late 18th-century piece, attributed to Oleh Sydor,³⁸ was created following the icon's coronation in

38 O. Сидор, 1999.

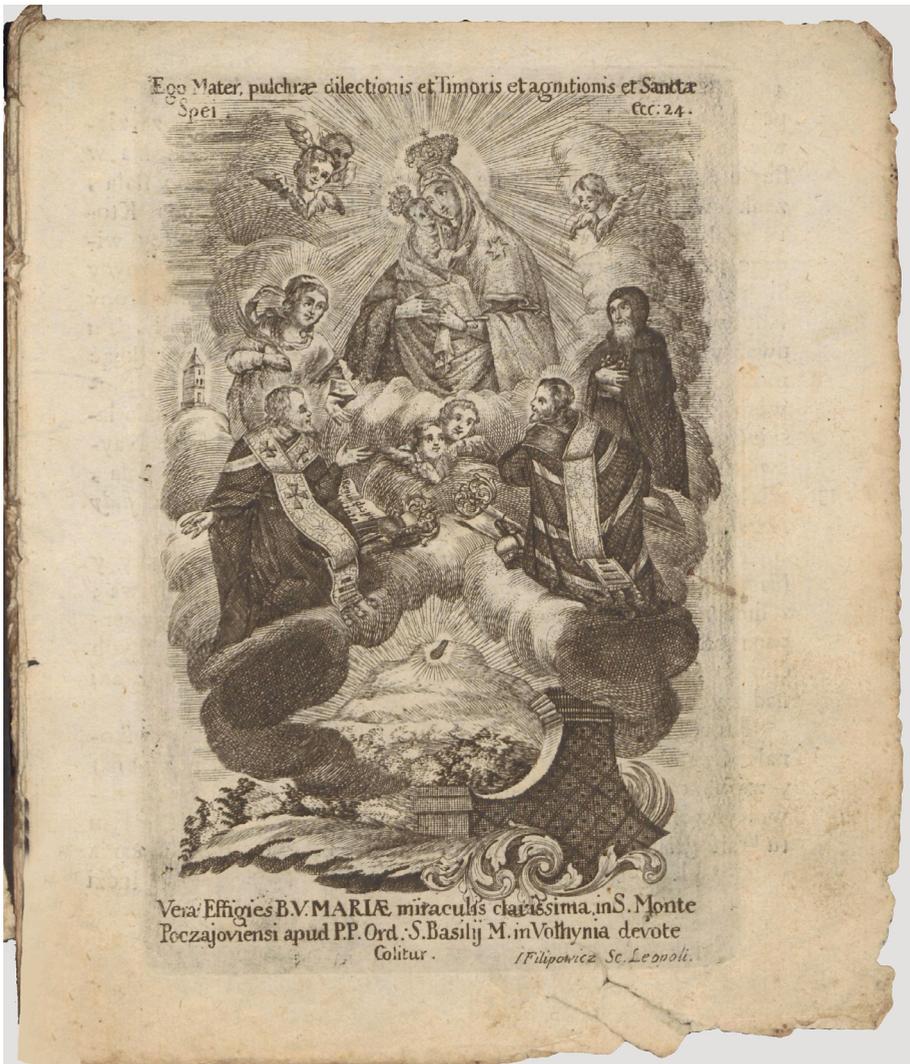


Figure 1. The miraculous image of the Pochaiv Mother of God, copper engraving by Jan Józef Filipowicz.

In: *Gora Poczaiowska Stopką Cudownie z niey wypływaiącą cudotwornę wodę maiącą y Obrazem Cudownym Maryi Nayświętsey Panny y Matki Boskiej Uczczona Całemu światu lasna y lawna*, [Poczajów]: [Drukarnia Bazyliańców], 1757, s. [18]. Wojewódzka Biblioteka Publiczna im. Hieronima Łopacińskiego w Lublinie (Hieronim Łopaciński Provincial Public Library in Lublin), P-18-q-52.

1773, and it features not only Josaphat Kuntsevych but also other pivotal figures and symbols of significance to the faith. This image serves as a visual manifesto of the Uniate triumph and underscores the Church's distinct position within the broader Christian tradition, blending elements of Eastern Orthodoxy with the Uniate spirituality.

The composition of the engraving is intricate, with eight figures arranged across three levels, which represent the earthly realm, the celestial domain of the saints, and the heavenly sphere. This structure not only accentuates the engraving's rich iconography but also illustrates the Uniate Church's theological breadth by including saints from various epochs. Central to the image are the Virgin and Emmanuel, adorned with crowns and ancient garments; they are surrounded by figures such as the martyrs St. Barbara, St. Basil the Great, and St. Josaphat Kuntsevych, identifiable by his axe. Notably, Iov of Zhelizo, depicted without a halo, reflects the nuanced approach to sanctity within the image.

Moreover, the *Apotheosis of the Virgin of Pochaiv* and its variations not only celebrate the Uniate identity but also engage in a broader dialogue with the Christian tradition. In this image, highly revered saints were situated around the Mother of God. The image was crowned by the Apostolic See in 1773, and the engraving articulates a hierarchy which reaffirms the Uniate Church's allegiance to the Holy See while maintaining its Orthodox heritage. This deliberate composition serves as a statement of Uniate theological and cultural narratives, offering a synthesis of Eastern and Western religious art forms.

Two other variations of this image are known. One can be found in the book of miracles for the Pochaiv icon, where it may have served as an illustration. This variation lacks the lower register of the original image. The other variation is more interesting, as it replaces the image of Josaphat Kuntsevych with that of St. Nicholas (Figure 1). It is unclear when this image was produced, but it is evident that the same matrix was used to create it. Additionally, the inscription 'St. Nicholas' was added later, and the language of the inscription was changed from Polish to Church Slavonic. This may indicate two things: first, that the matrix made for the Pochaiv printing house in the Basilian period continued to be used during the period when it was within the Russian Empire, and secondly, that such images, like the books printed in the Pochaiv printing house during the mid-18th century, were distributed to the Orthodox community. It is known that pilgrims of the Orthodox faith also visited the Pochaiv icon during 1743–1774. It is essential to acknowledge that Josaphat Kuntsevych was perceived as a confessional saint – a status which

was distinct but not acknowledged by Russian Orthodoxy. His representation on the icon, in the company of the other depicted figures, further positions him as a confessional saint of the Union.

The analysed image suggests that the authors may have intended to visually represent the newly formed identity of the Kyivan Uniate Metropolitanate by placing Josaphat Kuntsevych next to important and recognizable saints of the Christian tradition. This is likely due to the still-ongoing development of the cult of Josaphat Kuntsevych. In essence, this engraving stands as a cultural artefact which embodies the strategic use of iconography to navigate its identity within the 18th-century religious landscape. Through this and similar works, the Basilians communicated their theological inclusivity and distinct confessional stance, effectively demonstrating their identity amidst the complexities of religious affiliation and cultural change. The *Apotheosis of the Virgin of Pochaiv* thus represents a significant moment in the Uniate Church's visual and spiritual history, marking a creative and deliberate effort to define and disseminate its place within the Christian tradition.

However, it is important to note that the cult of Josaphat Kuntsevych did not develop as the Basilians had intended. There was a risk that the image of Josaphat Kuntsevych could be overshadowed by the authority of other saints, particularly concerning the Pochaiv icon. Therefore, this interpretation may be incorrect. Considering the Basilian approach to introducing and establishing this cult, it appears that including the figure of Josaphat Kuntsevych alongside more authoritative saints, such as the traditional and flourishing cult of the Mother of God during the Early Modern period, was part of the same program of cult development.

6.2. Terebovlya and Piddubtsi Icons

Two additional images are known of, in which Josaphat is depicted alongside Basil the Great, with a miraculous icon situated in the centre. These types of images are characteristic of the Zhyrovichy icon, indicating the spread of such depictions. However, in this case, less popular icons from monasteries in the Ruthenian Basilian province were chosen. The first image is of the Terebovlya icon of the Mother of God. The icon, now residing in St. George's Cathedral in Lviv, traces its origins to the Church of St. Nicholas in Terebovlya, with its initial benefactor believed to be the parochial priest. This remarkable icon was relocated from the municipal church to the Church of the Transfiguration at the Basilian Monastery of Pidhoryany near Terebovlya. Its inaugural miracle was manifested in 1663, as the icon 'wept' for an unbroken span of 40 days, which was a marvel witnessed by a multitude of

people. Subsequently, in 1674, Bishop Yosyf Shumliansky orchestrated the sacred image's move to St. George's Cathedral in Lviv. Concurrent with this event, the Brotherhood of the Mother of God of Terebovlya was established within the cathedral. Later, when the chapel of the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary was annexed to the cathedral, the Terebovlya icon found its new sanctuary there and was then entrusted to the reverent guardianship of the Basilians. In 1718, Dionysii Oleksandrovych, the abbot of Pidhoryany Monastery of the Saviour, endowed the icon with an ornate silver and gilded, chased raiment.³⁹

The graphic work under scrutiny was executed by the artisan Andrii Holota. Encased within an elaborate Baroque framework, at the composition's heart, there is a depiction of the Virgin Mary in the Hodegetria⁴⁰ iconographic style, with the Christ Child ensconced on her left, her hand directing onlookers to Him, and both figures oriented towards the viewer. The Virgin's garments are customary in form, yet adorned with intricate floral Baroque motifs, suggesting the representation of an icon clothed in ornate vestments. Below, the semi-portraits of two saints, identified as St. Basil the Great and St. Josaphat Kuntsevych, are set within oval cameos. Between them, there is a cartouche bearing the Latin inscription *Thaumaturga Trembovliensis apud Patres Ordinis Divi Basilii Magni*, affirming the icon's miraculous status and its affiliation with the Basilian Order.

The second image is the Piddubtsi icon of the Mother of God. Housed within the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Mother of God at the Basilian monastery in Piddubtsi, near Lutsk, the revered Piddubtsi icon has been an object of considerable devotion. Tradition holds that this icon, a remarkable relic, made its way from Smolensk during the rule of King Sigismund III (1566–1632). Documented instances of its miraculous intercessions span 1728 to 1773, under the record "*Connotatio Miraculorum Thaumaturgae Imaginis Poddubecensis B. V. M. per censorem Hieronimum Daszewski Ordinis divi Bazylis incepta an. salutis 1728*" ("The Record of the Miracles of the Miraculous Image of the Piddubtsi Blessed Virgin Mary, initiated by the censor Hieronim Daszewski of the Order of Saint Basil in the year of salvation, 1728"). Although not compiled in a standalone miracle compendium, in 1754, a dedicated ecclesiastical committee did acknowledge the image's miraculous nature, a recognition confirmed the following year by the Bishop Sylvester Lubynetsky-Rudnytsky.⁴¹

39 В. Александрович et al., 2008, с. 158.

40 One of the many original iconographic types of the Mother of God: "She who shows the way".

41 E. Nowakowski, 1902, s. 527.

In this artwork, crafted by Ivan Masievsky, the Piddubtsi icon is centred and framed by a rectangle. This icon adheres to the Hodegetria, paralleling the Smolensk icon, with the figure of Christ positioned on the left arm of the Virgin, His right hand making a gesture of blessing towards the centre of the scene. Positioned below this central imagery, effigies of St. Basil the Great and St. Josaphat Kuntsevych⁴² are depicted in full stature amidst the clouds, echoing their portrayal in *The Apotheosis of the Virgin of Pochaiv* painting. Interposed between these saintly representations rests the insignia of the Basilian Order, depicted as a fiery column.

The iconography of these images is very similar, with the figures arranged in a specific manner. It is worth noting that the image of St. Josaphat Kuntsevych in these icons is that of a martyr, as we see him with an axe in his head. The inclusion of Basil the Great, the coat of arms, and Josaphat Kuntsevych in this particular icon may suggest an attempt to associate these icons with the Basilians. The presence of both patrons and the coat of arms/symbol seems to indicate this point. A similar example is the image of the Virgin of Sven from the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, where Anthony and Theodosius of Pechersk, the founders of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, are depicted as two saints near the icon. Thus, for the Basilians, Josaphat Kuntsevych serves not only as a symbol of their Uniate identity but also as a means of self-identification.

By the 19th century, while under Russian oppression, the Basilians viewed themselves as heirs to St. Josaphat's legacy, enduring persecution in a manner reminiscent of their saintly forebear.

7. Conclusions

In conclusion, Josaphat Kuntsevych is a complex historical figure who is viewed from a range of perspectives. Some view him as controversial while others see him as a symbol of unity. This raises the question as to how he is viewed within the confession he represented. When engaging with Willem Frijhoff's perspectives on the confessional era, it becomes apparent that the era was marked by an intensified discourse on 'martyrdom for the faith' as an instrument for forging confessional identities. This study scrutinizes the manner in which the Basilians embraced this narrative in relation to Josaphat Kuntsevych, delving into graphic depictions which have not yet been extensively analysed in order to extract findings.

42 O. Сидор, 2008, с. 426.

It is important to recognize the limitations of examining a finite array of images. While a comprehensive visual account may be unattainable at the moment, the selected images provide insight into the Basilians' efforts to perpetuate the veneration of St. Josaphat. This is achieved primarily by upholding his image as a martyr for the faith, which distinguishes him from figures in other traditions of faith. Furthermore, the portrayal of Josaphat in the *Apotheosis of the Virgin of Pochaiv* alongside other revered saints, associated with a particular region, highlights his importance. In the examined images, Josaphat is raised to an emblematic position, representing the Basilian Order itself. Through this iconographic strategy, the Basilians articulate and affirm their distinctive Uniate identity. They weave the iconography of Josaphat Kuntsevych into the rich tapestry of their confessional narrative.

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