

Maria Grazia Bartolini*

Immaculate Conception(s): The Virgin, the Purity of the Political Body, and the Building of a New Orthodox Piety in Early Modern Ukraine¹

<https://doi.org/10.1515/slau-2026-2006>

Summary: The article examines how seventeenth-century Ukrainian Orthodox intellectuals creatively defined, appropriated, and popularized the doctrine of Mary’s Immaculate Conception, looking at the different religious, political, and ecclesiastical interests that intersect in their textual and visual representations of the Immaculate Virgin. What can the use of this controversial doctrine tell us about the broader changes in religion and theology that pervaded the territories of the Kyiv Metropolitanate during the second half of the seventeenth century, changes that historians of other regions have examined from the perspective of “confessionalization”? In tracing the varied contours of the discourse of immaculacy, the article tests the explanatory possibilities of two propositions. First, it argues that the idea of purity encapsulated in the doctrine is to be interpreted in a larger political frame – as a reflection of the Kyiv Metropolitanate and the Hetmanate as political entities deeply entangled in religious, confessional, and political problems. Second, it argues that in the last decades of the seventeenth century, there is a transference of Immaculist iconography and symbols to subjects other than the Virgin Mary. This shift invariably takes place in rhetorical contexts charged with political meanings, bringing together abstract theological propositions, devotional practices, and local and supranational politics. This speaks to the existence of what the author terms a *Pietas Kiovensis*.

Keywords: Ukrainian Literature, Ukrainian Religious Culture, Early Modern Ukrainian History, Kyivan Orthodoxy, Immaculate Conception

¹ Research for this paper was carried out while I was a HURI Research Fellow in Ukrainian Studies supported by the Lev and Oksana Iwanna Sijak Szczur Ukrainian Fund in the Fall term 2024. I am particularly grateful to Michael Flier and all the participants in the HURI public seminar series for their generous feedback on my research.

***Corresponding author: Dr. Maria Grazia Bartolini**, Associate Professor, Department of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Mediations, Università degli studi di Milano, I- Piazza S. Alessandro, 1, 20123 Milano, E-Mail: maria.bartolini@unimi.it

1 Introduction

In a sermon on the Conception of the Theotokos, published in Kyiv in 1676, Antonij Radyvylovskij (d. 1688), one of the most prolific preachers of early modern Ukraine, offered a passionate defense of the Immaculate Conception. Theologians, he states bluntly, can discuss Mary's Immaculacy as long as they want ("якж хочуть теолоґіове о том дишкурують"): he believes along with the Church – and will believe until death – that Mary was born without original sin (Radyvylovskij 1676: 551).

The fact that this sermon vociferously supports the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception and considers it a belief commonly held by the Orthodox Church, of which Radyvylovskij was a member, is no small matter, especially if we consider that the Eastern Orthodox Church never recognized the idea that the Virgin was conceived free from original sin. Even across Catholic Europe, this was a hotly debated issue. Before being pronounced a dogma of the Catholic faith by the 1854 Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, the Immaculate Conception was a doctrine lacking papal definition, fervently defended by many and stormily contested by some, with the Franciscans and the Jesuits championing Mary's exemption from sin and the Dominicans arguing that Mary must have been subject to original sin like any other human being. During the seventeenth century, an unprecedented volume of literature of all kinds was written on the subject, in a polemical campaign that generated mutual accusations of heresy and placed great stress on visual representation (Johnson 2007: 373).² In Spain, the debate attained "an impressive quasi-political status," as King Philip III (1578–1621) relentlessly lobbied the papacy to elevate the doctrine to dogma, transforming the defense of the Immaculate Conception into a dynastic crusade (Stratton 1994: 4).

In a European context in which the defense of the doctrine of immaculacy had become highly politicized, many Ukrainian Orthodox religious writers presented themselves as enthusiastic defenders of Mary's exemption from original sin before her conception. While they were not quite as prolific as in other parts of Europe, the texts they produced reveal a fervent devotion to Mary's eternal purity and a high commitment in propagandizing the doctrine. In so doing, they raise crucial questions about the origins and functions of this devotion in the East Slavic region. Why is the Immaculate Conception such an important symbol for Ukrainian early modern religious culture?

On a superficial level, the fact that Ukrainian literature and art in the seventeenth century had become increasingly focused on Immaculist notions is not parti-

² On the historical controversy surrounding the Immaculate Conception, see Mayberry 1991; and Sebastian 1958.

cularly surprising for a territory with close cultural ties to Catholic Poland-Lithuania and, by extension, to Western Europe. Sermon collections by Franciscans, the main advocates of the doctrine since the late Middle Ages, were widely popular among Kyivan preachers. Many Ukrainian Orthodox intellectuals studied at Polish-Lithuanian Jesuit Colleges, which were a hotbed of Immaculist thinking. For instance, it was under the influence of Jesuit Marian sodalities that in the 1690s, students of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (the major Orthodox educational institution in the East Slavic lands during the seventeenth century) founded a congregation in which members had to dedicate their lives “to the Virgin Mary, conceived without original sin” (Višnevskij 1903: 237).

That said, we cannot dismiss the Immaculist leanings of most Ukrainian writers as simply a mere instance of the Westernization of Ukrainian culture – a passive imitation of an early modern Catholic Europe saturated with Immaculist theology and imagery.³ The Immaculate Conception appealed so intensely to these writers – and Radyvylovs’kyj swears loyalty to the Immaculist cause “until death” – because it *meant* something to them. A rallying point for Counter-Reformation religiosity, in Orthodox Ukraine this non-official (though widely accepted) doctrine became a locus for spiritual, ecclesiastical, and political developments, reflecting the “local knowledge” (in Clifford Geertz’s term) and devotions of different members within the Kyiv Orthodox Church (Geertz 1983). Nonetheless, the few studies that have focused on the Immaculate Conception in Ukraine (Senyk 1984; Jakovenko 2017: 293–300) present these ideologically interwoven aspects as separate trends, focusing almost exclusively on the theological dimensions of the issue and their allegedly derivative nature.

Building on Rosilie Hernández’s recent study of how Mary’s Immaculate Conception shaped cultural identity in early modern Spain (Hernández 2019), I will approach this little-known topic via a different interpretative avenue. Instead of considering the enthusiastic support of the doctrine by Ukrainian Orthodox writers as an example of West-to-East cultural transfer, I will examine how they defined, appropriated, and popularized Mary’s exceptionality, turning her into a site of reflection for notions such as confessional purity, Church and State authority, and the unity of the political body. I will suggest that the arguments in support of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception offer us a glimpse not only of the history of theological doctrines and Ukrainian Orthodox religiosity in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, but also a portrait of the process of identity construction during the early modern age. The Immaculate Mary was, in this respect, a particu-

³ This is, for instance, the position of the renowned Russian Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky (Losskij 1975).

larly useful symbol to “think with” – an ideological space in which individuals and communities could articulate their Orthodox identities, often in opposition to an “other” perceived as irredeemably impure.

In tracing the varied contours of this discourse of immaculacy, I will first chart how the doctrine was explained and supported, and which biblical and liturgical texts were used to provide a scriptural backing, setting it within the wider context of medieval and early modern Mariology. With this larger theological framework in mind, in the second part of the article, I will explore how the theological complexities of immaculacy intertwined with politics, looking at contemporary political and confessional conflicts as the very problems that Mary’s purity needed to confront. In doing so, I will formulate two propositions. First, I argue that the idea of purity (and its tightly related opposite, “contamination”) encapsulated in the doctrine is to be interpreted in a larger political frame – as a reflection of the Kyiv Metropolitanate and the Hetmanate (the semiautonomous Cossack state that existed in the territories of Ukraine from roughly 1648 to 1783) as political realities entangled in religious, confessional, and political problems. In a historical moment of social and political turmoil, Mary’s pure body reflected the sense of anxiety about how the boundaries of the Hetmanate and its Church were threatened. More importantly, it indicated the need to recompose a fragile political body into an entity that, like the Immaculate Virgin, conceived its identity as “impermeable” to external contaminations.⁴ In this respect, the phenomena observed in this paper can be properly understood only in the context of the broader changes in religion that pervaded Europe between the second half of the sixteenth century and the mid-seventeenth century, which historians of other regions have examined from the perspective of “confessionalization” – the process by which, after the Reformation, all the major Christian denominations endeavored to develop well-defined doctrinal and ritual identities that would distinguish them from their rivals. Like Catholics, Lutherans, and the Reformed, Kyiv Church elites also participated in this larger process of distinguishing Christian denominations from each other, aiming at confessional homogeneity within the Hetmanate.⁵

Second, I argue that Ukrainian intellectuals drew on Marian Immaculist imagery and iconography to generate their political language. As a symbol, Mary’s immaculacy was highly productive, allowing different symbolic structures to be formed from its original nucleus. Thus, in the verbal and visual texts examined in this article, the attributes of the Immaculate Mary are extended to other concrete

4 On the social implications of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in other areas of Europe, see, for instance, Ruiz-Gálvez Priego 2009.

5 For an analysis of the social, cultural, and political transformations that invested early modern Ukraine from the perspective of confessionalization, see Plokhyy 2002.

and abstract subjects – the Muscovite tsar, the Hetman, and the Kyiv Church – that come to incarnate the drive for “purity” that was at the heart of immaculacy discourses, which then became a vehicle for competing ideologies.

These propositions will allow me to speak on the existence of what I term a *Pietas Kiovensis* (Kyivan piety), a specific moral and religious code promoted by Kyiv Orthodox elites to foster confessional cohesion and create an Orthodox identity that differed not only from Catholics and Uniates (Greek Catholics) but also from Muscovy and other Eastern Churches. I model this term on the notion of *Pietas Austriaca* first elaborated by Austrian historian Anna Coreth in a seminal work that appeared in German in 1959 (Coreth 1959).⁶ Coreth describes as *Pietas Austriaca* the devotional practices – devotion to the Eucharist, faith in the Cross, Marian piety, and veneration of the saints – that characterized the Habsburg dynasty during the early modern period. Similarly, I argue that Kyiv religious elites elaborated a specific set of beliefs, doctrines, and rituals that was distinctive of Kyivan Orthodoxy, and in which the Immaculate Conception played an important role. As I will show, the belief in Mary’s exemption from original sin was so deeply ingrained in the religious imagination that it propagated to other areas of social and cultural life, such as politics and political theology, influencing their symbolic articulation.

2 The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in Ukrainian Orthodox writings: theological landscapes

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception declares that the Virgin Mary is unique, in that she was shielded from the stain of sin from the very moment she was conceived in her mother’s womb. Although by the early eighth century a feast-day dedicated to the Conception of Mary was being celebrated in Constantinople every 9 December, theological developments on the issue were mainly confined to the Latin West (Pelikan 1996: 189; Rubin 2010: 161; Warner 1976: 239). In fact, the Eastern Church used terms such as immaculate (*amiantos*) to define the Virgin, but they implied moral and physical purity and not freedom from original sin (Warner 1976: 243). The idea that Mary was conceived without original sin circulated widely in the West through the second-century apocryphal *Protoevangelium of James* (also known as *Gospel of the Infancy of the Virgin and Christ*), which posited that Mary had been miraculously conceived without sexual intercourse by her parents Anne

⁶ Coreth’s work has been recently translated into English (Coreth 2004).

and Joachim. The first known treatise in defense of the doctrine, the *Tractatus de conceptione B. Mariae Virginis* [Treatise on the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary] by Eadmer of Canterbury (1064–1124), was written in England, where the Feast of the Immaculate Conception had been unofficially celebrated on December 8 since the early eleventh century. Immaculist ideas gradually took root at the turn of the fourteenth century, when the English Franciscan John Duns Scotus (ca. 1266–1308) became their strongest advocate.⁷ According to Scotus, Christ's purity required a perfectly pure source for His human form. God prepared Mary as a fitting mother for Christ by infusing her natural humanity with exceptional grace. The most perfect method of redemption was to preserve her from original sin rather than rescue her from it, thus setting her apart from all other human beings. To the arguments of Dominican philosopher and theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), who argued that Mary must have been subject to original sin “since she was conceived by way of fleshly concupiscence and the intercourse of man and woman,” Scotus replied by defining original sin as a lack of justice in the soul rather than as an inheritance sexually transmitted all the way from Adam. Since original sin was not transmitted in the seed or the flesh, it was possible for God to give Mary this special exemption at the moment of her conception (Warner 1976: 242; Lamy 2000: 42–53).⁸ Scotus' typically Franciscan emphasis on God's voluntarism – God is omnipotent and, therefore, has the power to exempt His son's mother from original sin – along with his view of original sin as a deprivation of grace rather than a physiological marker would become a pillar of the subsequent defense of the doctrine (Hernández 2019: 26), one that Ukrainian Orthodox writers wholeheartedly appropriated.

By the fifteenth century, the doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception had become highly contentious. The Franciscans stood in theological opposition to the Dominicans, who followed Aquinas in declaring that Mary was subject to original sin in the same way as all humans. Pope Sixtus IV (1414–84), himself a member of the Franciscan order, strongly encouraged the Immaculist cult and devotion. A special devotee of Mary, in 1476 he approved a liturgical office for the feast (*Officium Immaculatae Conceptionis*), newly written by the Franciscan Leonardo Nogarolo (d. 1486). In 1480, he sanctioned a second office and mass of the Conception, composed by the Milanese Franciscan monk Bernardino de' Busti (ca. 1450–ca. 1513), which remained in use throughout the eighteenth century and relied heavily on imagery from the Song of Songs (Rubin 2010: 304).⁹ When the Jesuit order was founded in

⁷ On the medieval history of the doctrine, see Lamy 2000.

⁸ Thomas Aquinas rejects Mary's exemption from original sin in *Summa Theologica*, question 27, art. 2–3.

⁹ De Busti's office was reprinted in a volume entitled *Mariale*, a major compendium of Marian theology that first appeared in 1483 and went through several reprintings.

1534, the Franciscan defense of the Immaculate Conception gained powerful allies. Although the Jesuits joined the debate later than the other two mendicant orders, they soon became the doctrine's most enthusiastic supporters (Warner 1976: 253), propagandizing it through a range of verbal and visual media as well as their expanding network of colleges, which reached as far as Polish-Lithuania and Ukraine.

Although the doctrine did not have any Biblical foundation, Immaculists cited several Scriptural texts to create a fitting theological framework for the theme of the Virgin's purity – a framework that, as we will soon see, Ukrainian Orthodox intellectuals actively reused and adapted. Biblical verses such as Genesis 3:15, Song of Songs 4:7, Ecclesiasticus 24:9, Proverbs 8:22, and Revelation 12:1 were used to prove that Mary was exempted from original sin *ab initio*, existing as a fully-fledged concept in the mind of God before the creation of the world (Hernández 2019: 28). The most important verse for defining the Immaculate Conception is Genesis 3:15, "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel," which sets the stage for an interpretation of Mary as the woman who crushes the head of the serpent and gives rebirth to humankind through Christ. Its use as proof of the Immaculate Conception became standard by the late sixteenth century, when it was interpreted as a sure sign that Mary was predestined to escape the devil's powers (Hernández 2019: 28; Twomey 2008: 73–74).¹⁰ Proverbs 8:22 ("The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways, before His works of old") and Ecclesiasticus 24:9 ("Before all ages, in the beginning, he created me") were other common allegories for Mary's predestination and conception in the mind of God before the inception of original sin.¹¹

Song of Songs 4:7 ("Thou art all fair. There is no spot in thee") became identified with the Immaculate Conception in the twelfth century, when the French Scholastic philosopher Peter Abelard (1079–1142) referred to it to describe Mary's exemption from sin in his treatise on the doctrine (Twomey 2008: 107). After Abelard, the verse "thou art all fair" (*tota pulchra*) became an "Immaculist refrain" (Stratton 1994: 17). In the late sixteenth century, it became the foundation of the iconographic composition known as *Tota pulchra* (Stratton 1994: 39–46), which portrayed the Immaculate Mary surrounded by symbols of her purity and miraculous virginity drawn from the Song of Songs (the lily among thorns, the tower of David, the garden enclosed, the fountain sealed, the sun and the moon) and other Biblical books (the spotless mirror described in Wisdom 7:26).

¹⁰ All Biblical quotations are from the King James Version except for those from Ecclesiasticus (Book of Sirach), which are from the New Catholic Bible.

¹¹ On the textual tradition supporting the argument of the Virgin being created from the beginning of time, see Levi D'Ancona (1957: 50–53).

Of the scriptural texts interpreted as prefiguring the Virgin Immaculate, Revelation 12 was, however, undoubtedly the most popular throughout the early modern period. This passage was first applied to the Virgin Mary and her defeat of the devil by eighth-century English theologian Alcuinus in his *Exegetica*. According to the later interpretation of Cistercian abbot and mystic Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), the Apocalyptic woman described in verse 12:1 was the Virgin herself, triumphing over sin (Levi d’Ancona 1957: 24). For Immaculists, the association of Mary with the Apocalyptic Woman expressed her most pure condition, functioning as a sign of her eternal fellowship with the Trinity before the Fall. Therefore, in the early seventeenth century, the iconographical details described in Revelation 12 (the crown of twelve stars, the moon under the woman’s feet, and the radiance of her being) were conflated with the Virgin *tota pulchra* to provide what would become the official iconography of the Immaculate Conception after the Council of Trent – Mary crowned with twelve stars, the moon under her feet, trampling the serpent or dragon. First developed in Spain and popularized across Europe by the dissemination of Flemish prints, this iconography came to encapsulate the essence of the doctrine, offering a striking visual formula for the idea of a woman eternally protected by God from the snares of sin (Stratton 1994: 60).¹²

Ukrainian Orthodox discourse took part in this prolific religious imagining that bolstered and reinforced the mystery of Mary’s immaculacy, producing a series of texts that actively and explicitly engaged with these theological notions and figurative symbols. Authored exclusively by male authors, this constellation of texts on Mary’s immaculacy includes miracle collections, sermons, lives of saints, and book illustrations. In particular, sermons delivered on the Nativity and the Conception of the Theotokos offer us important evidence of the popularity of the doctrine among Ukrainian religious writers, who gave both feasts unequivocal interpretations of the Virgin’s immaculacy, making this complex and abstract doctrine comprehensible to larger audiences. Ukrainian preachers followed early modern Mariologists (especially Franciscans) in arguing that Mary was predestined to be the Mother of God before the beginning of time and thus had to be preserved from original sin.

Although any direct influence of specific texts is difficult to detect or reconstruct, we must keep in mind that most of these sermons were written in the late 1650s and early 1670s, in the immediate aftermath of a massive wave of Immaculist debates and Spanish papal missions that culminated in Pope Alexander VII (1599–1667) mandating universal observance of the feast in 1661 with the bull *Soli-*

¹² On Western, and especially Flemish Marian prints travelling to Ukraine via Gdansk and Cracow, see Deluga 2000.

citudo omnium ecclesiarum.¹³ Echoes of the fervor surrounding the doctrine could have reached Ukrainian Orthodox literati via Poland, most probably through the sermons of Franciscan preachers, the theological disputations held in the many Jesuit colleges of Poland-Lithuania, and the widely disseminated treatises on the topic, which together constituted a corpus of theological discourse on Immaculacy.¹⁴ For instance, the miracle collection *Nebo novoe* [*New Heaven*, 1665] by Ioanykij Galjats'kyj (d. 1688) reports a well-known Immaculist miracle involving the medieval English theologian Alexander Neckam (named “Alexander Niklus” in the Ukrainian text) falling ill after denying the Virgin’s Immaculate Conception. Predictably, this miracle is quoted in a late medieval Franciscan sermon collection, the extraordinarily popular *Dormi secure* [*Sleep Well*, 1475], by the German Franciscan Johannes von Werden (Galjats'kyj 1665: 5v).¹⁵ The Ukrainian Uniate (Greek Catholic) Church, which, following the *Sollicitudo omnium*, officially adopted the feast in 1661 (Galadza 1997: 15), was another likely channel for this “stream” of immaculacy discourse. Unlike Catholic Europe, where the controversy over the Immaculate Conception was a matter of ecclesiastical politics marked by a heated theological and political confrontation between orders – and especially between Franciscan and Dominican institutional identities – Ukrainian Orthodox writers display a remarkable consensus, lacking the characteristic battles between Maculists and Immaculists. A careful examination of the sermons delivered by Lazar Baranovyč (ca. 1620–1693), Ioanykij Galjats'kyj, and Antonij Radyvylovs'kyj on the feasts of Mary’s Nativity and Conception reveals three men deeply engaged with Immaculism to the point of fashioning themselves, as we saw at the beginning of this article, as the self-appointed guardians of the incontestable truth of the doctrine against those theologians who sought to deprive the Virgin of exceptional grace. If a Maculist discourse existed at all, it remains in the background – “let the theologians dispute as much as they want,” concedes Radyvylovs'kyj – as a distant and elusive echo of the

¹³ On this debate, see González Tornel 2019.

¹⁴ For an overview of the doctrine in Poland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Misiurek (1994: I, 407–418).

¹⁵ For Neckam’s miracle, see the “Sermo de conceptione b[eatae] Mariae Virginis” in von Werden (1507: 35–45). Galjats'kyj also reports what was probably the most popular miraculous account to be used as propaganda for the doctrine of Immaculate Conception throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance – the miracle of Helsin, Abbot of Ramsay (1080s), who instituted the feast of the Conception of the Virgin after being rescued from shipwreck thanks to his appeal to Mary. A regular component of Western Conception liturgies, this legend was attributed to Scholastic theologian Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109), whom Galjats'kyj mentions in a marginal gloss. That these stories found their way in an Orthodox miracle collection suggests that Galjats'kyj considered the belief in the Immaculate Conception as coextensive with salvation, using it as a dividing line to draw boundaries between the blessed and the unholy.

fierce polemics that took place across other parts of Europe. Enthusiastically cohesive in their belief in Mary's Immaculate Conception, these three writers variously appropriated and elaborated upon Mary's status as "all fair," the conditions of her exemption from original sin, and her eternal existence before the Fall.

In Baranovyč's sermon on the Nativity of the Theotokos, the notion of Mary's Immaculate Conception is figuratively evoked by the image of the "lily among thorns" (Song of Songs 2:2) in the engraving prefacing the sermon.



Figure 1: Engraving preceding the Sermon on the Nativity of the Theotokos, 1674

A part of the *tota pulchra* iconography in Western art and literature, the lily among thorns had an important role in Nogarolo's Conception office, because it figured in the opening antiphon at first vespers (Twomey 2008: 163). The remainder of the text contains several other fundamental scriptural and theological tenets upheld by Immaculists as proof of Mary's purity, elaborating on Scotus' idea that Christ's perfect humanity could only be possible because Mary was exceptional in her spotlessness. A deft juxtaposition of Biblical quotations containing the term "sin" makes the notion of immaculacy more concretely visible for the audience, calling attention to the opposition between purity and impurity that is central to these texts. All human beings have to speak of themselves using the words of Psalm 50:7 ("Behold, I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me"); Mary, by contrast, was promised that "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling" (Psalm 90:10) (Baranovyč 1674: 9r, 11r). In the Christian interpretation

of Psalm 90, Christ treads upon the dragon as a metaphor for His destruction of evil, which echoes Mary's own defeat of original sin in the Immaculist exegesis of Genesis 3:15 and Revelation 12. Equally central to Immaculist discourse is Psalm 50, which was first used by Ambrose of Milan in his Commentary on Psalm 37:5 as a proof text arguing that since Christ had been conceived by a virgin, His flesh could not have been corrupted by original sin like other human beings. Building on Ambrose's exegesis, Scotus and the other Immaculists used precisely this psalm to defend the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, and posited that Christ's exemption from original sin made a special treatment of Mary necessary in the scheme of sin and salvation (Pelikan 1996: 191). It was not convenient (*non decuit*) for the Mother of God to have been in the grip of sin for even a single moment; therefore, God had to intervene by anticipating the merits of His redemption of all humanity (Pelikan 1996: 191; Lamy 2000: 468–471). The idea of God's anticipation of Mary's redemption clearly resonates in Baranovyč's Sermon on the Conception of the Theotokos (1674: 101r), which states that God could not allow Mary to be "a slave of original sin even for a short time" ("рабою грѣха и на малое время и перваго быти"). Throughout the sermon, the powerful, if visually elusive, notion of the Virgin's immunity to sin is made more easily accessible through the image of the sun, a metaphor fundamental to Conceptionist iconology and liturgical language. Mary, "fair as the sun" (a verse from Song of Songs 6:9 that regularly appears in the *tota pulchra* iconography), is the light that can dispel the darkness of original sin ("разсыпа тму грѣха первородна" [Baranovyč 1674: 102r]).¹⁶

If Baranovyč's defense of Mary's immaculacy focuses on her privileged status as God's mother, Radyvylovs'kyj's sermons on the Nativity and Conception of the Theotokos elegantly build on the equally common Immaculist topos that identifies Mary with Wisdom (*sapientia*) – a divine attribute existing in God's mind from before the creation of the world. Treading on Franciscan theological ground, he ties his defense of Immaculacy to the logic of God's omnipotence, developing a description of Mary as a fundamentally distinctive entity. Since the beginning of time, he writes, God had a portrait of Mary, who was the most beautiful of all creatures. For this reason the Holy Spirit said to Mary "thou art fair" (Song of Songs 4:1), a verse that by the end of the seventeenth century had become inseparable from the Conception doctrine (Radyvylovs'kyj 1676: 428). When Mary was created in God's mind ("творачи Марію в мысли своеи Бозкои"), she was unstained by sin ("жаднымъ грѣхомъ не мѣла буты змазана") "from the very first moment of her conception"

¹⁶ On the image of light in connection to the Immaculate Virgin, see De Bussi's *Mariale* (1502: II, iii, 1): "God said, 'let there be light' and the blessed virgin was given to the ages in a glorious light, as the church sings, and the completely shining light Mary was made without original sin." I quote the English translation in Butler 2009: 264.

(“в первомъ пунктѣ зачатїа ея” [Radyvylovs’kyj 1676: 441]). An unmistakable Immaculist declaration, this expression refers to the Franciscan argument that Mary’s soul was pre-redeemed by Christ *in the very instant* of generation, in opposition to the Dominican belief that she was sanctified later in Anne’s womb. Indeed, an emphasis on expressions such as “from the point that she [Mary] began to be in the womb,” “at the very moment,” “in the first instant” is a recurring feature of Latin and vernacular Immaculist texts, one that is deliberately echoed in Radyvylovs’kyj’s choice of words.¹⁷ In this passage, the idea of Mary’s spiritual creation in the mind of God is a reference to Proverbs 8:22 (“The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways”) and Ecclesiasticus 24:9 (“Before all ages, in the beginning, he created me”), two scriptural verses that, as we saw at the beginning of this section, were touchstones for Immaculist exegetical discourses. Both Nogarolo’s and De Busti’s Conception offices used Proverbs 8:22 as their readings.¹⁸ In the early seventeenth century, this interpretation was widely propagated in the influential Bible commentaries of the Flemish Jesuit Cornelius a Lapide (1567–1637), a theologian well known among Ukrainian Orthodox intellectuals: God, he wrote, “created and possessed the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of Christ, in the beginning of His ways, that is, of His works.”¹⁹ Documentary evidence that Ukrainian Orthodox literati followed this exegetical tradition includes the Catechism compiled by Kyiv Metropolitan Peter Mohyla in 1645, known as the *Sobranie korotkoj nauki* (*Collection of Short Instruction*), which describes Mary as chosen by God “from eternity” to be Christ’s mother (“привѣкъ выбрана и назначена будучи, абы маткою сына божого была” [Mohyla 1645: 20r]).

In placing Mary’s purity at the junction between time and eternity, Radyvylovs’kyj’s sermon enriches the line of argument adopted by Scotus and later Franciscans with parallels with the traditional topos of God as artist (1676: 545). Reproposing a claim made by many theologians before him, he refers to God as to a famous painter (“славный малар”) who painted Mary as the most beautiful of His creations; as heavenly architect, he built Mary with the best foundations – that is, without the stain of original sin (“пекніи фундаментъ чистого зачатїа”). This was not an uncommon argument among Immaculists: a twelfth-century pro-Immaculist treatise by Nicholas of St Albans (*Liber de celebranda conceptione*) described God as a “good craftsman preparing a room for His son,” while sixteenth-century Italian theologian

¹⁷ See, for instance, the expression “in primo instanti Conceptionis Virginis” (‘in the first instant of the Conception of the Virgin’) in Scotus’s *Ordinatio* (III, d. 3, q. 1) (Scotus 1968: IX, 91).

¹⁸ The first reference to Mary as “concepta in mente divina” [‘conceived in God’s mind’] is found in a fourteenth-century treatise on the Conception by Pseudo-John of Mandeville (Lamy 2000: 167).

¹⁹ “Dominus creavit et possedit B. Virginem, utpote Christi matrem, quasi principium viarum, id est, operum suorum” (a Lapide 1663: 515–516).

Cesare Calderari (d. 1588) discussed the creation of the Immaculate Virgin in a comparison between the work of the artist and the creation of God, the perfect painter: “It is as though she [Mary] had said: I was conceived from eternity in the mind of God, that supreme painter” (Twomey 2008: 201; Calderari 1601: 26).²⁰

The Immaculate Virgin being predestined to be spotless from before the foundation of the world is an idea also prominent in Galjatovs’kyj’s sermons, which compare Mary’s exemption from original sin (“грѣхомъ первороднымъ проклѣтымъ незмазанаа”) to Noah’s ark and Adam’s pure, prelapsarian flesh; two popular images among the apologists of the Immaculate Conception (Galjatovs’kyj 1659: 172v–173r).²¹ Remarkably, although his sermon collection *Ključ razuminija* [*The Key to Understanding*, 1659] does not contain any sermons on the Conception of the Theotokos, the topic of Mary’s immaculacy is explicitly articulated in the sermons on her Nativity and Dormition. For instance, in the sermon on the Dormition, he interprets Mary triumphally assumed into Heaven as the Woman of Revelation 12, specifying that she was granted the privilege of sitting next to Christ on the heavenly throne (“на Маестатѣ небесномъ”) because she was never touched by original sin (Galjatovs’kyj 1659: 153r, 162r). The conflation between the Woman of Revelation 12 as a symbol of Mary assumed into Heaven and her Immaculate Conception was common throughout early modern Europe. In fact, in the Latin West, the Assumption of the Virgin was commonly understood in the framework of the theology of Immaculacy, deriving from the idea that the Virgin could not have been assumed into Heaven corporeally if her flesh had not been pure. Readings from Revelation 12:1 were included in Nogarolo’s and De Busti’s office, in the sixth response in Matins and the first lesson in None.²² It is thus no coincidence that the book’s title page shows the coronation of the Virgin assumed into Heaven by the Trinity – an unusual iconography for Eastern Orthodoxy – accompanied by a quotation from Song of Songs 4:8 (“Come from Libanus, [my] bride, come from Libanus: thou shalt be crowned”) that was used by Immaculists as proof of Mary’s privileged condition.²³

²⁰ I quote the English translation in Stratton (1994: 43).

²¹ On these symbols, see Levi d’Ancona (1957: 66). De Busti’s Conception office reiterates the idea, first formulated in the twelfth century by French theologian Peter Comestor (d. 1178), that Adam and Eve were the only other persons beside Christ and the Virgin to be born free of original sin (1502: I, vii, 1).

²² On the connection between the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, which was already articulated in Eadmer’s *Tractatus de conceptione B. Mariae Virginis*, see Levi d’Ancona (1957: 28); and Stratton (1994: 58–66).

²³ On the Coronation of the Virgin and Song of Songs 4:8 as Immaculist symbols, see Levi d’Ancona (1957: 29, n. 67).



Figure 2: Detail of the title page of Ioanykij Galjatovs'kyj's *Ključ razuminija*, 1659

Here, it is important to note that Song of Songs 4:8 reads differently in the Greek and Slavic Bibles, which, unlike Jerome's Vulgate, contain no reference to the bride's coronation and follow the Hebrew text in using a verb of motion: "Come from Libanus, [my] bride, come from Libanus: *thou shalt come* [ἐλεύσῃ in Greek; прииди in Church Slavonic]." The reference to the coronation in Galjatovs'kyj's rendition of this verse should therefore be considered a borrowing either from the Vulgate ("veni de Libano...*coronaberis*") or the Polish Bible ("pójdź z Libanu...*będziesz koronowana*"), which deliberately call attention to the theme of Mary's divine election. Galjatovs'kyj constructs his Immaculate Virgin as a textual and visual image that combines the icons of the *tota pulchra* and the Woman of the Apocalypse, giving elegant visual form to subtle theological distinctions. If from a purely theological perspective the mystery of the Immaculate Conception is difficult to grasp with human understanding, the translation of the Virgin from immaterial concept to almost pictorial symbol encourages the audience to carve its own imaginative relationship with Mary, using the bride of the Song of Songs and the Woman of Revelation as convenient signposts for her immaculacy.

The most important visual document conflating this imagery from Revelation and the Song of Songs to convey Mary's exemption from original sin is the engraving on the title page of Baranovyč's sermon collection *Truby sloves propovidnych* [*Trumpets of Preaching Words*, 1674], which, it should be noted, was denied printing in Moscow allegedly because of its Catholic-tinged views on the Immaculate Conception (Rolland 1992: 211). Like the other Eastern Churches, the official Muscovite position vis-à-vis Mary's immaculacy was one of denial. For instance, in the *Skrizal'* [*Tablet*], a compendium of Church doctrine translated from Greek and published in 1656, Russian patriarch Nikon (1605–1681) affirmed that Mary had been conceived in sin; in 1667, the Muscovite monk and translator Evfimij Čudovskij

(1620–1705) wrote that the doctrine was against the beliefs of the Eastern Orthodox Church (Korzo 2011: 140).²⁴

While the causal link between the *Truby's* nonprinting in Moscow and Baranovyč's Immaculist leanings remains a moot point, the book's illustrations do little to hide his support for the doctrine, of which, as Kyiv-educated intellectual and court poet Simeon Polockij (1629–1680) once wrote to him in 1669, Baranovyč was “a most zealous promoter” (*zelotissimus propugnator*) (Rolland 1992: 211). The image is divided into three parts, with Mary at the center as the Woman of Revelation 12, with the crescent under her feet that was the standard feature of Immaculist iconography across Western Europe. A quotation from Song of Songs 4:7 (“thou art all fair”) is placed over her head in an ideal recreation of the *tota pulchra* iconography. On either side of the Virgin, her parents Joachim and Anne hold a grape and a vessel, which symbolize their daughter as a vessel for the human Christ – the true vine of John 15:1. The doctrine of the Incarnation – the image seems to suggest in accordance with Scotus's thought – is the basis of the belief in the Immaculate Conception: Mary must have been without original sin to be worthy of bearing Christ, to whom the grape held by Joachim clearly alludes. Moreover, Mary and the crescent are placed on the book with the seven seals of Revelation 5:1, further underlining the “cosmic” nature of the Immaculate Virgin, existing before and after the end of time as the carrier of the Logos made flesh.

The similarities of these texts and their arguments – God's decision to create a most pure human mother for His Son, Mary's spotless existence since the beginning of time, her representation through a conflation of verbal and visual emblems from Revelation 12 and the Song of Songs – speak of a coherent effort to create a standard narrative for the doctrine that was easy to grasp and remember for popular audiences. By hearing the same strings of Biblical quotations spoken aloud in explicitly Immaculist contexts, Kyivan Orthodox congregations would have connected the passages to this important Marian mystery, interiorizing the doctrine as vivid, almost emblematic images. In turn, these images would become an integral part of the set of shared beliefs that characterized the Kyiv Church – what I propose calling *Pietas Kiovensis* – differentiating it from Moscow and other Eastern Orthodox Churches, which, as we saw, never accepted the doctrine of Immaculacy. And while the exact moment in which Mary was exempted from original sin probably meant little for popular devotion, her victorious fight with the Devil – and the ensuing possibility that one's own carnality could be redeemed and transformed – must have appealed much more intensely to the emotions of those who attended sermons on the day of her Nativity and

24 For a general account of the Orthodox rejection of the Immaculate Conception, see Bulgakov (2009: 15–63).

Conception or looked at the images of the triumphant Virgin standing over the crescent moon. Hence these texts' recurring focus on the vocabulary of purity, articulated in expressions such as “without stain” (*bez zmazy*), “spotless” (*nezmazanaja*), and “unblemished” (*bez poroka*); and their emphasis on objects and spaces (the lily among thorns, the perfectly sealed Noah's ark) that call attention to the opposition between impermeable and porous borders. The larger implications of this concentration on the symbolism of Mary's purity and its contrary, contamination, and how the doctrine of immaculacy as articulated in the *Pietas Kiovensis* trickled down to politics and political theology, will be made clear in the following section.



Figure 3: Detail of the title page of Lazar Baranovych's *Truby sloves propovidnyx*

3 Militant immaculacy and the body politic

As I intimated at the beginning of this paper, the Ukrainian literati's enthusiastic adherence to the doctrine of Mary's immaculacy begs an additional and fundamental question: what does it reveal about the relationship between religion and the broader cultural and political circumstances in which these texts were produced? In pursuing possible answers to this question, we should consider two

closely related issues: the political situation in the Ukrainian lands in the second half of the seventeenth century, and the way Orthodox religious writers understood and interpreted it. After the Cossack uprising led by Bohdan Xmelnyč'kyj (1648), a period of conflict marked by foreign invasions, civil war, and peasant revolts – described in Ukrainian history as the Period of Ruin – lasted almost uninterruptedly until 1711. During these decades, which represented a local variant of the social and political turmoil referred to by historians as “the crisis of the seventeenth century” (Trevor-Roper 1968) the Cossack state was divided between a Polish sphere of influence on the Right Bank of the Dnipro River and a Muscovite sphere of influence on the Left Bank (which extended across the river to the city of Kyiv as well), each with its own hetman.²⁵ Hetmans often clashed with the Ottomans, (who were in control of large parts of the Right Bank), with Poland and Muscovy, and with each other. Faced with a generalized collapse of social and political order, Kyiv Church elites, formally under the suzerainty of Moscow, looked to the Muscovite Tsar as the protector of Orthodoxy against the Ottoman and Polish (Catholic) threats and the guarantor of the rights and privileges of their Church, which depended on the Patriarchate of Constantinople and enjoyed relative autonomy. It is during this period of constant turmoil that we see a transference of Immaculist iconography and symbols to subjects other than the Virgin Mary. This shift, as I will soon demonstrate, invariably takes place in rhetorical contexts charged with political meanings, bringing together abstract theological propositions and local and supernatural politics.

Unlike the works examined in the previous section, none of the texts I will explore in the following pages functions as a *deliberate* theological defense of the Immaculate Conception. Nonetheless, I contend they appropriate and reinvent the repertory of Immaculist symbols (the moon, the serpent, and the Woman of Revelation 12 crushing evil) that was so vigorously propagated in contemporary religious writings, adapting them to serve the purpose of political and confessional propaganda.²⁶

In particular, in the verbal and visual texts produced in the Orthodox territories of Ukraine during the last three decades of the seventeenth century, the Immaculist theological discourse I examined in the previous section interacts with a nexus of scriptural quotations to liken Mary's pure body to the *corpus mysticum* of the Kyiv Church, describing her as the exceptionally brave defender of this mystical

²⁵ For a characterization of seventeenth-century Ukrainian history as part of this larger phenomenon, see Magocsi (1996: 218).

²⁶ On the use of a “Marian vocabulary” for expressing political notions in early modern Europe, see Luebbe 1997.

body. For instance, in Galiatovs'kyj's sermon on the Dormition of the Theotokos, the ethereal image of a spotless Virgin, created *ab initio* as the most beautiful of all creatures, morphs into that of the Virgin warrior who has power over Satan – a strong woman whose exceptionality is intimately connected to the masculine virtues of strength and heroism. The Woman of Revelation 12, he explains, represents the Church as well as the Virgin Mary. Just as the Apocalyptic Woman tramples the moon under her feet, the Church crushes heretics (“допчетъ всѣхъ еретыковъ ногами своими”), while Mary will cut off the head of the Antichrist at the end of time, reenacting her primeval victory against the serpent of sin (Galjatovs'kyj 1659: 153v, 158v). Sharing Christ's pure flesh, Mary is legitimated to act as the protector of both individual bodies and the mystical body of the Church, over which she extends her miraculous and purgative powers. Similarly, the Jesuit-educated Ukrainian Orthodox preacher and poet Stefan Javors'kyj (1658–1722) transposes the well-known Old Testament accounts of Judith, the deliverer of Israel from the army of Holofernes, onto the allegorical symbolism of Genesis 3:15, portraying the Virgin as a heroic slayer of sin – a new Judith killing the infernal Holofernes (“мужества сила, побѣдившая, аки вторая Юдию, адскаго Голоферна”) with her man-like strength (Javors'kyj 1691: 295v). Not insignificantly, this image already appears in Nogarolo's Conception office, in which it equally describes the Virgin's supremacy over the bestial forces of sin (*Armamentarium* 1649: 71).²⁷

The Virgin's military strength in the fight against sin is also at the center of Baranovyc's Sermon on the Nativity of the Theotokos. In a further instantiation of the militant rhetoric inherent in Immaculist discourse, two traditional symbols of the Virgin's immaculacy in the Marian Litany and the *tota pulchra* iconography – “the tower of David built for an armory” of Song of Songs 4:4, and the horns of the moon of Song of Songs 6:9 – become the weapons with which she vanquishes both “the serpent of original sin” (“убоѣса змии грѣха первороднаго”) and the enemies of the Church Militant (“Церковь воюющая”). In a striking blurring of the lines between masculine and feminine, Mary is then described as the dove who can lovingly hide the faithful under her wings but also crush the serpent's head (“попираетъ главу змию”) during the “ferocious time” described by John in Revelation 6:15–16, a likely allusion to the turmoil brought by the Ruin to the Ukrainian lands (1674: 11v, 12r). This paradoxical coexistence of military and maternal characteristics – of masculinity and tenderness – reappears in the context of Immaculacy in Dymytrii Tuptalo's *Runo orošennoe* [*The Bedewed Fleece*], a collection of Marian miracles first published in Černihiv in 1683 and reprinted five times between 1683

27 On Judith as a Marian type in Immaculist contexts, see Ciletti 2010.

and 1700. In the section “Dogmat presvjatoj Bohorodycy” [The Dogma of the Most Sainly Theotokos], which opens the 1696 edition of this work (Tuptalo 1696: 1r–2v), Immaculist attributes from Song of Songs and Revelation merge to create an image of spiritual and physical refuge: Mary is given “the wings of a great eagle” (Revelation 12:14) and “a thousand bucklers” (Song of Songs 4:4) to protect sinners, for she herself could escape from the macula of sin (“ѡ грѣха возлѣтъвша”). On the title page, the image of a tree springing from Anne’s and Joachim’s breast and culminating in a lily holding up Mary further confirms the Immaculist orientation of the collection, for it reproduces an iconography of the Immaculate Conception that was common in Western Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries – what Mirella Levi d’Ancona calls “the Immaculist Tree of Jesse,” with Mary instead of Christ, and Anne and Joachim instead of Jesse.²⁸



Figure 4: Detail of the title page of Dymytrij Tuptalo’s *Runo orošennoe*, 1696

Significantly, the 1696 edition of this book also features an engraving by Lavrentij Krščonovyč (1653–1703), in which the traditional Ukrainian Orthodox icon of the Virgin of Pokrov – with Mary stretching her miraculous veil (*pokrov* in Church Slavonic) to protect the faithful – merges with that of the Woman of Revelation standing on the crescent.²⁹

²⁸ On the tree of Jesse as “a standard feature in representations of the Immaculate Conception,” see Levi d’Ancona (1957: 47–49); and Stratton (1994: 16).

²⁹ On this engraving and its attribution, see Deluga (2003: 83).



Figure 5: Lavrentij Krščonovyč, Virgin of Pokrov, 1696

This again points to a connection between the Immaculate Virgin and (military) protection that is central to the discourse of these writers on immaculacy. Since Mary was shielded from original sin, she can in turn shield the faithful under her mantle.

Arguably, these passages reflect a concern with porous boundaries that Mary's own purity and impenetrable virginity anticipates. This is especially evident if we consider that during the years in which they were written, some of their authors repeatedly petitioned the Tsar not to return Kyiv to the Catholic Poles and to protect it from Turkish and Tatar incursions (Sumcov 1885: 108). For instance, the Orthodox liturgical book *Anfolohion*, published in Novhorod-Sivers'kyj in 1678 under Baranovyč's supervision, opens with a dedication to Tsar Fedor Alekseevich (r. 1676–1682) that enjoins him to defeat the Turks. In keeping with this semantics of confessional antagonism, the book's Conception liturgy contains an image of Mary as the one who “crushed the idols” (“идолскаа капища сокруши”) that is drawn from the Conception Canon of eight-century Byzantine

hymnographer and theologian Andrew of Crete, and which was likely to intimate a parallelism between Mary's victorious fight against sin and contemporary military and confessional battles. Interestingly, the idol-destroying Mary does not feature in the Conception offices found in liturgical books printed in Moscow during the same period; it is a regular component of those printed in Ukraine, however, where it would have resonated deeply with audiences that had to face the religious turmoil and military confrontations of the Ruin (*Anfolohion* 1678: 233r).³⁰ Similarly, in the Akathist printed in Kyiv in 1693, the sixth *ikos* (a Byzantine liturgical hymn) celebrating Christ repelling "the flattery of the demons" ("отогнаа лѣсть бѣсовская") is accompanied by an illustration that portrays the Virgin, radiant with solar rays as the Woman of Revelation 12, standing in front of statues of bisected idols in the background.



Figure 6: The Virgin with shattered idols. *Akafysty s styxyry i kanony*, 1693

This rare iconography possibly combines the Conception Canon imagery with a tale from the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew about how hundreds of Egyptian idols spontaneously shattered when Mary and the baby Jesus entered a temple. Notably, although the hymn concerns Christ, its visual embodiment deliberately uses an image of the "militant" Virgin, drawing on an established connection between Mary and the vanquishing of evil, incarnated here by non-Christian gods.³¹

The contrast between Mary's immaculate body and symbols of religious alterity allows me to introduce a central element of the broader cultural and political implications of immaculacy as elaborated by Kyiv intellectuals: the extension of

³⁰ The verse is absent in the Festal Menaions and the Menaions for the month of December printed in Moscow in 1636, 1645, 1674, and 1690.

³¹ For the episode of the falling idols, see chapter 23 of the Pseudo-Matthew (The Apocryphal New Testament 1993: 96).

Immaculist attributes and symbols to subjects other than the Virgin Mary but sharing with her a role as defender of the Church and vanquisher of heresy. This is most evident in the title page of Lazar Baranovyč's *Meč duxovnyj* [*The Spiritual Sword*, 1666], a sermon collection printed in Kyiv and dedicated to Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich (r. 1645–1676). A look at its iconography helps to shed further light on the confessional anxiety lurking behind Immaculist imagery as well as what we may call the “expansive logic” of this imagery. In the central part of the composition, the Romanov eagle stands over a crescent, accompanied by a quotation from Revelation 12 (“and the moon under her feet”). Ideally patterned after the motif of Mary standing on the moon and serpent, this image draws on Immaculist typology to represent the fight against the “confessional others” that threatened the Ukrainian lands, here symbolized by the crescent, a traditional emblem of Turkish power and of Islam in general. Like the Woman in Revelation 12, the Muscovite tsar is expected to crush the Turkish moon – the quintessence of evil – under his feet.



Figure 7: Detail of the title page of Lazar Baranovyč's *Meč duxovnyj*, 1666

But why add a Marian and Immaculist tinge to the tsar's self-image as champion of Christianity? In his sermon on the Nativity of the Theotokos, Baranovyč provides important theological background for this association of the tsar with the Apocalyptic Woman overthrowing Satan. In the concluding section, he invites Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich to rejoice at Mary's birth because she gave birth to Christ, who is God

incarnated as man (“человѣка б[о]ра”). In a play on words that is typically Baroque, he reminds the tsar that his patron saint is the fourth-century monk Saint Alexius of Rome, known as “Man of God” (“человѣк б[о]жий”); this, in turn, makes him a participant in the redemptive scheme for which Mary is integral (Baranovyč 1674: 16r). As we may remember from the previous section, in this very sermon, Baranovyč uses Scotus’s argument that in order to be worthy of birthing Christ, Mary had to be free of original sin. Therefore, as a “Man of God,” the tsar partakes of the Virgin’s purity, which provides him with the spiritual legitimacy to vanquish evil – that is, the enemies of Orthodoxy.



Figure 8: Frontispiece of Lazar Baranovyč's *Truby sloves propovidnyx*

The frontispiece of the *Truby* represents an ideal visual gloss on this argument, further building on the spiritual contiguity between the Tsar and Mary. The Virgin, accompanied by an Immaculist verse from Song of Songs 4:4 (“Thy neck is like the tower of David”), is shown standing behind the Romanov eagle, her body merged with the Muscovite body politic represented by the eagle, whose wings are thus ideally turned into the “wings of a great eagle” given to the Apocalyptic woman in Revelation 12:14. In the upper part of the image, the winged apocalyptic woman appears standing beside a winged Christ – her prelapsarian incorruptibility protecting the tsar and his family and, by extension, the lands over which they rule.

This point requires attention. As has been observed by Serhii Plokhyy (2002: 319–320), the winged Theotokos that appears so often in Ukrainian book illustrations from this period represents an attempt to combine the cult of the Virgin of Pokrov with the quest for protection by the Muscovite tsar, visually translating the allegory (which was extraordinarily popular in educated Kyivan circles during the mid-seventeenth century) of the Romanov eagle spreading its wings to protect its eaglets, that is, the Cossacks and the Ukrainian lands. In turn, and this has not been previously noted, the eagle symbolism of Revelation 12:14 was already particularly important in sixteenth-century Muscovite ecclesiology, which regarded the Apocalyptic Woman as the Church and Moscow as her sanctuary (Kriza 2022: 38). Nonetheless, it is crucial to keep in mind the theological underpinnings of the Ukrainian version of this image, which make the very protective powers of the Apocalyptic Woman a consequence of her exemption from original sin. As noted by Tuptalo in the *Runo orošennoe*, Mary could shield others from sin because she was herself exempted from original sin, when “were given her the wings of a great eagle” (1696: 1rv). The merging of the Virgin of Pokrov with the Apocalyptic Woman standing on a crescent in one of the book’s illustrations perfectly encapsulates this idea. Thus, for those readers and viewers sharing the religious imagination of these writers, Mary’s representation as the winged woman of Revelation 12 could not be separated from the awareness of her eternal preservation from sin and her martial masculinity in crushing the dragon’s head.

The immaculacy subtext of the Woman of Revelation 12 also helps explain why, as noted by Natalia Pylypiuk (2004), Kyiv-educated artists and intellectuals often used the Apocalyptic Woman to represent various allegories of Wisdom, possibly infusing an Immaculist symbolism into the traditional Russian Wisdom iconography created for the Novgorod Sophia Cathedral in the fifteenth century, which represented Divine Wisdom as a winged woman.



Figure 9: Sophia, the Divine Wisdom, icon, second half of the fifteenth century.

As I showed earlier, Ukrainian writers concurred with Immaculists in considering the Virgin an incarnation of Wisdom existing in the mind of God before the beginning of time and used sapiential passages such as Proverbs 8:22 and Ecclesiasticus 24:9 as proofs of her predestination to be free from original sin. Not insignificantly, early modern biblical commentaries such as a Lapide's *Commentaria in Apocalypsin* (1627) interpreted the wings in Revelation 12:14 as a symbol of wisdom, which points to a web of mutually reinforcing Marian, immaculist, and sapiential perspectives within this image (a Lapide 1672: 211).

Far from being exclusively a symbol of protection, the fusion of Mary's body with the Romanov's body politic complicates, I argue, the traditional idea that tsars rule through divine election and mimicry of Christ. Instead, it invests it with a new and crucial Marian dimension by virtue of the tight connection, in Ukrainian Orthodox theology, between the doctrine of Mary's immaculacy and the incarnation. Mary is the immaculate human source and earthly dwelling place of Christ's immaculate sacramental body – her purity inextricably entwined with Christ's purity – and therefore has the miraculous ability to protect the Christian body politic over which the

tsar rules by divine election. In turn, the tsar could find in Mary an apt embodiment of his political mission, particularly of his defense of Orthodoxy, as the association between him and the woman crushing all evil under her feet makes clear. Despite not being uncommon in other areas of medieval and early modern Europe, this association between Mary and the male monarch represents an undoubtedly rare phenomenon in the East Slavic context, where it may have been influenced by the many Counterreformation intersections between Marian and political iconography and their dissemination among Ukrainian Orthodox writers.³² Take, for instance, the association of the Virgin with the Habsburg double-headed eagle on the title page of the collection of Marian sermons *Aquila mystica* [*Mystic Eagle*], which represents an intriguing typological parallel for the iconographies I examine here.



Figure 10: Titlepage of Maximilian Sandeus, *Aquila mystica*, 1645

³² In a recent monograph on Mary as a figure of warfare in medieval and early modern Iberia, Amy G. Remensnyder (2014: 38, n. 50) observes that while historians have considered Mary's role as an exemplar for queens, much less work has been done on Mary's importance to kings.

Published in Cologne in 1645 by the German Jesuit Maximilian Sandeus and dedicated to Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand III, it equally inscribes the Virgin within the body politic, suggesting a close relationship between Mary and the male monarch who, in the Habsburg scheme of theological politics, considered himself God's delegate on earth, a trope also found in the Byzantine and Muscovite coronation ceremony. In this respect, the typically Western (Catholic) emphasis on the role of Mary as "ruler" and "queen" – with Mary's regality itself a consequence of the privilege of her immaculacy – should be considered another crucial influence behind the connection between the Virgin and the themes of the tsar's political legitimacy and patronage that are central to late seventeenth-century Ukrainian religious discourse. As we saw in the previous section, Ukrainian intellectuals were well acquainted with this aspect of Latin Mariology: in Galjats'kyj's Dormition sermon, Mary as the Apocalyptic Woman sits next to Christ on the heavenly throne by virtue of her spotlessness.³³ Clearly, some audiences could have read the Woman of Revelation 12 simply as a prefiguration of the end of time when Satan will finally be defeated. What I want to stress, however, is that the creators of these visual and verbal texts inhabited a cultural and theological space that openly recognized the connection between chapter 12 of Revelation, Mary's Assumption and Coronation in heaven, and her exemption from original sin, drawing freely on this imaginary to celebrate a model of sacral kingship.

The importance of reading these political images (also) through a Marian and Immaculist lens becomes clearer if we look at other illustrations from the last decades of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth that elaborated on the coextension between Mary's pure flesh and the tsar's political body. Created in Kyiv and Černihiv by men associated with the major religious and cultural institutions in the Hetmanate, they are symptomatic of the religious beliefs and political ideology of the ruling elites – the brand of Orthodox piety I defined as *Pietas Kiovensis* – during a period characterized by multiple conflicts: the Ruin, Muscovy's struggle against the Ottoman Empire, and the first stages of the Great Northern War (1701–1721). In the frontispiece of the *Mineja obščaja* [*General Menaion*] published in Kyiv in 1680, the Romanov eagle stands over a broken crescent, reproducing with only slight variations the iconography created by *Meč duxovnyj* in the late 1660s to

³³ Notice also that Radyvylovs'kyj (1676: 535, 545) compares God's choice of Mary as Christ's mother to David's election as king of Israel, describing the Immaculate Mary as the biblical queen Esther who was exempted by King Ahasuerus from his edict of the slaughter of all his people (Esther 15:13). God exempted Mary from the common law regarding all humans, just like a king extends his rights to a queen ("привилеевъ позволяетъ царици своей заживати"). A traditional Marian type, Esther was used to define the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin in Nogarolo's and De Busti's Conception offices (Lamy 2000: 483).

propagandize an idea of Christian kingship actively engaged in the fight against confessional diversity. The theological background of this symbolic composition is, again, the discourse of immaculacy, and, more specifically, the established tradition of exegetical commentary on Revelation 12 that opposed the Virgin's purity with the moon's corrupt form. As one seventeenth-century bible commentator wrote:

The moon, because it has certain blemishes on its body, and undergoes eclipse, and scatters darkness here and there, signifies the failings and faults of corrupt [human] nature. Therefore, the victorious Virgin rightly crushes the moon beneath her feet, because she has triumphed in glory over every vice... [and] she is unable to be touched, even ever so lightly, by any defect (da Sylveira 1681: II, 23).³⁴

Accordingly, the verses accompanying this frontispiece identify the moon with the Turks (“луна бѣсурманская”) whom the tsar should crush under his feet (“под ногами стѣпти”), using Revelation 12 and Genesis 3:15 to express the idea of an anti-Muslim Christian unity that was dominant at the time and occurred throughout the writings of Kyivan religious writers.³⁵

The frontispiece of the 1702 edition of the Kyivan *Paterik* [*Patericon*], lavishly engraved by the prominent Ukrainian engraver Leontij Tarasevyč (1650–1703) and dedicated to Peter the Great, builds on this iconography to create a new and striking Marian image dominated by military and apocalyptic motifs.

Inspired by an icon created for Sof'ja Alekseevna in 1686, at the beginning of the Russo-Turkish war, and known as the Azov Icon of the Mother of God, the engraving portrays the Virgin uncannily fused with the Romanov eagle to the point of becoming a most eloquent incarnation of the Woman of Revelation 12, as an accompanying quotation from Revelation 12:14 also makes clear.³⁶ Mary is represented as in the icon of Our Lady of the Sign (Theotokos *Znamenie*), with her hands outstretched in prayer and the figure of the Child Jesus placed on her breast, which again calls attention to the Virgin as the dwelling place of the incarnated Christ.³⁷

³⁴ This passage was brought to my attention by Reeves (1997: 140), whose translation I cite. The tradition of interpreting the Apocalyptic moon as a symbol of all that is corrupt and mutable goes back to Gregory the Great's *Moralia*.

³⁵ The association of the crescent moon below the Virgin with the Turks is also made by da Sylveira's *Commentarii in Apocalypsim* (1681: II, 230).

³⁶ On the Azov icon, see Pogosjan & Smorževskix (2002: 12–14).

³⁷ On the Theotokos *Znamenie* iconography, see Evangelatou 2019.



Figure 11: Frontispiece of *Pateryk*, 1702

The lower part of the composition shows an earthly army defeating a serpent and a lion. The serpent represents the Turks, whom Peter had recently defeated in the Azov campaign, and the lion, the Swedes, whom the tsar was battling in the Great Northern War. Thus, the tsar's terrestrial campaigns against the enemies of (Orthodox) Christianity fuse with the Virgin's celestial battles against the forces of evil in the book of Revelation. The traditional nexus between Mary's fight against original sin and confessional otherness is made explicit in the book's introduction, penned at the Kyiv Caves Monastery by Archimandrite Ioasaf Krokovs'kyj (1648–1707), who describes the Swedes as Lutherans (*Ljuty*), possibly punning on the Slavic adjective *ljutyj*, “ferocious.”³⁸ In another frontispiece, that of the *Alfavit* [*Alphabet*], a compila-

³⁸ On the political significance of this frontispiece, see Marker 2007.

tion of pious readings published in Černihiv in 1705 by local archbishop Ioann Maksymovyč (1651–1715), so intense is this blurring of the lines between the Virgin and the Muscovite body politic that the medallion on the Romanov eagle's breast portrays Mary enclosed in a solar disc and not, as was usual, Saint George killing the dragon.



Figure 12: Frontispiece of Ioann Maksymovyč, *Alfavit*, 1705

Although here the image of Mary does not show any *explicit* Immaculist symbols, the fact that she replaces a dragon-killing saint and is accompanied by a quotation from Revelation 12 suggests strong Immaculist undertones, linking the tsar's military strength to Mary's purity and victory over sin.

As was often the case with Baroque imagery and symbols, these images combined different levels of literal and symbolic meanings and held polyvalent readings for contemporary audiences. On the one hand, they presented a divinely sanctioned model of kingship, refashioning apocalyptic motifs that were popular in sixteenth-century Muscovy (Rowland 1994). On the other, they invested this Christ-centered apocalyptic mode with a Marian symbolism virtually unknown to the Muscovite tradition, in which Mary was normally associated with royal women and not the Tsar (Thyr  t 2001). Significantly, the woman of Revelation 12 did not feature in any pre-seventeenth-century Muscovite visual works featuring apocalyptic themes, which instead focused on Christ and the archangel Michael as the heads of the heavenly host engaged in a cosmic battle against the dragon in Revelation 19 (Pogosjan & Smor  evskix 2002: 12). As I have shown, this Marian language has its theological roots in the immaculacy discourse that was so vigorously and pervasively maintained by Ukrainian religious writers, and which possibly innovates the traditional Russian iconography of Divine Wisdom as a winged creature. Within this new Marian-tinged apocalyptic discourse of Ukrainian import, the Woman of Revelation 12 represented a symbol of individual wholeness, promised through Christ's redemption and Mary's exemption from sin, as well as of communal wholeness, through the defeat of the Antichrist.

A further detail deserves to be noted regarding the Marian orientation of these illustrations. In all these images, the Romanov eagle cum Apocalyptic Woman is placed on the upper part of a vertical axis whose lower end coincides with the defeated dragon/enemy. Besides being informed by the Virgin trampling the moon iconography, this structure reproduces the visual grammar of contemporary polemical Marian prints produced in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, such as Leontij Tarasevy  's 1688 engraving announcing the defense, in Vilnius, of a philosophical disputation against the Protestant deniers of Mary's privileges, the *Theses Marianae Philosophicae*, by Vilnius Academy graduate Rafael-Michael Olechnowicz.³⁹

³⁹ On this engraving, see Stepovyk 2013: 284.



Figure 13: Leontij Tarasevyč. Engraving announcing the defense in Vilnius of Rafael–Michael Olechnowicz’s *Theses Marianae Philosophicae*, 1688

In a striking display of the rhetorical intimacy between the Immaculate Mary and the language of war, the Immaculate Virgin – a crescent under her feet, a whole contingent of angels shielding her from the darts of an army of (presumably Protestant) devils – is placed above the archangel Michael, ideally supervising and facilitating his killing of the infernal dragon. Thus, in the iconography of Mary as Romanov eagle, the militant Immaculacy discourse that was so closely associated with the Counterreformation is specially translated for the Orthodox environment, reassembling its original components to reflect a different set of political and confessional concerns. Audiences equipped with different levels of theological and visual literacy would have grasped these many strains of intersecting meanings with varying degrees of precision, although the connection between the Theotokos, the Romanovs, and their military leadership against other non-Christian (or non-Orthodox) polities would have been clear even to the least theologically educated.

In the political theology of Ukrainian Orthodox writers, however, kinship with the Immaculate Virgin was not exclusive to the tsar but could be extended to the hetman as well. In the last decades of the seventeenth century, Kyiv-educated intellec-

tuals faced a complex political and cultural landscape in which the tsar, the hetman, and the church represented different and sometimes conflicting sources of power and authority. It is unsurprising, therefore, that these texts also reflect the competing interests and different identity mechanisms of their authors vis-à-vis these issues. The emblematic panegyric *Echo głosu wołającego na puszczy* [*Echo of One Crying in the Wilderness*, 1689] is an important case in point. Written in Polish by Stefan Javors'kyj, it is dedicated to Ivan Mazepa (1639–1709), undoubtedly the most influential Cossack leader next to Bohdan Xmel'nyc'kyj. The book opens with an engraving of Mazepa's coat of arms, known as *Krucz*, which features a cross with a bident, an anchor at the basis of the cross, and a star and a crescent respectively on the right and left side of the cross. In the tradition of Renaissance and Jesuit heraldic poetry, the image is followed by heraldic verses that use some of the *Krucz*'s visual components to celebrate the "Most pure Virgin fair as the moon" of Song of Songs 6:9 and, crucially, her proximity to Mazepa's patron saint – John the Baptist.

Drawing on the same metaphorical procedure that allowed for the conflation of the Romanov eagle with the Apocalyptic Woman, Javors'kyj interprets the sun and moon in Mazepa's coat of arms as a symbol of Mary and her purity, in accordance with the Immaculist exegesis of Song of Songs 6:9 and Revelation 12 that was widespread at that time. This in turn allows the transference of Immaculist symbols into the political sphere. The final verses elegantly evoke this contiguity between the Hetman and Mary with the expression "it is nothing new that the Virgin stands with John," an allusion to the Deesis scheme in which the Virgin and John the Baptist flank Christ enthroned in Majesty, and to Mary and John the apostle (understood as the author of the Gospel of John and the Book of Revelation) at the Crucifixion, flanking the cross:

Piękna jak jasny księżyc, jest Panna Przepczysta,
Bo ją tak w Piśmie zowie jej panegirista.
Jutrzence zaś Jan Święty, pięknie figuruje,
Gdy przedwiecznemu Prawdy Słońcu marszałkuje
Tu pod Krzyżem obojgu stać co za przyczyna
Niedziw: Bo tam stać Pannie z Janem nie nowina.

[Fair as the bright moon is the Purest Virgin,
for so she is called in Scripture by her panegyrist.
While Saint John figures beautifully like the Morning Star,
When he heralds the eternal sun of righteousness. [John 3:28–30]
Here, beneath the Cross, they both stand. For what reason?
No wonder: it is nothing new that the Virgin stands there with John]
(Javors'kyj 1689: 1v).⁴⁰

⁴⁰ The translation is mine.

Accordingly, the many astronomical epithets used in the panegyric to celebrate Mazepa include such traditional Marian attributes drawn from the Akathist as “the star that precedes the sun” and “the moon that reflects the sun” (Javors’kyj 1689: 7v). As noted by Giovanna Brogi Bercoff (2004: 422–423), the book’s leitmotif is the need to wage war against Turks and Tatars, which again calls attention to the use of Immaculist imagery in the context of the fight against “confessional others.” For instance, one of the emblems in the book shows a supernatural light shining from the star and the moon in Mazepa’s coat of arms and killing the Turkish dragon.

This is clearly another variation of the Virgin trampling the dragon iconography, with the star and moon simultaneously evoking Mary’s purity and Mazepa’s military force, and thus suggesting a coextensive relationship between the hetman and the Virgin. To make the Marian and Immaculist subtext even more discernible, the accompanying verses state that “The Holy Virgin, fair as the full Moon, heralds the victory of the Roxolans [the inhabitants of Ukraine] over the Thracian Dragon [the Ottomans]” (Javors’kyj 1689: 4r). Significantly, after the battle of Poltava (1709), the image of the apocalyptic serpent was used as part of a broader strategy to disqualify Mazepa as a traitor and enemy of the Orthodox and erase him from the cultural memory of Imperial Russia, which underscores the remarkable fluidity of this imagery (Pogosjan 2004: 315–332).



Figure 14: Emblem celebrating Mazepa’s victories over the Turks, 1689

In the years following, this imagery was adapted and expanded by other artists in Javors'kyj's circle to explore the association between the militant Virgin and the Cossacks, as is the case with the panegyric engraving *Prognostyk szczęśliwy* [Happy Prophecy, 1693], engraved by Ivan Ščyrs'kyj for Danylo Apostol (1654–1734). In the 1690s, Apostol was Colonel of the Cossack Myrhorod regiment; in this capacity, he successfully repelled the Tatars in several battles, which the engraving duly celebrates. In this little-known but powerful image, the Virgin, accompanied by the Immaculist verse from Song 6:9 “who is she that looketh forth as the morning,” is shown throwing arrows from heaven at a dragon equipped with a crescent – a symbol of the Muslim threat – over its head.

Thus, the same political and religious imagery that was used to associate the tsar with the discourse of immaculacy is here transferred to the Cossacks. But in adapting the typically Counterreformational overlapping of immaculacy and military imagery to the Orthodox environment, Ščyrs'kyj is careful to depict the Virgin as a heavenly helper and mediatrix with no coextensive connection with the earthly actors she succors in the battle, most probably because Apostol was only a military and not a political leader.



Figure 15: Ivan Ščyrs'kyj, *Prognostyk szczęśliwy*, 1693

The proximity between Mazepa and the Immaculate Virgin finds more explicit reflection in an engraving contained in the *Zercalo ot pisanija božestvennaho* [*Mirror of the Divine Scripture*], a compilation of theological readings published in Černihiv in 1705 by Antonij Staxovs'kyj (1672–1740), a monk and preacher in Ioann Maksymovyč's circle who would later become archbishop of Černihiv. In the dedicatory verses, the Virgin is said to have loved the house of Mazepa “for a long time,” (“Домъ Мазеповъ издревле дѣла возлюбила”) while the city of Černihiv is compared to a New Jerusalem (*Zercalo* 1705: 5r–6v). In keeping with the Marian apocalypticism of the book's dedication, the accompanying engraving, made by a certain H. Baranec'kyj, shows Mary, in the guise of the Apocalyptic Woman, standing on Mazepa's coat of arms, the crescent under her feet merging with the cross in Mazepa's emblem.

The book's frontispiece knowingly elaborates on this incorporation of Marian discourse into politics, showing a crescent and a star inscribed with the name “Mary” surmounting Mazepa's coat of arms. Significantly, the crescent is placed under the star, in a position that evokes the fundamental scheme of Immaculいた iconography in which the Virgin stands on the crescent.



Figure 16: Engraving accompanying the dedicatory verses to Ivan Mazepa, 1705

Finally, the reconceptualization of the emblems of immaculacy as weapons in the fight against enemy forces occupies center stage in the dedication to Mazepa that prefaces the 1696 edition of Tuptalo's *Runo orošennoe*. In another striking example of the blurring of the boundaries between the Virgin's pure flesh and the body politic, the dedicatory verses interpret Gideon's fleece, the moon, and stars – all Marian symbols that were understood in an Immaculist way in the seventeenth century – as symbols of the hetman's victories over his enemies (“знакъ побѣдъ Мазепи на врагы”), while the accompanying engraving incorporates Gideon's fleece into the Hetman's coat of arms.⁴¹



Figure 17: Mazepa's coat of arms with Marian emblems

⁴¹ In his Sermon on the Nativity of the Theotokos, Galjatovs'kyj (1659: 172v) writes that just as the fleece was wet while everything else was dry, so Mary was given God's grace while everyone else was stained by original sin. On Gideon's fleece as an Immaculist symbol, see Levi D'Ancona (1957: 47).



Figure 18: Mazepa's coat of arms with Gideon's fleece

Like the Romanovs' eagle, Mazepa's *Krucz* is a symbolically capacious entity, one that can host and absorb the sacred within itself, giving us an important glimpse of the hetman's privileged status in the political theology of Kyiv Orthodox intellectuals.

In evaluating the connection between Mazepa, Marian, and Immaculist imagery, it is also important to look at the broader theological landscape. Perhaps significantly, John the Baptist, Mazepa's patron saint, was also thought to have been freed from original sin in the womb of his mother Elizabeth at the time of the Visitation, when "the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost" (Luke 1:41). The supporters of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception cited this episode, arguing that if John's mother had been granted such a privilege, then the Mother of God must have been granted the greater one of being preserved from sin from the moment of her conception (Levi d'Ancona 1957: 8). John the Baptist was also the only saint other than Mary whose birthday and conception were celebrated along with his death day. This notion was well established in the Ukrainian Orthodox discourse of the time. For example, Radyvylovskij's sermon on the Conception of the Theotokos repeats the traditional idea that John the Baptist was purified of original sin shortly after his conception (Radyvylovskij 1676: 539). Given

the porous borders between theology, politics, and visual and verbal imagery in the early modern Ukrainian cultural system, it is not unlikely that this idea could have favored the use of Immaculist attributes to celebrate Mazepa and his political might, creating a complex triangulation of Marian, Johannine, and Christological symbols to define the political persona of the hetman. As in the previous examples regarding the tsar, underlying this symbolism is a scheme of theological politics that rested on Christ's human presence on earth through incarnation, with the political leader mediating between the earthly and heavenly spheres. This explains the importance of Mary's immaculacy, which, as should now be clear, represents a prerequisite of Christ's incarnation, therefore sanctioning, legitimating, and safeguarding the very sacrality of political power.

Within this scenario, the notion of Mary's Immaculate Conception serves to envision the possibility of an uncontaminated space – of a community of Orthodox believers who, like Mary, are spared from corruption not at the end of time in the Church Triumphant, but in the struggles of the Church Militant. Both being inscribed into the theology of immaculacy, tsars and hetmans participate in this struggle for (confessional) purity, acting as the Virgin's allies to put an end to political and religious instability and facilitate the advent of a terrestrial Jerusalem. In this respect, the merging of Marian, Immaculist, and apocalyptic iconography that characterized this period powerfully reflects the “crisis of the seventeenth century,” with its fear of chaos and simultaneous desire for some force that would save society from the threat of disorder and external contamination.

In the East Slavic area, this use of a Marian language deeply resonant with apocalyptic and Immaculist attributes to define the political body and its protection should be considered a specific Kyivan innovation, one that, as I have demonstrated, stems from the Immaculist reading of Revelation 12 and Genesis 3:15 that was typical of Kyiv Orthodox literati. This suggests the existence of what I called a *Pietas Kiovensis* – a specific set of beliefs, doctrines, and rituals that was distinctive of Kyivan Orthodoxy and served to sacralize the legitimacy of the Kyiv Church through a complex set of textual and visual representations. Disseminated from Kyiv and other cultural centers within the Hetmanate, such as Černihiv and Novogorod-Sivers'kyj, these narratives created a symbolic system that reached beyond the borders of the Cossack state, crafting the image of rulers in Moscow so that they could be begged for help and protection, and creating a new iconography of power. Within this cultural framework that connected the spiritual and secular realms, the defense and symbolic appropriation of the discourse on Mary's immaculacy – along with other devotions such as the cult of specific Kyivan saints – served to promote true Orthodox faith in a territory deeply divided over political and religious matters, differentiating the Kyiv Church from Catholics and Uniates as well as from Moscow and other Eastern Orthodox Churches. While the latter never recognized

the doctrine of Mary's immaculacy, Ukrainian Orthodox literati identified deeply with the Immaculate Mary, and with the absence of sin – of contamination – that she personifies, intertwining a defense of her exceptionality with a defense of the Church to which they belonged. They fashioned the Virgin – human and yet impermeable to the ravages of sin – as a paradigm for their political project, using her as a dividing line to draw boundaries between the pure and the unholy, and fashioning a “we” defined by the Virgin's protection.

The elimination of sin from one human being was a powerful and simultaneously reassuring symbol: not only did it testify to the universality of redemption but also to the possibility of an equally spotless Orthodox society. In fact, the homogeneous Orthodox society aspired to by Kyiv Orthodox elites was never achieved, but the late seventeenth-century proliferation of images and texts influenced by the theology and iconography of the Immaculate Conception demonstrates the value that the doctrine held for these writers, who turned it into a symbol that responded to the anxieties of the system in which they were grounded. Significantly, in medieval and early modern Europe, it was often men from the Franciscan and Jesuit religious orders who encouraged kings to associate their personae with Mary (Remensnyder 2014: 28). Thus, it is not surprising that under the influence of Franciscan and Jesuit writings, Ukrainian Orthodox churchmen created a sophisticated symbolism that connected Mary's integrity and the integrity of the body politic, placing religious experience within a web of concrete concerns that agitated the local and political communities of the readers, listeners, and viewers of their texts. A complex symbol that spoke directly to the competing positions that were inherent in the Ukrainian Orthodox political theology of the time, the story of Mary's immaculacy in Ukrainian and East Slavic early modern culture remains to be fully unsealed.

Captions

Figure 1 Engraving preceding the Sermon on the Nativity of the Theotokos. Lazar Baranovyč, *Truby sloves propovidnyx*. Kyiv: Lavra, 1674. Courtesy of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine.

Figure 2 Detail of the title page of Ioanykij Galjats'kyj's *Ključ razumynija*. Kyiv: Lavra, 1659. Courtesy of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine.

Figure 3 Detail of the title page of Lazar Baranovyč's *Truby sloves propovidnyx*. Courtesy of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine.

Figure 4 Detail of the title page of Dmytrii Tuptalo's *Runo orošennoe*. Černihiv, 1696. Courtesy of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine.

Figure 5 Lavrentij Krščonovyč, Virgin of Pokrov. Engraving glued to some copies of the 1696 edition of Dmytrii Tuptalo's *Runo orošennoe*. Courtesy of the National Museum in Warsaw.

Figure 6 The Virgin with shattered idols. *Akafysty s styxyry i kanony*. Kyiv: Lavra, 1693, 61v. Courtesy of the Polona Digital Library. <https://polona.pl/preview/8719e28d-ae37-4c3e-81fe-ed71e52097cc> (last accessed: 11.11.2025).

Figure 7 Detail of the title page of Lazar Baranovyč's *Meč duxovnyj*. Kyiv: Lavra, 1666. Courtesy of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine.

Figure 8 Frontispiece of Lazar Baranovyč's *Truby sloves propovidnyx*. Courtesy of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine.

Figure 9 Sophia, the Divine Wisdom, icon, second half of the fifteenth century. St Sophia Cathedral, Novgorod.

Figure 10 Titlepage of Maximilian Sandeus, *Aquila mystica*. Cologne, 1645. Courtesy of Bibliothèque Nationale de France. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k310559h.image> (last accessed: 11.11.2025).

Figure 11 Frontispiece of *Pateryk*. Kyiv: Lavra, 1702. Courtesy of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine.

Figure 12 Frontispiece of Ioann Maksymovyč, *Alfavit*. Černihiv, 1705. Courtesy of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine.

Figure 13 Leontij Tarasevyč. Engraving announcing the defense in Vilnius of Rafael-Michael Olechnowicz's *Theses Marianae Philosophicae*, 1688. Reproduced in Dmytro Stepovyk. 2013. *Ukrajins'ka gravjura baroko*. Kyiv: Klio, 281.

Figure 14 Emblem celebrating Mazepa's victories over the Turks. Stefan Javors'kyj, *Echo głosu wołającego na puszczy*. Kyiv: Lavra, 1689. Courtesy of Lower Silesian Digital Library <https://dbc.wroc.pl/dlibra/publication/151594/edition/109330/content> (last accessed: 11.11.2025).

Figure 15 Ivan Ščyrs'kyj, *Prognostyk szczęśliwy*, 1693. Courtesy of Polona Digital Library. <https://polona.pl/preview/5869f697-9dd1-4f4f-b6d3-cd4e6d0750b9> (last accessed: 11.11.2025).

Figure 16 Engraving accompanying the dedicatory verses to Ivan Mazepa. Antonij Staxovs'kyj, *Zercalo ot pisanija božestvennaho*. Černihiv, 1705. Reproduced in Pavlo Popov, *Materjaly do slovnyka ukrajins'kych graveriv*. Kyiv 1926, 20.

Figure 17 Mazepa's coat of arms with Marian emblems. *Zercalo ot pisanija božestvennaho*. Reproduced in Popov, *Materjaly do slovnyka*, 137.

Figure 18 Mazepa's coat of arms with Gideon's fleece. Dmytrii Tuptalo, *Runo orošennoe*. Courtesy of the Vernadsky Library of Ukraine.

References

- a Lapide, Cornelius. 1663. *Commentaria in Ecclesiasticum*. Antwerp: J. Meursius.
- a Lapide, Cornelius. 1672. *Commentaria in Apocalypsin S. Iohannis apostoli....* Antwerp: apud Iacubum Merisium.
- Anfolohion*. 1678. Novhorod-Sivers'kyi.
- Armamentarium seraphicum et regestum universale tuendo titulo Immaculae Conceptionis*. 1649. Madrid: ex Typographia Regia.
- Baranovyč, Lazar. 1674. *Truby sloves propovidnyx*. Kyiv: Lavra.
- Brogi Bercoff, Giovanna. 2004. The Hetman and the Metropolitan: Cooperation between State and Church in the Time of Varlaam Jasyns'kyj. In Siedina, Giovanna (ed.), *Mazepa and His Time. History, Culture, Society*, 417–444. Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso.
- Bulgakov, Sergius. 2009. *The Burning Bush. On the Orthodox Veneration of the Mother of God*. Translated by Thomas Allan Smith. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Butler, Kim E. 2009. The Immaculate Body in the Sistine Ceiling, *Art History* 32(2). 251–289.
- Calderari, Cesare. 1601. *Concetti scritturali sopra il Magnificat di Maria Vergine*. Venice: Marchiò Sessa.

- Ciletti, Elena. 2010. Judith Imagery as Catholic Orthodoxy in Counter-Reformatory Italy. In Brine, Kevin R. & Ciletti, Elena & Henricke Lähnemann (eds.), *The Sword of Judith: Judith Studies across the Disciplines*, 345–370. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Coreth, Anna. 1959. *Pietas Austriaca. Ursprung und Entwicklung barocker Frömmigkeit in Österreich*. Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik.
- Coreth, Anna. 2004. *Pietas Austriaca: Austrian Religious Practices in the Baroque Era*. Translated by William D. Bowman and Anna Maria Leitgeb. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press.
- De Busti, Bernardino. 1502. *Mariale eximii Bernardini de Busti, ordinis seraphici Francisci, de singulis festivitibus Beatae Virginis*. Lugduni.
- Deluga, Waldemar. 2000. A Matham Virgin in Kiev, *Print Quarterly* 17(3). 284–287.
- Deluga, Waldemar. 2003. *Grafika z kręgu Ławy Pieczarskiej i Kolegium Mohylańskiego*. Kraków: Collegium Columbinum.
- da Sylveira, Joao. 1681. *Commentarii in Apocalypsim D. Joannis Apostoli*. Lyon: Nissonios et J. Posuel.
- Evangelatou, Maria. 2019. Krater of Nectar and Altar of the Bread of Life: The Theotokos as Provider of the Eucharist in Byzantine Culture. In Arentzen, Thomas & Mary Cunningham (eds.), *The Reception of the Virgin in Byzantium: Marian Narratives in Texts and Images*, 77–119. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Galadza, Petro. 1997. Liturhične pytanja i rozvytok bohosluzhen' naperedodni Beresteis'koi uniji až do kincia XVII stolittja, In Gudzyak, Borys & Oleh Turij (eds.), *Berestejs'ka unija ta vnutrišne žyttja Cerkvy v XVII stolitti*, 1–29. Lviv: Instytut istoriji Cerkvy.
- Galjatos'kyj, Ioanykij. 1659. *Ključ razuminija*. Kyiv: Lavra.
- Galjatos'kyj, Ioanykij. 1665. *Nebo novoe*. Lviv: Drukarnja Myxaila Sl'ozky.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1983. *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books.
- González Tornel, Pablo. 2019. The immaculate conception controversy and the accusation of scandal. Public conflict and religious devotion in seventeenth-century Spain, *Renaissance Studies* 34(2). 156–172.
- Hernández, Rosilie. 2019. *Immaculate Conceptions: The Power of the Religious Imagination in Early Modern Spain*. Toronto: Toronto University Press.
- Jakovenko, Natalja. 2017. *U pošukax novoho neba. Žyttja i teksty Ioanykija Galjatos'koho*. Kyiv: Laurus.
- Javors'kyj, Stefan. 1689. *Echo głosu wołającego na puszczy*. Kyiv: Lavra.
- Javors'kyj, Stefan. 1691. Concio de septe columnis Virginis, *RGIA* f. 834, op. 2, d. 1592.
- Johnson, Trevor. 2007. Mary in Early Modern Europe. In Boss, Sarah Jane (ed.), *Mary: The Complete Resource*, 363–384. London: Continuum.
- Korzo, Margarita. 2011. *Nravstvennoe bogoslovie Simeona Polockogo. Osvoenie katoličeskoj tradicii moskovskimi knižnikami vtoroj poloviny XVII veka*. Moskva: Institut filosofii RAN.
- Kriza, Agnes. 2022. *Depicting Orthodoxy in the Russian Middle Ages: The Novgorod Icon of Sophia, the Divine Wisdom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lamy, Marielle. 2000. *L'Immaculée Conception. Étapes et enjeux d'une controverse au Moyen-Âge (XIIe-XVe siècles)*. Paris: Institut d'études augustinienes.
- Levi D'Ancona, Mirella. 1957. *The Iconography of the Immaculate Conception in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance*. New York: College Art Association of America.
- Losskij, Vladimir. 1975. Dogmat o neporočnoj začatij, *Bogoslovskie Trudy* 14. 121–125.
- Luebke, David M. 1997. Naïve Monarchism and Marian Veneration in Early Modern Germany, *Past and Present* 154(1). 71–106.
- Magocsi, Paul Robert. 1996. *A History of Ukraine*. Toronto: Toronto University Press.
- Marker, Gary. 2007. Love One's Enemies: Ioasaf Krokovs'kyi's Advice to Peter in 1702, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 29. 193–223.

- Mayberry, Nancy. 1991. The Controversy over the Immaculate Conception in Medieval and Renaissance Art, Literature, and Society, *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 21. 207–224.
- Misiurek, Jerzy. 1994. *Historia i teologia polskiej duchowości katolickiej*. Vol. 1. Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego.
- Mohyla, Petro. 1645. *Sobranie korotkoj nauki*. Kyiv: Lavra.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. 1996. *Mary through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Plokhly, Serhii. 2002. *The Cossacks and Religion in Early Modern Ukraine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pogosjan, Elena & Marija Smorževskix. 2002. “Ja Devu v solnce zrju stojašču...”. (Apokaliptičeskij sjužet i formy istoričeskoj refleksii: 1695–1742 gg.), *Studia Russica Helsingiensia et Tartuensia VIII: Istoriia i istoriosofija v literaturnom prelomenii* 8. 2–36.
- Pogosjan, Elena. 2004. I.S. Mazepa v ruskoj oficjal’noj kul’ture. In Siedina, Giovanna (ed.), *Mazepa e il suo tempo: Storia, cultura, società (Mazepa and His Time: History, Culture, Society)*, 315–332. Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso.
- Pylypiuk, Natalia. 2004. “The Face of Wisdom in the Age of Mazepa.” In Siedina, Giovanna (ed.), *Mazepa e il suo tempo: Storia, cultura, società (Mazepa and His Time: History, Culture, Society)*, 367–400. Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso.
- Radyvylovs’kyj, Antonij. 1676. *Ohorodok Marii Bohorodytsy*. Kyiv: Lavra.
- Reeves, Eileen. 1997. *Painting the Heavens: Art and Science in the Age of Galileo*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Remensnyder, Amy G. 2014. *La Conquistadora: The Virgin Mary at War and Peace in the Old and New Worlds*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rolland, Peter. 1992. “Nieskoro prawi monsztuk do tych trab otrzymacie”: On Lazar Baranovyc’s ‘Truby sloves propovidnyx’ and their Non-publication in Moscow, *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 17(1–2). 205–216.
- Rowland, Daniel. 1994. Biblical Military Imagery in the Political Culture of Early Modern Russia: The Blessed Host of the Heavenly Tsar. In Flier, Michael S. & Daniel Rowland (eds.), *Medieval Russian Culture*, vol. 2, 182–198. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Rubin, Miri. 2010. *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Ruiz-Gálvez Priego, Estrella. 2009. Du Peché originel au Pêché des origines: Évolution et socialisation de la notion de ‘macula’. (Espagne XIIIe-XVIIe siècles). In Ruiz-Gálvez Priego, Estrella, *L’Immaculisme. Un imaginaire religieux dans sa projection sociale*, 98–126. Paris: Indigo.
- Scotus, John Duns. 1968. *Opera omnia*. 14 vols. Edited by Franciscus Lychetus Brixiensis. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- Sebastian, Wenceslau. 1958. The Controversy over the Immaculate Conception from after Scotus to the End of the Eighteenth Century. In O’Connor, Edward (ed.), *The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception: History and Significance*, 228–241. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Senyk, Sophia. 1984. Marian Cult in the Kievan Metropolitanate, XVII-XVIII centuries. In *Intrepido pastori: naukovyj zbirnyk na česť blažennišoho Patriarxa losyfa v 40-littja vstuplennja na halyč’kyj prestil, 01.11.1944*, 266–267. Roma: Universitas Catholica Ucrainorum.
- Stepovyk, Dmytro. 2013. *Ukrajins’ka gravjura baroko*. Kyiv: Klio.
- Stratton, Suzanne. 1994. *The Immaculate Conception in Spanish Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sumcov, Nikolaj. 1885. *Lazar Baranovič. K istorii južnorusskoj literatury XVII v.* Xarkiv: Tipografija M.F. Zil’derberga.

- The Apocryphal New Testament. A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation.* 1993. Translated by J.K. Elliott. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Thyrêt, Isolde. 2001. *Between God and Tsar: Religious Symbolism and the Royal Women of Muscovite Russia.* DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press.
- Trevor-Roper, Hugh. 1968. *The Crisis of the Seventeenth-Century: Religion, the Reformation, and Social Change.* New York: Harper.
- Tuptalo, Dymytrii. 1696. *Runo orošenne.* Černihiv.
- Twomey, Lesley K. 2008. *The Serpent and the Rose: The Immaculate Conception and Hispanic Poetry in the Late Medieval Period.* Leiden: Brill.
- Višnevskij, Dmitrij. 1903. *Kievskaja Akademija v pervoj polovine XVII st.: Novye dannye otnosjaščiesja k istorii etoj Akademii v ukazannoe vremja.* Kyiv: Tipografija I.I Gorbunova.
- Warner, Marina. 1976. *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary.* Oxford: Oxford University Press
- von Werden, Johannes. 1507. *Sermones Dormi secure de sanctis.* Lugduni.
- Zercalo ot pisaniia bozhestvennaho.* 1705. Černihiv.