

## **THE RETURN OF THE CULT VALUE TO THE KHARKIV TEMPLES: ANALYSIS OF THE AGENTS OF SOCIOCULTURAL CHANGE**

**Ruzhelnik O. (Kharkiv)**  
**Language supervisor: Guseva A.G.**

**Summary:** The article considers the alteration process in Kharkiv churches. The author identifies agents of sociocultural change and analyses their impact on the return of the cult value to the churches which lost their religious significance in the Soviet period.

**Keywords:** the alteration process, agents of sociocultural change, cult value, the orthodox community.

**Анотація:** Стаття присвячена розгляду ситуації зміни в церквах м.Харкова. Автором виділяються агенти соціокультурних змін, а також аналізується ступінь їх впливу на повернення культового сенсу церквам, що втратили своє релігійне значення в період радянської влади.

**Ключові слова:** процес зміни, агенти соціокультурних змін, культове значення, православна громада.

**Аннотация:** Статья посвящена рассмотрению ситуации изменения в церквях г. Харькова. Автором выделяются агенты социокультурных изменений, а также анализируется степень их влияния на возвращение культового смысла церквям, утратившим свое религиозное значение в период советской власти.

**Ключевые слова:** процесс изменения, агенты социокультурных изменений, культовое значение, православная община.

Throughout the twentieth century our country was exposed to significant changes: the beginning of the century was marked by a struggle for independence, later by the Soviet Union entry, and in 1991 by the declaration of independence. Naturally this transformation in the ideological base was followed by the alteration of the cultural model. The Events of 1917 triggered dramatic cultural changes, and the period of the Soviet Ukraine is characterized by stability and conservatism. The adoption of independence is "a cultural gap" (in Ionin's terms), i.e. the destruction of the Soviet ideology and its institutional framework [1, p. 142]. The latter was caused by the denial, neglect of the Soviet, Marxist culture marked as "a representative culture" (in Tenbruck's terms) of the period that lasted for three generations of Ukrainians.

The process of "a cultural gap" led to the return and rehabilitation of the concepts labeled as "anti-Soviet." In particular, it was applied to religious life. After the declaration of independence of Ukraine in 1991 the restoration of temples and churches, which were closed or redesigned at the time of the Soviet ideology, started in Kharkiv. Indeed, during the period of the Soviet Union a large number of clergy buildings underwent changes. In Kharkiv the churches of Heterodox beliefs were completely eliminated, thirteen Orthodox churches were destroyed, seven churches were redesigned for other buildings which led to the loss of their religious significance.

Having become an independent state, Ukraine returned the cult value to temples, churches, and to its religious heritage in general. But only four of the seven churches that had been redesigned, got back their religious significance.

These are Assumption Cathedral, Trinity Church, Church of St. Panteleimon The Healer, St. Demetrius Church. It should be noted that on the list of the redesigned buildings there was also Holy Virgin Protection Cathedral that used to be a museum in the Soviet times, but was restored earlier, in 1990. The remaining churches (University Church, the Church of the Ascension) retained their condition of the Soviet period. They have still been used to hold other, non-religious practices.

Thus, the subject of the research is the churches of Kharkiv which were reconstructed in the Soviet period (four churches). The object of the research is the alteration process, i.e. the comeback of the cult value to the above mentioned structures. The purpose is to analyse the influence of social agents of the alteration process of church facilities for the given period of time. The aim is to review the alteration process in four churches since the declaration of



independence, focusing on the agents of these changes. The methods used are as follows: 1) the text analysis (historical documents, resolutions, orders, information websites, forums, periodicals); 2) interviews with church mentors. The former method helps to make an objective review of the alteration process in the churches under study, to define the agents of social change, to find out the information concerning the extent of their influence on the process. The

interview method is employed to find the missing, inaccessible information in the Internet which could help us to complete the understanding of the alteration process in the symbolic space of the city.

#### *Trinity Church*

At the beginning of the 18th century there is a wooden Trinity Church in Kharkiv. After the October Revolution the bakery was located in the building of the temple for many years (pic.1) [2].

Shortly after the declaration of Ukrainian independence the building was returned to the church (based on the orders of the Kharkiv Municipal Executive Committee dated from 29.08.1991, № 119 "On the Transfer of the Buildings to Trinity Church", signed by A. Maselskiy). A few years later the order was issued on 09.02.1994, № 43 «On the Abduction of the Land to Trinity Church", signed by E. Kushnaryov. The temple was opened "due to the works and prayers of His Eminence Metropolitan Nicodemus and our flock", as Rector Archpriest Alexei Dovgal admitted later (pic.2).

Thus, the main initiators of the change are the people of faith, which, at present, are parishioners of the church (these agents played the most active role in the restoration of the church), and Metropolitan Nicodemus who, relying on the words of Father Alexis, had some influence on the regional authorities. The local government



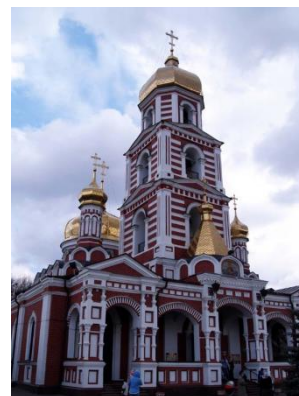
Pic. 2. Trinity Church, 2009

served as an instrument of social change since, in fact, their contribution was reduced only to document procedures.



### *Church of St. Panteleimon The Healer on the Sands*

A beautiful red and white church was built on the northern outskirts of the city in 1866 in a suburb named Peski (the Sands). In



February 1930 the church was closed (pic.3) [2].



In 1991 the facility was returned to the Orthodox Church (by the order of the Kharkiv Municipal Committee № 128 dated from 10.09.1991, signed by A. Maselskiy). Since then it has been restored

(pic.4). According to Rector Archpriest Nikolay Terkovetskiy "the whole flock participated in its repairing".

Since the Church of St. Panteleimon The Healer operates as Trinity Church under the auspices of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate, the alteration process and the agents are identical to the agents of the restoration of the building mentioned above.

### *St. Demetrius Church*

In the middle of the 17th century a wooden church in the name of martyr Demetrius was built in what was then a suburban settlement of Goncharovka Lopan (pic. 5, 6). The temple was closed in February 1930. The first service of



Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church was on November 8, 1992. The gradual transfer of the church community room lasted until August 11, 1999. However, the building of the former chapel and the parish school were still occupied by the outlets (pic.7).

The incompleteness of the alteration process can be explained by the statement that Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC) has, in comparison with Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate (UPTSMP), a small number of parishioners, who, due to its size, could not affect the final restoration of the temple. Moreover, the UAOC lacks the representativeness as influential as the Metropolitan Nicodemus for UPTSMP.

### *Assumption Cathedral*

The main wooden cathedral went to the dilapidated condition in 1680. A new stone cathedral was built within the fortress in 25-30 fathoms north to the old wooden one in 1687



(pic.8). The cathedral had been holding non-religious practices since 1924.

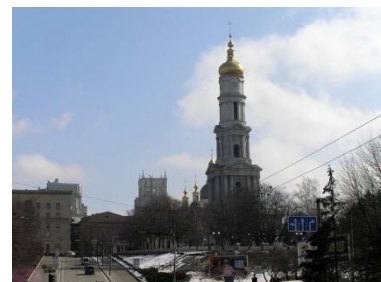
After 1991 Kharkiv Orthodox community was in favor of the return of the cathedral to the canonical Orthodox Church.

E. Kushnaryov, the Head of the Kharkiv Regional State Administration signed a decree on the transfer of the cathedral to Kharkiv Diocese in 2004, but after the "orange revolution" the order was challenged in court and suspended [3]. Later, on April 17, 2009, A. Avakov, the Head of the Kharkiv Regional State Administration signed a resolution on the transfer of the cathedral to Kharkiv Diocese of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (MP) (pic.9) [4]. The active role in this alteration process was played by the Orthodox community which provided influence on the decision of the city authorities without any powerful mediators.

As a result we can distinguish the following active agents:

- 1) the local and regional authorities: ultimately, they are the dominant agents of sociocultural changes taking (or not taking) a decision concerning the return of the cult value to the church buildings;
- 2) the church as a social institution (the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate) and its members as a representative community (Metropolitan Nicodemus);
- 3) the orthodox community, parishioners – the main initiators of the alteration process.

Citizens also act as agents of social change performing a passive role, as their everyday activities have the opportunity to draw attention to the church buildings and their religious, axiological content. The church itself is focused on the growth of religious practices, actualizes spiritual symbols and the faithful collective memory of the saints whose names serve as religious toponyms.



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