



Latinisation influences on church iconography and vestments in the Union Church of the 18th century: Based on archival materials of general visitations

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Abstract. The aim of the study was to trace how the normative guidelines of the Catholic Church were embodied in the practices of visual and material decoration of Union churches during the period of gradual ritual unification in the 18th century. The paper analysed the transformations of church space under the influence of Latin models, based on sources originating from the parishes of the Kyiv Metropolis, which encompassed the regions of modern Central and Western Ukraine. The study utilised a corpus of archival acts from general visitations conducted between 1730 and 1785, including documents from the visitations of the city of Lviv, the Pochaiv Monastery, the Fastiv, Pohrebyshchensky and Bila Tserkva deaneries, as well as the parish of the village of Hopchytisia. As a result of the study, it was established that the acts of visitations functioned not only as records of the condition of sacred spaces, but also as regulatory instruments for implementing Latin models in church practice. A combination of Latin and Byzantine ritual elements in textile design, liturgical utensils, and temple iconography was revealed. The process of replacing or reducing traditional iconostases, the appearance of figurative Latin statues, Latin-language instructions for altar arrangement, and the systematic introduction of Latin terminology in descriptions of vestments and utensils were identified. Analysis of the language of the visitations demonstrated the persistent presence of Latin-rite vocabulary combined with local elements, creating a mixed ritual-linguistic reality. The practical significance of the study lies in the possibility of using its results to reconstruct the visual image of the Union Church, to create a typology of Latinised objects in museum and church collections, and to develop criteria for attributing the sacred heritage of the second half of the 18th century

Keywords: sacred space; inventory description; ritual unification; protocol; liturgy; ritual practice

Introduction

The study of Latinisation processes in the Union Church holds particular importance within the framework of modern research on religious unification, interdenominational interaction, and the dynamics of local resistance to supranational influences. Following the institutional consolidation of the union project as a form of combining the Eastern rite with recognition of the Roman throne, a religious environment emerged that constantly balanced

between preserving its own identity and the gradual assimilation of Latin norms. Of particular value in this context are the descriptions recorded in the acts of general visitations, which not only document the condition of churches and their practices, but also reflect the mechanisms of transformation occurring at the level of parish life.

The issue of visitations as a mechanism for regulating the church environment has already attracted

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scholarly attention. Examining the functions of visitations within the Transylvanian union context of the 17th century, L. Molnár (2024) identified a significant discrepancy between the declared canons and the practical implementation of control. The author demonstrated that visitations often remained a rhetorical instrument rather than an effective mechanism of change. This highlights the need for research assessing the effectiveness of visitations in contexts where Latinisation had a clearly articulated programme, as in the case of the union parishes of the 18th-century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Another important field of inquiry concerns the study of iconographic practices within the union community. The combination of Eastern Christian elements with the Latin spatial logic of cult architecture in union environments of Rome was documented in the research of A. Upart (2021). He found that Roman union churches, although formally adhering to the Eastern tradition, were deeply embedded in Western-type iconographic systems.

At the intersection of religious practice and national self-determination lies the work of Y. Aoshima (2021), who examined how religious transformations in Eastern Europe influenced the formation of collective identity. He demonstrated that Latinisation was often used as a tool for incorporation into supra-regional political projects, whereas resistance to it functioned as a form of local opposition. In the context of the Uniate Church, this perspective allows visual unification to be reinterpreted not only as an aesthetic but also as an identificational strategy. In the field of liturgical transformation, the study by S. Alexopoulos & M.E. Johnson (2021) is particularly valuable, as it emphasised that the Byzantine rite itself was not static but continually evolved under the influence of both local and external factors. Their observations demonstrated that the hybridisation of forms – particularly investments and ritual – was intrinsic to the Eastern Christian environment. Research into union practice in the 18th century corroborates this approach, as evidenced by visitation records describing the coexistence of mixed elements in cult practice.

The work of L.D. Huculak (1990) proved particularly relevant, as he traced how, within the Ukrainian Union tradition, the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom adapted under the influence of canonical and liturgical reforms. The author demonstrated that the changes were not merely permitted but were often directly initiated by the hierarchy to bring the Byzantine rite closer to Latin norms. In this context, the alterations in the formulae of liturgical practice described in the archival protocols confirm the tendency towards normative integration. The political context of Latinisation was examined by L. Wolff (2020), who emphasised that the Union, which was intended to unite, simultaneously deepened internal divisions – particularly in the context of the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The author showed that the Union Church frequently became the object of external political pressure that dictated religious change.

Archival documents from the visitations confirm that Latinisation also possessed a symbolic dimension, associated with the desire to conform to the ideals of the European cultural norm.

A source-based perspective was introduced by E. Grin-Piszczek (2023), who studied the parish chronicles of Przemyśl, demonstrating how the routine practice of documentation enables the tracing of changes in the cultural life of communities. She established that Latinisation shifts can be observed not only in higher discursive layers but also in everyday details, such as records concerning the material provision of the church. This highlights the potential of visitation documents as a source for studying everyday, and not merely theological, transformations. The interaction between church and state in the Polish context was analysed by J. Kulska (2022), who focused on the institutional use of religion to consolidate political identities. The author emphasised that the Catholic Church in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth functioned not only as a spiritual but also as a political force. This allows Latinisation practices to be considered as part of a broader integration project with both secular and ecclesiastical dimensions.

The historical and canonical aspects of changes within the Union structure were the subject of research by O. Khortyk (2021), who analysed the synodal activity of the Union episcopate. He demonstrated that, since the 17th century, synods had served as a channel for the introduction of Latin norms. In the 18th century, these guidelines were further specified in visitation documentation, illustrating the institutional continuity of change. The transformations driven by Enlightenment influences were examined in detail by V. Los (2022). He found that, in the second half of the 18th century, the Union Church came under the pressure of rationalist ideology, which demanded the ordering, unification, and standardisation of religious practice. It is within this context that many visitation requirements concerning the removal of “disordered” icons or objects, as well as the introduction of “proper” forms of worship and vestments, should be interpreted.

Despite the multifaceted nature of previous research, the issue of the specific material embodiment of Latinisation processes at the parish level remains insufficiently developed. The inventory and descriptive protocols of visitations have been especially underexplored as a source not only of ecclesiastical norms but also of reflections of real conditions in individual communities. The aim of this study was to determine how Latin models influenced the formation of the iconographic, textile, and material components of the sacred space of the 18th-century Union Church, as were recorded in the sources of general visitations. The objectives of the study were: first, to identify formal signs of Latinisation in inventories and descriptions of parish space; second, to trace the transformation of sacred semiotics in iconographic terms; and third, to analyse hybridisation practices in ritual objects and vestments.

Materials and Methods

The study of Latinisation influences on church iconography and vestments in the 18th-century Union Church was conducted between February and April 2025 within the framework of a source-based and interpretative approach, with an emphasis on the analysis of primary archival materials of the Kyiv Metropolis within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Geographically, the research covered Union parishes located in the modern territories of Ukraine, including the Lviv, Ternopil, Kyiv, and Vinnytsia regions. The primary source base consisted of acts of general visitations preserved in archival collections and partially digitised repositories of academic projects.

At the first stage of the study, a systematic search for visitation acts dated between 1730 and 1785 was undertaken. Six visitation cases were processed, including: the visitation of the city of Lviv (1740-1743) (The visitation of..., n.d.); the Pochaiv Monastery (1739) (Vassilians are the..., 2022); the General visitations to the deaneries of Fastiv and Pavliv (1746); the village of Hopchytisia (1740) (The Hopchytisia Museum..., 2023); Dekanat Bialocerkowski (1750); and Acta Visitationis Gnrilis Decanatus Pohrebiscen (1784). The materials were analysed in digital copies, which required verification against accompanying archival documentation due to the absence of a unified digitisation standard. Copies of the visitation acts were obtained from the archives of the V.I. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, the State Archives of Ternopil Region, and the Museum of the History of the Village of Hopchytisia in Vinnytsia. At this stage, a source-inventory methodology was applied, which included: identification of attributive details (date, visitor, place, and volume of the document); verification of the completeness and physical condition of the source; and mapping of the geographical coverage of the acts.

The second stage involved a structural and functional analysis of the visitation acts. The composition of the texts was examined, including: the introduction; architectural description of the church; inventory of church property; descriptions of iconography and vestments; notes concerning the clergy; and the final conclusions. Particular attention was paid to stable formulations and internal genre transitions between descriptive, prescriptive, and legal elements. To identify the normative dimension of the documents, the method of hermeneutic interpretation of clerical constructions was applied: phrases were interpreted as carriers of regulatory meaning and analysed within the context of the prescriptive policies of the Zamoyski Synod (1720) (Łapa, 2024). In addition, a genre-functional typology was used to classify the acts not only as inventories but also as instruments of normative governance and cult transformation.

The third stage included a content analysis of descriptions of liturgical utensils, iconography, and vestments aimed at identifying Latin influences. A thematic coding system was developed, wherein each fragment

describing sacred objects or images was coded according to the following parameters: terminological markers, manufacturing technique, material type, and stylistic combination. The fourth stage comprised linguistic and semiotic analysis of the visitation protocols. The lexical-semantic mapping method was employed to systematise terms by type of ritual affiliation (Eastern or Latin) and to record combinations of stylistic features within a single description. Within the semiotic framework, the visual functions of the described objects were examined in relation to the spatial structure of the temple, particularly the shift of emphasis from the iconostasis to figurative imagery.

The fifth stage consisted of spatio-temporal comparative systematisation according to three criteria: (1) parish geography (central or peripheral); (2) institutional status (cathedral, monastery, or village church); and (3) the period of document creation. A diachronic comparative analysis was used for this purpose. At the final stage, the results of the archival analysis were correlated with the degree of accessibility and preservation of the sources. This required critical attribution and cross-archival comparison of visitation acts and their copies.

Results

Typology, structure, and function of visitation documents on the example of the Kyiv Metropolis

The Union Church, or Greek Catholic Church, was formed as a result of the Union of Brest in 1596, as an attempt to preserve the Byzantine rite amid confessional competition and political pressure within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Wooden, 2021). Having united with the Apostolic See of Rome, part of the Orthodox clergy recognised papal jurisdiction while retaining the right to celebrate the liturgy according to the Eastern rite, to use the Church Slavonic language, to follow the Julian calendar, and to maintain internal autonomy. Structurally, the Church acquired the status of a metropolis with subordinate dioceses, and its activities were regulated both by canon law and by the decrees of local councils, such as the Zamoyski Synod of 1720 (Łapa, 2024). In the 18th century, the process of Latinisation within the Union Church became systematic. The reasons for this were multifactorial. First, the Roman Curia consistently insisted on the introduction of elements of Latin discipline, which were regarded as universal within the Catholic world. Second, the Polish gentry, as a patronage group, supported the visual and ritual unification of church space in accordance with the Latin tradition. Third, the internal reforms of the Kyiv Metropolis explicitly prescribed the gradual incorporation of Latin elements into liturgy, theology, and church administration (Sysyn, 2023). This applied both to ritual forms (for instance, the appearance of Western vestments such as chasubles, albs, and amices) and to changes in the spatial structure of the church (installation of side figured altars, replacement of iconostases, and similar alterations).



In the second half of the 18th century, the acts of general visitations of Union parishes within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth appear as complex, multifunctional documents that simultaneously performed administrative, legal, and informational functions within the Kyiv Union Metropolis (Kosar, 2006). These documents were compiled during regular inspections of parishes conducted by representatives of the eparchial authorities, whose purpose was to assess the compliance of churches, their material support, and ritual practices with the provisions of Union law, particularly the norms established at the Zamoyski Synod of 1720 (Skochylas, 2020). From a genre perspective, the acts of visitation were not limited to inspection protocols; rather, their content exhibits characteristics of at least three functional types of documents: a management report, a legal act, and an inventory. On the one hand, they contained regulatory and supervisory conclusions certifying the conformity – or non-conformity – of parish conditions with current canonical legislation. On the other hand, their content provided a highly detailed reflection of the church's material state: vestments, liturgical utensils, iconostases, church images, and even church lands and buildings were described (Zielecka-Mikołajczyk, 2022). The legal function of these acts lay in their role as official records of parish life, authenticated by the signatures of witnesses, notaries, and visitors, thereby recognising them as valid or imposing sanctions where necessary. In this respect, the documents could serve to confirm ownership rights to church property or to initiate disciplinary proceedings against members of the clergy.

The structure of the visitation acts, despite the existence of general standards, was not entirely unified. In most cases, the documents began with a formal introduction – *mandatum visitatoris* – which stated the grounds for the visitation, the name of the visitor, and the date. This section typically had a fixed Latin formula, for example: "*Ego visitator ecclesiarum unitarum, mandata reverendissimi episcopi...*" (Mayovets, 2025). The introduction was followed by a section describing the church and its architectural characteristics – the material of the walls, roof, condition of the altar, presence of a bell tower, and state of the flooring, among other details. The next section generally comprised an inventory of church property, listing vestments (*planetae, dalmaticae, albae*), liturgical books (*missale, lectionarium*), utensils (*calix, thuribulum*), as well as items belonging to the throne or altar. In some acts, the inventory was subdivided according to the origin of the property – parish, charitable, or fraternal. A separate part of the document was devoted to the clergy, recording the name of the priest, his education, year of appointment, and compliance with regulations regarding obligatory confession, catechisation, and the keeping of birth records (Szcześniak, 2024). In cases of disciplinary violations – for instance, residence outside the parish or cohabitation with a woman – corresponding remarks and sanctions were

recorded. In the final section of the document, the visitor formulated conclusions concerning the general state of the parish and could provide recommendations or requirements for rectifying identified shortcomings. When necessary, the signatures of witnesses, clerks, the notary, and the visitor himself were appended.

The variability of structure and wording depended on several factors. Firstly, geographical location: visitations within the Lviv Diocese, particularly those concerning parishes in the city of Lviv, contained far more detailed descriptions of interiors and vestments than those from peripheral deaneries, where entries were shorter and often reduced to simple lists without elaboration (Fig. 1). Secondly, the period of compilation influenced content: in the second half of the 18th century, there was a notable increase in the use of formalised phrases and fixed constructions, such as "*altare principale ornatur tabula picta in medio BMV cum sanctorum imagines lateribus*" (Skochylas, 1999), which indicates a degree of clerical standardisation. Thirdly, the status of the parish played a role: Basilian monasteries or cathedral churches were documented in greater detail than small rural parishes, where the records were often limited to essential information only.

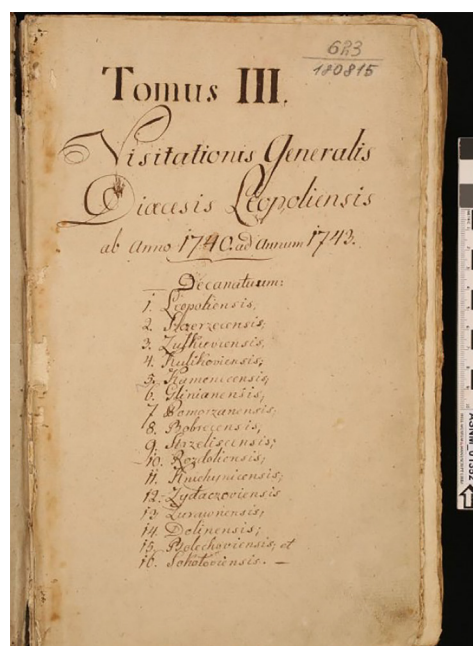


Figure 1. First page of the General Visitation of the Churches of Lviv, Volume III, 1740-1743
Source: The visitation of the General T (n.d.)

Functionally, the acts of general visitations served as an effective instrument for monitoring compliance with the Union's regulations, particularly the decisions of the Zamoyski Synod. Since the Synod of 1720 envisaged the unification of ritual practice while preserving the "Eastern rite", the visitation acts became the principal medium for both recording and disseminating Latinised norms

(Radny, 2023). This was manifested in instructions concerning the installation of confessionals and organs, the inclusion of Latin images such as the Immaculata, the introduction of Latin vestments, and the rejection of the multi-tiered iconostasis. The presence of such elements in the protocols determined the degree of conformity of each parish with the reformed Union-Latin rite. Some protocols contained explicit directives, such as the need to "remove unnecessary images", "restore the temple to its proper form", or "establish order in accordance with the norms of Union discipline" (Skochyliias, 1999). Such formulations testify to the normative character of these documents: they did not merely record the existing state of affairs but prescribed what it ought to be according to church policy. For example, the visitation of the parish in the village of Hopchytisia recorded that the altar was equipped with only one rosary and lacked a sacristy, which was deemed insufficient (The Hopchytisia Museum..., 2023). The entry concludes with an instruction to complete the church in accordance with established requirements (Fig. 2). A copy of this act is preserved in the Museum of the History of the Village of Hopchytisia, Vinnytsia Region.

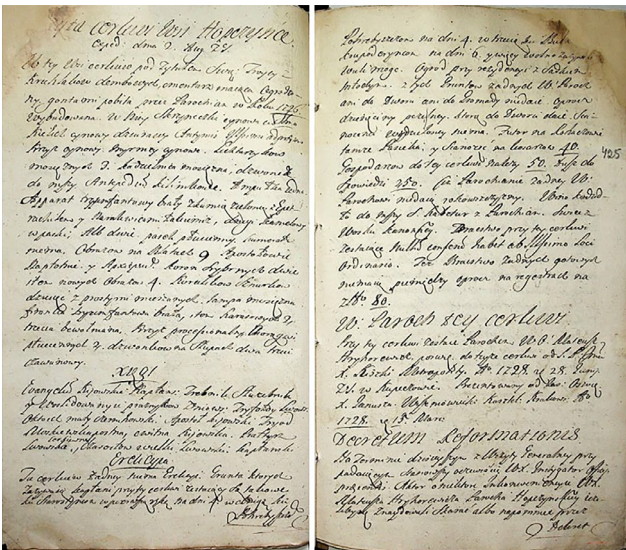


Figure 2. Act of visitation of the Church of the Holy Trinity in the village of Hopchytisia, 1740
 Source: The Hopchytisia Museum received a copy of the oldest document about the village (2023)

The administrative function of the visitation acts is also quite evident. As the documents were submitted to the consistory, where they were registered and preserved, they provided the diocesan authorities with a consistent administrative instrument for overseeing and monitoring the condition of the parishes (Avvakumov, 2025). The surviving protocols from the Acta Visitationis Gnrlis Decanatus Pohrebiscen (1784), held in the archives of the V.I. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, demonstrate that in many parishes recurring deficiencies – such as

the absence of catechetical instruction – were recorded repeatedly over several years. This indicates that earlier visitations were used as a reference point for comparative assessment and administrative analysis (Fig. 3).

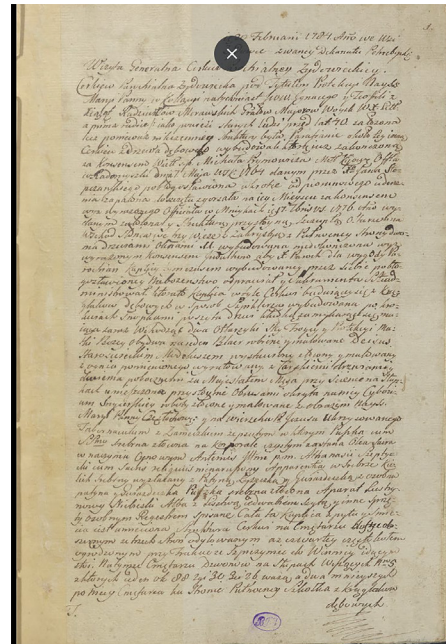


Figure 3. Fragment of the act of visitation of the Pogrebyshchensky Deanery, 1784
 Source: Acta Visitationis Gnrlis Decanatus Pohrebiscen (1784)

From the perspective of source typology, the acts of general visitations belong to the category of "regulatory-descriptive" documents, combining both inventory and normative-binding functions. Their content represents not only a record of the actual state of church material culture but also a definition of the expected standards that each parish was required to maintain in accordance with the norms of the Union and the prescriptions of the Zamoyiski Synod. Such documents served as a formalised channel of communication between the higher ecclesiastical administration and local communities, mediating the implementation of centralised policies in the areas of liturgical arrangement, clerical discipline, and religious practice. The regulatory character of the visitations was manifested particularly in the inclusion of prescriptions regarding the arrangement of the altar area, the presence of specific liturgical attributes, the introduction of designated images, and the forms of architectural decoration within the church (Palinchak et al., 2022). The texts of these documents frequently contained direct and imperative formulations, leaving no doubt as to their prescriptive nature. In this sense, visitation acts functioned not as passive inventories but as instruments for the mandatory standardisation of sacred space.

For example, the visitation act of Dekanat Bialocerkowski (1750), preserved in the archives of the

V.I. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, recorded a directive to install figurative Latin statues at the entrance to the church, clearly reflecting the normative intent of the document (Fig. 4). The corresponding fragment states: "*collocandae sunt statuae Sancti Iosephi et Virginis Immaculatae ad ingressum ecclesiae*" – that is, the requirement to introduce images characteristic of the Latin iconographic canon. Such prescriptions often corresponded to a broader programme aimed at introducing aesthetic and ritual models aligned with the Latin tradition, in particular the cult of the Immaculate Conception and the veneration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

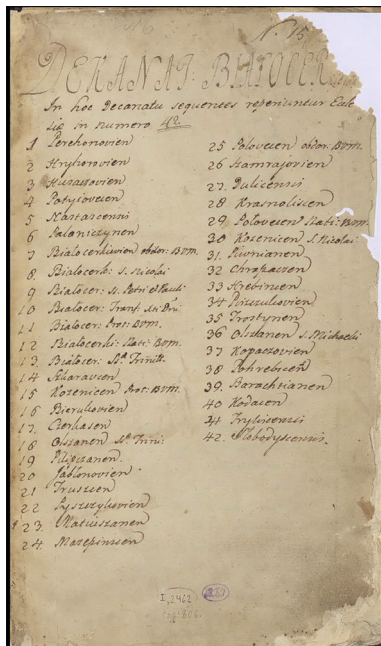


Figure 4. Fragment of the act of visitation of the Dekanat Bialocerkowski, 1750

Source: Dekanat Bialocerkowski (1750)

Thus, the acts of general visitations in the Kyiv Metropolis of the 18th century represent a distinct type of multifunctional document that combines the inventory of material culture, the recording of ritual practice, the regulation of spiritual life, and the implementation of a Latinised model of Union ecclesiality. Their typical structure makes it possible to trace both the formalisation of administrative language and the evolution of methods used to describe sacred space. The significance of these sources extends far beyond the confines of ecclesiastical history, providing a foundation for reconstructing religious policy, ritual standardisation, and the transformation of the sacred environment within the broader context of Union reforms in the second half of the 18th century.

Iconography, vestments, and utensils as objects of documentary description

The visitation acts of Union parishes served not only as an important tool for recording the state of the Church's

material culture but also as a means of regulating ritual practice through the detailed description of iconographic elements, vestments, and liturgical utensils. Their content makes it possible to trace the degree of Latinisation of church space and the transformation of visual and textile decoration that accompanied the transition to unified norms of worship introduced following the decisions of the Zamoyski Synod in 1720. The descriptions of vestments and liturgical textiles in the visitation protocols were primarily of an inventory nature, though the level of detail varied considerably depending on geography, authorship, and the significance of the parish (Szady, 2019). In several acts – particularly in the visitation of the Pochaiv Monastery in 1739, preserved in the State Archives of the Ternopil Region – general formulations appear, such as "*paramenta sacra sunt ordinate*" or "*habentur vestes pro duobus sacerdotibus*" (Fig. 5). At the same time, in some documents from the second half of the 18th century, greater precision can be observed: the number of vestments (*planetae*), sticharia (*dalmaticae*), and albs (*albae*) is recorded, along with the material (*pannus aureus, sericum cruentum*), the decorative technique (*brocatus cum filis aureis*), and the colour scheme.

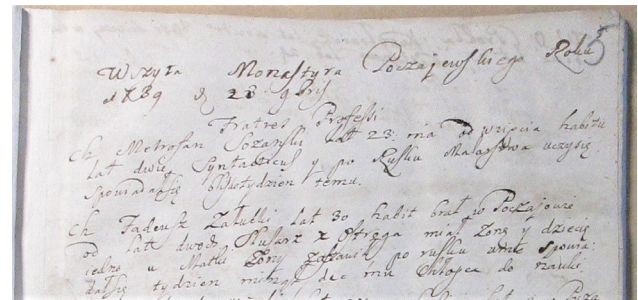


Figure 5. Fragment of the description of the visitation of the Pochaiv Monastery, 1739

Source: Vassilians are the Leading Monastic Order of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (2022)

Based on the acts of the General visitations to the deaneries of Fastiv and Pavliv (1746), preserved in the archives of the V.I. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, direct references were found to the introduction of Latin types of liturgical vestments that were atypical for the Byzantine-Slavic tradition, which had historically been based on the structures of the *sakkos*, *phelonion*, *epitrachelion*, *orarion*, and *parakh* (Fig. 6). The protocols contain Latin designations indicating the use of Roman chasubles (*planetae Romanae*), maniples (*manipuli*), and stoles (*stolae*), as well as other elements of the Latin textile complex, particularly the *amictus*, which has no functional analogue in the Eastern rite. One of the descriptions includes the wording "*planetae duae Romanae cum manipulis et stolis eiusdem coloris*", confirming the introduction of a Latin set with a complete range of accessories in colour coordination typical of the Roman liturgical code (Mayovets, 2025). The term "*Romanae*" in

this context clearly indicates the geographical and ritual affiliation of this type of vestment, distinguishing it from the established practice of the Union Church in the Ukrainian lands. In certain cases, a combination of Latin elements with local components is observed. For instance, one of the acts from the Fastiv Deanery for 1746 records: "*albae tres, una ex panno ruthenico cum ornatu romano*", which attests to the mixed origin or manufacture of the item. The alb made from local material (*pannus ruthenicus*) with Latin ornamentation illustrates the process of hybridisation in ritual textiles, during which Latin stylistic and ritual norms were integrated into the pre-existing structure of the Byzantine liturgical set.

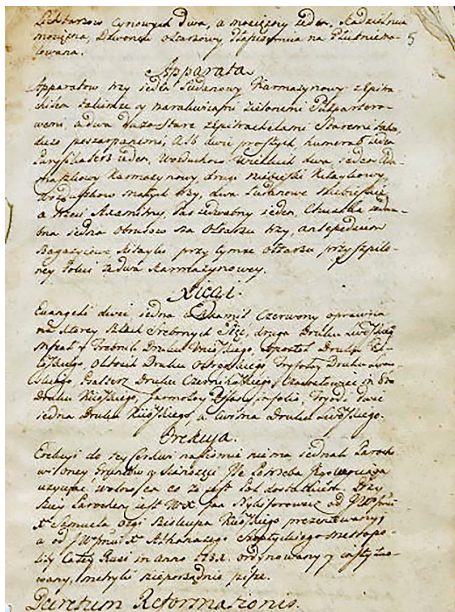


Figure 6. Fragment of the act of visitation of the Fastiv deanery, 1746

Source: General visitations to the deaneries of Fastiv and Pavliv (1746)

Such cases were not isolated exceptions but rather evidence of a broader phenomenon of adaptive Latinisation, implemented gradually and often within the framework of a compromise practice that allowed the simultaneous functioning of Eastern and Latin ritual elements. This phenomenon appears regularly in the visitation protocols. In several parishes, the presence of two sets of liturgical vestments was recorded – one for celebrations conducted in the Eastern rite tradition and another with Latin features, probably intended for services before Latin hierarchs or on feast days common to both traditions (Ivaniv, 2021). In this context, Latinisation did not represent a process of uniform replacement but rather reflected the pragmatic coexistence of two stylistically distinct models of vestment.

In addition to clerical attire, the protocols also frequently documented elements of the textile decoration of the church, particularly *vela* (velars), *antependia*, and

the so-called paramental handkerchiefs or towels used for ritual purposes – such as wiping the chalice or censer, or for use during consecration. Their presence was mandatory according to regulations; however, the level of descriptive detail and information on their physical condition varied considerably. Many protocols included evaluative terms concerning the state of objects, such as "*vetusta*" (obsolete), "*in usu continuo attrite*" (worn out from continuous use), and "*ornata sed ex parte rupta*" (decorated but partially damaged) (Ruvelas, 2023). The use of such terminology indicates not only the recording of inventory quantities but also the administration's effort to assess the practical suitability of these items for further use. This allows for the reconstruction of both the quantitative and qualitative composition of textile artefacts, as well as the intensity and conditions of their ritual circulation. Some protocols specifically noted cases where *antependia* or *vela* did not correspond to the prescribed liturgical colours for a particular period of the church calendar, which was regarded as a violation of established norms. At the same time, several descriptions indicate that, although present, certain objects were made from non-sacred fabrics or adorned with secular ornamentation deemed inappropriate for liturgical use.

Regarding liturgical utensils, the visitation acts display a consistent descriptive structure encompassing the main categories of objects used in worship. Eucharistic vessels (*calix, patena, ampullae*), processional and altar crosses (*cruces processionales, crux altaris*), reliquary boxes (*capsulae reliquiarum*), tabernacles (*tabernacula*), *flabella*, and other auxiliary objects, including spoons (*cochlearia*), patens (*discos*), altar cloths (*pallae*), and boxes for *prospophora* (*capsula pro prospophoris*), were systematically recorded. Typical entries note the material of manufacture (*argenteus* – silver, *cupreus* – copper, *ligneus* – wooden), the state of preservation (*integer* – intact, *fractus* – damaged), and decorative features (*cum imagine Crucifixi* – with the image of the Crucifixion, *cum titulis* – with inscriptions or coats of arms) (Bilyk, 2013). This level of documentation enables the classification of visitation acts as records that not only performed an inventory function but also conveyed the visual characteristics of sacred objects. Such descriptions are particularly valuable for reconstructing the material wealth of parishes and the specific features of altar ornamentation. In cases involving composite materials, references appear to designs such as "*calix ligneus interius cupreus*" or "*crux ligneo-argentea cum tabula picta*", confirming mixed origins or inlay techniques.

The appearance of Latin forms in liturgical utensils can be traced through references indicating a change not only in terminology but also in the typology and aesthetic parameters of cult objects. Some acts describe altars as figured architectural forms that have clear parallels with the Latin cult tradition. This suggests the adoption of Gothic stylistics, which were atypical for the Byzantine-Slavic tradition, where altars were usually



constructed as cube-shaped chests or built directly into the sanctuary. The visitation acts also record instances of liturgical utensils bearing signs of individualised donation, as evidenced by references to dedicatory inscriptions or heraldic elements on sacred objects. For example, several protocols mention "*calix cum inscriptione fundatoris*" or "*crux cum signis donatoris*", indicating the practice of inscribing donor names on sacred artefacts (Zielecka-Mikołajczyk, 2022). These references confirm that the Union Church culture of the late 18th century adopted and adapted forms of symbolic commemoration of patrons' characteristic of Western European ecclesiastical traditions, particularly in contexts where there was close interaction with Latin clergy or noble benefactors. However, this practice was not widespread and was generally confined to parishes where local noble sponsorship played a prominent role. A number of acts also record objects typical of Latin practice but rarely found in the Byzantine rite – particularly the monstrance, or *ostensorium*, used for displaying the Holy Gifts (Szczepaniak, 2024). Although their presence in the visitation acts of the Union Church is limited, mentions such as "*ostensorium cum lunula argentea*" indicate the selective introduction of such objects into the sacred space, primarily in monasteries or cathedrals that maintained close ties with Latin institutions.

Temple iconography in the visitations is most frequently presented within descriptions of iconostases, main altars, and side images. A comparative analysis of the 18th-century acts reveals a gradual decrease in references to full five-tiered iconostases, replaced by expressions such as "*iconostasis simplex cum tribus imaginibus*" – denoting simplified structures. This may reflect both the influence of Latinisation and local financial constraints. Several visitations include the imperative formula "*removendae sunt imagines inordinate dispositae*" (Buržinskas, 2021), suggesting direct centralised intervention in the design of the church interior. The appearance of figurative representations of the Virgin Mary following the Latin canon – previously uncharacteristic of the Byzantine tradition – is also significant. Interior descriptions reveal Baroque and Rococo stylistic elements, particularly in pulpits, wall paintings, and vault decorations. In some acts, the phrase "*muralia ornamenta in modum florem*" is used, indicating the application of Baroque floral decorative motifs. Combined with Latin imagery and new compositional schemes, these details signal a shift in the visual code of sacred space.

The linguistic dimension of the descriptions also reflects a blend of classical Latin with local Slavic-ecclesiastical elements. For example, the phrase "*icona sancti Mykolae picta super altare parochiali*" combines a Latin syntactic structure with a transcribed Slavic name. Likewise, words such as "*antimensium*", "*prozfora*", and "*krylos*", which lack Latin equivalents, were retained in their original form (Avvakumov, 2025). This demonstrates the hybrid character of the terminological apparatus and

underscores the importance of accurately recording the local ritual lexicon. The description of utensils is accompanied by specific vocabulary such as "*calix argenteus*", "*planeta cum stolone aureo*", and "*icones pictae in tabulis ligne*" (Almes, 2023). These constructions were standardised, reflecting the consistency of clerical language. At the same time, terms denoting technique ("*brocatus*", "*damascenus*"), materials ("*sericum*", "*lino crudo*"), and condition ("*partim combustus*", "*praeteritus in usu*") were commonly employed. Thus, analysis of the visitation protocols demonstrates that iconography, vestments, and utensils were not merely subject to detailed description but also functioned as indicators of ritual transformation. By recording new object types borrowed from the Latin tradition, the visitations served as instruments of documentary Latinisation of the church space while simultaneously preserving evidence of local material culture. This makes them a crucial source for reconstructing the visual image of the Union within the framework of the policy of ritual unification in the second half of the 18th century.

Archival context: Preservation, access, and classification of sources

The preservation and accessibility of the acts of general visitations of the 18th century, compiled within the Union Metropolis, constitute an essential component of the source base for studying transformations in the material and ritual culture of Union parishes. These documents are preserved across several state and ecclesiastical archives in Ukraine and are partially digitised and presented through open electronic resources, providing limited access to individual data sets. The most comprehensive collection of 18th-century visitation acts is held in the holdings of the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in Lviv. Within its collections are preserved both complete and fragmentary protocols of general and particular visitations, property inventories, church descriptions, and correspondence between diocesan institutions concerning the organisation of visitations. Individual protocols are also kept in the State Archive of Ternopil Region, while a significant body of materials is available at the Institute of Manuscripts of the V.I. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine. Particularly valuable are the episcopal archives and consistory copies, which include duplicates or extracts from the acts of visitations.

Regarding the physical state of preservation of these sources, a considerable portion of the visitation acts survives only in fragmentary form. This is particularly true of documents from the first half of the 18th-century, some of which have lost their opening or concluding pages or were partially destroyed during archival reorganisations in the 19th and 20th centuries. A notable example is the acts of the General visitations to the deaneries of Fastiv and Pavliv (1746), of which only sections describing the church inventory remain, while the introductory portion has been lost, complicating the attribution of the date and the identity of the visitor. Physical deterioration

includes both mechanical damage (torn pages, missing signatures or seals) and biological decay (mould, traces of old adhesive repairs). In some cases – such as within the holdings of the State Archive of Ternopil Oblast – the pages are not bound in chronological order, requiring reconstruction of the textual sequence during processing.

The digitisation of the acts has often been conducted selectively and without a coordinated metadata policy, hindering the tracking, use, and accessibility of archival records – a problem also noted by J. Coburn (2020) in the context of historical research. Some digital copies have been made available through individual academic projects; however, the inconsistency of these approaches to preservation and documentation reflects the broader issue of underdeveloped digital preservation strategies within cultural institutions. The problem of incomplete digitisation arises even when acts themselves are available – often without appendices, inventories, or related correspondence. A similar situation is observed in manuscript collections in libraries, where inadequate metadata limits both indexing and search capabilities (Ignatowicz *et al.*, 2025). Many online repositories contain only analytical descriptions or bibliographic references, without providing access to the full text of the sources, further compounding barriers to scholarly research.

Thus, although the source base is concentrated within several key archival institutions and partially available online, its accessibility remains constrained by both the physical condition of the documents and the irregularity of their digital representation. These limitations hinder comprehensive scholarly engagement, as researchers often face incomplete datasets and inconsistent metadata. Consequently, there is an urgent need for the systematic description, re-cataloguing, and publication of complete corpora of visitation acts, accompanied by careful attention to archival provenance, structural analysis, and detailed commentary on the degree of textual preservation and authenticity.

Discussion

The results of the study demonstrated that the acts of general visitations of Union parishes in the second half of the 18th century constituted a complex institutional form that extended beyond purely descriptive documentation and became an effective instrument of church policy. Their structure, language, and functions indicate that these documents served as mediators between local practices and centralised Union norms. Through them, not only was the actual state of parishes examined, but also the directive formation of ritual, visual, and material unification in the spirit of the Latin tradition was carried out. In this context, visitation acts assumed a normative character: they did not merely record what existed but also prescribed what was desired – the architectural structure of churches, the types of images, and the forms of liturgical utensils and vestments. Such an interpretation of the function of pastoral visitations corresponds

to the analysis of J.P. Paiva (2020), who, in the context of Spanish and Portuguese colonial policies, demonstrated that visitations were a key mechanism for controlling and standardising local ecclesiastical realities. In both cases, they operated as channels for implementing centralised models “from above”, albeit with differing emphases: in the Iberian context, the focus lay on the moral behaviour of the clergy, whereas in the Union parishes the emphasis shifted towards the visual, ritual, and material dimensions of unity with Rome. This suggests that visitations functioned not only as administrative tools but also as means of formalising sacred identity through mechanisms of supervision, description, and order.

Particularly significant in the context of regulatory mechanisms is the imperative language of the documents, which reflected the formation of a normative canon that parishes were expected to approximate. A comparable transformation in the linguistic code of ecclesiastical documentation was studied by T. Wiślicz (2020) in his research on the piety of the peasantry in Lesser Poland. T. Wiślicz showed that the church bureaucracy gradually standardised the language of religious description, transforming spiritual experience into an object of formalised record. This parallel demonstrates that the visitation language of the 18th century functioned not only as an instrument of control but also as a means of constructing a new religious lexicon capable of shaping the structure of sacred reality. However, in the visitations of the Union Church – unlike in T. Wiślicz example – linguistic formalisation did not entirely eliminate local vocabulary: Slavic and ritual terms persisted, confirming the hybrid nature of the document.

The material configuration of church interiors, as recorded in the visitation acts, reveals a gradual transformation of the visual code towards Latin aesthetics. This included the simplification of iconostases, the introduction of figurative imagery (reliefs, sculptures, statues), and the appearance of Latin iconographic motifs and decorative elements in the Baroque and Rococo styles, particularly in sacred painting. A similar reorientation of spatial and aesthetic parameters in ecclesiastical interiors was examined by M. Jakubowski (2024), who focused on architectural patronage in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. He found that patronal authorities often dictated the aesthetic parameters of sacred spaces, even contrary to internal ecclesiastical norms. The findings of the present study confirm that patronage initiatives – particularly those of the nobility – could actively promote the Latinisation of space by financing the decoration, statuary, or vestments appropriate to Western stylistic models. At the same time, unlike M. Jakubowski analysis, which emphasised tensions between patrons and the clergy, the archival protocols examined here indicate concordance between the instructions of visitors and the aesthetic transformations taking place, pointing to the consolidation of Latinisation tendencies within the ecclesiastical system itself.



Another important aspect of the study concerns the inventory of liturgical objects, including vestments, chalices, antependia, and other ritual textiles. The identified references to Latin types of clothing signify a shift towards Western textile standards. This process partly corresponds to the model described by J.A. Frykowski (2016), who analysed the visitation protocols of the parish of Ciotusz (Lublin Voivodeship). J.A. Frykowski observed that documentary references to Western forms of vestment often did not reflect actual practice but rather expressed a "desired norm". The results obtained in this study, however, reveal that such references were accompanied by specific formulae relating to quantity, colour, and correspondence of sets; therefore, these were not merely declarative ideals but evidence of an implemented material practice. This suggests a differentiation in the degree of Latinisation among parishes: in some cases, a "project model" of Latinisation (as defined by J.A. Frykowski) was observed, whereas in others it had been materially realised.

One of the key dimensions of the study was the aspect of hybridisation – the phenomenon of the coexistence of Latin and Byzantine components within the same sacred space. Archival protocols revealed a systematic combination of elements from both traditions: the texts contain references to fabrics of local origin adorned with Latin ornamentation, the simultaneous presence of Eastern and Western sets of liturgical vestments, and the parallel use of terms borrowed from both the Latin and Slavic ritual lexicons. The use of mixed constructions – both linguistic and material – indicates that hybridisation was not an isolated exception but rather an established practice of adaptation under conditions of ritual competition and administrative pressure. D. Solera (2025), in his study of the historical preconditions of the Union of Brest, emphasised that from the moment of the union's conclusion a model of cultural compromise had been established, envisaging unity with Rome without the complete dissolution of the Byzantine tradition. In light of this, the examples of hybridisation identified in the archival material can be interpreted as the practical continuation of that concept, adapted to the circumstances of the 18th century. However, unlike the political-theological compromise analysed by D. Solera, the manifestations recorded in the visitation acts concern primarily the administrative and material implementation of this compromise – visible in objects, vestments, and spatial arrangements. This ritual hybridity, rooted in everyday ecclesiastical practice, indicates that the Union existed not merely as a dogmatic construct but as a living system of interaction between traditions, wherein sacred matter became a field of negotiation between East and West.

The phenomenon of dual sets of liturgical vestments identified in the documents attests to a situation of ritual dichotomy, in which a parish could adapt its liturgical service to various religious, social, or hierarchical circumstances – both internal (linked to routine practice) and

external (for instance, in the presence of Latin hierarchs or during feasts of general ecclesiastical significance). The protocols frequently recorded formulae such as "*paramenta duplicia: pro ritu rutheno et pro ritu romano*", which directly testify to the deliberate preservation and parallel use of two ritual systems. Such a model did not simply represent mechanical coexistence but reflected the Union community's capacity to integrate flexibility into its ritual practice. This interpretation corresponds with the conclusions of P. Babie (2023), who demonstrated that Union identity in Ukraine was historically multi-layered, representing a synthesis of canonical dependence on Rome and profound cultural continuity with the local Byzantine-Slavic tradition. Yet, whereas P. Babie considered this multi-layeredness primarily in canonical and legal terms, the results of the present study reveal its material embodiment – manifest in the fabrics, colour schemes, cuts, and decorative techniques of vestments. For example, the coexistence of *planetae Romanae* alongside *phelonia*, or albs made from local cloth yet adorned with Latin ornamentation, illustrates not a merely symbolic but a functional realisation of the ritual compromise. Thus, the dichotomy of rites was transformed into a mechanism of adaptability, enabling Union parishes to balance between normative Latin unification and local forms of religious practice.

In summary, the research confirmed that the acts of general visitations of the 18th-century Union Church functioned not as neutral descriptive records but as an active instrument of ritual standardisation. They not only documented the condition of church interiors but also shaped a normative framework within which Latin aesthetic, ritual, and linguistic elements gradually displaced or transformed the Byzantine tradition. A comparison of these findings with those of leading scholars revealed both inter-regional parallels (notably in Spain, Poland, and Portugal) and distinctive local characteristics of the Union model.

Conclusions

As a result of the research, it was established that the acts of general visitations of Union parishes in the second half of the 18th century not only recorded the actual state of church life but also functioned as instruments for implementing ecclesiastical policy aimed at the gradual Latinisation of visual, ritual, and material space. The analysis demonstrated that these documents represented a regulatory-descriptive form, combining an inventory of sacred objects, an assessment of canonical discipline, the legal certification of parish status, and prescriptive instructions intended to align church practice with Union and Latin norms. The typical structure of visitation acts – introduction, description of the church, inventory, account of the clergy, and conclusions – made it possible to trace the formalisation of clerical language, particularly through the widespread use of fixed Latin formulae such as *collocandae sunt statuae Sancti Iosephi et Virginis Immaculatae ad ingressum ecclesiae*.

The documents attest to the gradual replacement of traditional Byzantine vestments (*phelonia*, *saccos*) with Latin forms (*chasubles*, *cofes*, *amices*), while retaining references to materials, decorative techniques, and colour coordination. An important qualitative finding was the identification of hybrid forms of vestment – particularly the combination of local fabrics with Latin ornamentation, or the parallel use of two sets for different ritual contexts. The results also confirmed that the protocols consistently recorded the nomenclature of Eucharistic, altar, and processional objects, providing detailed references to their materials, condition, and decorative features.

Archival analysis confirmed that the preservation of visitation acts is fragmentary, especially with regard to documents from the first half of the 18th century. Evidence of both mechanical and biological damage was found, including torn pages, loss of introductory leaves, and irregularities in the chronological order of binding, all of which complicate the interpretation of certain materials. Accordingly, the limitations of the study include the uneven preservation of archival sources, the

absence of some introductory and concluding sections, and the selective nature of digitisation, which prevented the inclusion of the full corpus of materials from peripheral deaneries. These factors may have affected the representativeness of the data, particularly in comparative analyses of urban and rural parishes. Future research should therefore be directed towards expanding the investigation to include other dioceses of the Union Church, comparing the archival corpora of the Kyiv, Lviv, Pinsk, and Przemyśl Metropolias, and undertaking a comparative analysis with Roman Catholic visitation records of the same period.

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Латинізаційні впливи на церковну іконографію, утвар та облачення в Унійній церкві XVIII ст. за архівними матеріалами генеральних візитацій

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Анотація. Метою дослідження було простежити, як нормативні настанови католицької церкви втілювалися у практиках візуального та речового оформлення унійних храмів у період поступової обрядової уніфікації XVIII століття. У роботі проаналізовано трансформації храмового простору під впливом латинських зразків на основі джерел, що походять із парафій Київської митрополії, яка охоплювала регіони сучасної Центральної та Західної України. В процесі дослідження було використано корпус архівних актів генеральних візитацій 1730-1785 років, зокрема документи з візитацій міста Львова, Почаївського монастиря, Фастівського, Погребищенського та Білоцерківського деканатів, а також парафії села Гопчиця. У результаті дослідження було встановлено, що акти візитацій виступають не лише як джерело фіксації стану сакрального простору, а й як регулятивний інструмент імплементації латинських зразків у церковну практику. Було виявлено поєднання латинських і візантійських обрядових елементів у текстильному оформленні, літургійному начинні та храмовій іконографії. Простежено процес заміщення або редукції традиційних іконостасів, поява фігурних латинських статуй, латиномовних приписів щодо облаштування вівтарів, а також систематичне впровадження елементів латинської термінології в описах облачення та утварі. Аналіз мови візитацій засвідчив стійку присутність лексики латинського обряду у поєднанні з локальними елементами, що створювало змішану обрядово-мовну реальність. Практичне значення дослідження полягає в тому, що його результати можуть бути використані для реконструкції візуального образу Унійної церкви, створення типології латинізованих предметів у музейних і церковних зібраннях та розробки критеріїв атрибуції сакральної спадщини другої половини XVIII століття

Ключові слова: сакральний простір; інвентарний опис; обрядова уніфікація; протокол; літургія; ритуальна практика