

jurisdiction of the patriarch of Constantinople. "... [T]he tsar has told us many times to consecrate the metropolitan of Kiev but I, without your [Dionysius's] blessing, did not want to do this. ..."76

We have seen that Nikon was a key-person in the tsar's decision about the unification between Ukraine and Muscovy. But he also played important role in the separation of Ukraine in 1658. Although the Ukrainian clergy did not want to accept the rule of Moscow patriarch, Ukrainian political elite had a great respect for Nikon. Khmelnytsky called him 'my great master',77 while Vyhovsky referred to him as 'our master, father and pastor'.78 Hetman Vyhovsky turned to Nikon during the critical aggravation of the Muscovite-Ukrainian relations in January–March 1658. In his conflict with Muscovite voivodes, the hetman tried to address Nikon, asking for support and mediation.79 Nikon's disgrace in early summer 1658 became a menacing sign for the Ukrainian elite – right at the moment they were making a choice between Muscovy and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Finally, they chose the latter, and in September 1658 signed the Hadiach Agreement with the Polish king. It is worth noting that none of the recent studies by Ukrainian and Polish historians focused on the events of Vyhovsky's hetmanate, addressing the religious factor and the role of Nikon in breaking off the Muscovite-Ukrainian union.80

To resume, religious considerations were of utmost importance for Russian Tsar Alekseï to take Ukraine 'under his high hand', and Nikon played the key role in this decision.

The years of Nikon's rule were a period of unification between Ukraine and Muscovy. When in 1657 the conflict between the patriarch and the tsar began, it coincided with the beginning of tensions between Kiev and Moscow. But this is another story.

⁷⁶ *Zapiski otdeleniya*, ii, 528.

⁷⁷ *Akty, otnosyashchiesya*, xiv, 526–7.

⁷⁸ RGADA, F. 196, op. 3, no. 225, l. 1.

⁷⁹ Ivan E. Zabilin (ed.), 'Malorossiiskaya perepiska, khranyashchayasya v archive Moskovskoi oruzheinoi Palaty...', CHOIDR, iii, 8 (1848), 70; RGADA, F. 196, op. 3, no. 225, l. 1–2.

⁸⁰ Piotr Kroll, *Od ugody Hadziackiej do Cudnowa. Kozacyzna między Rzeczpospolitą a Moskwą w latach 1658–1660* (Warsaw, 2008); Viktor Horobets, *Elita kozayskoï Ukrainy v poshukakh politychnoi legitimatsiyi: stosunki z Moskvoyu ta Varshavoyu* (Kiev, 2001).