

Teresa Chynczewska-Hennel

University of Białystok (Poland)

ORCID: 0000-9847-4540

## **Between *Slavia Latina* and *Slavia Orthodoxa*. The Discussion of Ihor Skochylyas with the Concept by Riccardo Picchio**

### **Abstract**

Both scholars are no longer alive. Riccardo Picchio (1923–2011) and Ihor Skochylyas (1967–2020) did not know each other and they were almost two generations apart. Riccardo Picchio, Italian Slavist, created the concepts of *Slavia Orthodoxa* and *Slavia Romana (Latina)*, which aroused discussion in the scientific world but also gave rise to considerable doubts. Anyway, he himself believed that conceptual schemas could not be of absolute value.

Over the years of his work, Ihor Skochylyas argued with these concepts, believing that in fact we are dealing with the picture of the Slavic world consisting of three realms: *Slavia Latina*, *Slavia Orthodoxa* and *Slavia Unita*. He presented this approach in many publications, including his last work entitled “The latest discoveries of the Lviv historians in research on the Synod of Zamość” published in the conference materials “The legacy of the Synod of Zamość 1720–2020. Challenges and Prospects”, Kraków 2021.

**Keywords:** Ihor Skochylyas, Riccardo Picchio, *Slavia Latina*, *Slavia Orthodoxa*, *Slavia Unita*.

The two remarkable scholars did not seem to know each other personally. They are both dead now. Yet the power of human thought overcomes what we used to call the finiteness of being on earth. I have known Ihor Skochylyas for many years and I can say we were friends. We met in Lviv, Kyiv, Warsaw, Cracow and Rome during conferences and social meetings. We last saw each other on 18 November, 2020, it

is true on-line, during the Conference organized by the John Paul II University at Krzeszowice near Cracow, dedicated to the Synod of Zamość held in 1720. Ihor Skochylyas presented the results of the recent research by the Lviv historians on the Synod held in Zamość. He died on 20 December, 2020, defeated by Covid.

From 1999 to 2020 he worked at the Ukrainian Catholic University. Scientific achievements of Professor Skochylyas are impressive and include over 250 articles, studies on the history of the region of Ternopil, the history of the Church in Ukraine, always showing a broad approach to this issue from the perspective of the Polish Commonwealth and its relations with the Catholic Church. His works were published in Ukrainian, English, Italian, Lithuanian, Polish and Russian languages.

The scientific achievements of this historian should be discussed in a separate article.

Knowing Roman archives that were used in his works perfectly well, he published original works covering a wide range of issues. His books and articles concerning the visitation of churches and monasteries of the Diocese of Volodymyr (Włodzimierz) at the end of the 17th century and at the beginning of the 18th century also made a significant contribution to these issues. The professor's cooperation with the Polish historian Professor Andrzej Gil was successful and resulted in valuable publications. I would like to highlight here the extensive study by both authors, i. e. the book entitled *Kościół Wschodnie w państwie polsko – litewskim w procesie przemian i adaptacji: Metropolia Kijowska w latach 1458–1795*, (Eastern Churches in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Process of Transformation and Adaptation: Kyiv Metropolis in the years 1458–1795), (Instytut Europy Środkowo – Wschodniej, Institute of Central and Eastern Europe, Lublin – Lwów 2014). This book was reviewed by the author of this article in the Annual "Polish Ukrainian Studies"<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> T. Chynczewska-Hennel, *Rev. (Andrzej Gil, Ihor Skoczylas, Kościół Wschodnie w państwie polsko – litewskim w procesie przemian i adaptacji: Metropolia Kijowska w latach 1458-1795, Instytut Europy Środkowo – Wschodniej, Lublin -*

We should note that the authors used rich source material (printed and handwritten) from Polish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian and Russian archives in this work on the history of the Eastern Churches – Orthodox and Uniate (Greek Catholic) during the period in question understood as a period of changes and adaptation in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In the research work by Professor Ihor Skochylyas it was characteristic, and innovative at the same time, that he was always looking for a “mental map” understood as a wide space of the faithful, the one that is not taken into account by the former administrative divisions having an impact on our understanding of divisions shaped by seeing maps. After all, according to the scientist, perception of distant places and spaces around them changed with time and that is why understanding the essence of such images can be perceived precisely thanks to the concept a “mental map”.

What is important to emphasize in Ihor Skochylyas' works is his disapproval of seeing Kyiv, the tradition of the Kyivan Rus' and Kyivan Christianity imposed by Russian propaganda strictly for political purposes and not for historical or religious sensitivity. Reliable historical analysis, deep knowledge of the past and real scientific reflection should be the duty of every true historian. This is the message that runs through historical studies conducted by Professor Ihor Skochylyas.

I met Professor Riccardo Picchio (1923–2011) in Rome and then in Cambridge at Harvard University. The biography of Professor Picchio should also be presented in a separate article. Here I would like to emphasize that this eminent Italian Slavist was associated with Poland for a long time when he worked at the University of Warsaw in the years 1947-1949 as a teacher of Italian. Then he completed Slavic studies in Paris, obtained habilitation in Rome and became professor in Florence and Pisa, where he lectured in Old Russian

---

*Lwów 2014*, p. 683) [w:] “*Studia Polsko-Ukraińskie*”, red. Walentyna Sobol, nr 2, Warszawa 2015, s. 195-200; idem, *In memoriam, Profesor Ihor Skoczylas (5 IV 1967 – 20 XII 2020)* [w:] “*Studia Polsko-Ukraińskie*”, red. Walentyna Sobol, nr 8, Warszawa 2021, s. 293-297.

and Russian literature. He was Director of the Institute of Slavonic Philology at Sapienza University of Rome and then he joined the Universities of Columbia and Yale in the United States. Riccardo Picchio was the editor of a respected magazine "Ricerche Slavistiche".

If we were to present the general characteristics of the scientific work by Professor Picchio, we should emphasize that as a philologist, language expert and an outstanding erudite he always took into account a broad background and the relationship of the analyzed texts with tradition and culture in which they were written. One of such works is undoubtedly the dissertation entitled "Slavia Orthodoxa" and "Slavia Romana" published in the Polish language in Cracow in 1999.

Here is what he wrote about these concepts:

"The concepts *Slavia Orthodoxa* and *Slavia Romana* that I have been using for over thirty years aroused great interest and considerable doubts. It was primarily the concept of *Slavia Orthodoxa* relating to the spiritual community of the Slavs that were widely included in the sphere of influence of Constantinople. I was asked and asked again to what extent I believe in the value of these concepts. To tell you the truth, I do not think that the conceptual systems of this type could be of absolute value"<sup>2</sup>. (The translation of the quote is mine. – T. Ch.-H.)

The reflections of this scholar on the concepts of *Slavia Orthodoxa* and *Slavia Latina (Romana)* focused, *inter alia*, on the study of formal structures of Orthodox Slavic literature as "poetics", with reference to the rhetorical and aesthetic methods, i. e. notions present in the Old Bulgarian, Old Ruthenian and Old Serbian tradition. As Picchio believed, literary culture is the "totality of cultural behaviour that is functionally common to authors and users of literary texts within a given society"<sup>3</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> R. Picchio, *I. Studia Slawistyczne, "Slavia Orthodoxa" i "Slavia Romana"* [w:] idem, *Studia z Filologii Słowiańskiej i Polskiej, Rozprawy Wydziału Filologicznego*, vol. LXXII, Polska Akademia Umiejętności, Kraków 1999, s. 29 (the entire article, s. 29-88).

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, s. 31.

Slavic communities comprise various socio-political formations, but they are close to each other through ethnic and linguistic features, especially visible from the mission of Saints Cyril and Methodius, which reflects a broad awareness of the Slavic community, which is quite cohesive (missionaries from the coast of the Aegean Sea could teach in Central Europe), but at the same time this also shows tendencies of the superpowers of the time in the “Roman” and the “Byzantine” world. The scholar pointed to the separability in the phenomenon of the development of the history and culture of the Slavs, being part of universal culture but also not acting as passive followers. Here he gives an example of the mission of Cyril and Methodius by emphasizing the importance and the huge role of the first Bulgarian Empire of Boris and Simeon<sup>4</sup>.

The role and importance of the centers of Slavdom in the community of the Orthodox Slavs changed, as it spread, due to the linguistic and cultural model existing in the Bulgarian Empire, to the Kyivan Rus', Serbia, as well as to Novgorod and all the way to Muscovy.

Riccardo Piccho maintained that the concept of “*Slavia*” was primarily the community of culture of a transnational nature. He added that such an understanding of the concept can be compared, for example, to the term *Slavia antiqua*, or, in terms of typology and ethno-linguistic geography, to *Slavia meridionalis*, *orientalis*, *occidentalis*, etc.

As regards the comparison that can be seen between *Slavia Cattolica* and *Slavia Latina* (*nota bene*: the author himself admits that he hesitated between the terms *Slavia Cattolica* or *Slavia Latina* as opposed to *Slavia Orthodoxa*), we should note that in both cases the Slavic people were subject to a process of “acculturation” on the part of Christianity from the very beginning. Both in the East and in the West religious institutions had an impact on the adoption of the written language<sup>5</sup>.

An interesting topic discussed by Riccardo Picchio is undoubtedly the period of Counter-Reformation. Namely, he drew attention to

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, s. 35.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, s. 66-67.

a more significant impact of the Protestants on the Slavs subjected to Rome than on the Slavs within a nascent Muscovy empire at that time.

In later centuries that supranational *lingua sacra* of the Orthodox Slavs, in competition against both the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, began to weaken gradually in favour of the local linguistic applications. The author transferred those interesting considerations to the 19th and 20th centuries<sup>6</sup>.

Ihor Skochylyas was a scientist representing younger generation and there was a difference of one, or even actually two generations between the two scholars. The Ukrainian scholar presents in his works and discussions on academic and conference forums a picture of the Slavic world composed of three dimensions such as: *Slavia Latina*, *Slavia Orthodoxa* and *Slavia Unita*.

The book entitled “Eastern Churches in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth”, mentioned earlier in this article, presents this three-part picture of Slavdom. According to the authors, the last three decades of the 17th century and the first quarter of the 18th century were a the “golden age” of the Uniate Church. The political result of this renewal was a fuller identification (Occidentalization, Westernization) of the Catholic Church of the Eastern Rite with culture and social structure of the Polish Sarmatian Commonwealth.

In his last publication, which was based on recordings of the Conference mentioned at the beginning – “The Legacy of the Synod of Zamość 1720-2020”, and which was completed by the wife of the deceased, Mrs. Irena Skochylyas, presents the latest discoveries by the historians of Lviv. Ihor Skochylyas stated, *inter alia*, that the Synod of Zamość “played in the Uniate Church, in the Ruthenian Church, as important role as the Council of Trent in the Latin Church or the Second Vatican Council in all Catholicism”<sup>7</sup>.

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, s. 37-38.

<sup>7</sup> I. Skoczylas, *Najnowsze odkrycia historyków lwowskich w badaniach nad Synodem Zamojskim* [w:] *Dziedzictwo Synodu Zamojskiego 1720-2020. Wyzwania i perspektywy*, red. nauk. P. Nowakowski CM, Kraków 2021 s. 119 (the entire article, s. 119-129).

In a synthetic form, or perhaps in a symbolic form, he referred to the problem of understanding Latin, Orthodox and Uniate Slavdom by presenting methodological issues in the studies of the Synod of Zamość. Here is what he writes:

“The methodological topic is about how we treat the Synod of Zamość, in what context and how we should approach it in order to understand both the Synod and its issues, which are very controversial for both the contemporary Greek Catholic Church and for our Orthodox brothers. [...] We carry out our project based on the concept of Kyivan (Ruthenian) Christianity in which the most important aspects of this tradition are: the rite (Byzantine-Slavic), especially the Divine Liturgy, theology (“Kyivan”); particular law; common geographical area, or the so-called “geographic isolation” (according to Fernand Braudel); common everyday life; *lingua sacra* (Church Slavonic Language) and the “simple Russian speech;” memory of the future (liturgical, historical and cultural); and political legitimacy (loyalty)”<sup>8</sup>. (The translation of the quote is mine. – *T. Ch.-H.*)

In 2019 the book “At the Crossroads of Cultures. The Monastery and the Church of the Holy Trinity in Wilnius” was published in Lviv (edited by Alfredas Bumlauskas, Aklvijus Kulevicius and Ihor Skochylyas). This is a joint publication written by 19 Ukrainian and Lithuanian authors, being the aftermath of a joint Ukrainian-Lithuanian project entitled *The Orthodox and Uniate Communities in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. History, Culture and Memory*. In 2021 the book was nominated for the prestigious Ivan Franko Award in Drohobych in Ukraine. Ihor Skochylyas was the *spiritus movens* of this undertaking. Studies of Ukrainian and Lithuanian historians on the history of the monastery and of the Church of the Holy Trinity in Vilnius are a symbolic example of *Slavia Unita*, i. e. the crossroads of cultures and religions on the Baltic-Slavic border of Latin and Byzantine civilization. Until the mid-nineteenth century, Vilnius was the meeting place, as the authors and editors of the book emphasize, of the Lithuanian West with the Ruthenian, that is to say Ukrainian and Belarusian East. The monastery and the Church

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, s. 122.

of Holy Trinity were the centers of the Basilian Order and of the metropolises of Kyiv and Vilnius. According to the concept of Ihor Skoczychylas, this multinational, multi-faith and multi-religious city was the meeting place and a place of mutual interpenetration of the worlds of *Slavia Orthodoxa*, *Slavia Unita* and *Slavia Latina*.

## References

- Chynczewska-Hennel T., *Rev. (Andrzej Gil, Ihor Skoczylas, Kościoły Wschodnie w państwie polsko – litewskim w procesie przemian i adaptacji: Metropolia Kijowska w latach 1458-1795, Instytut Europy Środkowo – Wschodniej, Lublin – Lwów 2014)* [w:] “Studia Polsko-Ukraińskie”, red. Walentyna Sobol, nr 2, Warszawa 2015, s. 195-200.
- Chynczewska-Hennel T., *In memoriam, Profesor Ihor Skoczylas (5 IV 1967 – 20 XII 2020)* [w:] “Studia Polsko-Ukraińskie”, red. Walentyna Sobol, nr 8, Warszawa 2021, s. 293-297.
- Picchio R., *I. Studia Sławistyczne, “Slavia Orthodoxa” i “Slavia Romana”* [w:] idem, *Studia z Filologii Słowiańskiej i Polskiej, Rozprawy Wydziału Filologicznego*, t. LXXII, Polska Akademia Umiejętności, Kraków 1999, s. 29-88.
- Skoczylas I., *Najnowsze odkrycia historyków lwowskich w badaniach nad Synodem Zamojskim* [w:] *Dziedzictwo Synodu Zamojskiego 1720-2020. Wyzwania i perspektywy*, red. nauk. P. Nowakowski CM, Kraków 2021, s. 119-129.