

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH AT THE KREMENCHUK PRISON CASTLE ACCORDING TO ARCHIVE DOCUMENTS

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Abstract:

The purpose of the article is to study the history of the Kremenchuk prison as one of the thousands of places where criminals and people under investigation are sentenced. The prison has long been a part of the city architecture, and the cohort of detainees is an integral part of society. The research is designed to fill certain gaps in urban studies of local history, history of social life, to demonstrate the informational potential of various archival sources, in particular, the magazine "Poltava Eparchial Bulletin" and the directories "Address-calendar" and "Remembrance Book.

The methodological foundations of the research are based on the principles of historicism, comprehensiveness, objectivity, and a complex approach, which in turn led to the use of a system of methods, including analysis, synthesis, descriptive method, historical-chronological, historical-genetic, biohistoriographical, the method of microhistories and archival heuristics.

The scientific novelty of the research results lies in the publication of materials related to the history of the church at the prison castle, the role of this religious building in the life of the detainees, information about the priests-rectors of the temple, whose social task was the re-education of criminals.

Conclusions. Based on the developed and analyzed reference books, documents, and interrogation protocols, it can be concluded that the church at the Kremenchuk prison castle became a necessary element of the city landscape and played an important role in the correction of those who committed a crime and sincerely repented of it.

Keywords: Kremenchuk prison castle, house church, the abbot of the temple, archival sources.

During the period of Russian military aggression, issues related to the phenomenon of Ukrainian culture, the identity of the Ukrainian people, and the separateness of the Ukrainian nation are gaining particular prominence.

The spiritual world is a decisive factor in the genesis of the Ukrainian mentality, and therefore it is very important to outline the origins of the Ukrainian ethnic group's worldview, among which religious beliefs, the church, and the clergy occupy a special place.

Another goal of this study is to fill in the gaps in the history of the hometown, to explore the history of specific institutions, in particular the prison, the peculiarities of the lives of prisoners and the people who cared for them.

Kremenchuk as a city of the frontline [1] since its foundation [2] gave the townspeople great opportunities and attracted people from all over the world.

Quite quickly, our city (which was both a provincial and a district centre) became a centre of international trade, a place of millions of transactions (it is not for nothing that one of the first banks of the Russian Empire was established here) and, consequently, the centre of crime.

Today, the issue of reviving Orthodox culture and history is an urgent one for scholars. Among researchers, this topic is not the least important and is becoming more and more relevant every year. But, unfortunately, the least studied are the house and regimental churches that were located on the territory of the Kremenchuk district in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The main task of this paper is to reflect the historical aspects of the existence of the church at the prison.

The history of this church was partially researched by Buchnevych V. E. [4], Lushakova A. M. [5] and Muzychenko N. V. [6]. But information about this temple in the works of these scholars was presented superficially in the content of general scientific articles.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, following the decision of the authorities to build stockades in the Malorussian province, important administrative buildings, such as prison castles, were built in the Poltava region. The Kremenchuk prison castle on the banks of the Dnipro River became necessary because of the large number of criminals who were concentrated here, on the border of three provinces [7].

The prison castle was built as one of the first stone structures in the city in 1804 [13]. The fence and the gate with the tower were built according to one of the first typical provincial projects (by the architect A. Zakharov, who designed the Admiralty in St. Petersburg). When comparing the archival drawings signed by Amvrosymov and Kurakin with the standard design, one can notice a significant difference in the arrangement of the courtyard from the standard design: not one building was built, as envisaged by the project, but three one-storey buildings [4]. The two buildings were located parallel to each other. They were buildings with the same rectangular layout and facades, their centre marked by a small projection with a pediment at the top. There were window openings only on the front façade. Perpendicular to these two buildings was a third one [5].

In 1838, the Malorussian governor-general asked the senior inspector-general of railways and public buildings to consider a new design for the Kremenchuk prison building because the old building had become dilapidated. In addition, in 1836, the middle inner building was destroyed by fire, the number of prisoners was increasing every year, and there was not enough space to hold them. A new project was developed by the commission of projects and estimates by 21 September 1838 by the Poltava provincial architect Kortashevsky [5] [8].

The prison castle was rebuilt in 1853. A two-storey building was erected in the

middle of the prison yard on the site of the demolished buildings. However, only the barracks were rebuilt; the fence and gate remained in their original state [4]. This building survived until the Second World War [9].

Until 1856, the prison castle was subordinated to the local police, but from 1 July it was transferred to the county guardianship department of the Committee on Prisons [5].

On the second floor of the prison building on Vesela Lane (now 39 B. Khmelnytskyi Street), 'at the gate of the prison fence', where the apartment of the castle warden used to be, a warm church was built by Major Oleksandr Ostrohradskyi in honour of the icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary «Joy of All Who Sorrow»[10], consecrated on 18th of April 1865 and was attached to the Assumption Cathedral [11]. In 1895 the church was rebuilt [12] (Fig. 1).



Figure 1 – Former prison gate church «Joy to All Who Sorrow» 1931.

The bell tower was built simultaneously with the church in the prison yard. It was a canopy on two wooden pillars [4].

As for the interior decoration of the prison church, a wooden single-tiered iconostasis made of carpentry was installed here [4]. In 1873, along with the entire building, the church was equipped with heating and lighting, for which the city authorities allocated a significant amount of money.

Since it was a purely closed building, and the church was a house church, it did not have a permanent parish.

After the church was closed, and even during the German occupation, the prison was used for its intended purpose - to hold prisoners of Kremenchuk and the district. During the Second World War, the building and the fence were significantly damaged, but as late as the mid-1950s, the gates and towers were preserved, which allowed architect M. Onyshchenko to claim that there was a castle in Kremenchuk designed by Zakharov [5].

There was a literacy school for prisoners at the church [9], which was opened here in 1878. On the 12th of June of the same year, Petro Lysenko, a deacon of the Kremenchuk Cathedral, was approved as its first teacher [13]. For his zeal and successful efforts to teach Kremenchuk prisoners to write, on 31st of January, 1881 he was commended and thanked with an entry in his service record [14]. After him, from the 29th of October, 1892, Prokopiyy Yareschenko, a psalmist of the Kremenchuk Assumption Cathedral, was appointed as a teacher [15].

Initially, the church was attached to the Holy Dormition Cathedral. Therefore, the church did not have a separate priest at first. Priests sent from the Assumption Cathedral served here [10]. For example, on the 18th of October 1874, priest Vasyl Bohayevsky served and performed services in the Kremenchuk prison church in honour of the icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary «Joy of All Who Sorrow» until the rector's vacancy was opened for him [16]. In addition to the above, other cathedral priests served here.

But the first and only rector of the church was Romenskyi Mykola Avtonomovich [17] [18] [19] [20] [21] [22] [23] [24] [25] [26] [27] [28] [30] [31] [11]. He was born in 1866 in the village of Korobivka, Zolotonosha district [32]. His father, Avtonom Danylovych Romenskyi, was a priest of the village church of St Nicholas, as well as the dean of the Zolotonosha district [10]. Since childhood, Mykola witnessed church services led by his father and followed his example, first attending a parochial school. Mykola received his first education at the Pereyaslav Theological School, and his secondary education at the Poltava Theological Seminary, where he graduated in 1889. In the same year, he became a teacher at the parish school

at the Spaso-Preobrazhensky Church in Kremenchuk [32].

On the 8th of March, 1897 Mykola Romenskyi, a teacher at Kremenchuk City School and a student at Poltava Theological Seminary, was ordained a deacon by His Grace Menander, Bishop of Pryluky, at the Poltava Exaltation of the Cross Monastery [33]. And the following day, at the Divine Liturgy, he was ordained a priest [34]. In 1897, he received the position of a priest at the Church of All Sorrowful Joy in Kremenchuk Prison Castle at the invitation of the Kremenchuk branch of the Prison Trusteeship Committee [32]. (Fig. 2).

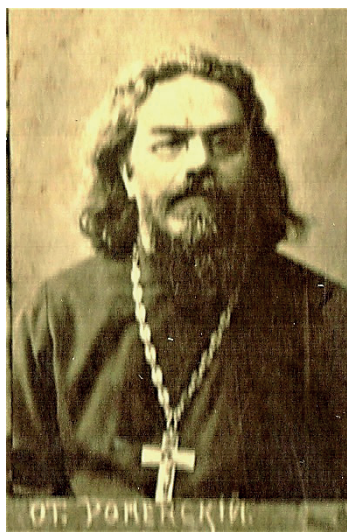


Figure 2 – Archpriest Nikolai Avtonomovich Romenskyi

In addition to church services and performing the requisites, Father was engaged in other activities. He was a member of various organizations. In 1907, he became the treasurer of the district branch of the diocesan school board, and in 1909 he became a member of this branch [24] [28]. Also, in 1907, Father Mykola was a member of the society for helping needy students of the Kremenchuk Women's Gymnasium [22] [23] [24]. (Fig. 3). In 1910, he became a collegiate assessor. And in summer 1910, before the end of the Second State Duma's term, he joined the newly created Duma social party Nationalist in Kremenchuk, which had election goals. He stayed there for only three months. The main goal of this party was to prevent other nationalities from seceding from Russia, seeing this as a threat to the Russian state. But in the autumn, the Duma's term was extended, and the Nationalist party ended its existence without publishing a single leaflet for the entire period.



Figure 3 – Mykola Romenskyi - a teacher at the Kremenchuk Women's Gymnasium, 6th of April, 1914

On the 29th of April, 1915, Mykola Romenskyi was appointed to the post of spiritual investigator of the 1st district of the Kremenchuk district [35], and held this position until 4th of June, 1916 [36]. In 1917, he was a member of the district department for the management and supervision of church schools [37].

One of the most urgent tasks of a clergyman is to bring the human soul closer to God, to learn to listen to the Word of God and to be cleansed from sin. This could be done through education. Therefore, one of the main activities of Father Mykola was teaching in educational institutions.

On the 11th of January, 1890, Mykola joined the Ministry of Public Education and until 1905 was first a teacher, then a headmaster and finally a law teacher at the Kremenchuk City Parochial School for children of both sexes [18] [19] [32] [38].

On the 15th of October, 1901, Father Mykola Romensky was appointed as a law teacher at the private school in Barsynia [39]. On 8th of October, 1903, he was appointed a teacher of the Kremenchuk Mariinsky Women's Gymnasium [32] [21] [22] [23] [24] [25] [26] [27] [28] [29] [30] [38]. On the 16th of August, 1903, he was approved as a teacher of the newly opened primary school and the 2nd city school [40]. From the 28th of August, 1908, he was the acting headmaster of the private women's gymnasium of Baberina [26] [27] [28] [29] [30] [38]. Father Mykola taught the law of God before the Soviet authorities issued a decree

abolishing the teaching of the law of God in schools.

For his zealous and long-lasting service in the house church of the Kremenchuk prison castle, Mykola Romensky was repeatedly awarded by the Holy Synod. Thus, on the 3rd of June, 1904, he was presented with a velvet purple scarf [41], on 6th of May, 1907, he was awarded a kamilavka (a headdress - the authors) [38], on the 1st of April, 1913, the priest was awarded the pectoral cross [42].

After the October Revolution of 1917, the lives of all priests changed dramatically. Mykola Romensky was not spared the bitter fate. After the decree on the separation of church and state was proclaimed on 23-d of January, 1918, services in the church were banned. the church was closed, and the priest found himself without a place of service. In January 1919, Mykola Avtonomovych was arrested by the State Political Administration (GPU) as a priest of the prison church. They tried to accuse him of anti-Soviet propaganda, but after taking his testimony, he was released in a few days due to lack of evidence [32].

During the Civil War, with the advent of the Denikins, the priest again went to serve in the prison church and was a law teacher in Kremenchuk educational institutions. At the end of 1919, when the Bolsheviks seized the city, the church of the Icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary 'Joy of All Who Sorrow' at the prison castle was finally closed, and priest Mykola Romensky was evacuated to Odesa with the prison administration. In February 1920, the former rector returned to Kremenchuk, but served in other churches in the city [32].

Psalmists assisted the priest in worship at the church. For example, in 1870, Mykhailo Cherniakhovskiy, a dismissed clerk of the Kremenchuk Spaso-Preobrazhensky Church, served in the house church of the prison [44]. On the 6th of April, 1897, Viktor Ioannovych Varvynskiy, a psalmist of the Kremenchuk Uspenskyi Cathedral, was ordained a deacon in the Church of All Sorrowful Joy of the Kremenchuk Prison Castle [45] [46] [17], who served here until his ordination as a priest on 16th of December, 1902, to the Transfiguration Church in the village of Petrovets, Myrhorod district [47]. He was replaced by Andrii Moskalenko, who was sent on the 11th of February, who graduated from the Lubny Brotherhood Teachers' School. He was also appointed a teacher at the church literacy school [48]. On 8th of December, 1903, Oleksii Terletskiy was appointed psalmist to the church of the prison castle [49], who served here only until 29th of January, swapping places with the psalmist of the St Nicholas Church in Omelnyk, Yermolai Drach [50]. Until 28th of September, 1910, Antonii Akakiiiovych Deineka served as a psalmist in the church, but he was moved to the Assumption Cathedral [51]. And from 1913, deacon Dmytro Vasylovych Kvitkovskiy, who was sent here after serving in the Intercession Church in the outlying town of Hradyzka, served with the priest [52]

[28] [29] [30] [11].

Among the elders of the Church of the Icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary 'Joy of All Who Sorrow' are honorary citizen John Ivanovich Bohdanov (1907-1912) [22] [23] [24] [25] [26] [27] [28] [29] [30] [31] [11].

In any prison, a kind of life goes on, rules are established, a certain hierarchy is built, traditions and norms of everyday life are formed. And if life goes on, it means that even here a person is looking for some kind of spiritual support, calmness, and opportunities to escape from everyday life. For many people, religion becomes a certain outlet, a consolation for prisoners, the beginning of correction. The administration was aware of this, not only the clergy reminded them of it, but also the archpastors who visited the Church of the Holy Virgin «Joy of All Who Sorrow».

In 1866, John (Petin) visited this church (Fig. 4). After the bishop had inspected the church, he addressed the assembled prisoners with an archpastoral admonition. John persuaded them to endure their punishment patiently. He then expressed his extreme satisfaction with the prisoners' church singing, advised them to learn to write, and persuaded the literate to read books aloud and the illiterate to listen. One old prisoner, kissing the archpastor's hand with tears in his eyes, responded: 'Thank you, Your Reverence, we are the ones who feel good now.' After that, having blessed about 80 prisoners and thanked the head of the nobility for setting up a church at the prison, His Grace left the church, staying for at least half an hour. On the stairs, the Bishop remembered one of the baptised Jews who had been imprisoned for stealing some things from her family when she ran away from home to be baptised. He ordered her to be brought to him. The archpastor persuaded her not to be discouraged in spirit and to be a good Christian. And he begged the prison authorities to be lenient in such cases and, if possible, to give this new Christian woman to the care of the priest Pivovarov, who was serving in the prison church at the time. The bishop's request was granted [53].



Figure 4 - John (Petin), Archbishop of Poltava and Pereyaslav

The next person to visit the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary «Joy of All Who Sorrow» was Bishop Hilarion (Yushenov) of Poltava and Pereyaslav on 19 April 1892. He spoke to the prisoners in a friendly manner, urging them to repent and change their lives, and comforted them with the hope of God's mercy [54].

Many prisoners, when released from the prison castle, became different people and kept the fire of faith for a long time, perhaps first lit in such a small cozy house church in the prison castle in the name of the icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary «Joy of All Who Sorrow». But times have changed, and the prison population has also changed. We can only guess what happened in the last days of this prison church. Most likely, from the moment the church was closed for some time, the people who inhabited the prison cells became desperate, apathetic, and disillusioned with the future. They had lost the purpose, support, and strength that communion with the Lord through common prayer and the Eucharist gave them. Perhaps the authorities of the time also understood this, as it was easier to break a person, his spirit and force an innocent person to confess to crimes, thus launching a powerful machine of repression, and thus the practice of complete subordination of everyone and everything to the totalitarian regime.

In 1946-1947, a woodworking plant was built on the site of the prison [5]. This is how the history of one of Kremenchuk's churches came to an end.

The abbot played a crucial role in this process, not only as a spiritual father but also as a psychologist, helping the prisoner understand their place in life, recognize their mistakes, and define their main goal for the future. With a high-quality education, the priests also effectively applied pedagogical methods in the re-education of criminals.

With the arrival of the Bolsheviks, the church was closed, as the new authorities underestimated the role of spiritual healing in the rehabilitation of criminals. Later, during the spread of atheism, both the church and the clergy themselves became targets of repression, marking the beginning of a new historical stage for Ukrainian society.

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