

THE INFLUENCE OF COLONIAL POLICY ON THE DESTRUCTION OF NATIONAL CULTURAL IDENTITY AND WAYS OF OVERCOMING ITS CONSEQUENCES

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Abstract

The article analyses the aspect of the influence of colonial policy on the destruction of national cultural identity, in particular, on the destruction of traditional religious objects. The problem is traced on the example of the colonisation of Algeria by France, which resulted in the purposeful destruction and reconstruction of historical mosques, on the example of the colonisation of Ukraine by the Russian Empire, which prohibited the construction of churches in the Ukrainian style, and later by the Soviet Union, and on the example of the modern Russian-Ukrainian war, when Russia deliberately destroys all religious buildings, even those subordinate to the Russian-backed Church. Religious buildings, as the legacy of a given nation's material culture, should be placed under conservation, as they are treasure to all of humanity. Examples of such positive thinking do exist. The study is complemented by the photofixation of the destruction of temples during the Russian-Ukrainian war, taken directly in the combat zone. The purpose of the study is to analyse the negative effects of colonial policy on the preservation of the national identity of religious objects and to propose ways to overcome them.

Keywords: Colonial policy; Destruction; Cultural identity; Reconstruction, Algeria, Ukraine

Introduction

The topic of the research of the authors was the influence of colonial policy on the destruction of national cultural identity. The authors deliberately chose only one aspect, namely the destruction of the sacred objects of traditional religions, because historically it is around the sacred object that the community unites. Thus, depriving a traditional community of such a unifying centre leads to its stratification and gradual loss of identity. This process is to some extent international, which is proven by the example of countries quite far from each other (moreover, with different religions) – Algeria and Ukraine. At the same time as colonisation, the processes in these countries, although aimed at destroying national identity through culture, were

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not identical. France is a predominantly Catholic country, Algeria is an Islamic country; that is, in this case, we should talk about an attempt to replace one religion with another by rebuilding historic mosques into Catholic churches or civil objects, or by destroying mosques. Instead, historically, both in Ukraine and in Russia, the dominant religious denomination was Orthodoxy, that is, after the gradual colonisation of Ukraine, starting from the 1770s and 1780s, there was not a ban on Orthodoxy as such, but a ban on manifestations of national culture in the religious sphere, in the form of folk-style church construction and prohibition of conducting liturgy in Ukrainian. The ban on building churches in the Ukrainian style was declared by the Holy Synod of the Russian Empire in 1801.

The specificity of the period of the Empire-classicism style in Ukraine was the maximum standardisation of projects in general, religious, and civil buildings according to their status. This led to a decline in the level of architecture, primarily in medium-sized and small cities throughout the territory of the Russian Empire, since atypical objects were built mainly in St. Petersburg and Moscow. Even after the lifting of bans on nontypical designs in the second half of the 19th century, this did not lead to the return of national features in Ukrainian architecture, as typical classicised church designs began to supplant churches in the Russian-Byzantine and pseudo-Russian styles. So, in this case, we can talk only about a certain variety of architecture, but with the preservation of the general colonial policy of the Russian Empire towards Ukraine. We can talk about the reaction and opposition of intellectual circles on a massive scale only from the end of the nineteenth century and especially from the beginning of the twentieth century, when these processes of popularisation of the national style of Ukrainian national romanticism continued in parallel with similar processes in Finland and the Baltic states under the rule of the Russian Empire.

The next stage of systematic destruction of the national cult heritage that remained was the Soviet policy of 'militant atheism', which led to the destruction of thousands of churches and cathedrals and continued even after the Second World War.

The relevance of the research topic is confirmed by the latest Russian-Ukrainian events. Since 2014, Russia has systematically displaced all religions in the occupied territories of the Crimea, Luhansk, and Donetsk regions, except for the one subordinate to the Russian Orthodox Church. However, the churches of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine were not destroyed, they were simply annexed for the needs of the Russian Orthodox Church. After the start of a full-scale war, the situation changed, the Russian army deliberately destroys all churches, even those subordinated to the Russian Orthodox Church.

It should be noted that religious buildings that attest to material cultural identity, irrespective of state affiliation, should not be damaged. There are many cases of buildings of religious significance that, despite being associated with a different nationality, culture, and religion, have been used in the same way over the years. The Cathedral of St Sophia in historical Zhytomyr can be considered a positive example of this.

The purpose of the study is to analyse the negative effects of colonial policy on the preservation of the national identity of cult objects and to propose ways to overcome them based on domestic and foreign experience.

The purpose of the research led to the study of the appropriate scientific sources:

1) general aspects of museification as a way of prolonging the life of monuments, preserving the cultural environment, perceiving architecture through the environment – articles by P. Spiridon, I. Sandu [1], P. Spiridon *et al.* [2], L. Pujia [3], O. Sleptsov *et al.* [4];

2) methods of modelling the historical environment, a systematic approach to restoration activities – articles by D. Giaccone *et al.* [5], M. Orlenko [6];

3) general aspects of restoration activities – publications by M. Orlenko and Y. Ivashko [7], M. Orlenko *et al.* [8], Y. Ivashko *et al.* [10], P. Gryglewski *et al.* [11];

4) restoration, strengthening and reconstruction of outstanding monuments – articles by Y. Ivashko *et al.* [12], S. Baiandin *et al.* [13], M. Orlenko *et al.* [14];

5) influence of ideology on the formation of a dominant style – article by M. Żychowska *et al.* [17];

6) experience of post-war reconstruction – article by A. Nadolny *et al.* [18];

7) research on destruction during the Russian-Ukrainian war – publications by Y. Ivashko *et al.* [19], T. Kozłowski *et al.* [20];

8) research of the Islamic heritage of Algeria and the state policy of its protection – articles by Y. Ivashko and R. Kouider [21, 22].

The review of the source base made it possible to formulate the research objectives:

– conduct a historical analysis of colonial policy in Algeria and Ukraine and its consequences;

– to study the existing experience of overcoming the consequences of colonial policy and propose it for the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine.

Materials and methods

To achieve the goal and solve the research tasks, the authors proposed such general scientific research methods as:

- the method of historical analysis – to study the manifestations of colonial policy in Algeria and Ukraine;
- the method of comparative analysis – to compare the goals of colonial policy in different countries and at different periods;
- the method of photofixation – to confirm the provisions and conclusions with graphical evidence base;
- analytical method – for analysing the effects of colonial policy on the state of cult objects of national religions, the experience of overcoming these effects and the development of proposals for post-war Ukraine.

The archival source base and research materials of R. Kuider, carried out under the leadership of Yu. Ivashko, were also included.

Results and discussion

The negative impact of French colonial policy on Algeria's Islamic heritage and ways to overcome it

Algeria has an Islamic heritage, marked by multiculturalism and a simultaneous combination of features of ancient Roman, Byzantine, Maghreb, Arab, Spanish, and Portuguese cultures with the formation of separate local conservative centres of cultures protected from external influences, which is the Kharijite culture of the M'zab Valley. According to archival evidence, as of the 17th century, there were 122 mosques per 100,000 inhabitants of Algiers, including 13 congregational mosques and about fifty other Islamic buildings. Until the period of French colonisation in 1830, the local type of Maghrib mosque with a square minaret in the form of a defensive tower remained widespread. There was also a Kharijite-type mosque protected from external influences, adapted to the conditions of the desert as much as possible. The research was conducted by K. Rezga under the leadership of Yu. Ivashko [21, 22] made it possible to determine the main period of the formation of the Algerian Islamic school of the 11th century – 1830, arguing that it was during this period that the national characteristics of Islamic architecture were established and consolidated on the territory of Algeria.

The year 1830 is the beginning of French colonisation, which lasted until 1962 and was aimed at destroying the Islamic cultural heritage of Algeria. Researchers of the Islamic heritage of Algeria traditionally characterise the period of colonialism as a period of interruption of Islamic architectural and building traditions and forced Western influences designed to cover all spheres of life in Algeria.

Active measures of Algerian state institutions, aimed at overcoming the consequences of Western cultural imperialism, at the same time do not protect against Islamic foreign influences – new mosques are often built in the foreign traditions of Arab countries (primarily the oil monarchies of the Persian Gulf) or Turkey.

We see that cultural imperialism can manifest itself not only in Christian countries of Europe but also within the Islamic world. States such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia, seeking to establish themselves as leaders among Islamic states, often sponsor the construction of mosques in other countries, and the architecture of mosques, as a rule, does not follow local traditions, but is a means of consolidating foreign influence.

The process of forced replacement of authentic traditions with French cultural traditions began with the capital, the city of Algiers, and later spread to other large cities.

In his research, K. Rezga refers to the facts provided in the report of the Islamic Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO), which indicates that according to the survey of Albert Devoulx, made in 1862, the colonisers who arrived in Algeria in 1830 found only the capital 132 mosques, of which they left only 12, in Oran only 1, the others were rebuilt into housing for immigrants, hospitals, stables, commercial establishments, even into Christian churches (in 1930, this is how the Ketschaua mosque was transformed).

Measures to reduce the cultural role of mosques in the life of Algerian society involved changing their original function, re-planning, radical reconstruction, and often destruction for the sake of new construction. Therefore, the period of French colonisation of Algeria is often called a period of architectural destruction, which slowed the process of Islamic cultural development in the country, when the construction of new mosques and the restoration of old mosques began mainly after 1970 (90% of mosques in the city of Constantine were built after 1970).

The state of Algeria faces the problem of the most effective liquidation of the consequences of colonial rule, which causes Algeria to actively participate in international legal monument protection activities (Fig. 1). To date, Algeria has ratified such international legal documents as the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (17.12.1975), the African Cultural Charter (19.09.1990), the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (20.04.2006), the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (26.05.2005).

At the 64th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations (July 22, 2009), in accordance with Resolution 65/155 of the General Assembly (July 10, 2009), information from the Algerian government on state policy in the field of cultural identity was presented [23]:

1. The Algerian government considers cultural diversity as one of the main components between civilisations and cultures. Algeria has ratified several international documents on the protection of cultural heritage. Furthermore, Algeria has adopted relevant laws to enshrine its international obligations in domestic law.

2. Algeria has developed a partnership strategy in the field of culture. The country is one of the organisers and a venue for important cultural events, such as the Pan-African Festival of Culture, and participates in various international initiatives in the fields of culture (including the preparation of a feasibility study for the creation of the Pan-African Institute of Culture and the restoration of the Museum of Great African Culture in Algeria).

3. Respect for cultural diversity is enshrined in the Algerian Constitution.

4. At the level of various institutions, several bodies have been established in Algeria, which are engaged in scientific research and dissemination of national cultures with the aim of ensuring diversity, conducting international cultural exchanges and cooperation, and preserving natural reserves.

5. Algeria allocates additional resources to ensure various forms of cultural expression and the formation of new infrastructure in the field of culture, including museums, theatres, cinemas, libraries, and cultural centres.

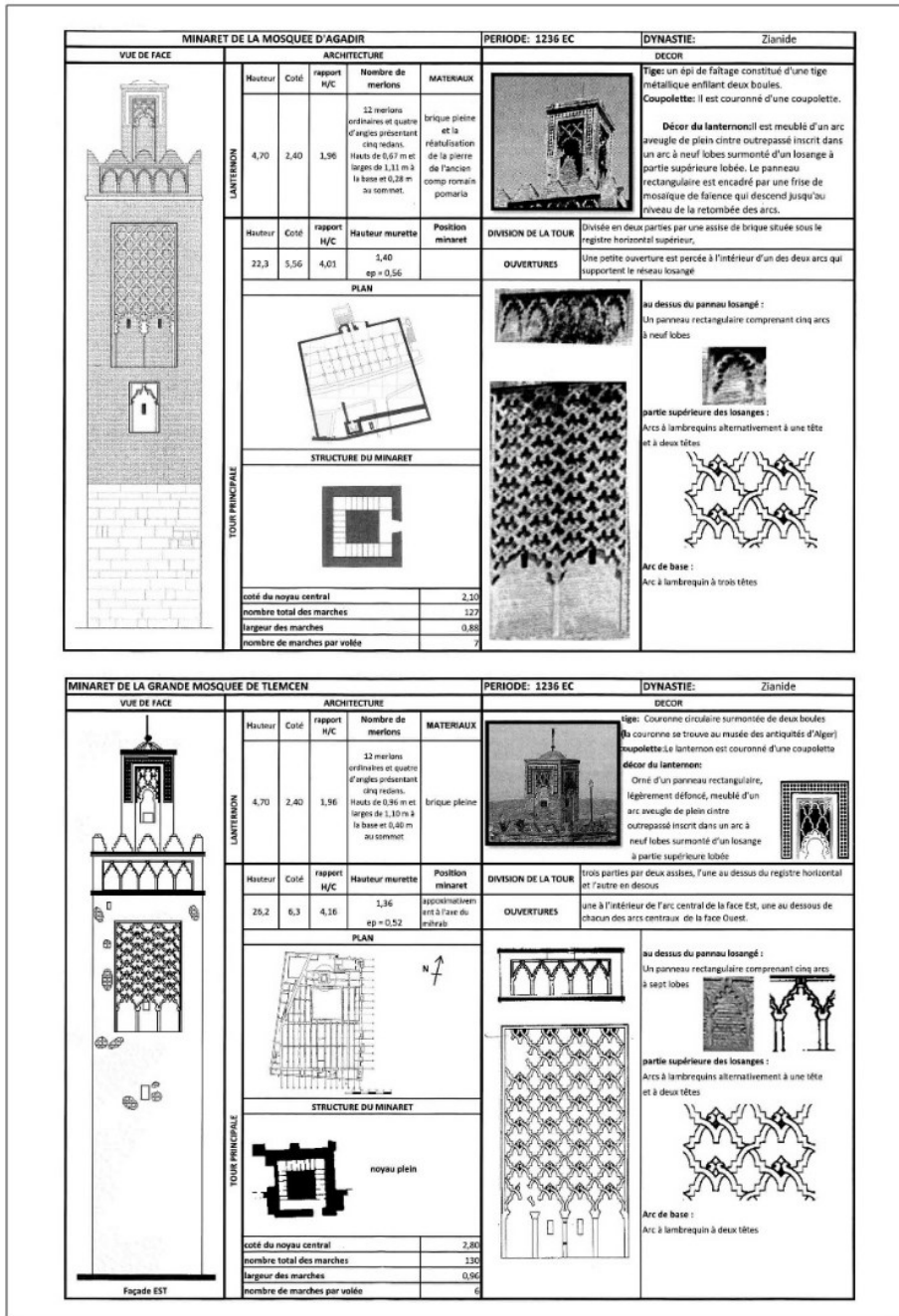


Fig. 1. Sample of Algerian monument protection documentation [24]

The current Algerian state policy is designed to join the world monument protection and restoration process, to draw the attention of the international community to the problems of preservation, restoration, and restoration of historical mosques, many of which are in a state of disrepair, and to include outstanding objects of Islamic architecture in Algeria in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The negative impact of the colonial policy of the Russian Empire, and later the Soviet government and modern Russia, on the religious architectural heritage of Ukraine and ways to overcome it

As mentioned above, Russia's colonial influence in Ukraine lasted for several years and differed from the situation that occurred in Algeria during the years of French colonial rule. Even between these stages, there were certain differences. In this case, we should pay attention to one more phenomenon related to this period: parallel to the colonisation of Ukraine, there was a process of maximally bringing the entire social and political life of the Russian Empire to certain imperial standards, which can be expressed by the single phrase 'One God, one king, one hero'. By the way, something similar is happening in modern Russia, only the heroes are constantly changing.

In parallel with the Synod's ban on the construction of Orthodox churches in national forms, there is a typification of church construction within the Russian Empire, when the construction of new churches was allowed exclusively according to one of the approved synodal standard projects. This period is often mentioned as the period of synodal double domes in churches: the belfry above the entrance, the dome in the central nave, and the plan in the form of an elongated Latin cross with three classicistic porticos.

This led to the fact that among the religious historical monuments of the 19th century there are far fewer truly unique objects than in previous centuries, because nontypical projects had to go through many instances and be personally signed by the emperor. We can talk about the appearance of certain diversity only from the second half of the nineteenth century, although even then the temples remained devoid of national Ukrainian features, three main varieties spread – Russian-Byzantine, pseudo-Russian, and Classical and none of them expressed architectural belonging to Ukraine.

Another negative phenomenon that led to the distortion of historical churches on the territory of Ukraine was the mass reconstruction of churches of the early periods for the purpose of the so-called 'blessing', which was expressed in the addition of classical elements, changes in interiors, replacement of domes, etc. These phenomena continued not only in cities, but also in villages, where most churches were generally wooden and dated to the age of the Cossacks of the 17th – 18th centuries, which is traditionally called the age of the Ukrainian Cossack Baroque (Fig. 2).

The process of destruction of Ukrainian national identity in the villages was even more tragic, as wooden churches tried to be demolished and a 'beautiful' 'correct' brick church was built in their place. Furthermore, three classical porticos were added to all churches – from the west, south and north, instead of three or five domes, one was left, and as a result, the appearance of the church turned out to be so distorted that it was dismantled again.

Among the Orthodox churches in those territories of Ukraine that belonged to the Russian Empire and were built in the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, the Russian-Byzantine (Fig. 3), pseudo-Russian, pseudo-classical style, objects in the Ukrainian style (such as the chapel on place of the peasant camp by I. Kalbus in Poltava) are single.

On the Right Bank of Dnipro, Russian influences in architecture competed with Polish ones, a vivid example of which is the Catholic Cathedral of St. Sophia in Zhytomyr, built in 1746 and rebuilt in the spirit of classicism in 1789 – 1801 (Fig. 4). Supported by the power of state institutions, Russian architectural influence in this region became dominant by the end of the 19th century, and Polish influences remained in the form of several architectural monuments that diversified the historical environment. Nowadays, the previously mentioned case of the Cathedral of St. Sophia is proof that religious buildings associated with a foreign nationality, in this case Polish, can, and even should serve society as originally intended.



Fig. 2. Church of the Intercession in the village of Krenychi, Kyiv region (1761, repair and addition in 1850, bell tower in 1850).

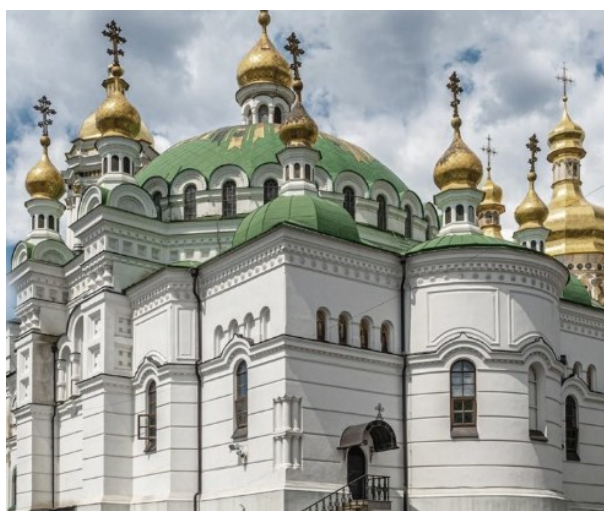


Fig. 3. The refectory church of the Upper Lavra in Kyiv in the Russian-Byzantine style (1895, architect V. Nikolayev).



Fig. 4. St. Sophia Cathedral in Zythomyr

The actual colonisation of Ukraine continued in Soviet times; only it had a different ideological orientation. If in the Russian Empire it was not about changing religion but about stripping it of its national colour, then during the ‘militant atheism’ of the 1930s and 1940s, it was about replacing religion with socialist-communist ideology. Here, it was not about the ‘correct’ or ‘incorrect’ church construction, but about its destruction as such.

The periods of Russian aggression in recent years turned out to be different from both the imperial and Soviet periods of ‘militant atheism’: the first began in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the second began on February 24, 2022, with a full-scale war unleashed by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. In the period 2014 to 2022, there was a violent forced change in the subordination of churches to the Russian Orthodox Church, while with the beginning of the war, the Russians destroyed all churches, including those belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church, and such churches were the most in the east and south of Ukraine (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. A ruined village church in the Mykolaiv region.

Even though the war continues, already now, given the huge amount of destruction, it is necessary to outline the directions of action, considering, among other things, the experience gained during reconstruction after World War II and during the reconstruction of the shrines destroyed during times of 'militant atheism'. The experience of reproduction by specialists of the Ukrrestavratsiia corporation actually from the foundations to the decorative decoration of the interior of St. Michael's Golden Dome Monastery with a bell tower, which were destroyed in 1934 – 1937 in connection with the decision to turn Mykhailivska Square into a part of the Government Centre, as well as most of the Assumption Cathedral of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, blown up on November 3, 1941, from which the ruins and the St. John the Theologian chapel remained, shows that modern restoration technologies allow even such unique works to be carried out, including the reproduction according to the previous images of mosaics, frescoes, and baroque iconostases. These two objects were extremely complex among their uniqueness in terms of volume and space solution, scale, and decorative details, which was a complete system.

Conclusions

Analysis of the negative colonial experience of Algeria and Ukraine proved the following. First, the fact that even though these processes continued in quite different countries and had a certain religious specificity, in all cases the main direction of colonial policy is the destruction of national identity through religious buildings. This destruction can involve both a change of religion (as was implemented by the colonial authorities in Algeria), and the deprivation of the traditional religion of national characteristics with the gradual planting of national cultural characteristics of the colonisers (Russian-Byzantine and pseudo-Russian styles of Orthodox churches on the territory of Ukraine) or the destruction of national identity through complete destruction of religious buildings and the construction in their place of buildings of a different ideology (examples of new construction on the site of mosques in the times of colonisation, the times of 'militant atheism' in the USSR). Resubordination of all Orthodox churches in Crimea, parts of Luhansk, and Donetsk regions occupied after 2014 to the Russian Orthodox Church can be called a colonial policy. A rather atypical direction of colonial policy is the way Russia acts during the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war: they destroy churches of all denominations, including those subordinated to the Russian Orthodox Church, which is the majority in the East and South of Ukraine. It is hardly necessary to look for any specific antireligious subtext here: the Russian army follows its fav 'scorched earth' tactic, that is, to suit tactical military needs, it destroys literally everything and everyone, without worrying about the consequences.

Preservation of cultural values and prevention of their destruction and loss is one of the important tasks of the state during military operations. On May 12, 2022, the first meeting of the Polish-Ukrainian-Lithuanian working group of the Lublin Triangle Foundation on the digitization of cultural heritage in Ukraine took place. In the process of digitizing three-dimensional figures, the first stage is their photo fixation. Currently, an important stage is the photo fixation of both objects as a whole and individual artifacts – icons, paintings, sculptures, furniture. Photo fixation of objects and individual elements has certain differences. For example, photo fixation of a sculpture involves frontal photos and photos of all profiles, side photos, top and bottom views. Be sure, if possible, to take a photo of the back of the sculpture, as usually there may be mounting elements behind the sculpture.

If the sculpture already has damage, it is necessary to record all the damage from different points, both with general photo fixation and with macro photography.

All photos are documentary-protocol, should have a scale in the form of a special photo rail, and if possible, a “north-south” pointer arrow.

Despite the fact that the war in Ukraine is still ongoing and is in a heated phase, there is already a lot of talk at various levels about ways to overcome the negative consequences caused by Russian aggression, and if more thoroughly, then by the colonial policy of the Russian Empire first and then by the Soviet government. In our opinion, the ways to solve the problem can be as follows:

- maximum dissemination of information about damaged and destroyed temples among international institutions in order to attract foreign funding for their restoration;
- compilation of a complete registry of damaged objects with a determination of the priority of restoration, the degree of damage, and a list of necessary restoration works;
- during the preparation of projects, reconstruction provision, also using the latest structural and conservation technologies, for the period of maximum flowering of the object, that is, without later low-value layering, which negatively affected the structure of the object;
- using the experience of the Ukrrestavratsiia corporation and Polish restoration organisations gained in the restoration of architectural objects destroyed during the Second World War [19].

The experience of Ukraine was positive, when a list of objects of priority restoration and reconstruction was drawn, including St. Michael's Golden Dome Cathedral with bell tower, the Assumption Cathedral of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, the Church of the Virgin Pyrohoscha in Kyiv, and St. Volodymyr's Cathedral in Chersonese. Since such unique objects are usually characterised by scale, complexity of spatial and spatial composition, complex and detailed decoration, their restoration requires significant amounts of funding and the participation of a large number of highly qualified specialists, as evidenced by the practical experience of the Ukrrestavratsiia corporation [6-8, 13, 14, 16].

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