

THE THEOLOGY OF ICONS AND SPACE OF THE NEO-UNITARIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN KOSTOMIOTY

The village of Kostomioty lies in Podlasie region, near Terespol. Its beginnings are likely to go back to the 11th century, but its history was first written after 1412 by the Augustinian hermit monks, who settled here at the time following a land donation to the monastery at Brzeńж Litewski by the Lithuanian Prince Witold, and by the members of the Sapieha family (the Kodec line) who acquired part of the Kostomioty estate from the local gentry and ruled it until the beginning of the 19th century. The monks themselves resided in Kostomioty until the beginning of the 19th century, when the monastery was confiscated by the Austrians.

The paper will concern the main monument of ecclesiastical architecture in Kostomioty – the wooden neo-Unitarian orthodox church, built in 1631, containing 19th-century iconostas. Some important icons will also be considered, namely the images of St. Nikita (the patron-saint of the church) of 1631, the Virgin with Child, *Deesis*, and Christ *Pantocrator* (mid 17th-century). The monuments will be discussed in the context of the theological principles defining the architecture of the church and the icons it contains. It will be therefore an attempt to grasp the essential meanings of the Kostomioty church as they appear in visual form.