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THE BIOGRAPHICAL PHENOMENON OF ST. MAXIMUS THE GREEK (CA. 1469–1555/6)¹

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*The year 2026 marks the 470th anniversary
of the death of Maxim the Greek.*

THE BIOGRAPHICAL COMPLEXITY

It is assumed that a comprehensive account of Maximus the Greek's life has already been provided. A detailed examination, however, reveals that the historical data is questionable. Moreover, there are still lacunae in the historical data. For example, there is a Wiki source with three entries in English, Russian and Italian (treccani.it – Massimo il Greco).² However, these entries differ from one another, *particularly* in terms of the sources cited, reflecting also the purposely oriented scholar's (nationally different) reception and perception.

¹ This chapter in the monograph is the result of work carried out as part of the research program *The (New) Cultural History of Intellectual Heritage: Slovenian Historical Space in Its European Context* (P6-0440), funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS).

² "Màssimo il Greco," Treccani, accessed February 2, 2026, <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/massimo-il-greco/>. See also Hugh M. Olmsted, "Maxim the Greek, St.," *Encyclopedia.com*, accessed February 2, 2026, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/maxim-greek-st>; "Maximus the Greek," Wikipedia, accessed February 2, 2026, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maximus_the_Greek; "Maxim der Grieche," Wikipedia, accessed February 2, 2026, https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maxim_der_Grieche, etc.

Maximus the Greek's hybrid personality, which manifested in three distinct biographical periods, each marked by the change of his name, led to a meaningful and informative division of his biography into three characters, each corresponding to a specific geographical and chronological context. Despite the transformation of his name, his awareness of his Greek identity remained consistent. Born as Mikhail Trivolis, he became a monk Maximus, and died as Maksim Grek. A significant accomplishment of establishing a connection between three different persons that would prove historically attested was initially proposed by Belgian scholar Élie Denissoff in his 1943 monograph, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, published in Paris-Louvain.³ During his time at the Athos monastery, Maximus's identity underwent a significant transformation due to the monastic change of his birth name and the rejection of his surname. This was the first trace how to identify the person whose name was changed three times. The third phase of his life was marked by his growing awareness of his authorship, as evidenced in his writings in manuscripts. Therefore, to prevent misinterpretations, it is essential to base the research on his personal manuscripts.

HIGHLIGHTED AND UPDATED BIOGRAPHY OF ST. MAXIMUS THE GREEK

1. BIRTH, EARLIER YOUTH, NORTH ITALY

Maximus the Greek was born as Mikhail (Μιχαήλ) Trivolis, ca. 1469, in the Greek city of Arta, in the territory of Epirus (near Albania), in the Trivolis family, and was baptised with the name Mikhail. According to his manuscript, in which he presented himself impersonally (grammatically: 3p.sg.), his mother's name was Irina and his father's name was Manuel, and the parents "were Christians, Greek, philosophers."⁴

³ Élie Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident* (Paris-Louvain: Desclée, de Brouwer, 1943).

⁴ Maksim Grek, *Works*, Mss. F. 173.I.153, f. unnumbered, Russian State Library (RGB), Moscow. The name of his father was documented in the Florentine Monastery of San Marco in 1502, when he entered the monastic community as "brother Mikhail, the son of Emanuil," accepted the protection of the Dominican father Mathew, and this is attested in the *Chronicle of the Monastery*, see Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 95, 96–98; Aleksei Ivanovich Ivanov, *Literaturnoe nasledie Maksima Greka. Harakteristika, atribucii, bibliografija* [The

Mikhail Trivolis received domestic education from his relative Demetrius Trivolis, the owner of a rich collection of books and manuscripts,⁵ a copyist of Plato and Plotinus, known also outside Greece for his extensive personal library. At that time, the Greek school in Corfu was a highly renowned institution that drew scholars from Italy and Greece. The overwhelming majority of these individuals originated from Crete and were meticulous in safeguarding the Byzantine tradition. Many of them proceeded to undertake further studies in the Adriatic region of Italy.

In Corfu in 1489, a decree was issued by the Venetian Senate at the explicit urging of the local populace. The reason was that following the Turkish occupation, Venice gave up its right to elect its grand council on an annual basis. Corfiotes subsequently requested, with the authority of the Supreme Council of the Senate of Venice, a re-convening of the Grand Council of Corfu for the purpose of establishing the officers of the community, with age limits in place. In the official report of the elections that took place in 1490 or 1491, in the execution of this decree, Mikhail Trivolis is identified as one of the last candidates, having received 20 votes in favour and 73 against.⁶ It can thus be inferred that Trivolis was born in either 1470 or 1469, indicating the earliest possible date, and he moved to Corfu at the age of nineteen or twenty. There, by Cretan John Moschus, who maintained a strict denial of the overall importance of Latin in the Byzantine Orthodox basis,⁷ Trivolis was guided to examine the original

Literary Heritage of Maksim Grek: The Characteristics, Attribution, Bibliography] (Leningrad: Nauka, 1969), 25.

⁵ The list of the works, preserved in the letter from Janus Laskaris to Demetrius Chalcondyle from Constantinople on July 10, 1491, regarding Laskaris's visit to Dimitrios Trivolis in May 1491 with the aim of collecting manuscript books for the personal library of the Italian mécénat Lorenzo de' Medici, see Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 126.

⁶ Capitula Corgphoy 1489, "die ultimo Julii," art. 3. See Kōnstantinos N. Sathas, *Documents inédits relatifs à l'histoire de la Grèce: Au Moyen Âge*, vol. V (Paris: La Maison des Députés de Grèce, 1884); Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 85–86.

⁷ John Moschus explained his position in his work "The Procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father," see Émile Legrand, *Bibliographie hellénique ou description raisonnée des ouvrages publiés en grec par des Grecs aux XVe et XVIe siècles*, vol. I (Paris: Chambre du Grec, 1885; reprint, Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1963), xc; Emmanuel Miller, *Catalogue des manuscrits grecs de la Bibliothèque de l'Escurial* (Paris: L'imprimerie nationale, 1848), 290; Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 140, 145.

Greek manuscripts.⁸ In Corfu he met his first teacher in philology, Janus Laskaris, and a peer Marko Musuros from Crete, a Greek scholar (later the Professor of Greek at the University of Padua 1503 and in Venice) with whom they travelled to Italy, passing Croatian islands. The trip led them to Florence in 1492,⁹ where Trivolis resided in Laskaris's Florentine apartment. Trivolis who was most probably also a member of the group tasked with collecting the personal library of the patron Lorenzo de Medici, and involved in the establishment of a Greek school (gymnasium, collegium and a press) with his son, Piero de Medici,¹⁰ was in contacts with Florentine intellectuals (Marsilio Ficino, Angelo Poliziano, Augustinus di Nipho) as well. In Florence, Trivolis met Aldo Manuzio, an Italian humanist who would later become famous as the first editor and publisher of printed Greek books ("Aldine"), who was searching for his own printing place. Trivolis started to work as a professional transcriber (copyist) and editor of manuscripts, that were involved in further printing process. It is evident from his letters that he was associated with Paolo de Canale too (the printer from Padua, who printed *Dioscorides* 1475, that Trivolis owned) and Francesco Rosetto from Verona,¹¹ who possibly influenced Manuzio's choice of applying Trivolis's handwriting as a typing model (Druckvorlagen)¹² for Manuzio's edition of Theocritus' *Idylles* in 1495.

⁸ He had his own library of Greek manuscripts, see Hippolyte Noiret, *Lettres inédite de Michel Apostolis publiées d'après les manuscrits du Vatican avec des opuscules inédits* (Paris: Bibliothèque des Écoles française d'Athènes et de Rome, 1889), 132.

⁹ David Speranzi, "Michele Trivoli e Giano Lascari. Appunti su copisti e manoscritti greci tra Corfù e Firenze," *Studi Slavistici* VII (2010), 246; Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 148–149.

¹⁰ Evro Layton, "Notes on Some Printers and Publishers of 16th Century Modern Greek Books in Venice," *Thesaurismata* 18 (1981):121; David Speranzi, "Giano Lascari e i suoi copisti. Gli oratori attici minori tra l'Athos e Firenze," *Medioevo e rinascimento* 24, no. 21 (2010): 341–342; David Speranzi, "Massimo il Greco a San Marco. Un nuovo manoscritto," in *Mostly mostite. Studi in onore di Marcello Garzaniti*, ed. Alberto Alberti (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2022), 191.

¹¹ Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 210–211, n. 5; cf. Maksim Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Indrik, 2008), 95–97, nn. 7, 10.

¹² The information about the Theocritus's *Idylles*, see Speranzi, "Michele Trivoli e Giano Lascari," 280, n. 94; Geri Della Rocca de Candal, "Printing in Greek before Aldus Manutius," in *Printing R-Evolution and Society 1450–1500, Fifty Years that Changed Europe*, ed. Cristina Dondi, *Studi di storia* 13 (2020): 286, 289.

Trivolis's correspondence with his friends and Greek scholars, Scypion Carteromach from Florence¹³ and Janus Grigoropulos¹⁴ provides evidence that he meanwhile resided twice at the Castle Mirandola, where he was a personal secretary, an advisor and a tutor of Greek to Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola.¹⁵ During this period, he reassessed Greek Platonism (by his growing criticism of and a reaction to Aristotelian views in the issues of the ascetical theology) and continued translating Orthodox Church Fathers and Byzantine mystical authors.¹⁶ From Florence he also wrote a letter to the Italian humanist Antonio Urceo Codro,¹⁷ who in 1498 invited Trivolis to Bologna for a lecture and possible professorship of Greek.¹⁸ He also wrote a letter to Nicholas of Tarrse¹⁹ (Canonist of Vercelli, of Greek origin but born in Capo d'Istria, today Koper in Slovenia, which was formerly home to a powerful Greek community),²⁰ from whom Trivolis received another invitation to Bologna university.

Nevertheless, his correspondence reflects his internally depressed condition, Trivolis is thus a profoundly distressed soul.²¹ In one of his letters he urged Carteromach to organise a return to Manuzio's printing house.²² Trivolis's six letters (1489–1504) from Florence and Mirandola were

¹³ Letters from Mihail Trivolis (Mirandola) to Janus Grigoropulos, cited in Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 88–97.

¹⁴ Letters from Mihail Trivolis (Florence) to Sypion Carteromach, cited in Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 98–101.

¹⁵ Scholar's conclusions regarding that Trivolis was a full follower of Pico's views are, however, not entirely reliable, see Ovanes Akopyan, *Debating the Stars in the Italian Renaissance: Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem and its Reception* (Boston: Leiden, 2021), 170.

¹⁶ In that period, he copied *De divinis Nominibus* of Dionysius Areopagite, see Mss. Laur. Conv. Soppr. 104, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence. See also Speranzi, "Massimo il Greco a San Marco," 194–197.

¹⁷ Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 89–94. Correspondence, cited in Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 88–91.

¹⁸ Therefore, he was invited to Bologna for the possible professorship by two persons: by Ludovicus II Ticianus ("Decianae comes, vicarius imperialis," as Trivolis named him) and by Antonio Urceo Codro. See Boris Leonidovich Fonkich, "Predislovie" [A Preface], in Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 88.

¹⁹ Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 201.

²⁰ Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 86–87.

²¹ Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 100.

²² Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 100–101.

addressed to Venice,²³ and they confirm that during his period in Italy he gradually became engaged in the sophisticated and painstaking typographical processes required to convert manuscripts to printed books at the editorial house of Manuzio in Venice. With constant access to Greek manuscripts, and finally in contact with other members (the second wave) of the Greek diaspora in Italy, especially with Greek intellectuals Zacharias Kalliergis, Nikolaos Vlastos, Mikhail Apostolios, Mikhail Souliardos and Nikolaos Sophianos,²⁴ he felt a temporal sense of being appreciated and he might have observed a rare spiritual peace in Venice. In the typographical “laboratory” of Manuzio, Trivolis got an insight into the oldest samples of Greek manuscripts of the Old Testament and the Septuagint, but he was also engaged in the very precise dissection of the canonical biblical content from the Apocrypha.²⁵ Trivolis observed the problems of Manuzio’s unrealised plan of printing Greek Orthodox liturgical books.²⁶ At that time the first Orthodox community was already (in 1494) set up in Venice (The Brotherhood of the Greek Nations, Scuola e Nazione greca).²⁷ Nevertheless, the situation in Venice was far from unaffected by the schism in the Christian consciousness during the Renaissance, which caused a complete moral collapse and the disorientation of the wider human population. His internal anxiety was also indicative of his inability to establish a fixed place of residence.

Trivolis’s pupil Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, a philosopher, man of letters and biographer,²⁸ subsequently employed a similarly complex critique – possibly instructing Mikhail to transcribe a manuscript of Commentaries on Aristotle’s *Ἀναλυστικὰ Πρότερα* [Prior Analytics] by John

²³ Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 88–101. However, only one letter was sent by Trivolis from Mirandola to Nicholas of Tarse in Vercelli; see Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 86–87.

²⁴ Ihor Ševčenko, “The Four Worlds and the Two Puzzles of Maksim the Greek,” *Paleoslavica* XIX, no. 2 (2011): 296; Evro Layton, *The Sixteenth Century Greek Book in Italy* (Venice: Istituto Ellenico di Studi Bizantini e Postbizantini di Venezia, 1994), 460–470.

²⁵ Layton, “Notes on Some Printers and Publishers,” 135.

²⁶ Layton, “Notes on Some Printers and Publishers,” 120.

²⁷ Layton, “Notes on Some Printers and Publishers,” 121.

²⁸ Charles B. Schmitt, “The General Attack on Aristotle,” in *Gianfrancesco Pico Della Mirandola (1469–1533) and His Critique of Aristotle, International Archives of the History of Ideas / Archives Internationales D’Histoire des Idees*, vol. 23 (Dordrecht: Springer, 1963), 63–84, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-011-9679-6_4.

Philoponus.²⁹ In Trivolis's letter to Carteromach from Florence (1504), it can be inferred that the Camaldolian monk Pietro Candido had provided him with accommodation in the city after his last stay at the castle of Mirandola. Obviously, he constantly visited Florence, where he attended the rigorous theological sermons of the radical Dominican friar, Girolamo Savonarola, whose anti-intellectual, ascetically oriented preaching left a profound impression on him. In Florence, he firstly created his personal verses in the marginalia of manuscript, including the "three-handed" Commentaries on Hermogenus by Greek rhetoricians, Sirianus, Sopatro³⁰ and Marcellinus, a work decisive for understanding the Byzantine comprehension of the difference between the rhythm in prose and in poetry.³¹ After having become acquainted with Zanobi Acciajouli, a librarian at the Monastery of San Marco,³² Trivolis decided to enter this monastery. There, he received a spiritual guidance of Brother Matteo Marci but he did not fully accept to be a Catholic Dominican monk and remained a novice.³³

2. THE HOLY MOUNT ATHOS

In 1502–1503 Trivolis returned to his native Greece. At Athos, in 1506, he entered the Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi (Vatopedi). He was ordained as a monk, under the name Maximus (after St. Maximus the Confessor). He experienced his greatest spiritual fulfilment during his Athonite period, gratified to find that his, acquired in Italy, philological and textual-critical abilities, but also linguistic talent were appreciated. He further developed his considerable experience with manuscripts. Monk Maximus now

²⁹ Dieter Harlfinger, "Codices Cremonenses Graeci (Eine kurze Neusichtung anlässlichlich)," in *I manoscritti greci tra riflessione e dibattito* (Atti del V Colloquio Intern. di Paleografia Greca, 1998) (Florence: 2000), 769.

³⁰ Janus Laskaris (first Maxim's mentor into handling manuscripts) visited the library of his relative (probably an uncle) Dimitrius Trivolis with an aim to acquire the manuscript of Sopatro. Nevertheless, the bibliophile Dimitrius Trivolis did not own the latter (Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 128); this information could represent a source for the confirmation of the future occupation of Mihail Trivolis with this manuscript.

³¹ Plut. 55.20, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence. On the manuscript, see: Speranzi, "Michele Trivoli e Giano Lascari," 276–278; see also Vessela Valiavitcharska, *Rhetoric and Rhythm in Byzantium: The Sound of Persuasion* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 33.

³² Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 106, 367.

³³ Nina V. Sinitsyna, "Rannee tvorchestvo prepodobnogo Maksima Greka" [The First Period of the Literary Writings of St. Maximus the Greek], in Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 25.

concentrated his efforts on sacred (Byzantine) literacy, beginning with a more comprehensive examination of hagiographical, hymnographic and liturgical sources. It is noteworthy that he was entrusted with the analysis of the oldest manuscripts, which date from the 11th century. Furthermore, Athos afforded him access to resources from Old Church Slavonic (OCS) manuscripts written in the Serbian and Bulgarian languages (South Slavonic, West Slavonic). Additionally, he was a close disciple of the Patriarch of Constantinople, Niphon II (his father was Albanian, mother was Greek), and accompanied him (until Niphon's demise in 1508) in Orthodox missionary activities, possibly localized in the regions of Ochrid and Moldo-Wlachia (Moldovia) also among the Slavic peoples.³⁴ Following these missions, he was able to identify the characteristics of spoken languages, as well as their potential use in ecclesiastical, liturgical and missionary contexts. The Orthodox missions led by Patriarch Niphon II were, according to Maximus, entirely Holy Spirit-inspired actions. This reflects the prevailing confusion of heretical religious trends within the Christian world at that time.

At Athos, Maximus began composing his versified liturgical-hymnological works (the most important is *The Supplicatory Canon to the St. John the Baptist*),³⁵ which also demonstrates his awareness of the Slavic sacred lands (evident in the topographical references in a lengthy prayer, a homiletical liturgical service to St. Erasmus³⁶), particularly Ochrid.³⁷ Linguistic research

³⁴ Summarized from Archimandrite Efraim (Kutsu), "Svjatoj Maksim kak vatopedski monah" [St. Maximus as the Monk of the Holy Monastery of Vatopedi], in *Rossija-Afon: tysjacheletie duhovnogo edinstva. Materialy mezhdunarodnoj nauchno-bogoslovskoj konferentsii* (Moscow: Izd. PSTGU, 2006), 292. About the Moldovian Slavic and monastic context, particularly in the case of St. Maximus, see Tereza Sinigalia, "La Liturgie Céleste dans la peinture murale de Moldavie," *Anastasis: Research in Medieval Culture and Art* 2, no. 1 (2015): 28–50; Klimentina Ivanova, "Слово на св. Василий Велики и на отец Ефрем за светата Литургия, как подобава да се стои в църквата със страх и трепет" [Discourse of St. Basil the Great and Father Ephrem on the Holy Liturgy, How One Should Stand in Church with Fear and Trembling], *Palaeobulgarica* 26, no. 1 (2002): 3–16. However, the research about specifically missionary character of monastic life at the Holy Mount Athos is not yet sufficiently updated.

³⁵ Ἀγίου Μαξίμου Γραικού, *Λόγοι*. Τόμος Δ'. Χαρτόδετο (Ἅγιον Ὄρος: Ἱερὰ Μεγίστη Μονὴ Βατοπαϊδίου, 2017) [Saint Maximus the Greek, *Works*, vol. IV (Mount Athos: The Holy Great Monastery of Vatopaidi)], 341–351.

³⁶ Ἀγίου Μαξίμου Γραικού [Saint Maximus the Greek], *Λόγοι*, vol. IV, 329–341.

³⁷ See also Emilia Crvenkovska, "Првобитниот словенски комплекс на богослужбени книги по византиски обред ('корпусот на Климент') и формирањето на македонската редакција на црковнословенскиот ('корпусот на Климент') и формирањето на македонската редакција на црковнословенскиот" [The Primary Slavic Complex of Liturgical Books of the Byzantine Rite

has revealed that Maximus had been in regular contact with Slavic-speaking countries long before his journey to Russia.

In 1516, at Vatopaidi, Maximus received the invitation from the Russian Grand Prince, who had sought a monk to edit Russian church books and translate scriptures from Greek. Consequently, he took responsibility and accepted the monastic duty to temporarily leave the Athonite community.

3. MUSCOVITE RUSSIA

The journey from Mount Athos to Russia is estimated to have taken approximately a year and a half. Maximus was accompanied by seven other monks from Athos, two of whom were likely members of the Russian Athonite monastery of Penteilemon.³⁸ There is a high probability that this route passed through Constantinople and potentially Venice, where Maximus could have obtained copies of the first printed Greek books. On March 5, 1518, he reached Muscovite Russia, where he was called Maksim Grek (Максим Грек). He promptly commenced translating ecclesiastical texts in Greek (i.e., intended for liturgical, hagiographical use), and began reviewing previous OCS translations of such texts by Russians. His first translation was the *Exegetical Psalter* (with twenty-four commentators),³⁹ which is considered the inaugural such translation in Russia (cca. 1061 pages). Also, he translated and revised many texts from Greek originals and on the basis of comparison with Greek originals, among them the Psalter with biblical Odes (1552).⁴⁰ Furthermore, he translated Commentaries on the Acts of the Apostles, and The Commentaries on Gospel of St. Matthew by John Chrysostom,⁴¹ a parts of the Greek *Nomokanon* of Constantinopolitan Patriarch Photios⁴² and Photios's texts (epistles) against

(“Clement’s corpus”) and the Formation of the Macedonian Redaction of Church Slavonic], *Slověne*, no. 2 (2016): 198–230; Emilie Bláhová and Zoe Hauptová, *Strumički (Makedonski) apostol: Kirilski spomenik ot XIII vek* (Skopje: Makedonska akademija na naukite i umetnostite, 1990).

³⁸ Sinitsyna, “Rannee tvorchestvo,” 28.

³⁹ *Exegetical Psalter*, translated by Maksim Grek, Shchuk. 4, Manuscript, Russian Historical Museum (GIM), Moscow; cf. Ivanov, *Literaturnoe nasledie Maksima Greka*, 41.

⁴⁰ Inna V. Verner, ed., *Интерлинейная славяно-греческая Псалтырь 1552 г.: в переводе Максима Грека* [Inter-linear Slavic-Greek Psalter of 1552: In the Translation of Maksim Grek] (Moscow: Indrik, 2019).

⁴¹ Ivanov, *Literaturnoe nasledie Maksima Greka*, 162.

⁴² Ivanov, *Literaturnoe nasledie Maksima Greka*, 51; Anton Pavlov, *Istoricheskij ocherk sekuliarizacii v cerkovnyh zemel' Rusii* [Historical Description of the Secularisation of the Russian Church Lands] (Odessa: Tipografija Ulrich and Schultze, 1871), 78, n.1.

Latins.⁴³ He continued to translate individual chapters from the *Menologion* of the Hagiographical collections by Symeon Metaphrastes (Logothetos).⁴⁴ Additionally, he translated some works of the Byzantine Church Fathers, including the writings of St. Basil the Great, St. John Chrysostom, St. Maximus the Confessor, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Gregory of Nazianzen and St. John of Damascus among others. Furthermore, he translated some chapters of the Byzantine Lexicon *Suidas*.⁴⁵ He frequently incorporated fragments of his (biblical⁴⁶ and other) translations into his own writings, providing personal explanations or philologically-theologically oriented commentary. Hence, his original author's works in manuscripts, edited by his own hand, are worthy of special attention.

In 1525, he was convicted by a church council of heretical errors in translation, in particular in the existing Russian translation of *Creed*.⁴⁷ In fact, he modified the Slavonic aorist to the perfect tense, insisting that he did not perceive those expressions of perfect tense "to be" in contradiction with the concept of the "eternal being" of Christ at the right hand of God the Father.⁴⁸ The crux of the issue for Maximus was that he was accused of employing orthodox theologically controversial terms in a deliberately heretical manner, with direct implications for the definition of Christ's temporal existence. During the trial, Maximus explicitly stated that the translation process had been carried out by two or three Russian translators (Ignat Vlasov, Dmitri Gerasimov, Mikhail Medovartsev) via Latin into Russian redaction of OCS, because during his first years of his residence in Muscovite Russia, he was

⁴³ Dmitrii Mihailovich Bulanin, *Perevody i poslania Maksima Greka* (Leningrad: Akademija nauk SSSR, 1984), 82–84.

⁴⁴ Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 42.

⁴⁵ Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 42; Bulanin, *Perevody i poslania*, 128–173.

⁴⁶ Ivanov, *Literaturnoe nasledie Maksima Greka*, 66.

⁴⁷ About that process Maximus reported in his text, see Maksim Grek, *O ispovedanii pravoslavnoi very* [About the Confession of the Orthodox Faith], Mss. Slave 123, fols. 16–19, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF), Paris. On the linguistic background of the particular accusation, see Varvara Andreevna Romodanovskaia, "'Sede odesnuiju Otsa' ili 'sidedesi'? K voprosu o grammaticheskoi pravke Maksima Greka" ['He Sat on the Right Side of the Father' or 'He Is Sitting'? To the Question about the Grammatical Correction of Maksim Grek], in *Problemy istorii russkoi knizhnosti, kul'tury i obshchestvennogo soznaniia. Sbornik nauchnykh trudov* (Novosibirsk: Institut istorii RAN – Sibirskii khronograf, 2000), 232–238.

⁴⁸ Nikolai N. Pokrovskii and Sigurd O. Schmidt, eds., *Sudnye spiski Maksima Greka i Isaka Sobaki* [The Reports from the Trials against Maksim Grek and Isaac Sobaka] (Moscow: Tipografija GAU pri SM SSSR, 1971), 110.

not fully certain of the precise meaning of every term in the Russian version of OCS. However, he defended and utilised such verbal usage also in his own writings. The latest linguistic research proves that he was acquainted with the OCS and Slavic even before his arrival in Russia, and it is essential to acknowledge his will, which confirms that his use of OCS was continually fully conscious.⁴⁹ In Moscow he was afterwards sentenced to solitary confinement in the dark, without permission to communicate, write, or read, and was also forbidden from attending church services and receiving Holy Communion, which was the most difficult and irreputable condition for the Orthodox monk. The impetus for this action against him was his refusal to translate Theodoret of Cyrhus' *Ecclesiastical History*⁵⁰ that he had been commissioned to do by Metropolitan Daniil of Russia, and what Maximus had also mentioned in the letter to Metropolitan Daniil.⁵¹ Maximus justified this decision on the grounds that the book contains certain controversial passages that could be theologically misguided, potentially leading the uninformed Orthodox Russians to erroneous beliefs.

In 1531, a new church council was convened against him (perhaps because of the letter that had been recently received in Moscow with the request for his freedom from the Protos⁵² Anphimius of the Holy Mount Athos,⁵³ who was at the time of Maximus's leaving to Russia the Hegumen of the Monastery of Vatopaidi and who had blessed Maximus at his departure from Athos). He was acquitted of the previous charges, but new ones were also brought

⁴⁹ The research by the author of the present chapter that partially addresses this issue is forthcoming in *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* (January 2027).

⁵⁰ Maksim Grek, *Works*, MS Slave 123, fols. 100v–101r, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF), Paris; Liudmila Ivanovna Zhurova, *Avtorskii tekst Maksima Greka (rukopisnaia i literaturnaia traditsii)* [Author's Text of Maksim Grek – Manuscript and Literary Traditions], vol. 2 (Novosibirsk: Izdatel'stvo sibirskogo otdelenia Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk, 2011), 140.

⁵¹ Cited in Zhurova, *Avtorskii tekst Maksima Greka*, vol. 2, 136–145.

⁵² A term of honor, given to the monk who is the head of the monastic governing (an administrative role, usually for one year) of Mount Athos, located in Karyes, see *A Pilgrim's Guide to the Holy Great Monastery of Vatopedi* (Mount Athos: The Holy Great Monastery of Vatopedi, 2025), 100.

⁵³ The archival record of the letter of “the Protos of Holy Mount Athos, Anphimius to Grand Prince Vasili III” about the release of Maximus the Greek in 1531, see Boris Vasil'evich Pal'tsov and Sigurd O. Schmit, eds., *Opis' arhiva Posol'skogo prikaza 1626 g.* [Description of the Archive of the Ambassadorship Legality for the Year 1626] (Moscow, 1977), 71; Sinitsyna, “Rannee tvorchestvo,” 30–31. About the circumstances see Liudmila Ivanovna Zhurova, *Avtorskii tekst Maksima Greka (rukopisnaia i literaturnaia traditsii)* [Author's Text of Maksim Grek – Manuscript and Literary Traditions], vol. 1 (Novosibirsk: Izdatel'stvo sibirskogo otdelenia Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk, 2008), 344–345.

forth. The new accusations included the charge of heretical translations in the *Life of the Holy Virgin* from the *Menologion* of Symeon Metaphrastes⁵⁴ (which he had translated already in 1521).⁵⁵ Additionally, he was accused of espionage for the Turkish court and of engaging in witchcraft.⁵⁶ During both interrogations (in 1525 and 1531), the Russian Emperors (Grand Prince Vasili III., Tsar Ivan IV) were present, which reflects a significant interest held by both ecclesiastical and government authorities in the fate of Maximus the Greek.⁵⁷

However, during his permission to speak openly Maximus was vehemently opposed to the growing and robust tendencies of the Russian Church towards its autocephaly among Orthodox Patriarchate. He demanded not only that the Russian Metropolitans be enthroned by Constantinople (he did reiterate his position openly and without fear during the Church process against him),⁵⁸ but also the respect for the See of Constantinople, together with the traditions of the Greek Church and Byzantine ecclesiastical literacy, even if it was from 1453 under the Islamic yoke. Moreover, he clearly advocated for an asceticism with a silent contemplation on sacred texts (which, though similar, are not fully adequate with hesychasm), encouraging the cultivation of both, the spiritual and intellectual dimensions.⁵⁹ Furthermore, he supported the monasticism that eschewed the accumulation of material possessions and was defined by a set of core ethical values, including modesty, generosity, humility, and poverty as an expression of inner continence, chastity, and the capacity to assist others in the common activities, recognised

⁵⁴ Vladimir V. Latyshev, ed., *Menologii anonymi Byzantini saeculi X quae supersunt. Fasciculos duos sumptibus Caesareae Academiae Scientiarum e Codice Mosquensi 376* (Moskva, 1912; Leipzig, 1970) [*Subsidia Byzantina lucis ope iterata*, 12], 374–383.

⁵⁵ Nina V. Sinitsyna, *Maksim Grek v Rossii* [Maksim Grek in Russia] (Moskva: Nauka, 1977), 61.

⁵⁶ The detailed manuscript about that rigged trial against Maximus the Greek (and also Isaac Sobaka), was found only in the second half of the 20th century, see Pokrovskii and Shmidt, eds., *Sudnye spiski*.

⁵⁷ Nikolai N. Pokrovski, “Zamechanija o rukopisi sudnyh spiskov Maksima Greka i Isaka Sobaki” [Notes on the manuscripts of the trials against Maksim Grek and Isaac Sobaka], *TODRL*, 36, (1981), 83.

⁵⁸ Pokrovski, “Zamechanija o rukopisi sudnyh spiskov,” 90.

⁵⁹ Cf. *The Hagiography of Gregory from Sinai*: Maximus’s corrections in the manuscript were made by his own hand, see Boris Leonidovich Fonkich, “Novyj avtograph Maksima Greka” [The New Autograph of Maksim Grek], *Byzantinoslavica*, no. 1 (1969): 81–82.

in the community of Athonite Lavra.⁶⁰ Despite being aware of the benefits of the Athonite approach⁶¹ (having witnessed the semi-coenobitic way of life particularly in the Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi)⁶² to the common ownership of monastic property, which also entailed responsibilities and labour according to each person's capabilities, he remained unwavering in his support for a strict nonpossessive position (in Russia that controversy lasted from the mid-15th century: between the supporters of monastery property and the opponents).

As a result, Maximus was sentenced to further punishment and subsequently transferred from the dungeon cell of the Joseph-Volokolamsk monastery to the Otroch monastery in Tver. He remained incarcerated, but in 1536 the conditions of his imprisonment were sufficiently relaxed to permit him to engage in writing. Consequently, he produced a substantial corpus of original writings, which he also attempted to collate into collected works during his lifetime.⁶³ However, he was not granted the right to receive Holy Communion and remained imprisoned until 1552, when he was transported to the monastery of the Holy Trinity of the Lavra of St. Sergius of Radonezh. At this point, he was permitted a certain degree of liberty. However, he continued to rely exclusively on his Athonite prayer practice. Although three official requests were sent to Moscow by Church authorities from Athos and Constantinople for his release to Athonite Monastery Vatopaidi, where obviously his memory and efforts were cherished, the Moscow ecclesiastical authorities did not allow him to leave Russia. In fact, already in 1521, soon after his first prominent translation of *Exegetical Psalter* he kindly asked Vasili Ivanovich III for the permission to return to his homeland Greece.⁶⁴ After already mentioned letter from the Athonite Protos Anphimios in 1531, also in 1545, after 20 years of his imprisonment, the Patriarch of Alexandria Ioachim sent a letter of request for the release

⁶⁰ Lavra: clusters of small cenobitic ascetic communities around central church and monastery, gathered for the church service and the Divine Liturgy, see *A Pilgrim's Guide*, 99.

⁶¹ For Maximus's work "The Letter to Grand Prince of Moscow, Vasili III about the Athonite Monasteries," see Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 119–133.

⁶² *A Pilgrim's Guide*, 23.

⁶³ Maksim Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Rukopis'nye pamjatniki Drevnej Rusi, 2014), 20.

⁶⁴ Viacheslav F. Rzhiga, "Opyty po istorii russkoj publicistiky XVI v. Maksim Grek kak publicist" [The Research on History of Russian Social Writings in 16th Century: Maksim Grek as the Social Writer], *TODRL* 1 (1934): 115.

of the Athonite monk Maximus.⁶⁵ A year later, in June 1546, the Constantinople Patriarch Dionisius II sent an even officially stronger letter with a firm request for the final release of Maximus the Greek (in Moscow they received it in the beginning of 1547).⁶⁶ That letter was signed by fifteen prominent Greek Orthodox authorities.⁶⁷

Following his demise, the official narrative of his role in Russia underwent a series of unintended alterations, all in the service of the Russian Church and Government (of the court of the Great Prince Vasili III, and consequently, the Tsar Ivan IV). Moreover, the Russian ecclesiastical and historical legitimacy in many respects based their so-called Old Russian direction on his strict Orthodox theological views. This continued throughout the following centuries, with the most prominent manifestation of the so-called Russian original theology and spiritual philosophy being the loudest national conceptualisation in the 19th century. In fact, they constructed what they considered to be the Russian national mentality on the basis of Maxim the Greek's theological and philosophical views, both the grammatical frameworks of the literary language and the structure of what they regarded as the original Russian philosophy and Orthodox thought.

Despite being highly respected by Moscow dignitaries from both Church and government circles, and having become venerated in his final years for his life of a saint (i.e., a man of profound learning and genuine wisdom endowed with the Holy Spirit), he was not recognized as a martyr by the Russian Church until the 20th century. He died on December 12, 1555 in the Monastery of the Holy Trinity of Lavra as Maksim Grek. Following the 40-day Orthodox period of mourning for his death, January 21, 1556 was established as the day of his passing. However, he was not officially proclaimed a saint by the Russian Church until 1988, when his feast day as Saint Maximus was set on January 21.

⁶⁵ Maksim Grek, *Works*, Ms. Slave 123, fols. 94r–95r, Manuscript, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF), Paris.

⁶⁶ Sinitsyna, *Maksim Grek v Rossii*, 152.

⁶⁷ The document was accompanied with signatures of the fifteen actual Orthodox Patriarchs and Metropolitans, see Maksim Grek, *Works*, Ms. Slave 123, fols. 97r–98v, Manuscript, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF), Paris. Maximus translated both letters from Greek and included them in his life-time edited collections of manuscripts.

CASE-STUDY

One must consider whether the formula “three faces of one person” is an appropriate and applicable concept. Is the chronological disintegration of a person’s biographical trajectory a sufficient reason for the further separation of the integrity of the personality?

Research on the life and work of Maximus the Greek requires exceptional caution, as much of the accepted biographical and interpretative framework is based on secondary, often biased scholarship, particularly within Russian-oriented traditions (often narrow, solely linguistic approach)⁶⁸ and also corresponding reception.⁶⁹ Many so-called established facts rest on unverified claims and interpretations that are not directly supported by Maximus’s own words and his personal (world)view. Consequently, such reconstructions cannot be considered fully reliable.

This study therefore prioritizes Maximus’s own lifetime manuscripts as the primary and most authentic sources. These texts are examined through careful palaeographic and linguistic analysis, limiting the corpus

⁶⁸ These studies appear to be remarkably consistent in terms of linguistic treatment; however, they are one-sided, relativising the work and life of Maximus the Greek similarly to the historical situation of his condemnation and profound misinterpretation in Russia. Moreover, they do lack a complex multidisciplinary approach that simultaneously includes different perspectives and contexts of his life and work, which is essential in a thorough understanding of the cultural historical value of Maximus the Greek. See, for example, Inna V. Verner, “Grammaticheskaja sprava Maksima Greka v Psaltyri 1552 g.” [Grammatical Corrections of Slavic-Greek Psalter of 1552 by Maksim Grek], in *Pismennost', literature, fol'klor slavjanskikh narodov. Istorija slavistiki. XV mezhdunarodnyj s'ezd slavistov*, ed. Aleksandr M. Moldovan et al. (Moskva: Drevlehranilishe, 2013), 104–127; Catherine Mary MacRobert, “Maksim Grek in linguistic context,” in *Latinas in the Slavonic world*, ed. Vittorio Springfield Tomelleri and Inna V. Verner (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018) 173–205.

⁶⁹ Dmitrii Mihailovich Bulanin, “Grecheski pisatel' ili moskovski knizhnik,” *Studia Slavica e Balcanica Petropolitana* 2, no. 22 (2017): 87–98; Marcello Garzaniti, “Svidetel'stvo Maksima Greka na sudebnykh processakh 1525, 1531 gg.: novoe prochnenie v ključe biblejskogo profetizma” [The Witnessing of Maksim Grek at the Trials of 1525 and 1531: A New Reading in the Key of Biblical Prophetism], in *Istochnikovedenie literatury i jazyka (arkheografiia, tekstologiiia, poetika)* (Novosibirsk: GPNTB RAN, 2022), 46–60; Marcello Garzaniti, “Антилатинские послания Максима Грека и русская публицистика первой половины XVI в. К вопросу о контекстуализации” [Anti-Latin Letters of Maksim Grek and Russian Publicistic Writings in the First Half of the Sixteenth Century: On the Question of Contextualization], *TODRL* 69 (2022): 84–96; Francesca Romoli, *Massimo il Greco e gli ordini religiosi dell'Occidente* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2021).

to manuscripts written during his lifetime or before the end of the 16th century,⁷⁰ prior to later ideological alterations, introduced in the 17th century. Therefore, the specific textual approach focuses on reconstructing Maximus's voice, will, and personal Slavonic idiolect, which was frequently misunderstood in previous scholarship.

By treating these manuscripts as elements of Maximus's personal archive rather than purely literary or apologetic texts, the research seeks to access his intellectual and spiritual "laboratory" and to enter the historical reality in which he lived. This methodology is essential for understanding both his opposition to Russian autocephaly and the reasons for his persecution, imprisonment, and delayed canonization. Ultimately, Maximus's case remains significant not only historically but also as a universal example of intellectual integrity and resistance to ideological and political coercion.

Following his first trial in 1525, Maximus was not allowed to read, to write and to communicate. By 1531 (after the second trial), the conditions of the imprisonment eased, allowing him to resume writing, and in 1536 he began collecting his texts. He revised his work multiple times to refine arguments and defend his positions. Three manuscript "editions" of the works of Maximus the Greek are known: Ioasafovskoe, Khludovskoe, and

⁷⁰ Some of the manuscripts that we are constantly working with include: Some of the manuscripts that we are constantly working with include: Maksim Grek, *Works* (Rumjantskovskoe), Ms. F. 256, Rum. 264, Manuscript, Russian State Library (RGB), Moscow; Maksim Grek, *Psalter* (15th century), annotated by Maksim Grek, Ms. Troic. 315, Manuscript, Russian State Library (RGB), Moscow; Maksim Grek, *Works* (Ioasafovskoe), f. 173.III. MDA 138, Manuscript, Russian State Library (RGB), Moscow; Maksim Grek, *Works* (Ioasafovskoe), f. 173. MDA 42, Manuscript, Russian State Library (RGB), Moscow; Maksim Grek, *Works* (Ioasafovskoe), f. 173. MAD, fund. 153, Manuscript, Russian State Library (RGB), Moscow; Maksim Grek, *Selected Works*, Ms. f. 247, Rogozh. 302, Manuscript, Russian State Library (RGB), Moscow; *Exegetical Psalter*, translated by Maksim Grek, Shchuk. 4, Manuscript, Russian Historical Museum (GIM), Moscow; Maksim Grek, *Selected Works*, Sin. 491, Manuscript, Russian Historical Museum (GIM), Moscow; Maksim Grek, *Liturgical Psalter*, 1552, Uvar. 85/14, Manuscript, Russian Historical Museum (GIM), Moscow; Maksim Grek, *Works* (Ioasafovskoe), Uvar. 309, Manuscript, Russian Historical Museum (GIM), Moscow; *Greek Psalter*, translated by Maksim Grek, 1540, Mss. Sof. 78, Manuscript, Russian National Library (RNB), St. Petersburg; Symeon Metaphrastes, *Menologion*, translated by Maksim Grek, Ms. Sof. 1498, Manuscript, Russian National Library (RNB), St. Petersburg; *Psalter*, translated by Maksim Grek, late 16th century, Sol. 753/862, Manuscript, Russian National Library (RNB), St. Petersburg; *Psalter*, translated by Maksim Grek, late 16th century, Sol. 752/862, Manuscript, Russian National Library (RNB), St. Petersburg; *Greek Apostol*, translated by Maksim Grek, 16th century, Kirill.-Beloz. 120/125, Manuscript, Russian National Library (RNB), St. Petersburg; Maksim Grek, *Works*, Ms. Slave 123, Manuscript, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF), Paris.

Rumjantsovskoe.⁷¹ The National Library in Paris holds a significant collection, showing his evolving drafts and final corrections, likely completed at the Monastery of St. Sergius of Trinity.⁷² Not a single page of Slavonic manuscript written entirely by Greek had survived; all were copied or dictated. Some Greek and even Latin autographs exist, including his own Greek Psalterium,⁷³ his Greek Apostol (1542)⁷⁴ and the works from his Italian period. His manuscripts are dispersed across Europe, including libraries in London,⁷⁵ Florence,⁷⁶ Rome,⁷⁷ Milan,⁷⁸ Cremona,⁷⁹ Vienna,⁸⁰ Paris,⁸¹ and Mount Athos,⁸² showing his work's transnational character.

It is important to note that Maxim's personal Slavonic script was not entirely uniform. In addition to Slavic letters, it incorporated Greek letters

⁷¹ Sinitsyna, *Maksim Grek v Rossii*, 223–262.

⁷² Maksim Grek, *Works*, Ms. Slave 123, Manuscript, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF), Paris.

⁷³ *Greek Psalter*, translated by Maksim Grek, 1540, Ms. Sof. 78, Manuscript, Russian National Library (RNB), St. Petersburg.

⁷⁴ *Greek Psalter*, translated by Maksim Grek, 1540, Ms. Sof. 78, Manuscript, Russian National Library (RNB), St. Petersburg; *Greek Apostol*, translated by Maksim Grek, 16th century, Kirill.-Beloz. 120/125, Manuscript, Russian National Library (RNB), St. Petersburg. It contains the Acts of Apostles, 7 Apostolic Letters: James, John, Peter, Juda, and 13 Letters of Apostle Paul, see Aleksei Ivanovich Ivanov, *Literaturnoe nasledie Maksima Greka*, 215.

⁷⁵ Theodoret of Cyrhus, *Graecarum affectionum curatio*, Can. Gr. 27, Manuscript, Bodleian Library, Oxford. See also Speranzi, “Giano Lascari e i suoi copisti,” 341–342; Speranzi, “Massimo il Greco a San Marco,” 191.

⁷⁶ Dionysius Areopagite, *De divinis Nominibus*, Laur. Conv Soppr. 104, Manuscript, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence; Liber Vestitionum; *Spoglio generale*, Manuscripts, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence.

⁷⁷ Flavius Josephus, *Contra Apionem*, Vat. Barb. 100, Manuscript, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome; Theocritus, *Idylls*, Vat. Gr. 1379, fols. 1–24, Manuscript, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome; Strabo, *Geographia*, Vat. Reg. 83, fols. 157–245, Manuscript, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome.

⁷⁸ *Epigram to Manuil*, the rhetor, Ms. Ambrosiana N.234, sup., Manuscript, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan; *Epitaph to the Constantinople Patriarch Ioachim I*; *Epitaph to Constantinople Patriarch Niphon II*, Ms. Ambros. I. N. 115 sup., fols. 504r–504v, Manuscript, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan.

⁷⁹ John Philoponus, *Commentaries on Aristotle's Analytica Priora*, Cod. Crem. 177, Manuscript, Cremona.

⁸⁰ *Vindobonensis hist. gr.* 122, Manuscript, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna.

⁸¹ *Geoponica*, Par. Gr. 1994, Manuscript, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF), Paris; Maksim Grek, *Works*, Ms. Slave 123, Manuscript, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF), Paris.

⁸² *Liturgical Service to St. Erasmus*. Cod. 198, fols. 579–588. Manuscript. Monastery of Vatopaidi, Mount Athos; *Supplicatory Canon to St. John the Baptist*. Cod. 1016, fol. 32r–35v. Manuscript. Monastery of Vatopaidi, Mount Athos.

(ĩ, ž, v̇, ω), as well as ligatures and word joints, the features also found in the first printed Greek books, along with stress marks that later influenced Slavic orthography. Interestingly, his script occasionally used Latin characters for certain Slavic letters (I, N for Cyrillic H; B for Cyrillic Б), which is relatively uncommon. This reflects not only his exposure to the Latin script during his time in Italy but also the possibility that he was aware of the practice of writing Slavic languages with Latin letters – a convention common in the South Slavic regions bordering Italy, particularly the Venetian State (corresponding to present-day Slovenian and Croatian territories). As a result, his manuscripts present a complex mixture of Greek, Latin, and Slavic (Cyrillic) features – not limited to Old or modern Russian – demonstrating a uniquely multifaceted linguistic and scriptural approach.

Maxim's Slavonic idiolect exhibits a wide range of forms derived from various OCS redactions, reflecting disparate temporal, spatial, and social contexts.⁸³ Moreover, it provides evidence of his proficiency in editing and proofreading Slavonic manuscripts, encompassing textual criticism of variant words, semantic and stylistic nuances, and formally distinct elements (such as homonyms) used in the service of emendation or the personal typification of language. A detailed study of his manuscripts, from his arrival in Russia until the end of his life, confirms his continuous use of different Slavonic varieties and linguistic forms, deliberately selected to advocate for a particular form of OCS that, in his view, corresponded most closely to the Greek Church tradition.

To recognize the structure of differences within his Slavonic idiolect, it is necessary to acknowledge the multifaceted chronological and geographical foundations, as well as the diverse sources, that shaped the formation of Maxim's Slavic proficiency and his personal Slavic expression. Research has shown that, more than Russian Slavonic, Western and/or South Slavic languages played a decisive role in shaping his linguistic consciousness before his first contact with Russia. In particular, South Slavic languages (especially Macedonian and Serbian), spoken in and around Maximus's birthplace of Arta, exerted a significant influence. This is reflected in the

⁸³ Neža Zajc, "Some Notes on the Life and Works of Maxim the Greek (Michael Trivolis, ca. 1470 – Maksim Grek, 1555/1556). Part 2: Maxim the Greek's Slavic Idiolect," *Scrinium* 12 (2016): 375–382.

lexical layer of words he used, drawn from colloquial everyday speech with frequent stable verbal forms, as well as in archaic features of his native Greek, which may sporadically preserve echoes of the Macedonian dialect.

Secondly, the spoken Slavic vernaculars of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in regions bordering the Venetian Republic – namely Slovenian and Croatian territories – partially, yet crucially, contributed to the initial formation of his understanding of Slavic languages. Finally, vernaculars encountered in both liturgical contexts and daily life, which he experienced deeply during his Athonite Orthodox missions, left significant traces of Macedonian, Bulgarian, and Romanian (Moldo-Wallachian) lexicon. These influences affected his semantic word formation, a process also visually reinforced through his work with Slavonic Athonite manuscripts – particularly Serbian⁸⁴ and Bulgarian liturgical typika, hagiography, and hymnography. Moreover, during his journey to Moscow, Maximus was accompanied by a Serbian, a Bulgarian and possibly also two Russian monks, further enabling Slavic verbal (and monastically impacted) linguistic influences.

Conversely, the study of Maximus's manuscripts and his language – which also attests to his remarkable mnemohistory – aligns closely with his apologetic attitude toward his own authorship.

During his formative years in Italy, Maximus had already sought to assert his identity, albeit inconsistently, through the dynamic use of nicknames rather than literary pseudonyms, all reflecting his Greek heritage. He referred to himself as the Lacedemonian (Greek: ὁ ἐκ Σπάρτης Λακεδαιμόνιος; transl. “someone of Spartan origin”) and Dorileos (Δωρίλεος; referencing his Dorian roots),⁸⁵ both names emphasizing his Greek origins⁸⁶ and characterizing his Italian period.

⁸⁴ For possible Serbian linguistic features of the language of Maximus the Greek, see Galina A. Kazimova, “О возможном сербском компоненте в связи с меной генитива и локатива мн.ч. существительных в славянском тексте гомилий Василия Великого на псалмы и некоторых других святоотеческих текстах (ГИМ, Син-238, лл. 456–786), считающихся переводами Максима Грека” [About the Possible Componential Change in the Nouns between Genitive and Locative Plural: The Case of the Slavic Homily of Basil the Great on Psalms and Some Other Patristic Works (GIM, Sin. 238, fol. 456–786), considered as the translations of Maksim Grek], *Crkvene studije* XVI, no. 2 (2019): 659–673.

⁸⁵ Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 45; Grek, *Sochinenija*, vol. 1, 94, 97.

⁸⁶ Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l'Occident*, 91.

His self-image in personal writings and correspondence, particularly during the painful periods of his life in Italy and Muscovy, often evokes the metaphor of a storm-tossed ship: a soul buffeted by wind and waves, unable to find a calm harbor, or resembling a ship without an anchor. This imagery reflects his sense of having no true homeland. In this context, his interpretation of Aldo Manuzio's signature – the anchor – acquires symbolic significance, suggesting the capacity to safeguard souls, akin to a secure haven.

Despite his periods of displacement, Maximus remained steadfastly attached to Greece until his final days. He ultimately achieved spiritual and intellectual fulfillment on Mount Athos through his monastic ordination at the Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi, an environment that most closely aligned with his inner mission, both personal and religious.

EPILOGUE

In 1552, four years before his death, Maxim the Greek finally regained a degree of personal freedom. In the same year, he translated two of his own works – *On Repentance* and *Against Hellenistic Knowledge* – from Slavonic into Greek.⁸⁷ These two Greek poems, written by a scribe, described as “a Greek who could have worked in Greece as well as outside that country,” were only recently attributed to Maxim following their discovery in the National Library in Vienna. The texts are preserved together with a “Letter of Presentation,” which states that the poems were sent “from the city of Moscow, the reigning city of all the northernmost Rosia” in 1551/1552.⁸⁸ The two poems were found as part of a Greek manuscript which also contains the works of Sopatro,⁸⁹ whose manuscript Maxim copied during his Italian period.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ In fact, these two Greek poems were Maxim's own translations of his texts from Slavic to Greek, see Ihor Ševčenko, “On the Greek Poetic Output of Maksim Grek,” *Byzantinoslavica* 58 (1997), 9).

⁸⁸ Ševčenko, “On the Greek Poetic Output,” 40–41.

⁸⁹ Herbert Hunger, *Studien zur griechischen Paläographie* (Wien: Brüder Hollinek, 1954), 313.

⁹⁰ His Florentine copy of the “three-handed” Commentaries on Hermogenus by Greek rhetoricians, Sirianus, Sopatro and Marcellinus, see Mss. Laur. Plut. 55, 20, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence; Speranzi, “Giano Lascari e i suoi copisti,” 337–377; Speranzi, “Michele Trivoli e Giano Lascari,” 276–278. This manuscript displays not only his own verses, but also an

Maxim sent the aforementioned letter, containing the two poems, in the hope that it would reach the appropriate addressee somewhere in central Europe, having a specific European audience in mind. In both poems Maxim presents an account of the monastic and Orthodox response to the European Renaissance. His awareness of the continued influence of Hellenistic doctrines demonstrates his acute comprehension of the prevailing European intellectual climate. Yet he felt obliged to warn his audience of the potentially harmful influence of ancient content (the second poem) and to call for repentance (the first poem). His perspective can be understood as a Christian reception of humanistic endeavours. Consequently, he sought to caution his addressee against certain classical ideas – popular in Renaissance Italy – that he deemed incompatible with spiritual growth, advocating instead a return to humility by the strict self-repentance practice.⁹¹ Importantly, these poems, sent in the form of a personal letter, suggest that even while imprisoned in a monastery in Muscovite Russia, Maxim maintained a degree of contact with the outside world. This, in turn, indicates that he was able either to restore previously established connections or to maintain existing ones – or, less likely, to establish new contacts – primarily with Europe rather than with Greece.

“The Letter of Presentation” also contains a noteworthy self-identification, in which Maxim employs a quasi-geographical, ancient reference to describe himself as a Hyperborean:

To Macrobius, who is loudly known as the lover of all holy wisdom, Minimos, rather than Maximos, the one who was once a Helladian and is now a Hyperborean, salutations in the Lord. When you receive this little work of love, correct it in all its imperfections. And when you have corrected it, do not let it fall into the depths of oblivion, but make it known to other lovers of the truth, as it deserves. And if not all, at least some of them will be taken out of the immeasurable furious affection by the Hellenistic

ornamented monokondylion with a shape, corresponding to his father’s name Manuil, see Speranzi, “Michele Trivoli e Giano Lascari,” 266; Denissoff, *Maxime le Grec et l’Occident*, 136. At that time in Florence Maxim also copied *De divinis Nominibus of Dionysius Areopagite*, see Dionysius Areopagite, *De divinis Nominibus*, Laur. Conv Soppr. 104, Manuscript, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence; Speranzi, “Massimo il Greco a San Marco,” 191.

⁹¹ There are several other Maxim’s texts on repentance, which are primarily addressed to the Russians and their monastic reality.

*delusion of which they are so helplessly sick. Farewell, beloved companion and brother in the Lord.*⁹²

In this short letter, Maximus the Greek clearly defines his biography by providing the former indication (a Helladian)⁹³ and the acquainted, a distinctive adjective that is historically complex but already classical and quasi-national, perhaps demonym, a Hyperborean.⁹⁴ He was confident about his addressee understanding his final self-identification.

To conclude, scholars have thus far failed to identify any historically attested 16th-century individual bearing the name *Macrobius*,⁹⁵ whether as a personal name, a nickname (Ševčenko), or a literary pseudonym (Bushkovich). There is, however, broad scholarly agreement that he was most likely “a Western man or a Greek with a Western education.”⁹⁶

The identity of the individual referred to as “Macrobius” in the 16th century, as well as the rationale behind Maximus’s choice of this cognomen, remains obscure. A full clarification of the enigma surrounding this “last trusted” addressee of Maximus the Greek lies beyond the scope of the present chapter.

⁹² Ševčenko, “On the Greek Poetic Output,” 40–41.

⁹³ A hapax in the meaning of inhabitant of Hellas was attested as a proper name in the Anth. Pal. (8: 151, 2); Gregory of Nazianzus (153, 3) and in Lexicon Suidas (its content Maximus closely knew). Laskaris used “Elladikos,” see Ševčenko, “On the Greek Poetic Output,” 40, no. 2.

⁹⁴ This word was attested in Strabo’s Geography (Maxim in Italy copied this manuscript).

⁹⁵ Macrobios should be considered a “nickname, to be understood among the initiates,” see Ševčenko, “On the Greek Poetic Output,” 41.

⁹⁶ Paul Bushkovich, “Maksim Grek – poet ‘giperboreec’” [Maksim Grek – a Poet ‘Hyperborean’], *Труды Отдела древнерусской литературы (ТОДРЛ)* 47 (1993): 218.

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