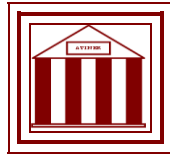


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**Maxim Grec (Maksim Grek) –
The Preservation of (canonical)
Christian Tradition**

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**Maxim Grec (Maksim Grek) – The Preservation of
(canonical) Christian Tradition**

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Abstract

The article is based on the study of manuscripts and archive records related to the study of biographical destiny of Mihail (Michail) Trivolis – born in the town of Arta around 1470, lived in northern Italian cities, worked in the Aldo Manuzio printing house; became a monk of the Mount Athos Vatopedi Monastery (ordained with the name Maxim) between 1504 and 1516, then a translator who moved to Muscovite Russia, where he died as *Maksim Grek*. Presented are the problems of the time related to the openness of the south western (Macedonian) Greek territory after the fall of Constantinople, but also its unique openness for the transmission of ideas, knowledge and thought. The presentation of the emerging Renaissance Europe includes the notes about of the preserving of a high level of monastic education on the Holy Mount Athos, its political and cultural bonds with eastern countries (Romania, Bulgaria, Russia) and the development of indigenous Eastern Christian tradition.

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Michail Trivolis was born around 1470 in the town of Arta in the Trivolis family to mother Irina and father Emanuel. His parents took responsibility for his education which, as it seems, corresponded the Byzantine system of higher education. The small town of Arta, famous for public processions of Marian icons¹ soon after the end of iconoclasm in 843, had an orthodox Metropolis dependent on Chalcedonian Church.² It was in Arta, the capital of the Despotate of Epiros, where after the fifty-seven-year period between 1171 and 1214 with no Byzantine emperor in Constantinople another Greek court was established. It was the period when only half of the population in the area of Constantinople managed to migrate before the Latin conquest to north western Greece – the highland area of Epiros, Acarnania, and Aetolia. While the Latin Kingdom with Baldwin of Flanders and the other part of Constantinople was allotted to the Venetians, Byzantines still held Epirus and Nicaea. However, a cousin of the former Byzantine emperors Isaac II and Alexios III, Michael Komnenos Doukas, took leadership (1204-1215) but never required to be addressed with the title *despotes*, which was also the reason why he was immediately accepted among the people as the leader who managed to preserve the unique tradition of Byzantine culture. The son-in-law of Alexis III, Theodore Laskaris, was crowned in Nicaea as the emperor in 1208 and set up a court there which sought to preserve continuity with the imperial past in Constantinople, and a further kingdom at Trebizond on the southern shore of the Black Sea. He also established a ‘modus vivendi’ with the Franks and peace with the Venetians of Constantinople³ in 1219. Obviously the south western territory was not only opened, but enforced to be regarded as a space of ability to combine the reception of two contradictory tendencies of Christian religion. But unfortunately there again were local misunderstandings between Epiros and Nicaea, responsible for the main, i.e. internal disability of the state of province. It was Michael Palaiologos who restored the Greek rule to Constantinople within the coalition of Epiros, Achaia and Sicily (1259). After the subsequent acquisitions of Mistra, Monemvasia as well as Maina and Moravia he presented himself as the guard of the Nicaean position in Europe. But Michael VIII Paleologian (1261-82) was considering himself more a military key and diplomatic front for regarding the possibility of an ecclesiastical union between Rome and Constantinople – in the second council of Lyon in 1274. This was crucial for the theological self-recognition, not of reign but of failure – it seems that it was not papal primacy but the problem of accepting the filioque in the Creed, like the omission of epiklesis⁴ in the period of the final schism in 1054, that was not acceptable for Eastern Church authorities. It is possible that from that time dynastic quarrels in this minor Byzantium became indisputable. It was in Arta where Nikephoros Doukas and his wife Anna Paleologian built the five-domed Paregoritissa church between 1284-96, it being part of the Paleologian ecclesiastic plan, with the intention to

¹ Cameron A. (2010). *The Byzantines*. UK. 105.

² Janin R. (1955). *Eglises Orientales et Rites Orientaux*. (4. ed.) Paris. 521.

³ Reinert S. W. (2002). Fragmentation. In: *The Oxford History of Byzantium*. Oxford. 253.

⁴ Runciman S. (1968). *The Great Church in Captivity*. Cambridge. 86-96.

cover the aims of funerary ritual duty. On the nearby Corfu (Kerkyra), where the remains of the Norman conquest in the XII. century were still obvious, Roger II of Sicily took advantage of the crisis, and also created a constantly tense atmosphere with which he threatened their patristic heritage. It could be said that traces of Michael Komnenos Doukas's politics were felt up to 1461 when Arta was finally conquered by the Ottomans.

Michail Trivolis never mentioned other than Greek sources of his youth education. His uncle Demetri Trivolis, who had well established links with the Italian coast, offered the twenty-year-old Michail an education that led across Crete, Corfu and possibly also Croatian islands. In Florence, the city dedicated to the Annunciation of Mary, where Michail first resided, he met Aldo Manuzio – probably in 1492 in the Florence apartment where the scholar and grammarian Ioannos Laskaris, also Michail's mentor, lived. For I. Laskaris in Florence Michail Trivolis transcribed twice the manuscript book *Geoponica* (between 1492 and 1495)¹ which during the lifetime of I. Laskaris (1445-1535) was handed over to the Italian poet, diplomat and philologist Andrea Naugerii (1483-1529).² The note that points to chronological and identificatory belonging is at the same time a record of awareness of unanonymous work (but only the beginnings of author's consciousness) in which the signs of man's Renaissance conscience can be recognised. The latter proves that in Italy M. Trivolis was invited to an elite circle of transcript writers, translators and professional calligraphers who carefully followed the process of transmitting manuscripts into printed form, and he soon asserted himself in this circle together with Mark Mousouros, a poet and philologist, later the first professor of Greek language at the University of Padova³. According to his letters in which he used several acronyms (pseudonyms)⁴ he shortly lived in Milan, Ferrara, and twice for a longer period at the Mirandola castle⁵ where he taught Greek to the nephew of the famous Pico, Gianfranco Mirandola. At the time he was already in touch with the newly established printing house of Aldo

¹ The name of the transcriber is in red ink, the note in black: 'Michael(a): twice ten and twice four days did I, Michael, copy this work *Geoponica* for Ioanos Laskaris'. Michail Trivolis wrote also the date of the binding of the codex: 'in the year since the birth of Christ 1498, the month of June, 21st'.

² The next note in Greek, handwritten by Mathew Devari, explains that from A. Naugerii the manuscript went into the hands of cardinal Nicollo Ridolfi (d. 1550). After the death of I. Laskaris it was no longer his in possession, but part of the collection of valuable manuscripts of N. Ridolfi; the latter became part of the collection of the French marshal Pierre Strozzi (1550-1558), and later part of the library of Catarina Medici (1558-1589), which in 1599 became part of the French Royal – what is today Paris National Bibliotheque: thus catalogued since 1604. Today it can be found recorded as Gr. 1994. (Fonkich, B. L. (2003). *Grecheskie rukopisi i dokumenty v Rossii v XVI-XVIIIv*. Moscow. 77-79).

³ According to his letter to I. Grigoropulos from 29th March 1498 (as well as to a minor canon Nicolla Tarassci in Vercelli), M. Trivolis was also invited to work with professor Antonio Urceo Codro at Bologna University but he decided not to do it.

⁴ For example: 'Dorileos Trivolis, lakedemonian from Sparta' (to I. Grigoropolis, Mirandola, March 1500).

⁵ Also preserved is a letter from 1500 that M. Mousouros wrote to M. Trivolis to Mirandola (Ambrosiana, Mss. Id. 2002).

Manuzio in Venice and with Greek colleagues Iaconos Grigoropoulos, Zacharias Kalliergis, Cretan calligrapher and founder of the Greek Press in Medici Rome, Nikolas Vlastos, as well as the scholars of the Moschos family (Georgi, Ioannis, Demetrios), and Scipion Carteromach, correspondence with whom is most widely preserved from that period. At the end of 1490s he returned to Florence where he regularly attended public sermons of Girolamo Savonarola and was present at his public execution. Michail Trivolis, who was a friend also with the Camaldolese monk Pietro Candido (Leuchaimon), entered San Marco Monastery in Florence himself in 1502, exactly four years after the death of G. Savonarola (1498), but remained there less than a year. However, he left the monastery before being ordained as a priest (he was registered in 'Liber vestitionum' as 'Mihail, son of Emanuil from Arta' only under the 'Vestizione' section, and not also under the section 'Professione', which is evidence of him being a novice). In his letter from Florence in 1504 to S. Carteromach he complained about illnesses which, in our opinion, are more closely to a different way of saying something that was difficult to express at the time. He writes:

'Apart from that I have neither time nor peace in my soul and mind, not only because I have not found it with anyone in here, but also because I am being tossed and turned like a ship shaken by changeable winds out on the open sea. Therefore I shall not write anything else but only that I have given up monastic life due to illnesses that plague me, and not for any other reason.'

We are speaking of circumstances which led people to consciously decide not to follow God's, but human laws only. In this letter, compared to previous ones, the words addressed to God are obviously present. Therefore it is not surprising that Michail Trivolis felt that the printing house of A. Manuzio was the only place where he could find soul comfort. In his letter to S. Carteromach, addressed to the venetian Printing House of Aldo Manuzio (it was also his last station on Italian ground), Michail literally begged him: 'In front of the face of the Redeemer himself, please, take over my work, as you have started, save me from my present burden and in some way or another, lead me to you all.'¹

The latest researches proved that Michail's commendable handwriting was used by A. Manuzio for the print of at least one the Greek editions. He edited the most distinguished pieces of newly printed books, while at that time in the workshop of Aldo Manuzio was formatting a programme of 'Nel' Accademia' and the first Greek orthodox community was being set up around 1500 in Venice. Aldo Manuzio himself designed a special plan for the printing of Greek liturgical books which, however, for unknown reasons, never took shape. In fact, two earlier attempts to print liturgical books for the Orthodox Christians had also failed. The first was by the Cretan Georgios Alexandrou who printed *Psalterion* in Venice in 1486 and the other was by Aldo Manuzio

¹ *Prepodobny Maksim Grek. Sochinenia. T. I.* (2008). Moscow. 99. (further on: MG 2008).

himself.¹ The fact that Michail Trivolis had his book of *Dioscorid* printed in 1499 in Manuzio's printing house proves that he was most probably transcribing the oldest and the most sought-after Greek manuscripts, some of them he was asked by Florentine thinkers to even translate into Latin, since he is believed to have been included also in the circle of educated men who were assigned to compose the famous Medici library.

Nevertheless, Michail Trivolis decided to return to native Greece where in 1506 joined the Vatopedi Monastery, dedicated to Annunciation - on the Holy Mount Athos. He was ordained and was given the monastic name Maxim consecrated following the monastic example of the Saint Maximus Confessor. In the monastery he first developed his extensive writing, translation and transcribing activities to which he most probably added acquisition of the knowledge of Slavic languages. In 1970 were published² documents from a small Athonite archive of Kastamonit for the first time, which contain also information of a manuscript written in March 1047 and recopied in the XVI. century. This is a record of protos Pheophilakt in which a monk Arsenios is confirmed to be the owner and igumen of the monastery of St. Anthony Neakitu, and has an inscription in the lines 26-27 announcing that a document from the XII. century was ordered to be copied by a monk Maxim from the Monastery of Vatopedi on request of the monks from the Kastamonitou monastery. The comparison of the handwriting with that in the letters of Michail Trivolis from the years 1498-1504, made by B. L. Fonkich,³ confirmed that the copy was, indeed, copied by the hand of the monk Maxim Trivolis, and it could be understood as the first known autograph from Athos of Maxim. Obviously this old paper, already quite damaged at that time (cf. an inscription of (Maxim): 'Where there were because of corruptions in the original manuscript left admissions and was the consequence broken, it is made a blank space'), was of significant value in the contradictions related to the properties of two monasteries Kastamonitou and Zoograph in the years 1512-1513. The latter proves that Maxim had access to the oldest documents of the Holy Mount Athos. It is understandable that the transcript of the damaged old document was entrusted a person who had the knowledge and various written skills as well as experience in international relations.

Maxim, who wrote *Elegiacs on the Grand Rhetor Manuel of Corinth* (1482-1530-1), who was connected with the ruler of Walachia Neagoe Basarab, and *Verses on Patriarch Ioachim I*, the patriarch who received funerary honors from the Walachian ruler Radu cel Mare (d. 1508), managed to establish strong bonds with, at the time the most important preserver of the Eastern Christian tradition, Patriarch Niphon II, who was a metropolitan in Walachia and for whom Maxim wrote many poems, dated to the years 1506-1518. Therefore the mention of the prophet Elijah in *The First Epitaph on Patriarch Niphon II*,

¹ Layton E. (1981) 'Notes on Some printers and Publishers of 16th century Modern Greek Books in Venice.' *Thesaurismata* 18. 120.

² Oikonomides N. (1978). *Actes de Kastamonitou*. Paris (Archives de l'Athos, IX), 25-30, 56-59. Pl. I, X.

³ Fonkich, 2003, 57-58.

dated after 11th August 1508, the year of the death of Patriarch Niphon, could not be interpreted just simply as a biblical reminiscence but a particular form announcement. Moreover, it seems clear that improving reading¹ of *Another Epigram on Niphon's reliquary*, i. e. 'I, the golden reliquary, conceal within -m y s e l f- the Archiepriest of Byzantium Niphon, more precious than gold', could be an implicit mention of the presence of 'the second' person (in the circumstances of funeral honours – only the Athonite monk Maxim could be close to the Patriarch Niphon II). If that is true, that could explain the image on the inner side of the cover of the golden box for the reliquary in the Athos monastery of Dionysiou² (y. 1515), where beside the iconic figure of Niphon there is the person who indeed could not be Neagoe Basarab,³ as it is written on the image, followed by an inscription, but might be the faithfully incipient Maxim. According to this addition, we could respond to the propose the question of a scholar⁴, whether Maxim Trivolis in his Athonite period did not only have direct contacts with Walachia; he was also present at the consecration of the Church at Curtea de Arges (only later restored by Neagoe Basarab) together with twenty abbots of Athonite monasteries, in the entourage of the Protos Gabriel of Athos, who was present on August 15, 1517. If this is true, this was exactly during his journey to Moscow for which he departed from Athos in June of 1516, stayed in Constantinople in April 1517 and was present in the Crimea early in 1518.⁵

Therefore it is not surprising that Maxim was sent as a translator from Greek to Old Church Slavonic language from Athos to Moscow when an invitation from Russia from the Vasili III was sent. Not only the vicinity of the Serbian Hilandar Monastery at Athos, but also the Athonite archives, which kept the oldest Slavic, and even Glagolitic manuscripts, were possible records from which Maxim studied Slavic elements of liturgical language of Eastern Christian liturgy. The information that he learned the Slavic language, not with the help of Greek, but Latin⁶ could be explained not only by the above mentioned contacts with Walachian and others eastern Christian church centres, but also by the vicinity of northern Italian cities to Slavic lands, particularly Venice where between 1500 and 1518 an increase in church-literary activities could be noticed. The language of the first prints of Slavic books in Venice are evidence of a characteristics, noticed in the language that Maxim wrote, which was presumably the church liturgical language, used among Slavs during the period of IX-XV century. Therefore it seems more probable that Maxim kept in touch with his Italian contacts also during his monastic life at Athos, and it is even more certain that on his way to Moscow

¹ See Ševčenko, 1997, 68--69.

² *Tresors de Mont Athos*. (1997). Thessaloniki.

³ Sinigalia T. (1998) 'Une Hypothese iconographique.' *Revue Roumaine d'Historie de l'Art*. Tome XXXV. 39-43.

⁴ Ševčenko, 1997, 68.

⁵ Cf. Ševčenko I. (1997). 'On the Greek Poetic Output of Maksim Grek.' *Byzantinoslavica* LVIII. 63-64.

⁶ Cf. Sinicina N. V. (2008). *Ranee tvorcestvo Maksima Greka*. In: *Prepodobnyj Maksim Grek. Sochinenia. T. I.* (2008). Moscow.19.

he made a stop in Venice where he could obtain printed books in Greek, in Latin and as well as in Old Church Slavonic which he took to Russia. Therefore he used Latin also to explain the meaning of the biblical (Greek) word to his Russian assistants who translated it into Russian Church Slavic – when he was in Moscow already in 1519 translating (from Greek – threw Latin – to Old Church Slavonic) the *New Testament* and in 1521 the extensive annotated *Psalter*.

The knowledge of the Latin language was also the reason why he was in 1525 at the Moscow church council accused of supposed heretical translation errors, and imprisoned. When he was convicted the metropolitan archbishop Daniil banned him from receiving communion (Eucharist) and attending church liturgy, which seemed most unjust for the Orthodox monk. In 1531 charges against him were renewed. He was reproached with even more ridiculous charges: he was suspected to be a spy for the Islamic court¹ because he was supposedly in possession of a translation of a letter by Suleiman the Magnificent addressed to the Doge of Venice Antonio Grimani (the father of the cardinal Domenico Grimani, 1461-1523), dated 28th January 1522, in which he gives notice of the conquest of Rhodos which formerly belonged to the Catholic order of Ioannites.² The truth was that Maksim Grek, as he was called in Russia, had a strong influence on the intellectual Muscovite court elite: in the beginning he publicly discussed theological problems and difficulties of biblical language. And thus he soon noticed that the Russians lacked not only the basic knowledge of an Orthodox theology, but were also not familiar with the European currents of the time about the rights of folk and national language. With his monastic ideology of the Holy Mountain Maksim Grek, advising the emperor Vasili III to follow the example of Patriarch Photius of Constantinople (whose documents and letters Maksim also was translating) and not approving the second marriage of Vasili III, was spreading a mindset opposite to the one of the prevailing church-governing authority since he defended non-privatisation and non-ownership of church society (particularly the monastic one). Crucial in this sense was therefore his opposition to the tendency of independence of the Russian Orthodox Church (Autocephaly) – from the church of Constantinople, having sensed in the emperor ideology serious contradictions with the basic Eastern Christian Orthodox doctrine. But if not more than the dogmatological question of independent Russian church, then at least equally painful, and theologically even more crucial was the accusation from the second church council against Maksim, which was charging him that he made heretical errors in the translation of the hagiographic text *The Life of the Mother of God* from *The Hagiographic Collection of Symeon Metaphrast* (preceding the Hagiography of Dionysius the Areopagite).

¹ Cf. Among his translations a letter of the Pope Eneo Silvio Piccollomini About the Turkish Siege of Constantinople was also found.

² Sinicina N. V. (2008). *Maksim Grek*. Moscow. 176-177.

The importance of this contradiction with the obviously canonical theological content and therefore his own allegations are evident after a detailed research of the manuscripts of his texts (but until today it seemed that remained outside the scope of scholars). Namely, after ten years of imprisonment Maksim Grek's punishment was assuaged in as much as he was probably in autumn 1536, when he was moved from the Volokolamsk Monastery to Otroch Monastery in Tver, allowed to write.

Since then he wrote numerous documents which he as author alone edited several times during his life, as well as collected them three times, leaving behind his three most well-known collections. In his texts he is referencing to the history of his own land, for example Alexander Macedonian, Aristotle, Tukididus etc. Moreover, he worked on dictionary-linguistic editions where he collected lists of words by adding Latin, Greek and Slavic equivalents. Found were also his rare Greek samples of texts which he used either to teach Greek to Russian scholars, or he wrote down or transcribed for other reasons. In 1551 when he was transferred to the Monastery Holy Trinity of Sergei Lavra and presumably almost liberated, he translated once again the whole *Liturgical Psalter* (without commentaries), at the end of which examples of the oldest regular liturgical patterns of the Greek Orthodox Church in the most pure Slavic language analogues can be found. If in his early texts he largely fought against the Latin addition to the Credo of Christian faith 'filioque', his texts with a later date are secretly permeated with his objections to the diminishing of the holiness of the Mother of God. There was a popular belief among Russian scientists at the time that in his text *About This Unfortunate Century* Maksim Grek portrayed the Russian state in the character of 'the woman in black, the sad widow, lonely by the significant road-way which runs into a traveller and tells him about the miseries of the world and laments about ruthless rulers. Her name is -- Basileusa. However, in our opinion this literary portrait presents the unification of iconic portraying the Mother of God with an iconographic ideality of unchangeable gazing of Early Christian beauty; in other words, Maksim Grek synthetically supplemented the knowledge about iconographical portraying of the Mother of God, marked by painful absence of the Son of God, which actually proved Early Christian inseparability of Mother from the Son, more precisely those well-known also in the West (Pieta, Dormition, Noli me tangere), with the experience of the significant East prayer-monastic practice of requiring mutual communication (whence the dialogue between two human protagonists, portrayed for that reason only). Studying iconographic motifs he precisely defined the meaning of *Pieta* (which he explained by including the Latin meaning of this expression which in the XIV. century started to slightly distinguish from its meaning in Italian) which the Russians understood as dejection. He also put into words the tradition about the Athonite icon of the Iviron Monastery, as well as in that time also Pachomios Rousanos,¹ the Athonite monk whose exceptional work was selecting among canonical and apocryphal texts which he consequently

¹ Cf. Chryssochoidis K. (2005). 'The Portaitissa Icon at Iveron Monastery.' In: *Images of Mother of God*. Ashgate. 135-137.

allowed to print in Venice in the printing house of Vinzentio Vukovic and which became a part of the body of the most read orthodox Slavic books in the XVI. century. Maksim Grek in one of his texts was too explaining the poetics of the verse acrostic which the authors-hymnographers presumably used to protect themselves from 'those who look for the glory of others'. He offered also his own interpretation of the typographical printing sign-symbol of A. Manuzio (as Erasmus of Rotterdam did at the time) showing a clearly expressed metaphor of human life and faith – in the image of anchor:

'This Aldus Manutius the Roman - imagined in his wisdom the following very wise idea, to remember with this story each gentleman as well as ignoramus how he can reach eternal life, if he really wants it. And thus with the anchor the firmness and probity of faith is portrayed, and with the fish the soul of a man, and through this it teaches us: as the iron anchor strengthens and makes stronger the ship in the sea and saves it from any sea waves and winds, so is the fear of God unfeigned, in human souls firmly anchored in each and every right, truth and God's commandments, safes these from every attack of visible and invisible enemy'.¹

In his letter to the Prince P. I. Shuiski in 1542² (the Greek textual base was also found) Maksim mentioned that he is aware that 'his mention of his return to the Holy Mount is unpleasant to them', but he only asks for the right to receive the communion, which he has not received for 17 years to be given back to him, and to have returned his own Greek books which were taken away from him soon after he came to Moscow. In his letter to the new Metropolitan Macarius (1542-1563) he therefore only asked for the right to receive Eucharist. Macarius instructed him to turn directly to Daniil who was still alive at the time, to whom Maksim wrote:

'Alone, my Lord, when we both stand in front of the Final Verdict, will know and see the word which will repay everything to both of us. I am saying this only because I was accused of heresy without reasons and forbid me Him to receive holy godly gifts'.³

On this letter of Maksim Grek former Metropolitan Daniil answered with a blasphemous and shameful proposal to misappropriate the truth: referring to the 13th rule of the I. world church council (renewed in those years at the church council in Trent),⁴ according to which he could pretend to be terminally ill and thus attempt to receive communion.⁵ The Metropolitan Macarius was

¹ MG 2008: 345.

² Fonkich, 2003,72—81.

³ Zhurova L. I. (2011). *Avtorski tekst Maksima Greka: rukopisnaja i literaturnaja tradicii. C. 2. Sochinenia*. Novosibirsk.143.

⁴ Delumeau J. (1979). *Des religions et des hommes*. Paris: 308.

⁵ Kartashev A. V. (2007). *Očerki po istorii russkoi cerkvi*. T. 1. Minsk: Belorusskij ekzarhat. 493--502.

the one who enabled him to attend liturgy and receive communion. Despite the fact that during the court procedure high respect to Maksim Grek was indirectly expressed, the Russian authorities were overwhelmed by fear that the truth about their treatment of the Greek monk might come out (even outside the Russian borders), therefore he was never allowed to return home. Russian authorities literally ignored written requests of two Byzantine patriarchs: in his letter in 1545 the Alexandrine Patriarch Jeremiah called Maksim Grek 'the great teacher of the Orthodox religion', and Dionysius of Constantinople in his letter the following year expressed not only respect to their monk, supported with signatures of fifteen Metropolitans, but also pointed out the obvious Muscovite pitilessness and imprudent disregard for the human right to die on native ground.

In the text *About the Athonite Monasteries*, in which Maksim Grek emphasised the strictness of mutual help and common possession, and mentioned also Patriarch Niphon II¹ and his own connectedness with the Dionysiu Monastery (dedicated to John the Baptist, *Intercessory Canon to John the Baptist*² Maxim Trivolis wrote during his Athonite period), he described also the exact arrangement rule of monastery tasks with absence of the hierarchical prescriptions and the history of the Holy Mount which he directly links to the patronage of the Mother of God. About the establishing of the Vatopedi Monastery he was narrating with the following words:

'The second is the divine and holy monastic community of the Pure Mother of God of Revelation called Vatopedin, lying to the midnight side of the mountain higher than the sea, as if lightning came to a halt, thus it is surrounded by high walls and nine towers in the shape of three angles /.../ The founder was, as delivered by blessed fathers, Vatos, somebody from Spain, a brother of the great Teodosio, therefore it is older than the holy Lavra as much as Teodosio is older than Nikiforos. But the sea army of unholy Arabs, who ruled at the time, devastated it of its former beauty, leaving it desolate for many years. It was restored under the emperor Nikiforos Phoka in silver with five men from the Adriatic Sea who were also monks of this decent dwelling, lit by God and celebrated monastery of the Greek empire, among emperors whose respected Andronicus Palaiologus, your forefather (i.e. Vasili III) received great mercy from the venerated icon of Mother of God, as he himself testified in his document sealed with gold. With many and great gentle deeds lord Ioann himself was emperor her, strengthened it and returned it its beauty it once had with the help of the esteemed Pure Mother of God. And today it exhausted, like saint Lavra, since they were no longer given charity by emperors and devout despots.'³

¹ 'In our days there were abundant gifts of the holy Patriarch Niphon who piously passed away in this monastery and hallowed from God was celebrated.' – MG 2008: 124.

² Vatopedi, Mss.1016.

³ MG 2008: 123.

In the text *A Story Terrible and Worthy of Remembering* with a later date in which was presented Maksim's view of those preservers of the holy tradition among Catholic orders who, in his opinion, deserved Christian glory, he recorded two monk orders: in the first part of the Story he described the city of Paris when he was talking about the Benedictine monastic order, and in the second part Florence, the description of which he started with the following words: 'Florence, a city the most beautiful and the best there are in Italy and I have ever seen'. He was narrating about the Dominican order of the San Marco Monastery in Florence, including in the story examples from everyday Florentine life and details from the life of G. Savonarola. Thus it seems that Maksim Grek, who wrote in Greek and Slavic only, after the inclusion also the Latin language (it being a language of diplomacy and business communication for him until he came to Russia), which he understood mostly as the language of the oldest Christian community, i.e. canonical part of Roman, managed to realize theological and exegetical correction of the language of Church Slavonic of previous translators and recorders. He polished the Slavic language to the extent that it could serve the Christian God in the Holy Trinity. In the prayer poem *Canon to Sacred and Saint Spirit Paraclitus*, reflecting the basic principles of creating the artistic prayer Akathist, in between the persons of the Holy Trinity, Maksim Grek found a place also for a suitable singing of praise of the Mother of God – as the last hymn (hallelujah), an expression of direct gratitude to Christ's Mother for protecting and preserving of a believer's soul intact. By that he reestablished for the Mother of God that position that She should have inside the basic Christian unit, that is the family – the role of mercy, protection and also a supply of immortality of the soul, and protected Her from leading Russian worship into state support. At the same time he managed to realize the Byzantine ideal of gratitude to the Mother of God – Theotokos, which successfully held together the broken up Byzantine empire and only because of that became a state cult – but not just of the state and forming the state – of maintaining soul peace. By such theological-poetic manner Maksim Grek not only revealed devout creativity of the first Slavic church poet Constantine the Philosopher (a brother of Methodius),¹ but also created in the Slavic language an exact equivalent to the oldest patterns of Christian liturgy as can be found in Greek liturgical manuscripts from the IX. century and Byzantine and Roman catacomb portrayals. Thus, according to the so-called Re-naiissance ideology he could be considered as a typical Renaissance man, yet he was indeed primarily managed to revive truly the Christian Renaissance, namely, with his written records he mostly presented the dark side of that time when the pristine Christian knowledge was endangered.

In Greek language only he was fully capable of releasing creative formation of individually understood word forms. Only at the end of 1984 in a Vienna

¹ Jakobson R. (1985). *Selected Writings. VI. Early Slavic Paths and Crossroads. P. I.* Berlin. 306.

library were found two extensive poems in Greek manuscript.¹ Maksim created over eight hundred lines in Greek elegiac distich.² The 'Letter of Presentation' reveals that the Greek poems were sent in 1551/2, signed with the name 'Maximos, the one that was once a Helladian, and is now a Hyperborean' - from Moscow, addressed to some 'Macrobios'. Scientists have failed to find a known person who would have lived in the XVI. century with that name.³

Results & Discussion

Maksim Grek, who could be understood as one of theoretical ideologists of the arising modern Europe (a forerunner of spiritual poetry, translator of the Byzantine Lexicon *Suide*) actually stood firmly by the rules of the earliest establishing of Christianity as the world religion. The most important fact, in our opinion, therefore is that Maksim Grek managed to preserve in such a difficult period, as well as develop the canonical Christian tradition. With his versatile (theological and grammatical) spiritual work he built the formation of the future Russian theosophical philosophy, and with a high liturgical norm at the same time superior and live language he enabled the final formation of the Russian standard language. Although he influenced a limited number of elite Russian intellectuals in the long run (Ivan IV, Andrei Kurbski, Protopop Avvakum), his role in the Russian history is actually ambiguous and has therefore often been brought into question. Maksim Grek (under that name he died in 1556 in Moscow) was a Greek monk, primarily a theologian, grammarian, poet and writer, thus also an important scholar of the age, he lived, and that is why a representative of the so-called Renaissance period, but indeed, truly the son of the Macedonian Greek land whose life as well as work remain insufficiently researched to present date.

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¹ Bushkovitch P. (1993). 'Maksim Grek—poet 'giperboreec'. *Trudy Otdela Drevnerusskoj Literaturny* 47 (1993): 215-228.

² 'In comparison with Greek contemporary scholars: Ianos Laskaris produced 691 lines of epigrams, Demetrios Moschos wrote epyllion 461hexameters long hexameters and twenty epigrams in elegiac distichs, Mark Mousouros wrote only 200 lines'. (Ševčenko, 1997, 61).

³ It seems that the secret addressee was found in the heart of Europe (but that remains to be confirmed in our future research).

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