

Anno XV

Numero XXVII

Dicembre 2018



“Byzantium and the Slavs”

2003-2018

Rivista online registrata, codice ISSN 2240-5240

**In collaborazione con:**

*Oxford University Byzantine Society (University of Oxford)*



*Istituto Romeno di Cultura e Ricerca Umanistica di Venezia*



*Association des étudiants du monde byzantin*



*Student Network for Byzantine and Medieval Study (University of Cyprus)*



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**SKLAVINIA IN THEOPHYLACT SIMOCATTA,  
(HOPEFULLY) FOR THE LAST TIME**

*Florin Curta*

Ο χειρότερος κουφός είν' αυτός που δε θέλει ν' ακούσει.

**Abstract:** A recent debate over a passage in Theophylact Simocatta's *History* mentioning Sklavinia (the land of the Sclavenes) has brought to scholarly attention the ancient author's narrative strategies and style. While the adjective σκλαυήνιος, which derives from the ethnic name of the Sclavenes, is nowhere to be found either in Theophylact's work or in the entire medieval Greek literature, the nouns πληθύς and πλῆθος are used in a variety of meanings, ranging from "horde" to "troops." All adjectives derived from ethnic names (such as Avar or Saracene) are in -ικός, not -ιος. More importantly, the verb in the passage in question is στρατοπεδεύω, which means "to encamp" or "to move camp." In that respect, the correct translation for the passage is: "Peter prepared to encamp opposite the multitude in Sklavenia." In this context, "opposite" refers to the river Danube, which the Roman army was about to cross so as to wage war on the Sclavenes.

**Keywords:** Theophylact Simocatta, Sclavenes, ethnicity, barbarians

Theophylact Simocatta is quite a trendy figure these days. Several passages in his primary work have triggered scholarly debates. The controversy surrounding the passage later adopted by Theophanes Confessor, which he slightly modified to include three words in vulgar Latin ("torna, torna, fratre"), is probably the longest, if not the most famous.<sup>1</sup> Much more recent, and less intense, are two other controversies: one

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<sup>1</sup> NĂSTUREL 1956; ROSETTI 1960; GLODARIU 1964; MIHĂESCU 1976; BALDWIN 1997; TANAȘOCA 1993; SARAMANDU 2002 and ID. 2012.

regarding the location of Zikideva, the other regarding the three Slavene men from the shore of the western Ocean.<sup>2</sup> In both cases, each opposing side presented its arguments, followed by one reply, after which the debate was closed. There was no nitpicking over tiny details and no overbearing desire to win the debate at any cost. This is why the polemic, with Andreas Gkoutzioukostas at the heart of it, over the passage containing the first mention of Sklavinia seems to me drawn out. In fact, it has become a dialogue of the deaf.

In his most recent salvo, Gkoutzioukostas hints at “certain philological oversights of modern scholars” that “caused a debate” and “created a problem that actually does not exist.”<sup>3</sup> I could not agree with him more, although for very different reasons, including for some reasons Gkoutzioukostas may not have been aware of when writing his reply. I have already recapitulated the history of this debate, but for the sake of clarity, let me reiterate the issue at stake. The passage in question is in Book VIII of Theophylact Simocatta’s *History* which describes the actions of Peter, the general whom Emperor Maurice has sent in 602 to fight against the Avars and the Slavenes across the Danube frontier of the Empire. Peter, after receiving the order to leave Adrianople, was getting ready κατὰ τῆς Σκλαυηνίας πληθύος στρατοπεδεύεσθαι.<sup>4</sup> Evangelos Chrysos and Andreas Gkoutzioukostas believe, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, that the word Σκλαυηνία is an adjective (“the Slavene horde”), and not the name of a territory (“the horde of [or in] the land of the Slavenes”). The main problem with their position is that there is no such adjective (σκλαυήνιος) either in the rest of Theophylact Simocatta’s work or anywhere else in the Greek literature written in the Middle Ages.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Zikideva: DINCHEV 1997 and ID. 2013; OLTEANU 2007. For the controversy surrounding the three Slavene men from the western Ocean, see WOŁOSZYN 2014 and ID. 2016; PROSTKO-PROSTYŃSKI 2015.

<sup>3</sup> GKOUTZIOUKOSTAS 2017, 12. For the earlier phases of the controversy, see CHRYSOS 2007; CURTA 2011 and ID. 2016; GKOUTZIOUKOSTAS 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Theophylact Simocatta, *History* VIII 5,10, in DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 293.

<sup>5</sup> Gkoutzioukostas believes that the adjective “S(c)lavinius” exists in Latin. To support that contention, he cites a passage from the *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum* in which “a certain Greek” named Methodius is accused of having invented “Sclavinis litteris” (LOŠEK 1997, 130; WOLFRAM 2012, 78). But the adjective in this case is “Sclavinus,” not “Sclavinus.” Moreover, the unknown author of the *Conversio*, writing in ca. 870, knew very well the noun Sclavinia, for he used it twice (LOŠEK 1997, 112 and ID. 116; WOLFRAM 2012, 68 and ID. 70, with 151 for the territorial meaning of the word). That the use of the adjective “Sclavinus” in “Sclavinis litteris” was awkward, if not altogether wrong, results from the adaptation of this phrase in Pope John VIII’s letter to Svatopluk of June 880: “litteras... Sclaviniscas” (Ioannis VIII Papae *Ep.* 255 CASPAR-LAEHR 1928, MGH.VII, 223). In that same letter, the pope wrote of “Sclauinica lingua” (*ibid.* 224). To him

However, the noun is well attested, in both Greek and Latin sources, albeit not before AD 700.

There are no new arguments in Goutzioukostas' article, where he is simply doubling down on his commitment to the adjectival interpretation of Σκλαυηνία. He also provides a rather unconvincing argumentation for his earlier remarks, according to which “the noun πληθύς/πληθος/πλήθη is normally followed by a genitive of content.”<sup>6</sup> This is supposed to support the idea that in the passage in question, the adjective σκλαυηνια simply replaces the genitive of content, (τῶν) Σκλαυηνῶν. But a quick glimpse at the evidence proves this not to be case. As indicated in the reliable thesaurus of Theophylact Simocatta's work compiled by Alessio Antonio De Siena, the noun πληθος appears 108 times in the *History*, 66 times (more than 60 percent) without the genitive of content.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the noun is “normally” used without the genitive of content, despite Gkoutzioukostas' <sup>claims</sup> to the contrary. In this usage, πληθος usually means “multitude, mob, masses.”<sup>8</sup> Much more infrequently the word is used without a genitive of content, in the sense of a “throng.”<sup>9</sup> However, sometimes, it bears the meaning of “a great number” of certain objects or a “great quantity” of a certain substance (such as snow), and in that respect the noun is commonly accompanied by a genitive of content.<sup>10</sup> This is most likely the reason for which πληθος is also employed

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(or to the scribe in his chancery), the correct form of the (ethnic) adjective derived from the name of the Sclavenes was “Sclauinicus,” not “Sclavinus.” At <sup>any</sup> rate, neither Pope John, nor the author of the *Conversio* knew of the adjective “Sclavinus”. Such an adjective does not exist.

<sup>6</sup> GKOUTZIOUKOSTAS 2015, 642.

<sup>7</sup> DE SIENA 2007, 160.

<sup>8</sup> Theophylact Simocatta, *History* I 2, 4; II 4, 10; II 15, 15 and 16; II 17, 5; III 1, 12; III 5, 9; III 18, 13; III 12, 11; III 14, 14; IV 3, 6; IV 7, 4; VI 3, 3; VI 9, 9; VII 1, 9; VII 6, 6; VII 10, 3; VIII 4, 11; VIII 3, 7; VIII 5, 10; VIII 7, 10; VIII 8, 8; VIII 8, 11; VIII 9, 3 and 4; VIII 9, 7; VIII 9, 9; VIII 9, 12; VIII 10, 3; VIII 10, 8; VIII 13, 8; VIII 11, 1; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 43, 97, 99, 104, 111, 118, 135, 139, 149, 153, 162, 224, 225, 233, 247, 262, 287, 291, 293, 297-304, and 310. It is worth noting that out of 32 occurrences of πληθος in the sense of “multitude”, without the genitive of content, 15 appear in Book VIII, the same book in which Theophylact wrote of κατὰ τῆς Σκλαυηνίας πληθῦος στρατοπεδεύεσθαι. By contrast, the noun πληθος with the meaning “multitude” is used only 5 times with a genitive of content (*History* II 11, 1; III 5, 7; III 12, 4; VII 7, 1 and VIII 7, 11; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 91, 118, 134, 256, and 297).

<sup>9</sup> Theophylact Simocatta, *History* II 8, 1; II 11, 14; II 10, 8; III 1, 9 and V 16, 10; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 83, 90, 93, 111, and 219. Again, πληθος in the sense of “throng” is used only twice with a genitive of content (*History* II 10, 10 and V 16, 9; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 90 and 219).

<sup>10</sup> Theophylact Simocatta, *History* V 6, 1; V 7, 6; V 9, 9; VI 3, 9; VI 9, 5; VII 2, 2; VII 3, 6; VII 17, 13; VIII 3, 10; VIII 6, 1 and VIII 9, 1; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 198, 201, 205, 226, 237, 247, 250, 277, 288, 293, and 299. The word in that meaning appears only once without a genitive of content (Id., *History* VII 17, 41; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 282).

to mean a “herd (of animals)”<sup>11</sup> as well as a “horde” of barbarians,<sup>12</sup> in particular Avars<sup>13</sup> and Sclavenes.<sup>14</sup> The “hordes” of Sclavenes are typically passive, for they are always the object of somebody else’s action: Comentiolus drives them back; they are ordered to cross the Danube; they are made a feast for the (Roman) sword; or they happen to be in the military procession of Ardagastus.<sup>15</sup> Πλῆθος can also mean troops, either Roman or barbarian.<sup>16</sup> However, the word is also used for “common people” or “population” in general.<sup>17</sup>

There are almost three times fewer instances in which the noun πληθός is used, and the majority of them are without the genitive of content (21 out of 39 cases, i.e., 54 percent).<sup>18</sup> As such, the word is often employed to mean “army,” “reinforcement(s),” or simply “body of soldiers.”<sup>19</sup> Like πλῆθος, πληθός may also refer to a “horde,”<sup>20</sup> a “throng,”<sup>21</sup> or, much more frequently, a “multitude.”<sup>22</sup> And as with πλῆθος, the latter meaning may be extended to imply either a “herd (of animals)”<sup>23</sup> or a “mob.”<sup>24</sup> Finally,

<sup>11</sup> Id., *History* II 2, 4; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 72.

<sup>12</sup> Id., *History* VII 5, 5; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 253.

<sup>13</sup> Id., *History* VIII 5, 5 and VIII 6, 1; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 292 and 293.

<sup>14</sup> Id., *History* I 7, 5; VI 4, 4; VI 11, 5; VI 7, 5 and VII 2, 15; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 53, 226, 232, 242, and 249. There is no “horde of Sclavenes” in Book VIII, which invalidates Gkoutzioukostas’ argument that Theophylact used “the adjective Σκλαυηνίας to modify the noun πληθός” in order to avoid “monotony and repetition better than [sic!] using a noun again” (GKOUTZIOUKOSTAS 2017, 8).

<sup>15</sup> The only active role of the Slavene hordes is at VII 2, 15 (DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 249), where they direct their force against Byzantium.

<sup>16</sup> Theophylact Simocatta, *History* II 9, 6; III 7, 3; IV 15, 15; V 10, 9; VI 8, 1; VI 11, 3; VII 1, 3; VII 5, 2; VII 12, 3; VII 13, 1; VIII 6, 7; VIII 6, 8 and VIII 7, 7; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 86, 123, 183, 207, 234, 242, 246, 253, 265, 267 and 294-296.

<sup>17</sup> Id., *History* III 16, 12; V 7, 3 and VIII 9, 2; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 145, 201, and 300.

<sup>18</sup> DE SIENA 2007, 160.

<sup>19</sup> Theophylact Simocatta, *History* I 9, 7; II 9, 2 and 8; III 17, 4; IV 4, 11; V 6, 8; V 9, 8; V 11, 3; VI 4, 11; VI 6, 3; VII 1, 4 and 5; VII 10, 2 and VII 13, 11; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 56, 86, 87, 145, 180, 199, 205, 209, 227, 230, 239, 246, and 269. There is no case of πληθός as “army” or “reinforcements” in Book VIII.

<sup>20</sup> Id., *History* II 15, 3 and VII 4, 13; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 99 and 252. Again, there is no occurrence of πληθός as “horde” in Book VIII.

<sup>21</sup> Id., *History* II 2, 6; II 3, 6 and II 8, 8; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 73, 74 and 85.

<sup>22</sup> Id., *History* II 10, 9; II 3, 9; III 7, 9; III 18, 14; IV 1, 3; V 1, 9 and V 16, 10; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 74, 90, 123, 124, 149, 189, and 219.

<sup>23</sup> Id., *History* VI 2, 2 (DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 222).

<sup>24</sup> Id., *History* VIII 12, 11 and 12 (DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 308).

just like *πλῆθος*, *πληθύς* may indicate “troops,” in general.<sup>25</sup> However, unlike *πλῆθος*, the noun *πληθύς* may occasionally be modified by an adjective, either “Roman” (*Ῥωμαϊκή*)<sup>26</sup> or “barbarian (*βαρβαρική*).<sup>27</sup>

There is a very interesting case of an army *τῆς Βαβυλονίας*,<sup>28</sup> which is comparable to the “horde” *τῆς Σκλαυηνίας*. Gkoutzioukostas considers *Βαβυλωνία* to be an adjective, similar to his presumption regarding *Σκλαυήνια*. But in addition to the 24 instances of the adjectival use of this word (“Babylonian”), there are also 17 instances in which the same word is used as a proper noun — the “country of Babylon.”<sup>29</sup> In an earlier article, I have suggested that at least in this particular case, what Mary and Michael Whitby translated as “associates from the Babylonian army” should be understood, in fact, as “associated from the army from Babylon(ia).”<sup>30</sup> The only other adjective used multiple times in the entire paragraph (IV 14, 7-14) is “Persian,” with only *Βαβυλωνία* referring specifically to an army (and not just a “group of people,” as Gkoutzioukostas would have it<sup>31</sup>). There is a good reason for this practice, as Theophylact struggled to note the mentioned army as being from Persia, i.e., as troops of Persian origin on the side of Khusro, who was at that time a refugee in the Byzantine Empire. The implication was, of course, that there were other Persians inside Persia who were against Khusro. While *Βαβυλώνιος* may refer to the whole Sassanian Empire, or only to the city of Ctesiphon, its use in this particular paragraph is not simply an archaism. The word serves a specific purpose, namely, to distinguish between Khusro’s Persian enemies and allies. The adjective typically refers to the people<sup>32</sup> and to the

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*, *History* V 9, 8; VI 6, 3; VI 10, 2; VII 1, 4 and 5; VII 14, 8 and VIII 5, 8; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 205, 230, 239, 246, 270, and 292.

<sup>26</sup> *Id.*, *History* III 7, 9; III 15, 8; V 6, 8; V 11, 3; VII 1, 5; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 123, 141, 199, 209, 246.

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*, *History* II 2, 6 (DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 73). There is also a “pedestrian” (*πεζική*) *πληθύς* (*ibid.* V 6, 3; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 230). It is important to note that the noun *πληθύς* does not appear in Book VIII in the company of an adjective — “Roman,” “barbarian,” or “pedestrian”.

<sup>28</sup> *Id.*, *History* IV 14, 11 and VIII 5, 10; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 180 and 293.

<sup>29</sup> DE SIENA 207, 39.

<sup>30</sup> CURTA 2016, 199. For the English translation of that passage, see WHITBY 1986, 125.

<sup>31</sup> GKOUTZIOUKOSTAS 2017, 4.

<sup>32</sup> Theophylact Simocatta, *History* III 8, 10; III 14, 6; IV 3, 3 and V 3, 7; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 139, 148, 175, and 213. Occasionally, only one man can be “Babylonian” (*ibid.* III 18, 6; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 147).

king.<sup>33</sup> “Babylonian” can be the land (or “race, tribe”)<sup>34</sup> and the state,<sup>35</sup> the latter symbolized by the Babylonian scepter.<sup>36</sup> Soldiers, fugitives, forces, and armament can also be Babylonian.<sup>37</sup> Such a complex usage of the adjective Βαβυλώνιος has absolutely no Slavene parallel. There is, in fact, no adjective derived from the ethnic name of the Slavenes, which otherwise appear 35 times in the *History*.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, all other adjectives derived from purely ethnic names (and not from territorial names, such as Βαβυλώνιος) are different from the alleged adjective Σκλαυήνια. For example, the ethnic name of the Avars appears 61 times in the *History*, but there are also 6 cases in which the adjective is used, derived from that ethnic name — Ἀβαρικός.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, the adjectives derived from the ethnic names “Thracian,” “Indian,” “Jew,” “Mede,” “Hun,” “Persian,” and “Saracene” are all adjectives in –ικός, not –ιος.<sup>40</sup> There is no Σαρακήνιος, just as there is no Σκλαυήνιος.

But let us assume for a moment that Σκλαυήνια in κατὰ τῆς Σκλαυηνίας πληθύος στρατοπεδεύεσθαι is an adjective, and not a noun. Gkoutzioukostas believes that Mary and Michael Whitby’s translation is correct: “And so Peter prepared to move camp against the Slavene horde...”<sup>41</sup> What exactly is happening at this point in the narrative? Because of his heavy interest in Σκλαυήνια, Gkoutzioukostas has paid no attention to the verb, and, as a consequence, has misunderstood that part of the text. The translation of the verb στρατοπεδεύω is “to move camp” and it appears 43 times in the *History*.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Id., *History* IV 8, 3 and VIII 1, 5; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 164 and 284). There is, of course, a Babylonian tyrant (Id., *History* IV 16, 13; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 185), as well as a Babylonian dragon (*ibid.* VIII 12, 13; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 308).

<sup>34</sup> Id., *History* IV 3, 6; IV 16, 22 and V 5, 6; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 174, 186, and 216.

<sup>35</sup> Id., *History* IV 4, 17 (DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 157).

<sup>36</sup> Id., *History* IV 13, 11 and IV 16, 6; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 175 and 184. In the latter instance, however, the scepter is “of Babylon(ia)”, rather than “Babylonian”.

<sup>37</sup> Id., *History* III 14, 8; III 15, 8; III 18, 13 and V 10, 12; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 140, 141, 149, and 208.

<sup>38</sup> DE SIENA 2007, 177-178.

<sup>39</sup> DE SIENA 2007, 3. “Avar” are the troops (Theophylact Simocatta, *History* II 10, 12; II 11, 9 and II 12, 7; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 90, 92, and 94), the agreement and truce (with the Avars; Id., *History* VI 6, 14; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 232), the news (about the Avars; Id., *History* V 16, 1; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 218), or the songs (Id., *History* VI 9, 10; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 238).

<sup>40</sup> DE SIENA 2007, 98, 101, 132, 145, 158, and 175.

<sup>41</sup> WHITBY 1986, 217; GKOUTZIOUKOSTAS 2015, 640.

<sup>42</sup> DE SIENA 2007, 181.

Of all those instances, in only two have the translators chosen something else than “to encamp” or “to move camp.” In one case, the translation “were marching” is clearly wrong, because Comentiolus and those with him must have camped “on the left side” of the river to observe the movements of the Avars, which is why, as Theophylact explains, “the Romans hid in the forests of Haemus.” Moreover, the reader is told that three days later, “Comentiolus summoned to his own tent the captains and the tribunes.”<sup>43</sup> This obviously refers to the tent of the commander in the middle of the camp. There is no march involved in that passage, just the setting of the camp. Another passage was also mistranslated, where within one and the same sentence Comentiolus is said to have built a camp in reaction to the Avars moving towards him.<sup>44</sup> In all other cases, the verb στρατοπεδεύω is translated as “to encamp, to camp, or to move camp,” often followed by precise indications of direction<sup>45</sup> or location. The latter may be indicated in reference to a particular place.<sup>46</sup> The precision with which Theophylact indicates location is sometimes remarkable: two miles from a bridge, four miles away, or ten miles from the ramparts of Palastolon.<sup>47</sup> By comparison, “Peter prepared to move camp against the Slavene horde” is very vague.

What does it mean “to move camp against a horde”? Where exactly was Peter getting ready to encamp? Gkoutzioukostas believes that it must have been in the lands to the north of the river Danube, as Peter must have crossed the river between leaving Adrianople and “moving camp against the Slavene horde.”<sup>48</sup> But the text is quite clear:

<sup>43</sup> Theophylact Simocatta, *History* II 12, 9 and 10 (DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 94); WHITBY 1986, 61.

<sup>44</sup> Id., *History* VII 13, 8 (DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 268); WHITBY 1986, 197.

<sup>45</sup> To mount Izala (Theophylact Simocatta, *History*, I 13, 7; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 65), to Martyropolis (*ibid.* III 4, 1; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 115), to the defiles of the Haemus (*ibid.* II 11, 4; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 91), into Albania (*ibid.* III 6, 17; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 122), to Mambrathon (*ibid.* I 15, 14; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 70), to the river Araxes (*ibid.* III 6, 16; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 122), or across the desert (*ibid.* III 10, 6; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 130).

<sup>46</sup> At Sirmium (Theophylact Simocatta, *History*, VI 4, 4; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 226), at Novae (*ibid.* VII 2, 6; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 249), at Nisibis (*ibid.* IV 1, 2 and IV 9, 1; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 149 and 165), in the vicinity of Tomi (*ibid.* VII 13, 2; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972 267), near the fort at Chlomarum (*ibid.* II 7, 6; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 82), or at the river Tissus (*ibid.* VIII 3, 8; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 288). Sometimes the location is without a place name: on the upper slopes of the mountain (*ibid.* II 8, 8; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 85), at the river crossings (*ibid.* VII 4, 13; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 252), very close to the enemy (*ibid.* V 10, 3; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 206), in the vicinity (*ibid.* V 5, 6; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 197), or, simply, “there” (*ibid.* IV 15, 1; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 181).

<sup>47</sup> Theophylact Simocatta, *History* VI 3, 4; VII 1, 4 and VIII 6, 4; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 225, 246, and 294.

<sup>48</sup> GKOUTZIOUKOSTAS 2017, 1 and 8. This is a mistake that Gkoutzioukostas has made twice, in the first article as well (GKOUTZIOUKOSTAS 2015, 639 and 641).

while getting ready to encamp, Peter wrote to Bonosus to ask for ferryboats in order to cross the Danube.<sup>49</sup> The actual crossing was done only later by Godwin. Therefore, when he was setting camp, Peter was on the southern, right bank of the Danube, on Roman territory. If so, why would he encamp “against the Slavene horde”? What Slavene hordes were there in the lands south of the river Danube, against which Peter needed to protect his troops by means of a camp? There is no mention of any Slavenes south of the river Danube in the summer of 602.<sup>50</sup> If the action taken by Peter (encamping) was not against the Slavene horde, from which he was separated by the river Danube, what then is the meaning of *κατὰ τῆς Σκλαυηνίας πληθύος στρατοπεδεύεσθαι*? In my opinion, “against” should be understood here not as “opposing” (as in a battle), but as “opposite” (related to direction). In fact, this passage is remarkably similar to *κατὰ τὰ παρύπτια τοῦ Ἰζαλά*, “(camped) against (i.e., opposite) the foothills of (Mount) Izala,” as well as to *κατὰ Κομεντιόλου*, “against (i.e., opposite) Comentiolus.”<sup>51</sup> In all three cases the location of the camp is described in opposition to another location, and across a more or less visible line of demarcation — the front line in the case of Comentiolus, and the river Danube in Peter’s case. This interpretation is further substantiated by the description elsewhere of the camp being on the other side (*πρὸς τὸ ἀντιπέρας*) of the river.<sup>52</sup>

Could then Peter have moved his camp to that particular location on the right bank of the river Danube, across from the “Slavene horde”? Given the precision with which *στρατοπεδεύω* is used multiple times in the *History*, it is very unlikely that the meaning of *κατὰ τῆς Σκλαυηνίας πληθύος* is actually “against the Slavene horde.” One would have to imagine that the Slavenes have gathered their troops on the other side of the Danube to prevent the Romans from crossing it, and that they could be seen easily from the right bank, in order for Peter to set his camp across from the Slavene horde. In fact,

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<sup>49</sup> Theophylact Simocatta, *History* VIII 5, 10-12; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 293.

<sup>50</sup> Moreover, there is no mention of Slavenes in Book VIII before the passage concerning Peter’s camp. The earlier mention of Slavenes in the *History* is in Book VII (4, 11, where the Slavenes of Peiragast spotted the Roman scouts). In other words, to employ “Slavene horde” at this point demands a great effort from the part of the audience to remember the last time a Slavene horde was mentioned in the text, in order to place it in time and space.

<sup>51</sup> Theophylact Simocatta, *History* II 10, 1 and VII 13, 8; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 88 and 268.

<sup>52</sup> *Id.*, *History* II 11, 9; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 93.

πληθὺς does not mean either “horde” or “army” in this passage, but can only refer to a “multitude.” In other words, Peter encamped across the river Danube from the multitude (of people) in the Sklavinia. The use of a noun for a particular territory derives from the location of the camp itself. Conversely, an ethnic adjective would make no sense whatsoever, for it lacks any spatial precision. There were Sclavenes in many places, and their hordes appear almost everywhere on the map of Theophylact’s narrative of the events in the Balkans. Nonetheless, besides an ἔθνος, ἀγέλαι, as well as γένη,<sup>53</sup> the Sclavenes have lands of their own.<sup>54</sup> Those are the lands where the Roman troops were ordered to winter in 602, so the exact location of Peter’s camp was of crucial importance for the understanding of what would come next in the narrative. Sklavinia — the territory inhabited by the “multitude” of the Sclavenes — is therefore a key component of Theophylact’s narrative strategy. It takes philology, and not merely the knowledge of Greek to understand that. It takes attentive reading of the text in its entirety, and not just selected passages to make a meaning relevant. It takes patience and open-mindedness to avoid a dialogue of the deaf.

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<sup>53</sup> Theophylact Simocatta, *History* II 7, 1; III 4, 7 and VI 6, 2; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 52, 116, and 230.

<sup>54</sup> Id., *History* VII 2, 14 and VIII 6, 2; DE BOOR-WIRTH 1972, 248 and 293.

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## IGNAZIO TESTIMONE DEL PRIMO ATTACCO RUSSO SUL MAR DI MARMARA?

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**Abstract:** The *Life of s. George of Amastris*, dated by Vasil'evskij to the first half of the ninth century and attributed to the deacon Ignatius (traditionally placed between 775 and 845 and known from a testimony of the Lexicon of Suida), was considered as a proof of the historicity of a Russian siege of Byzantium and Paphlagonia antecedent to that of 860. The present paper proposes to call into question the chronology traditionally attributed to Ignatius the deacon, analyzing the sources which attest it, and to provide possible alternative readings and dating of the *Vita Georgii* itself.

**Keywords:** Ignatius, S. George of Amastris, Russian siege of Byzantium, Propontis, Paphlagonia, Russia.

Le fonti bizantine e slave concordano nel collocare la prima invasione russa dell'Impero bizantino in concomitanza con il primo assedio russo di Costantinopoli storicamente attestato, quando i Russi attraversarono il Mar Nero e attaccarono la Città delle città, mentre l'imperatore Michele III (840-867) era in lotta contro gli Arabi sul Mauropotamo, in Asia Minore, e Bisanzio finì con l'essere messa in salvo – raccontano – da un miracolo della Vergine Blachernitissa.<sup>55</sup> Se fino al 1894 gli studiosi hanno creduto di poter datare quest'assedio all'anno 865 sulla base, tra le altre, della testimonianza della *Cronaca dei tempi passati* di Nestor di Pečerska (1056 circa - 1114 circa), la fortunata scoperta in un manoscritto del XIII secolo conservato a Bruxelles nella Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique (*Bruxell.* 11376) dei cosiddetti *Anecdota Bruxellensia* ha consentito di precisare la data e fissarla, invece, all'anno 860.<sup>56</sup> Nel quadro delle fonti bizantine e slave sulla vicenda, tuttavia, una in

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<sup>55</sup> VASILIEV 1946, 90-106.

<sup>56</sup> OMONT 1886, nr. 102; CUMONT 1894, 33; VASILIEV 1946, 145-149.

particolare ha sollevato una serie di difficoltà e di questioni: la testimonianza fornita da un racconto agiografico, la anonima *Vita di s. Giorgio di Amastride* (BHG 668), che cita in conclusione una ἔφοδος βαρβάρων τῶν Ῥῶς partita dalla Propontide (ἀπὸ τῆς Προποντίδος) e poi dilagante lungo la costa, fino alla città di Amastride, l'attuale Amasra, facendo razzia di sante reliquie e vessando tutta la popolazione senza alcuna pietà.<sup>57</sup> Il testo, tradito come anonimo da un manoscritto del X sec. (Parigi, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, *Par. gr.* 1452), è stato datato da Vasilij Vasil'evskij, suo primo editore, a prima dell'842 e attribuito al diacono Ignazio (tradizionalmente collocato tra circa il 775 e l'845 e noto da una testimonianza del Lessico di Suida<sup>58</sup>), sulla base di innegabili analogie stilistiche con altri due scritti agiografici, la *Vita Tarasii* e la *Vita Nicephori*, concordemente ritenuti ignaziani.<sup>59</sup> Con ciò Vasil'evskij riteneva di addurre una prova della storicità di un assedio russo di Bisanzio e della Paflagonia antecedente quello dell'860, di cui pure avrebbero vagheggiato in seguito alcune tarde opere slave, come la *Vita* di santo Stefano di Surozh (BHG 1671).<sup>60</sup> A partire dal 1893, anno della prima edizione della *Vita Georgii*, la paternità del suo testo e la conseguente ipotesi di un attacco russo precedente quello dell'860 sono divenute *vexatae quaestiones* degli studi di bizantinistica, saldandosi spesso in maniera più o meno evidente ad alcune delle tendenze nazionalistiche della storiografia su Bisanzio e in particolare a quella slavofila del bizantinismo russo ottocentesco.<sup>61</sup> Nel 1935 Alexander Vasiliev rigettò paternità e datazione dell'opera,<sup>62</sup> convinto che l'assedio descritto dall'anonimo agiografo fosse da identificarsi senz'altro con quello guidato dal principe russo Igor nell'anno 941, seguito in ciò, pur con variazioni, negli anni '40 da Germaine da Costa-Louillet<sup>63</sup> e nel 1970 da Wanda Wolska-Conus.<sup>64</sup> Negli anni '80 Athanasios

<sup>57</sup> VASILEVSKIJ 1893, 66-67.

<sup>58</sup> Su Ignazio si rimanda a MACRIS 1997, PRATSCH 2000, D'AMBROSI 2006.

<sup>59</sup> VASILEVSKIJ 1893. Sulla *Vita di Tarasio* si vedano BARANOV 2006 con relativa bibliografia e ŠEVČENKO 1977. Sulla restante produzione agiografica di Ignazio diacono si rimanda a EFTHYMIADES 1998.

<sup>60</sup> VASILEVSKIJ 1893, 74-79. Si veda anche *Synax. CP*, 263-264; VASILIEV 1946, 71-90; BOZOYAN 2006 (vita armena) e IVANOV 2006 (vita slavonica).

<sup>61</sup> VASILIEV 1946, 71-89. Sulla tendenza slavofila della bizantinistica russa dell'Ottocento si rimanda almeno a RONCHEY 1997, 298-300.

<sup>62</sup> VASILIEV 1935, 241-245; VASILIEV 1946, 71-90.

<sup>63</sup> DA COSTA-LOUILLET 1940, 330-338.

<sup>64</sup> WOLSKA-CONUS 1970, 330-338.

Markopoulos ha suggerito l'ipotesi di compromesso che si possa ritenere autenticamente ignaziano il testo della *Vita*, salvo ricondurre a un interpolatore dell'epoca di Fozio il breve passaggio sulla spedizione russa in Paflagonia.<sup>65</sup> Chi, in questa *querelle*, ha sostenuto la paternità ignaziana, ha in genere anche contestualmente proposto una datazione "alta" della spedizione russa di cui la *Vita Georgii* fornisce testimonianza, ritenendo che gli estremi cronologici del profilo biografico di Ignazio (ottenuti congetturalmente a partire da una analisi di alcuni dei suoi scritti agiografici) fossero determinanti per datare il testo della *Vita* stessa.

Revocare in dubbio la cronologia e l'identità stessa del nostro autore, può consentirci di guardare con una luce diversa alla testimonianza della *Vita Georgii*, come a un racconto relativo all'invasione russa della Paflagonia fatto da un contemporaneo e da un testimone dei fatti dell'860. Se la critica è concorde, infatti, nel collocare la morte del nostro autore nell'*annus Domini* 845 circa, poco si è riflettuto sulla circostanza che la tradizione gli attribuisca, lemmatizzati con la voce Ἰγνατίου, una serie di epigrammi giambici dell'*Anthologia Palatina* (I, 109-114) composti Εἰς τὸν ναὸν τῆς Παναγίας Θεοτόκου εἰς τὴν πηγὴν.<sup>66</sup> Il primo della serie (*Anth. Pal.* I, 109) ricorda come avvenuto e concluso il restauro della chiesa costantinopolitana della Vergine τῆς Πηγῆς, danneggiata da un terremoto e ricostruita nell'869, sotto l'imperatore Basilio I (867-886), data che viene dunque a costituire un primo *terminus post quem* per la datazione di tutto il gruppo di epigrammi e per la stessa cronologia del loro autore. Lo stesso componimento inoltre, nomina come regnanti gli imperatori Basilio I, Costantino VII (912-959) e Leone VI (886-912), l'ultimo dei quali incoronato soltanto nell'anno 870, data che costituisce un ulteriore *terminus post quem*. Esiste, dunque, una difficoltà oggettiva a retrodatare quanto più possibile, come pure ci si è esercitati a fare, la ipotetica cronologia del presunto Ignazio diacono e porla tra il 770 e l'845, per poi dovergli attribuire anche dei testi che sappiamo sicuramente composti negli anni sessanta-settanta del IX secolo, a delineare quindi il profilo di uno scrittore più che centenario. Se l'Ignazio

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<sup>65</sup> MARKOPOULOS 1979, 75-82.

<sup>66</sup> MANGO 1997, 13 revoca l'attribuzione al nostro Ignazio sulla base della tradizionale cronologia imputatagli. Sulla restante produzione epigrammatica di Ignazio si veda D'AMBROSI 2006, 90 e ss. Sulla Chiesa della Vergine τῆς Πηγῆς si rimanda a JANIN 1969, 224.

autore della *Vita Georgii* è lo stesso Ignazio autore degli epigrammi dell'*Anthologia Palatina*, sicuramente datati nella seconda metà del IX secolo, non esiste ragione di ritenere che la *Vita Georgii* sia stata composta prima dell'845, né che il suo autore sia morto prima degli anni 869/870 né che l'attacco russo che menziona sia precedente a quello, noto, dell'860. La *Vita Georgii* potrebbe parlare, quindi, dell'attacco russo all'Impero nell'860, del cui principiarsi sul Mar di Marmara è possibile che il nostro Ignazio sia stato testimone oculare.

Come è stato possibile congetturare la cronologia del profilo biografico di Ignazio che ha imposto *ipso facto* una datazione “alta” della *Vita Georgii*? S'è preteso di dedurla matematicamente, partendo dalla voce del Lessico di Suida che lo ricorda come “diacono e scevofilace della Grande Chiesa di Costantinopoli” e ne elenca alcune opere,<sup>67</sup> sulla base degli scarni e ambigui riferimenti autobiografici che egli farebbe in alcuni dei suoi scritti, in particolare da un luogo della *Vita Tarasii* (BHG 1698).<sup>68</sup> È Suida ad attribuire a Ignazio lo scritto biografico su Tarasio (730-806) ed è *auctore Suida* che la critica s'è potuta servire delle notizie autobiografiche fornite dalla *Vita Tarasii* per congetturare un profilo biografico per l'Ignazio diacono: l'autore di quel testo, infatti, afferma di aver imparato da Tarasio i trimetri e i tetrametri trocaici e anapestici ἐν ἀκμῇ τῆς νεότητος e di averlo ringraziato per quegli insegnamenti, offrendo come piccola contropartita il proprio impegno di riordinare le minute delle omelie del patriarca.<sup>69</sup> Partendo da questa notizia, s'è voluta inferire la data di nascita del diacono e porla, col beneficio del dubbio, a circa il 770-780 d.C., data successivamente riproposta in tutti i contributi sulla questione. Bisogna però, forse, sottolineare quanto evanescente sia il profilo biografico che si è andati via via ricamando sui pochi dati a disposizione e quanto deboli, a loro volta, i dati sui quali s'è andato costruendo il pur raffinato ricamo cronologico.

L'aspetto rimasto, peraltro, inesplorato nell'ambito della “questione ignaziana” così delineatasi nel corso del Novecento è una domanda fondamentale e, forse, risolutiva. Chi sia, cioè, questo Ignazio. Qualora, infatti, pure si volesse ritenere

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<sup>67</sup> ADLER 1928-1935, II (1931), 607-608.

<sup>68</sup> HEIKEL 1891, 423; EFTHYMIANES 1998, 165-166.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

attendibile la voce di Suida che dell' Ignazio diacono ci offre testimonianza e a lui ricondurre la *Vita Nicephori* e la *Vita Tarasii*, le elegie funebri, le epistole e i giambi (perduti, in realtà) per Tommaso Antarte, resta comunque la difficoltà di intendere quali opere tramandate come ignaziane debbano annoverarsi tra gli ἄλλα πολλά di cui Suida parla e delinearne quindi coerentemente anche un profilo biografico.<sup>70</sup>

Qualche aspetto per una riflessione, che pure non potrà esaurirsi in queste pagine, su una riconsiderazione complessiva dell'identità *vulgata* del nostro autore può essere qui presentato. Si pone, ad esempio, a rendere sotto altri aspetti sfuggente il profilo biografico del presunto Ignazio diacono, la questione dell'epistolario che da più parti e assai pacificamente si è ritenuto di potergli attribuire. Non sono mancate pure su di esso, specie all'indomani della scoperta avvenuta ai primi del Novecento, ipotesi attributive differenti, come quella di Daniel Serruys,<sup>71</sup> che per primo rinvenne questo interessante *corpus* epistolografico e che riteneva di ascriverlo all' Ignazio patriarca. S'è poi imposta in tempi successivi la linea attributiva, tuttora dominante, che vorrebbe riconoscere nelle sessantaquattro epistole di questo *corpus* quelle stesse ἐπιστολαί che Suida attribuisce all' Ignazio diacono. Parrebbe tuttavia di ravvisare in queste epistole qualche segnale tale da orientare nuovamente verso una riconsiderazione della ipotesi del Serruys. È in particolare l'undicesima epistola a destare qualche sospetto: Ignazio parla, infatti, di se stesso come di chi è stato posto ἐν τῷ μεγίστῳ βαθμῷ τῆς μητρὸς καὶ βασιλίδος πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν, “nel massimo scranno della madre e regina di tutte le Chiese”.<sup>72</sup> Non è dunque da escludere che un'ulteriore lettura dell'intero epistolario possa restituire maggiori elementi, insieme a una disamina complessiva dei dati cronologici che esso fornisce, utili a una riconsiderazione della plausibilità di quella ipotesi attributiva ormai quasi dimenticata, che ne vorrebbe come autore, appunto, il patriarca. La paternità del diacono era stata oltretutto già revocata in dubbio in un contributo di Aleksander P. Kazhdan in cui egli invitava, nei tentativi di comprensione e di contestualizzazione di quel materiale epistolografico, all'esercizio di una maggiore cautela e suggeriva

<sup>70</sup> Per un sintetico ed esaustivo resoconto sulla rimanente produzione letteraria dell' Ignazio diacono si rimanda a WOLSKA-CONUS 1970, 330-338 con bibliografia. Sul personaggio di Ignazio cfr. *supra* n. 4.

<sup>71</sup> SERRUYS 1903, 38-39, 57.

<sup>72</sup> Testo critico in MANGO 1997, 48-49.

qualche perplessità in merito alla tendenza a voler a tutti i costi rintracciare in esso l'Ignazio di cui parla Suida.<sup>73</sup>

Resta, infine, la questione del vasto *corpus* ignaziano, in larga parte inedito, di poesia liturgica.<sup>74</sup> Athanasios Papadopoulos-Kerameus, ad esempio, riconduceva l'intero *corpus* innografico all'Ignazio diacono altrimenti noto.<sup>75</sup> Della medesima opinione, quella cioè di una perfetta coincidenza tra l'Ignazio innografo e il diacono, erano anche anche Petr Nikitin e Vasile'vskij.<sup>76</sup> Altri, invece, attribuivano tutti i canoni noti come ignaziani, “sans en donner les raisons”,<sup>77</sup> al patriarca Ignazio di Costantinopoli e così faceva, ad esempio, Georgios Papadopoulos,<sup>78</sup> seguito da Casimir Émerau.<sup>79</sup> Negli *Initia* l'innografo è registrato come Ἰγνάτιος Κωνσταντινουπόλεως.<sup>80</sup> Una sorta di *querelle latente* in cui s'è ritenuto, di volta in volta, di dare credito e plausibilità all'una o all'altra delle ipotesi attributive, senza che mai si pervenisse a risultati se non definitivi, almeno convincenti. Buona parte della produzione letteraria che oggi si ritiene per universale consenso di ricondurre al diacono, era stata del resto in un primo momento legata alla figura del patriarca: è quel che è accaduto alla attribuzione a Ignazio patriarca degli Στίχοι Ἰγνατίου εἰς τὸν Λάζαρον καὶ εἰς τὸν πλούσιον, proposta dal loro primo editore, Leo Sternbach,<sup>81</sup> e poi revocata in dubbio, come pure nel caso di buona parte degli epigrammi, alla *Vita Gregorii Decapolitae*,<sup>82</sup> agli Στίχοι εἰς τὸν Ἀδάμ,<sup>83</sup> alla raccolta di 24 sentenze religiose in dodecasillabi ordinate κατ'ἀλφάβητον,<sup>84</sup> ai 53 componimenti in tetrastici

<sup>73</sup> KAZHDAN 1994, 243: «whatever this man was, his relationship with the Ignatios characterized in the Souda is far from clear. I am not sure that the man held the post of metropolitan. I am not sure that the whole collection was produced by one and same person – at any rate it can be tentatively divided into two groups, epp. 1-24 and epp. 25-64. Possibly (but no more than that) he was a monk in Mt. Olympos at the beginning of his career, held a high administrative post in the Church hierarchy (in Constantinople or Nicaea) in the 820s, left monastic ranks and became a scholar, and in 840s compiled a book of proverbs. But if we assume, on the other hand, the existence of two distinct authors, the whole hypothesis will fall apart».

<sup>74</sup> Resta desiderata una complessiva ricognizione del *corpus* innografico ignaziano: BENVENUTO 2017.

<sup>75</sup> PAPADOPOULOS-KERAMEUS 1902, 37-39.

<sup>76</sup> VASILEVSKIJ – NIKITIN 1905, 79-90.

<sup>77</sup> WOLSK-CONUS 1970, 334 n. 28.

<sup>78</sup> PAPADOPOULOS 1890, 246.

<sup>79</sup> ÉMERAU 1923, 433-4.

<sup>80</sup> *IHEG* II (1961), 272.

<sup>81</sup> STERNBACH 1987.

<sup>82</sup> DVORNIK 1926; MERCATI 1932; MACRIS 1997.

<sup>83</sup> MÜLLER 1886.

<sup>84</sup> MÜLLER 1891.

giambici che parafrasano in versi le favole di Esopo,<sup>85</sup> al carne anacreontico Εἰς Παῦλον.<sup>86</sup> Non si attribuiscono, insomma, a Ignazio patriarca i canoni liturgici, poiché non è nota altra attività letteraria dell'illustre prelado, tale da poter corroborare una eventuale attribuzione, salvo poi ammettere che molto di ciò che oggi riconosciamo al diacono era stato in origine attribuito al patriarca e non sembra del tutto agevole comprendere le ragioni sulla base delle quali s'è voluto rimettere in dubbio quella attribuzione. La definizione del *corpus* ignaziano, ancora in larga parte inedito, è cruciale per quella dell'identità stessa del suo autore. Se, da un lato, è stata recentemente evidenziata l'unitarietà di ispirazione che contraddistingue sotto il profilo tematico, stilistico e metrico buona parte del materiale innografico tradito come ignaziano e in particolare, al suo interno, del piccolo *dossier* di canoni per santi iconoduli,<sup>87</sup> a me pare anche che un certo qual vincolo sussista a tenere unite le opere agiografiche e quelle innografiche di Ignazio, e non si potrà negare in particolare l'affinità che caratterizza sotto più aspetti, stilistico e tematico, il *corpus* innografico e buona parte della restante produzione ignaziana: molti dei santi prelati che vengono celebrati nel *dossier* innografico, ad esempio i patriarchi Tarasio, Niceforo (806-815) e Metodio (843-847), sono gli stessi per i quali è documentato uno spiccato interesse negli scritti agiografici ed epistolografici che si è soliti attribuire all'Ignazio diacono.

Più lo si indaga, insomma, più l'Ignazio testimoniato da Suida si riduce progressivamente a un fantasma o a un ologramma. Su molte delle opere elencate da Suida continua a gravare il fondato sospetto della *authorship* dell'Ignazio patriarca. D'altra parte, la ben documentata cronologia della biografia del patriarca Ignazio (797-877) non è incompatibile con gli estremi cronologici che parrebbero potersi dedurre dalla *Vita Tarasii* stessa. L'unico appiglio cronologico fornito dalla *Vita Tarasii* – ἐν ἀκμῇ τῆς νεότητος – per la ricostruzione di una cronologia e di un profilo

<sup>85</sup> MÜLLER 1886.

<sup>86</sup> CICCOLELLA 2000, 42-55.

<sup>87</sup> Composto da un canone in memoria del patriarca Tarasio (acr. Ἀρχιερῆα Θεοῦ Ταράσιον ἄσμασι μέλω), per la traslazione delle reliquie di Niceforo (inc. Ἀμαρτιῶν τάφῳ δεινῶ συσχεθέντα με), per S. Giacomo Confessore (inc. Τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ σοῦ Δεσπότης Ἰάκωβε), per S. Giorgio di Mitilene (inc. Αἴγλην εὐσπλαγγίας μοι Χριστὲ τῷ πηρωθέντι), per il patriarca Metodio (acr. Ἀρχιερῆα Θεοῦ Μεθόδιον ἄσμασι μέλω, inc. Ἀφ'ἀρπαγῆς καὶ προνομῆς καὶ δουλείας με), e da un canone, ancora inedito, per S. Michele Sincello (acr. Τὸν ἐν μονασταῖς Μιχαὴλ ὕμνῳ μέγαν; inc. Τῷ παμφαεῖ λύχνῳ τοῦ Πνεύματος). Per una recente indagine sul *corpus* innografico ignaziano e l'unitarietà stilistica e metrico-melurgica del *corpus* si veda BENVENUTO 2017.

biografico dell'Ignazio diacono non sarebbe del tutto disagevole da ricondursi all'altro Ignazio, il patriarca, che con buona probabilità può aver seguito Tarasio negli anni della sua adolescenza. La scarna notizia autobiografica fornita dall'autore della *Vita Tarasii* è stata forse letta e interpretata dalla critica recente in maniera troppo letterale e univoca, volendo necessariamente dedurne l'identità di quell'autore con una sorta di personale segretario di Tarasio stesso: nulla vieta di rintracciare però nell'ἀνατάπτεσθαι cui fa riferimento quell'agiografo una sorta di esercizio ingiunto dall'anziano patriarca Tarasio al giovanissimo rampollo imperiale, più che l'attività di uno stenografo professionista. Sappiamo da Niceta Paflagone, biografo di Ignazio, che il patriarca morì ottantenne nell'877 e dunque i calcoli confermerebbero una data di nascita collocabile circa nel 797, suscettibile, ovviamente, della oscillazione di almeno qualche anno. Non è mai stato messo in evidenza, peraltro, il reale contenuto della informazione cronologica fornita da Niceta Paflagone nella sua *Vita Ignatii*, 78 (BHG 817) ὀγδοηκοστὸν δὲ ἤδη γεγονὼς ἔτος,<sup>88</sup> da cui si è voluto dedurre matematicamente il 797 come anno di nascita di Ignazio, ma che potrebbe forse essere intesa anche come “nell'ottantina, passato l'ottantesimo anno”. Tenuto conto dunque di questa possibile oscillazione, non sembra del tutto inverosimile che il giovane Niceta, nipote dell'imperatore Niceforo I (802-811) – regnante in un periodo in larga misura coincidente con quello del patriarcato di Tarasio – e destinato a diventare patriarca col nome di Ignazio, abbia potuto svolgere il suo primo apprendistato letterario proprio all'ombra del seggio patriarcale, cui doveva poi assurgere.

Se questa ipotesi si rivelasse fondata, l'autore della *Vita Georgi* sarebbe da identificare con l'Ignazio patriarca, sicuramente testimone oculare dell'invasione russa della Propontide nel nono secolo. Sappiamo, infatti, dal racconto del suo agiografo che Ignazio era esule nelle Isole dei Principi, al tempo della prima rimozione dal soglio patriarcale, durante il regno di Michele III, proprio in quell'860 in cui i Russi sferravano il loro primo attacco all'Impero.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Si veda SMITHIES 2013, 110.

<sup>89</sup> SMITHIES 2013, 45 e 69.

Il racconto della *Vita Ignatii* di Niceta menziona in ben due punti l'attacco russo, passato attraverso il Mar Nero (διὰ τοῦ Εὐξείνου πόντου) e poi spintosi fino al Bosforo (τῷ Στενῶ), per giungere alle Isole dei Principi sul versante superiore del Mar di Marmara e in particolare sull'isola di Terebinto, dove Ignazio era esule e dove aveva fondato un monastero, di cui pure i Russi – racconta – hanno fatto strage (*Vita Ignatii* [BHG 817]).<sup>90</sup>

Al racconto della *Vita Ignatii* di Niceta David sembra far eco quello dell'anonima *Vita Georgii*, rievocando in particolare il principiarsi della strage, appunto, sul Mar di Marmara (ἀπὸ τῆς Προποντίδος) e il suo successivo dilagare lungo la restante parte della costa (τὴν ἄλλην ἐπινεμηθὲν παράλιον) fino a raggiungere, in Paflagonia, la città nativa del santo (*Vita Georgii episcopi Amastridis* [BHG 668]).<sup>91</sup>

È Niceta Paflagone a dare, del resto, nella sua *Oratio XIX in laudem s. Hyacinthi Amastreni*, un'importante testimonianza della centralità di Amastris nel tardo IX secolo, ὁ τῆς Παφλαγονίας ὀφθαλμός, quale vitale luogo di contatto, κοινὸν ἐμπόριον, tra i sudditi dell'Impero (οἱ πρὸς νότον κείμενοι) e le popolazioni russe stanziata a nord del Mar Nero (τὸ βόρειον τοῦ Εὐξείνου μέρος περιοικοῦντες Σκύθαι).<sup>92</sup> La *Vita Georgii* potrebbe restituirci in tal senso una versione dei fatti dell'860 visti dalla prospettiva diversa, non costantinopolitana, che dovette

<sup>90</sup> SMITHIES 2013, 45: Ἐπεγένετο δὲ καὶ ἄλλη τῷ ἁγίῳ συμφορά. Κατ' ἐκεῖνον γὰρ τὸν καιρὸν τὸ μαιφονώτατον τῶν Σκύθων ἔθνος οἱ λεγόμενοι Ῥῶς διὰ τοῦ Εὐξείνου πόντου προσκεχωρηκότες τῷ Στενῶ καὶ πάντα μὲν χωρία, πάντα δὲ μοναστήρια διηρακότες ἔτι δὴ καὶ τοῦ Βυζαντίου περιοικίδων κατέδραμον νησιῶν, σκευὴ μὲν πάντα ληϊζόμενοι καὶ χρήματα, ἀνθρώπους δὲ τοὺς ἀλόντας πάντας ἀποκτείνοντες· πρὸς οἷς καὶ τῶν τοῦ πατριάρχου μοναστηρίων βαρβαρικῶ καταδραμόντες ὀρμήματι καὶ θυμῷ πᾶσαν μὲν τὴν εὐρεθεῖσαν κτήσιν ἀφείλαντο, εἴκοσι δὲ καὶ δύο τῶν γνησιωτέρων αὐτοῦ κεκρατηκότες οἰκετῶν ἐφ' ἐνὶ τροχαντήρι πλοίου τοὺς πάντας ἀξίναις κατεμέλισαν.

<sup>91</sup> VASILEVSKIJ 1893, 66-67: Ἐφοδος ἦν βαρβάρων τῶν Ῥῶς· ἔθνους, ὡς πάντες ἴσασιν, ὠμοτάτου καὶ ἀπνηοῦς καὶ μηδὲν ἐπιφερομένου φιλανθρωπίας λείψανον. θηριώδεις τοῖς τρόποις, ἀπάνθρωποι τοῖς ἔργοις, αὐτῇ τῇ ὄψει τὴν μαιφονίαν ἐπιδεικνύμενοι, ἐπ' οὐδενὶ τῶν ἄλλων, ὧν πεφύκασιν ἄνθρωποι, χαίροντες, ὡς ἐπὶ φονοκτονία· τοῦτο δὴ τὸ φθοροποιὸν καὶ πρᾶγμα καὶ ὄνομα, ἀπὸ τῆς Προποντίδος ἀρξάμενον τῆς λύμης, καὶ τὴν ἄλλην ἐπινεμηθὲν παράλιον, ἔφθασεν καὶ μέχρι τῆς τοῦ ἁγίου πατρίδος, κόπτων ἀφειδῶς γένος ἅπαν καὶ ἡλικίαν πᾶσαν, οὐ πρεσβύτας οἰκτεῖρον, οὐ νήπια παρορῶν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ πάντων ὁμοῦ τὴν μαιφόνον ὀπλιζῶν χεῖρα, τὸν ὄλεθρον ἔσπευδεν διαβῆναι ὅση δύναμις.

<sup>92</sup> *Patrologia Graeca*, 105, 421. Non c'è motivo di ritenere, con VASILIEV 1946, 88, che il passo costituisca una prova dell'incolumità di Amastris durante l'assedio dell'860, dal momento che non è necessario datarlo a circa l'870-880 come Vasiliev faceva fondandosi sulla cronologia di Niceta proposta da Assemanus. JENKINS 1965, 244-247 ha più recentemente dimostrato, infatti, che Niceta Paflagone è nato circa nell'885 e morto non prima del 963, non necessariamente testimone/memore, quindi, dei fatti dell'860.

caratterizzare lo sguardo di Ignazio patriarca su quelle vicende.

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## CONFLICT AND COEXISTENCE, CONTINUITY AND CHANGE: VISUAL CULTURE OF THE CENTRAL BALKANS DURING THE SETTLEMENT OF THE SLAVS

*Branka Vranešević – Olga Špehar*

**Abstract:** The settlement of the Slavs in the territory of the central Balkans marked the beginning of a new era and a turning point in the history of this part of the Peninsula, not only in historical but in artistic sense as well. This paper outlines the potential of archaeological data and art history in better understanding and consequently theorizing about the interaction between the Slavs and the Byzantines and offers some preliminary conclusions. It presents case studies of the urban settlements and the remains of visual culture prior and immediately after the arrival of the Slavs, and of the role they may have played in future shaping of what we today recognize as Southeastern Europe.

**Key words:** early Byzantine, the Slavs, art, early Middle Ages, central Balkans

The settlement of the Slavs (*Sclaveni*, Σκλάβηνοι, *Sclaboi*) in the territory of the central Balkans marked the beginning of a new era, and a turning point in the history of this part of the Peninsula, not only in historical but in artistic sense as well, creating new policies and identities.<sup>93</sup> In an attempt to better understand the long and intertwined process of transition from the world of Late Antiquity to the world of the Middle Ages, scholars in recent decades have been more interested in the role of people (*gentes*) in the so-called Migration Period, who were involved in the establishment of mixed societies within the Roman Empire and the construction of medieval and consequently modern Southeastern Europe.<sup>94</sup> The dynamic and multifaceted nature of the relationship

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<sup>93</sup> At this point we must accentuate that the history of the Slavs and their settling on the Balkans is today known mostly through sources written by the Byzantine authors who, as it turned out, wrote from considerable historical distance from those events. That of course doesn't undermine their credibility and reliability but we must approach their texts with certain vigilance. Luckily with archaeological excavations under way we hope more archaeological material will serve us in our further research.

<sup>94</sup> BAVANT 2004; IVANIŠEVIĆ 2012; ŠPEHAR 2012.

that the Slavs had with the Byzantines has been best understood, so far, through the analysis of written accounts. But scholars have also drawn their attention to material evidence through archaeological excavations, ethnic identity, anthropology, political ethnicity,<sup>95</sup> and social psychology.<sup>96</sup> Only through the comparative analysis of written accounts and material evidence with the use of an interdisciplinary approach can we get a clearer picture and nature of the Slavic settling.

Within the territory of the central Balkans the colonization of the Slavs, as stated above, was mainly studied through the analysis of written sources, as well as scarce archaeological evidence. Their scarcity leaves us with little or no material evidence in order to further complete the historical data regarding the arrival and settlement of the Slavs. Therefore, this paper outlines the potential of archaeological data and the role of art history in better understanding and consequently theorizing about the interactions between the Slavs and the Byzantines, if there was any, and offer some preliminary conclusions. It presents case studies of the urban settlements and the remains of visual culture prior to and upon the arrival of the Slavs, and the role they may have played in shaping what we today recognize as Southeastern Europe.

Early Byzantine authors inherited the world of antiquity and placed the Slavs into the world they knew and recognized. Some mentions of the Slavs can be found in Procopius' *Bellum Gothicum*,<sup>97</sup> Menander's *Excerpta de Legationibus*,<sup>98</sup> Theophilactus Symocatta's *Historia*<sup>99</sup> and Pseudo-Maurice's *Strategikon*.<sup>100</sup> However, the most detailed information on the Slavic population of the Balkans in general can be found within the famous *De Administrando Imperio* by Emperor Constantinus Porphyrogenitus (913-959).<sup>101</sup> There it is stated that the Slavs settled at the time of

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<sup>95</sup> GEARY 1983, 15-26; GEARY 1985, 114.

<sup>96</sup> DAIM 1998; POHL 1998.

<sup>97</sup> Procop. *BG* III 14, 353-360.

<sup>98</sup> Men. p. 209, 3-210, 2.

<sup>99</sup> Theoph. Sym. VI 2, 10-16.

<sup>100</sup> Maur. *Strat.* XII 5, pp. 272-289.

<sup>101</sup> Even though we have detailed description of the Slavs in Emperor Constantine's work, we must bear in mind that the text was written in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and refers to the events that occurred in the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, we cannot undermine the significance of the data. The author tried to be as accurate as possible but still he obviously could not avoid tendentious comments, which can be seen in his glorification of Emperor Basil I for political and legislative reasons.

Emperor Heraclius (610-641),<sup>102</sup> which coincides with information that the Byzantine army deserted northern Danubian frontier already in 602,<sup>103</sup> leaving the territory of the central Balkans poorly defended and open to Avar and Slav incursions.<sup>104</sup> At that point, the Avars were mainly interested in plundering, while the Slavs decided to settle.

By the time the Slavs arrived, Roman rule had already existed in the central Balkans for six centuries. Namely, in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC the Roman army arrived as far as the Danube, in an attempt to establish the river as the natural northern border of the Empire.<sup>105</sup> During the subsequent six centuries, the appearance of the entire area began a slow but continuous change. Along with urbanization, the spread of Roman culture, religion and art begun. When Christianity became the dominant religion of the Empire, the territory of the central Balkans abounded with churches built to honor martyr saints of the early 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>106</sup> Historical circumstances, as well as the fact that this territory was the border area facing various non-Roman tribes and peoples to the north, made the central Balkans a war zone in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, especially when the Huns crossed the Danube in 441.<sup>107</sup> One of the most visible consequences of that turbulent era was the destruction of earlier urban structures, their fortifications, public buildings, monuments and Christian churches. Therefore, when the Byzantine Empire began to reestablish its rule over said territory at the very end of the 5<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. during the reign of Emperor Anastasius I (491-518),<sup>108</sup> it became necessary to restore not only the defensive structures but also the cities and Christian churches as well. *Renovatio imperii* gained its strongest impetus in the time of Justinian I (527-565), especially when the erection of forts and churches is in question.<sup>109</sup> Intensive building activities resulted in the appearance of numerous Christian churches, whether in cities and towns, or in fortifications, villages and other mostly prominent and strategically

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<sup>102</sup> Const. Porph. 31-32.

<sup>103</sup> KOVAČEVĆ 1994, 123; TREADGOLD 1997, 235; LOUTH 2008, 128.

<sup>104</sup> Incursions took place across the Danube River and followed the Roman roads as a major trade but also invasion routes. Therefore, the greatest destruction took place along this path, cf. FINE JR. 1991, 3.

<sup>105</sup> MIRKOVIĆ 1994, 66.

<sup>106</sup> ZEILLER 1967.

<sup>107</sup> TREADGOLD 1997, 94-95.

<sup>108</sup> LOUTH 2008, 124.

<sup>109</sup> TREADGOLD 1997, 180; LOUTH 2008, 107.

important places.<sup>110</sup> Some of those, such as Iustiniana Prima, were according to archaeological material inhabited by the Slavs and therefore are of interest for our topic.

At the time of the restoration of the Empire, the Slavs and Bulgarians already started to break into the Byzantine territory south of the Danube, but their intrusions did not result in settling at such an early date, although already by 560s the Slavs wintered in Byzantine territory.<sup>111</sup> It is usually supposed that, by the time Slavs finally started to colonize the Peninsula, the Byzantines started to emigrate,<sup>112</sup> leaving behind, among the rest, representative places of worship adorned by works of art dedicated to the Lord. The reason for such a belief is found in information in *Miracula Sancti Demetrii* that the Slavs managed to arrive to Thessaloniki as early as 586 and kept the town under siege for some time, only leaving after the intervention of the patron saint Demetrius.<sup>113</sup> Therefore, defending the Empire from the Slavs was one of the main goals in Emperor Maurice's (582-602) foreign policy. In order to achieve that, he sent troops north of the Danube in 602. These military campaigns were successful but the Emperor wanted the army to spend the winter in enemy territory, which resulted in open mutiny and the acclamation of Phocas (602-610) as the new Byzantine Emperor. In order to ascend to the throne, Phocas led the army toward Constantinople, leaving the Danubian *limes* poorly defended, which resulted in the final settlement of non-Roman, mostly Slavic population.<sup>114</sup> It is interesting to note that in the time of their arrival the Slavs occupied much of the countryside, leaving walled cities and the remaining Roman population mostly intact.<sup>115</sup>

At the time of their appearance on the Byzantine historical scene, the Slavs were not Christianized.<sup>116</sup> According to Porphyrogenitus, they were baptized by the priests

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<sup>110</sup> MILINKOVIĆ 2015.

<sup>111</sup> TREADGOLD 1997, 165-166, 208; LOUTH 2008, 124.

<sup>112</sup> CURTA 2001, 120.

<sup>113</sup> Mir. I 13-15; LEMERLE 1953, 352 and 355; FINE JR. 1991, 41-44; KOVAČEVIĆ 1994, 117 and 123; LOUTH 2008, 127 with older literature.

<sup>114</sup> Theoph. Sym. VIII, 6-7; LOUTH 2008, 128.

<sup>115</sup> ŠPEHAR 2017, 228-229 with older literature. According to Alexis Vlasto the Slavs have perceived walled cities as walled tombs, and that was the reason why they did not populate them, cf. VLASTO 1970, 6.

<sup>116</sup> VLASTO 1970, 6; MARKOVIĆ 2016, 147.

from Rome during Heraclius' reign,<sup>117</sup> i.e. at the time of their settling, but according to the available historical and archaeological data the intensity of Christianization at that time cannot be observed with certainty. It seems that it was not intense enough to root itself strongly within all strata of the Slavic population, as evidenced by the arrival of missionaries in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, whose task was to spread Christianity among the Slavs, i.e. Serbs, obviously for the second time.<sup>118</sup> For a long period, Slavic tribes in the central Balkans did not have a state organization, but were divided into multiple groups settled in relatively small territories called by some authors "Sclaviniae".<sup>119</sup> Some sources even referred to them as a quite uncivilized and rampant people.<sup>120</sup> Despite that, when the Slavs finally settled south of the Danube, they gradually started to accept some elements of Byzantine culture, mostly through religion and trade, but also by observing, at that time certainly still visible and some most probably still in use, church buildings adorned with frescoes, mosaics, and furnishing. The most representative were located in Iustiniana Prima, the imperial city that holds evidences of Slavic intermingling with Byzantines at quite an early date (Fig. 1).

The archaeological site of Caričin grad is supposed to be the endowment of Emperor Justinian I (527-565) called Iustiniana Prima or the First Justiniana.<sup>121</sup> Located near the present-day town of Lebane, it was situated on an elevated plateau flanked by Svinjarička and Caričinska rivers. Since the excavations began in 1912<sup>122</sup> until today eight churches and numerous findings have seen the light of day, some of them being exquisite works of art as good representatives of rather short life of the city.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Const. Porph. 32.

<sup>118</sup> OSTROGORSKY 1965, 18; VLASTO 1970, 155-235; ĆIRKOVIĆ 1994, 152-153; ŠPEHAR 2017, 24.

<sup>119</sup> Mir. I 13-15; Const. Porph. 29; OSTROGORSKY 1965, 5 and 13.

<sup>120</sup> Men. pp. 209, 3-210, 2.

<sup>121</sup> It is generally believed that the city was built by Emperor Justinian I in the vicinity of the village where he was born. Even though we cannot state for sure, numerous finds indicate that this was indeed the above-mentioned place: the dating, its geographical position, excavated capital with Justinian's monogram, coins, seals, etc., as well as written sources such as *Novel XI* or descriptions of Procopius and John of Antioch. Cf. Iust. *Nov.* XI; BAVANT 2007, 338; VRANEŠEVIĆ 2013, 17-27.

<sup>122</sup> Vladimir Petković excavated in 1912 the Episcopal basilica, situated at the highest point of the elevated plateau and was the first to name the city Iustiniana Prima, cf. PETKOVIĆ 1913.

<sup>123</sup> The earliest attestation of the city can be found in *Novel XI* of Justinian the Great in 535 and was not mentioned after 604 (after Gregory the Great). Cf. BAVANT 2007, 338. Yet, according to archaeological finds it seems that some autochthonous Romanized population continued to live in some parts of the city even after the collapse of Byzantine rule around 615. Cf. IVANIŠEVIĆ 2012, 62.

Furthermore, three more churches were detected by non-invasive archaeological techniques, but are not yet excavated.<sup>124</sup> The urban core was built *ex nihilo* and is divided into three separate walled units: the Acropolis, the Upper City and the Lower City. Monuments expanded also in its extramural surrounding. With the existence of the Acropolis, the circular forum with imperial statue on the large column<sup>125</sup> and streets with porticoes, one cannot but notice an eastern Roman type of settlement.<sup>126</sup> An episcopal *basilica* with a baptistery and a large complex usually defined in literature as the Episcopal Palace,<sup>127</sup> that provided a seat for the Archbishop, were discovered within the fortified Acropolis. The walls of the Upper City included the Acropolis, so this highest and most sacred plateau was additionally protected. According to the archaeological remains, as well as up to date state of research, the Episcopal complex was the main representative of artistic tendencies in the city. It consisted of a three-aisle basilica with a baptistery, situated south of the church.<sup>128</sup> The remains of impost capitals and floor mosaics in the nave and the narthex that contain images of animals, floral and geometric motifs testify about the former appearance of the church. The baptistery has the form of a quatrefoil inscribed into a square and in its central part is a cross-shaped piscine surmounted by a dome. The interior of a baptistery was richly decorated with mosaic floors, marble revetment in the lower and frescoes once placed on the upper zones of the walls.<sup>129</sup> The mosaic floors have remained mostly intact and contain motifs of birds and animals, as well as floral and geometric motifs.<sup>130</sup> In the Upper City a basilica with a crypt, a cruciform church and a three-aisled basilica were discovered, while in the Lower City one double church and one three-aisled basilica was unearthed.

Fragments of mosaic floors, marble revetment, carved capitals and frescoes were discovered in almost all sacred buildings of the city. Unfortunately, since most of them

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<sup>124</sup> IVANIŠEVIĆ 2016, 118.

<sup>125</sup> KORAC-ŠUPUT 2010, 29. About the statue cf. ŠPEHAR 2013b with older literature.

<sup>126</sup> BAVAN-IVANIŠEVIĆ 2006, 26.

<sup>127</sup> KONDIĆ-POPOVIĆ 1977, 37-41, 316-318; BAVANT-IVANIŠEVIĆ 2003, 18; BAVANT-IVANIŠEVIĆ 2006, 35; BAVANT 2007, 365.

<sup>128</sup> About the disposition of architectural spaces cf. DUVAL-POPOVIĆ-JEREMIĆ 2010a; DUVAL-POPOVIĆ-JEREMIĆ 2010b; ŠPEHAR 2013a, 160-163.

<sup>129</sup> VRANEŠEVIĆ-ŠPEHAR 2016, 55-56.

<sup>130</sup> VRANEŠEVIĆ 2014.

are badly preserved we can only presume how those churches must have looked like originally and what effect they have had on the inhabitants of Iustiniana Prima.<sup>131</sup> Except for the Episcopal basilica, only two more churches on the site have their decoration preserved enough for us to envision their former *grandeur*. One of them is the three-aisled basilica with transept in the Lower City, one of the most representative Christian churches with the best-preserved early Byzantine floor mosaics not only in Caričin grad but in the entire central Balkans. Its walls were covered with marble revetment and frescoes, while carpet floors in the nave and narthex contain images of the Good Shepherd, warriors, amazons, centaurs, animals, birds, flowers etc.<sup>132</sup> Its tribelon had two impost capitals, one of them with incised Justinian's monogram.<sup>133</sup> The second is the triconch church outside city walls, which consisted of an atrium and narthex with porches. The entire church was also richly decorated with frescoes, marble revetment and floor mosaics with geometric, floral motifs and birds. In the southern conch a tomb was found indicating that it was probably a mausoleum of a prominent member of the city, presumably the church's *ktetor*.<sup>134</sup> However, rich decoration was not typical only of religious buildings in the city. According to discovered fragments, the so-called *villa urbana* in the Upper City was likewise adorned with mosaics, frescos and stucco,<sup>135</sup> as well as *thermae* outside of the city walls which had an atrium paved with floor mosaics containing images of animals in rectangular fields framed with spirals, while the mosaics in the porch had geometrical motifs.<sup>136</sup>

Having in mind the fact that the city was built in short period and that it served as an urban structure for less than a century, it is obvious that the entire site was an engineering and artistic workshop by its own right. Since most of the architectural sculpture and floor mosaics seem to be local productions, various artisans must have

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<sup>131</sup> For the preserved part of the decoration of the basilica with crypt cf. KONDIĆ-POPOVIĆ 1977, 77-79; BAVANT-IVANIŠEVIĆ 2003, 26; BAVANT-IVANIŠEVIĆ 2006, 38. For the cruciform church cf. GUYON-CARDI 1984, 1-90; ŠPEHAR 2014. For the single-nave church outside the city walls cf. KONDIĆ-POPOVIĆ 1977, 141; DUVAL- JEREMIĆ 1984, 91-146.

<sup>132</sup> CVETKOVIĆ-TOMAŠEVIĆ 1978, 14-16, fig. 6; VRANEŠEVIĆ 2013, 17-27.

<sup>133</sup> KONDIĆ-POPOVIĆ 1977, 115, fig. 85.

<sup>134</sup> ŠPEHAR 2013a, 170-171 with older literature; VRANEŠEVIĆ 2014; VRANEŠEVIĆ 2016, 13-24.

<sup>135</sup> BAVANT-IVANIŠEVIĆ 2006, 39.

<sup>136</sup> BAVANT-IVANIŠEVIĆ 2006, 45.

worked in the city for decades. There is a strong possibility that some master builders, craftsmen and artists came to the city whether from Constantinople or from some other important cultural, religious and artistic center, most probably Thessaloniki.<sup>137</sup> Therefore it is reasonable to suppose that a city of such importance, which Iustiniana Prima as an imperial endowment must have been, had great influence in the area under its jurisdiction at least in the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the early 7<sup>th</sup> century.

On the site of Caričin grad two *fibulae*, attributed to the Slavs or Ants, have been discovered (Fig. 2).<sup>138</sup> One of them was excavated in the area of the south tower of Acropolis and the other in the portico of the southern street in the Upper City.<sup>139</sup> In the opinion of Vujadin Ivanišević, one of the directors of the excavation project Caričin grad, they do not necessarily indicate the existence of Slavic settlement on the site but, what is more interesting, suggest that the Slavs played an important role among the non-Romanized settlers in the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>140</sup> It means that regardless of the exact percentage of the Slavic population in Iustiniana Prima, they must have had a direct encounter with the representative works of art produced and employed in the city. It also confirmed the information from Procopius' *Bellum Gothicum* that the Slavs were already present on the central Balkans in the 6<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>141</sup> most probably as mercenaries.<sup>142</sup> The presence of "Barbarians" in the Byzantine army was eligible and their swearing loyalty to the Emperor made them Roman soldiers. Yet, it did not make them Romans in cultural terms.<sup>143</sup> There are several other sites on the central Balkans where Slavic presence in the late 6<sup>th</sup> and the early 7<sup>th</sup> century is archaeologically testified for now, and all of them are situated along the right bank of the Danube (Hajdučka vodenica, Korbovo, Velesnica, Ljubičevac-Obala, Prahovo).<sup>144</sup> In the hinterland,

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<sup>137</sup> ŠPEHAR 2014; ŠPEHAR 2015. The importance of Thessaloniki lies also in the close geographical proximity to the lands the Slavs occupied, cf. Const. Porph. 32.

<sup>138</sup> IVANIŠEVIĆ 2012, 60; BUGARSKI-RADIŠIĆ 2016, 93. Florin Curta (CURTA 2001, 247-275) considered these *fibulae* not to be of a Slavic origin, but we incline to the interpretation of the director of the excavations Vujadin Ivanišević.

<sup>139</sup> KONDIĆ-POPOVIĆ 1977, 194-195, cat. nos. 31-32.

<sup>140</sup> IVANIŠEVIĆ 2012, 61.

<sup>141</sup> Procop. *BG* I 27, 130,9-17; II 26, 268,14-19.

<sup>142</sup> IVANIŠEVIĆ 2012, 61; BUGARSKI-RADIŠIĆ 2016, 94; ŠPEHAR 2017, 164-165.

<sup>143</sup> DIMITRIEV 2010, 28.

<sup>144</sup> BUGARSKI-RADIŠIĆ 2016, 92 and 94, fig. 45; ŠPEHAR 2017, 228-229.

however, such an early dating of discovered finds is for now testified only in Caričin grad.<sup>145</sup>

As it seems based primarily on the state of research, there are only several traces of artistic production for at least two centuries after the Slavs and later Bulgarians inhabited the central Balkans. While waiting for new results of archaeological excavations we must incline to several small finds that can perhaps help us better understand the development of early medieval art on the central Balkans. Namely, two religious items are of special interest for our topic. One of them is the censer from Pepeljevac near Kuršumlija in southern Serbia, dated to either the late 6<sup>th</sup>/early 7<sup>th</sup> or the late 7<sup>th</sup>/early 8<sup>th</sup> century, which is probably a product of Byzantine origin (Fig. 3). It is decorated with an incised relief containing various scenes tied to the lives of Jesus and Virgin: Annunciation, Encounter of Mary and Elizabeth, Nativity, Annunciation to the Shepherds, Baptism and Crucifixion.<sup>146</sup> The second is a jug discovered in Kostol, ancient *Pontes* on the Danube, with a citation of *Ps. 29:3* in Greek, variously dated from the late 6<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 4).<sup>147</sup> Despite the uncertain dating, it is probably a product of Byzantine cultural circle and testifies, as well as the above-mentioned censer, to the decisive Byzantine influence in the artistic tradition during the early medieval period on the central Balkans. These examples can suggest how Slavic and Bulgarian population in this part of the Peninsula relate to earlier Byzantine visual inheritance. But what still remains as an open question is whether newly arrived Slavs represented their own ethnicity and if so, in what way? Even the two *fibulae* from Caričin grad, although tied to the Slavic population, are not exclusively Slavic in character and were likewise used by some other tribes.<sup>148</sup> Yet, in written sources only the Slavs were mentioned as inhabitants in the territory in question and only they decided to settle. Therefore, it seems obvious that the future research must go in the direction of establishing their relationship with the remaining Byzantine and newly settled Bulgarian populations.

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<sup>145</sup> BUGARSKI-RADIŠIĆ 2016, 92, fig. 45.

<sup>146</sup> ILIĆ 2008, 128-129; ŠPEHAR 2017, 186.

<sup>147</sup> The earliest dating was offered by Ivana Popović (2015, 127), but since the item was discovered in the hoard dated to the later period, from the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> to the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, such an early dating was put into question. Cf. ŠPEHAR 2017, 189-190 with older literature.

<sup>148</sup> ŠPEHAR 2017, 164 with analogies and older literature.

It was in the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, with the rise of the Macedonian Dynasty and Emperor Basil I (867-886), that we can with certainty date Slavic i.e. Serbian works of art whose influence without a doubt came from Byzantium, and is best visible in church architecture.<sup>149</sup> Actually, the influence Emperor Basil I had on the Serbian lands was through local princes (*archontes*) and in overall Christianization of the people on the central Balkans. The area of Ras proved to be the place where artistic creativity was most visible when the territory of the central Balkans is in question. Certainly, the first and best-known monument of newly baptized Serbian people is the Church of St. Peter near Novi Pazar (Fig. 5). The central type edifice, a rotunda encircling a tetraconch with a gallery and covered with a dome, was probably built in the time of Prince Mutimir (870-890) and painted in the time of Mutimir's nephew, Prince Petar Gojnikovic (892-918).<sup>150</sup> The influence is supposed to have come from the capital itself in the form of the 6<sup>th</sup> century Church of St. Sergius and Bacchus whose echoes are visible in the churches of St. Vitale in Ravenna and Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel of St. Mary in Aachen. Except for Constantinople, Byzantine influences also came from the Adriatic coast, where the Empire had its strongholds. In the principality of Zachloumoi, mentioned in the work of Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus as being populated by the Serbs, we can find the churches where Byzantine influence can be attested simultaneously with influences from Western Europe, as for example in Ošlje, built probably in the time of Prince Michael (Mihailo Višević),<sup>151</sup> or in Ston.<sup>152</sup> In the following centuries certain characteristics of previous times remained, with artists coming both from the East and the West, forming specific and diverse styles.

We can conclude that the profound political and geopolitical transformations that consequently changed the social life of the peoples inhabiting the territory of the central Balkans actually show certain continuity between the world of antiquity and what we today perceive as the Middle Ages, or to be more precise, with the formation of new

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<sup>149</sup> ĐURIĆ-BABIĆ 1997, 5; KORAĆ-ŠUPUT 2010, 10; MARKOVIĆ 2016, 147. With the analysis of church architecture we can get a clearer picture on the trends, skills, ideas and understanding of the founders.

<sup>150</sup> ĐURIĆ-BABIĆ 1997, 7-8; MARKOVIĆ 2016, 147.

<sup>151</sup> It was built under the influence of the Church of St. Elijah in Constantinople (an octagon with seven altars) erected in the time of Emperor Basil I, cf. ĐURIĆ-BABIĆ 1997, 9; MARKOVIĆ 2016, 149.

<sup>152</sup> ČURČIĆ 2010, 459-460.

states and/or modern nations. Slavic identity (if we can perceive it as such) developed on the grounds of Roman-Byzantine identity along with its religious and geographical affiliation, as seen on the example of Caričin grad, Pepeljevac and Kostol. Still, the expansionist and powerful *gentes* interacted and influenced the development and rise of future societies, their art and culture. Early Byzantine written dossier enriched with some (so far excavated) material evidences, topography and rituals proved that what once was a separate identity gradually developed into kingdom/empire under the strong Byzantine influence. At the same time, the Byzantines were open to embrace new *gentes*.<sup>153</sup> With the use of diplomatic skills, education and Christianization the Byzantines tended to keep peace or to regain control over their former territories. Gradually a new world visible in language, trade, church organization, circulation of Byzantine coins and administration, art and architecture emerged. Byzantine influence was also spread thanks to the strong relationship with the Adriatic coast and accordingly with the Mediterranean,<sup>154</sup> not only with the Byzantine Empire but likewise with the West.<sup>155</sup> Many questions regarding the interactions between newly settled Slavs and local Byzantines still remain unanswered. Therefore, we hope that this complex phenomenon will foster further research and give a more detailed picture of the relationship, cultural and artistic bonds between the Slavs and the Byzantines.

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<sup>153</sup> By the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century the process of Hellenization of the Slavs reached its peak and is best viewed in the rise of Iconoclast Patriarch of Constantinople Niketas I (766-780) who was, as believed, a Slav. The details of his career are still unknown. Another Slav, named Thomas, who came from Asia Minor, rose to the rank of high officer during the reign of Emperor Leo (813-20), cf. VLASTO 1970, 9.

<sup>154</sup> STEVOVIĆ 2002 with older literature.

<sup>155</sup> Evidence can be seen in the illuminated manuscript of the Gospels of Otto III (983-1002) where one of the miniatures present images of female personifications of provinces bringing him gifts, among which is the Sclavinia, cf. CALKINS 1979, 75–76.

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**IMMAGES**

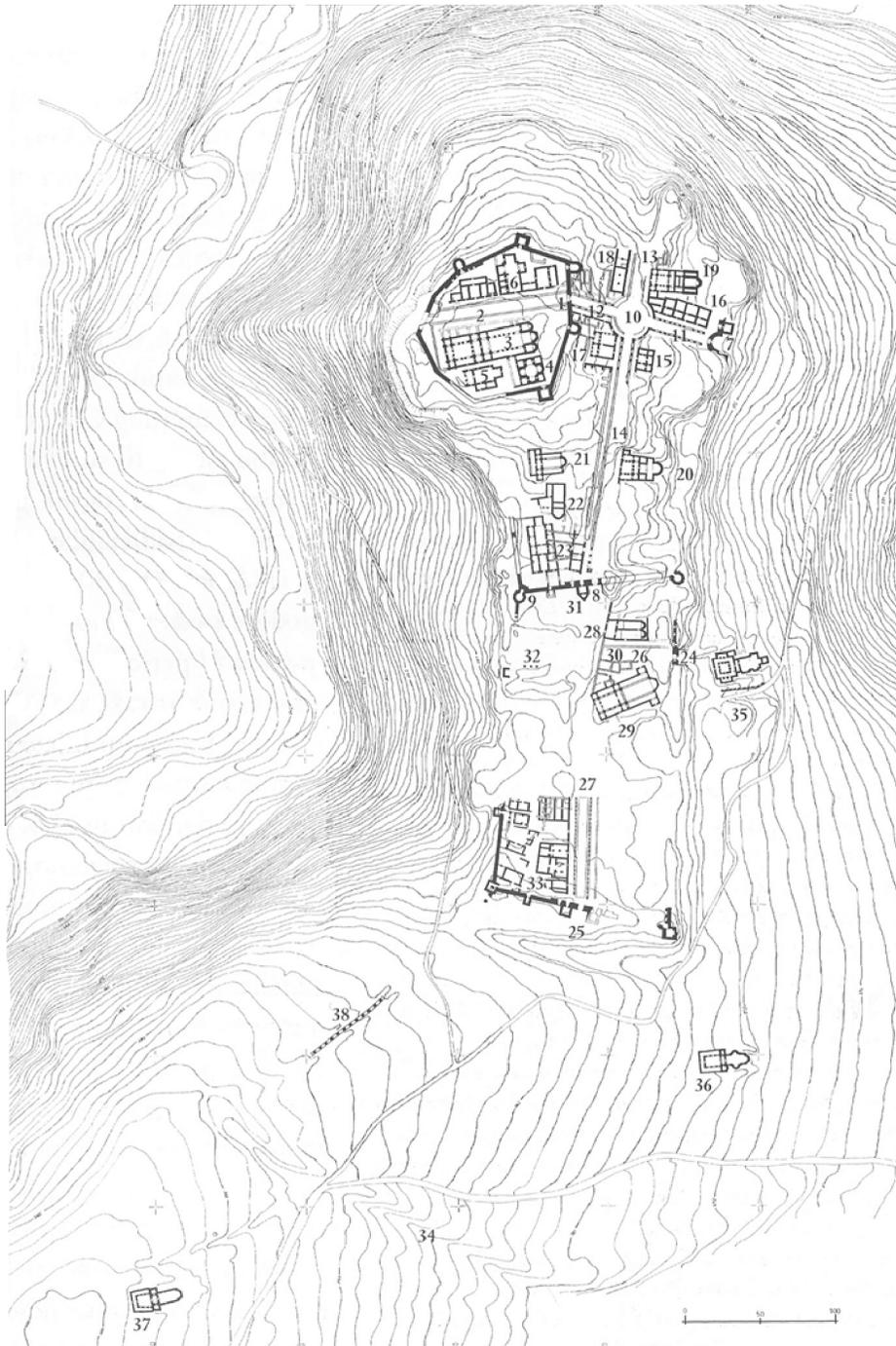


FIG. 1

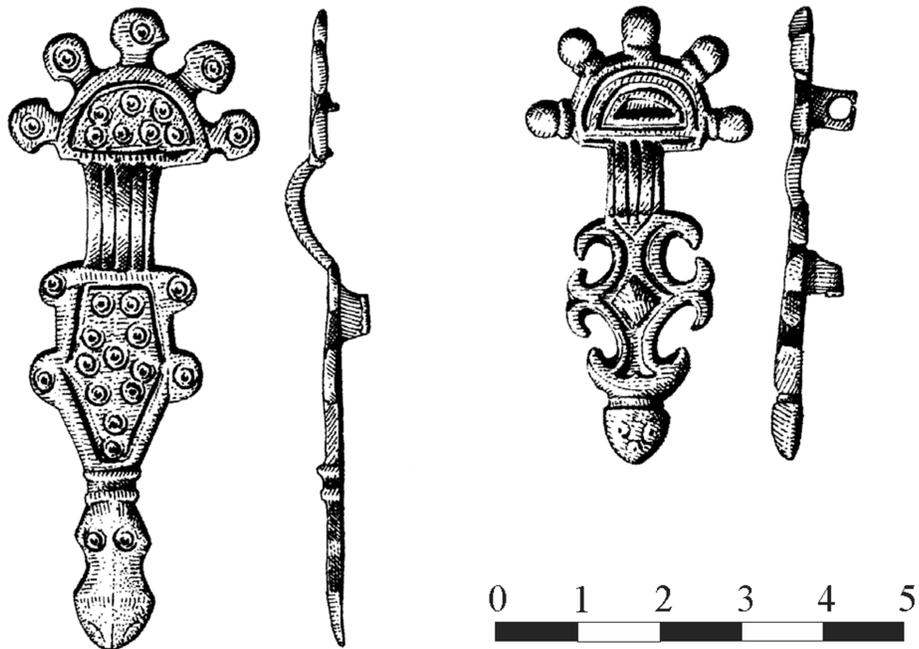


FIG. 2



FIG. 3



**FIG. 4**



**FIG. 5**

**ST. MAXIMUS THE GREEK – BETWEEN BYZANTINE MONASTICISM  
AND ATHONITE ASCETISM (MIKHAIL TRIVOLIS, ARTA, CA. 1470 – ST  
MAXIMUS OF VATOPAIDI, ST MAXIMUS THE GREEK, SV. MAKSIM  
GREK, ПРЕР. МАКСИМ ГРЕК, MOSCOW, 1556)**

*Neža Zajc*

**Abstract:** Maximus the Greek was several times misunderstood because of his individual use of the Slavic language. Born as Mikhail Trivolis in the Greek town of Arta, he gained a humanistic education in north Italy, particularly in Florence and Venice, where he was engaged in the process of the first printings of books and handling sample manuscripts. His author's work that in original form remained in manuscripts, reflected his awareness of the strict Orthodox theology and at the same time his special consideration of Biblical grammar. The paper shows how his use of (Slavic) language was all the time intentional, but at the same time profoundly influenced by Byzantine tradition, especially the liturgical emphasis. With such an attitude Maximus the Greek managed to create his own, deeply personal theological system, significantly marked with the synthesis of different Christian sources (hagiographic, hymnographic, patristic) of canonical knowledge. As a result, his own worldview combined the Byzantine (Constantinople) ideology of monasticism with his personal practise of Athonite ascetism, as seen in his theological works and his prayers.

**Keywords:** St. Maximus the Greek, the Holy Mount Athos, Manuscripts, Byzantine Hymnography, Orthodox Theology

### **Introduction**

When Mikhail Trivolis was born around 1470 in the Greek Macedonian town of Arta, the place had already been separated from Ioannina for about century, and remained a wall against the Latin invaders. Arta, known for public processions of Marian icons,<sup>156</sup> had from 843, the end of the age of iconoclasm, an Orthodox Church

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<sup>156</sup> CAMERON 2010, 105.

Metropolitanate dependent on the Chalcedonian Church.<sup>157</sup> Until 1417 it was influenced by Albanian clans from the Epirus, who were Orthodox, but after 1428 Arta was singularly controlled by the Greeks. Nevertheless, it became a commercial center with its progressive contact with Dubrovnik and Venice, and at the same flourished due to the influence of the Byzantine Church.<sup>158</sup> Moreover, the city was nearby various Serbian despots and in artistic contact with Italians, and interaction were especially frequent in the periods when such cultural differences were still not problematic.<sup>159</sup>

Mikhail's parents, mother Irina and father Emmanuel, took responsibility for his education which, as it seems, corresponded to the Byzantine system.<sup>160</sup> His cousin was probably Antonio Eparque, and another relative was also a well-known bibliophile and copyist, Demetrius Trivolis,<sup>161</sup> who had well-established links with Greek and Italian scholars, and with intellectuals from Corfù. A solid acknowledgement of Platonist tradition (particularly the Platonism from Mistra of Cardinal Bessarion) was thus known to Mikhail from his home environment. In June 1491, Ioannos Laskaris visited Demetrius Trivolis in Arta because he was searching for manuscripts for the library of Lorenzo Magnifico de' Medici.<sup>162</sup> The latter knew that Demetrius Trivolis had a large personal library in which he possessed a rare *Prolegomena* (12<sup>th</sup>) of Porphyri. In Corfù in 1492 Mikhail Trivolis stood in the elections for the Great Council of Senat, established by Venetian Republic, but he was too young to be elected (the limit for the participation was 20 age).<sup>163</sup> With Greek colleagues such as Ioannos Laskaris, Marco Musuros, Demetrius Halkondyle, and scholars from the Moschos family (Georgi,

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<sup>157</sup> JANIN 1955, 521.

<sup>158</sup> OSSWALD 2007, 133-138.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>160</sup> For a short and concise biography of Maximus the Greek see ZAJC 2015, 314-325.

<sup>161</sup> Demetrius Trivolis had his own personal library, brought from Greece, containing also his own copies of manuscripts. Probably Trivolis had already in 1460 a copy of Plato's *Timaeus*, written in Corfù; in 1472 he also acquainted *The Anthologie of the Greek Epigrammes* (Venezia, Biblioteca Marciana, Marc. gr. 621, f. 66) and *Odyssea* (in 1469). D. Trivolis had also a rare example of Porphyry's *Prolegomena* to Plotinus from 12th century, and other works of Greek philosophers (DENISSOFF 1943, 123, 127).

<sup>162</sup> This fact is described in the letter by Lorenzo de' Medici to Demetrius Halkondyle of 10 July 1491 (DENISSOFF 1943, 126).

<sup>163</sup> DENISSOFF 1943, 85-86.

Ioannos, Demetrios),<sup>164</sup> he travelled to north Italy via Greek and Croatian islands. Mikhail first established himself in Florence, the pilgrimage city, dedicated to the Holy Annunciation of Virgin Mary, a place that left a deep impression in his imagination for the rest of his life (he remembered Florence “*as the most beautiful and the most wonderful town in the Italian land that he had I have ever seen*”).<sup>165</sup> In the Florence apartment of Iannos Laskaris, Mikhail’s supervisor for his philological works, he met Aldo Manuzio in 1492, and was introduced to the elite circle of scribes, translators, and professional calligraphers who carefully followed the process of transmitting ancient manuscripts into printed form. Working with Florentine intellectuals (Marcilio Ficino, Cristophoro Landino<sup>166</sup> and Angelo Poliziano<sup>167</sup>), Trivolis also became enlightened by his contact with Italian humanism and the fashion for religious philosophy. He, thus, on the request of Ioannos Laskaris, twice copied the Greek manuscript of *Geoponica* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Par. gr. 1994).<sup>168</sup> In this manuscript Mikhail Trivolis left his signature that was not only chronological (data-based) evidence of one’s work, but also the sign of self-identification, a reflection of his awareness of the importance of a non-anonymous act, that was a very progressive gesture in the early Renaissance period. He also copied the *Geography* of Strabo that he concluded with verses as an ode to the ancient author (Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. gr. 83), and the manuscript of *The Jews History of Joseph Flavius* (Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. gr. 100). In Florence, Mikhail Trivolis was most probably included in the circle of educated men who were engaged in the project of the famous Medici Library. Mikhail’s *monokondylion* with an ornament depicting the name of his father, “*Manuil*”,<sup>169</sup> and his own poetical verses, can be found in the *marginalia* of the manuscript of Ermogen, Sirianus, and Sopatro (Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Conv. Soppr. 64, f. 174v). Ioannos Laskaris searched for the works of

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<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 140-143.

<sup>165</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Par. slav. 123, f. 461r.

<sup>166</sup> GARZANITI 2015, 343.

<sup>167</sup> DENISSOFF 1943, 152.

<sup>168</sup> This book, during the lifetime of Laskaris, was handed over to the Italian poet, diplomat, and philologist Andrea Navagerus (1483-1529) (DENISSOFF 1943, 88; FONKIČ 2003, 77-79).

<sup>169</sup> SPERANZI 2010, 266 n. 23, 278, 280; DENISSOFF 1943, 136.

Sopatro among Demetrius Trivolis' manuscripts in June 1491, in order to add them to the library of Lorenzo Magnifico de' Medici.<sup>170</sup> These Greek authors were important for the Byzantine theory of rhetoric and poetics, especially with regard the recognition of the rhythm and the meter,<sup>171</sup> albeit the rhythmical unit of prose and the rhythmical unit of the verse. Consequently, while working on this manuscript Mikhail could learn about the different forms of poetical expression, often written and understood as units of prose what can be seen in his later Slavonic manuscripts. In his subsequent theological-polemical works in prose he also applied the rhythmical principles of poetry (hexameter, pentameter – heroic meter and iambic).<sup>172</sup> Within a few years he had already been in touch with newly-established printing house of Aldo Manuzio in Venice, where he met a number of Greek colleagues, members of the second Greek diaspora: Ioannes Grigoropulos, Aristobule Apostolios, Nikolas Sofianos,<sup>173</sup> Zacharias Kalliergis (Cretan calligrapher and founder of the Greek Press in Medici Rome) and Nikolas Vlastos.<sup>174</sup> Mikhail may also have got in touch with the Venetian historiographer Pietro Bembo, who knew a lot of current information about the Slavic lands that were a part of Venetian Republic, and with the Italian philologist Giovanni Crastone. From that period Mikhail's correspondence with the Scypion Carteromach has been most thoroughly preserved.<sup>175</sup> Mikhail Trivolis obviously became a member of editorial group that was responsible for the newly printed Greek books in the workshop of Aldo Manuzio, while at that time a programme of *Neo-Accademia Aldine*<sup>176</sup> was forming there. He also visited Milan and Ferrara, and twice lived for extended periods at the Mirandola castle.<sup>177</sup> There he taught the Greek language to Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (a nephew of famous thinker Giovanni Pico), and most likely read the works of Dyonisius Areopaghyte for the first time. According to Mikhail's letters from Mirandola to Ioannes Grigoropulos and to

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<sup>170</sup> DENISSOFF 1943, 128.

<sup>171</sup> VALIAVITCHARSKA 2013, 33.

<sup>172</sup> DENISSOFF 1943, 142.

<sup>173</sup> ŠEVČENKO 2011, 296.

<sup>174</sup> DENISSOFF 1943, 88-89.

<sup>175</sup> GREK 2008, 101.

<sup>176</sup> DENISSOFF 1943, 206-207; RENAISSANCE ITALIENNE 1997, 17 (s.v. 'Académies' by G. HOLMES).

<sup>177</sup> It is also preserved a letter dated 1500 in which Marcos Mousouros wrote to Mikhail Trivolis in Mirandola (SPERANZI 2010, 263 n. 2).

Minor Canon Nicolas Tarasci<sup>178</sup> in Vercelli (29th March 1498), he was also invited to work with the professor of Greek and humanist Antonio Urceo Codro at Bologna University, but decided not to accept the invitation.<sup>179</sup> He was spiritually influenced by the theological teaching of Girolamo Savonarola, and also interested in the Catholic monastic orders of the Franciscans, Dominicans and Benedictines. Consequently he entered the Florentine Monastery of San Marco in Florence. However, he was not ordained, but remained as a ‘novice’. He left the convent for deeply personal reasons, as he expressed in a letter to S. Carteromach.<sup>180</sup> He found spiritual peace only in his work with manuscripts and first-printed books, and in Venice he was presumably involved in the plan for printing Greek Orthodox liturgical works (*i.e.* Byzantine books for the Holy Service).<sup>181</sup> Aldo Manuzio, whom later Maksim nicknamed as the Wise Romanian,<sup>182</sup> designed a special plan for the printing of Greek liturgical books, which, and for unknown reasons, was never realized. This was already the second failed attempt to print liturgical books for Orthodox Christians. The first was by the Cretan Georgios Alexandrou, who printed *Psalterion* in Venice in 1486.<sup>183</sup> During the period 1499-1500 the first Greek Orthodox community in Venice was set up, and Marco Musuros was a legal member of it.<sup>184</sup> In 1503 Musuros became a censor of Greek books in Venice,<sup>185</sup> but Mikhail Trivolis in that year left Italy.

### **The Beginnings of Ascetic Self-Determination**

Mikhail Trivolis had advanced his intellectual worldview at the Holy Mount Athos, in the Vatopaidi Monastery, dedicated to the Holy Annunciation, where in 1506

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<sup>178</sup> Nicolas de Tarso, with Greek roots and born at Capo d'Istria, was a protector of Mikhail Trivolis (DENISSOFF 1943, 201-202).

<sup>179</sup> DENISSOFF 1943, 89; GREK 2008, 87.

<sup>180</sup> GREK 2008, 98-99.

<sup>181</sup> *Psaltery* (Venice, 1485); *Horologion* (Venice, 1509); *Oktoechos* (Rome, 1520); *Parakletike* (Venice, 1522); *Triodion* (Venice, 1526); *Euchologion* (Venice, 1526); *Typikon* (Venice, 1545); *Menaia* (Venice, 1548) (cf. WELLESZ 1998, 431).

<sup>182</sup> Maximus the Greek explained the meaning of the additional name that Apostle Paul had ('The Romanian') as the noble name always gained by respectfully proceeding from the ancestor (cf. Moskva, Rossiiskaya Gosudarstvennaya Biblioteka, Rum. 264, f. 68r).

<sup>183</sup> LAYTON 1981, 120.

<sup>184</sup> SINITSYNA 2008, 53, 83.

<sup>185</sup> HARLFINGER 1989, 62.

he was ordained as a monk, and received the monastic name Maximus, after St. Maximus the Confessor. It has to be said that on the Mount Athos his previous education within the Italian world had been considered not only as valid, but as well appreciated. He continued his work with manuscripts, combining Eastern and Western sources of canonical Christian knowledge. As a monk in the Monastery of Vatopaidi Maximus had access to the oldest manuscripts of the Holy Mount Athos (on request he transcribed an old, damaged manuscript from 11<sup>th</sup> century that was of significant value with regard to the contradiction related to the properties of the Holy Kastamonitou and the Monastery of Zoograph<sup>186</sup>), and he was introduced in the study of the Holy Fathers<sup>187</sup> of the Orthodox Church and into chants of Byzantine hymnography. Maximus started a profiled translational practice, based on the tendency of the Greek normative, within which the Bulgarian linguistic features were being replaced not by Russian but by Serbian ones.<sup>188</sup> In Athonite libraries within the Serbian Hilandar Monastery, which kept the oldest Slavonic manuscripts,<sup>189</sup> Maximus thus made first, sporadic contact with the liturgical language of South Slavs. It is known that at this time he had already revised various liturgical manuscripts, since his *marginalia* have been found in a very rare Greek copy of the *Hagiography* of Clement of Ochrid, that also contains the liturgical service to this Slavic scholar and saint (*Menologion* for a month November, 25 November). Along with the epigrammatic *opus* (*Elegiacs on the Grand Rhetor Manuel of Corinth and Verses on Patriarch Ioachim I*), Maximus also wrote his own prayers, this demonstrating his creative practice with regard to personal prayer. He composed *Verses on Martyr St. Demetrius*, an extended *A Service-prayer to Saint Erasmus of Ochrid*, and a hymn in the form of an *Intercessory Canon to St. John the Baptist*.<sup>190</sup>

It is worth mentioning that in *A Service-prayer to Saint Erasmus of Ochrid* Maximus also provided a personal speech, entitled *Synaxarion of the monk Maximos*, in which he revealed that he could not discover much of the saint's childhood and

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<sup>186</sup> FONKIČ 2003, 57-59.

<sup>187</sup> DENISSOFF 1943, 27.

<sup>188</sup> MOŠIN 1998, 85.

<sup>189</sup> Cf. MOŠIN 1998, 37, 85.

<sup>190</sup> Athos, Μονή Βατοπεδίου, 1016.

education, because he had to rely on severely damaged manuscripts in the execution of his transcript. He then, nevertheless, begins to tell the life of the great scholar (*hieromartyr*) Erasmus, as he had managed to figure it out from the manuscript.<sup>191</sup> St. Erasmus was in particular honoured in Macedonia (Ochrid) and Albania at during the rule of Andronikus II. These lands were close to Mikhail Trivolis' birthplace of Arta. This story reveals that as a Vatopaidian monk Maximus not only worked constantly with liturgical manuscripts, but he also carefully studied their hagiographic content. The co-existence of the hagiographical content and liturgical notes, regarded as an obligatory monastic reading that also provided instructions on how to explain the various Biblical references, could be explained with another Athonite codex, *Μονὴ Βατοπεδίου*, 1207, dating to the period when Maximus Trivolis was a monk in the Athonite Vatopaidi Monastery. This variant of the *Synaxar* (a title that was given to very ambiguous and varied types of manuscripts, most often similar to collective contributions),<sup>192</sup> could be called a 'Co-Synaxar', because of the character of its commentaries on liturgical, but also hagiographic readings, on which the text was based. It could be proposed that such a *Synaxarium* formed the kernel of *Menaia* (and the analogues *Menologion* compilations), most often attributed to Symeon Metaphrastes (11<sup>th</sup>),<sup>193</sup> that was copied in the 1507-1508.<sup>194</sup> That manuscript could also have been in the hands of Maximus Trivolis while he was a monk in the Holy Vatopaidi Monastery.

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<sup>191</sup> "Hieromartyr Erasmus of Antioch suffered torment under Emperor Maximusian when he ruled over the territory of Illyricum. It all started when he, preaching Christ's faith, knocked over statues in the city of Ly(c)hnedon (?). Caesar sent troops who arrested him and brought him before his face. Trying to force him to adore other gods, he took him to Zeus' temple where Erasmus knocked over his statue simply by looking at it. A giant snake crawled from the statue; terrified, people looked to Erasmus for help – and he baptised them. Caesar then ordered the baptised to be killed and Erasmus was put into a hot bronze cabinet. The latter cooled off upon Gods' grace so Erasmus survived. He was then imprisoned yet again God saved him. He then miraculously came to Campania to the city of Phyrmos, where he preached gospel and baptised many people. There he died" (translated from Greek by Gregor Pobežin in 2018 on my request, N. Z.) (ΜΑΞΙΜΟΥ ΓΡΑΙΚΟΥ 2017, 340).

<sup>192</sup> See TURILOV 2018, 224-226.

<sup>193</sup> WELLESZ 1998, 135-136.

<sup>194</sup> In the catalogue its description does not correspond to the document (cf. ΧΕΙΡΟΓΡΑΦΩΝ 1896, 7) and it is indicated as Vatop. Gr. Typicon Ecclesiasticon Stouditi, perg., 15ct.

In Maximus' *Intercessory Canon to St. John the Baptist*,<sup>195</sup> associated with the liturgical realisation of the text, particularly with the feast of John the Baptist,<sup>196</sup> there are interpolated among the odes a number of verses, dedicated to the Holy Mother of God. After the reading of *Psalms* 50 there is placed the first glorification (doxology), dedicated to the Mother of God,<sup>197</sup> to whom the author is appealing to recognize him as worthy, since she is “*the only Divine Mother*” (ἀξίωσον μόνη Θεομήτορ).<sup>198</sup> It seems that, as a monk, Maximus was particularly influenced by the mystagogical theological aspect of Maximus the Confessor, because both authors managed to combine – in a literary genre with the language of Biblical awareness (especially respecting the prophetic message of John the Baptist, which is repeated throughout the Canon) – the monastic humility with liturgical observance of the sacred space (church),<sup>199</sup> as could be found in the following *heirmos* that is placed after the *theotokion* (Athos, Μονὴ Βατοπεδίου, 1016, f. 32v):

Ὡδὴ γ'. Οὐρανίας ἀψίδος.

Προστασίαν καὶ σκέπην τὴν ἀεὶ δίδου μοι, ἐπικαλουμένῳ  
 Προφήτῃ σὺ με κυβέρνησον, ταῖς ἱκεσίαις σου, τὸν ἀ-  
 σφαλὴ πρὸς λιμένα, τῶν δεσμῶν ἐξαίρων με τοῦ πολε-  
 μήτορος.

“3<sup>th</sup> chant of the Heavenly Dome/Arch.

*But give me your protection and cover when I call you; you steer me,  
 o Prophet, with your prayers, into a safe haven  
 liberating me from those who fight (against me)”*

<sup>195</sup> Handed down by the codex Vatop. 1016, ff. 32r-34v.

<sup>196</sup> This Canon contains an overture in the form of a hymn to the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (the first feast after the Birth of the Holy Theotokos), and after that an Ode to the Prophet John the Baptist, connected with the Feast of the Prophet and Forerunner John the Baptist on first Sunday after Epiphany. Later in the Orthodox liturgy were these verses recognized as “Apolithikion of St John the Baptist”. The feasts to the honour of St. John the Baptist were traditionally widely celebrating in the liturgy services of Athonite monasteries (of Stoudite tradition) (cf. NIKIFOROVA 2012, 183 n. 4).

<sup>197</sup> A similar praise in honour of the Mother of God is placed after the *Gospel* of Matthew (Vatop. 1016, f. 34r).

<sup>198</sup> This short prayer was recognized as the *theotokion* from the *Kanon Parakletikos Agion Parthenion* of Symeon of Metaphrastos, traditionally read in July, before the Feast of the Holy Dormition.

<sup>199</sup> Cf. BORNERT 1966, 86-88.

(translated from Greek by Gregor Pobežin)

The final address in the 9<sup>th</sup> *Ode* is a direct and clear veneration (Κυρίως Θεοτόκον). By inscribing the enclosed unit of God the Son and His Mother, it completes a pious request with following words (Vatop. 1016, f. 34v):

Χαρᾶς μὲν τὴν καρδίαν, Πρό-  
δρομε Κυρίου, σὺν Μαριάμ τῇ Παρθένῳ πληρώσασθαι, τὸν τῶν  
ἁπάντων Δεσπότην νῦν καθικέτευε.

*“To fill my heart with joy, the Fore-  
runner of the Lord, please, together with Virgin Mary,  
beg the Lord”*

(translated from Greek by N. Zajc)

This passage reveals a prayer with the naming of the most important Athonite icon of the Holy Theotokos, called Ἄξιόν ἐστίν.<sup>200</sup>

The previously mentioned adaptation of liturgical rules in the form of monastic advice (the co-existence of the hagiographical text within the commentaries) reflects Maximus’ constant dealing with liturgical works, especially hymnographical ones, that were spread among South Slavic and Greek monks. Further on, we can see that in Russia Maximus the Greek was introducing into his writings various commentaries and interpretations that could be seen in Latin, Greek and South Slavonic liturgical texts, but until his arrival on the scene were yet found in Russian manuscripts. Later, in his text, written in Church Slavonic, entitled *Let Us Pray for the Salvation of Souls*, Maximus the Greek addressed the different meanings of two words which are homonymous in Slavonic: that is, he explains the difference between *mir* as ‘world’ and *mir* as ‘peace’, two concepts which left their mark on Byzantine reflections on spiritual concord and

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<sup>200</sup> Vatop.1016, f. 34v.

human harmony. His interpretation of the prayer for our peace of mind, which was directed at, or dedicated to, the wrong recipient in the Russian Divine Service, is aimed at Everyman entering the world (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Par. slav. 123, f. 583r):

*“With your old translation, priests and deacons would begin the liturgy by bidding the devout pray for a higher mir (world), and there were some who mistakenly took this to refer to angels. Let it be known to Your Holiness that this verbal expression – mir – signifies two things in your tongue: all creation, visible and invisible (world), as well as the bond of love through which men establish peace among themselves. The Greeks, by contrast, have two different words: the world, the entire visible and invisible creation is the so-called cosmos, while the bond of love is called irini”<sup>201</sup>*

The essential mistake of the Russian liturgical service – associating peace of mind with angelic intercession – was exposed by Maximus the Greek not only as a misunderstanding of the Saviour’s Biblical words but even as a mistaken notion of the divine order itself. In other words, if Christ’s words about mutual love, which alone can endow mankind with peace of mind, are misunderstood, our view of the world may be warped as well. This premise, which joins a spiritual stance or personal view to history, shifts the philological quandary to an anthropological reality, which points the believer to the essence of inner contemplation and to the significance of mutual understanding. Rather than on the Church Fathers’ adages, Maximus’ interpretation rests on the words of two Biblical prophets, Isaiah and David. Their words were re-created in the *Canons of the Nativity of Our Lord*, composed by two leading Byzantine hymnographers, Joseph the Hymnographer and Cosmas of Maiuma, who praised the miracle of Mary’s preserved virginity. That text concludes with Maximus’ extended argumentation of the holiness of the Mother of God, that according to Greek tradition was benevolently honoured, because *“She is the only [human being] Who with the Mercy of Her Son*

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<sup>201</sup> All translations from the Old Church Slavonic texts of St Maximus the Greek are made by the author of this article (Neža Zajc).

*before the Second Coming resurrected in Her Body*".<sup>202</sup> His speech ends by prayer and invocation of the untouchable, analogous to the Divine Nature of the Mother of God.

Although Maximus the Greek never mentioned Nicolas Cabasilas directly, in this text he explicitly stated that Nilus Cabasilas (presumably Nicholas Cabasilas<sup>203</sup>) was an outstanding exegete of Divine Liturgy, moreover that his interpretation prevails those of John Chrysostom, Basil the Great and John Damascene. However, his text *Against Those Who Are Forbidding Those Who are Late to Attend the Divine Liturgy*, in which Maximus provided his explanations of three parts of the Divine service (Eucharistic offering), cannot be entirely identified with the explanation of Nicolas Cabasilas, because it is a reasonably argued, canonically pointed description of the semantic diversiform of the literal, allegoric and symbolic meaning of the Eucharistic rite that ends with receiving the Holy Communion. According to Maximus the Greek, he is referring to the rite that existed already in the first communities of Christians, when Gospels not yet had been written, but on the contrary Maximus underlines that it already existed the office of the Holy Spirit. He differs three parts of the rite, which corresponds to the Trinitarian cadre of the Anaphora that, indeed, is characteristic for the liturgical theology of Nicolas Cabasilas.<sup>204</sup> The triangle structure that Maximus describes is not analogues to the Cabasilas' Divine Liturgy but it could be compared with Cabasilas' Explication of the Rites.<sup>205</sup> The first part Maximus names as 'narrative', that is formed from the preparation or Prothesis of the sacred gifts (the bread and the wine) which are within reading of the prophetic songs brought from the throne into the altar. The second part he named as 'praying' and began with the words "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". Until the Cheroubikon' song that signifies the Great Entrance,<sup>206</sup> the pieces of bread must be placed at the altar. There are read the words from the Apostolic Letters and from the Gospels from which, according to Maximus, we have to learn about how to please to God the Son. The third part Maximus

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<sup>202</sup> GREK 2014, 283.

<sup>203</sup> ŠEVČENKO 1957, 86 n. 22.

<sup>204</sup> SALAVILLE 1967, 310.

<sup>205</sup> SALAVILLE 1967, 369-381.

<sup>206</sup> SALAVILLE 1932, 93.

describes as “*transforming, or, realizing all the power of all-pure and all-fearful Christ’s mysteries*”. At the end of this examination he limits the act of offering (sacrifice) from the solemn, but faithful participation, within which it could be proposed that Maximus’s treatise is different from Cabasilas who identifies the terms of the consecration and the sacrifice (Par. slav. 123, f. 406r):<sup>207</sup>

*“With the Cherubikon’s song it commands to leave aside all the sadness of the life and the worries, and to make ourselves being worthy with pure and pious thought to elevate the Lord and the King of Almighty accompanied with the invisible angels but not with the acts of the bringing gifts”*

The third part is crucial, because it basis on the fundamental Epiclesis formula, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, that is decisive also for the symbolical sense of the Eucharistic aim (Par. slav. 123, f. 406r).

*“In this third part the active grace of the Holy Spirit appears after the mysterious calling of the priest. And then blesses the altar and the divine’s bread into the body of the incorporated God the Word is transfigured and the wine, placed in the chalice into the life-giving blood of Him transmutes”*

However, Maximus underlined that the second part was being created for the illuminating and refining of our minds, but within the third part the sins could be not only forgiven but also totally rooted out,<sup>208</sup> and additionally could made “us seen by God”. After that, it is read the Gospel within the words about “The Right Wisdom” could be associated with the Small Entrance. After that there are placed the prayers about the transformed objects with the General intercession as a humble request within the prayer:

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<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>208</sup> Cf. SALAVILLE 1967, 85 (N. Cabasilas's *Explication of the Divine Liturgy*, chap. XXIX, 6-10; PG 429 D).

“‘Let Us Pray to the Lord’ *Who is Humanloving that He accept the gifts and sends upon us the divine grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit.*<sup>209</sup> *This is the fruit and the head and the spiritual grace and the pleasure of the Holy Liturgy*”

Indeed, Maximus the Greek had in common with Nicolas Cabasilas many radical opinions, especially against “*certain Latins*”.<sup>210</sup> Maximus’s favourite polemical theme was the theological argumentation against the Latins’ invention in the Confessional Creed, the *Filioque*.<sup>211</sup> In his writings could be observed that he was particularly underlining the necessity of properly and regularly celebrating the service of the so called *Epiclesis*.<sup>212</sup> Thus, Maximus’ text concludes with an argument for every believer to be present at the Divine Liturgy based on a vision of a scene of brightness at the attendance of the Holy marriage (Matthew 20, 1-16). A similar conclusion is repeated in Maximus’s *Prayer to the Holy Mother of God, and Partly About the Lord’s Sufferings*.

Nevertheless, this is the only explicit reference to Nicolas Cabasilas in Maximus the Greek’s texts. He thus also rarely referred to Maximus the Confessor but however, in his treatise *On How All Living Things are Guided by Divine Providence Rather than by Stars or Fortune’s Wheel*, he alludes to Maximus the Confessor, striving to support what he perceives as a fundamental theological idea: the anthropological predisposition of God’s purpose. This predisposition bestowed on Man the gift of reason, which was accompanied by a belief in the Christian God and directly linked to Man’s capacity for verbal comprehension:

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<sup>209</sup> Nicolas Cabasilas in *The Explication of the Divine Liturgy* (chapter XXVIII, 2, PG 428 A-C) is saying that “The Holy Spirit is the one who by the hand and a language of the priest consecrates the mysteries [...] the Paraclete is present invisible because it has no contact with the corps” (SALAVILLE 1967, 179).

<sup>210</sup> SALAVILLE 1967, 312.

<sup>211</sup> The controversial addition to the Latin Creed *Filioque*, connected also with the “new” teaching, is associated with the belief about the proceeding of the Holy Spirit, coming not only from God the Father but *also* from God the Son. It began to spread through the Christian West with the rule of Charlemagne (in the year 802), when this kind of thought (on the basis of Augustinian’ Trinitarian doctrine) starts to claim Alcuin from York (SIECIENSKI 2010, 95). In fact, Greek theologians rejected such innovation mainly because it deprived the liturgical act of *Epiclesis* (Greek practice of the prayer invoking the Holy Ghost at the consecration of the Host), a prayer omitted by the Latins (RUNCIMAN 1970, 37).

<sup>212</sup> SALAVILLE 1967, 32-36.

*“It is natural to our minds that the verbal part which exists in us is always ruled by God’s word while ruling over the non-verbal part”*<sup>213</sup>

Maximus claimed that the main characteristics of the *“human soul are, that it consists of words*<sup>214</sup> *and that it is immortal”*, and he saw human beings as endowed with a Divine reason, which can be exercised only by a wakeful mind and through conscious prayer.<sup>215</sup> Maximus professed the Christian view, which allows for an individual’s liberty of choice. Additionally, he saw the possibility of redemption through everyday life instead of exclusively through a monastic existence.<sup>216</sup> The latter view also emerged from his monastic experience in his Athonite period. Because of his linguistic skills in the Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi, Maximus was chosen for the mission to the Orthodox lands. He became a close disciple of Patriarch Niphon II,<sup>217</sup> who was a Metropolitan in Valachia, and with him carried out the Orthodox missions to Moldo-Vlachia.<sup>218</sup> During such work, Latin was used among people who did not share a common language,<sup>219</sup> just as it was the language of diplomacy used in European courts, but the use of Latin also attested to the process of so-called non-violent Christianization. This was not understood as a method that made use of polemical wrath, but rather as a monastic call for reflection on one’s Christian duties. Maximus later reported on this experience in a letter to the Russian Metropolitan Macarius (on the basis of the manuscript from Par. Slav. 123, f. 79r):

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<sup>213</sup> GREK 2014, 155.

<sup>214</sup> That means that the human soul is understood by words, powered by Divine Reason (a wisdom coming from the God).

<sup>215</sup> His special understanding distinguished two kind of knowledge: the external knowledge, coming from the human principle (philosophy, logic, mathematics, astronomy), and knowledge from Holy Scriptures, internal contemplation and incessant prayer; and only the latter is wisdom, granted a special theological manifestation by the Holy Paracletus. Maximus the Greek placed his trust above all in ‘God’s reason’, which held the character of something hidden in the Holy Scripture (the Holy Bible could be also the main source for such division of the human knowledge: cf. 2 Cor. 4, 11-18).

<sup>216</sup> Cf. Nicolas Cabasilas argued that the saints themselves were incomplete personalities if they had not received sufficient instructions in the world (BUCKLER 1948, 214-215).

<sup>217</sup> Later in Moscow 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 II, *“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”* (GREK 2008, 124).

<sup>218</sup> ŠEVČENKO 1997, 63-64.

<sup>219</sup> KALENDORF 2008, 87.

*“The witness to your righteousness from me is the only righteous heart-visioner<sup>220</sup> and the secrets of the dark and human thought, Who wishes to open and to reveal on the fearful day of His Second Coming, that I really did not act nothing badly or suspicious about the Orthodox faith of Yours and of mine, nor in my mind, did never write or speak, as some men lied about me /.../ although I very zealously tried to cooperate for the Orthodox faith, here, among You Russians, I wrote texts against widely spread heretical teachings, that means against Judaizers, Muslims and also against Hellenes, and also about those who are trying to seduce the Orthodox believers, such as liars, storytellers, astrologers, who one must not only not take into the consideration but also persecute. But I also before the noble men, called ‘Lachs’, brightly and confident preached our Orthodox faith, enlightened and empowered only under the direct act of the Grace of the Holy Paraclete before Whom I am kneeling”*

Maximus addresses his speech directly to God the Son, Who he named with an expression taken from the Apostol (*Apostolic Works* 15, 8). And he explicitly said that already before his arrival in Moscow he was preaching Orthodox theological principles to “*the Noblemen Lachs*” (*i.e.* Italian Catholics or Moldovlachians) in those places where, in fact, was for a long time the *Regula legis*, *Nomocanon* of the Patriarch Photius (of 9<sup>th</sup> ct.).<sup>221</sup> There were in 15<sup>th</sup> century the Serbian manuscripts presenting a connection between Orthodox believers and South Russia (Ukraine).<sup>222</sup>

On the occasion of Metropolitan Niphon’s death on 11<sup>th</sup> August in 1508, Maximus wrote *The First Epitaph on Patriarch Niphon II*, and *Verses on the Reliquary of Patriarch Niphon II*.<sup>223</sup> In 1516, as a Vatopaidian monk, Maximus was sent to Russia as a translator (from Greek to Old Church Slavonic) and a redactor of liturgical books as part of an Orthodox mission that was a response to a request made by the Muscovite Great Prince Vasili III. Although during his travels to Russia Maximus was

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<sup>220</sup> Literally “*God, Who knows the heart*” (*Acts* 15, 8).

<sup>221</sup> PITRA 1858, 63 n. 3

<sup>222</sup> MOŠIN 1998, 96.

<sup>223</sup> ŠEVČENKO 1997, 68-69.

accompanied by one Bulgarian and one Russian monk, it was once proposed that he did not learn Slavic with the help of Greek, but rather Latin.<sup>224</sup> This could be explained not only by the above-mentioned contacts with Valachian and other Eastern Christian church centres, but also by the vicinity of northern Italian cities to Slavic lands, particularly Venice, where he might have stopped in summer 1517 during his journey to Moscow. However, it is worth mentioning that in 1518 in Venice the liturgical press for South Slavonic Orthodox believers started operations, in the printing house of Božidar and Vincenzo Vuković, and this work was completed in two phases: one in 1518-1519 and the second in 1546-1567.

Soon after his arrival in Moscow in 1518, Maximus in 1519 had already finished the translation of “Apostol”: the first part, namely the annotated chapters from the New Testament; and the second part, *i.e.* the letters of the Apostles James, Peter, John and Jude, and Apostle Paul’s Letter to the Romans.<sup>225</sup> In 1521 he translated the extensively annotated *Psalter with Commentaries*, with profiled commentaries that enlarged the translation into 1,042 manuscript pages. Indeed, Maximus the Greek had realised the first translation of the annotated Psalter in Russia, and it was accompanied by extensive patristic interpretations of the nine liturgical songs after the reading of 150 psalms, and this became part of the canon of Maximus’s theological system (especially the second song of Moises and the song of the prophetess Anna). Among the Orthodox Church Fathers, Maximus’ translation included the following (the names are cited from the manuscript of *The Psalter with Commentaries*): Theodorite from Chyrrus, Eusebius of Caesaria, John Chrysostome, Gregory of Nazianzen, Didym, Aquila, Athanasius the Great, Basilius of Cappadocia, Asterius Episcopo, Victorius the Presbyter, Eudoxius Philosopher, Theodorus from Iraclius, Nicola the Presbyter, Apollinarius, Diodorus, Isichyus, Cyrillius from Alexandria, Origenus (from the period before the anathematical heretical teachings), and Theodorus from Antioch.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> JAGIĆ 1896, 301, 306; RUNCIMAN 1968, 327.

<sup>225</sup> The single version from 16th century is in the manuscript Moskva, Gosudarstvennyi Istoričeskij Muzei, Muz. 3475 (IVANOV 1969, 47).

<sup>226</sup> Moskva, Gosudarstvennyi Istoričeskij Muzei, Mss. Shuk. №4 (exact pages can not be indicated, because there are commentaries inserted all-along the manuscript that contains 798 written pages).

In 1522 the Metropolitan Daniil of Moscow asked Maximus to translate for him the *Church History* of St Theodoritus from Cyrrhus. Maksim Grek – as he was named in Russia – refused this work because he was aware of the theologically complex content that might lead to incorrect teachings. Additionally, a minor linguistic misunderstanding<sup>227</sup> with the political body of the Russian Church was the official reason for even more serious accusations that were made against Maximus the Greek. The fact is that he was translating through the Russian translators: Maximus told them the word in Latin and they then translated it into Old Church Slavonic. In 1525 at the Moscow Church Synod Maximus was for the first time accused of making heretical translation errors in Russian liturgical manuscript books, and was imprisoned. In particular there was a problem about the verbal forms (aorist - perfect) in the Confessional Creed. Maximus' use of the perfect form was found to be heretical. In fact, he used the verb in the perfect tense because he understood this verbal form in connection with God the Son with regard to a hymnographical-liturgical emphasis, in which the eternal view is obligatory, provided by oral (liturgical, chanted) and written (Biblical, theological, hagiographical) literal expressions. Additionally Maximus was looking for a Slavonic form with an aim of directly addressing Jesus Christ in the Confessional Creed.<sup>228</sup> Moreover, this example confirmed that Maximus had in mind a very precise conception of the Slavonic language, known to him from previous experience, and intermittent, distant contacts with Slavs and Slavonic manuscripts.

The Moscow Synod found Maximus guilty, and he was excommunicated, not allowed to visit the Church service (the Divine Liturgy), to communicate, or to have or read books,<sup>229</sup> and he was forbidden to write. Maximus was also put into irons and

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<sup>227</sup> USPENSKI 2002, 234-235.

<sup>228</sup> More about Maxim the Greek's Slavic idiolect in ZAJC 2016, 375-382.

<sup>229</sup> *“He must be imprisoned in the cell in the complete silence, without speaking with anyone, not from the monastery not from the ordinary people, not with the monks of other monastery, without exit and without communication. Nor my writing nor by teaching or thinking. He is not allowed to write letters or received them, nor to talk with someone or protect somebody. He must sit in the silence and make a repentance about his heretic teachings”* (Novosibirsk, Biblioteka Akademii Nauk, Sibirski Spisok, f. 344v; a citation from the documents of the Trial against Maximus the Greek, published by POKROVSKI 1971, 55.).

barred from the Sacrament of the Holy Communion-Eucharist, which was the harshest punishment for an Orthodox monk. About the latter he wrote the following in the above mentioned letter to Metropolitan Macarius in 1547 (Par. slav. 123, f. 79r):

*“I was sent from the Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi to preach the pure Orthodox faith and I was doing so under the holy support and the inspiration of the Divine Paraclete, and from everywhere I was deliberately returned to the Holy Mount Athos, but nowhere did anything happen to me like here, in Russia, where I was put into iron chains, and I experienced in a dark cell, the cold, the smoke and starvation.”*

According to his own words, Maximus was claiming that he was not able to keep in his memory all the Christian knowledge he had gained without the direct aid of the Holy Spirit Paracletos. This has to be understood as a valid proof, indeed, that Maximus had already received an important amount of his knowledge already before arriving in Russia, and that his intellectual profile at this time must be presumed to have been an integrated whole of different religious and ascetic sources, gained through a lifetime of searching for theologically prudent monastic thought along with appropriate linguistic reflection, as shown in his Orthodox Trinitarian system. But this kind of spiritual knowledge could only benefit the most humble, pious and virtuous writings, if it was indeed directly influenced and produced by the actions of the Holy Paracletos. In his description of the correcting Russian liturgical manuscripts, Maximus claimed that every single part of his linguistic work was guided by Divine inspiration of the Holy Paracletos. In the text *About Correcting the Russian Books, and About Those who are speaking that the flash of Lord after the Resurrection was indescribable*, he wrote (Par. slav. 123, ff. 259v-260r):

*“I do not corrupt Russian books, as I was falsely accused, but take great care in my fear of God to correct, with my common sense, what has spread from inept copyists, unfamiliar with the holy grammar – or from the first translators of the Holy texts. Truth must be told. Sometimes the gist of Hellenic sayings was not fully apprehended, which led to steering away from the truth. Hellenic speech is often difficult to interpret; those*

*who do not learn its grammar, poetry and above all philosophy, cannot clearly understand what was written, let alone translate it. The truth must be told that I carefully and diligently corrected what they misunderstood, the same must be explained to your Excellency with all honesty, in front of whom I humble myself as before God. Let me start with the following. I took the holy book of Triodion and noticed in the 9<sup>th</sup> hymn of the Maundy Thursday Canon: 'In His nature non-created Son and Word of the Father Who is always without the beginning, Who is not in His nature non-created, as they sing about Him.' I could not stand this great insult, so I amended the injury, as was handed to us by the most sublime Paraclete through the most blessed Kosmas in our books."*

Indeed, Maximus understood linguistic grammar with regard to its theological dimensions. More precisely, for him the knowledge of the language was close to the meaning of what he considered as Sacred.<sup>230</sup> In other words, he understood the Christian language within the theological aspect as it had been established during the first centuries of Christianity rising, at the ecumenical Church councils, where the language of the Bible was confirmed as canonical and in accordance with non-written grammatical rules of the first Christian liturgical service. Such respectful consideration of the grammar of the Biblical language was mainly the outcome of his Italian philological experience, but it had already started with the very first learning of his native language, from the Greek grammar as τέχνη that he trained within the theological issues that also involved the Byzantine oral linguistic (popular style of Greek) tradition<sup>231</sup>. Nevertheless Maximus was strongly attached to the Greek tradition, and it is obvious that he knew the theological discordances in Slavic texts quite well. It seems that he was familiar with Slavic by ear, which is explained by the fact that he had previously travelled along northern Italy, particularly Venice, and among the Adriatic islands.

From this passage it is also notable that from the literal iconographical depiction Maximus the Greek considered the Son of God, in an accordance with Orthodox theological thought, was and is, before and after His resurrection, visible, especially for

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<sup>230</sup> Cf. JAGIĆ 1896, 301, 306.

<sup>231</sup> Cf. ROBINS 1993, 15-16.

the Apostles who were able to witness Him, and consequently also describable (by them), and a subject that could be turned into an image. However, in another text, entitled *The Second Letter to Fiodor Karpov About the Astrology* (written in 1525-1530, in Moscow), Maximus submitted the opinion that Jesus Christ was visible only for three his disciples, Apostles James, John and Petes, who were there, under the Mount Tabor, at the Lord's Transfiguration. In this text Maximus outlined a strict hierarchy in the structure of the theological teachings, when he stated that Gregory of Akragina,<sup>232</sup> Kosmas of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa and John Chrysostom achieved only the bottom level, defined as the position of the "nine remaining" Apostles under the foot of the mountain (*i.e.* Mount Tabor).<sup>233</sup> Consequently, according to Maximus the Greek only three apostles (John, James, and Peter) possessed the ability to experience theophany in their lifetime, namely the seeing of the Divine glory of Jesus Christ. Maximus directly used the liturgical term for the Orthodox Feast of Theophany, within which he juxtaposed the theological and liturgical aspects (with the word 'богоявлению' - 'theophanic') - in Old Church Slavonic language – and confirmed that the very sophisticated usage of Slavonic in terms of Orthodox theology was for him always an act of creation, but not an invention. However, it must be said, that this is also the clear example of the fact that Maximus' monastic thought altered from the Athonite and Russian Hesychasm (both following the tradition of Gregory Palama) ascetic streams,<sup>234</sup> because at this single mentioning Mount Tabor he did not make any reference to the Holy Light, which was so characteristic for the above-mentioned Palamistes. This example could be also explained by the fact that the name of that mountain is not mentioned in the Bible, but only in Patristic texts that have a secondary place in the theology of Maximus the Greek.

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<sup>232</sup> Gregory of Agrigentum (late 6<sup>th</sup> century) was a bishop of Sicilia. To him is attributed the finest ancient commentary of *The Book of Ecclesiastes* in ten books (FERGUSON 1999, 491). About the author of the Old Testament Book of *Ecclesiastes*, St. Gregory Nazianzus once expressed as 'not entirely certain' (MORESCHINI 2012, 270-271).

<sup>233</sup> Par. Slav. 123, f. 38 (see GREK 2008, 313).

<sup>234</sup> Also Nicolas Cabasilas was marked as a "laic ascetic" because he was often far from the experience of light (SALAVILLE 1976, 14).

Beside the Holy Bible, and especially the translational project of *Septuagint* that Maximus the Greek understood as the highest example of the most pure Divine inspiration, and one of the first examples of the bilingual translational process, he relied significantly on the authority of Orthodox ecumenical councils that he understood as dictated directly by the Holy Spirit, and that consequently approved canonical texts. Many of Maximus' texts show that he knew very well the content of canons, especially the First Council of Constantinople, the Councils of Chalcedon, of Ephesus and of Trullo, but also the Council of Laodicea that in the year 360 prohibited the singing of individual songs/"private psalms" (*idiotikos*<sup>235</sup>) in churches, admitting only the Book of Psalms (in accordance with Patriarch Photius,<sup>236</sup> who wrote *Syntagma*, *Synagoga*, and *Nomocanon*), decisive not only for the strict and strong definition of Christology, but also for the dogmatic argumentation concerning the Holy Virgin (at Ephesus, in 431). Maximus' works were permeated with references to Orthodox decisions at Church councils, especially in the collection of works<sup>237</sup> that deal with the practicalities of monastic life, Orthodox feasts, fasting and non-fasting periods and the proper behavior during them, the practice of genuflection (*γονυπετέω*) differently in cell and in Church, daily habits at the monastery table (*τράπεζα*), and especially during Divine Liturgy. It seems obvious that Maximus first relied on St. Basil the Great, on his *Longer and Shorter Rules of Ascetica*, by which this conception of the communal life ensured the success of a moderate form of coenobitism and of the domestic discipline which he introduced into monastic groups.<sup>238</sup> With regard to the rejection of genuflection, Maximus the Greek quoted a rule supposed to be from John Damascene (*On the Heresy of Those Who Do Not Make Prostrations*). The stress is on the sequence of reading, silence and contemplation (which depends on the fasting or feast day rules). It is worth mentioning here Maximus' reference to the *Nomocanon of Repentance* (*Nomocanon of*

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<sup>235</sup> WELLESZ 1998, 147.

<sup>236</sup> It is impossible to establish direct adoptions between Maximus the Greek and Photius. The manuscripts attributed to Maximus the Greek contain also some deviations from the former Russian dogmatic manuscripts (mostly anonymous) dating before 1489. Maximus the Greek also translated a letter once subscribed by patriarch Photius and addressed to the Patriarch of Venice-Aquileia (dat. 883-884). However, D. Bulanin argues against the fact that Maxim the Greek translated it (BULANIN 1984, 93-94). Thus, that letter could be a compiled work (see SIECINSKI 2010, 101-103, n. 98).

<sup>237</sup> In the Mosqu., Rum 264, ff. 71r-82v.

<sup>238</sup> DELEHAYE 1948, 142.

*Fasting or Nomocanon of Penance*)<sup>239</sup> of the Great Monasteries which reflected the penitential *Nomokanon*, instructions for priests on how to hear confessions, by St. John IV of Constantinople (St. John the Faster). In general, it could be stated that these were the special monastic constitutions known as *typica* that adapted the laws issued by the Monastic Rules of St. Basil. As such, Maximus also differentiated among three great forms of monastic rules (“Great Typicon”, “ustav”): of Theodore the Stoudius, of Jerusalem, of the Holy Mount Athos, encompassing direct references from the Church Fathers and their particular ascetic guidelines. It is worth mentioned that one could find there also a definition of “*The Divine rule, according to that, written firstly by Apostle because of the true physical illness*”, and it was named as “*The Divine rule of the Holy Spirit*”.<sup>240</sup> There are also discussed the liturgical ordinances and the dates of fast-days from the *Typicon* of St. Sabbas of Jerusalem, as well are listed the rules of St. Anthony, St. Athanasius, St. Basil the Great, St. Euthymius, St. Epiphanius of Chypre, St. Andrew of Crete, St. John the Faster, and the monastic rule of St. Theophylus of Alexandria. At the end of this collection of texts there are two rare references to Canon 30 of the Chalcedonian Council, from the Greek Syntagma, that were not reproduced in Latin collections of canons,<sup>241</sup> and Canon 12 of the Council of Carthage.<sup>242</sup> There are also references to the 18<sup>th</sup> Canon of the first Council of Constantinople and to the 50<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup> canon rules of the Council of Laodicea.<sup>243</sup> However, some of the rules could be recognized as the Rules of the Euergetis monastery in Constantinople,<sup>244</sup> such as that during meals, which were eaten in common, someone reads aloud, and at no other time may any food or drink be taken. Maximus the Greek also translated the work of Patriarch Photius, the *Nomocanon*, as the basic dogmatic text in “the hierarchy of Holy sciences”

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<sup>239</sup> Mosqu., Rum 264, f. 72r.

<sup>240</sup> Mosqu., Rum 264, f. 75v.

<sup>241</sup> MÜHLENBERG 2006, 123; BENEŠEVIČ 1906, 126-129.

<sup>242</sup> Even it has to be presumed as a mistake, it is interesting to mention that among those manuscript materials Maximus entitled one source as *Monocanon of the fasteners and ascetic rulers of great monasteries* (Mosqu., Rum 264, f. 76).

<sup>243</sup> *Canon 50*: The fast must not be broken on the fifth day of the last week in Lent [*i.e.*, on Monday Thursday], and the whole of Lent be dishonored; but it is necessary to fast during all the Lenten season by eating only dry meats. *Canon 51*: The nativities of Martyrs are not to be celebrated in Lent, but commemorations of the holy Martyrs are to be made on the Sabbaths and Lord's days.

<sup>244</sup> DELAHAYE 1948, 150-151.

– among liturgical and patristic texts<sup>245</sup> – that contained also the apocryphal writings,<sup>246</sup> with commentaries of Ioannes Zonaras,<sup>247</sup> whose texts Maximus also translated (already in 1525 he translated the fragment *About the Christianization of Russians*).<sup>248</sup> Abstracts from the *Nomocanon*, associated with Symeon the Logothete Metaphrastes,<sup>249</sup> were followed by Maximus' translations of Metaphrastes' hagiographical ones (*On Miracles of St. Michael*; and *On Jesus Christ's icon of Edessa, On the Feast of St. John, On Apostle Thomas, On the Sufferings of St. Dionysius Areopagite*)<sup>250</sup> and others (e.g. *Constantine II Porphirogenetus, On Various Historical Topics*).<sup>251</sup>

In May 1531, further charges were made against Maximus the Greek in Russia. At the new Church synod he was suspected of several actions, including being a spy for the Islamic court. There were found to be problems in his translations of two letters: a letter to Mehmed II from Pope Pius II, and one from Suleiman the Magnificent to the Venetian Doge Marino Grimani. He was also accused of heretical errors in the translation of a hagiographic text, *Life of the Mother of God* from *The Hagiographic Collection-Menologion of Symeon Metaphrastos*,<sup>252</sup> that suggests that it was compiled also from the text, attributed to St. Maximus the Confessor, entitle as *The Life of the Virgin*.<sup>253</sup> However, after this episode the conditions of his imprisonment became slightly milder, with the result that he was finally allowed to write again.

With the fall of Daniil, Maximus' position improved slightly, but that was only after 1547. In this year he also wrote the cited letter to Macarius. After spending more than 20 years in three monastic prisons, his life was ameliorated somewhat in 1552. That year he also managed to send two poems in Greek to Central Europe. In the introduction

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<sup>245</sup> PITRA 1858, 26.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 34, 57.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 60, 68.

<sup>248</sup> GREK 2008, 343-344.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>250</sup> GREK 2008, 512-514; SPERANZI 2010, 274.

<sup>251</sup> Sankt Petersburg, Rossijskaja Nacional'naja Biblioteka, Sofijskoe 1498, f. 159 (cf. GREK 2008, 512-514).

<sup>252</sup> LATYŠEV 1970, 347-383.

<sup>253</sup> SHOEMAKER 2012, 193, 199.

letter, Maximus addressed someone called (nicknamed) Macrobios. However, until today scholars have not yet managed to identify this person.

If in his early texts Maximus largely fought against Latin addition to (and modification of) the Credo of Christian faith (the controversial *Filioque*), his texts from the later period were permeated with his objections to the diminution of the holiness of the Mother of God, also emphasizing heretical mistakes in the Russian manuscripts that were essentially against the Orthodox theology and the pure glory of the Mother of God, actions that he himself was actually accused in Moscow in his second trial. In perhaps his most important text, entitled *About That Last Century*,<sup>254</sup> Maximus the Greek created a unique, female personage that could be interpreted as the Mother of God. In this work the narrator, a lone traveller, meets a woman in black on a steep road, a sad widow, who identifies herself as Basileusa and tells him about the miseries of the world in the style of a lament, consistent with the writing seen from the Byzantine court in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>255</sup> However, in the mentioned text of Maximus the Greek at the end, the last exclamative speech of Basileusa sinks into a prayer:

*“I do not have Samuil, the great priest who was reacting against the sinner Saul, I do not have Nathan who cured David with a virtuous parable and with that saved him from a harvest sin, I do not have adherents-zealots like Elijah and Elisha, who were not ashamed before the aggressive Emperor Samaritan, I do not have Ambrose, the marvellous priest of God, who did not fear the greatness of the empire of Emperor Theodosius, I do not have Basil the Great, who was enlightened in the shrine and had wisdom, and with most clever teachings threatened Valent the persecutor of my sister, I do not have a John with a golden mouth (that means Chrysostom), who denounced the avaricious Eudoxia and did not disregard the tears of the widow...”*

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<sup>254</sup> The full title: ‘The speech that with regretfulness expands about the impious doing and disorders of the kings (tsars) and rulers of that last century’.

<sup>255</sup> BUCKLER 1929, 241-243.

Integrating into the lamentation (lachrymose deification) of Basileusa the presence of Old Testament Prophets-Emperors and Church fathers from the fourth to sixth centuries,<sup>256</sup> and not only the Eastern ones (since the first named is St. Ambrose of Milan), the poem's sense of time transposes, through the vacuum of temporality, non-contiguous or not-contemporaneous but representative human beings or individuals who faithfully served Christ. However, it must be said that among scholars in Russia there existed a popular interpretation of that poem, that Basileusa was presenting the sorrowful state of Russia. It is thus also possible to understand this figure differently. It seems that this female personification is the image of the fallen imperial city (ἡ βασιλεύουσα πόλις) of Constantinople itself, which made it possible that the Byzantine liturgy became the common possession of the East Romans.<sup>257</sup> Such selected personalities that were already confirmed as immortal, one might also find present in the early Christian imperial (Constantine and post-Constantine) monuments.<sup>258</sup> It is good to mention that Maximus the Greek wrote down also some historical sketches, among which one could find a text, entitled *A Crying of the Wife of Maurice*,<sup>259</sup> the Byzantine Emperor and a martyr, whose name was, however, Constantia. The notification gave the opportunity to indicate the time when in Byzantium the Emperor started to name himself 'Basileus, who is faithful to God'.<sup>260</sup>

Though, Basileusa timelessly lists various male figures from the Old Testament that had preceded her, and after this she also names the pious men of the fourth century Patristic and Imperial circles. That is the reason why it could be understood as the Church of all Christians. Such an interpretation of the pious females in Holy Scripture was known from St. Ambrose's writings about virginity (*De virginibus* and *De virginitate*) and his discourse on the death of Theodosius (*De obitu Theodosii*) in which

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<sup>256</sup> *Basileusa* could be also understood as a speech of the sister of Eudoxia, Pulcheria who supposed to be responsible for an order to build the famous Constantinople's Church of St. Maria Blaechearna, however the latter is not completely confirmed (see MANGO 1993, add. 4). However, Maximus the Greek located Basileusa among the personalities of the sacred history not among the solid human historical time. About the Patristic interpretations of the Christian empresses: St. Gregory of Nazianzen (Or. 24.17) and St. Cyprian wrote poems on the Empress Eudoxia (LIVREA 1998, 76).

<sup>257</sup> Cf. BAYNES 1948, XXXVI-XXVII.

<sup>258</sup> For example, the Arch of Constantine, the base of the Column of Arcadius, the base of the Obelisk of Theodosius; and also in the Byzantine chronicles, such as *The Chronicle of J. Skillitzes* (see VELMANS 1972, 153).

<sup>259</sup> Handed down by Moskva, Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei, Eparh № 405, ff. 190v-191r.

<sup>260</sup> DIEHL 1957<sup>10</sup>, 29.

among the patriarchs of Genesis one may find Constantine the Great in the heavenly company. This was rarely found in the early patristic tradition, but was accepted in the liturgical poetry by the Byzantine hymnographer Romanos the Melodist,<sup>261</sup> who opened the new stage in the church poetry by achieving the bondage of classical tradition and liturgical service.<sup>262</sup> From Romanus, Maximus the Greek might know such scheme of the genealogy of irreproachable female personalities of the Bible.

A strictly biblical interpretation of the eternal meaning of the heritage of the Mother of God can also be found in the Patristic of St. Gregory of Nyssa, particularly in his meditation on the Song of Songs, where he concluded that the Church of Christ played the role of Christ's bride.<sup>263</sup> Consequently, Basileusa could present precisely the Byzantine hagiographic belief in the eternal presence of Mary in the consciousness of believers, and in the liturgical tradition of humble prayers to Her. This concept, which was developed in the Byzantine hymnography, and especially reserved for "the expression of the inexpressible" (such as the mystical context of the presence of Christ's Mother in the Holy Scripture),<sup>264</sup> must be understood as part of the unique pattern of the so called "Theology of the Mother of God" that Maximus expanded in his confessional writings about the Orthodox faith. Additionally, also a theological doctrine of Mary's acceptance of the Holy Spirit after the angel Gabriel's annunciation in the Annunciation could be understood only by the refusal of an addition to the Confessional Creed of the Latin *Filioque*, by maintaining that the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father. That theological issue may be observed in its iconographical aspect in the scenes of *Annunciation* (from the mid - 11<sup>th</sup> century) and *Deisis* (the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> - the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century) in the mosaics of Vatopaidi Monastery, ordered by Andronicus II – (a copy of),<sup>265</sup> whose chrysobull,<sup>266</sup> dated 1301, Maximus the Greek

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<sup>261</sup> MOORHEAD 1999, 52-54, 67 n. 44.

<sup>262</sup> TILLYARD 1923, 11.

<sup>263</sup> Cf. JAKOBSON 1985, 325; LOUTH 2013.

<sup>264</sup> In the biblical terms, Maximus's presentation of Basileusa is not a rhetorical allegory, but a literal realization (Ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία) of the Gospel form of the Heavenly Celestial City or the Kingdom of Heaven in the context of temporal closure, caused by an absence of gentle devotees (Matthew 13: 24, 44-47 ff.).

<sup>265</sup> KASHTANOV 2001, 214.

<sup>266</sup> ZIADÉ 2009, 136 n. 45.

carried to Moscow in 1518. Therefore, by implicitly underlining the Holiness of the Mother of God, he was referring also to the preceding period, from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, when the liturgical veneration of the Mother of God, not only in the Byzantine Empire but also in the Western Christian countries (Southern and Northern Italy), was significantly increasing. Even more significant is the fact that at the Vatopaidi Monastery the honouring of Theotokos in the exact age of Andronicus II was purposefully perfected.<sup>267</sup>

Indeed, the beginning of Basileusa's lamentation – *"I do not have..."* – was also recognized as the Introitus of the prayer to the icon of the Mother of God of the Holy Vatopaidi Monastery.<sup>268</sup> In Russia that kind of prayer was known a century later, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when it was assimilated into a prayer to the icon called 'Всех скорбящих радость' (*"The Joy of All Who Suffers"*)<sup>269</sup> which in some aspects replaced late-Byzantine (13<sup>th</sup> century) forms and Western presentations of the iconographical motif named *Pietà*. The latter subject he also explained in one of his texts because Russians wrongly understood it as "Depression". It is worth to cite Maximus' interpretation not only because of different iconographical approach but especially because of the evidence how he was mindful of the authentic liturgical experience and from which sources he obtained the information about the pious forms of the Christian worship. Firstly Maximus the Greek explained the iconographic motif of *Pieta* (with the following word: he wrote that "*Pietas*") has to be interpreted as an expression, related to Jesus Christ (Par. slav. 123, f. 111rv):

*"The holy creation of the holy icon of the Lord and God and Redeemer Jesus Christ which deserves constant genuflection and veneration, and it is named in Roman 'pietàs', and in Russian humility or devotedness, but not depression. This was not alone human's invention but the Redemeer had been shown in the light to the holy Roman pope Gregory, the author of the pious writings to his deacon Peter. He showed Himself*

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<sup>267</sup> KASHTANOV 2001, 215.

<sup>268</sup> ALEKSEEV 2012, 40.

<sup>269</sup> MOLITVOSLOV 1998, 192-193.

*during the time of the Divine liturgy, when the holy mysteries began to operate as holy toward fearful and bloodless offering when the holy Gregory put down into the chalice (potir) the fourth part of the Holy lamb that deserves a genuflection. When Gregory saw this Divine image, not made by hands, that raised under him, he was so touched that his face was suddenly all covered with spiritual tears and he was surprised by Christ's humble unspeakable descent Who he saw with the eyes in the Spirit. This is why he ordered to the iconswriters that from now-on exactly such image of the Christ must be depicted”<sup>270</sup>*

Further, Maximus told that he heard this story from the pious people in Italy. It could thus be said that Maximus exactly defined the field within which the canonical Christian knowledge of the holiness of the Mother of God survived. It was in the Orthodox prayers, liturgical hymns and homiletic works of the early Christian, Eastern and patristic theologians, who were also hymnographers, wherein this unique knowledge concerning the life of Mary was preserved. In those poetical works the beauty of the Mother of God was based also on the non-literal sources for the presentation of the spiritual unity of the Mother and Son of God,<sup>271</sup> focusing on the prayers to the Christian God of the Holy Trinity. Maximus managed to create his own Slavonic language and to pray properly in concordance with Greek Orthodox theology. The essence of his theological vision is evident in *The Canon to the Holy and Divine Paracletos*, that serves as a confessional prayer (especially providing personal speech by the Greek apostrophe as an element of prosody), known also in the West from the 9<sup>th</sup> century, when certain elements were translated into Slavonic liturgical language not from Greek but from Latin. The significance of this prayer could be explained as an invocatory moment that marked the beginning of daily writing, and thus it could be seen as Maximus' personal prayer. However, it is not permanent one, because it is extended and it reflects several principles of the 'Akathystos' prayer and liturgical canticles. After the introduction of the Canon, Maximus the Greek contemplated, in an authentic

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<sup>270</sup> Par. slav. 123, f. 111rv.

<sup>271</sup> The latter could explicitly be found as a reflection on the icon of Mother of God, iconographically known as Elousis-Umylenie, widely spread after the end of twelfth century in Byzantium as well as in the West.

“*diataxis*” about the interior of the Church (“*Joy the God, the door that could not be entered/which is without entrance*”).<sup>272</sup> The latter form is an implicit address to Mother of God (the icon from Vatopaidi, called “*Paramythia*”).<sup>273</sup> After *Psalm* 50, there follows the specific<sup>274</sup> order of the odes, that are ascribed as a refrain with three variants of Kyrileison (to God the Son, Jesus Christ; to Holy Trinity; to Holy Paraclete), within the additional and obligatory praise of Theotokos. This Canon expresses Maximus’ belief that the human soul consists of words, and is at the same time immortal as an analogue to Jesus Christ’s incarnation, born from the Mother of God, and realized in the Church of Jesus Christ. This was also the topic of Maximus the Greek’s interpretation of the Orthodox Trinity, which should offer to all believers “*three lights of Sunlight*”, as he exegetically explained *Psalm* 18, and as is expressed in the *Canon to the Holy Parakletos* in the phrase that “*three hypostases act like three-facing [speech, personality, image]*”.

However, this Canon does not reflect concrete imitations of the forms of the Great Canon. On the other hand, it has certain characteristics of the Akathystos hymn. Indeed, the conclusion of each ode of the Canon<sup>275</sup> is dedicated to the Holy Theotokos. In this Canon, Mary in the first ode represents praise to the incarnation of the *Logos*, wholly present on Earth, which expresses the Orthodox view against that of Apollinios of Laodicea. In the final line there is again the solemn praise for the Mother of God, named as Holy Earth.<sup>276</sup> She is addressed as the nature and mother of all people, to whom the Holy Spirit sent the Angel Gabriel at the Annunciation, and thus she has to be included as a collaborator among the sacred personalities of the Holy Trinity.<sup>277</sup> The second ode

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<sup>272</sup> Moscow, Rossiiskaya Gosudarstvennaya Biblioteka, Rog. Kladbishe 302, f. 432v; MDA, 173/I, 42, in additional chapters (without a numbers) could be read also the following words: “*Joy the walls that are our and Intercession/Protection to whom we are running to.*”

<sup>273</sup> It was a rite with a rule to worship the icon of Vatopaidi before leaving the Church, and Igumen of monastery was every time passed the keys from the doors of monastery to a doorkeeper.

<sup>274</sup> KAZIMOVA 2006, 299.

<sup>275</sup> TILLYARD 1923, 19.

<sup>276</sup> WELLESZ 1955, 147.

<sup>277</sup> The promotions of such intervention was characteristic also for Nicolas Cabasilas theological treatise (JUGIE 1974, 463).

is missing, according to the earliest editions.<sup>278</sup> The third ode<sup>279</sup> is – after the brief mentioning of the Holy Trinity – dedicated to the Holy Spirit, and again, at the same time, to the Holy Theotokos.

This moment in Maximus' theology was enriched by the special approval of the Holy Mother of God, who presents the obligatory conclusion of the thanksgiving prayers and could offer the only undisguised sense of consolidation that is available for the mortal believer's soul. Nevertheless, Maximus dedicated his prayer to the Holy Paracletus.

We could thus conclude that none of Maximus' sources could be considered as directly repeated or literally translated by him into Slavonic. By using such a theological-poetical manner, Maximus the Greek not only revealed the devotional creativity of the first Slavic church poet, Constantine the Philosopher (a brother of Methodius),<sup>280</sup> but also created in the Slavic language an equivalent of the oldest patterns of Christian liturgy, as might be found in Greek liturgical manuscripts from the ninth century. Maximus the Greek polished the Old Church Slavic liturgical language to a certain level so that it could serve him as an analogous and parallel voice to the Greek of the Gospels, focusing on prayer to the Christian God – the Holy Trinity. Maximus' wish was to balance the veneration among the voices of the Orthodox Trinity, and on the global level, to make fully vivid the Christian Theology.

### **Concluding remarks**

The two main accusations in the Moscow councils against Maximus the Greek, that in 1525 about linguistic mistakes (which prohibited the Athonite monk from receiving the Holy Communion for nearly 25 years), and that in 1531, about the theologically doubtful expressions in his translations (especially in the Hagiography of Mother of God), influenced the personal aspect of his theological work, and left signs

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<sup>278</sup> KRYPIAKIEWICZ 1909, 361.

<sup>279</sup> KRITSKI 2013, 23-43.

<sup>280</sup> St. Constantine created similar accordance in the *Canon to St. Martyr Demetrius* (JAKOBSON 1985, 306).

on some of his writings. The spiritual battle for the right to receive the Holy Eucharist, during which God the Son could be experienced by all believers, was, Maximus reflected in his treatise on Biblical grammar, part of human internal (apostolic) knowledge. According to Biblical readings he understood the timeless presence of Jesus Christ as a direct manifestation of the Holy Word.

In the Old Church Slavonic writings of Maximus the Greek, especially in his individual Slavonic forms, there survive echoes of archaic Christian formulas, signified in the East by the thorough Trinitarian theology.<sup>281</sup> In Maximus' texts one can find the Christological definition as it was theologically determined in the Chalcedonian decree.<sup>282</sup> However, it is noticeable that he did not reject the Byzantine Imperial view that adopted the body of Church (the 28<sup>th</sup> Canon of the Chalcedonian council)<sup>283</sup> and that he considered the possibility of the ideal position of the state in accordance with the sacred rules. Maximus the Greek modestly believed that only a Christian Emperor could provide peace in the souls of humans. But he was also realistically aware that Christianity in 16<sup>th</sup> century was far from its pure beginnings, and that it was seriously endangered, mostly because of various uncanonical, heretical and seductive religious teachings. This view he dealt with when working on Pope Pius II's writings, which Maximus also translated.

Maximus the Greek's figurative Biblical exegetics are similar to St. Gregory of Nyssa's meditation on the Old Testament and St. Ambrose of Milan's homilies. Maximus' ascetic preaching, based on the images of the Old Testament, is close to St. John Chrysostom's revealing speeches *Against Juda*, that he also translated. It could be noticed the tendency for the building a hierarchical structure of the worldview, especially regarding the organization of the Christian knowledge, significant for the theology of St. Gregory of Nazianzen. But from Nazianzen's theology Maximus sourced also the aspect of the praying unit of God the Son and the Virgin Mary. This could be

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<sup>281</sup> ZAJC 2016, 382.

<sup>282</sup> Cf. GOLITZIN 2013, 130.

<sup>283</sup> GRIVEC 1921, 27.

seen in Maximus's commentary of the liturgical song *Magnificat* in the translation of the Annotated Psalter. The three characteristics of Maximus the Greek's theology – a profound understanding of the importance of the Mother of God, a significant Christological interpretation of the Old Testament, and an awareness of liturgical reality of the Christian believer – are known as the complex profile that distinguished St. Maximus the Confessor's mistagogical theology. Additionally, these principles could be connected with Nicolas Cabasilas' ideas in the sense of how he upheld a constant awareness of the commandments of Divine law<sup>284</sup> with the first jurisdictional system of the Psalmist-King David (and the Byzantine historical sources), but it was not overwhelming, and only juxtaposed with the theological dimension on the level of mindful consciousness. Nevertheless, we cannot speak about "the theology of liturgy" of Maximus the Greek, but instead of the liturgical emphasis of the theological comprehension of his monastic values. Therefore, it should be the liturgical presence, related to the Biblical reality, particularly characteristic for Maximus' reflective contemplation on the language of the Holy Bible, and his personal reflection on his biographical situation.

Although Maximus admitted that he had in his memory literal formulas from the texts of ancient Greek philosopher, we could thus conclude that none of the Byzantine sources was not directly (mimetically) repeated or imitated in his personal Orthodox theology. The complex and hierarchically very strict system of Maximus the Greek's theology could be associated with many Byzantine theologians, but none of them is represented as authoritative in his worldview. Above all he appreciated the text of the Holy Bible and the special interpretation of the primary text. His particular theological feature could be appropriately assigned as a special apprehension of the language of the Bible that he treated as the highly sophisticated, complex, but also inspired by the Holy Spirit. This is the reason that in his writings he most often relies on the authority of the Holy Spirit the act of which is, according to Maximus the Greek, responsible not only for the translation but as well for the creation of the literal work. Under such dictation

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<sup>284</sup> ŠEVČENKO 1957, 161.

of the Holy Spirit he considered that also the Ecumenical councils were assembled, consequently he relied on their canons. Reasonably, his writings should be regarded as the most pure fruit of the spiritual inspiration that Maximus the Greek had experienced although he was deprived in the monastery cell in Russia what is evident in his long prayer, entitled *Canon the the Divine and the Holy Paraclete* reflecting many of elements of the Byzantine hymnography. However, the practise of the calling upon the Holy Spirit was well known to him from his monastic period in the Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi. Furthermore, his constant including of the human experience is identified with the monastic addressee, or, even more precisely, with the only addressee of the Son of God, and on the day of His Second Coming. His theological writings could be understood as his battle against Latin *Filioque* as well as his attempt for the proper liturgical service in the correspondence with the believer's range of his ascetic formation. Only that within the aid of the Holy Spirit he managed to establish such original literal formulas as well as the poetical figures could be explained his only source of the writings that fully represents his thorough Orthodox theological system.

Indeed, he based his works on hymnographical, liturgical and hagiographical sources that confirm the Orthodox co-substantial concept of God the Son, as well as the untouchable nature of Mother of God. But in fact, Maximus the Greek's re-interpretation of Mary as the Mother of God is only an invocatory call for the theologically right understanding of the Orthodox Trinity, as already expressed in the language of the Old and the New Testaments, as well as in the liturgical-hymnographical and hagiographical Christian sources that came to light in the canonical content of Christian knowledge, passed on to humanity after apostolic times. The main goal of each prayer of Maximus the Greek was a balanced worship of the Holy Trinity that could only offer an adequate and equitable addressing of Jesus Christ. He also understood the fear of God as a higher inspiration, and only the beginning of one's daily ascetic routine, a preparation for a writing process. That is the reason why his aim was to purify and make more flexible the Old Church Slavonic language to such level that it could serve him as a correct form of expression for the Orthodox Trinity.

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**SLAVS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE:  
A REVIEW OF THREE SELECTED MONOGRAPHS PUBLISHED IN  
GREECE IN THE LAST DECADE (2008-2016)**

*Pavla Gkantzios Drápelová*

The Slavic presence in Byzantium has been a very popular subject among Greek scholars and Greek readers in general. The period between 2000 and 2017 was fruitful in Greece in the sphere of new publications on this topic. During the first fifteen years of the new millennium, several significant monographs have been published that focus on some aspects of the history and culture of the Slavs in the Byzantine Empire,<sup>285</sup> and some older works on this topic have also been re-edited<sup>286</sup>. Furthermore, numerous articles on the Slavs in Byzantium and their impact on Byzantine culture, history and philology have been published in Greece too, mainly in journals and periodicals, for example, in *Cyrrillomethodianum*, *Βυζαντινός δόμος* or *Fragmenta Hellenoslavica*. It is worth mentioning that various symposia and workshops related to Byzantine Slavs were held in Greece within the last ten years<sup>287</sup>. In addition, a couple of books popularizing the named subject and whose titles directly refer to Slavs in Byzantium were published in these years as well. This plethora of recent publications indicates that the topic of the Slavic presence in Byzantium and Greece continues to be popular and still provides new material for research.

For the purpose of the present review, I have selected three monographs that focus on the Slavs that had settled in Byzantium and the evidence of their presence in particular regions of modern-day Greece. The main aim of this review is to demonstrate that the Slavo-Byzantine and Slavo-Greek contacts are also often studied as part of regional history, because this allows for a better understanding of some specific cultural features and historic developments of local communities. The books reviewed here

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<sup>285</sup> Cf. ΜΑΛΙΓΚΟΥΔΗΣ 2006; ΜΑΛΙΓΚΟΥΔΗΣ 2013; ΝΥΣΤΑΖΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ – ΠΕΛΕΚΙΔΟΥ 2001; ΤΑΡΝΑΝΙΔΗ 2001; ΔΑΠΕΡΓΟΛΑ 2009, and others.

<sup>286</sup> Cf. ΤΑΧΙΑΟΣ 2006 (a collection of previously published articles).

<sup>287</sup> Cf. ΤΑΧΙΑΟΣ 2015.

represent just a fraction of the works that were published in Greece during the last ten years and one of the criteria for including them was the fact that these books illustrate the diversity and complexity of the subjects related to the Slavic presence in different parts of Byzantium.

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**P. CHARALABAKIS, *Σλάβοι στην Κρήτη. Κατά τον μεσαίωνα και τους προιμούς νεότερους χρόνους (ιστορικά και γλωσσικά τεκμήρια)*, Αθήνα 2016, 340 pp., 17,00 €, ISBN 978-960-565-167-1**

This recent monograph, *Slavs in Crete. During the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times (historical and linguistic evidence)*, is positively a very interesting and significant book. It focuses on the presence of the Slavs in Crete – a topic that has basically been neglected by scholars as most of the attention is usually paid to the Slavs in Byzantine Macedonia and in the Peloponnese. The author emphasizes that he is not the first one to write about this subject; however, his monograph is definitely the first publication that is devoted to the systematic and general study of the Slavs in Crete covering such a long period of time. The book is divided into two main parts: “Historical Evidence” and “Linguistic Evidence”, and these are subsequently subdivided into smaller chapters. The author starts with evidence concerning the Slavic presence in Crete, providing detailed information and critically examining the available sources.

Charalabakis concludes that some traditional views in the scholarship on this topic are wrong: e.g., the opinion of the Slavic incursion in Crete in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and the intense colonization of Crete by Slavs after 961. He also examines various documents – mainly dated to the period of Venetian rule (1205-1669) – that shed light on the position and social rank of people of Slavic origin living in Crete, and the use of terms Slav/Slave and Bulgarus/Bulgarian. The author also studied later sources, thus providing a complex picture of the Slavic presence in Crete up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Charalabakis suggests that Slavs could not have arrived on the island earlier than in the period of the Venetian rule.

The second part of the book is devoted to the linguistic evidence, focusing on the etymology of various words and toponyms common in Crete, and which might have Slavic roots. During his research, Charalabakis identified words of Slavic origin that were also common in the rest of Greece, so words that used to be considered Slavic, but actually are not. In addition, he also identified words whose origin was definitely Slavic, and which are attested exclusively in Crete, so they must be directly connected with the Slavic presence on the island.

The author notes the impracticability of enumerating the amount of Slavs in Crete under the Venetians. Nevertheless, he emphasizes the fact that it is not possible to

overestimate the role of the Slavs in Crete, but on the other hand, the underestimation and the rejection of their presence in Crete would also be a great mistake. Furthermore, he suggests that the Slavs came to Crete not in organized masses, but more probably as individuals who arrived in Crete for various reasons (merchants, mercenaries etc.).

One of the strengths of this book is the fact that the author used various sources, ranging from Byzantine and Slavic primary sources to the Venetian and early Modern documents. Furthermore, in some instances, archaeological material was also mentioned. Some of the sources presented in detail belong to the category of those that are often neglected, such as the Czech description of Crete by Jan Hasištejnský from the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. Another positive aspect of this publication is the fact that all the records are subject to strict and analytical analysis. Charalabakis work is definitely an important contribution to the study of the presence of Slavs in the Byzantine Empire which will be appreciated by readers for its objectivity and interdisciplinary approach.

**P.G. PAPADIMITRIOU, *Από τις Κλεισούρες στα Δερβένια. Η σύζευξη της σλαβοφωνίας και του Ισλαμισμού Πιτησκού της Ροδόπης: Μια ιστορική θεώρηση, Θεσσαλονίκη 2008, 375 pp., 29,20 €, ISBN 978-960-467-006-2***

Another monograph worthy of mention is “*From Kleisoures to Dervenia. The conjungtion of Slavophony and Islam among the Pomaks of Rodopi,*” published in Thessaloniki in 2008. This book centers around the topic of Muslim communities which speak Slavic languages and live in the border areas of northern Greece. It examines the close connection between the local Slavic and Muslim communities and the history of the Slavic presence in the region of Rodopi. Papadimitriou surveys the vast literature on the history and culture of Pomaks and, of course, on the history of its research.

The named topic could seem at first sight to belong exclusively to the period of Modern Greek history, but the author goes back in history to trace the early contacts between the Slavs, Byzantines and Muslims. The first chapter is dedicated to the late Roman and early Byzantine period (4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century) and to the problems that the region of Rodopi faced in these centuries, including the economic and agricultural changes and the first interactions with the Slavic people. However, the book is mainly dedicated to the history of the region between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, dedicating to this era four

chapters. The author emphasizes the conditions of co-existence of the local diverse populations (Bulgarians, Vlachs, Byzantines) and outlines the foundation on which the communities of Slavic-speaking Muslims were later created. The last chapter is the shortest one and it focuses on the situation after the 14<sup>th</sup> century, outlining the inclusion of the so-called “Bulgarians” from Rodopi into the administration of the Ottomans.

This book includes passages that will surely trigger vivid discussions among scholars and is a welcome addition to the field of Slavic-Byzantine history. Moreover, it provides a systematic summary of the history of a specific region throughout many centuries – the region of Rodopi. This allows the reader to examine the complex picture of the development of the frontier area of Greece. Students who specialize in Ottoman studies will also find this book beneficial, as it illustrates the complexity of the situation in the region where Byzantium met the Slavs and the Muslims.

**K.E. ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΟΥ, *Σλάβικα λεξιλογικά δάνεια στα ελληνικησδιώματα της Ηπείρου*,  
Ιωάννινα 2010, 245 pp.**

As a philologist, K.E. Oikonomou pays careful attention to various aspects of lexicology in Greece, focusing mainly on the region of Epirus. The monograph, “*Slavic lexical loans in the Greek idioms of Epirus*,” discusses the interesting topic of the existence of regional terms which evidently have roots in Proto-Slavic and Slavic languages. The book is divided into seven main chapters, which are then subdivided into shorter units. In the introduction, not only the main philological features of the region are presented, but also the history of its contacts and the presence of Slavs is outlined with an emphasis on the symbiosis of the Greek and Slavic languages in specific centuries. The following chapters address questions of etymology, phonetics, morphology and semantics of the terms whose roots might be Slavic and of the Slavic loanwords that have been identified in the region of Epirus.

The author provides analytical lists of the local words that are of Slavic origin, tracing their etymology and development (changes in the position of the vowels and consonants, like metathesis, metaphony or reduction etc.). The author studies various types of terms: the hydronyms, toponyms, vocabulary related to agriculture, and others.

In the concluding chapter, the author systematically summarizes the main features of the local words of Slavic origin. He emphasizes the differences between the Slavic languages and the local dialect in expressing some specific objects and situations. For example, Slavic languages usually have the same word for a type of tree and its fruit (e.g. *sliva*); while some local terms with Slavic roots have been identified, they made a difference between the two, as it is usual in the Greek language (e.g. *σιλιβιά* for the tree – *σίλιβα* for the fruit).

The author also stresses the fact that in some cases Slavic words were adopted in the local dialect via other languages, e.g. Aromanian or Albanian. Furthermore, he suggests that local Slavs were evidently more focused on cultivation than on breeding, because there were more terms with Slavic roots related to tillage than to livestock. These are just a few examples of the interesting data presented in this monograph. This book illustrates how the presence of Slavs in Byzantium in some cases affected the local dialects and some of the linguistic impacts that are still visible today. Oikonomou's monograph is useful to anyone who wants to get more acquainted with the culture of the Epirus region and who is curious about the Slavic influences on Greek dialects.