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LEXICAL DARING: MUSCOVITE RUSSIAN EXPERIMENTATION WITH GREEK LANGUAGE AS A REFLECTION OF UNDERLYING CIVILIZATIONAL RIVALRY

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One can hardly imagine any more significant event in Rus’ (East Slavic) history than the encounter with Greek Christianity. The 10th-century conversion of Volodymer of Kyiv (Kiev), reportedly inspired by beautiful Byzantine forms of worship, established a direction and context for the growth of a major civilization straddling Europe and Asia. More than a

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2 In approximate English translation: «For, as I am saying incessantly, for every lexical daring a release and remedy of sorts are those deeds and passions that near excess».

[It] is like a dog’s walking on his hinder legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all. — James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, *aetat.* 54
millennium later, the modern states of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine remain deeply influenced by Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Yet despite deriving virtually all foundational texts and ideas from the Greek Christian world, Russian (or Ukrainian) Christianity cannot be defined as «Greek». Differences of language, culture, and identity, combined with consciously achieved structural independence, distinguish «child» from «parent», borrowing from lending civilization. As is usual in cross-cultural interaction, complex adaptation and appropriation rather than simple imitation have characterized the East Slavic assimilation of Greek Christianity. The development of East Slavic Christianity vis-à-vis the Greek-speaking world has been as much a story of difference as of connection.

The present paper is concerned with the midpoint of that process of integration and differentiation: the end of the medieval and beginning of the early modern period in Muscovite Russia. It argues that Russian experiments with Greek linguistic knowledge reflected both: a) acknowledgement of the source whence Christianity had reached East Slavia; and b) stubborn insistence on independence from that origin. Thus lexicography in late medieval and early modern Muscovy carried a weighty politico-religious meaning. Greater accuracy or originality of early Orthodox Christian ideas could perhaps be found by studying Greek rather than relying exclusively on Slavic translations; yet the deeper such studies went, the more likely they were to arouse hostility and conflict. The Russian ambivalence toward Greek language may be imagined as part of a kind of «sibling rivalry»: having learned from the «older brother», younger Russian Christianity had no desire to remain subservient despite this acknowledged indebtedness.

Russian Christian ambivalence toward Greek linguistic and religious understandings also resembled, and may perhaps have been modeled on, Greek Christianity’s ambivalence with regard to its own earlier borrowings from the ancient Hebrew civilization. All the official scriptures of Greek Christianity were Jewish writings. The Hebrew Bible was made comprehensible to Greek readers by a collection of Jewish translations known as the Septuagint (LXX). Even the texts with Greek-language origins that came to form part of the Orthodox Christian biblical canon were the writings of Jews, expressing Hebrew-based ideas and demonstrating much lexical, syntactic, and other influence from Hebrew and Jewish Aramaic. However, over the course of the first centuries C.E., a new Christian Greek discourse developed, leading to gradual reinterpretation of these Greek Jewish texts and a great distancing of their perceived meanings from the original compositional settings within Israel and the Jewish Diaspora. While acknowledging a debt to the lending civilization, Greek Christianity simultaneously demonstrated outright hostility and antagonism toward this «older brother».

The origin was not denied; but the original was not desired. Greek Christianity had no wish to be dependent on Hebrew civilization, just as later Russian Christianity would show little willingness to remain dependent on Greek civilization.

To the surprise of most researchers, a popular genre of texts circulating in Muscovite Russia was the multilingual glossary. Despite a large body of such works, their very existence (let alone content) has been ignored by most historians. The glossaries or lexica have received some attention in historical lexicography and philology, but their broader role in Russian history remains

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4 A change in the valence of terms accompanied the gradual shift of Christianity away from its Jewish origins and transformation into a distinct religion with different ideas. See for example: George, C., «Jewish and Christian Greeks», in: E. Bakker (ed.), A companion to the ancient Greek language, Malden 2010, pp. 267–280; Edwards, M.-J., «The early Christian Greek vocabulary», in: Christidis, History of ancient Greek, pp. 1074–1079. Massive assimilation of Jewish texts was accompanied by anti-Jewish hostility: «The Byzantine identity was complex... both the New Romans and the new Israelis... the chosen people of the New Testament. They saw the Jews as their chief rivals and competitors. This meant that a Byzantine identity would be constructed in opposition to the Jews. Persecution and prejudice against the Jews were always features of Byzantine life», Anglo, M., Church and society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081–1261, Cambridge 1995, pp. 508–509.
greatly understudied. The earliest-known Russian glossaries of foreign words consist primarily of Hebrew entries and date from the 13th century. Their origins probably lay in the intriguing marginal notes found in some early East Slavic translations of Jewish scriptures, dating from approximately the 10th century. Many of these translations were seemingly Jewish in origin, as shown by their division into weekly synagogical readings and other specifically Jewish features. Their marginal glosses frequently explained Hebrew words. Several of these apparently Jewish texts eventually passed into Orthodox Christian libraries; and by the 13th century at the latest, lists of Hebrew words with translations into Russian had begun to circulate among Russian monasteries.5

One of the earliest known texts of this genre was titled, «А се имена жи водского языка преложена наргоукой» («Speech of the Jewish tongue transferred into the Russian»). This early dictionary reached to a few hundred entries in various redactions. Though not all of its entries derived from Hebrew, most did. Among them were such approximations as: мать (мати, «Mother»), rendered in the glossary as «дамия» (дамия, «Dama»), which is close to the Hebrew meaning, «gift of YHWH»; еврей (еврей, «Jew»), from Hebrew юде (юде), translated as «живыш» («life», very close to the original, дивинг); неуда (неуда, «Juda»), from Hebrew неуд (неуд), yehuda), given as «исповедание» («confession»), still somewhat close to the Hebrew, (правдив); авроа (авроа, for Hebrew авро, «even»), translated correctly as «вечер» («evening»). Other entries were less accurate; but, to paraphrase

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7 Ковтун, Русская лексикография, pp. 398—420.

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Johnson, the surprising thing for most historians is that such works existed at all in a country generally considered to lack interest in studying and knowing foreign languages.8

The Russian glossaries developed rapidly in the 13th and 14th centuries due to the infusion of many new entries from translated Greek onomastica. By this time, the practice of explaining Hebrew words in Greek already had a long history going back to famous ancient Jewish and Christian authors such as Philo of Alexandria, Josephus, Origen, and Jerome. Medieval Greek copybooks and compilations continued this tradition. Russian bookmen gained access to the Greek lexicicon entitled, «Ермания ономатей кат апоскелон нь ть апоскелон» («On names said to be of the Jewish tongue in the ecclesiastical books»). Liudmila Koptun has examined Russian assimilation of this text, including mistakes made in translation from Greek and other pertinent details; the reader is referred to her monograph for further information.9

The continued development of the Russian glossary gave rise to numerous and continually expanding texts, variants, and copies. Maxim the Greek, who moved from Mt. Athos to Moscow in the early 16th century, injected a great deal of authentic Greek knowledge into the Russian compilations of foreign words (about which more below). The Russian dictionaries also made use of a convenient handbook of Greek known as «Ручок тонкословия греческаго» («The speech of Greek fine discourse»).10 Dictionaries of this period incorporated not only Hebrew and Greek, but also a smattering of Latin, Arabic, Pervian, Turkish, and other languages. Unfamiliar South Slavic church terminology also gained in representation, and alphabetical organization became more common. A late-16th-century version of the glossary entitled «Толкование глагол и познаваемых речь» («Interpretation of sayings difficult to understand») began with the following entries: але́в (alet, for the first Hebrew letter а, alet); альфавит (alfavit, from Greek а́лфавитос); адуани (adunai, for Hebrew אדונא); ло́дос (loidos, from Greek а́лфо́стогог); и, skipping down a few entries, архиестратиг (arkhistratig, from Greek а́рхиестрато́го); архиепи́скопъ (arkhi-
episkop, from Greek ἐπίσκοπος); and so forth. Another 16th-century text, called Сказание речем недоведенным еже вображаем в евангельских книгах (Explaination of unknown sayings found in the holy books), listed names for God in a wide range of languages: аданик (adani, for Hebrew אדני); ама (ama, a graphical scribal mistake for Arabic الله); веце (ofes, for Greek ὕπεξ), perhaps after a demotic pronunciation; арства (arstva, for Armenian աստվա); пентри (pengri, for Tatar tengri, god of the sky); енъ (en', for Persian en, a high god in the Komи pantheon).12

In such texts, translation into Russian nearly always manifested an extremely wide range of relative accuracy, regardless of original language. Some entries received quite accurate renderings, while others were given fanciful interpretations based on theological association or some other source.13 By the 17th and 18th centuries, the glossaries developed into broader and better organized dictionaries or even mini-encyclopedias. The genre of texts thus represents a major aspect of the Muscovite Russian attempt to organize knowledge. Despite their meager representation in modern scholarly literature, this corpus no doubt provided major reference material for Muscovite bookmen of the late medieval and early modern period.14

Why were the glossaries created? Russian Orthodox Christians of this time regarded themselves as the continuation — and possibly the culmination — of the mainstream of true, divinely inspired history stretching back to ancient Israel and Byzantium. They recognized the Jews as the «first chosen people» and Hebrew as the first holy language for the transmission of God’s word. However, Hebrew writings had reached East Slavdom primarily via the mediation of Greek. If Russians wanted to understand their own tradition on a deep level, therefore, they had to contend with two foreign languages.15 Yet, as noted above, skill in foreign languages such as Hebrew and Greek was rare in Muscovy. New evidence published by Sergei Temchin suggests some remarkable but limited contact in the 15th and 16th centuries between East Slavs and Jews, engendering a transfer of some authentic Hebrew knowledge.16 Greek speakers did appear periodically in Muscovite Russia; but as Francis Thomson argues, their native mastery of contemporary spoken dialects did not necessarily imply good knowledge of classical or biblical Greek.17 Given such a situation, and the lack of formal linguistic education, it is obvious that most biblical names and terms deriving from Hebrew and Greek would be incomprehensible not only to the average Orthodox Christian, but even to almost all educated Russian monks.18 The multilingual glossaries certainly matched a clear need in Muscovite society, enabling a fuller understanding of the biblical and Orthodox Christian traditions.

Yet the promotion of purely linguistic knowledge was not the only or even the chief function of these glossaries. Ostensibly compiled to help with understanding biblical and other foreign languages, these texts also reflected ways of thinking about Hebrew and Greek language and their associated civilizations. Careful examination of the meanings given for various words demonstrates that the Muscovite lexicographers included certain entries for their didactic value, rather than due to any linguistic concerns. In many cases, of course, the compilers may not have been equipped to know whether a given translation had any basis in linguistic reality or not. In other cases, however, they seem to have intentionally taken theological commentary as indicative of inherent linguistic meaning, even despite available evidence to the contrary. The «Explaination of unknown sayings» cited above included the following pair of entries: павель, покон савл, струпшатою (pavel [Paul], rest; Saul [Saul], turmoil/ upheaval).19 Though neither of these translations was correct linguistically, they nonetheless fulfilled an important function in the Orthodox Christian semantic universe. The conflict between turmoil and rest could easily be understood as indicative of a theological opposition between Saul as

11 Кистун, Лексикография в Московской Руси, p. 269.
12 Russian National Library (RNB), St. Petersburg, Manuscripts collection, Kirillo-Belozerskii monastery manuscript no. 25-1102 (16th century), leaves 147-158, here ill. 147, 155v.
13 For further examples and discussion, see: Gruber, «Russians, Jews, and Hebrew», 128-132.
14 The effects of these glossaries on Muscovite literary composition, biblical interpretation, and so forth remain to be investigated.
15 For the Muscovite negotiation of its inheritance from ancient Israel and Byzantium, see the summary and interpretation in: Gruber, L., Orthodox Russia in crisis: Church and nation in the Time of Troubles, DeKalb 2012, pp. 23-50.
18 Note that the level of general education of Muscovite churchmen (let alone linguistic training) was considered deplorable by foreign visitors. See the discussion and sources in: Gruber, Orthodox Russia in crisis, pp. 49-50.
19 RNB, ms. 25-1102, l. 148.
Jew and Paul as Christian. Such an interpretation came neither from the words themselves nor from the scriptural text — Acts 13:9 says simply Σαύλος δὲ, ὁ καὶ Παύλος («Saul, then, who is also Paul»). However, this interpretation played into a longstanding competition between Christianity and Judaism and thus arguably fit the mindset of the glossaries’ compilers.20

The same pattern often applied when glossing Greek words. Multiple Russian glossaries interpreted φαλάκρομα as similar forms not as «bald head» but rather as «сажая за бор писать» (sazhnya za nizhny), «God was enraged at the Jews). This completely non-linguistic rendering derived from commentary in the 10th- or 11th-century Tolkovskaiia psaltery”, an East Slavic edition of the Psalms that made use of many remarks by (pseudo-) Athanasius and perhaps other Christian thinkers. Thus a creative, theologically motivated Greek Christian commentary on a Hebrew poem — designed to transform the latter into an anti-Jewish text — was translated and then adopted by Russian scribes to be presented as a linguistic reality!21 Nothing in the glossaries themselves demarcated such far-reaching theological interpretations, as of φαλάκρομα, from accurate or semi-accurate linguistic translations, such as: άναεμα, έμελεια ὥ διαρ [«anafema [έμελεια], cutting off from Gods).22

These multilingual texts thus reveal much about the mindset of Russian Orthodox literate society in the Muscovite period. The glossaries represented theologically-linguistic reference material that combined information from a wide variety of sources. The main goal was to entrench the (or a) Russian Orthodox Christian worldview. Sometimes this goal could be accomplished with accurate linguistic knowledge; other times it could be reached via the presentation of imaginative commentary as if it were accurate linguistic knowledge. These disparate types of material were presented side-by-side with no distinction and merged into a single artifact. The curious nature of the Muscovite glossaries is thus easily explained by the supposition that accurate linguistic knowledge was not the highest priority of the compilers.

Into this environment entered, in the early 16th century, Maxim the Greek. Born in Arta, he possessed a native knowledge of the Greek language, enhanced by studies at Corfu. He received further education in Italian cities with leading Renaissance figures before entering a monastic community on Mt. Athos. Maxim’s acquaintance with ancient languages, philosophy, ecclesiastical literature, and perhaps even contemporary international politics probably far surpassed that of anyone in Muscovy. He was invited to provide superior knowledge of, and translation from, Greek (though he arrived in Russia without knowledge of Slavic). However, Maxim’s linguistic activities, or associated theological and political complications, would eventually land him in jail. Perhaps both his superior knowledge of Greek and his inferior knowledge of Slavic played a role in the accusations of heresy leveled against him.23

Among his many works, Maxim evidently advanced the development of the multilingual glossary genre in Muscovy. In particular, he corrected, added, and explained numerous Greek terms. The Толкование именных по алфавиту («Interpretation of names according to the alphabet») exists in two reductions and 24 manuscripts of the 16th-18th centuries, not including 6 copies of an addendum to the first reduction. This text was explicitly attributed to Maxim the Greek and included in early collections of his works. Greek words (especially names) comprise by far the greatest number of entries in this text. In contrast to the earliest Russian glossaries, which were based primarily on lists of Hebrew words, Greek is here assumed to be the «default» language. Words originating in Greek are generally left unmarked, whereas loan words from other languages are specified as, say, «Hebrew» or «Latin». Moreover, this glossary (in contrast to some others) was clearly written by someone with actual mastery of Greek.24

In addition to translating a vast number of Greek names, Maxim’s dictionary introduced a broader vocabulary of important Greek terms to the Russian literati and occasionally supplied background information about them. His entries included the following: φιλοσόφος, φιλωρόμοις (philosophos, lover of wisdom); νικελομοῖος, νικελομοῖος, νικελομοῖος, νικελομοῖος, lover of Rome); φιλοχέντες, φιλανθρωποί

20 Many Jews of the first century had both a Hebrew name (יוסף and a Greek or Latin one (Παύλος), particularly if they lived and traveled both in Israel and in the Diaspora (as did this individual). However, many later commentators associated Saul with Jewishness and Paul with Christianity.
21 Кобуц, Русская лексикография, pp. 36, 398, 406, 419.
22 Кобуц, Русская лексикография, p. 434.
24 Кобуц, Лексикография в Московской Руси, pp. 116–262, 313–349. Koptev examines the attribution question in detail and determines that Maxim’s authorship is virtually certain. For other works of Maxim the Greek, see: Сочинения преподобного Максимилиана Гречи, 3 vol., Кизнер 1599-1602.
is so identified in Acts 19 («...οἱ οὖν ναοὶ ἄγρυφοι Αρτεμίδος... τὸ τῆς μεγάλης θεᾶς Αρτεμίδος ἱερόν... τῆς μεγαλείστης αὐτῆς, ἣν θὰ ἔχει ἡ Ασία καὶ ἡ οἰκουμένη στείρεται...»). Ἡ Ἰερουσαλήμ ἡ Ἁρτέμιδος ἡ Ἀποστόλων... Ἀνδρέας Ἐφεσιος, τῆς γάρ ἑκείνης ἄνθρωπον ἣν ὅν πάλιν καὶ κατακόρυφον σῶσε τῆς μεγάλης Αρτέμιδος καὶ τοῦ διοικητῆς»).20 On the other hand, Diomedes was the name of a Christian saint; Muscovite literati perhaps did not want it linked to a pagan god. Still, exceptions like Diodorus leave room for doubt as to the origin of these inconsistent translations in Maxim’s «Interpretation of names».

Due to his classical training, Maxim could distinguish between languages in a way that native Muscovite scribes usually could not. The «Interpretation of names» explains that Flavian comes from «Roman» (Latin) origin, and emphasizes that Domitian is «Roman, not Greek».31 Probably such clarifications were often intended to correct misconceptions encountered by Maxim in his interaction with the Muscovites. In other entries, Maxim gave the Muscovite scribes a sense of the layering of languages and consequent transformations involved in their reception of scripture: «μισέω, εὐφράσια περσίνια, αὐτογραφεῖται, σοφίτες εἰς τοὺς ἡπείρους εἰπάλθης» («milis [Περσα], a Jewish expression [Hebrew יְשָׁו, yeshua], and it is interpreted sôrîf [Greek σοφίτη], which is in Russian ἱστόρια).22

Maxim’s Hebrew knowledge was not confined to the most common names (like Jesus), but it was limited. The fourth entry in the «Interpretation of names» reads as follows: «αἰμακοῦμ, εὐφράσια περσίνια, τολκοῦσθαι ὅπως τὸν τραγάνον» («אַבַּאַַוָּאָם [עָבָאָוָא, Abba], a Jewish expression [Hebrew אָבָא, khavaq], it is interpreted father of arising).23 The translation given in Maxim’s dictionary is a smart but mistaken guess. It is based on attempting to reconstruct the original Hebrew name via its Greek transliteration, without a Hebrew text and without realizing the degree of modification the name has undergone in the process of transliteration. Maxim (or his source) assumed that Abba was derived from Hebrew אָב (abba, «father, dad») plus יְשָׁו (yesh, «arises»). Instead, the actual Hebrew name Khavaq more plausi-
nably signifies «embracing», as Jerome had it in his earlier onomasticon («Ambacue, amplexans»).34

Even Maxim’s Greek entries could be idiosyncratic, whether due to his own late acquisition of Slavic proficiency or as a result of subsequent editing and copying. His glossary translated «ἐπιστήμη» (epistimē, Greek «ἐπιστήμη») quite nicely as «художество, ведение» (art/skill, knowledge). However, another manuscript had «видение» (videnie, visions) in place of «ведение» (vedenie, knowledge).35 Given the limits of linguistic knowledge in Muscovy, unmotivated as well as motivated mistakes could easily creep into the glossaries. Regardless of such issues, Maxim clearly contributed a great deal of authentic Greek knowledge to his new society. Very few Russians of this period ever learned Greek; even for most of the tiny educated class, exposure to a glossary such as Maxim’s would be as close as they ever came to understanding the earlier language of their ecclesiastical tradition.

Grand Prince Vasily III had invited Maxim the Greek to Moscow due to the need for foreign assistance with foreign languages. Yet the Muscovites seem to have considered such assistance a definitely mixed blessing. Russians might, as David Goldfrank has remarked, «regard a pious and learned Greek as a source of spiritual wisdom, [but] they would not countenance a return to their former hierarchical subordination».36 The independent Russian Orthodox Church looked on the Greek Orthodox Church not only as a progenitor and a prototype to imitate — but also, in some ways, as a competitor and potential rival. This is arguably one reason why Maxim had such trouble in Moscow and found himself condemned by church councils and imprisoned as a result of his work and his outspokenness.

Despite frequent mention of adherence to the «Greek faith», the Russian attitude toward Byzantium, Greek customs, and the Greek language itself was far from unmixed adoration. In every sphere of life, the Byzantine Christian «inheritance» was filtered and adapted to Muscovite conditions.37 Even in Kiev (pre-Mongol) times, Greek had been respected but not revered by Rus’ literati. Simon Franklin reminds us that, «For most of the Rus’, most of the time the “land of the Greeks” was out of sight and the Greek language was out of earshot».38 Franklin continues, speaking of the 12th century:

Greek did not vanish [in Kievan Rus’]. It continued to be used for native purposes. Remnants of it survived, stranded and fossilized in sight and sound: in the aural iconography of ritual chants, in the visual iconography of portraits of saints. These residual uses of Greek did not necessarily require a knowledge of Greek. References in native writing show that Greek as a language was generally perceived to be remote and incomprehensible, associated with distant wonders and miracles. Such was the Kievan cultural image of Greek. Indeed, the main cultural function of Greek in Kievan Rus’ was precisely as image — whether for the eye or for the ear — rather than as language. Both its visual and its aural forms interacted with Slavonic and Cyrillic, and the resultant variegated hybrids, though they were often linguistically nonsensical, preserved a sacred and aesthetic significance.39

Perhaps four centuries before Maxim, then, the East Slavs had already become accustomed to viewing Greek as a conveniently «fossilized» language fulfilling a particular, limited function within their own ritual and culture. They did not think of Greek primarily as a living language, or even as the more original carrier of the ideas of their own religious tradition. Franklin has elsewhere observed that Ilarion, the first native Rus’ metropolitan of Kyiv (mid-12th century), immediately carved out a distinct rhetorical place for his nation among the various Christian peoples.40 Thus the Greek heritage was appreciated but not worshiped slavishly or imitated mindlessly, even from an early date. Meanwhile, Thomson argues that both Kievan Rus’ and Muscovy had virtually no exposure to classical Greek philosophy or «the dogmatically-philosophical element of the Christian faith, which itself is incomprehensible without a grasp of classical philosophy».41 This lack of exposure also presumably implied less motivation or perceived need to delve into the original language and texts of the Hellenic philosophers and Eastern Christian thinkers.

According to Boris Uspenskii, in Muscovy the Greek language actually came to occupy a position of less prestige than the form of South

35 Konon, Lexicon bogoslofskoye v Moskovskoy Rusi, pp. 317, 337.
37 Cf. Karampen, H., Священное апостольское чионию в Литве и Руси, Москва 1874, p. 1; Gruber, Orthodox Russia in crisis, pp. 26, 48, 188, passim.
39 Franklin, «Greek in Kievan Rus’», 81.
41 Thomson, Reception of Byzantine culture, pp. xi, xix-xxii.
Slavic used by the Russian Orthodox Church. Uspenskii writes: «В России церковнославянский язык воспринимался как благодатный и спасительный. Церковнославянский язык может считаться на Руси даже святее греческого, поскольку греческий язык создан язычниками, а церковнославянский — святыми апостолами» («In Russia the Church Slavonic language was perceived as a blessing and saving [force].... in Rus’, Church Slavonic can be considered even holier than Greek, inasmuch as the Greek language was created by pagans, but Church Slavonic by the holy apostles»). Uspenskii also describes how the Russian bookmen came to modify Greek loan words for their own purposes: «ангела» (angel) came to mean «angel» (not merely «messengers», but «angels» based on the Greek spelling ἀγγέλος, ἀγγελος, rather than its pronunciation ангел) meant «evil/fallen angels».42 Again we find that Russian Orthodox Christians recognized a certain association with or even debt to Greek Christianity and the Greek language, but simultaneously rejected any form of subservience, servile imitation, or presumed inferiority — including linguistic.

It should thus be no surprise that Maxim the Greek encountered trouble and opposition in Muscovy. The Russian elite recognized the power of language, even if during this period it did not go in for extensive study of foreign tongues. As the epigraph to this paper from (pseudo-)Longinus reminds us, experimentation in language is inextricably tied to intensity in action. From the Muscovite perspective, Greek knowledge was a double-edged sword. It could help entrench and further Russian Orthodox Christianity; or it could challenge and potentially even destroy native traditions and understandings. Like most people, the Muscovites probably did not like an outsider coming in and challenging their long-held beliefs, even or especially when the latter were flawed. Though he came from the «older» tradition, Maxim in Muscovy may thus have empathized with Dio Chrysostom, who had written in antiquity: «δοξάζει δὲ ὑμεῖς ὑπερήφανον παλαιὰς ἑκάτους, αἷς ὦκ ἐν ἑκάτοις δεινοῖσι» («Your opinions, then, I found old, immovable, impossible to contradict»).

A century after Maxim, the same problem persisted. In the early 17th century, two Russian monks named Arsenii and Dionisii managed to learn Greek. With the support of their superiors, they examined Greek originals and Slavic translations, finding numerous errors in transmission. Yet the unfortunate researchers

42 Успенский, Византия и Русь, pp. 207–209.
43 Διόνυσις, Ρωμαϊκοὶ λόγοι, 12.57.

faced the jealousy and hatred of other monks who possessed no comparable knowledge but nonetheless fancied themselves experts. In the early years of Tsar Mikhail’s reign, the studious pair found themselves insulted and attacked, dragged before a Church council and denounced as heretics, and sentenced to beatings, torture, and confinement. A purely textual matter — whether or not a particular prayer had originally included the words “and by fire” (и огнём) — was made into a doctrinal issue of the utmost importance. Simply stating the basic facts of the case became a criminal offense.43

Essentially Arsenii and Dionisii were tortured for the crime of knowing Greek in Muscovy. Once again, Maxim almost certainly could have empathized.

Virtually simultaneously, the Muscovite church and state continued to demand that books in monasterial libraries be sent to the center for checking and correction.44 This practice continued through the 17th century; comparison of local books to recent Greek editions and consequent revision of Slavic versions represented one major cause of the Raskol or Church Schism. Greek knowledge was thus sanctioned only if officially controlled by the politico-religious government.46 Not everyone was free to wield the dangerously powerful, double-edged sword of linguistic knowledge.

Even a brief study of the multilingual glossaries produced in Muscovy demonstrates their utility for historical inquiry, a potential that has gone almost entirely untapped until now. These unique texts provide a window into the Russian conception of sacred (biblical, ecclesiastical, etc.) words at a
foundational level, prior to their inclusion within literary compositions. By the 16th century, influence from Greek broadened the glossaries beyond their original scope and challenged some entrenched habits, with mixed success. The traditional Russian «daring» or experimentation with language and lexica consisted in appropriating Greek (as well as Hebrew) for native purposes, rather than learning from those foreign languages on their own terms. This linguistic approach was clearly tied to actions in the practical realm, as the Russian church and state demanded and acquired complete independence from the Byzantine «older brother».

Paradoxically, Byzantium itself had provided Muscovy with the conscious or unconscious model for accepting massive influence from another civilization whilst remaining resistant to dependency of any kind. Rus' inherited the Greek Christian love-hate attitude toward Israel and constantly reproduced such ambivalence in its own literature. East Slavic Christian writers constantly cited and imitated the Jewish Bible, while just as incessantly maligning Jews. Theological rationalization went so far that «journey» (ζημα, «Jew»), often a translation for Greek «Ιουδαίος» could mean «зачин» (іаііснік, «Gentile, of the nations, pagan», roughly parallel to Greek «Ουθάκος».

In other words, from within the context of biblical language, Jew came to signify its exact opposite, Gentile! The mechanism by which such extraordinary transformations became possible derived from the Greek Christian appropriation and resistance of Jewish language and thought. With the imperial church designated as the «New Israel», old Israel faded to the status of pagan unbelievers. It was only a short step from there to the Russian usage of Jew to mean pagan or Gentile — i.e., an unbeliever outside the replacement «Israel».

Yet to Russians, Greek seemed as alien or nearly as alien as Hebrew. Both of these foreign languages and civilizations were distant... other... incompre-

hensible... perhaps even «barbarian» when viewed through the Muscovite lens. Russian Christians did not need to trouble themselves over Greek any more than Greek Christians troubled themselves over Hebrew. The more original text and interpretation did not rule. As part and parcel of adopting the «Greek faith», then, the East Slavs received the perfect model for rejecting any unwanted influence from a «parent» source. When Constantine declared, «εκείνον τοίνυν διετο ὁμόν κοινόν μετὰ τοῦ εὐθύστου τῶν Ἰουδαίων γῆς» («Let us be no means be in common with the most hateful crowd of the Jews»), he not only established, finally, a distinct religion severing the very roots that had enabled it to sprout. The emperor also unwittingly sowed the seeds for the same process to be repeated over and over again in (Gentile) Christian history — sometimes just as dramatically, with open schisms; at other times more subtly, with less overt fissures in the apparent unity of Orthodoxy. The Russians accepted this paradox of Greek Christianity and quickly set about making it their own. Their semi-rejection of Greek was much less extreme than the Greek (and Russian) spurning of Jewishness — and in fact was always couched as acceptance. Yet the Russian-Greek dynamic floated on the very same undertones of civilizational rivalry, assertion of independence, and even a sense of superiority on the part of the «younger brother» vis-à-vis the «older».

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47 Cf. also the harsh Russian treatment of Patriarch Jeremias II of Constantinople during his visit to Moscow, which succeeded in gaining an independent patriarchate for Russia. The story is described in: Cudzinsk, B., Crisis and reform: The Kyivan metropolitanate, the patriarchate of Constantinople, and the genesis of the Union of Brest, Cambridge 1998, pp. 168–187.

48 See, for example: Persetoff-Month, Grin without a cat, 2 vols; Gruber, Orthodox Rusia in crisis, pp. 26–44, 162, 181.


51 Eusebius Panaphili, Life of Constantine, 3.18–19. According to Eusebius, the Council of Nicaea (325 C.E.) principally resolved a controversy concerning the date of pascha (Pascha, Passover). Up until this time, many Gentile as well as Jewish Christians still observed Jewish practices, and many Jews and Christians apparently intermarried quite freely in their daily lives. The laws introduced from the 4th century on in an attempt to keep Jews and Christians apart (e.g., bans on intermarriage) are themselves evidence of a great deal of normal interaction that the imperial and ecclesiastic authorities felt the need to limit and control. Hostility certainly existed as well, but was not the whole story. See: Linder, Jews in Roman imperial legislation; Linder, A., The Jews in the legal sources of the early Middle Ages, Jerusalem 1997; M. Williams (ed.), The Jews among the Greeks and Romans: A Diaspora sourcebook, Baltimore 1998, pp. 151–159, passim; and the large body of ecclesiastic canons, patristics, and other early Christian writings treating interaction with Jews.