

Abstracts and Notes on Contributors

Humanism and «Humanisms»: (Once Again) On Framing the Methodological Problem

(O. Akopyan)

This article addresses the enduring methodological problem of defining «humanism,» a concept central to the study of the European Renaissance. It traces the evolution of scholarly interpretations of humanism, highlighting the persistent debates over its nature, scope, and impact on Renaissance culture. The article begins by noting that since the popularization of the term «Renaissance» by Jacob Burckhardt, humanism has often been understood in two ways: as a liberating philosophy that challenged medieval dogma and as a scholarly movement reviving classical antiquity. These dual perspectives have shaped both Western and Russian philosophical discourse, with figures like Nikolai Berdyaev and Vladimir Zabugin offering critical reflections on the influence of Renaissance humanism. I then examine two major, conceptually opposed interpretations of Renaissance humanism: those of Eugenio Garin and Paul Oskar Kristeller. Garin, whose views have been influential in Soviet and Russian scholarship, sees humanism as inseparable from Renaissance philosophy, emphasizing its anthropological focus and its role in transforming conceptions of human dignity and creativity. Garin's interpretation, shaped by Italian intellectual traditions and political contexts, foregrounds the idea of «civic humanism» and the centrality of figures like Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. However, the essay critiques the tendency to overemphasize Pico's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* as the apex of Renaissance anthropological (or magical) thought, arguing that such readings often ignore the broader theological and mystical dimensions of Pico's work.

In contrast, Kristeller's approach, rooted in German neohumanism, strictly separates humanism from philosophy, defining it as a set of professional activities—*studia humanitatis*—that replaced medieval scholastic curricula. Kristeller's model, influential in Anglo-American scholarship, focuses on the philological, ethical, and pedagogical aspects of humanism, downplaying its progressive character. The article notes that while Kristeller's framework has been criticized for lacking a holistic view of the Renaissance, it offers a more flexible and inclusive account of the period's intellectual diversity, avoiding reductive narratives centered on human freedom or secularism.

The article further explores the ancient origins of the concept of *humanitas*, distinguishing it from *studia humanitatis* and tracing its development from Roman and Hellenistic traditions to its reinterpretation by Marsilio Ficino in the fifteenth century. Ficino's triadic model of

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humanitas – *eruditio* (learning), *philanthropia* (love of humanity), and *unitas* (unity) – is presented as a broader philosophical and theological construct that transcends the limits of Renaissance anthropology. I argue that Ficino's vision of *humanitas*, rooted in efforts to harmonize Christian doctrine with ancient wisdom, was ultimately fragmented by later philosophical developments, particularly those of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre, whose «anti-humanist» tendencies redefined the place of the individual in modern thought. In conclusion, I contend that contemporary scholarship is moving beyond the dichotomies established by Garin and Kristeller, increasingly recognizing the complexity and plurality of humanist traditions. The article calls for a more nuanced understanding of humanism that acknowledges its historical transformations, its entanglement with religious and philosophical currents, and its relevance to ongoing debates about human rights and identity.

Keywords: Renaissance Humanism, Studia Humanitatis, Humanitas, Eugenio Garin, Paul Oskar Kristeller, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Anti-Humanism.

Ovanes Akopyan is a Research Associate (Tenure-Track Assistant Professor) at the Institute of Philosophy, Zagreb, and a Visiting Professor at Ibn Haldun University in Istanbul. His research interests focus on the intellectual history of the Renaissance and the modern age, particularly on astronomy, environmental thought, and intercultural connections).

Italian Renaissance and the Russian Religious-Philosophical Renaissance: A Dialogue Across the Centuries. The Case of V. Zabughin

(O. Kusenko)

The phenomenon of the Italian Renaissance held a special place in Russian culture at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. Philosophers, poets, writers, artists, architects, and composers intensively and fruitfully turned to the semantic and figurative structure of the Italian Renaissance era. During this brief but incredibly fruitful period of its development, Russian culture conducted a unique dialogue with Italian culture—a dialogue across the centuries. Dante's work became part of the lifeblood of the Symbolist poets, Russian thinkers debated the historiosophical and teleological meanings of the Italian Renaissance, and architects embodied classical and Renaissance models in their projects. This article will focus on the Renaissance studies of one of the outstanding representatives of the era of the Russian religious-philosophical renaissance, the historian and philologist Vladimir Nikolayevich Zabughin (1880-1923), who lived and worked in Italy in the first quarter of the 20th century. Zabughin directed his spiritual and intellectual efforts towards bringing the worlds of Western and Eastern Christianity closer together. Therefore, the «Eastern theme» in the Italian Renaissance – the theme of contacts between Italian authors and the Greco-Byzantine and Slavic cultural traditions during the Renaissance—is one of the central themes in his research. The interest of the Russian thinker lay in understanding how Italian humanists regarded Byzantium, what they drew from its culture for themselves, and what knowledge they possessed about Eastern Christianity.

In 1910, Vladimir Zabughin became the editor of the journal *Roma e l'Oriente* (Rome and the East), which was published in Italy from 1910 to 1921 with the support of the Grottaferrata Monastery. In this journal, Zabughin had his own special regular column titled «Greco-Slavic Religious Questions among Renaissance Writers». In it, he addressed the texts of Dante, Pomponio Leto, Guarino da Verona, and other Renaissance authors. Zabughin's articles aimed to show the spiritual kinship of Christian Europe, instances of mutual interest and understanding that overcame division. These texts by Zabughin from *Roma e l'Oriente* served as the primary material for this present study.

Keywords: V.N. Zabughin, Renaissance Studies, Italian Renaissance and Byzantium, «Roma e l'Oriente» (Journal).

Olga Kusenko, PhD, is Senior Research Fellow at the Department of Western Philosophy, Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow).

Sofia Palaiologina and the Problem of Renaissance Influence in Russian Culture in the Late 15th and Early 16th Centuries

(T. Matasova)

The article investigates the role Sophia Palaeologina played in introducing Russian culture to the world of the Renaissance. The origins of the concept according to which Sophia's influence was decisive (studies of N. M. Karamzin, P. Pierling) are considered, and it is shown why this actually was not the case. Having collected in one article the main results and conclusions of a number of her own studies and relying on a wide range of sources (chronicles, acts, notes of foreigners, lives of saints, etc.), the author comes to the conclusion that Sophia's influence on the reception of Renaissance culture is rather limited. To prove this thesis, questions about Sophia's property, her education, as well as a plot related to the news about the appearance of St. Sergius to Sophia are specifically considered. Much attention is paid in the article to the activities carried out by the Greeks who arrived with Sophia. It is shown that their role in disseminating bits of Renaissance knowledge was more significant than Sophia's, yet it should not be exaggerated, either: not all among them Greeks were connected with the humanistic tradition.

Keywords: Sophia Palaiologina, Greeks, Moscow, Renaissance.

Tatiana Matasova, PhD in Russian History, is Associate Professor at the Department of Russian History of the Lomonosov Moscow State University. Her research focuses on the history of Russian-Italian relations and Russia's contacts with the Greek world in the 15th-17th centuries, as well as the history and culture of the Russian North. She is author of more than 80 scientific publications, including 3 monographs.

«Volga Cannot Flow into the Caspian Sea»: Cosmographical Conclusions of the Habsburgian Diplomat Francesco da Collo Inspired by the Anxiety over Ecology

(O. Kudriavtsev)

The diplomatic mission of the Emperor's envoy Francesco da Collo to Moscow, 1518-1519, was aimed at a reconciliation of a long military conflict between Russia and Polish-Lithuanian union. After return to Empire Da Collo made a description of his travel which is of great interest in some aspects: firstly as a precious source on the history of international relations and diplomatic customs in Russia and Empire, secondly because of information about Moscovite state and the way the well-educated European perceived it, thirdly thanks to its accounts of East-European physical geography. Namely this last theme is under investigation in the present paper. It demonstrates that Da Collo aligns with the old tradition, going back to the geographical ideas of antiquity, which argued the presence in the Eastern Europe of mountain-ridges, so called Ryphean and Hyperborean mountains from which apparently stem the great rivers of the region and, according to Da Collo, the most important among them – river Tanais or Don. And he insisted on this thesis although just before him, in 1517, the Polish cosmograph Mathias de Miechow had published the treatise in which he had asserted the groundlessness of all attempts to prove the presence of these mountains. But Da Collo's adherence to the conception of East-European physical geography that had been developed in antiquity is caused, as is stressed in this paper, by anxiety over the stability of the Mediterranean hydrosystem, which depended, as Da Collo thought, mainly on one river Tanais/Don because it accumulates the main East-European hydroresources since it receives, according to Emperor's envoy, river Volga together with other rivers which flow into it. And all this mass of water through Tanais/Don enters Azov and Black seas and then – all the Mediterranean seas. Moreover, these great rivers – it is Da Collo's conviction – cannot originate from lakes and marshes in the flat country, that's why they have their sources in the Riphean mountains. And now it is clear, why according to Da Collo, «Volga cannot flow into the Caspian Sea».

Keywords: Francesco da Collo, Ryphean and Hyperborean Mountains, Tanais/ Don, Volga, Black Sea, Caspian Sea.

Oleg Kudriavtsev is Professor at the Department of Mediaeval history in Moscow Lomonosov State University and at the Department of the World and Russian History in the Moscow State Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. He is author of more than 400 scientific works dedicated to the history of culture and of social thought of Mediaeval and Renaissance Europe as well as to the perception of Russian civilization in 15th-16th centuries Europe.

The Woman of the Apocalypse in Russia: Images and Metaphors in Apologetic Production in the First Half of the 16th Century

(M. Garzaniti)

From the end of the fifteenth century, a wider presence of the Apocalypse can be observed in Russia, probably due to cultural influences from the West, where this New Testament book and its exegesis were much more widespread in the context of medieval prophethood and reform trends. Certainly, the question of dating the end of the world, which troubled the consciences of the time and which in the East Slavic world appears to be connected to the question of the seventh millennium (1492), had to play an important role.

In this context the author proposes to interpret the different function of the image of the Apocalyptic Woman found in the text *On offences against the Church*, in the *Letter of the Pskov starec Filofej to the d'jak M.G. Misjur' Munechin*, as well as its transformation in a figural key in the *Discourse on instability and chaos* by Maximus the Greek. While in the former, the anonymous author keeps the eschatological horizon in the foreground with a strong appeal to fidelity to the Christian tradition not only in doctrinal, but also in moral terms, in his *Letter*, the starec Filofej adopts this image to illustrate his idea of the transfer of imperial power to the city of Moscow. In his turn, the Athonite monk transforms the image of the woman into a figure of the charisma of power, constructing a dialogue in which the protagonist Vasilija illustrates the moral decadence of the empires and kingdoms of his time by calling for the conversion of the rulers.

Keywords: Woman of the Apocalypse, Apologetic Imagery, Filofei of Pskov, Maximus the Greek

Marcello Garzaniti, formerly full professor at the University of Florence, is a member of the Editorial Council of the Firenze University Press and editor of the "Europe in between" series. His research focuses on the Slavonic Bible, the Slavic Literatures history, and the relationships between culture and religion in Slavic countries.

The Concepts of «Free Will» and «Free Choice» in Maximus the Greek: Insights into Intellectual Vocabulary in Sixteenth-Century Muscovy

(M.C. Ferro)

The Eastern Slavic world also underwent the process of developing the intellectual lexicon of modern languages, that was characteristic of Renaissance culture, thanks in part to the literary output of the Athonite monk Maximus the Greek (born Michele Trivolis, Arta, c. 1470–Sergiev Posad, 1556), who is acknowledged as having played a mediating role in introducing concepts typical of Renaissance humanist culture into 16th-century Muscovy. This paper has the dual purpose of offering a review of recent studies investigating the Greek monk's ability to translate ideas and concepts into Church Slavonic through an original *usus verborum*, and of exploring the expression of the concepts of «free will» and «free choice» in the writings of Maximus the Greek, analysing the compounds of slavonic the slavonic pronoun самъ with the words власть and воля, present in the first letter to F.I. Karpov against divinatory astrology.

Keywords: Maximus the Greek, Church Slavonic lexicon, Intellectual lexicon, Concept of free will, Renaissance humanist culture in 16th-century Muscovy

Maria Chiara Ferro is Associate Professor of Slavic Studies at the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures, and Cultures of the University of Chieti-Pescara, where she teaches Russian Language and Translation from Russian into Italian. Her main research interests lie in the writing production of the East Slavic Middle Ages, the intellectual lexicon of Russian language, and issues concerning the teaching of Russian language and culture within the Italian university context.

The Tale about the Image Called «Sorrow» by Maximus the Greek:
the *Imago pietatis* at the Meeting of East and West

(F. Romoli)

Maximus the Greek addresses the subject of sacred images in a handful of writings, some aim to defend the Orthodox tradition from European reformist developments, and others to instruct the Russian faithful on the correct reading and interpretation of specific iconographies. To this second group belongs the *Tale about the Image called «Sorrow»* (*Skazanie ob obraze, nazyvaemom Unynie*). On the whole, the work remains obscure in terms of its addressee and dating, the purpose and concrete circumstances of its composition and its sources. The present study investigates these questions and brings the following results.

As for the dating, it can be assumed that the *Tale* belongs to the second period of Maximus' Slavic production, when, after the trial of 1531, he was transferred to Tver' under the protection of bishop Akakij, who can be identified with his interlocutor in the *Tale*. If we accept this hypothesis, the dating of a copy of the *Tale* to 1533 allows us to specify the chronology of Maximus' stay in Tver' by fixing 1533 as the *terminus ad quem* of his arrival. With respect to the purpose of the text and the concrete circumstances of its composition, there are several plausible scenarios. Considering the work revising liturgical texts that Maximus was called upon to carry out in Muscovy and given his writing habits, the most probable hypothesis seems to be that the *Tale* was prompted by the erroneous Slavic rendition for the Greek *Ákra tapeinosis* referring to the *Imago pietatis* in a written source, possibly the codex GIM Sin. nr. 310(377) (or in a codex closely related to it). Finally, with reference to the sources, the elements characterising the episode of the «Mass of Saint Gregory» in the version offered in the *Tale*, above all the connection between Saint Gregory's vision and the reproduction of that vision in the form of the *Imago pietatis* unequivocally leads the text back to the «minor version» of the printed reproduction of van Meckenem's *Imago pietatis* belonging to the church of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme in Rome.

In conclusion, the *Tale* seems to bring Maximus back to Tver' in the aftermath of the second trial and to show him intent on instructing his interlocutor on the meaning and authenticity of the *Imago pietatis*, which he now illustrates by recalling the image's ability to evoke God's mercy and arouse the devotion of the faithful, and by narrating the story of its origins in the «Mass of St. Gregory». Thus restored to its context, the *Tale* can ultimately be read as an action aimed at the *renovatio* of Russian culture at the meeting of the traditions of East and West, which finds the reason for their synthesis in the values of early Christianity.

Keywords: Imago Pietatis, Mass of Saint Gregory, Israhel van Meckenem, Iconography, Exegesis.

Francesca Romoli is Associate Professor of Slavic Studies at the Department of Philology, Literature and Linguistic (FiLeLi) of the University of Pisa, where she teaches Slavic Philology. Her main research interests concern the medieval East Slavic literary tradition (homiletic, hagiography and spiritual teachings), the relationship between sixteenth-century Muscovy and Humanistic Italy, and the figure and work of Maximus the Greek. She is the PI of the PRIN 2022 PNRR MaximHum.

The Triumph of the Holy Wisdom in the Kremlin Palace: A Russian Interpretation of Some Renaissance Ideas

(O. Chumicheva)

Frescoes of the Golden (Middle) and Transitional Chambers of the Grand Prince Palace of the Moscow Kremlin, built in 1499-1508 by Italian architect Aloisio da Carcano are one of the most famous, disputable and ephemeral monuments of Russian art of the sixteenth century. We argue that they were made for the first time in 1514 by Feodosy and Dmitry, sons of the famous painter Dionisius, after their work in the adjacent Annunciation Cathedral. The palace frescoes were renovated several times through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, last time in 1672 by Simon Ushakov, who left us a detailed description of all the elements and texts of the compositions in those ceremonial halls. That description laid the foundation for a scheme-reconstruction of the ensemble, completely destroyed in 1752 for the sake of a new Baroque palace.

Serious state and political reforms of the reign of Prince Ivan III prolonged by his son Prince Vassily III made it necessary to shape a new language of representation of the power — in fact, of a new state which proclaimed itself as an important participant of the European and Asian politics, an integral part of the world. Our recent studies shown that the Golden Chamber fitted a row of Renaissance laic frescoes in ducal palaces of Italy of the fourteenth – sixteenth centuries, which were in a great fashion in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as well. The most famous and already mentioned samples are well known: the Sala dei Mesi in the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara and the Borgia Apartments in Vatican. But there were many other palaces with the Halls of the Zodiac, the Halls of the Map of the World (*mappomundi*) and so on. Three registers were typical for Italian frescoes of that type: the low one for common day life of princes, the middle one for allegorical interpretations (with biblical or Classical imagery), and the upper one, the ceiling or the vaults for Heavens, which manifested the idea of the Divine Providence and astrological concepts, popular in Italy, Europe, late Byzantium – and, since the late fifteenth century, in Moscow Russia. The Russian version was an original one and it used East Orthodox imagery. The Triumph of the Holy Wisdom gave a kind of blessing for the Moscow branch of the dynasty and demonstrated the Divine Providence as a good omen.

Keywords: Kremlin Palace, Golden Chamber, iconography of the Holy Wisdom, Renaissance Iconography, Russian-Italian Contacts.

Olga Chumicheva, formerly Senior Researcher of the Research Centre for Eastern Christian Culture. Her current research focuses on the iconography of the 14th-late 16th centuries, spiritual and political ideas of the Late Medieval and Early New Times Russia in the context of the relations with the post-Byzantine, Catholic, and Protestant worlds.

A New Language of Legitimizing Power:

The Relief on the Entrance Portal of the Faceted Chamber of the Moscow Kremlin

(I. Verner & O. Verner)

The relief of the frieze over the Red Porch entrance portal of the Faceted Chamber in the Moscow Kremlin, being the oldest monument of its kind on a secular stone building in Moscow, has been undeservedly ignored by art historians. The only interpretation of the bas-relief found in the scholarly literature is the one based on the 19th century descriptions of the bas-relief identifying it with the Lithuanian coat of arms so-called Pogonya. The article presents for the first time the interpretation of the central image of the bas-relief as Alexander the Great. This interpretation seems justified considering the symbolism of the figures of the leopard and the winged serpent surrounding the horseman and their attributes. It takes into account the cultural and historical context of the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries and reflects the emerging claims of Ivan III to the legitimate succession of power from Alexander the Great within the metaphysical theory of the transfer of world kingdoms.

Keywords: Alexander the Great, Bas-Relief, Faceted Chamber, Power Imagery.

Oleg Verner is an independent researcher. His research interests include application of digital methods to research in the humanities.

Inna Verner is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow. Her main research interests concern the history of Bible translations in Church Slavonic (15th-17th centuries) and in particular the translations of Maximus the Greek, the history of Church Slavonic language and literacy in its contacts with Greek, Latin and West Slavic textual traditions.

St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow: New Considerations on the Sources

(F. Rossi)

The Church of the Intercession of the Mother of God on the Moat in Moscow (1555-61), more commonly known as St. Basil's Cathedral, although extremely famous, has received limited attention in Western European countries and has been the subject of only a small number of scholarly studies. Yet contemporary sources dating from the period of St. Basil's construction, as well as sources from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, encourage scholars to look to the West in order to better understand this building.

This study presents evidence hitherto overlooked concerning St. Basil's Cathedral by examining two sources that have so far been neglected in the scholarly debate on the monument. They consist of two manuscripts written between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: *Essay on Russian Antiquities [Opyt o russkich drevnostjach v Moskve]* by Nikolaj L'vov and *Moscow and Its Surroundings... [Moskva s okrestnost'jami ...]* by Nikolaj Karamzin, composed respectively for Paul I, Emperor of Russia from 1796 to 1801, and the Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna (d. 1828). Interestingly, these two sources agree in attributing the church to an Italian architect. This article analyzes the two sources with particular attention to the historical and cultural context in which they were written.

Keywords: St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow, Italian Architects, Nikolaj Karamzin, Nikolaj L'vov.

Federica Rossi is Associate Professor of Architectural History at the IUAV University of Venice and a Research Associate at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut. Her publications include: *Palladio in Russia. Nikolaj L'vov, Russian architect and intellectual at the twilight of the Enlightenment* (Venice 2010); *Piranesi. Do i posle. Italija-Rossija. XVIII-XXI veka. / Piranesi. Before and After. Italy-Russia. 18th-21st Century*, ed. by F. Rossi (Crocetta del Montello-Moscow 2016).

Paths of Confessionalization in Russia in the 16th Century: The Stoglav Council Between Tradition and Innovation

(E. Emchenko)

The program of the Stoglav Council became part of the events held by Metropolitan Makarii and the «Izbrannaja rada» at the end 40-50s of the 16th century. These reforms reflected two important processes, common for the history of European states: the creation of modern states, the origin of which occurs in the Middle Ages and which develop in modern times, and the process of confessionalization associated with the formation of early modern nations in Europe. The term confessionalization, appearing in historiography in the middle of the 20th century to describe the history of German Protestantism in the 16th-17th centuries, over time it was used to describe similar processes in Catholic and then Orthodox countries in Europe. In search of confessional self-determination in Russia in the 16th century, the state power takes an active part. This is evidenced, first of all, by the intensification of conciliar activity and, of course, the Stoglav Council.

Thus, under the conditions of the formation of the early modern state, despite the orientation on «*starina*» (old times) declared by the council, the resolutions of the Stoglav Council reflected significant transformations associated with the creation of new bodies of representative power and the widespread use of the Russian church legal tradition.

Keywords: Confessionalization, Church Councils, Early Modern State, State and Church.

Elena Emchenko is Head of the Department of History, Philosophy, and Social Sciences at the Moscow State University of Geodesy and Cartography (MIIGAiK), Senior Research Researcher at the Educational and Research Centre for Current Issues in Historical Science and Education, Moscow Pedagogical State University (MPGU). Her research focuses on the study of the history of the Russian Orthodox Church and the terminology of historical documents.