

## THE TERM **HELLADIKOI** IN BYZANTINE TEXTS OF THE SIXTH, SEVENTH AND EIGHTH CENTURIES

Theophanes, as is well known, twice uses the term *Helladikoi* to refer to the inhabitants of what presumably was the theme of Hellas<sup>1</sup>. Finlay, commenting on this use of the term remarked: «At the beginning of the eighth century we find the native Greeks called *Helladikoi* by Byzantine writers in order to distinguish them from the ancient Hellenes and from the Ramaioi or Greeks of the Roman empire. The word was a contemptuous name for them as mere provincials»<sup>2</sup>.

Finlay's statement that *Helladikoi* was a term used in a contemptuous sense was first challenged by J. B. Bury. He wrote in 1892<sup>3</sup>: «*Helladikoi* meant the inhabitants of the theme *Hellas*, which was only a small part of Hellas, either modern or ancient. It did not include the Peloponnesus which constituted another theme; the Peloponnesians were not *Helladikoi*. Nor did it include the western part of Greece north of the isthmus which formed the theme of Nicopolis. The passages in Theophanes do not give the slightest ground for supposing either that the word had a wider signification than the theme of Hellas, or that there was anything contemptuous about it. *Helladikoi*, formed on the analogy of *Armeniakoi* and *Anatolikoi*, had a purely administrative, and not a national meaning. The folk of the theme of Hellas could not be called Hellenes, because that famous name had acquired a theological meaning; so they were most fitly

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<sup>1</sup> Theophanes, *Chronographia*, edited by C. de Boor, 1 (Leipzig 1883), 405; 474.

<sup>2</sup> George Finlay, *A History of Greece*, edited by H. F. Tozer, 1 (Oxford 1877), 405.

<sup>3</sup> J. B. Bury, *The Helladikoi* (*The English Historical Review*, 17, 1892, 80-81). Bury had expressed substantially the same view three years earlier. See his *History of the Later Roman Empire from Arcadius to Irene* (London 1889), 2, 437 f.

called *Helladikoi* and thus brought into line with their fellow subjects of the Anatolic and Armeniac themes».

That Bury was right in denying any contemptuous sense to the term *Helladikoi* there can be no doubt<sup>1</sup>. The observation of Bees that Byzantine writers often referred to the inhabitants of Greece proper with contempt has no bearing on the term *Helladikoi*, for the texts which he uses to support his opinion employ the term Hellenes and not *Helladikoi*<sup>2</sup>. It can be questioned, however, if Bury was right in denying that the Peloponnesians were *Helladikoi* and in maintaining that *Helladikoi* was «formed on the analogy of *Armeniakoi* and *Anatolikoi*».

Bees has observed that *Helladikoi* came to be used to refer to the inhabitants of the theme Hellas and in general to those of the country south of Olympus, especially of the Peloponnesus, because the term Hellenes had become synonymous with the term pagans<sup>3</sup>. That this was the real reason for the use of *Helladikoi* had also been expressed, some years earlier, by N. G. Polites. Polites wrote in 1901<sup>4</sup>: «And it happened during the early years of the prevalence of Christianity in the empire, when the name of the Romans had not yet spread as an ethnic of the subjects of the newly formed Eastern Roman empire, that there returned into common use old and forgotten national names of the Greeks. Henceforth perhaps one called *Helladikoi*, i.e., by an appellation which we find in the philosopher Xenophanes of the sixth century B. C., the inhabitants of Greece proper». But despite the opinion of these two Greek scholars, it is the view of Bury that has generally prevailed. The Frenchman A. Bon, for instance, has written recently<sup>5</sup>: «In our opinion the very use of the term *Ἑλλαδικοί* is cha-

<sup>1</sup> But one may still read the following in the *Enciclopedia Italiana*, 17 (1933), 900: Negli scrittori bizantini questo popolo, a partire dal sec. VIII, è indicato col nome di *Helladikoi* per distinguerlo tanto dagli antichi Elleni quanto dai *Romaioi* (Romei), civè dai Greci dell'impero; e il nome aveva un senso dispregiativo.

<sup>2</sup> Nikos A. Bees, *Helladikoi* (*Wiener Studien, Zeitschrift für klassische Philologie*, 40, Vienna 1919, 169-171).

<sup>3</sup> Bees, 'Ἑλλαδικοί, in 'Ελευθερουδάκη 'Εγκυκλοπαίδ. Λεξικόν, 5 (1929), 292.

<sup>4</sup> N. G. Polites, 'Ελληνες ἢ Ρωμαῖοι, in *Λαογραφικά Σύμμεικτα*, 1 (1920), 124. This article first appeared in 1901. It was called to my attention by George Soules who, in my opinion, is fast becoming a first-rate scholar.

<sup>5</sup> A. Bon, *Le Péloponnèse Byzantin jusqu'en 1204* (Paris 1951), p. 38, n. 2.

racteristic: indeed, if it already exists in antiquity..., it appears here in order to avoid confusing the Hellenes in general with the inhabitants of Hellas taken in its narrow sense; equivalent, for instance, with *Ἀρμενιοὶ* or *Ἀνατολικοί*, it has the value, at least for the sense, of an administrative neologism. In our opinion one has wrongly explained the use of the term by the desire to distinguish from the true Greeks of former times the new population strongly mixed as the result of the invasions, or by the care to avoid the name of *Ἕλληνες* considered as a synonyme of pagans, a use which it may sometimes have». More recently still Ostrogorsky has written<sup>1</sup>: «Contrary to Finlay, who was of the opinion that this name [*Helladikoi*] served in the Middle Ages to designate the natives of Greece in order to distinguish them from the ancient Hellenes and the Romaioi of the rest of the Byzantine Empire and to refer to them with a certain contempt as provincials, Bury demonstrated brilliantly not only that it did not even refer to the natives of all of Greece, but that it designated exclusively the inhabitants of the theme of Hellas which, as Bury specifically emphasizes, consists 'only of a small part of Greece, whether modern or ancient'. *Ἑλλαδικοί* is not a national concept but a military and administrative one. Just as the soldiers and later even the inhabitants of the themes Armeniakon and Anatolikon in Asia Minor were called *Ἀρμενιοὶ* or *Ἀνατολικοί* so the soldiers and later even the inhabitants of the military theme of Hellas were called *Ἑλλαδικοί*. All this is undoubtedly very correct...»

An examination of the sources, however, shows that Bees and Polites are closer to the truth than either Bury or those who have accepted his views. The term *Helladikoi*, besides the two references in Theophanes which have already been cited, is met with six times in the sources of the sixth and seventh centuries: twice in Cosmas Indicopleustes; three times in Malalas and once in the *Chronicon Paschale*. The term is also used in the *Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitanarum* in connection with a practice, no doubt legendary, which is said to have begun in the reign of Constantine the Great and to have ended in that of Justin II.

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<sup>1</sup> G. Ostrogorsky, *Postanak Tema Helada i Peloponez* (Iz Zbornika Radova XXI, Vizantoloskog Instituta San Knj. 1, Belgrade 1952, 66 f. I do not read Serbian, but I was able to consult this work in a translation which Michael Petrovich, a brilliant young scholar, now at the University of Wisconsin, made for me.

Now to examine these references. The two in Cosmas are too general and as a consequence yield no precise information. In the one place <sup>1</sup> he tells us that the Ionians and the *Helladikoi* were among the descendants of Japhet; in the other <sup>2</sup>, he mentions the *Helladikoi* among a number of peoples who accepted Christianity. The most that one can infer from these statements is that the *Helladikoi* were the inhabitants of the Greek lands in general. Malalas is much more precise. «Aegealeus», he writes in one place, «was the first king of the Sicyonians who are now called *Helladikoi* <sup>3</sup>». And elsewhere: «Pelops, from whom the *Helladikoi* came to be called Peloponnesians, ruled for thirty-two years <sup>4</sup>». Finally there is the reference to Athenais, the future Eudocia and wife of Theodosius II. She is called both *Helladike* and Hellenē; *Helladike* because she was an inhabitant of Greece <sup>5</sup>; Hellenē because she was a pagan <sup>6</sup>. We find the same preciseness in the *Chronicon Paschale*. The reference here is also to Athenais. As in Malalas, she is called *Helladike* because she came from Greece and *Hellenis* because she was a pagan <sup>7</sup>. The reference in the *Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitanarum* is to Athenian, Theban and *Helladikoi* philosophers. These philosophers, we are told, used to mount a vaulted portico which Constantine the Great had built and there urged with the Constantinopolitans. Up to the reign of Justin II they were always victorious, but in that reign they were defeated and as a consequence ceased to come <sup>8</sup>. As the *Helladikoi* here are distinguished

<sup>1</sup> Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Topographia Christiana*, Migne, *Patrologia Græca*, 88 (Paris 1860), 85, Winstedt's edition, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 169. Winstedt's edition, p. 119.

<sup>3</sup> John Malalas, *Chronographia* (Bonn 1831), 68: τῶν δὲ Σικωνίων τῶν νυνὶ λεγομένων Ἑλλαδικῶν ἐβασίλευσε πρῶτος ὁ Αἰγυλιεύς.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 84: ἐβασίλευσεν ὁ Πέλοψ ἔτη λβ', ἐξ οὗ καὶ Πελοποννήσιοι ἐκλήθησαν οἱ Ἑλλαδικοί.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 353: Ἑλλαδικήν, ὀνόματι Ἀθηναΐδα, τὴν καὶ Εὐδοκίαν μετακληθεῖσαν. Also on p. 354.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 355: ἦν γὰρ Ἑλλην, καὶ μετονομάσας αὐτὴν Εὐδοκίαν, ἔλαβεν αὐτὴν εἰς γυναῖκα.

<sup>7</sup> *Chronicon Paschale* (Bonn 1832), 1, 576: Ἑλλαδικήν, ὀνόματι Ἀθηναΐδα. Also on pp. 577-578. And on p. 576: καὶ κρατήσας αὐτὴν ἐποίησε χριστιανήν, ἦν γὰρ Ἑλληνίς, καὶ μετωνόμασεν αὐτὴν Εὐδοκίαν.

<sup>8</sup> *Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitanarum*, edited by T. Preger, 2 (Leipzig 1907), 229: Τὸν δὲ λιμένα Σοφίας ὁ αὐτὸς ἐκτίσεν Ἰουστίνος εἰς πρόσωπον τῆς γυναικὸς αὐτοῦ Σοφίας. πρὸ δὲ τοῦ κτίσαι τὸν λιμένα ὑπῆρχεν σιὰ καμαροειδής, ἣν ἐκτίσεν ὁ μέγας Κωνσταντῖνος, καὶ ἀνῆρχοντο οἱ φιλόσοφοι οἱ δυτικοὶ Θηβαῖοι τε καὶ

from the Thebans and the Athenians, they are probably Peloponnesians<sup>1</sup>.

These are the references on which any interpretation of the term *Helladikoi* will have to be based. If they indicate anything, they indicate that this term, already known in antiquity<sup>2</sup>, came back into use in the early centuries of the Later Roman Empire, long before the creation of the theme of Hellas as an appellation for the inhabitants of Greece, including, of course, the Peloponnesus. It came to be so used because the more usual term which served for this purpose, that of Hellenes, had assumed a theological connotation, it had become synonymous with pagans. This is clearly shown by the references in Malalas and in the *Chronicon Paschale* when Athenaïs is called both *Hella like* and *Hellenis*, *Helladike* because she was an inhabitant of Greece, *Hellenis* because she was a pagan. It follows, therefore, that the revival of the use of *Helladikoi* by the Byzantines had nothing to do with the creation of the theme of Hellas and Bury and those who accept his views are wrong when they say that «*Helladikoi*, formed on the analogy of *Armeniakoï* and *Anatolikoi*, had a purely administrative, and not a national meaning». It had, of course, a national meaning, although with the creation of the theme of Hellas it came to be restricted to the inhabitants of that theme.

It should be also noted perhaps that the term Hellenes, despite the theological connotation which it assumed, continued to be used to refer to Greeks in the national sense. Procopius, for instance, uses the term in this sense in several places<sup>3</sup>; it was in the source whence derive both the *Chronicle of Monemvasia* and the Scholium of Arethas<sup>4</sup>; and it appears in the *Miracula Sancti Demetrii*<sup>5</sup>. The term,

\* *Ἀθηναῖοι καὶ Ἑλλαδικοὶ καὶ διελέγοντο ἐκεῖσε μετὰ τῶν Κωνσταντινουπολιτῶν. καὶ διήρκεσε τοῦτο μέχρι Ἰουστίνου καὶ πάντοτε ἐνίκων οἱ θυσιακοὶ. ἐπὶ δὲ Ἰουστίνου ἡττηθέντες οὐδέποτε ἀνῆλθον μέχρι τῆς σήμερον.*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Julius Jüthner, *Hellen und Barbaren*, Aus der Geschichte des Nationalbewusstseins (Leipzig 1923), 114.

<sup>2</sup> W. Dittenberg, *Ethnika und Verwandtes* (Hermes, 41, 1906, 209 f.).

<sup>3</sup> For instance, *De bello persico*, II, 4, 10-11; *De bello gothico*, I, 15, 24; *Anecdota*, XXVI, 30-31. I used Haur'y's edition.

<sup>4</sup> P. Charanis, *The chronicle of Monemvasia and the question of the Slavonic settlements in Greece* (Dumbarton Oaks Papers, 5, 1950, 147, 152).

<sup>5</sup> *S. Demetrii Martyris Acta*, Migne, *Patrologia Græca*, 116 (Paris 1864), 1293.

however, found its widest use as a synonym of pagans (Evagrius<sup>1</sup> calls even the Saracenes Hellenes) and for this reason it became necessary to find other terms to designate the inhabitants of Greece. One of these terms was *Helladikoi*, another was *Graikoi*<sup>2</sup>, although the latter was sometimes used in a pejorative sense<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Evagrius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, edited by Joseph Bidez and Léon Parmentier (London 1898), 238.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Polites, *op. cit.*, 125. Despite my efforts I was not able to procure the work of B. A. Mystakides, *Αἱ λέξεις Ἑλλην, Γραικός (Γραικός), Ρωμαῖος (Γραικορρομαῖος), Βυζαντινός* etc. (Tübingen 1920).

<sup>3</sup> For instance, Procopius, *Anecdota*, XXIV, 7.