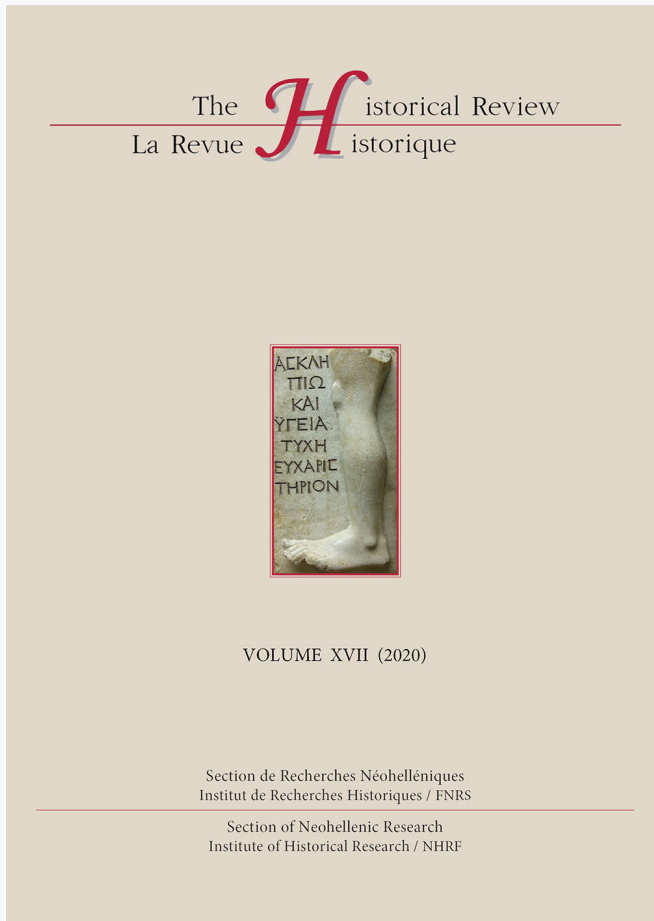


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Olga Katsiardi-Hering, Anastasia Papadia-Lala, Katerina Nikolaou and Vangelis Karamanolakis (eds.), Έλλην, Ρωμῆος, Γραικός: Συλλογικοί προσδιορισμοί και ταυτότητες [Hellene, Romios, Greek: Collective designations and identities]

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Olga Katsiardi-Hering, Anastasia Papadia-Lala,
Katerina Nikolaou and Vangelis Karamanolakis (eds.),
ΕΛΛΗΝ, ΡΩΜΗΟΣ, ΓΡΑΙΚΟΣ:
ΣΥΛΛΟΓΙΚΟΙ ΠΡΟΣΔΙΟΡΙΣΜΟΙ ΚΑΙ ΤΑΥΤΟΤΗΤΕΣ
[Hellene, Romios, Greek: Collective designations and identities],
Athens: Eurasia, 2018, 678 pages.

Naming labels for individuals and/or groups (endonyms, exonyms, ethnonyms and a host of others) categorise and organise the world around individuals or groups, whether these are their creators and/or users. Such labels can serve as instruments of control, status, domination, insubordination, inclusion, exclusion and so on. They can be potentially fairly innocuous and unproblematic or contested and divisive. They can be widespread or sparsely used. The massive volume under review has the explicit purpose of examining the three labels that crown its title, *Hellene*, *Romios*, *Greek*. The collection includes 41 essays and is the outcome of an international conference that took place in January 2017 under the auspices of the Department of History and Archaeology, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. The contributions span a variety of scholarly fields and chronological frameworks, but there is a recognisable preponderance of essays in the medieval, early modern and modern periods, including the long nineteenth century. The twentieth century is very sparsely represented, and this was a conscious choice (as indicated in the prologue) given the hermeneutic

aims of the volume. That said, the array of scholars and fields is indeed impressive: historians of the ancient and Byzantine periods, medievalists, Ottomanists, early modernists and modern historians of Greece and other Balkan areas, art historians and archaeologists fill the more than 600 pages of printed text. They provide studies regarding the ancient Greek world of city-states; the worlds of empires in the medieval, early modern and modern periods; and the transition from empire to national states in the modern period. The bulk of the essays covers the late Byzantine world, the early modern period, and the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (periods of Ottoman and Venetian control; communities in the Habsburg territories). Produced with care and attention to detail, the volume thankfully includes footnotes (and not endnotes). All essays are in modern Greek. English-speakers can consult the brief summary that follows every contribution. This reviewer would also dare hope for an English translation of the complete volume and hereby makes an open call for such an undertaking. It would be very much worth the while of a potential donor.

First, a word about the volume's nature: it functions as an archaeology of names, that is, its main aim is to provide a survey and analysis (an *ονομάτων επίσκεψις*) of the terms *Hellene*, *Romios* and *Greek/Graikos* on the basis of a multitude of written and material sources. Chronicles, inscriptions in houses of worship, satires, private and official correspondence, historical treatises, legal and bureaucratic documents, memoirs and so on are all mined for information to that effect. This information is then contextualised (to a varied level of detail) and analysed in order to extract the meaning and content of these terms and their relationships, if any. In what follows, I will not dwell on the thesis and arguments of each contribution. Instead, I will focus on the overall conclusions that bring together these methodologically and chronologically very varied essays, each of which is characterised by its own source base and analytical traits.

One of the volume's main conclusions is that – not surprisingly – the terms *Hellene*, *Romios*, *Greek* could and did have different meanings at different periods. However, somewhat more unexpectedly, it also appears that the terms sometimes could potentially, and indeed did in practice, function interchangeably, depending on the context and on the educational level of their writer/exponent and their audience. Actually, context was paramount, this volume tells us, in a multiple of examples from across time. Thus, when addressing the Ottoman authorities, it may have made more sense for one and the same person to call oneself *Romaïos/Romios/Rum*. If, however, at the same time one were

to polemicise with Roman Catholics or Protestants (that is, with Christian rivals) at an elevated, erudite level, the use of *Hellene* may have been (but not always) more appropriate. And what if one was responding to a Latin tract where the *Graeci/Greci* appeared again and again, but in essence the reference was not really to Orthodox Christians in general, but primarily to their Greek leaders? In fact, the host of factors determining the preferred/employed self-appellation appears seemingly endless: bureaucratic lingo and categories, traditional professional group designations, local and regional habits, educational levels and scholarly predilections, and even simple inertia could and did determine, alone or in combination, the name utilised and its associated terminology. Identity-related linguistic usage was very much conditioned both by individual preferences and by societal requirements, including the educational and scholarly level of the discourse involved. Consequently, the terms *Hellene* or *Romios* or *Graikos* could potentially carry ethnic, national, regional, geographic and local meanings. That these terms could carry national meaning denoting something akin to or identical to the nation of cultural or even political nationalism of the modern (post-Enlightenment) period is a further conclusion that several essays come to, some more, some less vigorously. One should note, however, that such a conclusion is not usually presented in polemical or essentialist terms, nor does it fall victim to crude nationalist continuity theories about any supposed eternal and unbroken spirit of Hellenism. Rather, more often than not the authors carefully

eke out the meaning of the sources with solid source-based criticism and attention to context. To put it differently: even those of the essays, especially on the early modern period, that discuss concepts of a Greek collective identity based on cultural commonalities (language, religion, etc.) do not necessarily and automatically turn such concepts into the first stage for the creation of a nation-state that would overcome political and diasporic fragmentation. Thus, the creation of a nation-state does not appear to be automatically and teleologically the end result of such ideas from time immemorial.

The volume also indicates very clearly that in the naming game juxtapositions, direct or indirect, inherent or imposed or forced from above, played very important roles. It is a psychological and historiographical truism that we identify ourselves in contrast or comparison to others. It would appear that the Hellenic, Romios or Graikos identities were formed in this way across the ancient, medieval, early modern and modern periods, whatever their specific content in each case. The Greeks were identified as such in juxtaposition to non-Greeks by the foreigners themselves. Their local identities may have been Kefalonian or Cretan, Athenian or Theban, Constantinopolitan or Thessalonikan, but there were also other parts to them. Indeed, another major contribution of this volume is that it proves with evidence that the norm was a multiplicity of identities. (This feature, of course, is not particularly rare in the contemporary world, when the nation-state is certifiably dominant.) These identities could be linguistic, local, regional, religious and so on. If one

were to employ a frequently used metaphor, one could identify these multiple identities as the arrows an individual carries in one's quiver. The arrow of each identity was brought out from the imaginary quiver whenever needed, and as needed, individually or in combination with others. Whether the arrows were artificial, imposed, contested, resented or, conversely, real, voluntary, appropriate or pleasing is a difficult thing to determine for the researcher, and has to be investigated comparatively, contextually and carefully. For example, it is very clear that the Christian and Hellenic identities were indeed compatible in the mind of Panagiotis Nikousios, the grand dragoman of the Ottoman Porte in the mid-seventeenth century, in a discussion on religions. One should remember that Nikousios was a Romios, who claimed to be a Christian Hellene (that is, a descendant of the ancient Greeks), and who was also called a Graikos by his Western European interlocutors.

A third contribution of the present volume is that, contrary to assertions by those who consider the creation of nations a post-Enlightenment process, the terms Hellene, Romios and Graikos could and did sometimes carry ethnic and ethnic national connotations, and not just religious ones, depending on the source and context. This conclusion constitutes a major service of the volume, in that it surveys, traces and situates chronologically and geographically the variability, extent of interchangeability and collective-identity-denoting content of the terms. In the minds and pronouncements of several of the exponents and users of the terms, the Greeks of the

sixteenth or eighteenth century were descendants of the Eastern Romans whose empire the Ottomans had destroyed and whose main city, Constantinople, they had captured. Similarly, several scholars in the post-1453 period lamented what they considered to be the ignorance and educational dearth of their contemporary Greeks as compared to their illustrious ancestors. Others sought the help of contemporary Western European powers to restore Greece and the Greeks to their earlier ancient (oftentimes identified as Athenian) glory. How widespread were these and similar ideas? Given the types and kinds of sources available and given their variable circulation, such assertions display a remarkable continuity between the late medieval period all the way down to the nineteenth century. Obviously (it bears repeating) such labels were used contextually, with attention to the audience and with specific aims in mind. But something very close to the modern nation (termed in various ways: *ethnos*, *genos*, *Hellas*) was certainly in the minds of their exponents, as a collectivity with a common history, language and customs. The cultural nationalism, to use a modern concept, was certainly there in several cases. What appears to have been slowly building, therefore, were also various forms of the political nationalism that exploded in the nineteenth century, but whose presence in earlier centuries cannot be totally denied in good faith, as several essays in the volume show. Whether such expressions can be indicative of already formed ideas of mass nationalism is something that we will probably never know. The essays in this volume, however, show that we cannot

simply and a priori dismiss the existence of mentalities that privileged the ethnic or national collectivities as organising principles of social and political life in the age of empires before the late eighteenth century. The French Revolution may have made the nation overwhelmingly political in nature. But the nation, as a collective of some kind and not necessarily only as a collective united by religion, appears to have been there before, at least in the minds of some of the educated exponents whose voices we hear in some of the sources.

One could be Roman Catholic from Chios, such as Leo Allatius, but consider himself and be considered a Greek in Italy. Not only that, but Alexandros Mavrocordatos also regarded Allatius as a fellow Greek: despite the difference in religion, there seemed to be in this case a commonality based on origin and language. Notoriously difficult to translate, the term *genos* could be specific but also expansive and flexible. For example, when the Patriarchate of Constantinople declaimed on the *genos ton Orthodoxon*, then it self-evidently meant all the Eastern Orthodox people that it desired to claim authority over, Greek or non-Greek. But the same phrase could also mean just the Greeks (as opposed to Serbs, Bulgarians, etc.), depending on who or when was using it. In short, whether it was the Romioi or the Hellenic nation that were being talked about, the resulting conceptual collectivity was clearly in some cases not thought of as a religious community only but as a group that shared religion *and* many other attributes. What these common attributes were could and did vary over time, as it

does in the modern period, by the way. *Rum* and its associated terms did not always and necessarily carry an exclusively religious designation imposed by the Ottomans or manipulated for use by the patriarchate, but it could refer to Greeks only, as opposed to other Orthodox peoples of the Ottoman Empire. The essays by Ottomanists and by specialists on the diaspora and on the histories of other Balkan peoples are a particularly welcome feature of the volume as they provide additional forays into the richness and variety of usage from above and from below, by rulers and ruled, in the imperial framework.

Finally, the volume's reader will immediately sense the larger background dispute that in the last few decades has marked much of the Greek historiography on the early modern and modern periods. The dispute is between the medieval/early modern historians and some of the modern historians of the Greek experience over the existence of the nation before the appearance of the nation-state. It is this reviewer's impression, for whatever that is worth, that few among the specialists on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries actually are willing to engage seriously with the sources that medieval and early modern historians of the Greeks work with, let alone the resulting historiography. Thus, there is very little actual exchange between the two groups, through which the conceptual frameworks on nationalism that attract many modern historians can be tested against the earlier sources. Greek historiography is not the only one suffering from such a disconnect, by the way. The theories about imagined communi-

ties, medieval or early modern religious nations, or any combination thereof have indeed been beneficial and productive in undermining positivist or ethnocentric approaches to the history of the Greeks. But they may have also run out of steam or been misused outside of their specific contexts to such an extent that they can offer limited interpretive value when confronted with the sources (much like, for example, Orientalism has been).

This is not to say that all of the 41 contributors to this volume are equally in agreement about the use, misuse or usefulness of theoretical approaches to nationalism, including the constructivist paradigm. Far from it. A great many of the essays are productively in conversation with such theoretical work and are informed by it. It is also true that a few essays are openly polemical against and dismissive of such theoretical approaches. More often than not, however, the volume's authors are very clearly restricting themselves to the terminological exploration that permeated the original intent of the conference. The terms, context and limits (social, economic, cultural) of those using the terms, as well as their audiences, are one way or another always in the foreground of the essays' analysis.

This is a refreshing approach and one that has long been direly needed. Perhaps the most important contribution of the volume is its coverage of several fields and a large number of methodological approaches that are not beholden to any preconceived scheme of continuity that was ethnic, national, spiritual, connected to a supposed Greek soul or otherwise. It is true that the term Greekness (*ellinikotita*) is used heuristically in some

of the essays. But it does not or at least does not seem to have a transcendental content that is somehow connected to an eternal Greek spirit or to the wishful thinking about the existence of some kind of special providential Greek character with a cultural mission in the world. Rather, whenever employed *ellinikotita* seems to be context- and source-specific. Its cultural, political or other content is what is of interest, not its supposed salvific, providential or transcendental function, at least as far as the scholar's gaze is concerned.

The overwhelming majority of these contributions are specific, concrete, rigorously source-based and analytically solid. Some are more theoretically informed than others, but this is an advantage: the reader can see where and how much theory can be or could have been useful, when applied and if applied. Above all, the authors analyse primary sources and thus show that modern theories about nationalism cannot ever a priori replace the bottom-up historical work that needs to be done before pronouncing securely on what *Hellene*, *Romios* or *Graikos* meant when, where and for what reason. In some ways, the essays in this volume throw the ball in the court of (some of the) modernists and challenge them to consider whether the *genos* of the Hellenes or the Romans of the sixteenth century as an ascriptive category with specific content is different from the *ethnos* of the Hellenes of the late nineteenth century. It may or may not be different, depending on who is making the pronouncement and for what purposes at a concrete instance. The term of the sixteenth century may or may not have had political planning in mind

with more or less exclusivist aims (that is, the creation of an empire of the Greeks and others, or of the Greeks only, or of the Hellenes and others, etc.). In other words, whether the *genos* equals the nation in the mind of some historical actors is an interesting historical question, whether in and of itself, or because historians try to understand what kind of state, political formation or political existence the exponents of such concepts had in mind (a resurrected empire? A nation-state? An exclusive nation-state involving their own religion only? Something else?). What kind of state and nation did two Kefalonian hieromonks, who were themselves subjects of the Venetian state, who were teaching at a school for the bureaucratic elite in Moscow in the late seventeenth century, who were claiming descent from a Byzantine patriarch, and who were hailing Peter the Great as the liberator of the Greeks – what kind of liberation, what kind of state and what kind of nation did they envision when they called on Tsar Peter to liberate the Greeks in the 1690s? The answer cannot and should not be reduced to one that caters to right-wing nationalist reveries whose exponents fantasise of being direct descendants of Aristotle, Alexander the Great or Constantine the Great. Nor should the debate involve the detection of imaginary left-wing conspiracies aimed at undermining the role of the nation for political or other nefarious reasons, when some scholars express doubts about neat national continuities or adduce theoretical models into their accounts. In short, instead of a struggle between the medieval/early moderns and (some of) the moderns, here is to hoping for a collaboration between the two

sides that will check for continuities and discontinuities, inventions and constructions, individual and collective identifications, religious and less religious or even secular (not to be necessarily equated to atheist) approaches to one's individual identity and a group's identity. It is to be hoped that medievalists and early modernists will continue and intensify such mining for and of sources, as the one that is at the heart of the volume's essays. Similarly, it is to be hoped that (some of the) modernists will pay attention to such

sources, if only in order to check their paradigms and certainties in the (partial or total) applicability of modern theories. This collaboration is certainly needed so that all sides can be secure in the terminology they use: so that they can use terms without quotation marks, if possible. Which is why the *ονομάτων επίσκεψις* is the first and important step.

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