

On the Question of the Hellenization of Sicily and Southern Italy during the Middle Ages

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IN the Middle Ages, at least to the end of the eleventh century, important regions of Sicily and southern Italy, notably the eastern portions of the former and the territories known as Calabria and *terra d'Otranto* of the latter, were Greek in language. In southern Italy, indeed, Greek survived the Middle Ages, and there are even now, both in Calabria and the *terra d'Otranto*, a number of communities where Greek is the language of the population.¹

When and under what circumstances did Sicily and southern Italy become Greek in language? The earliest answer given to this question was that the prevalence of Greek in Sicily and southern Italy during the Middle Ages was a linguistic survival of *Magna Grecia*. This view prevailed down to and beyond the middle of the last century when it was challenged by the Italian philologist G. Morosi. Morosi was the first to study systematically and scientifically the Greek in southern Italy in the nineteenth century. He studied both the Greek spoken in *terra d'Otranto* and that spoken in Calabria. With regard to the former he came to the conclusion that it was the popular idiom of the tenth century, and, accordingly, he placed the origin of the Greek colonies in the *terra d'Otranto* at the end of the ninth century, during the reign of Basil I or that of Leo VI.² The origin of the Calabrian colonies, however, he placed later than the ninth century, in the period between the middle of the eleventh century and the end of the twelfth. The reason for this was that in the Greek dialect spoken in Calabria he thought he had found many Arabic and Turkish influences.³ Morosi, therefore, rejected the earlier view which considered the prevalence of Greek in Sicily and southern Italy during the Middle Ages as a linguistic survival of *Magna Grecia*.

The ideas developed by Morosi became generally accepted and remained unchallenged for a considerable time.⁴ In the meantime, however, the accumulation of archaeological and epigraphical evidence tended to show that the ancient Greek element in Sicily and southern Italy had not been completely

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¹ M. A. Triantaphyllides, *Νεοελληνική Γραμματική*, I (Athens, 1938), 296.

² G. Morosi, *Studi sui dialetti greci della Terra d'Otranto* (Lecce, 1870), p. 189.

³ "Il dialetto romaico di Bova di Calabria," *Archivio Glottologico Italiano*, IV (Torino, 1878), 72 ff.

⁴ See, for instance → H. F. Tozer, "The Greek-speaking Population of Southern Italy," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, X (London, 1889), 11-42.

Latinized by the long Roman domination. This evidence was finally sifted and studied systematically by G. Rohlfs, who offered his results in a doctoral dissertation, which he later revised and enlarged.⁵ Rohlfs' book marks a reaction to the ideas which had been developed by Morosi, for Rohlfs returned to the view which had prevailed before the publication of Morosi's works. The conclusion which he reached was that the basic element of the population of eastern Sicily was not Latinized but remained Greek-speaking throughout the Roman domination; there was, therefore, no break in the Greek tradition in Sicily and southern Italy.⁶ Rohlfs' opinions have found favor among many scholars.⁷

Rohlfs himself, however, was careful to point out that the position of Greek in Sicily had greatly deteriorated under the Roman Empire and had it not been stimulated by an outside influence it would have died out.⁸ Thus the difference between the ideas of Morosi and Rohlfs is a difference in degree. Morosi held that the Greek of *Magna Grecia* had completely disappeared; according to Rohlfs it had not disappeared, but its position had greatly deteriorated. In either case its revival in the Middle Ages needed an outside stimulus. The problem, therefore, of determining the nature of this influence still remains.

In the meantime, between the publication of the works by Morosi and that of Rohlfs, when Morosi's idea that the Greek of *Magna Grecia* had completely died out during the Roman domination was generally accepted, several attempts were made to determine the factors which were responsible for the revival of Greek in Sicily and southern Italy during the early Middle Ages. The explanation generally accepted was that this revival was the result of an influx into Sicily and southern Italy of a considerable Greek-speaking element, but the real problem was to determine the date and the place of origin of this migration and the circumstances under which it was brought about. Morosi's opinion that the earliest Greek colonies in southern Italy were established toward the end of the ninth century was not found satisfactory. For besides the fact that the evidence for the establishment of Greek colonies in southern Italy at the end of the ninth century is very slight,⁹ it was well known that

⁵ G. Rohlfs, *Scavi linguistici nella Magna Grecia* (Rome, 1933).

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 129-131.

⁷ J. Vendryes' review of Rohlfs' book in *Revue des études grecques*, XLVIII (Paris, 1935), 185 ff.

⁸ Rohlfs, pp. 134 ff.

⁹ There are two references in the Byzantine writers concerning the establishment of Greek colonists in Italy toward the end of the ninth century. According to a note found in the manuscript C of the chronicle of Cedrenus (Bonn, 2:225C) the city of Gallipoli was reconstructed and settled during the reign of Basil I with colonists brought from Heraclea Pontica. The second reference comes from Theophanes Continuatus (Bonn, 321) who says that Basil settled in the theme of Longobardia three thousand former slaves from the Peloponnesus.

Sicily and southern Italy had become Hellenized long before the reign of Basil I.

Not long after the appearance of Morosi's work, François Lenormant published his history of *Magna Grecia* in which he offered another explanation of the Hellenization of Sicily and southern Italy. This explanation had already been suggested by others, but Lenormant gave it force and expression and made it his own. Lenormant's explanation consisted of this, that in the eighth century, during the iconoclastic controversy, many Greek-speaking monks fled to Sicily and Italy in order to escape the persecutions of the iconoclastic emperors and that these monks were responsible for the Hellenization of these regions.¹⁰ This explanation sounded plausible and won some acceptance,¹¹ but further investigation showed that it was open to serious objections. The document upon which Lenormant had based his contention that the number of monks who fled to Italy was large was shown to be a forgery of the eighteenth century.¹² This was a serious objection, but still more serious was the fact that by the beginning of the iconoclastic controversy the Hellenization of Sicily was complete. Lynn White has shown that whereas about 600 A.D. Sicily "contained a considerable Latin element," by 650 it "had become completely Greek in language, rite and culture."¹³ Besides, as Batiffol remarked, "a country could not be peopled by monks, *gens aeterna in qua nemo nascitur*."¹⁴ Lenormant's explanation is no longer seriously held.

Those who have studied the history of Rome and of Italy in the seventh and eighth centuries have been struck by the fact that out of the thirteen popes who from 678 to 752 occupied the pontifical throne eleven were orientals, *i.e.*, Greek speaking. This fact called for an explanation. Several explanations have been offered and they are all related to the question of the growth of Hellenism in Italy.

Charles Diehl in his remarkable study on the exarchate of Ravenna attributed the predominance of oriental popes in the period from 678 to 752 to the policy of the imperial government. His contention is that during and after the reign of Justinian the imperial government made it a point to fill the important administrative positions in Italy with orientals because it was believed that they would more faithfully carry out its policies. Hence it promoted them to important positions, particularly in the church, and by applying pressure succeeded in vesting them with the papal dignity itself. These oriental admin-

¹⁰ F. Lenormant, *La Grande-Grèce* (Paris, 1881), II, 380 ff.

¹¹ For example, Tozer, *loc. cit.*, X, 38.

¹² P. Batiffol, *L'abbaye de Rossano* (Paris, 1891), p. v.

¹³ Lynn White, *Latin Monasticism in Norman Sicily* (Cambridge, Mass., 1938), p. 17. The third chapter of this book, which is entitled "The Byzantinization of Sicily," appeared in a more extensive form under the same title in the *American Historical Review*, XLII (1936), 1-21.

¹⁴ Batiffol, p. v.

istrative officials and ecclesiastics, aided by oriental merchants who were in Italy, became the agents for the Hellenization of Italy, which was one of the objectives of the imperial government.¹⁵

The influence of the oriental merchants in the Hellenization of Italy, which was only touched upon by Diehl, was developed and elaborated upon by Louis Bréhier.¹⁶ Bréhier was also struck by the predominance of orientals among the popes of the seventh and eighth centuries. He agreed with Diehl that there was a political reason for the elevation of so many orientals to the papal see, but he felt that this explanation was not enough. Bréhier argues that the election of so many orientals to the pontifical see could have been made possible only if there existed among the Roman clergy an "elite of orientals capable of accepting the burden of the pontifical power" and the "fact that it was made possible is proof of the existence of such an elite of oriental clergy."¹⁷ The existence of this elite of oriental clergy "is one of the principal indications of the social influence that the Greeks and the orientals exercised" in Rome. These Greeks and Syrians came to Italy as pilgrims and exiles, but primarily as merchants. That there were many oriental merchants in Italy throughout the sixth century was shown by Bréhier to be a fact.¹⁸

Thus both Diehl and Bréhier place the beginnings of the spread of Hellenism in Italy in the sixth century and attribute it to the influence of the orientals who settled in Italy as administrative officials, both lay and ecclesiastic, and as merchants.¹⁹ Diehl, however, is careful to warn against any exaggeration.²⁰ "Despite the large place," he writes, "that the oriental element held in the Roman society, and although Rome may have been in the seventh century, according to a statement of M. di Rossi, a city half Byzantine, the Latin tradition and language kept so great a force that many among the newly arrived foreigners became fused with the indigenous population." This statement of caution casts doubts upon the entire theory that the spread of Hellenism in Italy was the work of administrative officials and merchants. For if in Rome where these officials and merchants were strong and doubtless constituted the upper stratum of Roman society, their influence, as a Hellenizing agent, remained superficial and hardly touched the core of Roman society, in the provinces where they were much less strong their influence must have been considerably less, no doubt without the power to change the language and cultural tradition of a whole region. But, as the language and cultural tradition

¹⁵ Ch. Diehl, *Etudes sur l'administration byzantine dans l'exarchat de Ravenne (568-751)* (Paris, 1888), pp. 241-88.

¹⁶ Louis Bréhier, "Les colonies d'orientaux au commencement du Moyen-Age," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, XII (Leipzig, 1903), 1-39.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, XII, 4. ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, XII, 5 ff.

¹⁹ But see also Paolo Orsi, "Byzantina Siciliae," *ibid.*, XIX (1910), 475.

²⁰ Diehl, p. 283.

of Sicily and parts of southern Italy were seriously affected, the agent that did this must have been other than the influence of the oriental officials and merchants. But besides this general observation, it must be noted that Diehl really did not produce any concrete evidence in support of his thesis. His contention that the oriental popes of the seventh and eighth centuries were elevated to the pontifical throne through pressure exerted by the imperial government is by no means well founded. Gay has found no evidences of such pressure, and has further pointed out that these popes were not particularly subservient to the imperial wishes. Gay himself accounts for the predominance of the orientals among the popes of the seventh and eighth centuries on the ground that they were essential, in view of the Monothetic controversy and the troubles caused by the Arabic invasions, because they were well versed in the traditions of the East.²¹ Besides, the most important regions under the jurisdiction of the papacy in the seventh century and the first part of the eighth—southern Italy, Sicily, Greece, including Thessalonica and Crete—were Greek speaking. Gay, therefore, rejected the view that the Hellenization of Sicily and southern Italy was brought about by the increasing influence of the Byzantine administration and of the Greek element that was already there. In his opinion what brought about the Hellenization of Sicily and southern Italy was the influx of a considerable number of Greek-speaking elements from the East as a result of the Arabic conquests.²²

The explanation offered by Gay is now generally accepted. It did not, of course, originate with him, nor was it developed by him at length. Batiffol,²³ writing in 1891, offered the same explanation, and twelve years later K. Lake²⁴ expressed the same view. In recent years Lynn White has become its outspoken exponent.

But the evidence in support of this explanation is very meager. Already before the publication of White's study Rohlfs rejected this explanation on the ground of insufficient evidence.²⁵ White himself is very much aware of this insufficiency. "The documentation of these westward movements," he writes, "is as yet most inadequate and the chances of error regarding them are great."²⁶

²¹ J. Gay, "Quelques remarques sur les papes grecs et syriens avant la querelle des Iconoclastes," *Mélanges offerts à M. Gustave Schlumberger* (Paris, 1924), I, 40-54.

²² Gay, "Notes sur la crise du monde chrétien après les Conquêtes Arabes," *Ecole française de Rome: Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire*, XLV (Paris, 1928), 2.

²³ Batiffol, pp. vi ff.

²⁴ K. Lake, "The Greek Monasteries in South Italy," *Journal of Theological Studies*, IV (1903), 350. Lake attributes the Hellenization of Sicily to two causes: (1) "to the expedition of Constans II and the occupation by Greek soldiers and settlers to which it gave rise, and (2) to the immigration of Greeks, lay and monastic alike, who fled from the troubles which were depopulating the Levant generally." See also A. Vaccari, "La Grecia nell'Italia meridionale," *Orientalia Christiana*, III (Rome, 1925), 274-75. To the expedition of Constans II was attributed by Lancia di Brolo the introduction of the Greek rite in Sicily. Lancia di Brolo, *Storia della chiesa in Sicilia nei primi dieci secoli del Cristianesimo*, II (Palermo, 1884), 21 f.

²⁵ Rohlfs, pp. 146-47.

²⁶ White, in *Am. Hist. Rev.*, XLII, 7.

Indeed, as Rohlf's remarked, this documentation reduces itself to a few isolated instances of persons of oriental origin finding themselves in North Africa and Sicily during the period of the Persian and Arabic invasions. Of the alleged immigration of orientals to the Occident during the Persian invasion of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt only one person, the monk John Moschus, is cited as having reached Rome.²⁷ This belief of a mass emigration from the Orient during the Persian invasions is really based on a deduction. Wherever the Persians went they favored the Jacobites and persecuted the Chalcedonians who were composed chiefly of Greek-speaking elements and were vastly in the minority. Therefore, considerable elements of the Greek minority must have emigrated.²⁸ But the fact is that no definite evidence has been produced to show that, as a result of the Persian persecutions, emigrants from the Orient reached Italy in any appreciable numbers.

A piece of evidence offered as proof of the existence in Italy of a considerable number of oriental elements toward the end of the first half of the seventh century is the composition of the Roman synod of 649 which condemned Monotheletism. It was observed that this synod was controlled by oriental monks, and from this it was deduced that these monks must have come from the Orient because of the Monotheletic policy of Heraclius. The contention is that Heraclius' policy split the Chalcedonians, many among whom chose to abandon their home rather than accept the religious policy of the emperor.²⁹ But the fact that some monks fled to Rome in order to fight the religious policy of Constantinople offers no proof of a substantial movement of Greeks from the Orient to the Occident. The arrival of ecclesiastics in Rome in order to combat some particular policy of the emperors of Constantinople was a common occurrence in the early history of the church. In the final analysis, therefore, the argument of the establishment of Greek emigrants from the Orient in Italy as a result of the Persian invasions of the oriental provinces of the empire is based on the instability of conditions in the East, both political and religious. Concrete evidence of such an emigration does not exist.

There remains now to be considered the argument adduced in favor of an emigration of Greeks from the Orient and their establishment in Italy as a result of the Arabic invasions of the seventh century. When Alexandria capitulated to the Arabs in 642, a considerable part of the Greek population departed with their goods. This fact was seized upon by White as evidence in support of his thesis. He writes, "It seems probable that some of them reached

²⁷ *Ibid.*, XLII, 8.

²⁸ "All this [the persecution of the Chalcedonians by the Persians]," writes White, "would doubtless stimulate emigration by the Greek minority." *Ibid.*, XLII, 9. But the point is to show that a great many of these emigrants went to Sicily or Italy.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, XLII, 9 f.

the west," but he hastens to add that "there is no clear evidence on the point."⁸⁰ Indeed the evidence to which White refers is not only obscure but virtually nonexistent. White cites two references: the frescoes in Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome; and the oldest MS of the Alexandrian Liturgy of St. Mark, which comes from Messina. In the church of Santa Maria Antiqua there are five layers of frescoes, the second of which is Hellenistic in style and was painted sometime before 650. Myrtila Avery, who studied this layer, came to the conclusion that its iconography is Alexandrian and this, plus the fact that its style is Hellenistic, led her to the further conclusion that it must have been painted by Alexandrian artists.⁸¹ White seized upon Miss Avery's opinion as constituting an "admirable evidence of the arrival in Rome before 650 of eastern immigrants," although, because of the chronology, he does not think it probable that they came as a result of the Arabic invasions.⁸² Now both these references in reality yield no evidence of an eastern immigration to Italy. The MS of the Alexandrian Liturgy, like other manuscripts, may have been brought to Sicily, as Vaccari suggests, by oriental monks,⁸³ but the fact that oriental monks brought books to Sicily does not prove that there was a mass immigration there of Greeks coming from the Orient. The same objection applies to the inference drawn from the frescoes of Santa Maria Antiqua. Besides the point that it is by no means certain that the iconography of these frescoes is Alexandrian—there is indeed considerable doubt whether there was such a thing as a specific Alexandrian iconography or a specific Alexandrian style⁸⁴—the mere presence of Alexandrian painters in Rome is no indication of a mass movement of population from Alexandria to Italy.

It is known from Greek and Mohammedan sources relating to the conquest of Syria and Palestine by the Arabs that many Greeks abandoned their homes and sought shelter elsewhere. This, too, was seized upon as possible evidence that there was a Greek migration to Sicily during this time. The fact is, however, that nowhere in these sources is it said that those who abandoned their homes went to Sicily or Italy.⁸⁵ Most likely they all went to Asia Minor. The

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, XLII, 10.

⁸¹ Myrtila Avery, "The Alexandrian Style at Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome," *Art Bulletin of the College Art Association of America*, VII (New York, 1925), 131-49.

⁸² White, in *Am. Hist. Rev.*, XLII, 10, n. 48.

⁸³ "I monaci greci, che popolarono la Sicilia e poi le Calabrie nell' alto medio evo, ci venivano dalla Palestina e dall' Egitto; portavano seco, qual sacro tesoro, le divine Scritture, e allo studio di esse continuarono sempre a consacrarsi con ardore, non solo per la santificazione delle anime loro, ma anche per istruzione e utilità dei posteri." Vaccari, *loc. cit.*, III, 303.

⁸⁴ Ernst Kitzinger, *Römische Malerei vom Beginn des 7. bis zur Mitte des 8. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1934), p. 12. See in addition M. Schapiro's review of C. R. Morey's, *Early Christian Art*, in *Review of Religion*, January, 1944, pp. 170, 181.

⁸⁵ White (*Am. Hist. Rev.*, XLII, 11, n. 49) refers to Philip Khuri Hitti, *Origins of the Islamic State* (New York, 1916). I have checked the references and here is what I have found. "In the year 49 the Greeks left for the sea-coast" (p. 180). They (the Greeks of Tripoli) "wrote to the king of the Greeks asking for relief through reinforcement or ships on which they might

social and military transformation of Asia Minor during the seventh century is usually explained by the settlement of refugees from the oriental provinces and barbarians, chiefly Slavs, from the Balkan peninsula.³⁶

Some emigrants from Syria, Palestine, and Egypt are known to have lived in North Africa about 641, and a few among them crossed over into Sicily two years later.³⁷ But, to repeat Rohlf's statement, this is an isolated instance of no great importance, for these orientals were few in number and practically all monks. And what was said by Batiffol in his criticism of Lenormant's thesis, that monks fleeing from the persecutions of the iconoclast, were responsible for the Hellenization of Sicily and southern Italy, applies equally well to this case: "A country could not be peopled by monks, *gens aeterna in qua nemo nascitur*."

These are all the pieces of evidence offered in support of the thesis that an emigration from the oriental provinces of the Byzantine Empire of considerable proportion took place during the Persian and Arabic invasions and that the Greek-speaking people involved settled in Sicily and southern Italy, a settlement which had the effect of bringing about a metamorphosis in the language, rite, and culture of these regions. It must be admitted that this evidence is meager and in no way does it justify the thesis that has been built upon it. Indeed this thesis seems to have been arrived at by some such reasoning as this: By the middle of the seventh century Sicily had gone through a linguistic and cultural transformation; this transformation was brought about by an immigration of considerable importance; about the time this transformation took place the East was in the midst of a political and cultural convulsion, the result of the Persian and Arabic conquests; therefore, the people involved in this immigration must have come from the East. "From 614 onward," writes

escape and flee to him. Accordingly, the king sent them many ships which they boarded in the night-time and fled away" (p. 194). "He [a certain Greek patrician] made his way together with his followers to the land of the Greeks" (p. 195). "The fact is that when Damascus was taken possession of, a great number of its inhabitants fled to Heraclius who was then at Antioch, leaving many vacant dwellings behind that were later occupied by the Moslems" (p. 189). "At last they [the people and soldiers of Antioch] capitulated, agreeing to pay poll tax or evacuate the place. Some of them did leave; but others remained, and to the latter abu-Ubaidah guaranteed safety, assessing one *dinār* and one *jarīb* (of wheat) on every adult" (p. 227). "When the Moslem armies reached these towns [Greek towns in Syria], their inhabitants capitulated, agreeing to pay poll-tax or evacuate the places. Most of them left for the Byzantine empire" (p. 232). Alexandria: "Some of its Greek inhabitants left to join the Greeks somewhere else" (p. 348). It must be said, however, in fairness to White, that he does not claim that his source actually says that the Greeks who left the Orient went to Italy. The implication of his statement is, however, that he believes that some of these refugees went to Sicily. That some of these refugees may have gone to Sicily is, of course, possible, but the mere possibility that this may have happened does not justify the belief that it did happen.

³⁶ George Ostrogorsky, "Agrarian Conditions in the Byzantine Empire in the Middle Ages," *Cambridge Economic History*, I (London, 1941), 197; see also my article, "On the Social Structure of the Later Roman Empire," *Byzantion*, XVII.

³⁷ White, in *Am. Hist. Rev.*, XLII, 11 f.

White, "the Levant suffered a series of fearful convulsions any one of which would have forced thousands of refugees across the sea."³⁸ The same thought forms the basis of Gay's article, "Notes sur la crise du monde chrétien après les conquêtes Arabes."³⁹

The series of convulsions which the Levant suffered during the first half of the seventh century were indeed fearful, and doubtless thousands of refugees were forced across the seas, some of whom may have possibly reached Sicily. But these convulsions were not restricted to the oriental provinces of the empire. The agony that the Balkan peninsula suffered was perhaps more dreadful than anything that happened in the East. Bulgars, Cotrigurs, Avars, Slavs—all these people rivaled each other in their destructiveness. Particularly severe and devastating was the great invasion of the Avars and Slavs during the early years of the reign of Maurice (582–602). Following is a description of this invasion by a contemporary.

That same year, being the third after the death of king Justin, was famous also for the invasion of an accursed people, called Slavonians, who overran the whole of Greece, and the country of the Thessalonians, and all Thrace, and captured the cities, and took numerous forts, and devastated and burnt, and reduced the people to slavery, and made themselves masters of the whole country, and settled in it by main force, and dwelt in it as though it had been their own without fear. And four years have now elapsed, and still, because the king is engaged in the war with the Persians, and has sent all his forces to the East, they live at their ease in the land, and dwell in it, and spread themselves far and wide as far as God permits them, and ravage and burn and take captives. And to such an extent do they carry their ravages, that they have even ridden up to the outer wall of the city, and driven away all the king's herds of horses, many thousands in number, and whatever else they could find. And even to this day, being the year 895 [A.D. 584], they still encamp and dwell there, and live in peace in the Roman territories, free from anxiety and fear, and lead captives and slay and burn.⁴⁰

This invasion was only one of a series of invasions which left the Balkan peninsula prostrated and changed its ethnic composition, giving rise to problems the solution of which still defies the ability of the world statesmen. These invasions began before the death of Justinian, grew in intensity in the fourth quarter of the sixth century, and continued well into the seventh century. And what was said of the Levant may also be said of the Balkan peninsula, that from 558 onward it "suffered a series of fearful convulsions any one of which would have forced thousands of refugees across the sea." Yet it has occurred to no one among those who have dealt with the question of the Hellenization of

³⁸ *Ibid.*, XLII, 7.

³⁹ See note 22 above.

⁴⁰ John, Bishop of Ephesus, *The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History of John, Bishop of Ephesus*, tr. from the Syriac by R. Payne Smith (Oxford, 1860), p. 432. The other contemporary sources are: Evagrius, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. by Bidez and Parmentier (London, 1898), p. 228; Menander in C. Müller, *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, IV (Paris, 1851), 252; John of Biclar in *Mon. Germ. Hist., Chronica Minora* (1893), V, II, ed. by Mommsen.

Sicily and southern Italy that the immigrants responsible for this Hellenization might have come from the Balkan peninsula, particularly Greece.

As a matter of fact the impulse, in the form of an immigration, which strengthened the Greek element in Sicily and southern Italy, thereby bringing about the linguistic and cultural transformation of these regions, came from Greece in the eighties of the sixth century and as a result of the devastating invasion of the Avars and Slavs a contemporary description of which was given above. The information about this immigration has been available since 1749, but no one among those who have dealt with the question of the Hellenization of Sicily and southern Italy appears to have known it, while those who have referred to it in connection with the question of the Slavonic settlements in Greece in the sixth century usually discarded it. This was because this information is given by an anonymous chronicle, known as the *Chronicle of Monemvasia* and thought to have been written in the sixteenth century, hence about a thousand years later than the events which it describes.⁴¹ But recent studies have shown that this chronicle was actually written toward the end of the tenth century or the beginning of the eleventh, and that its author drew his information from a first-rate historical source, now lost, which was written before 932.⁴² This conclusion was made possible by the publication in 1912 of a scholium of Arethas of Caesarea, an outstanding Byzantine scholar of the late ninth and early tenth centuries, a pupil of the great Photios, written in 932, which confirms, as far as it goes, almost word for word what the chronicle has to say.⁴³ Since the publication of Arethas' scholium there remains virtually nothing in the chronicle that cannot be confirmed by other sources. Therefore, it can now be affirmed in unmistakable and unambiguous terms that the *Chronicle of Monemvasia* is absolutely trustworthy and constitutes one of the most precious sources of the Avar and Slav penetration of Greece and the dispersion of the Greeks during the early years of the reign of Maurice (582-602).

Here is what the *Chronicle of Monemvasia* says about the great Avar

⁴¹ This chronicle was first published in 1749 by Joseph Pasinus and his collaborators in their catalogue of the manuscripts of the royal library of Turin from a manuscript written in the sixteenth century: *Codices manuscripti bibliothecae regii Taurinensis Athenaci*, I (Turin, 1749), 417 f. Pasinus' edition was the only edition available until 1884 when S. P. Lampros reissued it, together with two other versions which he found in two manuscripts, the one belonging to the monastery of Koutouloumoussion, the other to that of the Iberikon, both monasteries of Mount Athos. According to Lampros the manuscript of the Iberikon was written in the sixteenth century, that of Koutouloumoussion probably in the sixteenth, although there are some indications which point to the seventeenth. S. P. Lampros, *Ιστορικά Μελετήματα* (Athens, 1884), pp. 97-128. In 1909 these three versions were reprinted by N. A. Bees with some corrections: "Τὸ περὶ τῆς κτίσεως Μονεμβασίας, χρονικόν," *Βυζαντικῆ*, I (Athens, 1909), 37-105.

⁴² S. Kougeas, "Ἐπὶ τοῦ καλουμένου χρονικοῦ «Περὶ τῆς κτίσεως τῆς Μονεμβασίας», " *Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων*, IX (Athens, 1912), 473-80. I have studied the *Chronicle of Monemvasia* in detail and my results will be published in the fifth volume of the *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*.

⁴³ Kougeas, *loc. cit.*, IX, 474-75.

invasion of the eighties of the sixth century, the same invasion that is described by the contemporary passage quoted above:

In another invasion they [the Avars] subjugated all of Thessaly and Greece, Old Epirus, Attica and Euboea. They made also an incursion into the Peloponnesus, conquered it by war, and, destroying and driving out the noble and Hellenic nations, they settled in it themselves. Those among the former [the Greeks] who succeeded in escaping from their blood-stained hands dispersed themselves here and there. The city of Patras emigrated to the territory of Rhegium in Calabria; the Argives to the island called Orobe; and the Corinthians to the island called Aegina. The Lacones too abandoned their native soil at that time. Some sailed to the island of Sicily and they are still there in a place called Demena, call themselves Demenitae instead of Lacedaemonitae and preserve their own Laconian dialect.

This passage offers unmistakable evidence of an immigration to Sicily and southern Italy toward the end of the sixth century, but the immigrants involved came not from the oriental provinces of the Byzantine Empire but from Greece itself. And this immigration was of considerable proportion. The entire city of Patras moved to Calabria and the Lacedaemonians who went to Sicily were numerous enough to found a city to which apparently they gave their name.⁴⁴ And although documentation is lacking, it is not improbable that, in view of the general situation, other Greeks besides the people of Patras and the Lacedaemonians, Greeks from Epirus, central Greece, and the western parts of the Peloponnesus in general, went to Sicily or Italy at that time. As the Slavs occupied virtually all the western part of the Peloponnesus, the Peloponnesians who managed to flee could find no nearer haven than Sicily or Italy.

Therefore, it must now be admitted that the outside impulse needed to strengthen the Hellenic element in Sicily and southern Italy and to enable it to regain its predominant position came from Greece, particularly from the Peloponnesus, during, and as a result of, the great Avar and Slav invasions of the late sixth century. It is, of course, entirely possible that this element was further strengthened by refugees from the Orient during the Persian and Arabic invasions, but of these refugees nothing definite can be affirmed because documentation is lacking. It is not impossible either that Greek-speaking

⁴⁴ On Demena see Michele Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia* (2d ed.; Catania, 1933), I, 609 ff. Also, Sac. Luigi Vasi, "Notizie Storiche e Geografiche della città e valle di Demona," *Archivio Storico Siciliano*, nuova serie, anno X (Palermo, 1885), 1-15. The etymology of Demena is not certain. Amari (I, 609 f.) thinks that it was named after the inhabitants. If this opinion is correct then the name Demena may have been derived from Demenitae, the name by which, according to the *Chronicle of Monemvasia*, the Lacedaemonians who settled in Sicily came to be known. And the term Demenitae is a corruption of Lacedaemonitae as the *Chronicle of Monemvasia* calls the Lacedaemonians. What probably happened was the dropping of the first two syllables from Lacedaemonitae and the simplification of the spelling of what remained—Demenitae instead of Daemonitae. The form Demona instead of Demena occurs several times in the sources.

refugees from central Italy settled in Calabria, after the conquest of the exarchate of Ravenna by the Lombards, but for this, too, there is no definite documentation.⁴⁵ The movement of population from Greece to Sicily and southern Italy toward the end of the sixth century is the only movement for which definite documentation exists. It is to this movement, therefore, that the ultimate Hellenization of Sicily and southern Italy must be attributed.

Related to this Greek emigration is the question of the establishment of Slavonic settlements in Greece. That Slavs settled in Greece during the Middle Ages no scholar has ever denied,⁴⁶ but it has been denied, especially by modern Greek scholars, that they settled there as early as the end of the sixth century. This was because the *Chronicle of Monemvasia* was ignored, while the contemporary accounts of Menander, Evagrius, and John of Ephesus were given an interpretation of such a broadness as to make them inapplicable to Greece.⁴⁷ But with the *Chronicle of Monemvasia* confirmed by the scholium of Arethas there can no longer be any doubt that Slavs settled in the Peloponnesus in the sixth century, during the reign of Maurice, and that, in settling there, they exterminated part of the ancient population and forced another part to disperse and emigrate. But it by no means follows that the Greek element completely disappeared from the Peloponnesus and that the modern Greeks are Christians of Slavonic descent in whose veins there is "not a single drop of real pure Hellenic blood."⁴⁸ For the eastern part of the Peloponnesus from Corinth to Malea remained in Greek hands, and when, beginning with the ninth century, the Slavs of the Peloponnesus were subdued, parts of the country were settled with new Greek-speaking elements, some of which were pure Greek, others not so pure, but doubtless Hellenized.⁴⁹ Slavonic tribes

⁴⁵ C. Cecchelli, "Squardo Generale all' Architettura Bizantina in Italia," *Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici*, IV (Rome, 1935), 21.

⁴⁶ On the Slavs in Greece see A. A. Vasiliev, "The Slavs in Greece" (in Russian), *Vizantiiskij Vremennik*, V (St. Petersburg, 1898), 404-38, 626-70. Vasiliev's work, although written forty-eight years ago, is still fundamental. I read it with the aid of Mrs. Nathalie Scheffer. The German Max Vasmer, a scholar of Slavic philology, published during the war (1941), in the *Proceedings of the Prussian Academy*, a long work (350 pages), based principally on the study of place names in Greece, on the question of the Slavic settlements in Greece. This work was not available to me, but I had access to the long review by C. Amantos, "Οἱ Σλάβοι εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα," *Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher*, XVII (Athens, 1944), 210-21. The question has been more recently treated in an excellent monograph by D. Zakythinis, *Οἱ Σλάβοι ἐν Ἑλλάδι* (Athens, 1945). About this book see the *post scriptum* to my article "Nicephorus I, the Savior of Greece from the Slavs," *Byzantina-Metabyzantina*, I (New York, 1946).

⁴⁷ As late as 1939 the Greek scholar Amantos wrote, "By Hellas the archaist Menander means the Byzantine regions up to the Danube, including modern Bulgaria." In the same way he explained the passage of Evagrius. Constantine I. Amantos, *Ἱστορία τοῦ Βυζαντινοῦ Κράτους* (Athens, 1939), I, 281 ff. See also my review of this book in *Byzantium*, XV, 472.

⁴⁸ Fallmerayer, *Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea während des Mittelalters* (Stuttgart, 1830), I, iii-xiv, as quoted by A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire* (Madison, 1928), I, 213-14.

⁴⁹ *The Chronical of Monemvasia*, Bees's edition, pp. 68-69; the scholium of Arethas, in Kougeas, *loc. cit.*, IX, 474-75. See also C. Hopf, *Geschichte Griechenlands vom Beginn des Mittelalters bis auf unsere Zeit*, in Ersch and Gruber, *Allgemeine Encyclopädie der Wissenschaften und Künste*, LXXXV (Leipzig, 1867), 98-99.

continued to exist; some of them were still there in the fourteenth century, but their strength had declined at the beginning of the ninth century when they were defeated at Patras and that city was again resettled with Greeks, descendants of those who had emigrated to Calabria in the sixth century.⁵⁰ The Slavs indeed continued to resist, but their long domination of the western Peloponnesus was over; eventually they succumbed and became completely absorbed by the Greek race. They left behind them some Slavonic place names, but their long domination failed to affect materially the Greek language.

⁵⁰ *The Chronicle of Monemvasia*, p. 69; the scholium of Arethas, Kougeas, *loc. cit.*, IX, 474.