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THE PROVINCE STRIKES BACK  
IMPERIAL DYNAMICS  
IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

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# What Difference Did Rome Make? The Cretans and the Roman Empire

Angelos Chaniotis

## What have the Romans ever done for us?

There is a memorable scene in the film *Monty Python's Life of Brian*. A member of the Patriotic Front of Judea asks the question: "What have the Romans ever done for us?" A rhetorical question, one might think. The other members of the Patriotic Front present, however, a list: the Romans have built streets, baths, aqueducts; they have brought sanitation, irrigation, education, wine, security, peace ... What difference the Roman Empire made in the life of the Cretans is the question I will address in this chapter, trying to sketch the major results of the provincialisation of Crete.

The coming of Rome was the most significant turning point in the history of Crete since the destruction of the Minoan palaces. It not only meant the subjugation of Crete under foreign rule – for the first time since the coming of the Mycenaean Greeks; it not only meant the establishment of a provincial government. It also meant the extinction of a social and political order that had existed for almost a millennium. After the conquest, the many competing dwarf states of Crete were united under a single administration. Crete was now an island not on the periphery of the Aegean, a sea troubled by wars and raids, but an island in the middle of the pacified Eastern Mediterranean, entirely integrated into the Roman system of rule and the economic networks of the Roman Empire.

To a certain extent my response to the question of what difference the Roman Empire made will not differ very much from that of the ingenious makers of *Life of Brian*. Yes, the Romans built streets, e.g., a street funded with the sacred money of the sanctuary of Diktynna in western Crete.<sup>1</sup> And, yes they did build baths, e.g., in Aptera, Arkades, Gortyn, Eleutherna and many other places.<sup>2</sup> And of course, the Romans built aqueducts. The largest work of architecture surviving from ancient Crete is the aqueduct of Lyttos, probably built in Hadrianic times, that leads from the *caput aquae* in the mountains of Lassithi to the harbour of Lyttos, at Chersonesos.<sup>3</sup> All this is Roman in Roman Crete (Fig. 1); indeed, most of this would have been inconceivable in pre-Roman Crete.

## The new factors

### *Unity under external central authority*

I have intentionally begun my paper with visible, major works of architecture that best

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<sup>1</sup> Tzifopoulos 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Ducrey and van Effenterre 1973 (Arkades); Sanders 1982, 70 (Kato Asites), 80 (Gortyn), 83-84 (Lappa), 151 (Arkades), 158 (Gortyn), 163 (Lappa); Harrison 1993, 273-274 (Makrygialos), 281-284 (Gortyn, Aptera, Zaros, Arkades, Koufonisi, Kastelli Kissamou); Niniou-Kindeli and Christodoulakos 2004, 323-326, 329-334 (Aptera); La Rosa and Portale 2004, 488-490 (Phaistos).

<sup>3</sup> Sanders 1982, 147-148; Harrison 1993, 197-201.

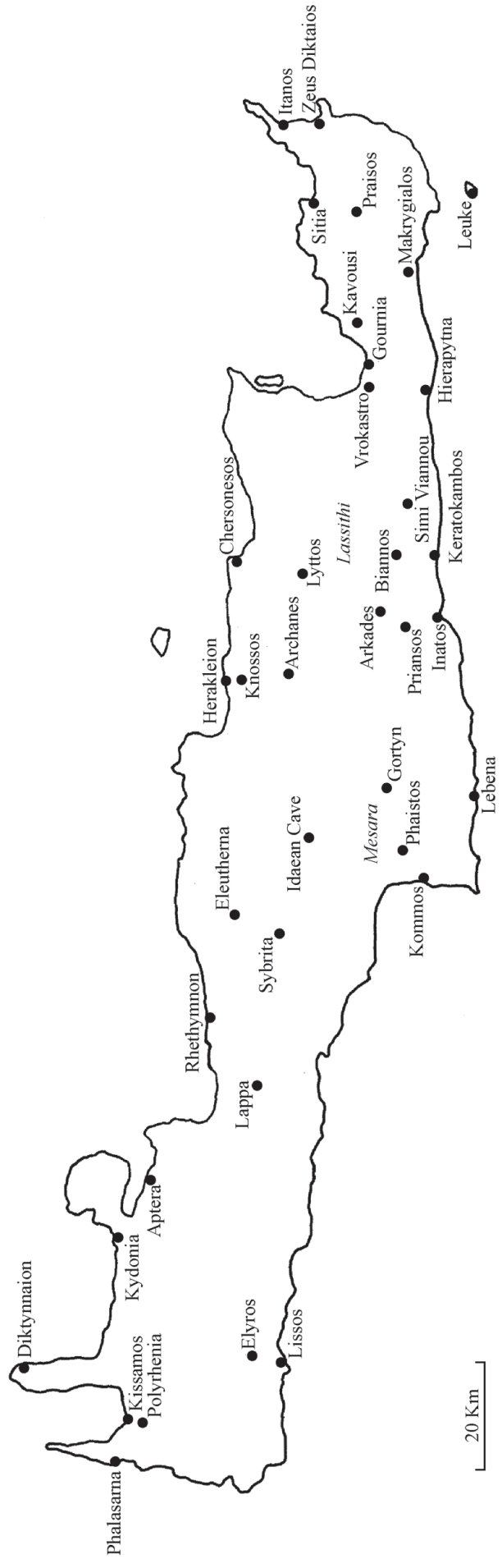


Fig. 1. Hellenistic and Roman Crete.

express the radical break with Hellenistic traditions. For such works require an organisation of manpower and an administration of resources, the procuring of funds and material; and above all they require the crossing of the boundaries of individual communities. The political fragmentation that characterised Crete from the Late Bronze Age to the Roman conquest,<sup>4</sup> made such communal works impossible, since they required the cooperation of more than one community. They required the existence of a central authority with access to funds and resources. Here we see the first among four new factors I will consider.

Pre-Roman Crete was characterised by political fragmentation into at least sixty communities fighting against one another for land, resources, and honour.<sup>5</sup> The continual wars of the Hellenistic period had reduced the number and expanded the territory of these communities substantially,<sup>6</sup> but it was the new order brought by Rome in 67 BC that left only 15 or 16 settlements with the status of a polis and determined their boundaries.<sup>7</sup>

The cities of Hellenistic Crete had often been united in alliances, but never once in a single alliance comprising the entire island.<sup>8</sup> Not even the final attack of the Romans against Crete found all the Cretans united and willing to face the invader.<sup>9</sup> Under Roman rule the remaining 15 to 16 communities retained the status of a polis as members of the new *Koinon ton Kreton* (League of the Cretans).<sup>10</sup> This change is clearly reflected in the epigraphic habit of Roman Crete with regard to the spatial distribution of inscriptions. One observes a high concentration of inscriptions in only three cities: Gortyn, Knossos, and Lyttos. On the contrary, in the Hellenistic period inscriptions were more evenly distributed among the forty to sixty independent poleis. These three cities were prominent already in the Hellenistic period, but then as leaders of rival alliances. Their prominent position in the Imperial period is due to the fact that they were the cities with the largest territories in Crete, and this also applies to Hierapytna in the East. What we observe in the Imperial period is the concentration not of military and political power in these cities but the concentration of economic power, related both to huge territories and to new forms of exploitation in these territories. This is connected with the second, and certainly most significant, impact of empire, the reorientation of the Cretan economy.

#### *A new orientation of the Cretan economy*

Hellenistic Crete was an area with intensive contacts with the rest of the Hellenistic world. But these contacts primarily took three forms: the service of mercenaries in the Hellenistic armies from the Black Sea to Nubia and from Italy to Iran; the raids of the notorious Cretan pirates in the Aegean; and – related to these raids – transit trade and trade with war booty and slaves.<sup>11</sup> Cretan society from the Archaic to the Hellenistic period was based on

<sup>4</sup> Bennet 1990, 200-201; Chaniotis 1996, 11-13.

<sup>5</sup> Chaniotis 1996, 27-56; Chaniotis 2005b, 9-12.

<sup>6</sup> Chaniotis 1996, 170-175; Chaniotis 2005b, 12. Cf. Bowsky 1994 (Hierapytna).

<sup>7</sup> Rouanet-Liesenfelt 1994, 17-18.

<sup>8</sup> Chaniotis 1996, 99-100.

<sup>9</sup> Sanders 1982, 3-4.

<sup>10</sup> Rouanet-Liesenfelt 1994.

<sup>11</sup> Mercenaries: Petropoulou 1985, 23-34; piracy: Brulé 1978; Petropoulou 1985, 35-45; Wiemer 2002, 155-176, 341-351; Kvist 2003; trade: Chaniotis 2005a; Hadjisavvas and Chaniotis forthcoming. Many studies of the economy of Hellenistic Crete, in particular by archaeologists, tend to overemphasise and misinterpret the significance of trade in Hellenistic Crete, failing to make a distinction between trade with local products and transit trade or trade with booty.

the military training of the youth, the organisation of citizens in men's houses (*andreia*); and the organisation of common meals (*syssitia*) in men's houses; for the funding of the common meals, the Cretan cities had established a rigid taxation system.<sup>12</sup> Economic production was aimed primarily at funding the *syssitia* with contributions of citizens, the community, and the tithe of the dependent population. Consequently, the economy of Classical and Hellenistic Crete was dominated by the production of staple goods for local consumption. Trade did exist, in particular within the island,<sup>13</sup> but it did not dominate economic activities. Long distance trade also existed, but to the best of our knowledge not in connection with a planned and intensive production of surplus.<sup>14</sup>

All this changed under Roman rule, and it changed abruptly. The military activities of the Cretans could not be reconciled with the rule of Rome. The *syssitia* were abolished and with them the fundamentals of the archaic social system. Agrarian production was suddenly freed from the regulations imposed by the system of the *syssitia*. The producer was now free to decide what, how much, and for whom to produce. The ownership of land was no longer confined to a class of privileged warrior-citizens; the legal and social discrimination against merchants and craftsmen disappeared. The impact of this change was all the greater because it occurred in a period in which wars ceased in the Eastern Mediterranean and this area was integrated into the economic network of an empire. The radical changes the Cretans experienced in the last decades of the first century BC are comparable with the effects the introduction of a market economy had in the former East Block in 1989. The impact of these developments was intensified due to two other factors: the payment of tribute to Rome and the migration of a foreign population that ignored the old traditions.

### *The migration of Italians*

Non-Cretans came to Crete both as individuals and in larger groups of colonists.<sup>15</sup> From 65 BC onwards veterans of the great generals of the late Republic were given land on the island; their presence is reflected by the Latin names that gradually appear in Crete.<sup>16</sup> After his victory over Marc Antony, Octavian founded a Roman colony in Knossos, which had been the victim of destructions during the conquest of Crete. The population of Colonia Iulia Nobilis Cnosus consisted of new settlers, probably from Campania, and possibly of a group of the old population that received Roman citizenship.<sup>17</sup> Octavian had settled some of his veterans in Capua, which was compensated by receiving land in the former territory of Knossos.<sup>18</sup> Many families of Campania used this possibility to settle in Crete, as we can infer from the onomastic material.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Talamo 1987; Lavrencic 1988; Link 1991, 119-121; Chaniotis 1999a, 193-194.

<sup>13</sup> Guizzi 1999a.

<sup>14</sup> Viviers 1999 (transit trade); Chaniotis 2005a. The military relations with other areas explain cultural exchange, e.g., the introduction of Egyptian cults (Magnelli 1994/95) or the presence of Sicilian capitals in Gortyn in the late third century BC (Portale 2002).

<sup>15</sup> The best source for migration of Italians to Crete, often via Delos, are the Roman names that are being studied by M. W. Baldwin Bowsky (Bowsky 1994, 1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2002b, 2004b).

<sup>16</sup> Bowsky 2001a, 2002a.

<sup>17</sup> Paton 1994, 143; Bowsky 1997, 2002b, 2004a.

<sup>18</sup> Rigsby 1976 and note 17.

<sup>19</sup> Bowsky 1997, 2002b. On the relations between Crete and Campania see also Pagano 2004.

A third important group were traders from Rome and Italy, eager to exploit the island's economic potential.<sup>20</sup> Already in the first century BC an organised group of Roman traders existed in Gortyn.<sup>21</sup> They must have been attracted by the trade in olive oil and wine, and contributed to the economic growth of Crete and its economic as well as social and cultural integration in the Roman Empire.

A substantial part of land property came into the hands of persons who had come from Italy.<sup>22</sup> From their country of origin they were familiar with the possibilities, but also with the risks, of an agrarian production oriented towards exports; they were familiar with the production methods of *latifundia*. One of the first governors of Crete, Cnaeus Tremellius Scrofa (50 BC),<sup>23</sup> was a specialist in agriculture, but unfortunately we do not know whether his expertise played any role during his short stay on Crete. Among the names that appear on inscriptions related to economic activities (inscriptions on wine amphoras, locally produced clay lamps, etc.) we hardly find any typical, traditional Cretan names (e.g., Sosos, Dryton), whereas Latin names are very common.<sup>24</sup>

### *The emperor*

The most important Roman who had economic interests in Crete was of course the emperor. The interest of the Romans in the years immediately before the conquest was primarily economic in nature. The Cretans were not only dangerous as pirates, they were also notorious for the wealth accumulated in their island in the last decades of the second and in the first century BC, a wealth still visible in archaeological finds of this period. The wealth of Crete in these last years of its freedom may easily be inferred from the amount the Romans requested in order to reach a peace agreement in 70 BC. They demanded the payment of 4,000 talents of silver. This is equivalent to half the tribute the Romans received from all their Eastern provinces.<sup>25</sup> This is an enormous amount, 1/4 of what the entire Seleucid Empire had to pay in 185 BC; if we estimate a day's salary for a mercenary at one drachma, this amount corresponds to a year's salary for 70,000 mercenaries.

We have almost no direct information concerning the payment of tribute by the Cretans during the Empire, and in general we know little about Roman administration on Crete.<sup>26</sup> Since the Roman army was not stationed on Crete, Crete was a senatorial province, governed by a proconsul of praetorian status with his seat in Gortyn.<sup>27</sup> Hardly any of these governors is known for a splendid career, and this suggests that the administration of Crete was not a very challenging job. The emperor Tiberius is known to have sent exiles to Crete,<sup>28</sup> and an ambitious senator might have seen his transfer to Crete as an exile; such senators must have recognised that the emperor did not need their services for one of the

<sup>20</sup> Bowsky 1999, 2001a, 2004b. On the Roman economic interests in Crete cf. Viviers 2004.

<sup>21</sup> *I.Cret.* IV 278, 290-291; cf. Bowsky 1999, 310-311; Bowsky 2002a, 37-39.

<sup>22</sup> Bowsky 1999, 328-329; Bowsky 2004b.

<sup>23</sup> Sanders 1982, 5.

<sup>24</sup> For Roman names on wine amphoras see Marangou-Lerat 1995, 152-154 (with my comments in *SEG* XLV 1244); on lamps: Chaniotis 2005a, 103-107; on ostraka from Chersonesos: Litinas 1999 (*SEG* XLIX 1218).

<sup>25</sup> Sanders 1982, 3.

<sup>26</sup> Sanders 1982, 5-15.

<sup>27</sup> Roman governors of Crete and Cyrenaica: Bowsky 1983, 1987; Pautasso 1994/95; Reynolds and Alí 1996; Bowsky 2001b, 106-109 (*SEG* LII 1133). For the administration during the Late Republic see Perl 1970, 1971.

<sup>28</sup> Sanders 1982, 7 (*Tac. Ann.* 4.21).



more demanding tasks. But if the job of the Roman governor was not very exciting, there was more for the procurator of the emperor to do.

The imperial procurators were members of the equestrian order who represented the emperor's economic interests.<sup>29</sup> What could have justified the service of imperial procurators in Crete? Did the emperor own land on Crete? This is not attested directly, but it is conceivable. Crete was under the rule of Cleopatra when it fell into Octavian's hands, exactly as Egypt. Egypt remained the emperor's property. What about Crete? If Octavian was in a position to give Knossian land to Capua, then perhaps he originally regarded the territory of Knossos not as property of the *populus Romanus*, but as his own property. Future epigraphic finds may shed more light on this matter.

We are on safer grounds when we consider the emperor's involvement in the collection of and trade in medicinal plants.<sup>30</sup> With its more than 1200 different plants Crete offers the largest variety of herbs in Europe. From the first century BC onwards we find evidence for a massive export of Cretan herbs that were used in medicine, in the production of perfumes, in cooking, and in magic. The medical authors mention more than 40 different Cretan plants and describe their healing properties.<sup>31</sup> Some of these plants exclusively grew on Crete. Galen, the greatest physician of the Imperial period, stresses in his work *de antidotibus* both the importance of the trade in Cretan herbs and the role of the emperor in this business:<sup>32</sup> "Every year, in the summer, many medicinal plants come from Crete to Rome. The emperor keeps on the island herbalists (*botanikoi andres*), who deliver not only to him but to the entire city baskets full of medicinal plants. Crete exports these herbs to other regions, too, because this island does not lack herbs, fruits, corns, roots, and juices. All the other products are pure, but some juices are adulterated, although this does not happen often. The variety of plants on Crete is so huge, that the herbalists do not really need to cheat their customers". This explains why the emperor needed a procurator on Crete, and I shouldn't be surprised if the emperor owned land in the mountains.

## The effects

### *Commercialisation: the example of the wine trade*

The abolition of the *syssitia* and with them of a system of supply for the entire citizen body must have meant a setback for a large part of the population. In particular those citizens who did not own land, but had an income through mercenary service and booty, must have suffered from this development. Nevertheless, after this initial shock, the conquest in combination with the *pax Romana* made new economic activities possible and ultimately contributed to economic growth.

Agrarian production, no longer bound to the public meals, could be oriented to more profitable branches such as the massive production of wine and oil for export. Such a

<sup>29</sup> Procurators in Crete: Rigsby 1976, 319; Bowsky 1986/87; Chaniotis and Preuß 1990, 196-197; Burton 1993, 21.

<sup>30</sup> Chaniotis 1991, 105-106, 108-109; Rouanet-Liesenfelt 1992; van Effenterre and Rouanet-Liesenfelt 1995; Chaniotis 1999a, 209-210, 219-220.

<sup>31</sup> Chaniotis 1999a, 219-220. For the relation between the glass production in Crete and the exploitation of medicinal and aromatic plants see Taborrelli 1994.

<sup>32</sup> Galen. *de antidot.* XIV p. 9 ed. Kühn. On this passage see the bibliography in note 30.

specialised production required an initial investment and was anything but free of risks;<sup>33</sup> but if successfully implemented it could bring large profit. New archaeological surveys attest to an increasing number of small settlements meant for more intensive exploitation of areas such as the plain of the Mesara,<sup>34</sup> and also to the presence of villas and small production units.<sup>35</sup> A small archive of ostraka discovered in Chersonesos (second century AD) records the delivery of an unknown product (oil or wine) and substantial amounts of money, which reveal transactions connected with the trade of agrarian products.<sup>36</sup>

This new orientation of the Cretan economy can best be observed in the wine trade.<sup>37</sup> Wine was continually one of the most important products from the Minoan period onwards, but intensive wine trade was practised only under Roman rule and in the Venetian period, i.e., in the periods of a foreign rule in which the Cretan economy was oriented towards the west. There can be no doubt that wine was traded, to a limited extent, already in Hellenistic Crete,<sup>38</sup> but the known wine-producing facilities are modest. An agricultural installation of the third century BC in Agia Pelagia was composed of wine-stocking stores of no more than 25 m<sup>2</sup>, and the same modest size for vineyards is attested in the same century in an inscription from Kydonia (*I.Cret.* II.x.1). Cretan wine hardly finds any mention in the literary sources of the Classical and Hellenistic period, as opposed to the many references in the Imperial period. Cretan wine was certainly an object of trade, but the Hellenistic evidence supports the assumption that viticulture essentially responded to local needs. Locally produced amphoras with stamps or dipinti are almost entirely lacking, with the exception of a few wine amphoras produced in Hierapytna in the late second century BC; local amphora workshops have been identified only in Gortyn, Keratokambos, and Knossos.<sup>39</sup> The Hierapytnian amphora stamps have been found in Tripitos, close to Hierapytna, in Alexandria, and in Kallatis (west coast of the Black Sea). Even if more Hierapytnian amphora stamps may – and will – be recognized in museums in the future, this cannot be seriously taken as evidence for an extensive wine trade in the entire Hellenistic period and over the entire island. Since one of the most important issues treated in agreements about the employment of Cretan mercenaries was the supply of food,<sup>40</sup> one should not be surprised if Cretan wine amphoras are found in small numbers in Alexandria, the main employer of Cretan mercenaries. What is more important: the Cretan amphoras belong to the latest phase of the Hellenistic period which is a distinct

<sup>33</sup> Chaniotis 1988a, 83.

<sup>34</sup> Watrous and Hadzi-Vallianou 2004, 351-358; their analysis of the economy of the Hellenistic period (pp. 334-338) is, however, based on a misinterpretation of the written sources. Other surveys confirm this picture (e.g., Archanes, Gournia, Kavousi, Lassithi, Pediada), but also demonstrate regional variations (Akrotiri, Kommos, Vrokastro). Akrotiri peninsula: Raab 2001, esp. 157-163. Archanes: Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1997, I 42-45. Gournia: Watrous, Blitzer, Haggis and Zangger 2000, 478. Kavousi: Haggis 1996a, 416-424. Kommos: Hope Simpson *et al.* 1994, 398-399 (however, with no differentiation within the 'Hellenistic period'). Lassithi: Watrous 1982, 24. Pediada: Panagiotakis 2003, 341, 354-365. Vrokastro area: Harrison 2000; Hayden 2004a; Hayden 2004b, 199-219. Cf. Harrison 1991.

<sup>35</sup> Altamore 2004.

<sup>36</sup> Litinas 1999.

<sup>37</sup> Chaniotis 1988a; Marangou 1994; Marangou-Lerat 1995; Marangou 1999, 2004; Yangaki 2004/05.

<sup>38</sup> Chaniotis 1988a, 69-71; Marangou-Lerat 1995, 9-13; Marangou 1999, 270; Chaniotis 2005a, 97-100.

<sup>39</sup> Hierapytna: Marangou-Lerat 1995, 123-124; Marangou 2000; *SEG* XLV 1244; XLVII 1410; L 876, 885; LI 1169; cf. Vogeikoff-Brogan 2004, 216-217. The date has been established by Stefanaki 2001; cf. Stefanaki 2006, 311. Gortyn: Portale and Romeo 2000. Keratokambos: Marangou-Lerat 1995, 67. Knossos: Eiring *et al.* 2002.

<sup>40</sup> Petropoulou 1985, 18.

period in the history of the Cretan economy.<sup>41</sup> Around 145 BC the large Cretan cities (Gortyn, Knossos, Lyttos, and Hierapytna) reached the peak of their expansion and in 110 BC the Cretan wars stopped, marking the beginning of a new period. This period is characterised by intensive raids of Cretan pirates, limited mercenary services, intensive trade in slaves and other booty, and a marked presence of luxury goods in Crete. The Hellenistic wine trade is a limited phenomenon of the very last decades before the Roman conquest. This is also the period in which we observe the production of Cretan amphoras that imitated well-known foreign shapes, and are consequently hard to detect.<sup>42</sup>

Things changed dramatically after the establishment of Roman rule and the coming of Italian immigrants and traders. Cretan wine is the wine more often mentioned in medical works, in particular a sweet wine made of dried grapes (*passum*, *passon*, *staphidites* or *hepsema*).<sup>43</sup> Wine is the only Cretan product mentioned in the *Expositio totius mundi et gentium* (64), a geographical handbook of the Imperial period. Its quality is praised in an inscription on a Cretan amphora in Pompeii (*CIL* IV 5526: *vinum Creticum excellens*).

Short texts engraved or painted on Cretan wine amphoras are an excellent source of information for wine production and trade.<sup>44</sup> They give us such information as the names of producers and merchants, the year of the production, the capacity of the vase, the place of production, and the particular variety. It is thanks to such texts, e.g., that we know that Lyttos must have been the most important centre for the export of Cretan wine to Italy. Forty-one amphoras in Pompeii, the largest group of inscribed amphoras found in the city, bear the inscription *Lyttios* (“wine from Lyttos”).<sup>45</sup> Archaeological surveys and studies of Cretan wine amphoras and the workshops where they were produced now allow us to identify the Cretan vessels thanks to their form, exactly as today we identify various types of wine, Riesling, Chianti, Bordeaux, etc., from the form of a bottle.<sup>46</sup> So we know that the Cretan wine was massively exported throughout the entire Mediterranean, from Asia Minor to Spain, from the Black Sea to North Africa.

The texts on the Cretan amphoras and on stone inscriptions reveal a specialisation of production for which there is no evidence in pre-Roman Crete. We also have references to different types of wine, such as the sweet *Theraios*, made from grapes imported from Santorini, to the light white *hydatodes*, and to ‘aromatic’ wines (*aromatikos*) mixed with pepper, saffron, honey, and myrtle berries (*myrtites*) – the latter used in medicine, but also for dyeing the hair black.<sup>47</sup> Sweet wine (*glykys*) was often mixed with seawater; *athalassos* was wine that did not contain seawater. On an amphora from Eleutherna one reads: “Wine, not mixed with seawater, strong as Hercules”.<sup>48</sup>

The export of wine must have contributed to the wealth of Roman Crete, although not every merchant succeeded in making a fortune with this risky business. Artemidorus,

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Vogeikoff-Brogan 2004; Stefanaki 2006.

<sup>42</sup> Vogeikoff 2000, 71; Eiring 2000, 58; Eiring *et al.* 2002; Finkielsztejn 2002.

<sup>43</sup> Chaniotis 1988a, 72-73.

<sup>44</sup> Collection of the evidence in Marangou-Lerat 1995, 124-154 (with my comments in *SEG* XLV 1244); an addition: De Caro 1992/93 (with my corrections in *SEG* XLVIII 1265); cf. Chaniotis 2005a, 101-102.

<sup>45</sup> Chaniotis 1988a, 75; Marangou-Lerat 1995, 131-133.

<sup>46</sup> Workshops: Markoulaki, Empereur and Marangou 1989; Empereur, Kritzas and Marangou 1991. Typology and diffusion: Marangou-Lerat 1995, 35-154; Marangou 1999, 273-278; cf. Romeo and Portale 2004; Marangou 2004; Yangaki 2004/05.

<sup>47</sup> Chaniotis 1988a, 72-73; Marangou-Lerat 1995, 15-29, 151; cf. Ashton 2002.

<sup>48</sup> Marangou-Lerat 1995, 150 P106; Matthaiou 1992-98; *SEG* XLVIII 1250.

e.g., describes the following nightmare (*Onirocriticon* 4.41): “A big trader from Crete saw in a dream that he was washing his face with wine. A dream interpreter explained: You will be successful with your trade with wine and you will wash your debts away. But he had another thing coming. His wine was spoiled and became as unfit for consumption as water for washing”. The names on the amphoras show that this trade was dominated by persons of Italian origin.<sup>49</sup>

The new economic orientation is confirmed by the archaeological evidence. A large building in Tholos in East Crete, may have served the purpose of storage of grain transported from Egypt to Italy via Crete.<sup>50</sup> In Koutsounari, in East Crete, large fish tanks have been identified;<sup>51</sup> and Crete developed into one of the most important centres for the production of lamps that were exported to Asia Minor and North Africa.<sup>52</sup> The impulse for the production of the Cretan clay mould lamps came from Italian immigrants. The names of the most important producers of Cretan lamps (Gamos = Gamus, Sergios = Sergius, Keler = Celer) originate in Italy, and in particular in Campania.<sup>53</sup>

### *Social complexity*

The conquest and economic restructuring of Crete resulted also in a change in the character of social complexity. Social positions in Classical and Hellenistic Crete were defined exclusively according to legal criteria (freedom, citizenship, family);<sup>54</sup> what was praised was military achievement and deeds of manly behaviour.<sup>55</sup> The rule of aristocratic families in Hellenistic Crete was replaced by the rule of a new oligarchy of wealth in Roman Crete. The presence of this oligarchy is visible through the display of wealth and benefactions. Unlike pre-Roman Crete where the various social strata are hardly represented in the epigraphic evidence, in Roman Crete inscriptions represent the whole range of positions, the Roman magistrates, the wealthy benefactors, the women, the slaves, the freedmen, the foreign traders and entertainers, the Jews.<sup>56</sup>

The epigraphic habit in Hellenistic and Roman Crete helps us recognise these differences.<sup>57</sup> Categories of evidence, so well-represented in the source material of the larger Hellenistic world, are entirely absent in Hellenistic Crete. Let us take, for instance, one of the most striking phenomena of the Hellenistic world: the prominent role played by benefactors. They erected buildings, made loans to their cities, cared for their supply with cheap corn, and monopolised political life. Honorary decrees for local benefactors are entirely absent in Hellenistic Crete. In the rest of the Hellenistic world the activities of benefactors are recorded in many types of texts which served their self-representation: honorary decrees, building inscriptions, statue bases, dedications, and luxurious funerary monuments, consolatory decrees after an untimely death, sacred regulations concerning

<sup>49</sup> Chaniotis 1988a, 85-86; Marangou-Lerat 1995, 154.

<sup>50</sup> Haggis 1996a, 419-423; 1996b.

<sup>51</sup> Davaras 1975.

<sup>52</sup> Mercado 1974; Apostolakou 1987; Papadopoulou 1989/90; Sussman 1995; Sapouna 1998.

<sup>53</sup> Sapouna 1998, 91-117 (cf. *SEG* XLVIII 1202 bis and 1212); Chaniotis 2005a, 103-107. I will discuss this subject in the forthcoming publication of the lamp signatures from the Idaean Cave.

<sup>54</sup> Link 1994.

<sup>55</sup> Chaniotis 2004.

<sup>56</sup> Chaniotis 2004, 82-83. Women: see notes 68-69. Entertainers: *I.Cret.* IV 222-223. Jews: Spyridakis 1988. Slaves and freedmen: e.g., *I.Cret.* III.iv.45; IV 263; *SEG* XLI 745.

<sup>57</sup> Chaniotis 2004.

cults and sanctuaries founded by them. This type of evidence is absent from Hellenistic Crete, but quite prominent in the Roman period.<sup>58</sup> A comparison between the dedications and building inscriptions in the Hellenistic versus the Roman period also confirms this picture. In Hellenistic Crete the epigraphic habit is predominantly public, anonymous, impersonal, masculine, local, and limited with regard to the representation of social groups. The epigraphic habit of Roman Crete is predominantly one of individuals, of men and women, of free persons and slaves, of Cretans and foreigners, of representatives of all social strata. For the first time we encounter honorary inscriptions and honorary statues set up by the cities for magistrates, members of the local élite, benefactors, and intellectuals; honorary inscriptions initiated by associations; and statues set up by individuals for members of their family, for educators, patrons, and friends; honorary inscriptions dedicated by women or for women. Inscriptions concerning economic activities mention freedmen and slaves or persons that may be identified as such because of their names (e.g., Isargyros, Onesimos, Threptos).<sup>59</sup>

In pre-Roman Crete a Cretan identified himself primarily as a citizen of his polis, then as a member of a tribe, of an *andreion*, as a member of a family.<sup>60</sup> Only outside Crete did he identify himself as a Cretan (*Kres*, sometimes followed by the name of his city), usually as a member of a military unit consisting of Cretan mercenaries. The most important factor of identity, citizenship, lost its significance in the Imperial period. It was not important in a legal or political sense, since the polis no longer possessed sovereignty similar to that of the Hellenistic period; the assembly of citizens gradually lost its power.<sup>61</sup> Citizenship was not so important in an ideological sense, since the end of the Cretan wars also marked the end of a militant local patriotism. Unified administration through the governor, great mobility within and outside the island, the award of Roman citizenship to many Cretans, and the economic and social bonds between persons from different cities<sup>62</sup> made it less important whether someone was Gortynian, Hierapytnian, or Lyttian. The Cretans of the Empire identified themselves primarily by a social criterion: class.

It is not surprising that most of the sources concern the élite. Public and private inscriptions make men and – at last – women known to us, individuals who occupied a prominent position because of their economic power and their achievement; men such as the high priest of the Cretan Koinon Soarchos, who donated an aqueduct to the Gortynians in the first century AD (*I.Cret.* IV 330), or T. Flavius Iulius Volumnius Sabinus, who acquired the permission of the emperor to organise gladiatorial combats at exceptionally great expense (*I.Cret.* IV 305),<sup>63</sup> women such as Flavia Philyra, probably member of a family of freedmen of Lyttos, who built at her expense the temple of the Egyptian gods in Gortyn.<sup>64</sup> Cretan society was already aristocratic from the Archaic period onwards, and this did not change in the Hellenistic period. The innovation of the Roman period is the

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<sup>58</sup> Chaniotis 2004, 82-83 note 28. See also Martínez-Fernández and Niniou-Kindeli 2002; Niniou-Kindeli and Christodoulakos 2004, 314-319; *SEG* LII 843-847 (public heroön in Apta).

<sup>59</sup> Chaniotis 2004.

<sup>60</sup> Chaniotis 2006.

<sup>61</sup> For the decline of the power of the assembly see Chaniotis 1985.

<sup>62</sup> For possible economic networks see the prosopographical studies of Bowsky mentioned in note 15. See also notes 64 and 65.

<sup>63</sup> See also, e.g., *I.Cret.* IV 300.

<sup>64</sup> *I.Cret.* IV 249; Bricault 2005, 374. On her relation to Lyttos see Chaniotis and Rethemiotakis 1992, 37-38. Cf. Magnelli 2006 (on the family of the Petronii).



development of an élite whose activities were not limited to a single city, but extended to the entire island. This new élite, which primarily consisted of newcomers (as we may infer from the names), crossed the boundaries of the civic communities politically, socially, and economically.<sup>65</sup> Its members had a network of personal relations all over the island; their building activities were not limited to their own city.

Only a few of them were recruited by the Imperial administration,<sup>66</sup> possibly because of the small political and strategic significance of Crete and the presence of rather unimportant governors. Senators from Crete are a rarity – the most prominent among them being L. Flavius Suplicianus Dorion Polymnis from Hierapytna.<sup>67</sup>

The new form of social complexity may be observed also in the greater visibility of women.<sup>68</sup> Flavia Philyra has already been mentioned. Ago in Hierapytna founded a private association (*sodalitas*, *I.Cret.* III.iii.7). Women had access to the public bath in Arkades;<sup>69</sup> in Gortyn a new authority, the *gynaikonomoi* (overseers of women), was created precisely because of the more common presence of women in public life (*I.Cret.* IV 252).

### *Cultural complexity*

At first sight Crete gives the impression of a fully integrated province, in the outlook of the cities, in art, especially in sculpture, in the occasional use of Latin in public documents, sometimes in private inscriptions,<sup>70</sup> in the forms of entertainment, in the cults. Roman Crete has a cosmopolitan outlook.

A modern visitor to the ruins of the Roman cities, whether those of the systematically excavated Gortyn or those of Lappa, hidden behind the trees of gardens or built in modern houses, will see what one sees in most cities of the Roman East. A prominent position is occupied by buildings for concerts and spectacles, such as the Odeion of Gortyn or the theatre in the small city of Lissos. Theatres have been found in many cities, e.g., in Aptera, Elyros, Chersonesos, Gortyn, Hierapytna, Lyttos, even on the small island of Leuke (Koufonisi).<sup>71</sup> Theatres are entirely unknown in pre-Roman Crete. Nothing can show more clearly the cultural impact of Empire on Crete than this new architectural form, which went hand in hand with the introduction of cultural events unknown or unimportant in pre-Roman Crete,<sup>72</sup> such as theatrical performances, performances of acrobats and mimes, concerts etc.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Bowsky 1994, 38; 1995, 51 (Volumnii of Knossos and Larcii of Gortyn), 60 (the Supliciani in Gortyn and Hierapytna); on the contacts of the Cretan aristocracy with that of other areas see, e.g., Bowsky 1995, 44 and 57-59.

<sup>66</sup> The evidence is reviewed by Bowsky 1995, 60-62.

<sup>67</sup> *PIR*<sup>2</sup> F 375. On senators from Crete see Reynolds 1982; Bowsky 1995, 60-61.

<sup>68</sup> Bowsky 1999, 333-336 and 2000.

<sup>69</sup> Ducrey and van Effenterre 1973.

<sup>70</sup> Chaniotis 1985; Chaniotis and Preuß 1990, 1991; Bowsky 2004a.

<sup>71</sup> Spanakis 1968; Sanders 1982, 57-63; Papadakis 1983 (Koufonisi); Harrison 1993, 139-151; Barresi 2004 and Montali 2004 (Gortyn).

<sup>72</sup> Two foreign mimes are known in Hellenistic Sybrita (second cent. BC): Le Rider 1966, 258; theatrical performances are not directly attested in Hellenistic Crete. For cultural performances in the assembly see *I.Cret.* I.viii.11-12; I.xxiv.1; Chaniotis 1988b. Dance competitions were, however, very important, in connection with the education of the citizens; see Chaniotis 1996, 127.

<sup>73</sup> E.g., *I.Cret.* IV 222 A and B, 223, 305, 309. On the theatres see note 71. On gladiatorial combats and *venationes* in Gortyn see *I.Cret.* IV 305, 309, 373-375; Sapouna 2004, 958.

The ancient visitor to Roman Crete would also see other types of buildings unknown in pre-Roman Crete. The capital city had in addition to a so-called praetorium, three theatres, an odeion, an amphitheatre, a temple of Egyptian gods and monumental fountains.<sup>74</sup> The course of the aqueduct of Lyttos is still visible for a length of 15 km. Aqueducts have been identified in several other places, including Gortyn and Knossos.<sup>75</sup> Baths of the Roman type have been excavated in cities and villas, e.g., in Stavromenos and Makrygialos. Coloured marbles imported from various places, from Thessaly to North Africa and from Athens to the Propontis, are a visible witness to wealth and the display of wealth.<sup>76</sup> Roads and highways crossed the territories of old cities.<sup>77</sup> Marble sarcophagi decorated with reliefs were imported from the workshops of Athens and Italy.<sup>78</sup> Statues were signed by artists from Aphrodisias, Paros, and Athens.<sup>79</sup> The mosaics that decorated temples, villas, baths, and banquet rooms of private houses represent the works of foreign and local artists.<sup>80</sup> And in the large cities, in Gortyn and Lyttos, one admired the statues of emperors, public and private benefactors, magistrates, and governors.<sup>81</sup> None of this is known from pre-Roman Crete; none of this would have been possible in pre-Roman Crete. The division of the island, the lack of a central authority made joint building activities impossible. Citizens distinguished themselves through military achievements and not through benefactions for their community.

This impression of uniformity is nevertheless misleading, and I have intentionally avoided the term 'Romanisation' to characterise the change in Crete after its conquest.<sup>82</sup> Roman Crete was not 'Roman' but an integral part of the economic network of the Roman Empire; it followed the cultural and social trends of that period. Roman Crete is characterised by oppositions and contradictions no less than other Roman regions. In part they can be explained by the different origin of the population, in part as the result of the new social differentiation. I have already mentioned the migration of foreigners. Besides the Italians, we know of immigrants from various parts of Greece and North Africa, later also from Macedonia,<sup>83</sup> as well as a large community of Jews,<sup>84</sup> whose migration

<sup>74</sup> Sanders 1982, 61-66, 70-71, 73-80, 156-159; Di Vita 1986/87 (amphitheatre, theatre); Ricciardi 2000 (amphitheatre). Nymphaion: Ortega 1986/87. On the urban development in Roman Gortyn see Di Vita 2001, 2004. On Knossos see Paton 2004.

<sup>75</sup> Sanders 1982, 153 (Knossos), 156 (Gortyn); Kelly 2006. For Lyttos see note 3.

<sup>76</sup> Paton and Schneider 1999; Pensabene and Lazzarini 2004. For Makrygialos see note 2.

<sup>77</sup> Tzifopoulos 2004; Bowsky and Niniou-Kindeli 2006.

<sup>78</sup> Sanders 1982, 47-48; Ghisellini 1985; Harrison 1993, 235-238.

<sup>79</sup> Sanders 1982, 48-51. For statues see also note 81.

<sup>80</sup> Markoulaki 1990; Paton 2000; Guimier-Sorbets 2004; Markoulaki, Christodoulakos and Frangonikolaki 2004, 366-373; Sweetman 2004; cf. Sanders 1982, 51-55.

<sup>81</sup> E.g., Guerrini 1974; Apostolaki 1980; Sanders 1982, 48-50; Guerrini 1984; Ghedini 1985; Chaniotis and Rethemiotakis 1992; Romeo 1992/93; Romeo and Portale 1998; Chaniotis 2004, 82-83 note 28 (epigraphic sources). Statues of emperors: Karanastasi 2004; Lagogianni-Georgakarakou 2004b. Portraits: Raftopoulou 1968; Natsouli-Stavridi 1981 and 1994-96; Portale 1992/93; Weber 1999 (with the remarks of Fittschen 2000); Lagogianni-Georgakarakou 2004a. The earliest portraits date to the late second or first cent. BC, which represents a separate phase in the history of Hellenistic Crete (cf. note 41); see Lagogianni-Georgakarakou 2006.

<sup>82</sup> Some reflection on why the term 'Romanisation' is inappropriate in Crete in Harrison 2000 and Sweetman 2006. Cf. also Wardle and Wardle 2004, 479-480.

<sup>83</sup> North Africa: *I.Cret.* I.xviii.83?; IV 372. Kos: *I.Cret.* IV 248. Macedonia: Spyridakis 1986.

<sup>84</sup> Noy, Panayotov and Bloedhorn 2004, 249-253; Spyridakis 1988.

from Cyrenaica to Crete from the first century BC onwards seems to be the result of the administrative connection between the two areas.

These immigrants brought their own traditions: the Jews a monotheistic religion, the Campanians new methods of production and the Latin language, but also an interest in entertainment and new funerary practices. Some of the first entertainers ever honoured in Crete are Romans: the pantomime L. Furius Celsus and the comic actor Babullius. The cult of the Egyptian deities had already been introduced in Crete by Hellenistic mercenaries, but its great diffusion is a phenomenon of the Imperial period.<sup>85</sup> New cults, as those of the 'Highest God' (*Theos Hypsistos*)<sup>86</sup> or of the Christian god, competed with the older cults that best corresponded to the needs of the people, in particular with the cults of Asklepios and Sarapis. The appearance of mausolea in Knossos and Gortyn in the first century AD can most plausibly be attributed to Roman influence.<sup>87</sup>

The most important cults in Hellenistic Crete are the cults of patrons of the community and its territory;<sup>88</sup> the most important cults in Roman Crete are those of the personal saviours of the people: the gods of the mystery cults, who promised security in life and a blessed life after death, and the healing god Asclepius, whose sanctuaries in Lebena and Lissos attracted large numbers of pilgrims.<sup>89</sup> If the cult of Zeus in the Idaean Cave revived in Roman times, this is probably due to its connection with a mystery cult and to its association with the Cretan Koinon, and possibly with the emperor cult as well.<sup>90</sup> The cult cave of Zeus on Mt. Ida and the Diktynnaion were closely connected with local myths and could contribute to a local Cretan identity, represented by the Cretan Koinon.<sup>91</sup> The most important new cult, however, was the cult of a mortal. The birthday of the emperor was celebrated in Crete, as it was celebrated everywhere from the Euphrates to Britain, with sacrifices, the dedication of statues, and spectacles.<sup>92</sup>

Despite the integration, despite the construction of a pan-Cretan identity, for example, through the promotion of joint cults, pan-Cretan sanctuaries, the organisation of contests, and the representation of local myths on coinage,<sup>93</sup> we may still observe a tendency towards local patriotism. Cosmopolitanism and the elimination of particularities always provoke reactions. At the same time that the Cretan Koinon constructed a joint Cretan identity,<sup>94</sup> a citizen in Lyttos attempted to re-introduce the *syssitia* that had been abolished three centuries earlier; they were to take place not on a daily basis, but only

<sup>85</sup> Cult of Egyptian deities in Hellenistic Crete: Magnelli 1994/95; Di Vita 2000; Bricault 2005, 370-375 nos. 203/0101, 0201, 0601-0603, 0901. In Roman Crete: Salditt-Trappmann 1970, 54-66; Vassilika 2004; Bricault 2005, 370-376. For the entertainers honoured in Crete see note 56.

<sup>86</sup> Mitchell 1999, 136 nos. 119-124; Rizzo 2004.

<sup>87</sup> Vassilakis 2004. For a new type of grave monuments in Roman Knossos see Grammatikaki 2004.

<sup>88</sup> Chaniotis 1996, 68-75.

<sup>89</sup> Bultrighini 1993; Melfi 2004; Melfi 2007, 138-149. For the gods of the mystery cults see note 85.

<sup>90</sup> Mystery cult in the Idaean Cave in the Roman period: Chaniotis 1990 (on *IG* XII.6.584). The only stone inscription found there (*I.Cret.* I.xii.2) may be an honorary inscription for an emperor.

<sup>91</sup> Idaean cave: Verbruggen 1981, 99, 178-181; Alcock 2002, 126-129. Diktynnaion: Tzifopoulos 2004; cf. Sporn 2001.

<sup>92</sup> Emperor cult: Rouanet-Liesenfelt 1994. Dedication of statues: Chaniotis and Rethemiotakis 1992.

<sup>93</sup> Alcock 2002, 128; cf. Lagogianni-Georgakarakou 1995, who also stresses the influence from Rome on Cretan coinage. For the increased interest of the Romans in Cretan myths see Capomacchia 2000; Karamalengou 1995; Braccisi 2004; Armstrong 2006.

<sup>94</sup> Alcock 2002, 123-130.



on the occasion of two festivals, the Belchania and the Theodaisia.<sup>95</sup> The latter was the festival during which ephebes were introduced into the citizen body.<sup>96</sup> This initiative may, therefore, be connected with the re-introduction of ephebic institutions.<sup>97</sup> The document consciously uses an Archaic term to describe the tribes: *startoi*. The only other time we find this term in a Cretan inscription is in the laws of Gortyn, more than six centuries earlier.<sup>98</sup> We may detect similar archaisms in the occasional use of the old Dorian dialect<sup>99</sup> or in references to local myths in the Cretan epigrams.<sup>100</sup> In a time of imperial globalisation newly discovered and newly imagined traditions aimed at promoting a local identity.

## Conclusions

The picture I have sketched is selective, impressionistic, not complete, and rather peaceful. Our sources hardly ever allow us to go beyond the surface. From Roman Crete we lack personal voices, we lack direct references to conflicts and oppositions that certainly existed. The replacement of the Hellenistic military élite of traditional families by an élite of entrepreneurs in part of foreign origin, the reorganisation of territorial boundaries, the payment of tribute, the competition among cults, are phenomena that entail conflicts. Our sources are silent in this respect, with the exception of indirect evidence concerning disputes about boundaries.<sup>101</sup> The assembly that still played an important role in Hellenistic Crete and in the cities of the Roman East, especially in Asia Minor, disappears from the epigraphic evidence of Roman Crete, unlike the council or the magistrates. In Knossos, the election of the magistrates seems to have been transferred from the assembly to the council, as a Latin honorary inscription implies.<sup>102</sup> Did this happen peacefully and with no conflicts? Our sources tell us something about Roman Crete, but hardly anything about the Cretans.

Let me return to the question of the Patriotic Front of Judea with which I opened this chapter. What have the Romans ever done for Crete? Roman Crete appears different from Hellenistic Crete: pacified, cosmopolitan, and multifaceted with regard to society and economy. The Romans did not introduce social complexity, but they changed its character; they did not invent cultural complexity, but they enhanced it. The most radical changes were the establishment of Cretan unity and the integration of Crete into the economic networks of the Mediterranean. An external central authority was necessary to implement intensive economic cooperation among the various regions of Crete. And here we see a convergence between Roman and Venetian Crete.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> *I.Cret.* I.xviii.11; Guizzi 1999b. Cf. Alcock 2002, 118-121 on local memories.

<sup>96</sup> Chaniotis 1996, 126.

<sup>97</sup> An ephebos is mentioned in *I.Cret.* I.xviii.123, possibly not as an indication of age, but of an institutionalised age-class.

<sup>98</sup> *I.Cret.* IV 72 col. V LL. 5/6; cf. *I.Cret.* IV 80.

<sup>99</sup> E.g., *I.Cret.* I.xviii.12, 13, and 51. On Greek identity in Roman Lyttos see Bowsky 2006.

<sup>100</sup> Vertoudakis 2000, 133-183.

<sup>101</sup> Rigsby 1976; Chaniotis 1986, 193-194; Chaniotis and Preuß 1990, 200-201.

<sup>102</sup> Chaniotis 1985.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Bennet 1990, 201-208.

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