

THE EMERGENCE OF CRETAN STATES IN THE HELLENISTIC TIMES

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The glory of the Minoan civilization as revealed by the excavations of the palatial centers at the beginning of 20th century established a long tradition of prehistoric archaeological research on Crete. Archaic, Classical and especially Hellenistic periods remained rather marginalized at least until the second half of the century, when few but important works appeared; Kirsten's *Das dorische Kreta* in 1942 for the 5th and the 4th century, the classic Demargne's, *La Crète dédalique: études sur les origines d'une renaissance* at 1947 and Willets' *Aristocratic society in ancient Crete* at 1955 on the structure of Cretan society, among others.

Since then a series of excavation projects conducted in several places of Crete revealed new data and provided significant information enlightening the history of the island especially in the field of interrelations between politics, economy, and society. This process can be traced at the collective volume *From Minoan Farmers to Roman Traders, Sidelights on the Economy of Ancient Crete* edited in 1999 by Angelos Chaniotis, where a diachronic and broad approach of the Cretan economy from the Bronze Ages to the historical periods up to the Roman times, is provided. As it is traditionally sustained, the economy in Crete was based on a rural self-sufficient and rather closed and isolated model, until the Roman period. However, archeological research conducted in Crete and relevant studies, especially epigraphic and numismatic, provide evidence for a different economy pattern prevailing in Hellenistic times, displaying a rather extrovert society showing vivid interest in arranging commercial issues and in revitalizing and reorganizing a strong monetary tradition in the context of the Hellenistic *koine*.

The latest historical research, presented in this volume, confirms the significance of Crete, and especially its coastal harbors for the control of the maritime routes of the Eastern Mediterranean and its connection to the West. The long-established network of eastern Mediterranean trade routes, where Crete consisted a crucial node since prehistoric times was never abandoned and in fact, it was strengthened to accomplish the needs of intensified trade and commerce of Hellenistic kingdoms and economic powers. Either by violence or peace treaties Crete got involved in this new order.

Although few of the known Hellenistic sites are systematically excavated, it is possible to establish a specific pattern of habitation, delineated by the geographic place of Crete on one hand and its geomorphology on the other, oriented to the commerce and the exploitation of land and resources. Inevitably, therefore, several Hellenistic settlements were organized on the site of previous ones, even not continuously.

In the East, the case of Mochlos at the Bay of Mirabello is characteristic. The site is known from the settlement of the Bronze Age, while excavations revealed a re-occupation phase dated to the 3rd century until the last decades of the 1st century. According to the remains of a Beam Press Building and the transport amphorai found, Vogeikoff-Brogan suggests that surplus exploitation of wine at least took place on the site. On the other hand, plenty of finds of East Cretan Cream Ware, produced in the Hierapytna area, indicates that Mochlos was under the control of Hierapytna during its territorial expansion of the 2nd century BC, and its effort to establish a port network on the N coast. It is probably for the same reasons that Romans and Italians were attracted to the site, residing there until its final destruction in the last decades of the 1st century BC.

In Central and Western Crete, the habitation pattern does not differ radically, as the organization of the domestic space remains the same. It is evident, however, that it can take different forms and adapt to different uses, always around the *oikos*, which remained the nucleus for both urban and rural houses. A reassessment of the evidence from Phaistos, undertaken by Di Biase, regarding the so-called *andreion* or *prytaneion*, shed more light on urban houses, despite the stratigraphical destruction in favor of Minoan

