

Roman domination, as this collection itself shows.³ Some of the fundamental modes of Graeco-Roman acculturation are touched on here, not least by Melfi herself: e.g. in seeing subordinate poleis using Greek cult to communicate with the dominant power, and the agency of ‘the taste of the Romans’ in shaping Greek cultic changes (p. 104; also pp. 249–50, a discussion that perhaps could be taken further, to suggest the moralising impact of the Augustan regime on Greek cults of Aphrodite previously practising sacred prostitution). What is needed now, this reviewer ventures to suggest, is a larger, theorised, study of this Roman context, one problematizing, not only polis religion, but also Greek – for want of a better term – ‘Romanisation’.

A. J. S. SPAWFORTH
BRIGHTON, U.K.
tony.spawforth@ncl.ac.uk

- Galli, M. (ed.) 2014. *Roman Power and Greek Sanctuaries. Forms of Interaction and Communication* (Tripodes 14). Athens: Scuola Archeologica Italiana di Atene.
- Habicht, C. 2015. Die in Messene verwendete Ära, in A. P. Matthaiou and N. Papazadarkas (eds) *ΑΕΩΝ. Studies in Honor of Ronald S. Stroud*: 515–529. Athens: Greek Epigraphic Society.
- Petsalis-Diomidis, A. 2010. *‘Truly beyond Wonders’: Aelius Aristides and the Cult of Asklepios*. (Oxford Studies in Ancient Culture and Representation) Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Roman

Jane E. Francis and Anna Kouremenos (eds) *Roman Crete. New Perspectives*. pp. ix+262, b/w and colour illustrations. 2016. Oxford: Oxbow Books. ISBN 978–1–78570–095–8 hardback £ 50.

This volume was instigated by a panel on *Roman Crete* presented at the *Roman Archaeology Conference* in Frankfurt, Germany in March 2012. The current book comprises a selected number of papers from the RAC panel, to which are added seven other articles. Totally, the volume is consisting of 13 articles, plus a foreword written by Hugh Sackett, and an introduction and an afterword, where the editors present an account of the previous archaeological and historical research on Roman Crete, summarize the outputs of the volume papers, and propose directions for future research.

Chronologically, the focus of the volume is the Roman imperial period (1st–3rd centuries AD). Some articles, however, extend to the late Hellenistic and late Roman periods, or even into the Early Byzantine age (8th and 9th centuries AD).

Thematically, the volume contains a variety of subjects. Broadly speaking the 13 articles discuss matters concerning economy and trade, urbanism, climate, art and architecture. As Jane Francis notes in the introduction, ‘this total represents a cross-section of the variety of Cretan material evidence, history and interpretations available to date’. Clearly, the scope of the volume was to present as much as possible new material for Roman Crete.

In the first article of the book François Chevrolier discusses the relationship between Crete and Cyrenaica, the two parts of the double province, united from the middle to second half of the 1st century BC till the beginning of the 3rd or even the early 4th century AD. Chevrolier argues that commercial exchanges between the regions are barely attested via the material evidence, but according to him, it is wrong to assume that the two regions were ignorant of each other, since ancient contacts go back to Minoan times. Coin and pottery circulation, as well as epigraphy, attests dynamic relations just after the union, i.e. during the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD, which decline from the end of the 1st century onwards.

Martha Baldwin Bowsky in her article ‘A context for Knossos: Italian Sigillata stamps and cultural

³ Also, e.g., Galli 2014.

identity across Crete' uses the circulation of the Italian Sigillata in Crete and the Greek East, as evidence for trade and economic integration of the cities, and as evidence of acculturation of the local elites. She examines the provenience, chronology and distribution patterns of the examined ceramics, and tries to analyze the reasons behind the Italian Sigillata boom in the 1st–2nd century AD. She finds the explanation in the decline of local pottery production and in the local elite's 'self-Romanisation', expressed with the desire for Italian-style artefacts. Although the title of her article is focused on 'cultural identity' this point is not satisfactorily developed. (Perhaps the title is very resonant for the material under examination). However, her analysis on the attested examples of Italian Sigillata is very detailed and the reconstruction of the distribution patterns and exchange networks inside and outside of Crete is very illuminating.

In the third article of the volume, Anna Kouremenos brings us to a different context. Via an iconographic analysis she narrates the development that the double axe, one of the most typical symbols of Minoan Crete, underwent from Bronze Age to Roman times. Although, as she admits, 'the rather eclectic mix of artefact categories depicting the double axe [...] raises more questions than it answers', she convincingly concludes that from a mostly religious symbol during the Bronze Age, in the Roman period the double axe has evolved to a multi-faceted but mostly apotropaic symbol.

In a fascinating paper, Jennifer Moody analyses the climate in the southwest Aegean (Crete included) from the Hellenistic till the Byzantine period (3rd/2nd centuries BC – ca. 1000 AD). She uses tree-rings, pollen, microfossils, speleothems, geomorphology and ancient texts for this exercise, and compares her evidence with data from central Europe and the eastern Mediterranean. Although in the conclusions she states that 'the influence of external socio-political forces on the region in the form of conquest and war seem to overwhelm any adaptations or reactions to climate change', her results actually seem to fit the human history attested in the southwest Aegean during this time span! In the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC the climate was cold resulting in less land available for cultivation than had been in the past. From 100 BC to 200 AD (the so-called Roman optimum) the climate was characterised by stability and warming temperatures, which have lengthened the growing season and allowed frost-sensitive crops like olives to be grown at higher altitudes. From 200 AD onwards climate instability and low temperatures

occurred, while the 8th – 9th centuries AD were less evaporative. Comparisons between the situation in southwest Aegean with central Europe and eastern Mediterranean for the most part concur but, of course, with some regional divergences.

Jane Francis discusses apiculture in Roman Crete. The author presents the main archaeological evidence for apiculture on the island, namely the ceramic beehives, and poses questions relating to the contribution of apiculture to the economy of Crete in the Roman period. Export of Cretan honey to Italy is archaeologically attested, and Roman texts provide evidence for the movement of honey and wax off Crete to other Mediterranean centres. Francis, using both literary and archaeological data, tries to identify the boundaries between family subsistence and export for the honey and wax production.

Pavlina Karanastasi, in her article on Roman imperial sculpture from Crete, makes the common mistake to connect regional economic prosperity with the concentrated capital in individual urban centres and families. The decisive factor, she argues, for Crete's prosperity was the Italian settlers, who 'were accustomed to high living standards with good quality housing and imported household objects'. Starting from this principal it is not surprising that her conclusions note that although the number of flourishing cities decreased in the Roman era, compared to Hellenistic times, there is an increased distribution of sculptures in large urban centres in Crete. Besides that, Karanastasi offers a comprehensive view of the local and imported sculpture in Roman imperial Crete.

The next article, written by Michael Milidakis and Christina Papadaki, is dedicated to a single item, namely an attic marble support from Roman Kissamos depicting a boar in relief. The authors investigate the style of the relief and present an iconographic analysis of the subject in Greek and Roman art.

Vanna Niniou-Kindeli and Nikos Chatzidakis present a preliminary (but also detailed) report from their excavation and restoration work on the theatre of Aptera. This report is more than welcomed as the theatre of Aptera is the only excavated Greek theatre (with Roman modifications) in Crete. It is interesting that, according to the present archaeological data, by contrast to the numerous Roman theatres attested on the island, pre-Roman theatres are identified only in Gortyn, Lato, Lytto, and Aptera. The authors argue that this must be coincidental due to the lack of excavations or to

the total destruction of the pre-Roman phases of the theatres by the Roman renovations. Although in theory nobody can refute this scenario, the fact is that in mainland Greece, Roman modifications to Classical-Hellenistic theatres have not obliterated the older phases of the buildings; on the contrary the Roman interventions were limited, usually identified in the stage buildings or in the orchestras and the lower parts of the *cavea* (the latter in the cases of the transformation of the orchestras of the theatres into arenas). Financial reasons would constitute a serious objection to the destruction of an already standing building for its replacement by an entirely new one. The presence of many, entirely new, Roman theatres in Crete must be probably explained to the lack of (remarkable) pre-Roman theatres on the island; a phenomenon which if true triggers challenging research questions.

Enzo Lippolis summarizes the results of the long-term research of the Italian Archaeological School in Gortyn and he presents an archaeological narration of the urban development of the city from the early Hellenistic period till late Antiquity. With good descriptions and illuminating maps, Lippolis makes clear to the reader how Gortyn was transformed from a medium-sized city in Hellenistic times, to a Roman megalopolis of ca. 100 ha inhabited area in Antonine and Severan periods, and equipped with numerous public buildings. Gortyn, the capital of the double province of Crete and Cyrenaica, attracted from early on the attention of scholars, thus producing the results that we enjoy today. Aspects on long-term urban developments, like that described for Gortyn, are sadly lacking for most of the Cretan cities.

In the next article, Scott Gallimore offers a meticulous and interesting paper on Crete's economic transformation in the Late Roman Empire, using the amphora record as a primary economic proxy. He refutes the scenario of Crete's economic failure after the end of the 3rd century AD and proves that the export economy of the island continued to flourish into the late Roman period. Apart from the free-market exchange attested in the entire Roman age (1st – 7th centuries AD), the significant shift that he identifies from Early to Late Roman times, is that while in the early centuries the island 'used' the Alexandrian grain trade to export its goods towards Italian markets, in the late Roman period and especially during the 6th and 7th centuries the island became part of the military *annona* supplying the military forces stationed around the Black Sea.

In the penultimate article of the volume entitled 'Theatres, plays and the 3rd century crisis', George

Harrison drafts evidence for the economic and cultural activities on the island to challenge (not in the clearest way I have to confess) the perception of a 3rd century decline.

Lastly, Anastasia Yangaki offers an analytical and up-to-date presentation of the ceramics that circulated on the island during the late Roman and early Byzantine periods (4th – early 9th centuries). Yangaki touches upon issues related to the current state of evidence and new directions, and she goes on, beyond typo-chronological seriations, to matters of fabrics and trade networks. Of particular interest is the continuous ceramic sequence attested in Crete after the end of the 7th century, and the plentiful evidence for the 8th, which comes in sharp contradiction with the scarce material of the 4th – 5th centuries.

The collection of the aforementioned articles offer a significant boost to the study of Roman Crete. The articles are written by experts in the field and the pluralism of the contributions makes this book attractive to a wide range of scholars. But herein lies also the problematic point of the volume. The book is not thematic and it lacks a synthetic interpretation. It includes papers like Moody's on climatic change, as well as papers like that of Milidakis' and Papadaki's on a single marble table support. I suppose this is the price paid for the many research directions included in the volume.

Furthermore, some areas have been especially outlined in comparison to others. For example, the economy of the island as evidenced by the ceramics, has been discussed in almost half of the volume papers. Urbanism and settlement patterns, on the other hand, are strikingly lacking. This topic is represented only by the discussion of Gortyn. But Gortyn was just one of the c. 23 cities which were active in Roman Crete, and plus it was the province capital. We would like to be able to compare the 'story' of Gortyn with the fate of some other (second rank) cities of Roman Crete.

Despite the aforementioned weak points, which to an extent is not the responsibility of the editors but of the research gaps, *Roman Crete. New Perspectives* is undoubtedly a book of reference for Roman Crete and it has much to offer not only on a regional level, but also to Roman studies in general.

MICHALIS KARAMBINIS
HELLENIC MINISTRY OF CULTURE
mkarambinis@gmail.com