FROM COMMUNAL SPIRIT TO INDIVIDUALITY:
THE EPIGRAPHIC HABIT IN HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN CRETE

The subject of my paper is a comparison between the epigraphic habit in Hellenistic and in Roman Crete, from the third century B.C. to the third century A.D. We define as 'epigraphic habit' the position occupied by inscriptions in the public and private life of a particular period and area. Studies of the epigraphic habit do not focus so much on the specific content of inscriptions, but consider more general aspects, such as the number of inscriptions, the nature of the texts, their language, their distribution over time, space, and social strata. These aspects depend to a great extent on the particular characteristics of the community which produces and displays inscriptions, such as mentality, social stratification, ideology, and socio-political structure. Consequently, changes in these features often (but not always) reflect deeper changes in a community. Studies of the epigraphic habit naturally have a quantitative component; but numbers never speak for themselves, and it would be meaningless to say, e.g., that more inscriptions or more epitaphs survive from Roman than from Hellenistic Crete. In order to give meaning to these or similar statements, one needs to take into consideration various parameters, especially the state of research; e.g., with regard to epigraphy, central Crete is better known than the eastern and western parts of the island. It is for this reason that I will focus on central Crete. The most important parameters in the study of the epigraphic habit are not quantitative, but qualitative:
- the character of the documents (laws, decrees, treaties, epitaphs, dedications, inscriptions on pottery and other instrumenta domestica, etc.); it is, e.g., significant that the majority of the Hellenistic inscriptions of Crete are public/legal documents (see below);

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- the spatial distribution of the inscriptions; roughly 1/4 of all the inscriptions of Roman Crete have been found in only three cities (Gortyn, Knossos, and Lyttos), whereas the Hellenistic inscriptions are more evenly distributed; this is certainly related to the fact that there were more than 40 independent poleis in Hellenistic Crete, but only 15 or 16 settlements with the status of a polis in Roman Crete (members of the provincial Koinon)\(^2\), also the specific status of these cities in Roman Crete results in this unequal distribution of texts: Gortyn was the provincial capital, Knossos the only Roman colony on the island, and Lyttos a city with a huge territory;

- the distribution of the texts in the territory of a community; particular attention should be paid to the reasons for the concentration of texts in particular areas, such as sanctuaries, cemeteries, the civic center, dependent settlements, forts, etc.;

- the gender and social position of the dedicators or the honorands; and

- textual aspects, such as the use of stereotypical or unique expressions, and the language (including the use of dialects or koine forms, spelling, etc.).

Changes in these features are the result of developments, such as socio-political reforms, the familiarity with writing, contacts with other regions, uniformity or heterogeneity, and the integration or the isolation of an area. Above all, one needs to relate the situation of the area under study to the broader picture, i.e., to the epigraphic habit in the rest of the Hellenistic and Roman world\(^3\). Studies of epigraphic habits are comparative studies, requiring comparisons between sites, regions, periods, types of documents, and different social groups. In the case of Roman Crete, we cannot detect peculiarities and evolutions if we limit ourselves to an endoscopic analysis which considers only inscriptions of the Imperial period and only the inscriptions of Crete. We need to compare the situation in Hellenistic and Roman Crete with the epigraphic habit of the Hellenistic and Roman world, in general, and we also need to compare the epigraphic behavior of the Cretans inside and outside of their island\(^4\). Here, I will have to concentrate on a few examples, beginning with a general characterisation of the epigraphic habit in Hellenistic Crete.

Its most striking feature is its predominantly public nature. From Hellenistic Gortyn (c. 300-50 B.C.) we have 77 public legal documents (decrees, laws, and treaties), but only 15 grave inscriptions\(^5\), and the situation is similar all over the island. We see how uncommon this


\(^4\) One of the reasons I think that J. Whitley (see note 1) reaches the wrong conclusions with regard to the state of literacy in Archaic and early Classical Crete is the fact that he has not considered the epigraphic behavior of Cretans outside of Crete; see my remarks in *SEG* XLVII 1377.

proportion between legal texts and epitaphs is, if we compare it with the situation in other areas. To give but a few examples from recent corpora, in Epidamnos the epitaphs make up 99% of the stone inscriptions (from the Archaic period to Late Antiquity), in Apollonia 72%, and in Beroia 53%. Within the group of the public legal documents of Hellenistic Crete three categories prevail, all three of them related to a military and diplomatic context: proxeny decrees for foreigners; 59 decrees which concern the inviolability of sanctuaries and communities outside Crete (the largest group of asylia decrees in the entire Greek world), and more than 100 treaties or decrees concerning interstate agreements. With the exception of the imperial power of Athens, no other Greek area has produced so many treaties in the entire ancient world as Crete in a period of only two centuries; treaties of alliance with foreign powers concerning the recruitment of mercenary soldiers, treaties concerning the settling of legal conflicts between persons of different citizenship, treaties of alliance between Cretan communities, treaties which aimed at improving certain economic activities especially for those citizens who did not own land. Many Cretans made a living as mercenary soldiers on the basis of interstate agreements, the seasonal pastoral activities were improved, and trade activities became the subject of detailed regulations.

In this context it is necessary to underline the fact that, contrary to what many scholars maintain, the evidence for trade activities in Hellenistic Crete does not mean that the character

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2 See esp. Aptera: IC II 3, 5-15; Elytia: IC II xiii 1-2; Gortyn: ICTIV 202-229; Kisamos: A. MARTINEZ FERNANDEZ, St. MARKOULAKI, Decreto inédito de provenia de Kisamos, Creta, in ZPE 133, 2000, pp. 103-108; Knossos: IC viii 10, 12; Lappa: ICn I xiv 4-9; Olous: IC I xii 4-7; SEG XXIII 549, 551; XXXIX 978; Polybenaia: IC II xiii 4; Sybrita: LE RIDER 1966, 258f. The military context is evident in the following honorary inscriptions: IC I xii 41, V, III iv 2-3; IV 168, 195, 208 A, 215 C, 220; LE RIDER 1966, 258f. nos. 4-5; see also A. PETROPOLOU, Beitrag zur Wirtschafts- und Gesellschaftsgeschichte Kretas in hellenistischer Zeit, Frankfurt 1985, 33f.


9 For the treaties between Cretan poleis see Chaniotis, op. cit. (note 2); for the treaties between Cretan cities and foreign states and kings see ibid. 16f. note 57 and S. KREUTER, Außenbezüge kretischer Gemeinden zu den hellenistischen Staaten 3. und 2. Jh. v. Chr., Munich 1992.

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of the island's economy changed dramatically from an economy primarily oriented towards subsistence to a production primarily oriented towards exports. The trade with slaves and with war booty is well attested\textsuperscript{11}; there is evidence for imports to Crete (e.g., Rhodian amphoras, works of sculpture, and luxury objects)\textsuperscript{12}; there can also be no doubt that the Cretans exploited the geographical position of their island for transit trade\textsuperscript{13}; but there is no evidence for substantial exports of any Cretan product before the Imperial period. I have the impression that the scholars who underline the importance of trade for the Hellenistic economy of Crete tend to overlook the essential difference between transit trade and trade with local products and to overevaluate the evidence.

Since this issue is of some importance for understanding the Cretan particularities, I should comment on the recent views of two of the best specialists on Crete: Paula Perlman, who has presented a very stimulating study on the relations between Crete and Rhodes (note 10), and L.V. Watrous who has written a review of a volume I have recently edited on Cretan economy. Perlman has presented an impressive review of evidence which in her view is related to foreign trade; it includes the clause of the safe use of Cretan harbors in proxeny decrees, the privilege of the customs-free import and export of valuables in honorary inscriptions, the numerous Hadra vases and the few Cretan amphora stamps found in Egypt (see further below), the introduction of Egyptian cults into Crete, and the discovery of a workshop for wool production at Xerokampos\textsuperscript{14}. This evidence is, however, not at all unequivocal and should be interpreted with caution. It is simply not true that every ship that was guaranteed safety when sailing to a Cretan harbor was a merchant ship; it is also not true that all the wares exported from Crete were Cretan products; and it is absolutely certain that many recipients of the privileges of inviolability, customs-free import and export, and the safe use of harbors were not traders. At Olous the recipients of these privileges include, e.g., a soldier (\textit{IC} I xxii 4 XI) and a doctor (\textit{IC} I xxii 4 XIII), at Knossos envoys of Magnesia on the Maeander and an epic poet (\textit{IC} I viii 10 and 12). As a matter of fact there is not a single proxeny or honorary decree earlier than c. 100 B.C. which unequivocally reveals an economic context, whereas a military background is directly attested in many cases\textsuperscript{15}. The rest of Perlman's evidence is equally problematic. Everything we know about the introduction of Egyptian cults into Crete reveals a military context (Cretan mercenaries returning from Egypt or Egyptian troops on Crete); and it is methodologically problematic.


\textsuperscript{13} See note 7. The relatively large group of honorary inscriptions for musicians and epic poets can be explained by the popularity of such performances on Crete: \textit{IC} I viii 12; xxii 4 III, VI; LE RIDER 1966, 258f. nos. 2-3; A. CHANIOTIS, \textit{Als die Diplomaten noch tanzten und sangen}, in \textit{ZPE}: 71, 1988, pp. 154-156.
to make out of a single workshop in Xerokampos a wool industry; Perlman may "see no reason to doubt" that its products were exported, but the fact remains that there is absolutely no evidence supporting this conclusion. If there were so many foreign traders on Crete or Cretan traders abroad they certainly succeeded in concealing their identity, because not a single one of them is known. I see similar problems with L.V. Watrous' views. Watrous correctly points out that there is recent archaeological evidence pointing to intensive agricultural exploitation in the Hellenistic period and to industrial activities at Matalon; he also draws attention to the doubling of rural sites in the Mesara "in the Hellenistic period (ca. 325-69 B.C.)", to the numerous finds of stamped amphoras, and to Polybius' statement on the greed of the Cretans (6.45-47). I very much doubt whether any of this can be regarded as evidence for an export economy in the third and second centuries B.C. The increased number of rural sites in the Mesara needs to be contextualised in order to become meaningful: it makes a huge difference if the new sites came into being before or after the destruction of Phaistos (c. 150 B.C.), since the late second and early first centuries B.C. form a distinct period in the history of Hellenistic Crete. The stamped amphoras imported to Crete provide no evidence for export trade, and Polybius' comment has nothing to do with export economy, but with the vices that the historian (in an exaggerated way) attributes to the Cretans: piracy and mercenary service.

Again it is only a comparison between Crete and other parts of the Hellenistic world that can reveal the Cretan peculiarities. Many categories of evidence, so well represented in the source material of the areas which were integrated into the economic networks of the Hellenistic world, are entirely absent in Crete: we lack evidence for a long-distance trade with local products, for local manufacture (except for the Hadra vases), for Cretan merchants, and for the display of private wealth which characterizes big and small Hellenistic poleis (luxurious dedications, foundations, private dedications of public buildings, contributions to festivals, impressive funerary documents, honorific decrees for benefactors, etc.). This is not due to some coincidental gaps in our sources, but to the peculiarities of Cretan society and economy. Consequently, I see no reason, yet, to reconsider my view that the Cretan economy in the Hellenistic period continued to be primarily oriented towards subsistence and that the concentration of so many related treaties in a period of only 200 years (c. 300-110 B.C.) should be seen as a response to a crisis in Cretan society. This evidence is not only unique in the history of Crete; in this density, it is also unique in the Hellenistic period and clearly bestows upon Crete a very distinctive character.

Hellenistic Crete is also unique in other respects. One of the most striking phenomena of the Hellenistic World is the prominent role played by benefactors; we know of their activities in cities as big as Athens or Ephesos and as small as Morrylos in Macedonia through hundreds of honorary decrees and honorary inscriptions which record their...
activities. They erected buildings, made dedications, repaired the fortification walls, made loans to their cities, cared for their supply with cheap corn, and they tended to monopolise the political life of their cities. Honorary decrees for benefactors, so abundant in mainland Greece, on the islands, and in Asia Minor, are entirely absent from Hellenistic Crete; the few honorary inscriptions which were set up for benefactors (energetai) are always dedicated to foreigners: to foreign kings, Roman magistrates, and doctors (usually in periods of war). It is at the end of the period that we find a single reference to a benefactor, a choregos, who financed repairs of a temple at Lato (IC I xvi 27), and a posthumous funerary epigram for a statesman at Lato.

In the rest of the Hellenistic world the activities of benefactors were also recorded in other types of texts which served their self-representation: building inscriptions, statue bases (sometimes with long lists of the offices they had occupied), dedications, and luxurious funerary monuments, consolatory decrees after their untimely death, sacred regulations concerning cults and sanctuaries founded by them.

Again, this type of evidence is either extremely limited or even entirely absent from Hellenistic Crete; if we do find it, then only in the last part of the period, the last one or two generations before the Roman conquest, which should be regarded as a separate period (see note 17). Let us take the case of dedications and building inscriptions. In central Crete, i.e., the most representative area, covered by volumes I and IV of the Inscriptiones Creticae, we have a total of 78 Hellenistic dedications and building inscriptions, most of them from the last 50 years before the Roman conquest and almost one fourth of them from a single sanctuary at Sta Lenika (see table 1). Only 36% of them are dedications by private individuals, only four dedications were made by women, only four by foreigners. The overwhelming majority (59%) are records of building activities and dedications financed by the community and supervised by civic officials.

In a period which elsewhere is generally characterized by individuality and by the self-representation of strong personalities, the political and military leaders of Hellenistic Crete escape our knowledge because they have left no inscriptions which honor them for their public role or commemorate their dedications and benefactions.


23 M.W.B. Bowsky, Epigrams to an Elder Statesman and a Young Noble from Lato pros Kamara (Crete), in Hesperia 58, 1989, pp. 115-129 (SEG XXXIX 972; LXII 808; XLVII 1400).

24 For an exception see the epigram of a priest at Kydonia: SEG XL 775.

In Hellenistic Crete the epigraphic habit is predominantly public, anonymous, impersonal, masculine, local, and limited with regard to the representation of social groups - and all this despite the fact that Crete was neither isolated nor egalitarian, despite the unequivocal evidence for social stratification, despite the indications of the strong position occupied by women. In Hellenistic Crete the epigraphic habit does not allow individual personalities to emerge beyond the anonymity of the public epigraphic record. We know about the life and personality of some Cretans only when they are part of the epigraphic habit of areas outside of Crete: we know of Eumaridas of Kydonia because he was honored in Athens, of Charmadas of Anopolis because of the biographical epigram written on his grave in Palestine, of the dream interpreter and poet Ptolemaios of Polythenia because of the dedications he made on Delos, of Telemnastos of Gortyn because he was honored by the Cretan soldiers he had commanded, not in Crete, but in Epidauros. The question is why the epigraphic behavior of the Cretans changed so dramatically when they were outside of their island. I will return to this question later.

In Crete itself the dramatic change occurs after the Roman conquest. The epigraphic habit of Roman Crete is predominantly an epigraphy of individuals, of men and women, of free persons and slaves, of Cretans and foreigners. The inscriptions concerning the most important individual in the Roman empire - the emperor - and the most important individual

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in Crete - the provincial governor - naturally take pride of place, but we also have inscriptions concerning members of the civic elite and representatives of all social strata.

These dramatic changes are apparent in the dedications and building inscriptions which become predominantly private (Table 2)\textsuperscript{26}. Considering again central Crete, we see that out of 67 dedications and building inscriptions, only 11 were set up by a community (16% as opposed to 59% in the Hellenistic period). The dedications by women are more prominent (23% of the private dedications); we have for the first time dedications made by associations (IC IV 266-267), dedications made by slaves for the well-being of their masters (IC III iv 45; SEG XLI 745) and an increasing number of dedications financed (and not just supervised) by magistrates.

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\textbf{Table 2. Late Republican and Imperial building inscriptions and dedications (not including honorary statues and dedications to the emperors)}\textsuperscript{27}.

For the first time we also encounter honorary inscriptions and honorary statues set up by the cities for magistrates, members of the local elite, benefactors, and intellectuals\textsuperscript{28}, honorary inscriptions initiated by associations (IC IV 290-291), and statues set up by individuals for


\textsuperscript{27} I have not considered the dedications to the emperors because this dedicatory practice would distort the picture: inscriptions were regularly dedicated to the emperor, by communities, magistrates, and individuals, often in the context of rituals, such as the celebration of the emperor's birthday: see A. CHANIOTIS, G. RETHEMIOTAKIS, \textit{Neue Inschriften aus dem kaiserzeitlichen Lyttos, Kreta, in Tyché}, 1992, p. 32. For this reason dedications to the emperor cannot be compared and associated with the other types of dedicatory inscriptions.

\textsuperscript{28} IC I vi 25; viii 22-24; xvi 37; xviii 51-57; IV 289, 292-293, 297, 300, 303, 304, 307, 309-311, 424, 444; SEG XXVII 634 = XXXIII 904. For a posthumous honorary inscription
members of their family, for educators, patrons, and friends. Honorary inscriptions dedicated by women or for women also appear for the first time in the Roman period. Also the few decrees of this period allow us to recognize personalities, such as Symmachos of Lyttos, who initiated the revival of an old institution, the distribution of money to the tribal subdivisions (startos) on the occasion of two festivals.

Let us now turn to the grave inscriptions. The Hellenistic Cretans did not pay less attention to their dead than the other Greeks, but if one may trust statistics, it seems that they were less interested in inscribing the funerary monuments in the Hellenistic period than both other Hellenistic Greeks and their countrymen in the Roman period. In the territory of the Cretan Arkades, e.g., we have in the Hellenistic period seven grave inscriptions, among them only one epigram and not a single monument erected by a woman. In the Roman period not only the numbers increase (17), but also the content of the funerary texts is more diverse and assimilated to the epigraphic habit of the rest of the Greek world. We have two epigrams, longer texts, four texts set up by women for their deceased husbands, two for their deceased children, and a monument set up by a man to honor his educator. The situation is similar in Chersonesos, with only six Hellenistic epitaphs and 17 in the Roman period (again four texts were set up by women). If we turn to Lyttos we are confronted with an extreme situation. We have 134 epitaphs from the Roman period as opposed to only 15 grave inscriptions of the Hellenistic period; epigrams and epitaphs set up by women appear for the first time in the Imperial period; we also find for the first time a funerary imprecation. In some other cities (e.g., in Lato, Olous, Gortyn, and Knossos) the material is more evenly distributed, but changes occur in the content of the texts: we find for the first time inscriptions which mention the age of a person at death, epitaphs set up by foster children for the persons who had raised them and by women for their husbands or children, and texts forbidding the violation of the

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29 For family members: IC I xvi 57; IV 292, 296-297, 299, 425; L'Annee Epigraphique 1985, 841. For an educator: IC IV 295. For friends: IC I xvi 56, 59; IV 301-302, 305-306. For patrons: IC I xvi 55, 58; IV 289, 293.

30 Honorary inscriptions for women: e.g., IC I v 25; xvi 37; xvii 52, 54; II iii 44-45; IV 290, 303; by women: IC I xvi 57; IV 292, 296-297, 299, 425.


33 Hellenistic: IC I vii 14-16, 18, 25; SEG XXXIII 730. Roman: IC I vii 12-13, 17, 19-24, 30-32; SEG XLV 1249-1253. Texts set up by women: IC I vii 23-24, 31; SEG XLV 1249. In the case of Chersonesos one should be very cautious about statistics, however, since a lot of inscriptions found in recent years remain unpublished.

34 Hellenistic period: IC I xvi 73, 78, 101, 107-108, 110 A, 112, 119, 122, 130, 136, 143, 145, 148; SEG XXIII 543. Imperial period: IC I x 2 (from Dreros, which was part of the Lyttian territory); I xvi 65-72, 74-77, 79-100, 102-106, 109, 110 B, 111, 113-118, 120 A-D, 121, 123-129, 131-135, 137-142, 144, 146-159, 161-167, 169-170, 172-180 (N.B.: several of these monuments contain two or three different epitaphs); SEG XXV 1014; XXXIII 544; XXXIX 976; LX 778; XLII 816 A/B. Epigrams: IC I vii 177-180. Epitaphs set up by women: IC I xvi 72, 74, 76 B; SEG XXV 1014 (the word kyrios here designates the husband, not her master; cf. SEG XLVII 853).

35 IC I xvi 64. For the funerary imprecations see J. STRUBBE, 'Agai imrufi^ioi. Imprecations against Desecrators of the Grave in the Greek Epitaphs of Asia Minor: A Catalogue, Bonn 1997.

36 E.g., IC I v 17; xvi 43; xvii 98 A/B, 120 A/B, 123, 128, 139 B; I xiii 17; IV 356; SEG XXVIII 743; cf. IC II xxi 4, 5-9, 13, 15-18, 23-25.

37 Foster children: e.g., SEG XLI 732, 736. Women: e.g., IC III iii 32, 39, 42, 46; see also notes 32-34. I know of only one pre-Roman epitaph possibly set up by a woman: SEG
The epitaphs of Roman Crete also apply the standard funerary formulas known from the rest of the Greek world (e.g., the attributes, heros, amemptos, anenkletos, glykytatos = dulcissimus, or the expression aretas kai sophroynes charin)\(^{39}\).

My last example for individuality and diversity in the epigraphy of Roman Crete concerns the "inscribed instrumenta domestica", i.e., inscriptions on pottery, tiles, weights, etc., which give us the names of producers, owners of workshops, owners of objects, traders, and eponymous magistrates. We have considerable numbers of instrumenta domestica from Hellenistic Crete:

1 - roof tiles inscribed with names (often those of magistrates)\(^{40}\);
2 - loom weights inscribed with the names of the women who owned the looms or with individual letters (probably numbers)\(^{41}\);
3 - amphora stamps, mainly from Rhodes and Thasos\(^{42}\); and
4 - outside of Crete the Cretan Hadra vases, used as funerary urns, often for Cretan envoys and mercenaries\(^{43}\).

Stamps or painted inscriptions on amphorae produced on Crete are almost entirely lacking, with the exception of only seven handles of wine amphorae stamped with the seal of Sosos of Hierapytna (third century B.C.) found in Alexandria (six pieces) and at Trypitos (one piece)\(^{44}\). The six Hierapytnian amphora stamps in Egypt cannot be seriously taken as

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\(^{38}\) Xgovia (1000 nX.-lOO CJJCJfiaAnriaia/ogiatt, 71x401, XLI760(c.300B.C);
\(^{39}\) individual letters (probably numbers) grave 38. The epitaphs of Roman Crete also apply the standard funerary formulas known from the rest of the Greek world (e.g., the attributes, heros, amemptos, anenkletos, glykytatos = dulcissimus, or the expression aretas kai sophroynes charin)\(^{39}\).

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evidence for wine trade. A comparison with the thousands of amphora stamps of other producers of wine (Rhodes, Chios, Thasos, Knidos, Sinope, Chersonesos, etc.) is devastating. Six or even six thousand amphoras filled with Cretan wine can easily find their way from Crete to Egypt aboard the ships which continually brought Cretan mercenaries to the kingdom of the Ptolemies for more than 150 years. This is evidence neither for trade nor for a specialised production intended for massive export. Until new evidence which disproves this is published, I suggest that the aforementioned types of the Hellenistic instrumenta domestica are closely related to life in contemporary Crete: to pastoral economy and the production of textiles (loom weights), to public constructions (tiles), and to the presence of Cretan mercenaries in Egypt (Hadra vases).

Again, a comparison with the situation in Roman Crete shows an enormous difference. It is only from the late first century B.C. onwards, that we have evidence for a specialized production, for standardisation and for a massive export of local products, especially of wine. Besides the identifiable centers of production of Cretan amphoras and the many references to Cretan wine in the literary sources, in the Roman period we have not only seven, but several hundred stamps and painted inscriptions on Cretan amphoras, found in Greece, Italy, Gaul, and Africa. The texts refer to the type, quality, and provenance of the wine, e.g., from Lyttos, Gortyn, Kantanos, and Aptera. The dipinti also demonstrate a certain standardisation of production, using attributes for particular types of wine, such as rubrum, athalassos, anthinos, passon, staphidites etc. Thus, in the Roman period we do not have isolated items, but a wide distribution of inscribed Cretan amphoras. We know the names of individuals connected with this trade: producers, traders, and middlemen (cf. SEG XLV 1244). This is evidence for standardisation of production and for an organised massive export trade, for the commercialisation of production, and for the integration of the


48 See the bibliography in note 47. For a new piece see DE CARO 1998. De Caro's reading of the inscription should be corrected to ἔπιτυμχάνοντος Καρπάνων (not ἔπιτυμχάνοντος Καρπάνων, 'del vino che spetta ai Cardani'). ἔπιτυμχάνοντος is not a participle, but the genitive of the common name ἔπιτυμχάνων; similarly, the second name is probably Καρπάνων (nominative), a name already attested on Crete (IC I viii 62); C. CARRERAS MONFORT, Miscelanea: Las otras instrumenta domestica in Roman Crete: IC I xii 5, SEG XXXII 898.
island's production in economic networks that comprised the entire empire. We observe an analogous development in the case of lamps which bear the signatures of workshops. Signed lamps are unknown in Hellenistic Crete, although they are quite common in other areas. The signed lamps of Roman Crete bear to a large extent signatures of foreign workshops, but for the first time we can also identify Cretan workshops (e.g., the workshop of Gamos, the products of which were occasionally exported, e.g. to Kyrenaiak). These categories of evidence reflect a change in the economic behavior of the Cretans: a more dynamic development of local production, a specialisation, the development of recognizable workshops, and a production aiming at exports.

In these examples Roman Crete presents itself as a thoroughly assimilated and integrated area of a unified empire. We reach the same conclusion, if we study the language of the inscriptions, the decreasing number of texts with dialectal features and the increasing number of inscriptions in the koine, the fair amount of inscriptions in Latin, especially in the Roman colony of Knossos and in the provincial capital Gortyn, and above all the imperial epigraphy, i.e., the large number of inscription related to the Roman emperor in his various capacities.

Let me sum up: The epigraphic habit of Hellenistic Crete is predominantly public, anonymous, impersonal, masculine, local, and limited with regard to the representation of social groups; the epigraphic habit of the late Republican and the Imperial period is predominantly initiated by private persons and by the representatives of the provincial administration - not by the civic communities (with the exception of honorary inscriptions and dedications for the emperors); it originates in and reflects the life of individuals: men and women, Cretans and foreigners, magistrates and private persons, free persons and slaves; it is socially diverse, assimilated to the practices of the rest of the Roman world. The question is why. Only some of the changes can be ascribed to political and economic changes, e.g., the existence of an emperor, the establishment of a provincial administration, the loss of independence, the coming of colonists from Italy, the existence of a new economic network.

The transformation of the epigraphic habit from collective to individual reflects a change of mentality, which is far more difficult to explain. Let me give an example: Competitions (agones)
took place in Hellenistic Crete, but unlike the rest of Greece the names of the victors are not recorded in agonistic inscriptions, friendship was an important factor of social life, but there is not a single honorary inscription set up for a friend in Hellenistic Crete; on the contrary we have several such texts in Roman Crete (see note 29); men proposed decrees in Hellenistic Crete as they did in every Greek city, but while the psophismata in other areas regularly mention the man who had proposed them, the Cretan decrees do not, demonstrating the same striking anonymity and a communal spirit. There must have been political leaders in Hellenistic Crete, but their deeds are not recorded in honorary inscriptions.

If all this changes in the Roman period, this must be the result of a change in the forms of self-representation and praise, from oral and introverted, to written and public. I suspect that the decisive factor for this change in mentality is the fact that the Cretans in the Imperial period, exactly as the Hellenistic Cretans who used the medium of inscriptions outside of Crete, were not bound to the peculiar forms of the internal organisation of the Cretan communities, i.e. the division of the citizens in groups (tribes, men’s houses, syssitia, and military groups of the youth)54. These forms of organisation do not further individuality, but a collective spirit. They endorse competition, but they also provide a different framework for the praise and the honor of the victorious, the virtuous, and the prominent man: not the written record in the agora and the sanctuary, but the oral praise in the common meal, in the festival, in the assembly55. Whenever the Hellenistic Cretans were outside of their island, no longer bound to these forms of organisation, they adopted the epigraphic habit of the rest of the Hellenistic world. When these forms of organisation disappeared together with the abolishment of the military organisation of the Cretan cities after the Roman conquest, the new forms of self-representation became common and they also included all those social groups which had been previously either misrepresented (women, foreigners) or even excluded (slaves, freedmen, artisans). Changes in mentality are harder to grasp and explain than e.g., unequivocal changes in the constitution. But if we can detect them, it is with the application of more subtle methods, such as the study of epigraphic habits.

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55 The importance of oral praise in the syssitia is underlined by Dosiadas, FrGrHist 458 F 2.