

CRETE IN THE HELLENISTIC AEGEAN: SEEING THROUGH THE CRETAN MIRAGE

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Abstract

From a geographic perspective, the island of Crete in the south of the Aegean was well-positioned to engage in the rapidly expanding trade networks of the Mediterranean that flourished in the wake of the death of Alexander the Great. Ancient literary sources tell us that these maritime routes through which goods flowed were often plagued by ‘pirates’, roaming independently of any hegemonic rule. On the basis of Polybius, the most popular (modern and ancient) theory is that Hellenistic Crete was a center of this pirate activity. Powerful ruling cities like Rhodes, attacked Crete in the 3rd c. BC with the professed intent to destroy any pirate threat housed there. The mirage is that Crete is an island full of pirates, liars, and greedy citizens has continued in modern scholarship. This “Cretan Mirage” has had the effects of perpetuating the stereotypes of ancient Crete and marginalizing it within studies of the Hellenistic period. Paula Perlman first proposed that the “Cretan Mirage” was at work in the depictions of the First Cretan war (Perlman, 1992, 151-153). Here I go further to suggest that the “Cretan Mirage” has blinded scholars to other valid arguments about Cretan history and economics during the Hellenistic period. First, I will place Hellenistic Crete within its broader Aegean context, and, using archaeological and literary data, then I will compare the political and economic position of Crete to another major economic power in the Aegean, Rhodes. Finally, through a close examination of Crete’s role in the Mediterranean-wide trade I will argue that the “Cretan Mirage” is in fact a mirage. Crete was not solely inhabited by pirates, its people were not purely liars and full of greed. Rather, Crete was very much like any other island in the Aegean. I will also argue that Crete’s economic success and impact on the Aegean was similar in many way to Rhodes’. This conclusion should encourage a re-evaluation of the political and economic struggles that characterize the Hellenistic Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean in the 3rd and 2nd c. BC.

CHAPTER 1

Reviewing Modern Scholarship on Crete

There is an endemic marginalization of Crete in modern scholarship. In the index to Peter Green's seminal book on the Hellenistic period, *From Alexander to Actium: The Historical Evolution of the Hellenistic Age*, there are eight references to Crete and/or Cretans:¹ one depicts Cretans as liars, five highlight Crete only in terms of its pirates or piracy, one discusses a Cretan inscription on Orphism, and the last is written in relation to the Roman take over of Greece. By comparison, the nearby island of Rhodes has 124 references – almost an entire column to itself in the index.² Smaller Delos, a commercial port in the middle of the Aegean, has 36.³ This is not only found in Green's history, however. In Graham Shipley's book, *The Greek World After Alexander (323-30BC)*, the index lists three references to Crete generally, with a note directing the reader to investigate Crete further through referencing "particular places" and tellingly "piracy".⁴ The *Cambridge Companion to the Hellenistic World* mentions Crete twice: once to note that Crete had no economic change during the Hellenistic period and once to note Crete's small contribution to the wealth of material culture found in Greece.⁵ Last, Blackwell's *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* provides a much more rounded view of Crete, but this more recent resource still lacks an in-depth full chapter on Hellenistic Crete.⁶ These resources exemplify the current attitudes in general works towards Hellenistic Crete, wherein the majority

¹ Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium: The Historical Evolution of the Hellenistic Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 208, 302, 306, 449, 558, 592, 656, 675.

² Ibid., 962.

³ Ibid., 943.

⁴ Graham Shipley, *The Greek World After Alexander (323-30 BC)* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 552.

⁵ Glenn Bugh, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Hellenistic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 90, 151.

⁶ Andrew Erskine, ed. *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003); See Susan Alcock, Jennifer Gates, and Jane Rempel, "Reading the Landscape: Survey Archaeology and the Hellenistic *Oikoumene*," in *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, ed. Andrew Erskine (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 367-71.

is focused upon the piracy of Crete, or perhaps more generally, its negative reputation. Primarily, they show the exclusion of Crete from broader topics – such as the general history and economics of the period. It is important to note that these general works may leave out Crete due to the difficult source material, since it is incomplete and not easily found or dealt with, and the lack of secondary scholarship. Even so, I will argue that a more prominent reason for the exclusion is due to the marginalization of Crete within ancient Greek thought and the influence of the “Cretan Mirage”.⁷

Due to the reliance on literary sources, namely Polybius, Diodorus Siculus, and Strabo, the discrepancy between ancient and modern conceptions of piracy, the misconception of Crete’s mercenary economy, and the influence of the “Cretan Mirage” on interpretations of archaeological data, Crete has been disconnected from the mainstream history of the Hellenistic World and effectively marginalized. As a result, scholars who come across Crete within their research tend to perpetuate the stereotypes of the “Cretan Mirage”, which depict Cretans as greedy, lying, pirates. The main focus of this thesis is to examine the evidence for both the marginalization of Crete within scholarship and the perpetuation of the “Cretan Mirage” as well as to evaluate the archaeological evidence for an alternate perception of the history of Hellenistic Crete. Using the following chapters that will contextualize Crete within the Hellenistic Aegean, outline broad economic theory, consider a case study on Rhodes, and analyze the literary sources and archaeological evidence, I will dispel the “Cretan Mirage” and postulate that Crete was an important economic force in the Hellenistic Aegean, like the neighboring island of Rhodes, and that this success contributed to the slanderous reputation it has in ancient literature.

⁷ These phenomena are described by Paula Perlman in “Kretes aei leistai? The Marginalization of Crete in Greek Thought and the Role of Piracy in the Outbreak of the First Cretan War,” in *Hellenistic Rhodes*, edited by Vincent Gabrielsen (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1999), 132-61. See also Chapter 4 on Hellenistic Crete on page 48.

CHAPTER 2

The Hellenistic Aegean: A Broader Perspective

The story of the Hellenistic Mediterranean is one of war, profound cultural transformation, ideological shifts, territorial flux, economic ebbs and flows, and political dominance. From the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC until the Ptolemies lose control of Egypt to Rome in 31 BC, this period of history is change in essence.⁸ As Alexander lay dying in Babylon, he had only one true heir to the throne: his Macedonian wife Roxane's unborn child, unfit to claim the massive empire Alexander would soon leave behind.⁹ With no one to inherit his position at his death, a dispute began over ownership to the lands of Macedonia, Egypt, Persia, and mainland Greece. So began the Wars of the Diadochi, in which several of Alexander's relatives and most successful generals waged war and used political strategy to conquer regions. It was not until 276 BC that there were three distinct successor kingdoms with solid control over territories.¹⁰ The Ptolemies ruled Egypt, the Antigonids held Macedonia, and the Seleukids controlled Asia. The fighting would not end there, however. Alexander's lasting influence impressed upon his generals the absolute necessity of regional dominance, imperial expansion, and monarchical hierarchies.¹¹ Dynamic hegemonic political strategies would continue to move borders for the next three centuries, finally ending when Rome incorporated Greece into its own empire.

⁸ Glenn Bugh, "Introduction," *The Cambridge Companion*, xix-xxii; Erskine, *A Companion*, 2; There is some debate as to exactly when the Hellenistic period ended and when the Roman period began, depending on how one defines Rome's influence and level of control. 31 BC is the traditionally accepted date, which I will use here.

⁹ Winthrop Adams, "The Hellenistic Kingdoms," *The Cambridge Companion*, 28-30; There were other claims to the throne through Alexander's bloodline, though none were quite as legitimate as Roxane's unborn child.

¹⁰ Green, *From Alexander to Actium*, 134; There is some difference in dates here for the end of the wars of the Diadochi. David Braund ends this period in 281 BC with the Battle of Koroupedion and the murder of Seleukos (David Braund, "After Alexander: The Emergence of the Hellenistic World, 323-281," *A Companion*, 33.), though Graham Shipley, along with Bugh and Green, attributes the new period after the wars to the takeover of Macedonia by Antigonos Gonatas (Shipley, *The Greek World*, 107.).

¹¹ Green, *From Alexander to Actium*, 187.

The development of these kingdoms is only a piece of the larger interplay of change with which Greece was dealing with at this time. Alexander had stretched Greece's borders from the mainland to India, as north as Macedonia, and south to Egypt. As part of this growth, Alexander founded cities in Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Media, Bactria, and a few in Egypt.¹² War, booty, land, and opportunities for class advancement called tens of thousands of Greeks away from their homelands.¹³ This movement of people and goods set the stage for the Hellenistic Aegean to turn into an ancient 'superhighway' and provides an opportunity to analyze the economic status of individual regions and their interactions with other regions.

In the opposite direction, these empires opened trade routes, which allowed people from Ionia, Southwest Asia, and Egypt to immigrate and travel to Greece, bringing with them new ideologies, religions, languages, traditions, and material culture. Furthermore, even as the Wars of the Diadochi settled, these trade routes continued to be immensely valuable for military and economic purposes. Each kingdom relied heavily on imports such as foodstuffs, pitch, wood, slaves, and metals. There are several cases in the Hellenistic period where these hegemonic kings would go to great lengths to protect these interests or gain monopolies to control them.¹⁴ From a military perspective, gaining key islands or footholds in the Aegean allowed kings to station garrisons, dispatch diplomatic relations, or successfully maintain supply lines.¹⁵ Politically, it is important to understand that though the Ptolemaic, Antigonid, and Seleukid kingdoms were large-scale entities, the Aegean was home to smaller players that had a notable impact on trade and commerce in the region. Within the Cyclades, the city of Delos became an important

¹² Richard Billows, "Cities", *A Companion*, 198.

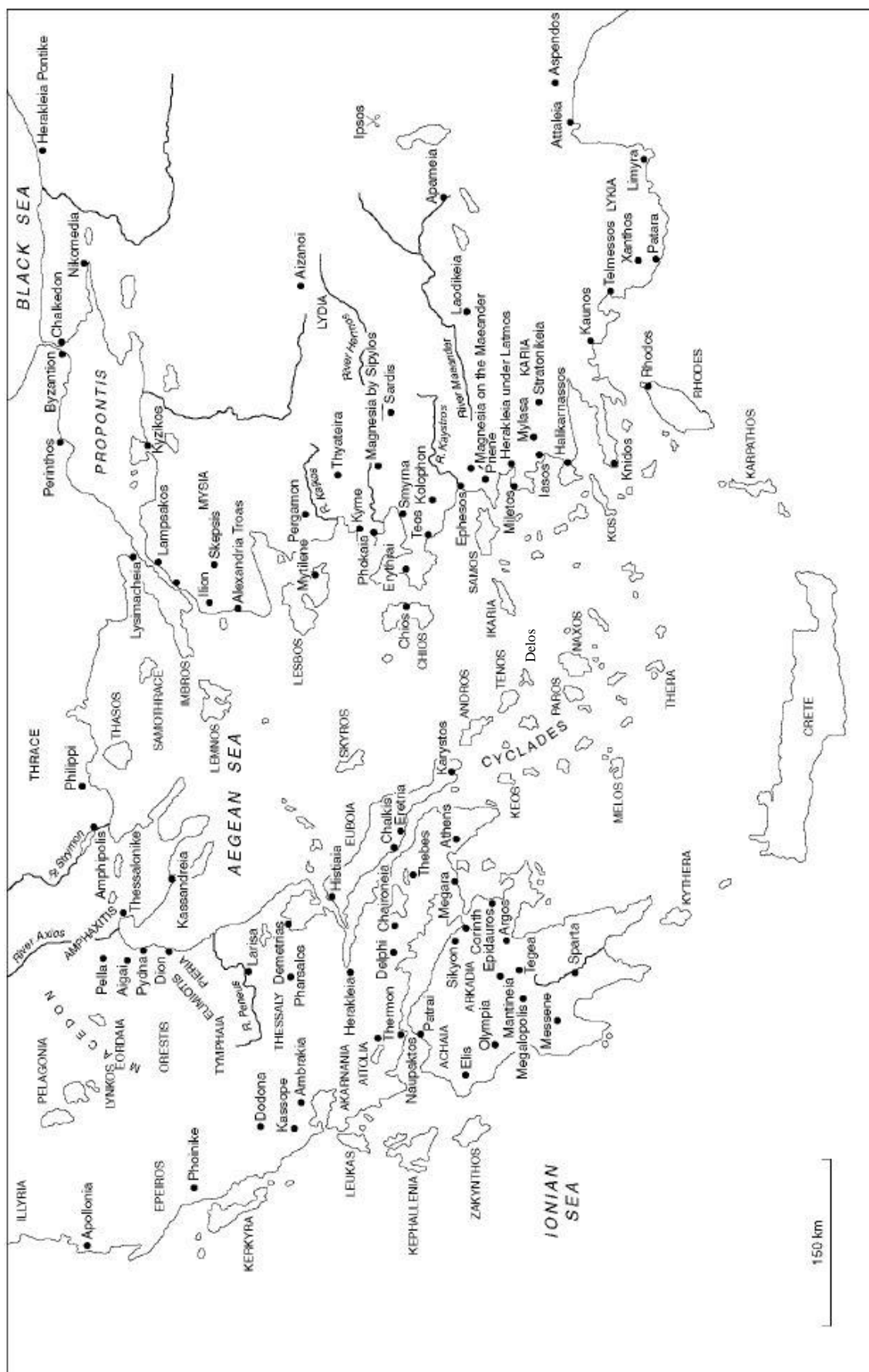
¹³ Shipley, *The Greek World*, 57.

¹⁴ See Vincent Gabrielsen "Profitable Partnerships: Monopolies, Traders, Kings, and Cities," in *The Economies of Hellenistic Societies: Third to First Century BC*, ed. Zofia Archibald and John Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 216-50.

¹⁵ Gary Reger, *Delos. Regionalism and change in the economy of independent Delos, 314-167 BC* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 20-6.

religious center and middle-ground for merchants and military ventures because it connected the Ionian coast, mainland Greece, and the northern Aegean (see Map 1). Further to the south lay wealthy Rhodes. In addition to creating its own hegemonic sphere and vast trade network, Rhodes also possessed one of the most advanced navies in the Aegean, likened to that of Athens in the Classical period.¹⁶ This navy placed Rhodes on a similar military level to the larger kingdoms, allowing it to participate in larger-scale political issues. Rome was also a key factor, especially beginning in the 2nd c. BC, because of its growing influence on Greece and the Aegean impacted military operations, trade, and treaties.

¹⁶ Vincent Gabrielsen, *The Naval Aristocracy of Hellenistic Rhodes* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1997), 85.



Map 1: Greece and Asia Minor

It is within this context that one can begin to paint a picture of general political and economic issues of the Hellenistic Aegean that will greatly influence the entire Mediterranean region. Significantly, mainland Greece and Macedonia were under the rule of Antigonos Gonatus (from 277/271 BC until his death in 239 BC) and were not, by any means, equivalent to a united Greece.¹⁷ Many Greek cities were full of rebellious intentions and were still vying for independence. This tension was exacerbated by the newly founded Achaean League (280 BC) and the Aetolian League, both of whom tirelessly attempted to rid Greece of Macedonian domination.¹⁸ Polybius describes the twelve members of the Achaean League as so unified and determined in their goal that he says “In general there is no difference between the entire Peloponnese and a single city except that its inhabitants are not included within the same wall . . .”, though Peter Green debates whether or not this is a reflection of Polybius’ bias as an Achaean man himself.¹⁹

Green also states that in Greece during the early 3rd c. BC “the uneasy tension between local autonomy and Macedonian lordship continued, further complicated by the Ptolemies’ hostility to Antigonid expansion in the Aegean . . .”²⁰ While the Ptolemies allied themselves with Sparta and any other anti-Macedonian entities on the mainland, they also were fighting the Antigonids for control of the Aegean through naval superiority – an economic necessity as well as a political defense mechanism.²¹ It was at this point that Antiochus II of the Seleukids allied with Macedonia in 261 BC and began to fight the Ptolemies in the Second Syrian War.²² Meanwhile, by the beginning of the 2nd c. BC, independent Rhodes began to become extremely

¹⁷ Peter Green, *The Hellenistic Age: A Short History* (New York: The Random House Publishing Group, 2007), 136-37.

¹⁸ Ibid, 71.

¹⁹ Polybius, *Histories*, 2.37.7-38

²⁰ Green, *The Hellenistic Age*, 70-71

²¹ Green, *From Alexander to Actium*, 147.

²² Ibid., 148.

wealthy through trade due to its position at the “intersection of all the major Mediterranean shipping routes, from Egypt, Cyprus, and Phoenicia to the Aegean and the Black Sea, as well as Italy and North Africa.”²³ This wealth helped it build its immense navy, which it used to support different superpowers to increase its own growing sphere of influence. In the southern Aegean, Crete had a strategic central position for many of these maritime routes. This discussion of the 3rd-century politics illustrates the types of power shifts that were common in this period in the Aegean – a constant back and forth between large kingdoms with support from smaller entities.

It is important to examine the different types of material evidence from the Hellenistic period in order to clearly understand the implications of each type. Archeological evidence, particularly, can provide information that we cannot glean from the literary evidence. Even though there is much inscriptional evidence, there is a comparative lack of contemporary literature for the period, meaning we must understand Hellenistic culture, societal structure, militaristic strategy, and ideologies through archaeological data. With a resurgence of academic interest in the period after Alexander’s death for the past twenty-five years, there is a wealth of new scholarly theories, recently published archaeological investigation, and more detailed analyses into our literary evidence. Scholarly interest funnels money into programs and departments, allowing for research opportunities and providing for a restructuring of the world’s previous understanding of the Hellenistic period. The material evidence is growing so rapidly that interpretations accepted even twenty years ago are revised rapidly. Glenn Bugh stated in the introduction to the *Cambridge Companion to the Hellenistic World* (2006) that “[The Hellenistic period] can no longer be called a neglected or discredited field, certainly not among the increasing number of scholars who have taken up the cause. . .”²⁴ I would agree, and go even

²³ Ibid., 378

²⁴ Bugh, “Introduction”, 6.

further to state that this field is the one with the most potential for breakthroughs, since scholars must combine literary and archaeological evidence. However, the complex history of the Hellenistic kingdoms gives just a small hint towards the difficulties of attempting to assign definite dates to evidence. Furthermore, there are a multitude of ancient languages to deal with in the literary and epigraphic evidence, due to the lasting effects of Alexander's empire. While most Classicists are well versed in Greek and Latin, the languages of the Near East and Asia are outside their usual training. Perhaps Andrew Erskine describes the study of 323 BC – 30 BC best in this way:

The body of evidence is growing all the time. A satisfactory narrative may be elusive but the variety and richness of the source material gives the historian the chance to confront other questions and issues . . . The challenge lies in combining all this evidence, material that often pulls in different directions.²⁵

I will begin by discussing the evidence that is most relevant to a study of the Hellenistic Aegean. These include literary, epigraphic, and coin evidence, as well as an evaluation of transport amphora. By highlighting the specific attributes and interpretation issues of each, I hope to organize a base from which to more completely contextualize the Aegean. Following this discussion, I will focus on the role of regional analysis within a broad overview of economic theory from the Hellenistic period, for both are crucial to a well-rounded understanding of the Aegean and of Crete its historical context.

Literature

As mentioned above, contemporary literary sources for the Hellenistic period are limited. Additionally, most of the literature proves difficult to gain any specific regional information from, as they tend to be broad historical narratives. Very little has survived to modern times, and what has survived is fragmentary. Of all of the authors that may be mentioned in an analysis of

²⁵Andrew Erskine, "Approaching the Hellenistic World," *A Companion*, 4.

Hellenistic literature, it seems that Polybius, Diodorus Siculus, and Strabo are the richest sources.²⁶ Each work is a product of the author's approach to their topic and influenced by the historical context in which it was written, so an examination of each of these authors is necessary gain an awareness of the possible limitations of their utility. It should be noted that this discussion will be about historical narratives, instead of poetry or philosophy texts. Though useful in other contexts, poetry and philosophy cannot provide much in terms of interpretation of specific events, dates, and broader economic theory.

To begin, Polybius of Megalopolis is the best historian we have for the period between 220 and 146 BC, due to the fact that the first five of his forty books are intact and that he was writing about contemporary events.²⁷ Born around 220 BC, Polybius was raised in an aristocratic Achaean family and he soon rose to be commander of the Achaean League.²⁸ Although he was quite familiar with Roman generals because of his position, he was deported to Rome in 170 BC to be examined for anti-Roman sentiment. It was there that his career as a historian would take off.²⁹ He traveled extensively, visiting Africa, Spain, and Gaul, Italy, Greece, Portugal, and perhaps Rhodes, which most certainly would have given him sufficient perspective on Roman conquest to write his main work. *The Histories* is focused on the rise of the Roman Empire (both in general and in Greece) and how its glory was so swiftly attained.³⁰ His approach to history was one of pragmatism and realism. In Polybius' own words:

²⁶ Green, *From Alexander to Actium*, xix; There are many contemporary authors which have been lost to us, including Douris of Samos, Hieronymus of Cardia, Poseidonius, Phylarchus, Timaios of Tauromenion, and authors from the period of Alexander as well, Aristoboulos of Kassandreia, Kallisthenes of Olynthos, Kleitarchos, and Ptolemy I of Egypt. See also Erskine, "Approaching the Hellenistic World", 5-6.

²⁷ Green, *From Alexander to Actium*, 269.

²⁸ Jeffrey Henderson, "Introduction", *Polybius' The Histories* ed. Jeffrey Henderson, Trans. W. R. Paton, Revis. Frank W. Walbank and Christian Habicht (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), xii.

²⁹ F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 4-5

For we can get some idea of a whole from a part, but never knowledge or exact opinion. Special histories therefore contribute very little to the knowledge of the whole and conviction of its truth. It is only indeed by the study of the interconnection of all the particulars, their resemblances and differences, that we are enabled at least to make a general survey, and thus derive both benefit and pleasure from a history.³¹

Therefore we can take into account that Polybius most certainly desired to tell the truth of history, in its entirety. Many scholars believe that he fails to keep to that personal goal quite frequently. However, we must also understand that any historian must write to an audience – in this case it is debated whether or not that audience was primarily Roman or Greek.³² Furthermore, it seems that Polybius was quite fond of calling upon Tyche, god of fortune, as a source of constant explanation when events have no reason or meaning.³³ This is an interesting footnote, due to his wish to be as rational as possible. Keeping in mind as well that he was an “individual, an Arcadian, a Greek, a former soldier and statesman,” as well as highly influenced by the Roman Scipio, his biases will sometimes be focused in those directions.³⁴ As for his credibility, his sources are sound. The only other issue found in using Polybius exclusively is that 35 of his books in *The Histories* are fragmentary (even if some of those books are mostly intact). Polybius then, remains our most contemporary, complete, relatively straightforward, and least biased source, despite the few issues above.

³¹ Polybius, 1.4.11-1.6.2, 15, trans. W. R. Paton (1922-27).

³² There are three differing views put forth on Polybius’ intended audience: Peter Green states that “Despite polite genuflections to his Roman readers, he was really aiming at Greeks.” (Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 271); Henderson says that “It was aimed at Roman readers, a clear sign that Romans were able to read Greek, but that the author also had a Greek audience in mind.” (Henderson, *Polybius’ The Histories*, xv); F. W. Walbank believes that “Usually, however, it is not clear to what particular audience Polybius is directing his frequent didactic observations on the advantages that will accrue from reading his work. . .” (Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, 7). I am inclined to believe Walbank, due to the possibility that Polybius’ could be trying to please several audiences without alienating either, although Green and Henderson have the benefit of more recent investigation and compelling arguments.

³³ For instance, Henderson, “Introduction”, xxiv – xxv; Walbank, *A Historical Commentary*, 17.

³⁴ Green, *Alexander to Actium* (1993), 273. One of Polybius’ sources is also Zeno, a Rhodian historian with an exaggerated sense of Rhodian excellence – this will also account for some of Polybius’ bias. See Perlman, “The Marginalization of Crete,” 133.

Diodorus Siculus was born in 90 BC in the Sicilian town of Agyrion, and he probably died there as well.³⁵ He spent most of his life traveling and spent thirty years on composing the *Historical Library*, a monumental history of the world up to his time in the 1st c. BC.³⁶ This work originally comprised of forty books - as in the case of Polybius – though there are some who believe that the work was originally forty-two books, with Diodorus skimming the work down in order to create a more idealized historical narrative.³⁷ It is clear through all of the scholarship on Diodorus that he was highly influenced by his sources, especially those of Ephorus and his contemporary Livy.³⁸ The variety in his sources, his rational take on history, and his continuity – all make Diodorus’ work a valuable rarity in ancient literature. Unfortunately, much of this work has been lost but his books 17-20, which are focused on the Hellenistic period’s militaristic incidences, survive.³⁹ However, it would seem that most modern scholars avoid using his work, the *Historical Library*. As to why that may be, the answer could lay in his confusing use of multiple sources - Ephorus, Timaeus, Hieronymus of Cardia, Polybius, and Posidonius - creating for what some call an “unintelligible farrago”.⁴⁰ In 1993, Peter Green even goes so far as to remark that “Diodorus . . . is a third rate compiler only as good as his source: This makes him, at times, of great value, but not on his own account. . .”, and furthermore, Green scathingly remarks that he will not create “another imaginative analysis of [Diodorus’] chronological inconsistencies and synthetic rhetoric.”⁴¹ However, there has been a recent resurgence in using Diodorus as a

³⁵ Peter Green, *Diodorus Siculus, Books 11-12.37.1: Greek History 480-431 B.C., the Alternative Version* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 4-7.

³⁷ Catherine Rubincam, “How Many Books Did Diodorus Siculus Originally Intend to Write?” *The Classical Quarterly* 48.1(1998): 233.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 230.

³⁹ Michel Austin, *The Hellenistic World from Alexander to The Roman Conquest: A Selection of Ancient Sources in Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 7.

⁴⁰ Robert Drews, “Diodorus and His Sources”, *American Journal of Philology* 83.4 (1962): 383-92.

⁴¹ Green, *Alexander to Actium*, xix; It should be noted that Green recants this argument in his later book *Diodorus Siculus*, x, xiv, wherein he states that “. . . Diodorus, properly examined, turns out to be a rational, methodical, if

viable resource, and this is because scholars have begun to reject these negative stereotypes, which riddle 19th century works on his *Historical Library*. As Kenneth Sacks states, “A recent study of Diodorus' writing style reveals that he was no simple copyist of his current main source, but rather that he possessed sufficient independence of mind to rewrite narrative in his own words.”⁴² He is our only consistent chronological source, providing continuity from the Persian wars through the wars of the Diadochi, and even more bits and pieces throughout the end of the 4th century.

Finally Strabo of Amasia is a Classicists' familiar friend. He lived from approximately 64 BC through 23 CE (at least), and in that time his main work of history was his *Geography*, in which he intended to “represent the world as a whole, rather than individual regions in microcosm.”⁴³ We have all but book seven of his *Geography*, though the work as a whole was meant to be a sequel to Polybius' *Histories*.⁴⁴ His sources are varied and sound, his work influential and respected, and Strabo remains one of our great resources for the Hellenistic period. To create such a work, he traveled extensively. In his own words:

I have travelled westward from Armenia as far as the regions of Tyrrhenia opposite Sardinia, and southward from the Black Sea as far as the frontiers of Ethiopia. And you could not find another person among the writers on geography who has travelled over much more of the distances just mentioned than I.⁴⁵

somewhat unimaginative, minor historian, who planned on a large scale, and was quite capable of seeing major faults and inconsistencies provided he lived to correct them. . . Here I must take refuge . . . in Walt Whitman's cheerful apophthegm: ‘Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself.’”

⁴² Kenneth Sacks, “The Lesser Prooemia of Diodorus Siculus” in *Hermes*, 110.4 (1982): 434.

⁴³ Daniela Dueck, Hugh Lindsay, and Sarah Potheary, ed. *Strabo's Cultural Geography: The Making of a Kolossourgia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1.

⁴⁴ Dueck, Lindsay, and Potheary, *Strabo's Cultural Geography*, 1.

⁴⁵ Strabo, *Geography*, 2.5.11, C117, in Daniela Dueck's *Strabo of Amasia: A Greek Man of Letters in Augustan Rome* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 15-16.

Not only was he well-traveled, but he was well educated - taught by the best Greek teachers an aristocratic family could provide.⁴⁶ According to Dueck, Lindsay, and Potheary, there are two ways to analyze Strabo: a regional examination, or a thematic one, each with their own advantages and disadvantages.⁴⁷ Regionally, we can understand Strabo as he recounts his *Geography* in terms of areas divided culturally, ethnically, politically (the distinctions of which will be further explained below) and as a more objective historian. If we use the thematic approach, one can understand Strabo as more subjectively present in his narrative with boundaries of culture and politics crossing continually.⁴⁸

Interestingly, it would seem that although Strabo is providing a history that is broad enough to include many different cultures, his overall view of those cultures is still quite influenced by the Classical ideal of Greeks versus ‘barbarians’. Eran Algamor puts Strabo’s view in these terms: “As a person raised in the Hellenic tradition and imbued with its set of values, he adopts the classical ethnic dichotomy, and mostly rejects Hellenistic revisionist attitudes, which tried to adapt the old division to the changing ethnological realities.”⁴⁹ This is important to keep in mind while using Strabo as a source for the Hellenistic Aegean, as during this time period the Aegean would have seen more foreigners than it ever had before, immigrating, trading, and offering themselves as mercenaries. For a region with so much variation, Strabo’s viewpoint may not have been the same as those living in that area and this is a crucial point to recognize.

Epigraphic Evidence

⁴⁶ Dueck, *Strabo of Amasia*, 8.

⁴⁷ Dueck, Lindsay, Potheary, *Strabo’s Cultural Geography*, 3-4.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁹ Eran Algamor, “Who is a Barbarian? The barbarians in the ethnological and cultural taxonomies of Strabo.” in *Strabo’s Cultural Geography*, 54.

Inscriptions are by far our most prolific source for the Hellenistic Aegean. Inscriptions provide insight into what was thought important enough to record in stone, including evidence for individual honors, details of economic and political transactions between cities, and local and regional politics. This epigraphic data gives a surprising amount of detail on the everyday lives of those living in the Hellenistic Aegean. Inscriptions detail various topics, such as temple accounts, Greek city assemblies and council decrees, and royal letters and decrees.⁵⁰ Most inscriptions found by archaeologists have been reused as building materials, so many original contexts cannot be reconstructed exactly.⁵¹ We are also limited by the fact that most of our urban inscriptional evidence is fragmented.⁵² When scholars try to reconstruct the pieces which are fragmented, often times they do so through using the formulaic building blocks of most honorary epigrams, which are generally correct.⁵³

Arguably even more problematic than reconstructing missing words for a certain inscription is determining the date at which it was written. If we cannot assign a date or time period for the information given, then it is impossible to understanding its true meaning. We cannot use the information out of context. Often times, scholars use the style of the writing of Greek found in order to determine the inscriber of the inscription, and then use that information to approximate date that the epigraph was written.⁵⁴ To do so, someone must learn the writer's precise stylistic method for inscribing each letter, and all of that writer's unique minute stylistic details. From there, the scholar must scour inscriptional records to find the closest match to the style of the writer in question – it is here where another person may have published that same

⁵⁰ John Davies, "Hellenistic Economies" in *The Cambridge Companion*, 76.

⁵¹ John Ma, "The Epigraphy of Hellenistic Asia Minor: A Survey of Recent Research (1992-1999)" *American Journal of Archaeology* 104.1 (2000): 100-01.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 99.

⁵³ Arthur Woodhead, *The Study of Greek Inscriptions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 74.

⁵⁴ Stephen Tracy "Dating Athenian Inscriptions: A New Approach," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 144.1 (2000): 69.

writer's other inscriptional work, perhaps with a date through archaeological context or upon the stone itself.⁵⁵ This entire process is called the 'study of hands'.⁵⁶ Though this method may seem to have too much subjectivity to be precise, it is relatively accurate. In fact, newly created computer systems which use mathematical algorithms may completely remove human error, allowing for the most complete connections to be made between the various works of a single stonecutter.⁵⁷

However, even with these issues, inscriptions give us information that can tell us clearly about populations, interactions, and transactions between poleis and even regions. They can also tell us what kinds of things people were honored for – recording the causes for a city to give thanks or celebrate. The valuable information given to us is well worth the difficult and often variable translation process.

Numismatic Evidence

When studying the Hellenistic Aegean, numismatics, or the study of ancient coins, is an important one. One of the most useful ways of interpreting finds of coins in this period are by looking at commercial connections between regions and highlighted by those patterns of monetary exchange. For instance, Panagopoulou sees that “the respective distribution of the Antigonid silver issues predominately reflects local preferences in transactions.”⁵⁸ For Panagopoulou, this means we can use numismatics to infer who was trading with whom, although even here we must have caution, because direct trade is not always the reality. It may be that one person trades with another, who then continues trading with the same coin, leading to

⁵⁵ Ibid., 69-70.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 76.

⁵⁷ See Stephen Tracy and Constantin Papaodysseus, “The Study of Hands on Greek Inscriptions: The Need for a Digital Approach,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 113.1 (2009): 99-102; 100% accuracy was observed in a study of 23 inscriptions with 6 hands, spanning a time period from 330 BC to 140 BC, pp. 113.

⁵⁸ Katerina Panagopoulou, “The Antigonids: Patterns of a Royal Economy,” in *Hellenistic Economies*, ed. Zofia Archibald, John Davies, Vincent Gabrielsen, and Graham Oliver (New York: Routledge, 2001), 244.

the coin transferring hands between several poleis and between several states without direct contact. But if a coin makes it far enough, an implication can be made about the value of the coin or its importance to the market because of its high circulation throughout a large geographical region. Cities could also create their own coinage under the sovereignty of a ruler, or under their own sovereignty. This independent unregulated coinage continues throughout the Hellenistic period through to the Roman period, where Romans placed a state of controlled coinage upon Greece.⁵⁹ Often if a polis was large enough and/or independent they would create their own coins, resulting in localized monetization. We must not think that the production of coins is as it is today however. Thomas Martin states that

...the numismatic, historical, documentary, and literary evidence uniformly fails to support the idea that there was an operative in the classical Greek world a strongly felt connection between an abstract notion of sovereignty and the right of coinage which implied the necessity to enforce a uniform monetary circulation.⁶⁰

Unregulated coins mean that we get “fashion coins”, which are often misleading for attempting to piece together a chronology of power shifts within regions. Andrew Meadows discusses the *lex Seyrig*’s impracticality in light of these “fashion coins” – an outdated academic law within numismatics which argues that “no state issued coin in its own name if it was ruled by another.”⁶¹ Meadows rejects the *lex Seyrig*, citing several examples where states would independently create coins while under another’s rule, and then create “fashion coins” minted with the faces of monarchs who may have previously ruled the region because the coinage itself was worth enough or prized enough that it was worthwhile to replicate it. It is only in

⁵⁹ Andrew Meadows, "Money, Freedom, and Empire in the Hellenistic World," in *Money and its Uses*, ed. Andrew Meadows and Kirsty Shipton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 53.

⁶⁰ Thomas Martin, “Why Did the Greek Polis Originally Need Coins?” in *Historia*, 45 (1996): 257.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

conjunction with other evidence or detailed analysis that we can tell which coins are fashion coins, and thus move forward with a correct chronology.

Transport Amphorae

The Hellenistic Aegean was actively engaged in commerce, and trade routes that cross through the region were paramount for political entities and their hegemonic goals. Commercial interactions between cities in this region are clearly demonstrated by the distribution of transport amphorae; these ceramic indicators can tell us where items came from, who was using them, and possibly what was being traded. Each city had their own ‘brand’ of transport amphora, in that the shapes, clay, and stamps upon them were unique to their location of origin. They could be used to transport wine, oil, grain, dried figs, gourds, firewood or virtually any commodity that could fit within its wide mouth.⁶² Mark Lawall urges caution in equating discovery of amphora to a direct connection between its origins and the new found location, however. “Rhodian stamps at Carthage do not *themselves* indicate that any Rhodian merchant, or even non-Rhodian ship originating at Rhodes, ever landed at Carthage,” he claims.⁶³ This is due to indirect trade – either on account of strictly economic, socio-economic, or cultural reasons. For example, offloading mixed cargo through several ports, re-filling and re-exportation, movement between estates or for military operations, and private merchants will shift the reality of amphorae locations.⁶⁴ Lawall concludes by saying that “Only on a case-by-case basis is it possible to explain chronological and geographical patterns of distribution.”⁶⁵ It can seem very enticing to use amphora to make broad assumptions of trade interactions, though we must remember that these

⁶² Gary Reger, “The Economy,” in *The Cambridge Companion*, 337-38.

⁶³ Mark L. Lawall, “Amphoras and Hellenistic Economies: Addressing the (Over)Emphasis on Stamped Amphora Handles,” in *Making, Moving, and Managing*, ed. Zofia H. Archibald, John K. Davies, and Vincent Gabrielsen (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005), 193.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 194.

items were not simply one-time use, one-time function, nor had one-time movement. These dynamic pieces of material culture had unique individual stories. The key is to use all pieces of evidence available from the amphorae.

The fabric, or material from which the amphorae are made, can significantly challenge our perceptions of where these amphorae originated. Using petrographic analysis, archaeologists can now determine the exact source of sand or clay that was used to make the amphora. Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan and Stavroula Apostolakou recently used such methods to source amphorae from two sites on Crete (Mochlos and Pyrgos-Myrtos), indicating that the clay used to create them was from the area of ancient Hierapytna on Crete – now labeled East Cretan Cream Ware (ECCW).⁶⁶ Information using such scientific technology can then show that even in cases where it would be impossible to identify sources through provenience, stamps, or other missing identification markers, we can still discover the source of the amphorae.

More information can be gleaned from transport amphorae than simply the movement of goods, however. John Lund has used amphorae evidence found in Egypt to provide a rough estimate of the average output of Rhodian wine trade, and then extrapolates that information to estimate climate variability.⁶⁷ He concluded that the economy of Rhodian wine was in flux, creating ebbs and flows that can then tell us much about the economic situation for Rhodes and its trade partners. He also discussed how regional climates should be “regarded as one of the ‘engines’ that kept the inter-regional trade going’.”⁶⁸ Such research does, of course, have its

⁶⁶ Vogeikoff-Brogan and Stavroula Apostolakou, “New Evidence of Wine Production in East Crete in the Hellenistic Period” in *Transport Amphorae and Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean: Acts of the International Colloquium at the Danish Institute at Athens, September 26-29, 2002*, ed. Jonas Eiring and John Lund (Athens: Tameio Archaeologikon Poron kai Apallotrioseon, 2002), 418.

⁶⁷ John Lund, “Rhodian Transport Amphorae as a Source for Economic Ebbs and Flows in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Second Century BC,” in *The Economies of Hellenistic Societies: Third to First Century BC*, ed. Zofia Archibald and John Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 289-90.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 290.

limitations, but it is a testament to the many different ways creativity in the field can lead to new conclusions. Even Lund admits in the study above that “The main conclusion to be drawn from this chapter is that we still have a lot to learn about the modalities of wine production and trade of Rhodes.”⁶⁹ Many other recent studies use amphora stamps to indicate broad patterns of trade. Amphora stamps and petrographic analysis are the two most reliable ways to determine the origin of an amphora.⁷⁰

Stamps are not, however, always as clear as they may seem. Lawall, again, challenges us to think beyond stamps and their broad conclusions or insufficient data:

The over-emphasis on amphora stamps has meant that . . . the only significant amphora publications from Rhodes are the local stamps. Was Rhodes a transshipping center with a similar mix of sources as pre-230s Athens? Or was Rhodes more of an importing-exporting center, like nearby Ephesos? . . . The choice for historians of Hellenistic economies – whether they are ‘historians’ or ‘archaeologists’ – is clear: either remain bogged down in the current pessimistic stalemate blaming lack of the necessary data, or exploit the existing data to form new questions, propose new models, and, ultimately, begin to organize and understand the myriad developments that comprise Hellenistic economic history.⁷¹

It is with this challenge in mind that transport amphorae can continue to be used to extrapolate enough data and interpretations to expand our knowledge of the Hellenistic Aegean.

Regional Analysis

Economically, the Hellenistic Aegean is characterized by interactions on ‘local’, ‘regional’, and ‘interregional’ levels. Evidence for these transactions comes from finds of coins, transport amphorae, ancient literature and inscriptions.⁷² “Greece is made up from many different landscapes,” writes Graham Oliver, “intra-regional variability must be given greater emphasis. A

⁶⁹ Ibid., 289.

⁷⁰ Reger, “The Economy,” 338.

⁷¹ Lawall, “Amphoras,” 216.

⁷² Gary Reger, “Interregional Economies in the Aegean Basin,” in *The Economies of Hellenistic Societies: Third to First Century BC*, 368-89.

more localized focus will highlight the immediate problems that were presented to a community.”⁷³ As Gary Reger points out, the ability to distinguish each of these levels is of paramount importance when constructing an argument for economic policy, trade, and political interactions. According to Reger, there are three types of overlapping regions, which can be used to later ascertain the separation of larger regions: geographic, ethnic, and political.⁷⁴

Geographical regions can be determined based on features such as mountain ranges, lakes, rivers, coastlines, and other land features that could divide people. These landmarks also impact how easily trade and interactions can be between different areas – it is much easier to walk across a valley to speak to a neighbor than to scale a mountain. Often times, these geographies impact subsistence, which impacts culture.⁷⁵ For example, subsistence patterns will influence traditions of food, occupations, placements of households, tool use, and much more. Ethnic regions may vary from the geographical regions, though they are linked. These ethnic regions are defined mostly by “bonding with place”, a process which takes place over long periods of time. In this regional type, the people are the most important distinction – their shared religions, food, language, and family traditions.⁷⁶ These regions, while resembling political unities, are not quite the same as the third type of region. In the Political region, it is the actions taken by the people which determine the extent of its borders. One might define a political region by looking at judicial/legal systems, taxes, currency, and other governmentally ruled pieces of society.⁷⁷ Reger notes all three of these types are interconnected – eventually ending the section saying that “it will rarely if ever be possible to draw sharp lines on the ground” to indicate these borders. They

⁷³ Graham Oliver, “Regions and Micro-regions: Grain for Rhamnous”, in *Hellenistic Economies*, 140-41.

⁷⁴ Reger, “Interregional Economies,” 371-72.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 374.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 374.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 377.

are constantly changing, shifting, and moving.⁷⁸ Oliver likewise states that “geographical and political boundaries can be punctuated and transgressed, necessarily so if we are to trace the movement of commodities. Nor should interests in the economy operate only at the level of the polis or kingdom.”⁷⁹

Using a regional approach, as I will apply to the study of Crete, enables us to better understand how kingdoms and individual polities interact, particularly from an economic standpoint. Theories of who is politically most likely to trade with another region, which regions are closest in terms of cost of travel, which regions have beneficial resources to trade, and other such markers of economic movement are useful tools to examine the dynamics of the Hellenistic Aegean. “If one is to understand economic processes in diverse Hellenistic worlds,” Graham wrote, “then one must be aware of the complex variety of micro-regions which make up such worlds.”⁸⁰ It is with this in mind that the basis for an understanding of economics in the Hellenistic Aegean can be attained.

Economics

Studying the economics of the Hellenistic Aegean can provide information about cultural specifics, such as types of imports, exports, trade relations, and about what people considered to be valuable. Furthermore, this time period challenges ancient economists to think more broadly and more in depth about how to analyze material evidence in terms of economics. Zofia Archibald highlights this in the opening chapter of *Making, Moving, and Managing*, wherein she says that “. . . this is the period in which significant changes occurred at macro and micro levels,

⁷⁸ Ibid., 378.

⁷⁹ Oliver, “Regions and Micro-regions,” 141.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 153.

which allow us to study the interplay of local, regional, and inter-regional connections.”⁸¹ It is through all of the evidence that has been explained above that regionalism can be applied to ancient economic theory. However, there is some debate as to what ancient economies looked like and how they should be interpreted. There are two schools of thought on this topic – traditional and dynamic.⁸²

The traditional view is the most prevalent when discussing ancient Greek economics. The main premise is that Greece still put merit in a status-distributive (or Homeric) type of profit gain, rather than a market economy.⁸³ According to this school of thought, it was ‘immoral’ on an individual level to pursue a profession focused on obtaining wealth through production, but instead one should build a wealth base on his natural environment or opportunistic ‘homeric’ warfare.⁸⁴ Furthermore, this view names Greek economics as ‘primitive’, since there is no forward thought towards increasing production to then increase profit.⁸⁵ The point, then, of an ancient economy was stability. According to Alan Samuel:

All [Aristotle’s] reasoning is based on the fundamental assumption that stability in society is a good, is achievable, and is the basic aim of all political and economic arrangements. Thus the designation of self-sufficiency as the chief good. It is so because self-sufficiency is the circumstance which will most surely produce stability. . . There is certainly no sense at all that the system calls for, or that Aristotle has any interest in, what we would call growth or progress.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Zofia Archibald, “Markets and Exchange: The Structure and Scale of Economic Behaviour in the Hellenistic Age,” in *Making, Moving, and Managing*, 1.

⁸² Interestingly, in addition to both the traditional and dynamic views on economy, there is also the ‘substantivist’ and ‘modernizing’ positions. Both views discussed above are within the ‘modernizing’ position, wherein contemporary economic theories are applicable to ancient times. The ‘substantivist’ position holds conversely that ancient economies were so different from our own that modern theories are not applicable. See Archibald, “Markets and Exchange,” 3.

⁸³ Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 363.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 365.

⁸⁵ Alan E. Samuel, *From Athens to Alexandria: Hellenism and Social Goals in Ptolemaic Egypt* (Lovaini: Studia Hellenistica, 1983), 1.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 26-27.

Green agrees with his view, citing examples of the lack of Hellenistic innovation, and going so far as to say that “The prejudice against commerce ran very deep”.⁸⁷ This traditional view has been held for quite some time, however. In 1973, I. Finley put forth his view on attempting to study ancient Greek economics: “. . . they in fact lacked the concept of an ‘economy’, and, a *fortiori*, that they lacked the conceptual elements which together constitute what we call ‘the economy’”.⁸⁸ It was through this distinction then, that authors like Green and Samuel have come to the modern conclusion that the economies of ancient times could not be as complex as they are today. Rather, these ‘economies’ (if one can call them such, according to Finley) were simply byproducts of ancient attempts at subsistence, or stability. While there is merit and perhaps some Classical period evidence for such modes of existence, the Hellenistic period seems to demand more than this traditional approach.

In a direct response to Finley’s viewpoints, John Davies wrote that there has been a “continuous undercurrent of determined deconstruction of the Finley model as static, simplistic, useless and retrograde”.⁸⁹ This is the start to understanding the dynamic model – moving past Finley’s outdated information and forward with new evidence and thinking. Zofia Archibald defines the dynamic economy approach as a reinterpreting of the complex activities that reside within ancient economies through the use of non-linear dynamics and ‘Complexity science’.⁹⁰ These models can then lead to more thorough research into specific ancient situations where complex factors may be working in conjunction to produce economic realities scholars were

⁸⁷ Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 365.

⁸⁸ Moses Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 21.

⁸⁹ John K. Davies, “Hellenistic Economies in the Post-Finley Era,” in *Hellenistic Economies*, 13.

⁹⁰ Zofia Archibald, “Markets and Exchange,” 7-8; See Archibald’s example of Shawn Graham’s systematic survey of brick manufacturers in the Tiber valley, wherein it was found that the “role of key players, who acted like ‘hubs’ or junctions in the network, was correspondingly far greater than that of individual agents on the periphery, and thus their presence or absence could have disproportionate significance in the history of the network as a whole”. Archibald brings up the potential that this survey could have for applications in ancient economics – quite important when looking at the dynamic model of economic theory.

previously unaware of. The dynamic model is also attempting to be more intersectional, allowing for many different kinds of methods to have a say. Davies explains:

“The discourse on ancient economies is becoming lively, even ebullient, it knows what it does not like, is busy absorbing interpretative concepts drawn from adjacent disciplines such as economic anthropology or systems analysis, but does not yet know which models will run best on the layouts of the economies of antiquity, which are becoming every year more complex and diverse.”⁹¹

It is through the lens of the dynamic model that evidence for Hellenistic Aegean economies will be presented, as it is much more applicable to this period than the traditional view. With the constant flux of the Hellenistic kings, the wave of changing ideals and values, and a new found broader world, a traditionalist view leaves much unanswered.

With an understanding of the theories on ancient economics, one can continue on to the physical evidence that will contextualize the role of economy in the Aegean. Davies provides an acceptable starting place to begin the discussion:

All one can do is to start from human needs and from the *effective* demand for those needs to be satisfied, to trace the flows of goods and services generated by that pattern and level of demand, to superimpose them where the main flows and main nodes are, (and conversely where the interactions are feeblest), and then – and only then – attempt to identify what ambitions, or ideas and attitudes, or transaction costs, or fiscal or governmental interventions, impede or help the flows.⁹²

This formula can streamline any economic discussion within the Hellenistic period, and if followed, will provide scholars a base upon which to create their arguments. To start from human needs, Gabrielsen makes an argument for monopolies as facilitators of commercial progress – the needs being trade interests (be it wood products, foodstuffs, etc.). There is some debate, however, as to the political struggles of the hegemonic kingdoms were large economic drivers, for in many ways these kings created a net loss of life, harvest, and stability. These

⁹¹ Davies, “Hellenistic Economies in the Post-Finley Era,” 14.

⁹² Ibid., 22.

issues could be interpreted as mainly negative, or as the start of eventual Hellenistic decline. Largely connected to the traditional view of economics, Gabrielsen makes an attempt to move away from this perspective, along with Archibald and Davies, by stressing the positive economic factors of warfare and hegemonic struggle. He makes an argument for the “specific way in which states and private economic actors entered into profitable partnerships: the establishment of monopolies or monopoly-like arrangements.”⁹³ Gabrielsen notes five different kinds of ancient monopolies, though the ‘Natural Monopoly’ was perhaps most easily applicable to the Hellenistic kingdoms. Natural Monopolies, based on an overwhelming cost advantage resulting from expansion, created systems with constantly moving borders. In conjunction with the movement of these borders, different economic interests needed to be protected. A prime example is brought up by Gabrielsen when he considers the case of Kallatis, Byzantion, and Rhodes in the middle of the 3rd c. BC. Kallatis wanted to create a monopoly through use of its neighbor’s resources, wherein Byzantion (a supporter of “free trade”) declared war immediately to protect its own interests. Roughly thirty years later, Byzantion had procured its own monopoly on fishing and slave industries within the Bosphorus straits, controlling all of the fiscal and commercial passage through this area. Rhodes, now the naval protector of the Aegean and free trade activist, declared war on Byzantium. This move was an intentional strategy to promote Rhodes’ interests as well as the interests of her allies in the north. By removing Byzantion and reestablishing free trade, Rhodes continued to hold its position as a supreme economic powerhouse of the region.⁹⁴ These types of power plays happen throughout the Hellenistic Aegean, largely influencing other economies throughout the Mediterranean.

⁹³ Gabrielsen, “Profitable Partnerships,” 219.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 223-24

In addition to monopolistic interest, another way to see economic flows in the Aegean is, as mentioned above, transport amphorae and ceramic evidence. Essential to daily life throughout Greece, ceramics primarily dominate as the utility for which to transport and store foodstuffs.⁹⁵ In a case study highlighting archaeological evidence for the argument that agriculture and trade were the primary economic activity of Greece, John Lund uses Eastern Sigillata A fine ware to more intimately define the variety of ways in which ceramic assemblages can be of use. The geographic distribution implications of this fine ware can be applied to other cases, even those of transport amphorae – as distributive trade patterns are a broader economic phenomena.⁹⁶ Lund found that Eastern Sigillata A fine ware was a connected market to agriculture. Furthermore, he found that its distribution “must have had a considerable economic importance at a local – if not regional – level.”⁹⁷ Such a statement suggests that a thriving ceramic industry will also indicate a thriving local economy, and that they are inextricably linked.

The Aegean creates these small pockets of regional variance naturally with its many islands and seafaring peoples. For trading between islands, the mainland, and the Ionian coast, ships were essential. Some of our best information on ships comes from Rhodes, due to its naval superiority at the time. Using Rhodes as the focal point for trade routes, Gabrielsen claims it would take five days to sail from Byzantion to Rhodes and ten to sail back. From the Black Sea, nine and a half days would be needed. Rhodes to Alexandria would take three and half days, while it would take four days to sail from Athens to Rhodes.⁹⁸ Climate was a large factor in these sailing times, as was the type of ship which was attempting the journey. Rhodes had some of the

⁹⁵ John Lund, “An Economy of Consumption: The Eastern Sigillata A Industry in the Late Hellenistic Period,” in *Making, Moving, and Managing*, 233.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 240; See subheading “Distribution mechanisms”.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 244.

⁹⁸ Gabrielsen, *The Naval Aristocracy*, 71-72.

best ships at this time period with its large navy and even larger export trade, but even the best ships can turn into shipwrecks on the rocky coasts of Greek islands during a terrible winter storm.⁹⁹ Shipwrecks have recently become popular archaeological endeavors, as we now have the technology to locate and excavate more of these unfortunate pieces of the past. Amphorae from wrecks have been found originating from Rhodes, Samos, Knidos, Chios, Thasos, Paros, Kos, Herakleia, Chersonesos, Sinope, Corinth, along with many more amphorae whose origins are still unknown.¹⁰⁰ This information alone is quite useful, let alone an investigations into their contents. Using the evidence that the majority of Hellenistic Mediterranean wrecks found have been small, Gibbins makes the claim that tramping – “the speculative and small-scale contractual transport of goods along coastal routes, often within an established economic region” – may be the main form of maritime commerce.¹⁰¹ If this is the case in the Hellenistic period, this would mean that goods may be moving much more frequently, changing hands at every port. Developing theories as to where material goods originated from – who was trading with whom – could be much more difficult.

Piracy and Pirates

Related to the topic of ships is the topic of those who were at the helm. According to Gabrielsen, pirates were central to maritime trade.¹⁰² Piracy during this period was defined, according to de Souza, as “any form of armed robbery or plundering involving the use of ships” - an all-encompassing type of definition.¹⁰³ Of course, using this definition makes it difficult to tell

⁹⁹ Ibid., 85.

¹⁰⁰ David Gibbins, “Shipwrecks and Hellenistic Trade,” in *Hellenistic Economies*, 276.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 294.

¹⁰² Vincent Gabrielsen, “Economic Activity, Maritime Trade and Piracy in the Hellenistic Aegean,” *Revue de Etudes Anciennes* 103.1-2 (2001), 221.

¹⁰³ Philip de Souza, “Who are you Calling Pirates?” in *Rough Cilicia: New Historical and Archaeological Approaches, Proceedings of an International Conference Held at Lincoln, Nebraska, October 2007*, ed. Michael Hoff and Rhys Townsend (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2013), 43.

the distinction between a naval battle and a ‘pirate’ raid – for robbery and plundering are often apart of warfare. In fact, this distinction was so fluid that within the ancient literature ‘pirates’ were often simply on the opposing side of the narrator. Polybius, for instance, describes the Aetolians as pirates - despite the fact that Aetolians would view themselves as honored warriors.¹⁰⁴

Semantics aside, if pirates were depleting resources, killing men, plundering goods, and creating chaos, would they not be negatively impacting commerce? There is a convincing argument against piracy as an antithesis to economic growth, however, including the point that pirates would want to stimulate commerce in order to further their own economic interests.¹⁰⁵ It seems that pirates stimulated commerce through providing slaves and other goods for the market, while also offering a form of employment when other forms were not available. Though the Hellenistic period was full of warfare and strife, de Souza makes the claim that pirate activity did not escalate during the Hellenistic period. Instead, the frequency at which pirates were used as scapegoats to elevate levels of prestige or substantiate claims of naval supremacy increased, creating more references to piracy in the literary record.¹⁰⁶ Unfortunately, the means to detect the physical presence of pirates or their impact remains elusive. “Whatever our literary sources might claim, the contribution of piracy to the economy of any place in Antiquity is unknowable,” writes de Souza, “because it cannot be detected.”¹⁰⁷ With the multitude of literary evidence, however, it is clear that pirates played a large part within the mindsets of the Hellenistic period.

¹⁰⁴ Polybius, 4.6.1, trans. W. R. Paton, (1922-27); Philip de Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 74.

¹⁰⁵ Gabrielsen, “Economic Activity,” 221.

¹⁰⁶ de Souza, “Who are you Calling Pirates?” 45; Gabrielsen, “Economic Activity,” 222.

¹⁰⁷ de Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World*, 60.

CHAPTER 3

Rhodes: A Case Study

Rhodes is an island of approximately 544 square miles, and is located just below modern day Turkey in the eastern Aegean (see Map 1). During the Hellenistic period, Rhodes was a major economic force in the Aegean: it possessed the best navy in the region and it became very wealthy – it reached the height of its power in the 3rd c. BC. Hellenistic Rhodes is comparatively well-documented as a polity and, as a result, it has been the focus of scholarly studies of the political/economic trends, maritime trade, and piracy in the Aegean. This chapter will discuss the political unity of Rhodes, evidence for Rhodes' commercial contacts (especially its wine trade), and lastly, its role as 'policeman of the seas' in the 3rd-century Aegean. These specific aspects of Hellenistic Rhodes were chosen because they are points of comparison and relation to contemporary Crete and by examining them it is hoped they will provide insight into the latter's position in the Aegean during this period.

While the political unity of Rhodes and its ability to maintain a wide sphere of political influence will be investigated more thoroughly below, ancient historians suggest how the Hellenistic polis was perceived in antiquity. Diodorus Siculus states that Rhodes was a state with substantial power and was viewed favorably by other Greeks during the 3rd c. BC:

The city of the Rhodians, which was strong in sea power and was the best governed city of the Greeks, was a prize eagerly sought after by the dynasts and kings, each of them striving to add her to his alliance. . . In fact she advanced to such strength that in behalf of the Greeks she by herself undertook her war against the pirates and purged the seas of these evil-doers. . .¹⁰⁸

It is worth noting that Diodorus is claiming that Rhodes maintained the best political system at this time, especially since there were many other cities with equally excellent systems. Polybius

¹⁰⁸ Diodorus Siculus, 20.81.2-3, trans. Francis Walton (1957).

shows Rhodes as an important sometimes-ally of Rome, but also as guarding their independent status for reasons of commercial gain:

For the policy of Rhodes had been so little by sentiment, that although that state had from nearly a hundred and forty years taken part in the most glorious and finest achievements of the Romans, they had never made an alliance with Rome. The reason of their action in this respect should not be ignored. It was this. As they wished none of the kings and princes to despair of gaining their help and alliance, they did not desire to run in harness with Rome and engage themselves by oaths and treaties, but preferred to remain unembarrassed and able to reap profit from any quarter.¹⁰⁹

Modern scholars tend to take a favorable view of Rhodes by portraying it as a small island struggling to maintain its independence in the midst of larger powers. In this vein, Green states that “. . . Rhodes, with her benevolent naval aristocracy and her famous maritime laws, nevertheless held out against the dominant pattern of Hellenistic kingship, and preserved much of the old classical Greek pride and civic intransigence.”¹¹⁰ It is perhaps due to an overreliance on such ancient literary sources that this ‘idealized’ image of Hellenistic Rhodes has been perpetuated in modern scholarship. Vincent Gabrielsen puts forth a theory on Rhodes’ extremely positive image in the historical record, saying that “The Rhodians certainly deserve credit for elevating their city-state to such an admirable position. And no less credit is due to them for their persistent endeavours to conserve, and even heighten, the image of their country as an immaculate polis . . .”¹¹¹ Gabrielsen cites three examples where the Rhodian image was embellished by ancient historians: Polybios’ view on two Rhodian historians, Diodorus Siculus’ “eulogy of Rhodian power and prosperity” in his causes of Macedonian aggression, and Polybios’ citation of Roman and Rhodian collaboration for “nearly one hundred and forty

¹⁰⁹ Polybios, 30.5, trans. W. R. Paton, (1922-27); There is some question here as to the validity of Polybios’ statement on an alliance between Rhodes and Rome, as it is known they frequently maintained formal interactions since at least 306 BC. For more information see Gabrielsen, *The Naval Aristocracy*, 23.

¹¹⁰ Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 378.

¹¹¹ Gabrielsen, *The Naval Aristocracy*, 19.

years”.¹¹² Hans-Ulrich Weimer takes this position a step further when he calls ancient accounts of Rhodes “political propaganda” that “cannot serve as a reliable guide to the aims and principles of Rhodian policy”.¹¹³

Historical Background

During the Late Classical period, Rhodes was allied with Sparta from 412-395 BC.¹¹⁴ From here, Sparta maintained control of Rhodes until it then became a member of the Second Athenian Confederacy in 378 BC. It soon rebelled from Athens in the Social War of 357 BC, however.¹¹⁵ After a period of brief independence, the Carians dominated Rhodes until 323 BC and the death of Alexander.¹¹⁶ It was not until they repulsed Demetrius Poliorketes of the Antigonids, however, at the ‘Great Siege’ of Rhodes in 306/305 BC that they had earned their independent status.¹¹⁷ From there, Rhodes developed fairly quickly into a major naval power.

How the island came to be strong enough to repel the Antigonid forces of Demetrius, however, is the key to understanding Rhodes’ rise from simply being independent to becoming a commercial superpower. Ioannis Papachristodoulou has said that “the study of the regional organization of the Rhodian state . . . has an important contribution to make to our understanding of what can rightly be called the “Rhodian miracle” of the Hellenistic period.”¹¹⁸ This ‘miracle’ was the synoikism of the island’s three largest poleis in 408/7 BC¹¹⁹ - Ialysos, Camiros, and

¹¹² See Gabrielsen, *The Naval Aristocracy*, 19-25.

¹¹³ Hans-Ulrich Weimer would even go so far as to call it the “Rhodian Mirage”; See Hans-Ulrich Weimer, “Early Hellenistic Rhodes: The Struggle for Independence and the Dream of Hegemony”, in *Creating a Hellenistic World*, edited by Andrew Erskine (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2011), 124.

¹¹⁴ See Christopher Mee, and Ellen Rice, “Rhodes,” in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 4th ed.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Richard Berthold, *Rhodes in the Hellenistic Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 62, 76.

¹¹⁸ Ioannis Papachristodoulou, “The Rhodian Demes within the Framework of the Function of the Rhodian State,” in *Hellenistic Rhodes Politics, Culture, and Society*, ed. Vincent Gabrielsen et al. (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1999), 43.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 27.

Lindos - which led to a cohesive unification that allowed Rhodes to build a political framework to support its success. The reasons for the synoikism are not known, though there are two main theories: Berthold mentions that it may be linked to Athenian raids after Rhodes defected, while the Christopher Mee and Ellen Rice postulate more commercial reasons.¹²⁰ Once unified, it is clear that Rhodes was not a democracy. Rather, it has been likened to an aristocracy, or at the very least, to having a republic-like structure.¹²¹ Rhodes was unified by oligarchs, and the power structure after the synoikism was largely influenced by the euergetism of its upper class.

Arguably, this was a part of the “infrastructure on which Rhodes’ political and economic success relied” – as was the case in most Hellenistic societies.¹²² This meant that Rhodes was dependent on its aristocracy and the wealth of its aristocracy. It could not have succeeded without the maintenance of aristocratic wealth.

For the most part, however, Rhodes attempted to stay politically neutral in wider world. This was primarily motivated by economic interests, but also to avoid military confrontation as much as possible.¹²³ Such a policy was largely successful until 160 BC, when the Rhodians became entangled in Roman policy.¹²⁴ This general policy of neutrality can be seen in the events leading up to the ‘Great Siege’ – wherein Rhodes attempted to avoid supporting the Antigonids in a conflict between the Antigonids and Ptolemies. According to Weimer, Rhodes stood nothing to gain from an alliance with either side, it did not want to have political ties it could not sever,

¹²⁰ Richard Berthold, “Fourth Century Rhodes” *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 29:1 (1980): 34. Berthold draws this motivation for the synoekism from a single inscription found at Lindus in approximately 408, though even he notes that it is “slender evidence”. Mee and Rice, however, postulate that the decision was made for reasons “probably commercial rather than military”. See Christopher Mee and Ellen Rice, “Rhodes.”

¹²¹ Berthold, *Rhodes*, 39-40.

¹²² Gabrielsen, *The Naval Aristocracy*, 36.

¹²³ Gabrielsen, *The Naval Aristocracy*, 75; Berthold, *Rhodes*, 12, 80; Sheila Ager, “Rhodes: The Rise and Fall of the Neutral Diplomat” *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 40 (1991), 11.

¹²⁴ Ager, “Rhodes,” 11.

and it wanted to firmly hold onto its autonomy.¹²⁵ Thus, when negotiations and a Rhodian attempt at neutrality failed and the Antigonids sent Demetrios Poliorketes to attack Rhodes, their resistance became a symbolic stance against hegemonic power.¹²⁶ After withstanding the siege, the Rhodians used the funds from Demetrios' abandoned siege weaponry to build the Colossus, a giant victory monument that would stand to demonstrate Rhodes' wealth, power, and prestige.¹²⁷ Rhodes had gained a reputation as a major power, and such public proclamations as the Colossus were crucial to developing its reputation as the defender and liberator of the Aegean islands.

This stance of neutrality does not necessarily equate to a lack of desire for hegemonic growth. As Sheila Ager has demonstrated, "Rhodes' ambition was not just for peace *per se*, but rather a peace in which she could profitably pursue her own interest."¹²⁸ The Rhodians' involvement as mediators in the Byzantium trade wars, the First Macedonian War, the Syrian Wars, and the Cretan Wars all have the pretense of peace but end in the promotion of Rhodian interests.

Beginning in the 3rd c. BC, Rhodian hegemonic aims can be seen quite clearly and its image as a benefactor in the region should be viewed as propagandistic.¹²⁹ By the end of the 3rd c. BC, Rhodes had the nearby islands of Karpathos, Chalce, Syme, Megiste, Kasos, Nisyros, Telos, and Saros within its political domain.¹³⁰ Although these islands are relatively small and of little strategic importance, their incorporation into the Rhodian political sphere are a sign of the progress Rhodes had made on its hegemonic aims. Furthermore, from 200-168 BC Rhodes had

¹²⁵ Weimer, "Early Hellenistic Rhodes," 127.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* 127-28.

¹²⁷ Berthold, *Rhodes*, 80.

¹²⁸ Ager, "Rhodes: The Rise and Fall of the Neutral Diplomat," 13.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 27; Ager mentions that the Rhodians were using "emotional propaganda" to attain Greek sympathies when making a stance against piracy, the sincerity of which she doubts.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

significant economic power over and political ties within the Cyclades.¹³¹ For Rhodes, having strategic control in the Cyclades allowed for greater protection of their merchant vessels. Rhodes also used finances to protect its interests and to increase its influence in the Aegean. For example, the Rhodians loaned 140,000 drachmas to Sinope in order to prevent a siege by Mithridates primarily to ensure that Rhodes' commercial connection to the Black sea was not lost.¹³² Mithridates decided against attacking the city, which with Rhodes' aid, would have been well-equipped to rebuff his efforts.

The Rhodian Economy

For a period of about eighty years after the 'Great Siege,' we know little about events on Rhodes.¹³³ When Rhodes does reappear in ancient literary sources, it seems to have gone through a period of swift economic and political growth. Evidence of the power and position of Rhodes comes from the accounts of the many kings and poleis that came to their aid after the earthquake of 227/8 BC. So much aid was given that Gabrielsen suggests that the Rhodians were "determined to capitalize on the catastrophe, managed by means of diplomatic dexterity to extract material and financial aid amounting to far and above the extent of the actual damage: in this case, disaster became the occasion for improvement".¹³⁴ Berthold rightly emphasizes the economics of the situation, which was beyond simple the diplomatic "voluntary tribute" to Rhodes, in describing the donors:

¹³¹ Weimer, "Early Hellenistic Rhodes," 135; Gabrielsen has some reservations on using the Cyclades as an example of Rhodian 'hegemony' due to his stance that the "available evidence defies chronological precision and offers few, if any, of the marks of a formal 'hegemony', as it was earlier practiced by the Antigonids and especially the Ptolemies." This distinction seems to be one of the definition of the term 'hegemony'. Here I am using the term to mean having a substantial political influence upon a region, and/or directly controlling the region, while attempting to expand such influence or control. Thus, no matter the scale of Rhodian 'hegemony', without a doubt much smaller than the Antigonids and Ptolemies, I would claim that their political sway over the Cyclades is substantial enough to warrant the term. See Gabrielsen, *The Naval Aristocracy*, 56.

¹³² Berthold, *Rhodes*, 93-94.

¹³³ Berthold, *Rhodes*, 61.

¹³⁴ Gabrielsen, *Naval Aristocracy*, 76.

All these states were involved in the economic activities of Rhodes, and many were dependent on it to some extent for imports and the shipping and marketing of exports. . . there was probably also a general fear in the international banking community of a widespread financial crisis should the Rhodian economy be seriously disrupted. There are in fact few more impressive signs of the extent of the Rhodian economic influence than the reaction to the earthquake and the seeming ease with which the Rhodians elicited the simultaneous support of the ever-contentious Hellenistic powers.¹³⁵

From all of this evidence, it is clear that Rhodes had become an economic powerhouse in the Aegean by the second half of the 3rd c. BC. This position was largely the result of its involvement in merchant marine which was the largest in the Hellenistic world and, since the fourth century, Rhodian products were traded throughout the Mediterranean, particularly wine and oil, as well as grain.¹³⁶ Berthold stresses that the majority of Rhodian trade was done by Rhodian merchants, which gave them physical control over their own interests, and allowed their profits to skyrocket by avoiding the middlemen.¹³⁷

Located at a prime position in the eastern Aegean and with good harbors, Rhodes is well-situated as a stopping point on north-south routes along the Ionian coast and east-west routes from the Near East to the central Mediterranean.¹³⁸ Rhodes' excellent location meant that it was also able to profit by taxing incoming and outgoing merchants who would use their ports to continue on their trade routes. Polybius states that "the harbour-dues in former times were farmed for a million drachmae", and it is approximated that at two percent tax, fifty million drachmae in goods must have passed through Rhodes' harbors.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Berthold, *Rhodes*, 93.

¹³⁶ Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 378. Although wine, oil, and grain were their main exports, they also exported fruits, honey, grapes, olive products, fish, and minerals – see Berthold, *Rhodes*, 47.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹³⁸ Gabrielsen states that "the island enjoyed commercial contacts with the Near East, Asia Minor and the Aegean, the Black Sea, and Carthage". See Gabrielsen, *The Naval Aristocracy*, 74.

¹³⁹ Polybius, 30.31.12, W. R. Paton, (1922-27); Berthold, *Rhodes*, 53.

Banking was another important form of profiting from complex trade interactions for Rhodes. Rhodian merchant-moneylenders, private treasurers, and even public moneylending entities loaned, donated, and invested money to other merchants and citizens.¹⁴⁰ Such an emphasis on banking shows an opportunistic mindset, because debt would accrue power for the lenders, lenders would invest money back into Rhodes' interests, and its growth would benefit its prestige.

Archaeological evidence for the Rhodian trade can be found throughout the Aegean. Rhodian transport amphorae have been found at almost every major Hellenistic site, especially Athens, Delos, and Alexandria.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, perhaps less significant but still related, are finds of Rhodian coins all over the Mediterranean in circulation as wide as their transport amphorae.¹⁴² Nicholas Rauh has demonstrated how the distribution and ratios of Rhodian amphorae handles to other non-Rhodian amphorae illustrate the flow of goods between Rhodes and other areas. Using this method, for instance, he concludes that the Rhodian wine trade dropped significantly, though not drastically, at the end of the 2nd c. BC in the Aegean (through evidence of lessened Rhodian amphorae ratios to non-Rhodian amphorae) perhaps due to competition from Kos, Knidos, and Kaunos.¹⁴³ We can also tell by amphorae distributions that Alexandria was a huge importer of Rhodian wine in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC due to the huge numbers of stamped

¹⁴⁰ Gabrielsen, *The Naval Aristocracy*, 82-83.

¹⁴¹ Nicholas Rauh, "Rhodes, Rome, and the Mediterranean Wine Trade 166-88 BC," in *Hellenistic Rhodes: Politics, Culture, and Society*, 50.

¹⁴² Berthold, *Rhodes*, 50. Although it is not clear if a correlation between Rhodian amphorae handles ratios and Rhodian coinage locations has been explored as of yet, but such a study would be fascinating in terms of researching market origins.

¹⁴³ Rauh, "Rhodes, Rome, and the Mediterranean Wine Trade 166-88 BC," 166,179; It is worthwhile to mention that the decline in Rhodian wine is debated, and also that Rhodian wine exportation may have even risen, while trade in specific areas may have decreased. Of course, such are the limitations of amphorae statistical analysis – refer back to Ch. 2. John Lund agrees with the acknowledgement of a decline, though in more general terms. See John Lund, "Rhodian Amphorae in Rhodes and Alexandria as Evidence of Trade," in *Hellenistic Rhodes: Politics, Culture, and Society*, 187-203.

handles found there (as well as literary evidence¹⁴⁴ that plainly substantiates the claim). With upwards of 80,000 handles from Rhodes identified in Alexandria, John Lund theorizes that the Rhodians and Ptolemies may have been trading wine for grain increasingly throughout the 2nd century.¹⁴⁵ David Gibbins is highly skeptical of the identifying an upward trend in Rhodian wine using only amphorae handles, though that does not mean that Gibbins denies that Rhodes had a remarkable “mercantile dominance”.¹⁴⁶ This is a case where caution needs to be taken when looking at only amphorae stamps, but it is clear that Rhodian products were intensively consumed in Egypt and other places in the late 3rd and early 2nd century BC.

Despite difficulties in assessing the absolute volume of Rhodian exports, maritime trade clearly would not have been so successful without the Rhodian navy. After the decline of the Ptolemaic navy in the mid-3rd century, Berthold claims that “[Rhodes was] the only one that possessed the capability of rapidly launching a considerable force and manning it with a constant supply of highly skilled sailors”.¹⁴⁷ They had small ships, skilled citizen sailors, and enough financial stability to grow a fleet so powerful that Rhodes would come to be known as the ‘protector of the Aegean.’ Gabrielsen claims that the powerful aristocracy of Rhodes is behind the upkeep of this navy, not only in leading/funding the ships as a trierarchs, but also in supplying the manpower to run them.¹⁴⁸ Through the hegemonic growth discussed above, the Rhodian navy was able to be stationed throughout the Cyclades and Dodecanese, effectively allowing them to dispatch ships quickly and with the full amount of force against any threat.¹⁴⁹ The objectives of the Rhodian navy were multifaceted: to protect the island of Rhodes, to protect

¹⁴⁴ See Diodorus, *Historical Library*, 20.81.4.

¹⁴⁵ Lund, “Rhodian Amphorae,” 201-202.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 293.

¹⁴⁷ Berthold, *Rhodes*, 43.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 100, 107.

¹⁴⁹ Gabrielsen, *The Naval Aristocracy*, 43.

any citizen maritime trade interests, to lend protection to allies in times of need, and lastly, the most intriguing objective – to protect the Aegean from pirates.¹⁵⁰

Rhodes and Piracy

Piracy in the Aegean, as mentioned above, was a phenomenon that could cost an economic powerhouse like Rhodes quite a bit of money. Stolen goods, lost ships, the death of skilled-sailors or merchants, and loss of their reputation as a sea power were at stake for Rhodes should piracy undermine their efforts. Even before the ‘Great Siege’ by Demetrios Poliorketes, the Rhodians were dedicated to suppressing piracy in any form. They dispatched warships of citizen soldiers after the Battle of Chaeronea in 338 BC to escort merchant vessels after rumors of pirates at Piraeus, and also used armed merchantmen to defend cargo vessels against pirates on their way to Egypt.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, references to the Rhodians fighting with the Tyrrhenians – Etruscan pirates who attacked ships along the trade route between Greece and Italy - are found in an inscription from Rhodes dated to 305 BC, wherein three Rhodian brothers were killed.¹⁵² The Rhodians also fought Illyrian pirates in 220 BC, according to Polybius.¹⁵³ Primarily, however, Rhodes is known for their defense of the Aegean from Cretan pirates, which will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. Keith Fairbank calls the Rhodians the “pirate police of the Mediterranean”, though Green notes that they were “in the business of eradicating piracy only when it conflicted with official monopolies.”¹⁵⁴ Green implies here that Rhodes often used the protection of the Aegean against piracy as a means to protect their monopolies and other

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 45; de Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World*, 48; Berthold, *Rhodes*, 42-43.

¹⁵¹ de Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World*, 49; Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library*, 20.82.2, trans. Francis Walton (1957).

¹⁵² de Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World*, 50; Berthold, *Rhodes*, 98.

¹⁵³ Polybius, *Histories*, 4.16.6-8; Berthold, *Rhodes*, 98.

¹⁵⁴ Keith Fairbank, “The Strength of Rhodes and the Cilician Pirate Crisis” *Studia Antiqua* 6 (2008): 87; Green, *The Hellenistic Age*, 78.

economic interests – a far cry from an altruistic model that is adopted by ancient historians.¹⁵⁵

Indeed, Rhodes protected merchant vessels from pirates in Piraeus and from the Illyrians, and when one analyzes the treaty between Hierapytna and Rhodes after the First Cretan War, it is clear that the Rhodians benefited economically from such actions.¹⁵⁶ There is also evidence that Rhodes even created a market out of protection against piracy – Gabrielsen states that Rhodes “nearly managed to monopolize the protection market by making the supply of *phylake*

(‘protection’) to paying customers both a top-ranking objective and the specialty of her fleet.”¹⁵⁷

Indeed, the Rhodian fleet was made to combat the fast and light ships of pirates through its own speed and efficiency.¹⁵⁸ Berthold tells us that “Shouldering the burden of policing the Aegean, though motivated by self-interest, could only enhance Rhodes’ already brilliant reputation among the smaller communities . . .”¹⁵⁹ And so it did. Of course, being a protector for the good of all would have complimented their ongoing personal propaganda, and a display of force and wealth could never hurt.

This prestige allowed the Rhodians to build trust in a variety of smaller entities, and historians would remember them throughout time as the wealthiest in the Aegean, best governed of the Greeks, protectors of the innocent, and eradicators of pirates. This reputation is crucial to understanding literary accounts of the First Cretan War, when there was a general agreement that Rhodes should eliminate the ‘Cretan’ pirate threat from the southern Aegean. Arguably Rhodian propaganda was so entrenched that no ancient historian would speak ill of such a decision, and perhaps as a direct result very few modern historians would either.

¹⁵⁵ See Chapter 2 on literary sources, page 10.

¹⁵⁶ For a more detailed description of this treaty, see Chapter 4 on Crete, page 50.

¹⁵⁷ Vincent Gabrielsen, “Rhodian Associations and Economic Activity,” in *Hellenistic Economies*, 166.

¹⁵⁸ Gabrielsen, *The Naval Aristocracy*, 86.

¹⁵⁹ Berthold, *Rhodes*, 99.

CHAPTER 4

Hellenistic Crete

With a firm background in the use of literary sources, archaeological evidence, piracy, and Rhodes, I will now discuss the evidence for politics, economy and society of Hellenistic Crete. First, I will describe the literary sources highlighting Polybius', Diodorus', and Strabo's specific views on Crete. Next, a full explanation of the "Cretan Mirage" and Paula Perlman's alternative view on the reasons for the beginning of the First Cretan War will provide the necessary introduction to the marginalization of Crete in modern scholarship. Using the evidence for the "Cretan Mirage", an analysis of the archaeological evidence for Cretan commerce will follow. A brief history of 3rd and 2nd c. BC Crete, and Cretan pirates, will lead up to a comparison of Crete and Rhodes, allowing for the final conclusion: the "Cretan Mirage" facilitated a disregard for interpreting Cretan commerce as significant, Crete in the Hellenistic period was nearly as economically successful as Rhodes, and its maritime success led to the slandering of the island and its people by ancient and modern authors.

Sources and Evidence for Hellenistic Crete

Modern investigations into ancient Crete have focused on the Minoan period of the island (2000-1500 BC), a time period that has captured the mind of scholars for over a century with its massive palaces. As the island moved from prehistory to history, one might expect our knowledge of Crete to increase, but this is largely not the case.¹⁶⁰ For the Hellenistic period, the best documented pre-Roman era, our main literary sources are Polybius, Diodorus, and Strabo, who offer intriguing snippets about Cretan mercenaries, the general war torn nature of the island,

¹⁶⁰ The exceptions to this statement seem to be book 10, chapter 4 of Strabo's *Geography*, which is entirely dedicated to Crete, as well as book 6, chapter 46 of Polybius' *Histories*. For references to Crete in general, see Polybius' *Histories* 13.6, 5.63-65, 6.45-46, 18.54, 33.4, 15.3, 16.1, 17.1-5; Diodorus Siculus' *Historical Library* 33.4, 31.37-38, 48, 45; Strabo's *Geography*, 10.4, trans. H. L. Jones (1917).

or moments when Cretan generals provided aid to larger military ventures. While these references are somewhat helpful, they tend to be colored by the author's particular bias, and so scholars must rely on other means in order to gain information on this island (see below).

When analyzing these sources for Hellenistic Crete, there are two crucial points to keep in mind. First, the literary sources are not Cretan. This means we are subjected to an outsider's perspective in all the cases for literary accounts of Hellenistic Cretan history. Second, arguably, the island of Crete had been on the fringes of the Greek civilization since the end of the Late Bronze Age. Not quite integrated into mainland Greece due to its distance (approximately 187 nautical miles from central Crete to Athens) and too big to be apart of the Cyclades, Crete seems to have occupied a liminal space for most ancient Greeks. Thus, while Cretans were acknowledged as Greeks, they were seen as slightly outside the ancient Greek norm.

The earliest source we have for Hellenistic Crete is book 4 of Polybius' *Histories*.¹⁶¹ While discussing the differences in the character of men during battle, he states that: "the Cretans both by land and sea are irresistible in ambushes, forays, tricks played on the enemy, night attacks, and all petty operations which require fraud, but they are cowardly and down-hearted in the massed face-to-face charge of an open battle. It is just the reverse with the Achaeans and Macedonians."¹⁶² This is only the first of many one or two line appearances of Cretans in Polybius, but already there is an obvious tone of disapproval. In other ways, however, this image is slightly terrifying. One can imagine Cretans as guerilla fighters, using their "tricks" and "fraud" to catch the unsuspecting by surprise. Either way, this is no positive account of Cretan war tactics. Either they are cowardly or frightening – neither can bode well. Later, while

¹⁶¹ See Chapter 2 on Polybius in the literary sources section, page 10.

¹⁶² Polybius, *Histories*, 4.8.11, trans. W. R. Paton, (1922-27).

comparing the constitutions of different entities to Rome's, in the most commonly cited excerpt by modern scholars, Polybius states:

Their laws go as far as possible in letting [the Cretans] acquire land to the extent of their power, as the saying is, and money is held in such high honour among them that its acquisition is not only regarded as necessary, but as most honourable. So much in fact do sordid love of gain and lust for wealth prevail among them, that the Cretans are the only people in the world in whose eyes no gain is disgraceful. . . owing to their ingrained lust of wealth they are involved in constant broils both public and private, and in murders and civil wars, they regard this as immaterial. . .¹⁶³

This version of the typical Cretan is quite blatant in its bias. Such mercantile behavior was held as uncivilized because of the ancient Aristotelian view on economics – wherein possession or acquisition of material wealth not stemming from private landownership was a sign of immoral character or a similar disconnection from ideals of Greek ethnicity.¹⁶⁴ Most scholars agree that the motivation for Polybius' bias was contemporary relations between Crete and Aetolia, the latter were the archenemies of the Achaeans.¹⁶⁵ Crete was known to have dealings with the Aetolians and as a proud Achaean, Polybius' had plenty of reason to slander the Cretans. He may have even been using a Rhodian source for his sections on Crete, which would also shed light on his bias, as Rhodes and Crete were at war twice in the Hellenistic period.¹⁶⁶ In doing so, Polybius creates a universal image of the 'bad' Cretan – one that is difficult to believe. Crete, dotted by one-hundred poleis from the Archaic to Hellenistic periods¹⁶⁷ and geographically

¹⁶³ Polybius, *Histories*, 6.46, trans. W. R. Paton, (1922-27).

¹⁶⁴ Refer back to Chapter 2, on economic theory, page 22.

¹⁶⁵ Stylianos Spyridakis, *Ptolemaic Itanos and Hellenistic Crete* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 40. Spyridakis also mentions Cretans allying with Nabis of Sparta (Polybius, *Histories*, 13.8). Nabis was a tyrant whom the literary sources tell us was brutal to the extreme, and even if this is an exaggeration, he nonetheless began to attack Messene (Sparta's long-time ally) and attempt to take control of the Peloponnese. Any Achaean would find this character notorious. See also Polybius' personal background in Chapter 2 on literary sources, page 10.

¹⁶⁶ Perlman, "The Marginalization of Crete," 133; See also the "Cretan Mirage" section below, page 49.

¹⁶⁷ See Paula Perlman, "Crete" in *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis: An Investigation Conducted by the Copenhagen Polis Centre for the Danish National Research Foundation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1144.

separated by mountain ranges, would inherently develop a multitude of cultural difference between regions (see Map 2).¹⁶⁸ Susan Alcock notes that “The uneven physical topography and irregular shape of the island also contributed to the delineation of certain natural divisions and zones.”¹⁶⁹



Map 2: Elevation map of Crete.

The fact that they were “engaged in . . . civil wars” most likely had something to do with their regional differences. As we have no idea of the scope and duration of these ‘civil wars’, aside from a few epigraphic references, this situation is not uniquely Cretan in the Hellenistic period. Although Polybius’ statement on wars in Crete is likely an exaggeration, Hellenistic Greece was full of similar events. One may only look upon events such the mass government

¹⁶⁸ Reger, “Inter-Regional Economies,” 373-74. A more in-depth discussion of how Crete displays these regional differences can be found in the Cretan Politics section below, page 59-60.

¹⁶⁹ Susan Alcock, “Three ‘R’s’ of the Cretan Economy,” in *From Minoan Farmers to Roman Traders*, ed. Angelos Chaniotis (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1999), 177.

reform and murder of previous rulers after the death of Antigonos Doson in the Peloponnese in 221 BC for prime examples.¹⁷⁰

Diodorus Siculus provides a similar description of Cretans when they attacked Siphnos:

The Cretans, putting in at Siphnos, assaulted the city and by intimidation and deceit gained admission within the walls. Having pledged their word to commit no wrong, but acting with customary Cretan faithlessness, they enslaved the city, and after sacking the temples of the gods (set sail) for Crete, laden with their spoil. Swiftly the gods inflicted upon them the penalty for their transgressions, and the divine power signally dealt with their impiety in unexpected fashion. . . .¹⁷¹

According to Diodorus, Cretans are “faithless”, and impious.¹⁷² Thus, when they are destroyed in the night by a gale that ripped their ships apart, it is only the justice of the gods. Any narrative of war is interesting in terms of demonizing the opponent and then rejoicing in their failures – here, even more interesting is how the Cretans used “intimidation and deceit” to gain entrance to the city. From a victor’s point of view, perhaps if a Cretan had told this story, they may have utilized “clever” or “resourceful” ways to enter this city, or would have been called “brave” or “fierce” in terms of their entrance. It is the consistent use of such negative language to describe the actions of Cretans during the Hellenistic period by ancient historians that created the “Cretan Mirage.”¹⁷³

Strabo also participates in this demonization of Cretans when he discusses Crete in the tenth book of his *Geography*.¹⁷⁴ Although he was not as anti-Cretan in his discourse as Polybius

¹⁷⁰ See Green, *Alexander to Actium*, Chapter 18 “Antiochus III, Philip V, and The Roman Factor, 221-196 [BC]”, 286-311. This chapter illustrates the civil war, murder, and political upheaval of the middle of the Hellenistic period in Greece.

¹⁷¹ Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library*, 31.45, trans. Francis Walton (1957); See also Chapter 2 on Diodorus Siculus in literary sources, page 12.

¹⁷² Diodorus also mentions Crete in a negative light in 18.20, and 27.3; See Chapter 2 on literary sources and Diodorus Siculus, page 12. Diodorus was influenced heavily by his sources, and Polybius particularly.

¹⁷³ See Perlman, “The Marginalization of Crete,” 137-38.

¹⁷⁴ See Chapter 2 on Strabo in literary sources, page 13.

and Diodorus, perhaps due to his greater distance in time and space, or perhaps due to his focus on cultural and regional distinctions within his work¹⁷⁵, he says that:

In regard to Crete, writers agree that in ancient times it had good laws, and rendered the best of the Greeks its emulators, and in particular the Lacedaemonians¹⁷⁶ . . . But later it changed very much for the worse; for after the Tyrrhenians, who more than any other people ravaged Our Sea, the Cretans succeeded to the business of piracy; their piracy was later destroyed by the Cilicians; but all piracy was broken up by the Romans . . .¹⁷⁷

Therefore, even from a less bias source it was known that Crete “changed very much for the worse” and that they were committed to piracy in the minds of Greeks.¹⁷⁸ Aside from Strabo’s commentary on this historical change, most of his account consists of descriptions of individual Cretan cities, their constitutions, and their societies. The way in which Strabo takes the time to individually describe Knossos, Gortyn, and Kydonia exemplifies the very idea that these poleis were distinct. He even says “Of these peoples, according to Staphylus, the Dorians occupy the part towards the east, the Kydonians the western part, the Eteo-Cretans the southern; and to these last belongs the town Prasus, where is the temple of the Diktaean Zeus; whereas the other peoples, since they were more powerful, dwelt in the plains.”¹⁷⁹ Strabo seems to be highlighting a regional concept of Crete – at least their distinct polities, if not their cultural differences.¹⁸⁰ The warfare between the Cretans may have more to do with this, perhaps, than their “ingrained avarice” in Polybius’ account.

¹⁷⁵ See the discussion on Strabo’s personal background and focus for the *Geography* in Chapter 2, page 13. One might argue that highlighting regional differences facilitates stereotypes, though here Strabo seems to avoid too much blatant negativity.

¹⁷⁶ Lacedaemonians were from Lacadaemonia, the region under the direct control of Sparta. Sparta, according to Strabo, used laws of the Cretans in the Archaic period, as Cretans were famous as lawgivers in that period.

¹⁷⁷ Strabo, *Geography*, 10.9. trans. H. L. Jones (1917).

¹⁷⁸ Strabo was probably using Diodorus and Polybius as source material here, and his description of Cretan pirates is very similar. This shows the strength and enduring nature of the Cretan pirate stereotype.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.6, trans. H. L. Jones (1917).

¹⁸⁰ Refer back to regionalism in Chapter 2, page 20.

Epigraphic evidence is in many ways more informative about Cretan society, as they are from Crete, than ancient historical accounts. It provides arguably more ‘neutral’ evidence and is much more plentiful, in the form of treaties, honorary degrees, and oaths. In particular, the Itanos Oath and an Honorary Decree from Athens to Eumaridas in Crete describe Crete’s interactions with other poleis, its economic prosperity, and its broader reputation.¹⁸¹ The Itanos Oath provides an excellent example of the aims of the oligarchical government of Itanos on Crete, and their expectations of their citizens.¹⁸² It says: “I will [not] betray [any] of the citizens / nor any of the belongings of the citizens. [And] I will not provoke an assembly or [conspiracy] for the harm of [the city] or of the citizens, nor will I associate with anyone [else] who / [wishes] to do any of these things . . .”¹⁸³ According to Michael Austin, this oath was needed in Itanos at a time when the body of citizens was growing in the 3rd century, and it acted as a safeguard against new citizen uprisings.¹⁸⁴ Itanos is located at the most eastern point on Crete (see Map 3), an area from which we have quite a bit of commercial evidence.¹⁸⁵ These types of citizen oaths are not uncommon on Crete. Another example of a citizen oath can be found at Dreros, though instead of peace between citizens, it encourages conflict between two communities.¹⁸⁶ In some ways, however, Spyridakis found that the Dreros oath, which pitted Drerians against Lyttans, is “less diabolical” than some Athenian oaths against Thebans, which delineates specific violent means to be taken against the enemy.¹⁸⁷ Unlike Polybius’ perception of Crete, it would seem that governments are attempting to moderate conflict between cities – just like any other Greek city.

¹⁸¹ William Dittenberger, ed. *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum* (Syll.), “Itanos (Crete): oath of loyalty to the state (third century),” 526; Austin, *The Hellenistic World*, Inscription 108, 206-07; Dittenberger, ed. *Syll.*, “Oath of Dreros in Crete (c.220?),” 527; Austin, *The Hellenistic World*, Inscription 109, 207-08.

¹⁸² Dittenberger, ed. *Syll.*, “Itanos (Crete): oath of loyalty to the state (third century),” 526.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*,

¹⁸⁴ Austin, *The Hellenistic World*, 207.

¹⁸⁵ See below section on Cretan commerce, page 52.

¹⁸⁶ Dittenberger, ed. *Syll.*, “Oath of Dreros in Crete (c. 220?),” 527, lines 1-136.

¹⁸⁷ Spyridakis, *Ptolemaic Itanos*, 41.

Another decree from Athens dated 217/16 BC honors the Cretan Eumaridas of Kydonia:

Since Eumaridas both previously, / and at the time when Bucris overran the countryside and carried off to Crete a large number of the citizens and of the others from the city, performed many great services for the people and contributed money from his own pocket. . . and (since) he undertakes to show every care to ensure the preservation of good relations between the people (of Athens) / and all the inhabitants of Crete; . . . be it resolved by the people, to praise Eumaridas son of Pancles of Cydonia, and to crown him with a gold crown according to the law because of his goodwill.¹⁸⁸

It is clear that there were good relations between Eumaridas and Athens, if not also between Athens and Kydonia (see Map 1 and 3).¹⁸⁹ de Souza notes that Bucris may be Aitolian, and Aitolians and Cretans are known to have contact during this time – and thus “it is no surprise to find the Athenian captives being disposed of in Crete.”¹⁹⁰ It may be that Eumaridas is being bought-off in the tradition of Hellenistic *euergetes*, but positive relations between Athens and Cydonia are documented in the late 4th century BC, lessening the probability that such an arrangement is being made.¹⁹¹ Even more surprising, however, in comparison to the image of Cretans as pirates given by ancient sources, is that a Cretan has rescued victims of pirates instead of being a pirate himself. This inscription suggests that not all interactions between Cretans and other Greeks were negative, and that that Polybius, Diodorus, and to some extent, Strabo, are presenting a stereotype rather than a reality.

The “Cretan Mirage” and the First Cretan War

The “Cretan Mirage” is the idea that Hellenistic Crete is represented in both ancient literature and modern scholarship as piratical, uncivilized, greedy, war-torn, immoral and full of

¹⁸⁸ Dittenberger, ed. *Syll.*, “Athens honours Eumaridas of Cydonia in Crete for rescuing victims of Aetolian pirates (217/16),” 535.

¹⁸⁹ Perhaps Athens even had good relations with more than one Cretan or city during this period as hinted at by the use of the word “preservation” (διαμένειν).

¹⁹⁰ de Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World*, 67.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 67, fn. 93. There is another inscription honoring Eurylochos of Kydonia for ransoming Athenian prisoners, similar to Eumaridas in 320 BC.

liars and thieves. This image nurtured by Polybius and perpetuated by anyone who used him as a source. For instance, the “Cretan Mirage” has influenced modern scholars to the point that some have attempted to use Polybius and his successor ancient historians to interpret various new kinds of evidence about Hellenistic Crete, which leads very problematic results (see below).¹⁹² One of the largest perpetuations of this mirage involves the First Cretan War between Rhodes and Crete in 205 BC.

The First Cretan War is traditionally presented as a response to a Cretan pirate attack on various Aegean islands, resulting in Rhodes declaring war on the inhabitants of Crete. Diodorus Siculus states that it began in this way: “With a fleet of seven ships the Cretans began to engage in piracy, and plundered a number of vessels. This had a disheartening effect upon those who were engaged in commerce by sea, whereupon the Rhodians, reflecting that this lawlessness would affect them also, declared war upon the Cretans”.¹⁹³ Modern scholarship continued to see Crete at fault in this situation, though Paula Perlman presents an alternative view. In her article, “The Marginalization of Crete in Greek Thought and the Role of Piracy in the Outbreak of the First Cretan War”, Perlman states the following:

Diodorus’ account of the outbreak of the First Cretan War probably depends upon Polybius, who in turn relied upon a Rhodian source or sources, most importantly Zeno’s history. To be sure, Polybius criticized Zeno and his fellow Rhodian Antisthenes, for their patriotic exaggeration, but it is unlikely that Polybius, whose hatred for the Cretans is evident throughout his history, would have scrutinized his Rhodian sources for an anti-Cretan bias.¹⁹⁴

She argues convincingly that the reason for First Cretan War was not piracy, but rather was economically driven. Perlman’s argument is a complex one that utilizes a variety of evidence and

¹⁹² See the below section on Pirates and Hadjidaki, “Preliminary Report of Excavations at the Harbor of Phalasarna in West Crete” *American Journal of Archaeology* 92:4(1988): 463.

¹⁹³ Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library*, 27.3, trans. Francis Walton (1957).

¹⁹⁴ Perlman, “The Marginalization of Crete,” 133.

is highly critical of ancient authors' account of Hellenistic Crete. She begins with the argument that there are no good sources that tell us about the end of the First Cretan War, and therefore we have no concrete evidence of how Rhodes actually defeated Crete.¹⁹⁵ The only source for the end of the war is possibly the treaty between Rhodes and Hierapytna – where it is clear that Rhodes maintained a dominant position in the negotiations.¹⁹⁶ It provides for the deployment of Hierapytnian mercenaries and/or armies when Rhodes demanded, the suppression of piracy whenever Hierapytna saw it, as well as the use of the Cretan city's harbor and navy bases.¹⁹⁷ Such an alliance is very beneficial to a power such as Rhodes, and quite limiting to Hierapytna's pursuit of its own interests. This, however, is not concrete evidence for Rhodes' victory. Perlman's next point is that Crete has been traditionally viewed by ancient Greeks as a "distant and remote place" where Cretans are "morally ill-equipped to fight as hoplites", and when they do fight it is "devious and underhanded".¹⁹⁸ She then goes on to explain that previously, piracy on Crete was used to explain new settlement patterns from the Classical period to the Hellenistic period, where the Classical period displayed isolated poleis in the uplands, and the Hellenistic period displayed a movement towards the coastal regions with much more interaction with other poleis as a result of more people becoming pirates and needing the harbors.¹⁹⁹ She argues then that piracy was not a good explanation of this development – rather, it was increased material prosperity related to trade and commercial activities that led to population growth and the desire to occupy coastal areas. Furthermore, inscriptions provide solid evidence for Crete's involvement maritime trade on a much larger scale than previously recognized, which may be

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 136-37

¹⁹⁶ Austin, *The Hellenistic World*, 216.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 213-16.

¹⁹⁸ Perlman, "The Marginalization of Crete," 138.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 139-40.

one source of the prosperity that led to the new settlement patterns.²⁰⁰ These inscriptions are treaties and tax agreements between poleis, which, among other incentives, provide for the facilitation of goods through *isopoliteia*, or multiple citizenship rights.²⁰¹ Finally, she argues that Rhodes was a maritime power with the boldness to attack in order to protect their economic assets – as happened with Byzantion – and they had a bold propaganda strategy to back up their reasoning for attacking anyone who stood to threaten their hold on them.²⁰² Part of Perlman’s argument is that instead of viewing Cretans as pirates, one should accept that Crete had “legitimate maritime interests and probably upon occasion legitimate reasons to appeal to force in support of those interests. The reputation of the Cretans may be in part attributable to their conceptual marginalization, and the ancient tradition concerning Cretan piracy should be considered in that light.”²⁰³

These points together compel a new picture of the First Cretan war, wherein Crete is no longer a threat through piracy to Rhodes, but rather Crete becomes a threat to Rhodes through their commerce. Perlman pushes us to question our sources, reevaluate the evidence that has been provided, and look for new evidence as it arises. She writes that “it is hoped that this exercise will serve to . . . shed some light both on the role of ethnic stereotyping in Greek historiography and on Rhodian commercial interests and policy.”²⁰⁴ Her analysis of the First Cretan War opens the door to analyze Crete more broadly, not just in regard to the First Cretan War, but also in terms of the Hellenistic Aegean.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 145.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 145, fn. 33. She lists as examples the *isopoliteia* treaty between Hirapytna and Arcades, the alliance of Gortyn and Hierapytna with Priasos, the *isopoliteia* treaty between Hirapytna and Priasos, the alliance between Gortyn and Lappa, the alliance between Eleutherna and Aptera, the alliance and treaty between Lato and Hirapytna, the peace treaty, alliance, and *isopoliteia* treaty between Lyttos and Olous, and the peace treaty, alliance, and *isopoliteia* treaty between Lato and Olous.

²⁰² Ibid., 152-53; See Polybius’ *Histories*, 4.8.11; See also Chapter 3 on Rhodes, page 31.

²⁰³ Perlman, “The Marginalization of Crete,” 153.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 133.

Trusting Polybius as a contemporary source on Hellenistic Crete is an understandably strong desire among modern historians. Yet, as Perlman has shown, it is harmful to our overall understanding of the Hellenistic period, and especially to Crete. The “Cretan Mirage” colors the limited non-literary evidence easily, encouraging modern historians and archaeologists to read new evidence with an old mindset, instead of interpreting it with fresh eyes. Furthermore, one cannot argue *against* a contemporary historical source – one can, however, be critical of the account and attempt to identify bias within it by comparing the information with other available evidence. For instance, Cretans most assuredly had a large mercenary force, and piracy was definitely committed by some Cretans, but the frequency of such activities and the proportion of the population they involved, must be challenged. Only when the “Cretan Mirage” is recognized can new evidence can translate into new theories, which can then change the view of Hellenistic Crete.

Evidence for Cretan Commerce in the Hellenistic Period

In 1999, Angelos Chaniotis stated that “With the exception of timber, there is no evidence for substantial export of any products of the economy of the uplands – or of Crete, for that matter – before the Imperial period.”²⁰⁵ Such was the scholarly opinion on Cretan commerce in the Hellenistic period only 15 years ago. While he notes that trade activity increased during the Hellenistic period on Crete, he cites a lack of evidence “for a long-distance trade with local products, for local manufacture, for Cretan merchants, and – more important – for the display of private wealth which characterizes big and small Hellenistic poleis.”²⁰⁶ In making this argument, he uses primarily inscriptions and literary sources, the continuity of subsistence economies, and some Cretan treaties to discuss economic trends in Crete from the Archaic through Hellenistic

²⁰⁵ Angelos Chaniotis, “Milking the Mountains” in *From Minoan Farmers to Roman Traders*, 210.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 210-11

periods. Notably lacking, however, in the corpus of Chaniotis' work on Cretan economies are references to archaeological evidence. While his overall conclusion that the economy of pre-Roman Crete is characterized by subsistence farming is likely, the addition of archaeological data provides a much broader picture.

First, there is considerable data for the economy in the Hellenistic period from finds of Cretan ceramics as objects of trade. In an analysis of the East Cretan wine trade, Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan and Stavroula Apostolakou investigated the ceramic assemblages of Mochlos, Pyrgos Myrtos, Trypetos, and Agios Nikolaos (see Map 3). Through the use of petrographic analysis, they found three local types of transport amphorae, all of which are made of a fabric they coined East Cretan Cream Ware (ECCW).²⁰⁷ They found, in fact, "substantial evidence of a significant production of local transport amphoras in East Crete from the third century BC." This indicates that this region during the Hellenistic period was producing enough surplus wine or oil to justify making vessels to export it. Furthermore, ECCW amphorae have been found in Egypt.²⁰⁸ With a production center and a distribution destination, the evidence is growing for East Crete as a larger economic force than has been recognized. These sites, especially Trypetos, also produced finds of non-local imported amphorae²⁰⁹ - from Rhodes, Cos, Knidos, and Corinth - all suggesting a larger scale of commercial importation than is previously acknowledged.

There is another form of Cretan ceramic that has been found in Egypt, called the Hadra Hydria.²¹⁰ There are two distinct forms: White Ground Hydriae, and Clay Ground Hydriae.²¹¹ While the White Ground variety has been found only in Egypt, the Clay Ground type is found all

²⁰⁷ Vogeikoff-Brogan and Apostolakou, "New Evidence," 417-18.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 426.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 417, 421.

²¹⁰ Philip Callaghan and R. E. Jones, "Hadra Hydriae and Central Crete: A Fabric Analysis" *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 80 (1985): 2.

²¹¹ Ibid., 1-2.

over the Mediterranean, including from Alexandria to Crete, Rhodes, Cyprus, Athens, Eretria, South Russia, Turkey, Cyrenaica, Italy, and Thera.²¹² ²¹³ Such a distribution indicates a far greater level of contact between local production and larger networks of exchange than a primarily agrarian-based economy or piracy would otherwise have allowed.²¹⁴

In his only reference to material culture, Chaniotis minimizes the role of Hadra Hydriae saying that “The importance of the export of Cretan ‘Hadra vases’ to the islands’ economy should not be overestimated.”²¹⁵ He and others argue that mercenaries brought the Clay Ground vases with them to Egypt as personal possessions.²¹⁶ While there were many Cretan mercenaries stationed throughout the Hellenistic world, the idea that there is only a “second-hand market” in Hadra Hydriae, especially the Clay Ground type, is quite unlikely. If this were the case, then their ubiquity and distribution would be dependent upon each mercenary group carrying a multitude of Hadra Hydriae with them, and then selling them or redistributing them when they arrived at different ports. Furthermore, even if a mercenary were to bring items with him while participating in warfare, it is unlikely that the quite large and cumbersome Hadra Hydriae would be a part of his personal cargo (see Fig. 1).²¹⁷

²¹² Ibid., 2. Due to the White Ground being found only in Egypt, it was assumed that these must be Egyptian vessels. Along with similarities in the vase shapes, slips, as well as fabrics, it was determined that a study to test the chemical compositions of the clay was needed in order to verify the origins of these Hydriae. It was found that they were indeed of Cretan origins, particularly from the region of Knossos.

²¹³ Brian Cook, *Inscribed Hadra Vases in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1966), 7 n.3.

²¹⁴ Chaniotis, “Milking the Mountains,” 181-211.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 184.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 184; Also see Philip Callaghan “The Trefoil Style and Second-Century Hadra Vases” *The Annual of the British School at Athens*, 75:1(1980): 35.

²¹⁷ Hadra Hydria are quite large for such mobility, see Fig. 1.

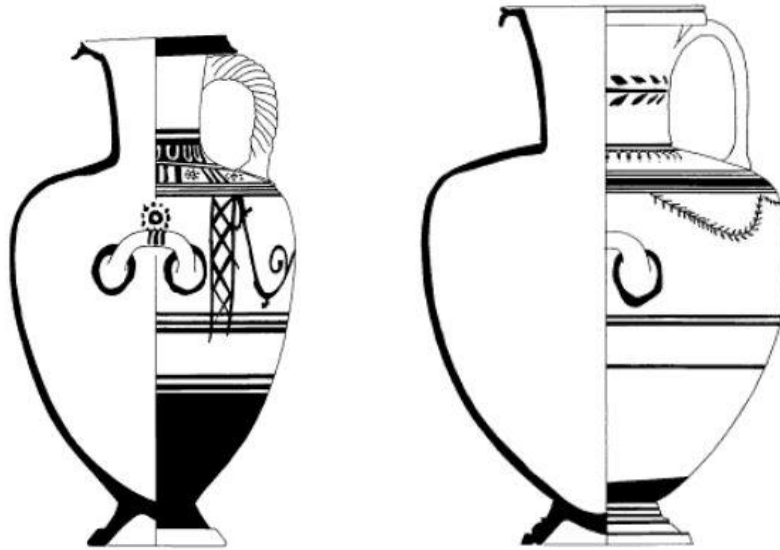


Fig. 1: Two Hadra Hydria. The Hadra on the left stands at 36.7cm in height and 24.9cm in width, while the Hadra on the right stands at 46.7cm in height and 26.1cm in width.

One justification of the mercenary-distribution argument is that the vessels were used as prizes, similar to those used in the Panathenaic games, and that they may have been re-used later as burial urns.²¹⁸ Peter Callaghan states that “No Clay Ground hydria . . . bore specifically funerary scenes on its surface and thus there is no proof that they were ever primarily intended for the use to which they were ultimately put.”²¹⁹ Although this is true, this argument can easily be flipped to state that there is no evidence that only vases marked with funerary scenes were intended to be used as funerary urns (and, in fact, there is lots of evidence to the contrary). While it is easy to assume that mercenaries brought some goods with them around the Mediterranean, there is no direct evidence that these vases arrived at their final destinations via mercenaries. What would such evidence even look like within the archaeological record? A far better explanation for the distribution pattern of Clay Ground Hadra Hydriae removes mercenaries from the picture and instead credits Crete with an economy like any other region of the

²¹⁸ Ibid., 35.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 35.

Mediterranean that produced a ceramic vessel that was widely traded. It is the ‘Cretan mirage’ and the more plausible theory of the White Ground Hydriae that resulted in the somewhat far-fetched assumption that mercenaries were the engines of trade in these Cretan products during the Hellenistic period.

Numismatic evidence is a largely untapped resource for determining the extent of the Hellenistic Cretan economy. Coin evidence shows a large increase in the amount of Cretan coins during the 3rd century BC being produced at Kydonia, Gortyn, Phaistos, Knossos, and Lyttos (see Map 3).²²⁰ According to Manolis Stefanakis, the evidence suggests that Cretan coins only circulated outside of Crete during the Hellenistic period.²²¹ Coins from Crete have been found at Delos, Kythera, and at the Athenian Agora (see Map 3).²²² In the 320s B.C., Cretans opened their mints and began to overstrike coins - primarily Aiginetan staters.²²³ They appear to have operated on a “reduced Aiginetan standard” in order to “cover the 5% cost of melting and restriking.”²²⁴ At around this time, a decree from Gortyn was released, stating that “one must use the bronze coinage which the city has issued; one must not accept the / silver obols. If anyone accepts (the silver obols) or refuses to accept the (bronze) coinage or sells anything in exchange for grain, he shall be fined five silver staters.”²²⁵ This decree implies both that there was significant commerce occurring to issue such a statement and that a polis might regulate coinage used in local markets. Through the use of the Aeginetan standard and the discovery of Cretan coins outside of Crete, it seems that Crete is engaging in large trade networks. It is unclear

²²⁰ Manolis Stefanakis, “The Introduction of Coinage in Crete and the Beginning of Local Minting,” in *From Minoan Farmers to Roman Traders*, 257; Ruth Westgate, “House and Society in Classical and Hellenistic Crete: A Case Study in Regional Variation” *American Journal of Archaeology* 111:3 (2007): 432.

²²¹ Stefanakis, “The Introduction of Coinage,” 248.

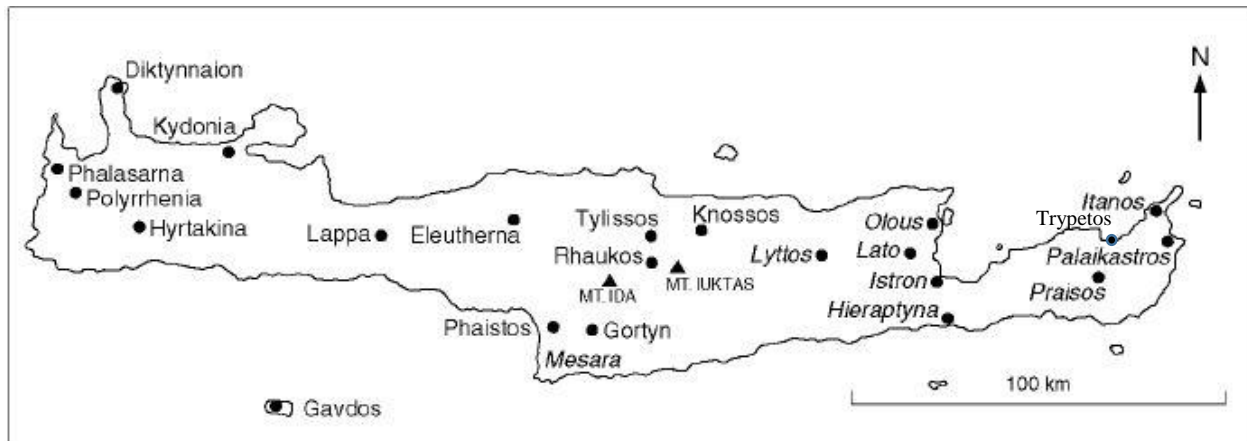
²²² *Ibid.*, 248-49.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 257, 59.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 261.

²²⁵ Dittenberger, ed. *Syll.*, “Decree of Gortyn on the use of bronze coins (mid-second half of third century)”.

exactly what was being traded, the quantity of the items being exchanged, and how these items may have reached their find spots, however. As Reger states in his discussion on regionalism and trade, common currencies are indicators and represent a “candidate for a region” that may be a trade partner.²²⁶



Map 3: Crete with significant archaeological sites.

Stefanakakis, attributes this “outburst” of coin circulation with “returning mercenaries, commerce, or military disturbances in the Aegean”.²²⁷ It could also, however, be due to new commercial enterprises, a larger scale of production, or many other factors not related to piracy and/or mercenary profit as the driving forces the Hellenistic Cretan economy. This is not to deny that mercenary work may have been an economic motivator for some aspects of Cretan society, but rather that it is likely that there were more factors at play. An example of how Hellenistic economies worked at a local level can be seen in the archaeological data from the site of Trypetos. Located in east Crete near Itanos, it was an autonomous polis issuing her own coinage from the 3rd to mid-2nd c. B.C. until it was destroyed (see Map 3).²²⁸

²²⁶ Reger, “Interregional Economies,” 386.

²²⁷ Ibid., 259.

²²⁸ Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan, “Domestic Assemblages from Trypetos, Siteia: Private and Communal Aspects,” in *STEGA: The Archaeology of Houses and Households in Ancient Crete*, ed. Kevin Glowacki and Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan (Athens: The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2011), 411; Westgate, “House and Society,” 432.

The excavation was primarily directed at studying domestic organization and attempting to discern the social and political organization of cities in Hellenistic Crete.²²⁹ It was found that in a sample of three housing spaces, two contained oblong houses with a “low value of openness”, while the third, Cluster E, had a “high value of openness” and this one had accessibility to the street.²³⁰ Artifacts found in this last cluster, including a stone perirrhanterion (wash basin), a lekane (ceramic basin), a stone gournia, stone tools, loomweights, and pithoi (storage jars), as well as its accessibility and openness, resulted in the interpretation of Cluster E as having a commercial function.²³¹ Using petrographic analysis, it was found that either at Trypetos or in the immediate vicinity, there was a site associated with wine production.²³² Along with examples of a possible Trypetos type of amphora, there were also Hierapytnian, Coan, Rhodian, and Corinthian amphorae found in Cluster E – and all of these samples date to approximately the late 3rd or early 2nd c. B.C.²³³ Across the Street in Building C, there was an olive press signaling the local production of olive oil. These finds combined other similar archaeological data from Trypetos to provide evidence of daily economic activity that is typical of most Hellenistic towns (e.g., Halieis in the Argolid). The local production of a Trypetos transport amphora is clear evidence on the part of the city to engage with intra-regional trade networks. The town was clearly connected to local and Aegean maritime trading routes as shown by the Hierapytnian amphorae and the amphorae from Cos, Rhodes, and Corinth. Such small-

²²⁹ Vogeikoff-Brogan, “Domestic Assemblages from Trypetos, Siteia: Private and Communal Aspects,” in *STEGA*, 410.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 415-16.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 416. The other two types of houses in Cluster A and B2 were found to have been indicative of houses with dining activity in them.

²³² The hesitation in the distinction between attributing the wine production to Trypetos solely comes from the unclear results of the petrographic analysis. The results indicated that the ceramics were definitely made in the region of Trypetos and Petra, though it is unclear as to which may have produced the vessels. See fn. 61.

²³³ Vogeikoff-Brogan and Apostolakou, “New Evidence,” 425.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 417, 421

scale production as the wine amphora of Trypetos may also provide a better understanding of Cretan commerce, which was clearly not restricted to the uplands agrarian model which Chaniotis claims for Crete nor to piracy.

The archaeological evidence from Crete clearly illustrates larger scale inter-regional commerce than has been previously acknowledged by scholars. The ceramic evidence of ECCW and Hadra Hydria, the numismatic evidence of a larger output of Cretan coinage and its circulation beyond the island in the Hellenistic period, and the site of Trypetos all hint at, if not confirm, the island- wide variation of commercial activity. Crete, and particularly eastern Crete, maintained a thriving economy that participated in and influenced the exportation of various goods across the Greek world. This commercial activity was diverse in its material goods as well as in its various maritime trade networking agents – both intra-regional and inter-regional. The impact, while unnoticed by most modern scholars, would not have been unnoticed by ancient merchants.

(Dis)Unity: A Brief Note on Cretan Politics

After 323 BC, when Alexander the Great died, Crete was largely ignored by his successors.²³⁴ Although our sources are fairly limited on Hellenistic Crete, we can reconstruct a basic history up to the Roman conquest. After Alexander's death, the next major recorded historical event was the First Cretan War, when Rhodes and Crete were at war in 205-201 BC.²³⁵ Rhodes, the pirate police force of the Aegean, the protectors of the innocent, the strong and able maritime power, declared war on Crete on the grounds that seven Cretan ships were “engaging in acts of piracy” and plundering “no small number of vessels.”²³⁶ According to Diodorus, “the

²³⁴ Scott Gallimore, “An Island Economy: Ierapetra and Crete in the Roman Period,” (PhD diss., University of Buffalo, 2011) 7.

²³⁵ Berthold, *Rhodes*, 62-63; de Souza, “Who are you calling pirates?” 47.

²³⁶ Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library*, 27.3. See also Chapter 3 on Rhodes, page 31.

Rhodians made war on the Cretans recognizing that it was only a matter of time before the Cretans harmed them.”²³⁷ Such an act looks to be preemptive, and because Rhodes’ stance on piracy was strict, it could be seen as a chance to prove their naval superiority while gaining popularity throughout the Aegean for quelling pirates.²³⁸ This war ended with a treaty between Hierapytna and Rhodes.²³⁹ This was the first of two Cretan wars with Rhodes. The second Cretan war lasted from 155-153 BC, also fought over issues of piracy.²⁴⁰

Crete’s documented external relations during the Hellenistic period include profitable relations with Egypt, Athens, Aigina, the Peloponnese, and even Rhodes, many of which began in the Classical period.²⁴¹ Ptolemaic relations were especially prevalent, because having a foothold in Crete, military or economic, would be crucial to relations with the rest of the Greek world. As Spyridakis explains, “The Hellenistic despots of the East, ruling over multitudes of non-Greek subjects, were vitally interested in securing the services of Greek colonists, administrators, and soldiers for the consolidation of their power. . .”²⁴² Relations with Rome began in 189 BC, when it was arbitrating between the Cretan cities of Kydonia, Gortyn and Knossos. Even if it was not an explicitly commercial relationship, Rome interacted with Crete in the role of a neutral mediator in order to maintain peace in the region.²⁴³ The archaeological evidence does not support piracy as an enormous sector of Cretan commerce. If they had a

²³⁷ Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library*, 27.3.

²³⁸ See Chapter 2 on Pirates, page 28; See also Chapter 3 on Rhodes, 39.

²³⁹ Austin, *The Hellenistic World*, 213.

²⁴⁰ Angelos Chaniotis, *War in the Hellenistic World: A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 11.

²⁴¹ Stefanakis, “The Introduction of Coinage,” 256; Dittenberger, ed. *Syll.*, “Athens honours Eumaridas of Cydonia in Crete for rescuing victims of Aetolian pirates (217/16),” 535; Spyridakis, *Ptolemaic Itanos*, 70; Brice Erickson, *Crete in Transition: Pottery Styles and Island History in the Archaic and Classical Periods* (Athens: American School of Classical studies at Athens, 2010), 281; de Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World*, 85. Though there is no written evidence of fair relations with Rhodes, Rhodian ceramics have been found at Trypetos and other sites, which may indicate a certain level of positive relations.

²⁴² Spyridakis, *Ptolemaic Itanos*, 69.

²⁴³ Gallimore, “An Island Economy: Ierapetra and Crete in the Roman Period,” 11.

successful maritime trade network, however, this may have accounted for the literary sources attribution of Cretans as “mercantile” and “greedy”.

In contrast to Rhodes, Crete was largely unable to unify its many poleis during the Hellenistic period. The epigraphic sources we have from Crete point to many treaties between and alliances against other Cretan poleis, but the closest that Hellenistic Crete ever came to political unity was expressed in the existence of the island-wide “Koinon”. A koinon is an agreement between polies to act as a unit in governmental affairs, where each polis has representatives and makes decisions regarding common issues. S. Ager states that “the Koinon of Hellenistic Crete was a somewhat looser structure than other federations, and this impression is reinforced by what little we know of the vicissitudes of the Koinon's history.”²⁴⁴ Apparently, if Gortyn and Knossos, the largest poleis of Hellenistic Crete, were at peace or allied, the Koinon would exist.²⁴⁵ If they were at odds, the Koinon fell apart.

Politically, Hellenistic Crete was dominated by three main bodies of political power, and headed by the three poleis at various times. Mainly, Gortyn controlled Lyttos, Arkades, Ariaian, Kyrtakinia; Knossos controlled the larger poleis of Praisos, Itanos, as well as seventeen smaller entities; Phaistos, controlled Metala and Polyrrhenia (see Map 3).²⁴⁶ Hierapytra was also an important player, taking over the territory of Praisos in 145 BC, destroying Itanos, and gaining economic clout throughout the rest of the Hellenistic period.²⁴⁷ These political spheres changed rapidly over time due to rivalries between each of these groups. Gortyn and Knossos are an excellent example. Ager highlights the fighting between these dominant poleis above, though in

²⁴⁴ Sheila Ager, “Hellenistic Crete and the KOINOΔΙΚION” *The Journal of Hellenistic Studies* 114:1 (1994), 2.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

²⁴⁶ Spyridakis, *Ptolemaic Itanos*, 48, no. 35.

²⁴⁷ Gallimore, “An Island Economy: Ierapetra and Crete in the Roman Period,” 12.

the Oath of Dreros, Gortyn allied with Knossos against Lyttos.²⁴⁸ Similarly, Kydonia and Polyrhena fought frequently over the lands of the Temple of Diktynna.²⁴⁹ Spyridakis gives a multitude of reasons for Cretan conflicts, including the control over sanctuaries, violations of treaties, land ownership, resource control, and the hegemony of Cretan poleis.²⁵⁰ When the Ptolemies had substantial control over cities or regions, according to Spyridakis, Crete saw peace, but the death of Ptolemy Philopater led to “antagonistic” Eteocretan states.²⁵¹ Such internal political strife, though not uncommon in the Hellenistic world, would have facilitated the negative stereotypes on Cretan piracy.

Cretan Pirates

As noted above, ancient literary sources and modern historians repeatedly state that Hellenistic Crete was full of pirates. When the modern reader hears the word “pirate”, connotations of bands of sailors with no government attachments come to mind – they rape, pillage, plunder, and otherwise wreak havoc upon the coastal towns that they can reach by ship. Perlman uses modern international law to define piracy as “an act of violence committed upon the high seas or upon land by descent from the sea that would be felonious if done ashore by one not acting under the authority of a politically organized community”.²⁵² Such a definition works well in the context of modern states and governments, because it is usually clear who may be working as pirates and who is sanctioned. Indeed, it is also useful when analyzing Crete and its pirates – in order to determine if piracy was indeed happening at the society-wide level that is implied by the ancient sources. In short, was ‘piracy’ occurring when Cretan cities were at war,

²⁴⁸ Dittenberger, ed. *Syll.*, “Oath of Dreros in Crete (c. 220?),” 527, lines 1-136; Austin, *The Hellenistic World*, 208.

²⁴⁹ Spyridakis, *Ptolemaic Itanos*, 54.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 55-58.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁵² Perlman, “The Marginalization of Crete,” 137, fn. 22.

and these “pirates” are only labeled as such by the defending party? Both de Souza and Gabrielsen discuss ‘piracy’ in the context of legitimate warfare and conclude that the ancient definition of piracy was not as clear as our modern one.²⁵³ War was often followed by plundering the town and surrounding areas in ancient times - a legitimate right for victors after the defeat of the enemy – and would look very similar to acts of piracy under other circumstances. Indeed, even the language of piracy is difficult to ascertain, as de Souza points out in attempting to distinguish between banditry and piracy. “Ancient Greek has two common words which can be translated as pirate, ληστης (leistes) and πειρατης (peirates). . . There is only one word in Greek which means a pirate, not a bandit: καταποντιστης (katapontistes), which translates literally as ‘one who throws into the sea’. . . It is not a commonly used word in Greek literature. . .”²⁵⁴ de Souza claims this distinction between bandits and pirates is important because during the Hellenistic period many words loosely meaning pirate are used

typically to refer to acts of maritime armed robbery which meet with [Thucydides and Polybius’] disapproval, for one reason or another, but the variety of contexts in which they employ them, ranging from the aristocratic raiding of Homeric times to seaborne plundering on behalf of the Hellenistic kings, are a strong warning against simply placing all such references under the heading of ‘piracy’, and assuming that they had an unchanging, negative image in the eyes of contemporaries.²⁵⁵

When viewing Polybius, especially, this information is crucial. In all cases where piracy is invoked, one must critically engage with the context of the event. Who would gain from labeling the opposing forces as pirates? For example, one may look at Polybius’ bias in Nabis of Sparta’s interactions with Crete, when he states that “he took part in piracy with the Cretans; he filled the Peloponnese with temple-looters, robbers, murderers. . .”²⁵⁶ This may indicate an alliance of

²⁵³ Gabrielsen, “Economic Activity,” 223; de Souza, “Who are you calling pirates?” 43-44.

²⁵⁴ de Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World*, 9.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 12.

²⁵⁶ Polybius, *Histories*, 13.8.1-2.

Sparta and one or two cities of Crete, or that Nabis may have hired Cretan mercenaries, and they then proceeded to infiltrate the Peloponnese. Again, this is not to deny that true piracy existed – of course, it must have – but rather, to question what kinds of activity are meant each time an ancient author discusses piracy.

de Souza discusses this topic thoroughly and explores the impact of labeling the enemy as pirates. He says that “. . . it was generally expected that an expeditionary force would not only carry out coastal raids and attack ‘enemy’ shipping . . . but might also extort money from supposedly allied coastal cities and maritime traders”, and therefore anyone who was aware of these raids could use the incident to slander their opponent.²⁵⁷ This political tactic was used in several cases in history. Two examples that de Souza notes are when Philip II labeled the Athenians as pirates in an attempt to sway the Greek poleis to gain support for his warfare against the Athenians, and when the tyrant Alexander of Pherai who used a fleet of “pirate ships” to defeat the Athenians.²⁵⁸ The latter resulted in Xenophon recording his actions in history as nothing more than a lawless pirate – though he was obviously much more.²⁵⁹ Furthermore de Souza agrees that the powerful kingdoms and poleis could improve their image through the guise of suppressing piracy, using it to further their aggressive hegemonic aims, as is argued in the case of Rhodes above.²⁶⁰ Returning to the work of Paula Perlman and her argument that if Rhodes had an interest in attacking Crete for their own hegemonic aims, slandering them as pirates in order to attack them would be no new tactic.²⁶¹ History would then record Crete as

²⁵⁷ de Souza, “Who are you calling pirates?” 45.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 45.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 45; Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 6.4.35.

²⁶⁰ See Chapter 3 on Rhodes, page 35, 39; de Souza, “Who are you calling pirates?” 45-46.

²⁶¹ See page 53-54.

piratical, instead of acknowledging the clear evidence for economic success that has been evident from the discussion above.²⁶²

Moreover, it seems nearly impossible to prove in the ancient record that pirates were at work. What would piracy look like in the archaeological record? An attempt to find Cretan pirates in the archaeological record comes from the site of Phalasarna. It is located on the west side of Crete, situated on the coast near Cape Grambousa (see Map 3, above.). Called a harbor town, excavator Elpida Hadjidaki has labeled this Classical and Hellenistic site as a “famous Cretan pirate nest”.²⁶³ Mentioned by both Polybius and Strabo, Phalasarna was known as the most western port of Crete, and Strabo uses it as a reference point within his *Geography*.²⁶⁴ Excavators discovered a large fortification wall that enclosed the harbor, and that there may have been two lines of fortification walls extending southeast, to protect the land east of the town (see Fig. 2).²⁶⁵ Large structures deemed of significant importance were an “artificial closed harbor”, a “throne possibly dedicated to Poseidon”²⁶⁶, a sandstone quarry, and a few fortification towers,

²⁶² See the previous section on Cretan Commerce, page 54.

²⁶³ Elpida Hadjidaki “Preliminary Report of Excavations at the Harbor of Phalasarna in West Crete” *American Journal of Archaeology* 92:4 (1988): 463.

²⁶⁴ Strabo, *Geography*, 10.4.2, 13.

²⁶⁵ Hadjidaki, “Preliminary Report,” 464.

²⁶⁶ It should be noted that the throne was attributed to Poseidon due to the fact that Phalasarna was “a maritime city”. *Ibid.*, 464.

one of which was round.²⁶⁷

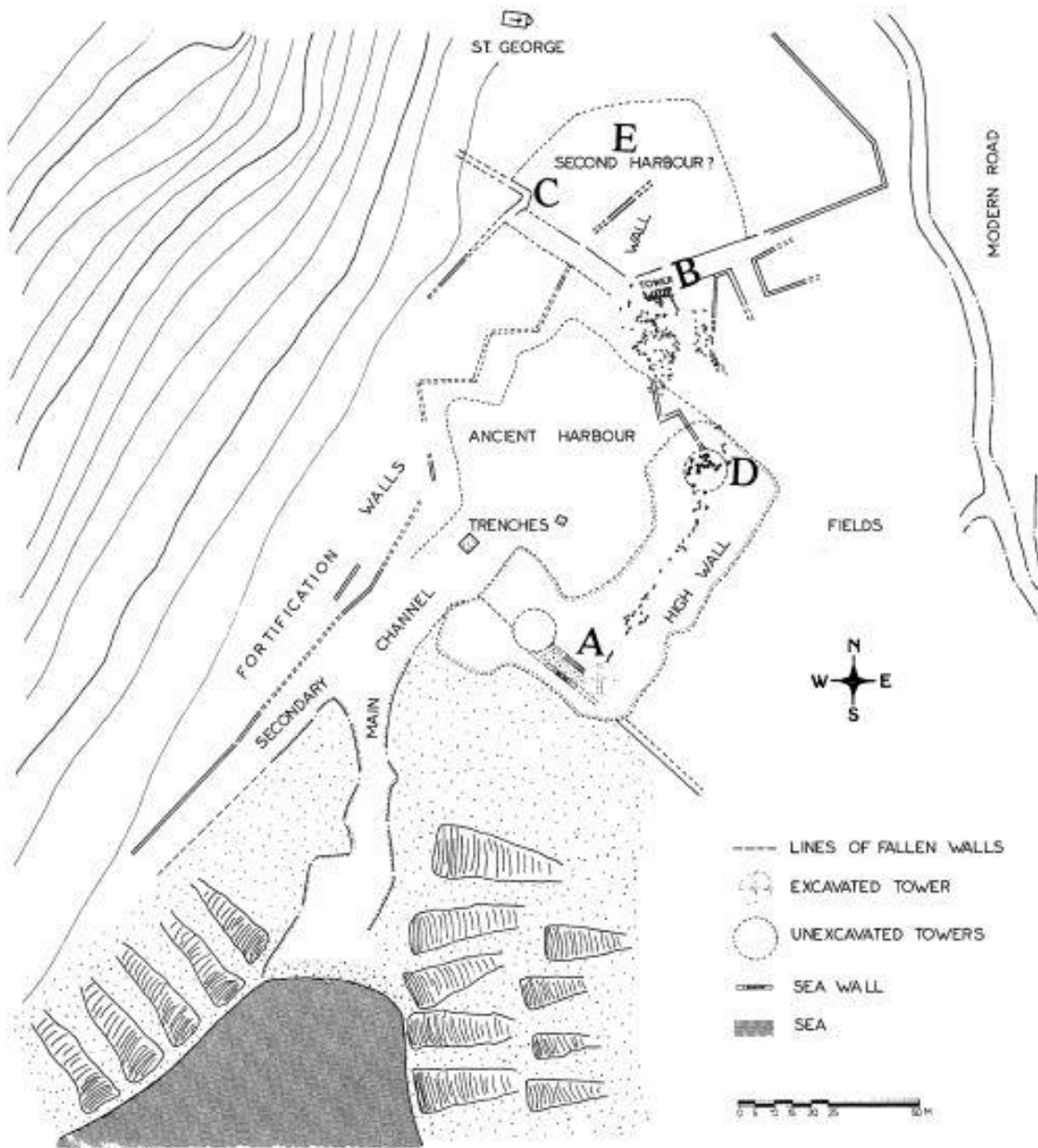


Fig. 2: The site of Phalasarna.

The preliminary report of this site is mostly speculation, as the excavated material had not been fully analyzed, and Hadjidaki relied primarily on the literary evidence of Phalasarna to direct her interpretations of the above structures. The excavation of the round tower, however,

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 463-64.

did put forth interesting questions on the defense of the city – as the tower looks different from other harbor towers known in the Hellenistic period.²⁶⁸ Once a final excavation report of Phalasarna came out in 1990, however, it was noted that this round tower was most likely a cistern, not a defense tower or fish tank.²⁶⁹ The evidence for this is debatable. Frost and Hajidaki postulate that the blocks leading into the channels would have allowed for rainwater collection and that a cistern would be useful in a pirate town where it could resupply ships and hold out during periods of siege.²⁷⁰

This information is, of course, based on the assumption that the town was a pirate nest. After the cistern, the “artificial closed harbor” is the next most significant find. In the final report, it was re-interpreted as a “brackish lagoon”, with no connection to the main harbor.²⁷¹ Frost and Hajidaki believed that Phalasarna was destroyed in the mid-2nd century by the Romans and Marcus Antonius’ campaign when they were clearing the seas of pirates.²⁷² This is serious speculation. If one looks clearly at the evidence, there could be a variety of conclusions that may be drawn other than piracy. The most obvious conclusion that comes to mind when one eliminates the literary sources and looks mainly at the archaeological evidence is that this site was a commercial harbor. Frost and Hadjidaki disagree with this, claiming that there was no evidence of commercial activity, that the harbor was not large enough to facilitate the movement of merchant vessels, and that the fortifications of the harbor would indicate more violence than a port of trade.²⁷³ The lack of commercial evidence – that is to say, pottery, coins, and loom

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 473.

²⁶⁹ Frank Frost and Elpida Hadjidaki, “Excavations at the Harbor of Phalassarna in Crete: The 1988 Season” *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens* 59:3 (1990): 516.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 517.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 525. The former “artificial enclosed harbor” was not interpreted as a second harbor due to the lack of seashells found (an indicator of a connection to the sea) and because the space between the wall and acropolis would not have allowed ships to pass through it.

²⁷² Hadjidaki, “Preliminary Report,” 463.

²⁷³ Ibid., 463.

weights – however, may be due to the incomplete nature of the archaeological record or the incomplete nature of the excavation. de Souza even points out that “agriculture, trade in stone, commercial links with nearby Polyrrhenia and later Egypt, and the service of local mercenaries overseas, are all attested in some form [at Phalasarna], and seem to provide adequate explanations for the city’s relative prosperity.”²⁷⁴ Such is the danger of accepting Cretan piracy wholesale. The “Cretan Mirage” effectively blinded these excavators to interpretations other than the mainstream conceptions of Hellenistic Crete.

There are so many references to it and our evidence so incomplete, however, that it is impossible to claim Crete was free of any form of piracy. Instead it is the pervasiveness of the image that can be addressed – why were all Cretans branded as immoral or pirates? First, is it possible that some areas of Crete were participating in the Hellenistic hegemonic race, like its neighbors Rhodes, the Ptolemies, the Seleukids, and the Antigonids did? As seen above, warfare and piracy were related in terms of plundering and attack. Or were these ‘pirates’ actually individual regions/cities protecting their economic interests in the Aegean? There is strong evidence for Cretans’ connections with many entities in the Aegean, and just as the Rhodians, they may have needed protection. Or did the lack of unity and the marginalization of Crete in the public eye lead others to believe that Cretans operating outside of the island of Crete were automatically pirates? After all, if there was no central political organization (as the marginal perception of Crete would attest), no Cretan marine force could be legitimate. Thus, they would be pirates. At this point, it is impossible to prove any of these claims. There is evidence that Cretans may have been slandered profusely though the label as ‘pirate’, as de Souza and Perlman

²⁷⁴ de Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World*, 59.

have made clear.²⁷⁵ In light of such claims, these are options that scholars may investigate as an alternative to the stereotypical, marginalized, Cretan.

Rhodes and Crete: A Comparative Analysis

Hellenistic Rhodes, as investigated in the case study in Chapter 3, was clearly an economic and political power during the Hellenistic period. It engaged in substantial inter-regional trade that brought its products all over the Mediterranean. The island was also a stopping point on trade routes, which allowed it to profit through taxation of marketable goods and services. Politically unified, it could stand against the forces of Demetrius Poliorketes. The literary sources place Rhodes at the top of the moral ladder as a protector of free trade and a destroyer of pirates. Politically savvy through its mediation of potential military conflicts, it could also support the best navy in the Aegean (after the fall of Ptolemaic naval power) when it needed to protect its interests. When the earthquake that damaged the Colossus struck the island, Greek poleis and kings rushed forth to help – enough so that Rhodes was able to make a profit off of such a terrible disaster. In many ways, Rhodes was the golden child of the Hellenistic period – autonomous, wealthy and politically connected. It was located in the correct place, ignored by or allied to the larger kingdoms, and was able to navigate successfully the constantly changing political atmosphere through strategic alliances or neutrality.

As we've seen, ancient literary sources marginalized Crete to the most dramatic degree as greedy, unorganized, murdering, lying, dishonorable, cowardly pirates and mercenaries. Crete's allies are few and far between, according to the sources – not many would come to the aid of Crete. However, much of this beleaguered image can be explained away as part of the "Cretan Mirage". In essence, our evidence points to more trade than is acknowledged, and there is even

²⁷⁵ de Souza, "Who are you calling pirates?" 45-46; Perlman, "The Marginalization of Crete," 133; See page 53-54.

evidence that Cretan economic activity and prosperity spiked during this period. Despite the fact that Crete did not unify completely, it did have larger unifications that were powerful in their own right – such as the cities of Gortyn, Knossos, and Hierapytna. The connections to the mainland by various Cretan polities may be relatively few, but they are large powers such as Athens and the Ptolemies.

Was Crete really that much different from Rhodes? Yes and no.

In 205 BC, Rhodes attacked Crete in what is now understood to be the First Cretan War. This attack on the pirates of Crete, I believe, is evidence that Crete was on a very similar level as Rhodes in the Hellenistic period. Threatened by its rising prosperity, Rhodes needed to protect its hegemonic aims and goals, as well as its economic ties through ensuring that Crete did not rise completely to its level. Later, Rome would do very much the same, under the guise of piracy.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

Through investigating the source of bias in ancient historians, re-examining the archaeological evidence, applying economic theory, understanding political strategy, and using a bit of interpretation, the “Cretan Mirage” has been dispelled. It is not true that Crete was piratical in essence – rather, these ancient people and their poleis are as dynamic and opportunistic as any of the other Greek poleis during the Hellenistic period. Crete’s many cities were operating on the Aegean trade network, building their economic power, spreading the culture and goods of Crete to other Greeks. It had the connections, the economic clout, and the material production to be a major competitor to Rhodes, and Rhodes attacked Crete for these reasons. Mirages such as the “Cretan Mirage” are dangerous within scholarship, because they are difficult to detect and they impair the ability of researchers to objectively analyze the past. In this instance, piracy played a large role in the mirage. Our modern understanding of what pirates are and what they do are not the same as ancient notions of piracy. Piracy was used against Crete to slander its reputation and all but erase it from Hellenistic history. I would like to end by again quoting Polybius, as he was correct in one aspect:

For indeed some idea of a whole may be got from a part, but an accurate knowledge and clear comprehension cannot. Wherefore we must conclude that episodic history contributes exceedingly little to the familiar knowledge and secure grasp of universal history. While it is only by the combination and comparison of the separate parts of the whole,—by observing their likeness and their difference,—that a man can attain his object: can obtain a view at once clear and complete; and thus secure both the profit and the delight of History.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁶ Polybius, *Histories*, 1.4, trans. W. R. Paton, (1922-27).

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