

From Purple to Perfume: New Studies Concerning Crete
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Justification: Studies concerning ancient Crete, its land and its antiquities, published in the last 30 years abound. They form the “focus of intensive archaeological exploration during recent decades”¹ and one can say with fairness that Crete as a topic is “hot.” Yet due to want of new literary evidence, they do not often appear as a free standing subject in today’s classical studies curricula. One is apt to think more readily of the Cretan philosopher Epimenides of Knossos (c. 600 BC), who declared: Κρητες εἰ ψεύσται, "Cretans, always liars" or the symbols on the mysterious Phaistos disk. And yet we find Crete, its products and its people playing myriad roles over a long period time in the ancient world. Thus it is important to follow new trends in research about Crete. This panel will present some new ideas developed by researchers fresh from sites visited in Crete during 2007 and 2008 and fitted within the framework of our existing literary evidence.

1 Zenon Papakonstantinou, Angelos Chaniotis, (ed.) *From Minoan Farmers to Roman Traders: Sidelight on the Economy of Ancient Crete* (Stuttgart, 1999) *BMCR* 2001, 10.30. See also *Archaeology and European Modernity: Producing and Consuming the Minoans*, (eds.) Yannis Hamilakis and Nicoletta Momigliano (Padua, 2006), Graham Campbell-Dunn, *Who Were the Minoans? An African Answer* (Indiana, 2006) Oliver Rackham and Jennifer Moody, *The Making of the Cretan Landscape* (Manchester UP, 1996), and Ian Sanders, *Roman Crete* (Warminster, 1981).

Thanks to famous accounts by such prominent authors as Herodotus and Strabo describing their political association as a joint Roman province in the first century BC, and their self-evident geographic proximity, Crete and Cyrene have been frequently linked throughout the ages. However, very little has been done to investigate tangible links between these two regions, unlike the significant work done to date linking Crete with Egypt.

If we are to understand Herodotus correctly (4.25), it was only by accident that a Cretan purple dye dealer by the name of Corobius landed in Africa. On the other hand, Strabo provides explicit sailing directions from Crete to Cyrene, suggesting that it is a well-traveled route by his time. Can we extrapolate this evidence to mean that programmed interactions between the two regions were only initiated after the 7th century and crescendoed slowly until reaching a peak in the Roman period? Recent evidence from Crete suggests that complex trade relationships did in fact exist between the two regions stretching as far back as the Minoans. This is not only supported by indirect evidence, but highlighted by the possible discovery of silphium in a Late Minoan perfumed oil workshop that was producing aromatics from an assortment of botanical sources such as Cretan rockrose, wormwood, and linden.

Sweet History: The Importance of Honey in the Ancient Mediterranean
and Its Role in the Cretan Economy
Jennifer L. Meyer (Wayne State University)

Throughout antiquity honey has been prized as a multi-faceted product used for everything from a natural sweetener to embalming fluid. One of the best places to obtain this precious product was Crete. Honey has been a staple commodity for this island back to the Minoans, continuing throughout the Roman occupation, and remains so today. Honey holds a place in both Greek and Roman mythology as sustenance for the gods and as a main ingredient in their offerings. In addition, Greek and Roman literature provides evidence concerning the value of honey and its cultivation.

Archaeology also has something to tell us about honey, and this paper written with the encouragement of Dr. Christoforos Vallianos, Director of the Museum of Cretan Ethnology in Vori will examine what has been found in the archaeological record concerning apiculture on Crete, mainland Greece and other locations. Building on the work of other scholars my evidence suggests that Cretans fostered the production of honey and turned it into an important facet of their economy;¹ their central location in the Mediterranean made widespread distribution possible, as evidenced by other products. From their available flora grew (as it still does) a floral admixture yielding a sweet and prized elixir.

1 Virginia R. Anderson-Stojanović and J. Ellis Jones, "Ancient Beehives from Isthmia," *Hesperia*, 71 (Oct. - Dec., 2002), 345-376; R. P. Evershed, S.J. Vaughan, S.N. Dudd and J.S. Coles, "Beeswax in Lamps and Conical Cups from Late Minoan Crete," *Antiquity* 71(1997), 979-985.

Looking Through the Purple Haze:
Investigating Royal Purple Dye Production in Crete
Thomas C. Harwood (Wayne State University)

If I were to ask you to pick a color that best represented value in today's society, gold, silver, or even green might come to your mind. In the distant past however, purple was extremely rare and one of the most precious colors. Today purple is common and purple clothing is easily had, but in ancient times the wearing of clothing dyed purple outwardly expressed wealth and prosperity. Surviving ancient Greek and Latin sources give us some idea as to the manufacture of purple dye, but they do not provide the actual "recipe" for making the dye. Thus the mechanical aspects of its production have remained a mystery.

Furthermore the literary sources provide a one-sided account from the perspective of the affluent. In other words much is understood about those who wore this symbol of wealth, but little is known about the skilled laborers that made it. Those that manufactured this luxury item for the wealthy were members of an underclass of artisans that has been forgotten because they failed or were unable to leave behind written accounts. The aim of my research is to cut through the haze that lingers over the historical documentation, and using some methods in experimental archaeology try to reproduce this dye according to ancient practice. My research, conducted with the help of the Aegean geologist Dr. Floyd McCoy and Dr. Thomas Brogan, director of INSTAP-SCEC (Institute for Aegean Prehistory Study Center for East Crete) at a Middle Minoan dye making facility in the summer of 2008, both illuminates certain details found in the literary evidence as well as challenges others. ¹ In this presentation I will discuss my findings.

1 Deborah Ruscillo, "Faunal Remains and Murex Dye Production," *Kommos V: The Monumental Minoan Buildings*, (eds.) Joseph W. Shaw and M. C. Shaw, (Princeton, 2006), 776-840.

A Brief Look at the History of Cretan Cypress
Michele Valerie Ronnick (Wayne State University)

Sources both literary and archaeological tell us that cypress from Crete was a valued commodity that was used for general construction purposes, monumental doorways, statues and the building of ships. ¹ While the evidence has not been brought together, it seems plausible to assume that Cretan cypress wood was exported to Egypt during the Bronze Age 101, as it was in 5th century Athens. when cypress served as the “main weight bearing timber of the Parthenon.” ² Evidence for this connection is supported by a fragment ascribed to the comic playwright Hermippus who tells us that “Crete sends us [Athenians] cypress for the gods” (Athenaeus, 27 d-e). From Thucydides 2.34.3 we learn that the remains of Athenians who died during the opening year of the Peloponnesian War were put in cypress coffins.

This tree with its highly durable and aromatic wood was doubly valuable because it did not grow everywhere or easily. Pliny tells us that it is native to Crete and that it was first imported into Italy at Tarrentum (*NH* 16.141). In the same passage he describes the tree’s marvelous vitality growing spontaneously from uncultivated Cretan soil. This was not the case for trees grown on Italian soil as Cato’s detailed plan for its propagation attests (*R.R.* CLI).

We have until recently widely accepted Sir Arthur Evan’s assertion that “a main cause of the downfall of Minoan dominion is to be sought in the gradual deforestation of the island.”³ Oliver Rackham disagreed in 1996 and recent work on the eastern coast of Crete indicates that the tsunami generated by the volcanic blast on Thera was the cause.⁴ Using evidence from the age of Pericles to the time of Pliny, my paper demonstrates that whatever the cause of the collapse of Minoan palace culture, the use and export of Cretan cypress did not disappear with it.

1 For information on the use of cypress in statues see Meiggs, 313; Pausanias, 6.18.7, Livy, 27.37.12 and Pliny, *NH* 16.216.

2 Russell Meiggs, *Trees and Timber in the Ancient Mediterranean World*, (Oxford, 1982), 101; 201.

3 Arthur Evans, *The Palace of Minos*, (Macmillan, 1921-35), vol. 2, 565.

4 Oliver Rackham, “Ecology and Pseudo-Ecology,” *Human Landscapes in Classical Antiquity: Environment and Culture*, (eds.) Graham Shipley and John Salmon (Routledge, 1996), 29.