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From Gortyn to Heraklion? A Note on Cretan Urbanism During the 8th Century

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ΙΝΣΤΙΤΟΥΤΟ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΚΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ
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ΤΟΜΟΣ 29 VOLUME

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DURING THE 8TH CENTURY

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Recent scholarship on Late Antique and early Byzantine Gortyn has claimed that the turning point of its urban fabric occurred primarily in the 8th rather than the 7th century¹. The study of its cityscape during this historical period is still in progress, but the current state of research appears

* I would like to thank Yorgos Brokalakis, Sophia Didioumi and Maria Leontsini for their helpful comments on this article.

1. See I. BALDINI – S. COSENTINO – E. LIPPOLIS – G. MARSILI – E. SGARZI, *Gortina, Mitropolis e il suo episcopato nel VII e nell’VIII secolo*, *Saia. Annuario della Scuola Archeologica di Atene e delle Missioni Italiane in Oriente*, ser. III, 7, 90 (2012) [2013], 239-308; E. LIPPOLIS – L. M. CALIÒ – C. GIATTI, con la collaborazione di F. GIANNELLA e C. LAMANNA, *Gortina VIII, 1. Gortina, l’isolato del Ninfeo I. La topografia, i monumenti e lo scavo (campagne 2003-2008)* [Monografie della Scuola Archeologica di Atene e delle Missioni Italiane in Oriente, XXV], Firenze 2019. In the synthesis by A. DI VITA, *Gortina di Creta. Dieci secoli di vita urbana*, Roma 2010, 65-66, 81-82 the end of the city as ‘structured entity’ (p. 82) is dated after the big earthquake of 670. Overviews of the Cretan urban history in Late Antiquity / early Byzantine period (4th to 8th century) are those by CH. TSIGONAKI, *Les villes crétoises aux VIIe et VIIIe siècles: l’apport des recherches archéologiques à Eleutherna*, *Saia. Annuario della Scuola Archeologica di Atene e delle Missioni Italiane in Oriente*, ser. III, 7, 85 (2007), 263-297 and EAD., *Πόλεων ἀνεπίστοις μεταβολαῖς. Ιστορικές και αρχαιολογικές μαρτυρίες από τη Γόρτυνα και την Ελεῦθερα της Κρήτης (4ος – 8ος αι.)*, in *Οι βυζαντινές πόλεις, 8ος – 15ος αιώνας. Προοπτικές της έρευνας και νέες ερμηνευτικές προσεγγίσεις*, ed. T. ΚΙΟΥΣΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, Rethymno 2012, 73-100. A monograph on the water supply of Gortyn has been recently published by E. GIORGI, *Archeologia dell’acqua di Gortina di Creta in età protobizantina*, Oxford 2016, while a recent synthesis on the social and economic history of Gortyn from Late Antiquity to the early Byzantine period can be found in S. COSENTINO, *Gortina dalla tarda antichità all’età bizantina*, in LIPPOLIS – CALIÒ – GIATTI, *Gortina VIII, 1*, 57-85.

to outline a specific picture. The *Praitōrion* area, as a political and public space, seems to continue to function until the early 8th century, after which it was infringed upon by agricultural installations²; its nearby western artisanal and residential quarter, the so-called ‘Byzantine houses’, expands itself eastwards by encroaching upon the main axial road that bordered the governor’s palace along its western side. The edifice identified as the episcopal church shows important hints of a protracted use until the 8th century³, while the settlement around Hagios Titos (modern dedication) probably increased in devotional, residential and demographic importance, since it was the focus of the programme of urban requalification carried out by the Metropolitan Andrew of Crete in the 720s. The Acropolis must have also gained in importance and benefitted from new fortifications built in the late 7th or early 8th century. In overall terms, it can be stated that the lower part of the city continued to exist as an organised system of districts whose distant model ascended to that of the Justinianic period until the first third of the 8th century. Only after this date does Gortyn seem to become a different town compared to how it was in Late Antiquity by changing its cityscape and transforming or reducing the nuclei of its inhabited sectors.

Along with modifications to the urban fabric of Gortyn, a major transformation in the governance of the island occurred in the 8th century. Until the 7th century, Crete had been ruled by a series of governors whose office had been qualified since the early 4th century as *ὑπατικός* (*consularis*), a classification which appears to last throughout the 4th and the 5th century⁴. In the 6th century this qualification seems to transform into that of *ἀνθύπατος* (*proconsul*), a term which presumably employed the same meaning as *ὑπατικός*⁵. The office of *ἀνθύπατος* and the functions

2. See E. BALDINI, L'inquadramento topografico, and G. MARSILI – F. FRASCA, Gli apprestamenti produttivi, in *Gortina VIII.1* (as above, n. 1), 473-478, 516-528.

3. BALDINI ET ALII, Gortina, Mitropolis e il suo episcopato (as above, n. 1).

4. The office was constituted after the separation of the former united province of Crete and Cyrenaica. Mention of it in *Notitia dignitatum, accedunt Notitia urbis Constantinopolitanae et Laterculi provinciarum*, edidit O. SEECK, Berolini 1876, *Or.* I, LXXV; lists of the *consulares* of Crete in Late Antiquity: *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* [henceforth *PLRE*], by J. R. MARTINDALE, II, AD. 395-527, Cambridge 1980, *fasti*, 1285 (Fortunatianus Servilius, Callinicus 1); and *PLRE* III, 1488 (Helias 1).

5. The passage from *ὑπατικός* / *ἀνθύπατος* must have occurred during the early reign

connected to it continued to operate more or less during the same time frame in which the area of the *Praetōrion* began to lose its political vocation, and despite the institutional history of the island, it eventually came to assume a different character as compared to the past. This form is marked by the appearance of a new officer, whose formal title was *βασιλικὸς σπαθάριος καὶ ἄρχων Κρήτης*. He is witnessed in at least eight seals dating from the second half of the 8th to the first quarter of the 9th century⁶. Evidence about his functions is meagre, but based upon indications which denote other officers styled with the same title in Cagliari, Malta, Dyrhachion, Cyprus, Chios and Cherson, one can hypothesize that he exerted some judicial functions, supported the officers of the central administration and was entrusted with the task of controlling the commercial activities that took place on Crete⁷. The latter function would seem certainly appear to be the case of a certain Ioannes ἄρχων καὶ παραφύλαξ Κρήτης⁸, as other bullae belonging to officers bearing the same title known to have been active in Abydos, Thessalonica, Nicaea, Ephesus and Amorion confirm⁹. Moreover, it is not clear at all where the residence of this new officer was. The discovery of a seal pertaining to a certain Antiochos *κουβικουλάριος*

of Justinian: see Helias *περίβλεπτος ἀνθύπατος* quoted in a Gortynian inscription dated to 539: *Inscriptiones Creticae opera et consilio Friderici Halbherr collectae*, curavit M. GUARDUCCI, I-IV, Roma 1935-1950, IV, 460 [henceforth IC]; A. BANDY, *The Greek Christian Inscriptions of Crete*, Athens 1970, 31 [henceforth BANDY]. Last known mention of such an officer is in a seal, still unpublished, found in the area of the cathedral of Mitropolis, which bears evidence of a certain Christodoulos. The seal has been inspected by K. Sidiropoulos, who is inclined to date it to a period ranging from 550 to 600. I thank my colleague Isabella Baldini for this communication. *Ἀνθύπατοι* are attested still in middle Byzantine period (see N. OIKONOMIDES, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles*, Paris 1972, 294), but their office is different from that of Late Antiquity.

6. See the quotations of sources by S. COSENTINO, in BALDINI ET ALII, *Gortina, Mitropolis e il suo episcopato* (as above, n. 1), 245, n. 37.

7. D. TSOUGARAKIS, *Byzantine Crete from the 5th Century to the Venetian Conquest* [Historical Monographs, 4], Athens 1988, 173-177.

8. D. TSOUGARAKIS, *The Byzantine seals of Crete*, in *SBS*, ed. N. OIKONOMIDES, 2, Washington D.C., 1990, n. 21 (= *Prosopographie der mittel-byzantinischen Zeit, Erste Abteilung (641-867)*, I-VII, Berlin-New York 1998-2002, vol. I, 3008 = henceforth *PMBZ*).

9. See the evidence quoted by S. COSENTINO, in BALDINI ET ALII, *Gortina, Mitropolis e il suo episcopato* (as above, n. 1), 246, fn. 40.

καὶ βασιλικὸς χαρτουλάριος, on Saint John's Hill, the Gortynian acropolis, made it possible to suggest that the ἄρχων moved his headquarters there¹⁰. Partial shifting of urban settlements to hilltop sites, a well-documented phenomenon during the 'dark centuries' across the empire, is known to have also occurred in Crete, as in the cases of Pyrgi (Eleutherna) and Knossos¹¹. On the other hand, there are at least two circumstances that cast doubt over the case for the continued residence at Gortyn of the Cretan ἄρχοντες. Firstly, none of their seals have been found *in situ* since for the most part they have come from the antiques market of Istanbul¹². Secondly, an episode from the eighth century *bios* of Stephen the Younger mentions a *praitōrion* that seems to be situated not in Gortyn, but in Heraklion (ἐν τῷ λεγομένῳ πραιτωρίῳ τοῦ Ἡρακλείου)¹³. In former literature, such information had been interpreted as a reference to a residence built by Emperor Heraclius in Gortyn¹⁴. Although today's archaeological research has indeed identified a

10. The seal has been edited (without proposing a date) by G. RIZZA – V. S. M. SCRINARI, *Il Santuario sull'Acropoli di Gortina*, I [Monografie della Scuola Archeologica di Atene e delle Missioni Italiane in Oriente, 2], Roma 1968, 118; new analysis and a tentative attribution to the 7th century by TSUGARAKIS, *Byzantine Crete* (as above, n. 7), 362, n. 165a and TSUGARAKIS, *The Byzantine seals* (as above, n. 8), n. 30.

11. At Pyrgi (Eleutherna) the seal of a πατρίκιος καὶ ἀπὸ ὑπάτων has been found which has been dated to the 8th century: TSIGNAKI, *Les villes crétoises aux VIIe et VIIIe siècles* (as above, n. 1), 280; from Knossos comes the seal of Ioannes βεστήτωρ (καὶ) πρωτονοτάριος βασιλικοῦ σακελλίου dated by its editor to the 8th / 9th century: A. DUNN, *A Byzantine fiscal official's seal from Knossos excavations and the archaeology of the dark-age cities, in Creta romana e protobizantina*, eds. M. LIVADIOTTI – I. SIMIAKAKI, I, Padova 2004, 140-141.

12. TSUGARAKIS, *The Byzantine seals* (as above, n. 8), *passim*.

13. In this episode the Cretan ἡγούμενος Paul, after having refused to step on an icon, is tortured by the ἀρχισατράπης τῆς νήσου, Theophanes Lardotyros, in ἐν τῷ λεγομένῳ πραιτωρίῳ τοῦ Ἡρακλείου: *Vita Steph. iun.* 58 (see M.-F. AUZÉPY, *La vie d'Étienne le Jeune par Étienne le Diacre, introduction, édition et traduction*, Aldershot 1997 [Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Monographs, 3], 258-259).

14. See M. G. PARLAMAS, Τοπωνυμικὰ περιπέτεια τοῦ Ἡρακλείου, in *Κρητικά Χρονικά* 8/1 (1954), 273-286, part. 277-278. (challenging the assumption by N. TOMADAKES, Κρήτη = Χάνδαξ = Ἡράκλειον, *ΕΕΒΣ* 21 [1951], 235-237). N. TOMADAKES, Ἡ ἀποστολικὴ ἐκκλησία τῆς Κρήτης κατὰ τοὺς αἰ. Η' - Π' καὶ ὁ τίτλος τοῦ προκαθημένου αὐτῆς, *ΕΕΒΣ* 24 (1954), part. 93-102 and TSUGARAKIS, *Byzantine Crete* (as above, fn. 7), 133-134 contests the argument of Parlamas, while it is shared by G. KIOURTZIAN, L'incident de Cnossos (fine septembre/début octobre 610), *TM* [= *Constructing the Seventh Century*, ed. by C. ZUCKERMAN], 17 (2013), 173-196: 193.

restructuring phase of the governor's residence at Gortyn during the reign of Heraclius, it has also proved beyond any doubt that when the *Life* of Saint Stephen was composed (in the second half of the 8th century) this complex had definitely ceased to function¹⁵. When Stephen the Deacon was writing the *Life* of Stephen the Younger, the *Praitōrion* of Gortyn had become an area for the production of olive oil and the storage of grain¹⁶.

Scepticism toward a possible transfer of the Cretan governors from Gortyn to Heraklion could be motivated from the widespread opinion which deems that the latter could not have been a significant settlement before the Muslim conquest of the island. The *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, for instance, lists Heraklion under the entry «Chandax» and unhesitatingly attributes its foundation to the Arabs¹⁷. As a matter of fact, the *Synekdēmos* of Hierokles – a list of towns and provinces of the empire assembled early in the reign of Justinian but based upon administrative records from the time of Theodosius II (408-450) and Marcian (450-457) – mentions twenty-two towns in Crete without including Heraklion among them¹⁸. Evidently, in Late Antiquity the modern Cretan capital did not have enough institutional importance to be classified as a 'town' from an administrative point of view. However, this does not mean that it was devoid of any form of settlement. Strabo had already (*Geogr.* X 476, 7) mentioned it, describing it as the port of Knossos, and its existence as a settlement had undoubtedly continued until the early and late Roman period. This is confirmed by a fifth-century funerary inscription found in Gortyn concerning a certain Theoktistos¹⁹. The marble slab on which it is engraved is in a bad state of preservation, so that the epigraph can only be read by means of heavy integrations. At any rate, it seems to refer to an individual of high social standing that was born in Heraklion and ended his life in Gortyn. Yet even if we do not want to rely on this piece of evidence, another funerary inscription dated to the 6th or 7th century confirms the existence of a settlement in Late Antique

15. See above, n. 2

16. See above, n. 2.

17. See *ODB* I, 409 (entry by T. E. GREGORY).

18. *Συνέκδημος*, 649, 3-651, 2 (*Le Synekdēmos d'Hiérokès et l'opuscule géographique de Georges de Chypre. Texte, introduction, commentaire et cartes* par E. HONIGMANN, Bruxelles 1939, 19).

19. *IC* IV, 508; BANDY, 45.

Heraklion. In this case, the stone on which it is carved was found in the foundations of a house located near the present Historical Museum at Heraklion²⁰. Moreover, the Passion of the Ten Saints, a hagiographic text possibly written in Gortyn during the late 6th or early 7th century, lists among the martyrs Euarestos, who was a native of Heraklion²¹.

The so-called *Cosmographia* by the Anonymous of Ravenna composed towards the late 7th or early 8th century includes the *civitas* of *Eraclium* among the twenty-four towns that are described with reference to Crete²². This work is of great historical value; it is written in Latin, yet filled with Greek terms to such an extent that some scholars have presumed it was derived from an original Greek model²³. Furthermore, it makes use of sources which are not attested elsewhere, such as the Ostrogothic geographers Athanarid, Marcomir and Heldebald²⁴. Its author not only reuses former geographical and administrative materials, but he also tries to adapt them to his time. The Anonymous of Ravenna predates by nearly a century and half the first mention of Heraklion as an episcopal see, as found in the acts of the Second Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (787). I am well aware that this evidence has been evaluated with great caution or even rejected by some scholars²⁵

20. BANDY, 60.

21. *Passio Decem Martyrorum* 3, 31 (in P. FRANCHI DE' CAVALIERI, *Scritti agiografici*, II, 1900-1946, Città del Vaticano 1964 [StT, 22], 367-400: 391); S. LOGIADOU-PLATONOS, 'Ιστορική έπιγραφή έξ Ηρακλείου, *Κρητικά Χρονικά* 15-16/2 (1961-1962) (=Πεπραγμένα τοῦ Α΄ διεθνoῦς Κρητολογικοῦ Συνεδροῦ, II), 47-58:54.

22. Ravennatis Anonymi *Cosmographia et Guidonis Geographica* V 21, 15-30 ed. J. SCHNETZ [Itineraria Romana, II] Lipsiae 1940. For a detailed commentary of the books II-V see H. STOLTE, *De Cosmographie van den Anonymus Ravenna. Een studie over de bronnen van boek II-V, Ph. dissertation* (in Dutch, with a summary in English), Amsterdam 1949.

23. See G. A. MANSUELLI, I geografi ravennati, in *Corsi di Cultura sull'Arte Ravennate e Bizantina*, 20, Ravenna 1973, 331-346, esp. 333; S. MAZZARINO, Da Lolliano et Arbetio al mosaico storico di S. Apollinare in Classe (Note sulla tradizione culturale di Ravenna e sull'Anonimo Ravennate), in Id., *Antico, tardoantico e era costantiniana*, II, Bari 1980, 313-335: 317-318 (published originally in *Helikon* 5 [1965], 45-62).

24. F. STAAB, Ostrogothic geographers at court of Theoderic the Great. A Study of some sources of the Anonymous Cosmographer of Ravenna, *Viator* 7 (1976), 27-58: 54 thinks that the abovementioned authors were active at Theoderic's court between 496/497 and 507.

25. E. LAMBERZ, *Die Bischofslisten des VII. ökumenischen Konzils (Nicaenum II)* (Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Abhandlungen phil.-hist. Klasse, NF Heft 124), München 2004, p. 61, n. 271.

due to the fact that it includes three homonymous bishops who signed respectively as Theodoros ἐπίσκοπος Ἡρακλείας, Theodoros ἐπίσκοπος Ἡρακλειουπόλεως, and Theodoros ἐπίσκοπος Ἡρακλειουπόλεως ἦτοι Πιδαχθός²⁶. The see of the first, Herakleia, has effectively been difficult to determine, since there existed at least three towns with this name in the empire: in Thrace, Caria and Honorias (Pontus)²⁷. However, the see of the second and third bishops (Ἡρακλειούπολις) clearly shows a different toponymy compared to the town of the first bishop (Ἡράκλεια). Additionally, since one of the two Ἡρακλειουπόλεις has been identified as Pidachthoë, in *Armenia II*²⁸, I do not see evident reasons to doubt that the other may correspond with Heraklion. The form registered by the Anonymous of Ravenna, *civitas Heraclii*, is just a Latin translation of the Greek Ἡρακλειούπολις. Moreover, in the acts of the council of 787, his titular places his signature among the bishops of Crete, precisely between the bishops of Lampe and Knossos. The fact that Heraklion is not mentioned in the *Notitiae episcopatum* 2 and 3 should not be deemed as sufficient reason to deny the existence of a bishopric in Heraklion in the second half of the 8th century. Regarding the section concerning Crete, the *Notitia 2* seems to be based upon the *Συνέκδημος* of Hierokles²⁹, while the data and

26. Theodoros ἐπίσκοπος Ἡρακλειουπόλεως: *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum, series secunda*, III, *Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum*, edidit E. LAMBERZ, (*Concilii actiones IV-V*), III/2, Berlin - New York 2012, 508, 17 (subscription at the IV session, but with incongruous Latin translation as *episcopus Heracliuspoleos id est Pidachthoe*); 806, 25 (subscription at the VII session); Theodoros ἐπίσκοπος Ἡρακλείας: *ibid.* vol. III/3 (*Concilii actiones VI-VII*, adiuvante U. DUBIELZIG, indices confecit G. DUURSMA) Berlin - New York 2016), 800, 11 (subscription at the VII session); Theodoros ἐπίσκοπος Ἡρακλειουπόλεως ἦτοι Πιδαχθός: *ibid.*, 818, 10 (subscription at the VII session), and 836, 7 (subscription of the profession of faith). See also *PMBZ I*, respectively 7591, 7589, 7590.

27. *PMBZ I*, 7589.

28. LAMBERZ, *Die Bischofslisten* (as above, n. 25), 51.

29. J. DARROUZÈS (in *Notitiae Episcopatum Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, Paris 1981, 15, 19; henceforth *Notitiae episcopatum*) states that the *Notitia 2* corresponds to an evolution datable to the 8th century. E. ΚΟΥΝΤΟΥΡΑ-ΓΑΛΑΚΗ, Η 'Εικονοκλαστική' NOTITIA 3 και το λατινικό της πρότυπο, *Σύμμεικτα* 10 (1996), pp. 35-73: 70, 71 considers the *Notitia 2* as an earlier stage of the transformations happening in the ecclesiastical hierarchy during the reign of Leo III (which were systematized in the *Notitia 3*), while C. ZUCKERMAN, Byzantium's Pontic Policy in the *Notitiae Episcopatum*, in ID. (ed.), *La Crimée entre Byzance et le Khaganat khazar* [Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance,

purpose of the *Notitia* 3 have been debated by scholars so much that it is difficult to ground it any solid assessment³⁰. It should be noted that *Notitia* 3 registers Hierapetra and Siteia³¹; the latter appearing here for the first time in ecclesiastical lists concerning the Cretan bishoprics, while the former is quoted with the post-Roman form of ‘Hierapetra’ and not ‘Hierapidna’, as in the *Συνέκδημος* and *Notitia* 2. Regarding Siteia in particular, it appears more logical to think that this new episcopate would have been founded during the 8th century rather than the 9th century, considering the new political situation of Crete after the 820s³². Unfortunately, in the only ecclesiastic *taxis* with an official character, namely the *Notitia* 7 (compiled between 901 and 907 under Patriarch Nicholas I and Emperor Leo VI), the ecclesiastic geography of Crete is completely lacking³³.

In the last twenty years, archaeological investigations have given a more dynamic image of Roman and post-Roman Heraklion. The excavations made in the so-called northern extension of the Archaeological Museum during the years 1993-1996 have revealed a Roman building with mosaic floors, pottery, lamps and coins (dating from Hellenistic times until the reign of Emperor Theophilus)³⁴. Furthermore, a revision of old and new

Monographies 25], Paris 2006, 201-230: 206 postpones chronologically the *Notitia* 2 to the *Notitia* 3.

30. G. I. KONIDARIS, *Αί μητροπόλεις καὶ ἀρχιεπισκοπαὶ τοῦ οἰκομενικοῦ πατριαρχείου καὶ ἡ ‘τάξις’ αὐτῶν* [Texte und Forschungen zur byzantinisch-neugriechischen Philologie], Athina 1934, 23 followed by P. YANNOPOULOS, *Métropoles du Péloponnèse mésobyzantin: un souvenir des invasions avaro-slaves*, *Byz* 63 (1993), pp 388-400: 397 (who considers the text earlier than the VII ecumenical council); KOUNTOURA-GALAKE, *Η ‘Εικονοκλαστική’ NOTITIA 3* (as above, n. 29) and V. PRIGENT, *Les évêchés byzantins de la Calabre septentrionale au VIIIe siècle*, *Mélanges de l’École Française de Rome, Moyen Âge* 114/2 (2002), 931-953: 934-935 maintain that the *Notitia* 3 was composed during the reign of Constantin V; DARROUZÈS (*Notitiae episcopatum*, 32) thinks that it was produced in the 9th century, probably toward the end of it, while LAMBERZ, *Die Bischofslisten* (as above, n. 25) 24-25 is skeptical about its historical value; ZUCKERMAN, *Byzantium’s Pontic Policy* (as above, n. 29) 206 argues for a date between 787 and 805 “or, better, between 802 and 805”.

31. *Notitiae episcopatum* 3, 243, 2344 (p. 235).

32. Both sees are quoted no more in the episcopal *τάξεις* until *Notitia* 13, which dates to the Comnenian age.

33. *Notitiae episcopatum* 7, pp. 53-55; 270-288 (text).

34. *Ηράκλειο. Η άγνωστη ιστορία της αρχαίας πόλης*, ed. A. IOANNIDOU-KARETSOU,

archaeological data has helped bring forth the conclusion that in the early Byzantine period Heraklion was endowed with fortifications, a walled enceinte going towards the sea which reused previous Hellenistic structures, and a system of trenches facing the hinterland³⁵. Evidence concerning the town during the 7th and 8th century also includes an inscription recently analysed by Georges Kiourtzian³⁶. The epigraph was found in Heraklion in 1960, and was an element of reuse discovered during the restoration undertaken on the northern sector of the Venetian walls³⁷. It is engraved on a white, plinth-like marble block just over a meter and a half (57 cm X 63 cm) in width and height. The front of the block displays the epigraph, while upon the left and right sides two different types of crosses are carved³⁸. The rear side of the block is undecorated, a particular that makes it possible to believe that the artefact's original position was close to a wall.

The text reads as follows:

††† ὄροι τῆς ἁγιοτάτης ἐκκλησί[ας] / ὅθεν ἀπεστράφη ὁ διάβολος ὡ[ρ]/
μήσας εἰσελθῖν καὶ φλέξε / τὴν πόλιν † συμπληρουμένου τοῦ μη(νὸς)
Ἰουνίου τοῦ ἐπὶ ἰνδικτιῶνο[ς] δι' †

Herakleio 2008, 75-100 (excavation by IOANNIDOU-KARETSOU); 151-201 (material culture by N. POULOU-PAPADIMITRIOU, where it showed a remarkable example of a bronze buckle dated to mid-7th/early 8th century); mosaics (by S. MARKOULAKI), 149-147; coins (by V. PENNA), 203-211.

35. See B. SYTHIAKAKI - E. KANAKI - CH. BILMEZI, *Οι παλαιότερες οχυρώσεις του Ηρακλείου: Μια διαφορετική προσέγγιση με βάση τα νεότερα ανασκαφικά δεδομένα*, in *Αρχαιολογικό έργο Κρήτης* 3, I, eds. P. KARANASTASI - A. TZINGOUNAKI - CH. TSIGONAKI, Rethymno 2015, 395-410. Hypotheses on the shape and location of the early Byzantine fortifications are in CH. TZOMPANAKE, *Χάνδακας. Η πόλη και η τείχη*, Heraklion 1996, 113-115 (especially map 12). I thank the anonymous reviewer of my article for having pointed out to my attention this book.

36. KIOURTZIAN, *L'incident de Cnossos* (as above, n. 14). The epigraphy has been edited for the first time by S. LOGIADOU-PLATONOS, *Ἱστορική ἐπιγραφή ἐξ Ἡρακλείου*, it (as above, n. 21), 47-58: 48 (= *Ηράκλειο. Η άγνωστη ιστορία* [as above, n. 34], 39) and then re-edited by BANDY, 61.

37. LOGIADOU-PLATONOS, *Ἱστορική ἐπιγραφή* (as above, n. 21), 47.

38. SYTHIAKAKI - KANAKI - BILMEZI, *Οι παλαιότερες οχυρώσεις* (as above, n. 35) 395 question the chronology of the inscription to 671 (they do not quote the edition by Kiourtzian) on the basis of the sculptural decoration of the artifact, which, according to them, would recall artistic motifs of late 10th - early 11th century; however, the examples pointed out by them do not seem to support their inferences.

«Boundaries of the most holy church from which the devil, when he tried to enter the city for burning it, was repelled. When the month of June was coming to an end, in the 14th indiction».

I do not want to reexamine all the elements of the inscription, but simply want to touch upon the more relevant points which concern the topic being discussed in the present article. The date of 30 June worked out by Logiadou-Platonos, as has already been argued by Kiourtzian³⁹, is certainly wrong, because it is based on a defective reading of a group of letters that she interprets as ΗΜΔ, written below the frame in which the epigraph is engraved. Moreover, her reading of Δ, as Δ(ευτέρα), is inconsistent with Greek epigraphic habit, in which the numerals are normally used as letters⁴⁰. This implies that as far as the date is concerned, the only inner element of the text is the 14th indiction (7th century: 611, 626, 641, 656, 671, 686; 8th century: 701, 716, 731, 746, 761, 776, 791; 9th century: 806, 821, 836, 851, 866, 881, 896).

Now, I would like to focus attention on the locution *ἀγιωτάτη ἐκκλησία*. The premise is that it appears very unlikely that the block, due to its weight, was carried to Heraklion from the outside in order to be re-employed in the Venetian walls. This entails, as a starting point, that the inscription would have been incised in Heraklion. If the church in question is that of Knossos, as it has been supposed⁴¹, the text would confer to Heraklion a certain civic importance, for it defines it as a town (*πόλις*). If this is not the case, the conclusion is that Heraklion would have already been an episcopal see at the time the inscription was carved. The text, with its evocative language, opens the door to speculation whether the «devil» mentioned in it may be identified with Muslim raiders or internal political opponents. The meaning of «devil» is to be interpreted in a metaphoric sense, being a literary equivalent of “enemy”. In his analysis, Kiourtzian shows that narrative Byzantine sources from 7th to 10th century never use the term *ὁ διάβολος* in reference to the Muslims. This seems convincing, and I am myself sceptical

39. KIOURTZIAN, L'incident de Cnossos (as above, n. 14), 177.

40. This objection had been already raised by L. Politis in the discussion of the contribution by Logiadou-Platonos (see LOGIADOU-PLATONOS, Ἱστορική ἐπιγραφή [as above, n. 21, 36], 55).

41. KIOURTZIAN, L'incident de Cnossos (as above, n. 14), 178, 180 (the Author thinks that the *πόλις* in question is Knossos).

about the understanding of the term as an equivalent for «Muslims». A Latin inscription from Carales (Sardinia) reinforces this interpretation: *Metatu sancti Longini centurionis: hic abes a Domino diabule* («In the *metatum* of St Longinus stay away by the Lord, you devil!»)⁴². Here it is patently clear that with the term «devil» the writer of the short composition meant any transgressor of the holy space pertaining to the *metatum* of St. Longinus. The same meaning applies to our inscription, which is a ὄροσ, indeed, a boundary mark⁴³. Contrary to the Caralitan epigraph, the Cretan one implies two different actions. Not only does it blame whoever dares to violate the sacred space of a church, but it implies that such a violation had consequences upon the whole community, for the enemy – the devil – wished to burn the entire town. Beneath the formulaic language a real military event is hidden. For the reasons explained above it is improbable that this event referenced a Muslim attack against Crete. What this event really was, it is impossible to establish. Kiourtzian framed it within the context of the clashes between the ‘Greens’ and ‘Blues’ prior to the seizure of power by Emperor Heraclius, whose fleet in its route from Africa to Constantinople

42. Edited by L. PORRU, Una caserma intitolata a s. Longino centurione nella Cagliari bizantina, in *Quaderni. Soprintendenza archeologica per le provincie di Cagliari e di Oristano* 6 (1989), 205-211, who thinks that the word ‘metatum’ refers to a military building devoted to St Longinus. In early medieval Latin, it means any kind of ‘lodging’ or ‘accommodation’ (see DU CANGE *Lat.*, s. v. *metatus, metatum*). In Greek, the verb *μητατεύω* signifies to ‘mark off’ (see LAMPE, s. v.); it is probable, therefore, that the expression used in the inscription of St Longinus refers to any ‘delimited space’ with a particular function, not necessarily connected to the military sphere. L. PANI ERMINI, Le città sarde nell’alto medioevo: una ricerca in atto, in *Materiali per una topografia urbana. Status quaestionis e nuove acquisizioni* [Mediterraneo tardoantico e medievale. Scavi e ricerche, 10], Oristano 1995, 55-67: 61 and F. VIRZI, L’iscrizione per San Longino centurione da Cagliari: osservazioni sulle intitolazioni ai santi militari, in *Città, territorio, produzione e commerci nella Sardegna medievale. Studi in onore di Letizia Pani Ermini* ed. R. MARTORELLI [Agorà, 17], Cagliari 2002, 551-557: 557 both believe that the inscription was walled in the enceinte of Caralis, which leaves me skeptical for the explicit presence of the word ‘metatum’. I would rather think it refers to a room attached to a church, such as a sacristy or a warehouse.

43. For the symbolic meaning of the ὄροι see S. COSENTINO, Boundary marks and space organization in early Byzantine epigraphy, in *Inscriptions in the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine History and History of Art*, ed. CH. STAVRAKOS, Wiesbaden 2016, 95-105.

may well have stopped on Crete⁴⁴. Consequently, he dates the inscription to 611⁴⁵. Its palaeography, however, displays forms of cursive writing as the article *τοῦ* in ligature or *δ* in minuscule at line 5 that seem to fit well with a later date than the early 7th century⁴⁶. As a simple suggestion, I note that 821 (better: 1 September 820 – 31 August 821) is one of the years coinciding with a fourteenth indiction. In this same year, Thomas the Slave attempted to capture Constantinople with joint forces on both land and sea. Thomas had the support of the majority of the themes of Asia Minor as well as those of Macedonia and Thrace along with the fleet of the Cibyrrhaeots⁴⁷. In his scheme, the fleet gathered as planned on Lesbos on 1 September 821⁴⁸, but hostility between Michael II and Thomas had begun before September 821, and I wonder if our text does not preserve the memory of an attack led by the Cybrrhaeots against Heraklion in June 821, considering that until 822 the theme of Hellas was on the side of Michael II⁴⁹.

In summation, a number of coherent indications in our evidence make it possible to believe that Heraklion experienced a strong institutional, geo-strategical and demographic strengthening during the 8th century. Whether this process actually involved the birth of a new episcopal see or the transfer of the *ἄρχων Κρήτης* to the town remains, at the current state of research, a hypothesis. At any rate, it is evident that this process had to mature into a framework of long-lasting modifications which affected the ties between Crete and Constantinople rather than within the immediate political contingency. The hegemonic role of Gortyn in the insular territorial organisation, still visible in the classical age, was confirmed under Roman imperialism⁵⁰. Between the 1st and the 3rd century AD, imports to the island

44. KIOURTZIAN, L'incident de Cnossos (as above, n. 14), 190-191.

45. KIOURTZIAN, L'incident de Cnossos (as above, n. 14), 190-191.

46. The comparison between the Heraklion epigraph and the honorary inscriptions concerning Emperor Heraclius, Constantine III and Fabia Eudocia engraved on marble columns (on which see L. GASPERINI, Le iscrizioni gortinie di età tardoantica e protobizantina, in *Creta romana e protobizantina* [as above, n. 11], 157-162: 161) shows a substantial palaeographic difference among the two witnesses (see for example letter υ, α, ε and ζ).

47. W. T. TREADGOLD, *The Byzantine Revival, 780-842*, Stanford 1988, 234-235.

48. TREADGOLD, *The Byzantine Revival*, 234.

49. TREADGOLD, *The Byzantine Revival*, 239.

50. D. VIVIERS, Rome face aux cités crétoises: trafics insulaires et organisation de la province, in *Creta romana e protobizantina* (as above, n. 11) 17-24: 23.

originated largely from Africa and the Aegean; Italic or Spanish goods had little role, while those coming from Syria and Palestine seem to have been negligible⁵¹. Beginning in the early 4th century, Gortyn started moving its economic gravitation from West to East. The sole western supplier remained the powerful African pottery industry; but apart from this, the Cretan metropolis, unlike the 3rd century, began importing wines, fish sauce and olive oil from the Aegean, Asia Minor, Palestine, Syria, Cilicia, Cyprus and Egypt⁵². The eastward shift of the Gortynian commercial axis was motivated by several factors, among which the administrative separation from Cyrenaica and the birth of the new capital on the Bosphorus were the most important ones⁵³. The latter – namely the rise in importance of Constantinople – had the far-reaching consequence of attracting economic resources which came from several regions of the eastern Mediterranean basin. Until the 7th century, the development of the big Constantinopolitan market did not have consequences upon the Cretan economy, since the geographical position of the island allowed it to intercept trading flows along routes that had both north-south and east-west directions. The route followed by the Alexandrian *embolē* – Palestinian and Syrian coast, Cyprus, Rhodes, Kos, Samos, Chios, Lesbos, Tenedos and Abydos – enabled Gortyn to easily connect itself with this vital commercial corridor. Moreover, the recapture of Africa by Justinian in 533-534 emphasized the importance of the landing places of the southern Cretan coast for Carthage and Constantinople, whether they took place by means of open sea navigation via Malta or via the ports of Egypt and Cyrenaica.

However, beginning with the post-Heraclian age, this geo-economic situation changed significantly⁵⁴. The loss of Egypt and the need to supply Constantinople urged the central government to undertake a long-range search for food involving Sicily, Cyprus, North Africa and Crete itself⁵⁵.

51. I. ROMEO – C. PORTALE, Gortina ed il commercio mediterraneo: le anfore da trasporto tra l'età di Augusto e la conquista araba, in *Creta romana e protobizantina* (as above, n. 11), III/1, 959-973: 962.

52. ROMEO – PORTALE (as above, n. 51), 966.

53. ROMEO – PORTALE (as above, n. 51), 972.

54. M. LEONTSINI, The Byzantine and Arab Navy in South Aegean and Crete: Shipping, Mobility and Transport, *Graeco-Arabica* 12 (2017), 170-231: 175-176.

55. For Sicily and North Africa see V. PRIGENT, Les rôle des provinces d'Occident

Hence, the Byzantine capital became the focal point of a productive hinterland surrounded by Thrace, Bithynia and the Aegean insular space. Later Cretan pottery productions (amphorae of TRC2, TRC4, TRC9 type, and perhaps LRA14, Zeest 99 / Sazanov, if the latter are of Cretan origin) have been found in the regions facing the Black Sea, where they continued to be exported until the late 7th century⁵⁶. The presence of these amphorae has been associated by archaeologists to the provisioning of the military contingents that operated on the Balkan frontier. Late Antique and early Byzantine Crete was not a militarized region, neither in its social structure nor in its landscape⁵⁷. This by no means signifies that the agricultural products of the island were not exploited by the central government to supply the army, because they were indeed. Proof of this is evident in the seal of a Ioulianos ἀπὸ ὑπάτων γενικὸς κομμερκιάριος ἀποθήκης Κρήτης. Thus, the new political framework of the 7th and 8th centuries, which entailed a concentration of military operations in the Balkans and Asia Minor, resulted in an emphasis of the geo-strategic importance of the northern coast of Crete, to the detriment of the southern one.

In fact, the Cretan towns of the north side whose later phases have been thoroughly investigated by archaeologists such as Eleutherna and, partially, Knossos, have revealed increased economic ties with the Aegean and the

dans l'approvisionnement de Constantinople (618-717): témoignages numismatique et sigillographique, *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome, Moyen Âge*, 118/2 (2006), 269-299: 290-294.

56. G. MARSILI, in BALDINI ET ALII, Gortina (as above, n. 1), 289; E. C. PORTALE, The sunset of Gortyn: Amphorae in 7th-8th centuries AD, in *LRCW 4. Late Roman Coarse Wares, Cooking Wares and Amphorae in the Mediterranean, Archaeology and Archaeometry. The Mediterranean: A Market without Frontiers* eds. N. POULOU-PAPADIMITRIOU – E. NODAROU – V. KILIKOGLU [*BAR, International Series* 2616, I], Oxford 2014, 477-489: 480.

57. See the arguments provided by COSENTINO, Gortina dalla tarda antichità all'età bizantina (as above, n. 1), 69-72. In a long and interesting article E. KOUNTOURA-GALAKE, Crete and the formation of the Isaurian naval administration network, *Graeco-Arabica* 12 (2017), 95-126 argues, on the contrary, that Crete was elevated to the status of a theme more or less at the middle of the 8th century (for her, the first *στρατηγός* can be considered the Theophanes Lardotyros mentioned in the *Life of St Stephen the Younger*: p. 125). The same Author admits (p. 121) that there is no evidence of the military activity of a *στρατηγός* on the island for the most part of the 8th century. Clear signs of militarization of Crete began only in the late 8th / early 9th century.

regions of Asia Minor in the early Byzantine period⁵⁸. Eleutherna, being too far from the coast, had no chance to emerge as a new central location on the island during the 8th century. Even Knossos did not face the sea, although it was very close to it. Heraklion had the best chance for revitalization. Its port was the terminal of a road axis that directly linked the most important production area of the island, the plain of the Μεσσαρά, to the northern emporia. From Heraklion products from the Aegean could have easily been distributed to other Cretan settlements; while products from the island could have easily been shipped for transmarine trade. If the *ἄρχων Κρήτης* counted among his functions that of overseeing the trading activities that took place in the ports and emporia of Crete, Heraklion had to be the best place to carry out such an activity during the late 7th and 8th century. Such a perspective, if confirmed by future investigations, would also make it possible to better understand the phases of the Muslim occupation of the island. According to Gigourtakis, the landing of the Abū Ḥaḥṣ's troops would have occurred in the southern part of Crete, in an area comprised between Tsoutsouros and Keratokampos⁵⁹. This must have entailed, in a first phase, the conquest of the settlements situated on the southern coast,

58. On Eleutherna: *Πρωτοβυζαντινή Ελεύθερνα τομέας I* ed. P. THEMELIS, II [sic], Rethymno 2000; I, Athina 2004; CH. VOGT, Échanges et économie proto-byzantines d'Eleutherna d'après les témoins céramiques, in *Creta romana e protobizantina* (as above, n. 11) III/1, 923-944; A.C. YANGAKI, *La céramique des IV^e – VIII^e siècles ap. J.-C. d'Eleutherna: sa place en Crète et dans le bassin égéen*, Athènes 2005; TSIGONAKI, *Les villes crétoises aux VII^e et VIII^e siècles* (as above, n. 1); TSIGONAKI, *Πόλεων ἀνεπίστοις μεταβολαῖς* (as above, n. 1) 89-100; on Knossos: R. J. SWEETMAN, Late antique Knossos. Understanding the city: Evidence of mosaics and religious architecture, *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 99 (2004), 315-354; EAD., Roman Knossos: The nature of a globalized city, *American Journal of Archaeology*, 111/1 (2007), 61-81; EAD., Roman Knossos: Discovering the city through the evidence of rescue excavations, *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 105 (2010), 339-379. Strengthening of the northern coast sites (islet of Pseira and Itanos): N. POULOU-PAPADIMITRIOU – E. NODAROU – V. KILIKOGLOU, Transport vessels and maritime trade routes in the Aegean from the 5th to the 9th century AD. Preliminary results of the EU funded 'Pythagoras II' project: the Cretan case study, in *LRCW 4. Late Roman Coarse Wares, Cooking Wares and Amphorae in the Mediterranean* (as above, n. 56), 873-883.

59. N. GIGOURTAKIS, «Ἀκρωτηρίω τῷ Χάρακι»: Αρχαίες παρατηρήσεις για το σημείο απόβασης των Αράβων του Abu Ḥaḥṣ's Omar στην Κρήτη, *Graeco-Arabica* 11 (2011), 73-95: 81-83.

such as Gortyn, and then a northward march. An expansion departing from the south to the north, lasting a dozen years, would lend more sense to the dynamics of the military operation led by Photeinos, *στρατηγός* of the Anatolikon, and afterward by Damianos⁶⁰. The description of both operations in Byzantine sources lend credence to the belief that they had safe landing places on the northern coast of the island. On the other hand, if the Cretan governor was settled in Heraklion when the Muslims landed on the island, it is understandable that they would have chosen to disembark in an area where they expected to face minor military resistance.

60. As is well known, the precise chronology of the conquest of Crete by the Muslims is disputed. After 824 and before 829, the central government launched three expeditions to take control of the island led by Photeinos, Damianos and Crateros: V. CHRISTIDES, *The Conquest of Crete by the Arabs (ca. 824). A Turning Point in the Struggle between Byzantium and Islam*, Athens 1984, 85-88; ID., *The Cycle of the Arab-Byzantine Struggle in Crete (ca 824/6-961 AD) in the Illuminated Manuscript of Skylitzes (Codex Matritensis Graecus Vitr. 26-2)*, *Graeco-Arabica* 11 (2011), 17-50: 22-24 (where he maintains that the conquest occurred gradually from 823 to 867); TSOUGARAKIS, *Byzantine Crete* (as above, n. 7), 30-45; TREADGOLD, *The Byzantine Revival* (as above, n. 47), 251-257. In any case, the failed expedition commanded by Theoktistos in 843 seems to mark the end of the Byzantine hopes to recapture the island.

ΑΠΟ ΤΗΝ ΓΟΡΤΥΝΑ ΣΤΟ ΗΡΑΚΛΕΙΟ;
ΣΗΜΕΙΩΜΑ ΓΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΚΡΗΤΙΚΗ ΑΣΤΙΚΟΠΟΙΗΣΗ ΤΟΝ 8ο ΑΙ.

Η Γόρτυνα, παρότι είναι μια από τις πιο γνωστές αρχαίες πόλεις της Κρήτης και έχει μελετηθεί επαρκώς από αρχαιολογική άποψη, είναι αβέβαιο εάν στις αρχές του 8ου αιώνα εξακολουθούσε να είναι ακόμα η έδρα του κυβερνήτη του νησιού. Το παρόν άρθρο συνηγορεί υπέρ της πιθανότητας της μεταφοράς της έδρας του *ἄρχοντος Κρήτης*, δηλαδή του διαδόχου του παλαιού *ἀνθυπάτου*, στο Ηράκλειο (ή ίσως στην Κνωσό). Η μεταφορά αυτή θα μπορούσε να είχε πραγματοποιηθεί στο πλαίσιο ενός γεωστρατηγικού μετασχηματισμού των σχέσεων μεταξύ Κωνσταντινούπολης και Κρήτης, ο οποίος επήλθε μετά τη μουσουλμανική κατάκτηση της Καρχηδόνας. Το περιστατικό αυτό οδήγησε στην ενίσχυση της οικονομικής σημασίας των κέντρων που βρίσκονται στη βόρεια ακτή του νησιού, εις βάρος των νοτίων ακτών. Τούτο φαίνεται ότι είχε ως αποτέλεσμα την ενίσχυση του οικισμού του Ηρακλείου, το οποίο, πολύ πριν από την άφιξη των Αράβων στο νησί, πρέπει να είχε λάβει ήδη κατά τον 6ο αιώνα, τον ρόλο του νέου πολιτικού κέντρου του νησιού.

