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Cretan Memories

Crete in the Letter to Titus and the Acts of Titus

Es ist sehr unwahrscheinlich, dass Paulus auf Kreta zusammen mit seinem Mitarbeiter Titus Gemeinden von Christusgläubigen gegründet hat, wie es Tit 1,5 behauptet wird. Dennoch ist der fiktive kretische Schauplatz des Titusbriefes nicht einfach Zufall, sondern spielt in der Argumentation des Briefes eine wichtige Rolle: Die Kreter dienen als paradigmatische Barbaren, die zivilisiert werden müssen. Dazu werden negative Stereotypen über die Kreter aus der hellenistischen und früh-römischen Zeit aktiviert. Die Titusakten sind vom Titusbrief abhängig. Ihr Bild von Kreta unterscheidet sich jedoch deutlich von dem negativen Bild, das im Brief gezeichnet wird. Sie stützen sich beispielsweise auf Erinnerungen an Minos, den König und Gesetzgeber der Kreter, und knüpfen an positive Aspekte der kretischen Vergangenheit an, die für die lokale kretische Elite im Römischen Reich wichtig waren.

Keywords: Letter to Titus, Acts of Titus, Roman Crete

If we are to believe Acts, Paul has never visited Crete, preached there, or founded congregations of Christ-believers there, but only passed by the island on his way to Rome as a prisoner (Acts 27:6–20). The Letter to Titus, however, mentions Paul's stay on Crete and his missionary activities there (Tit 1:5).¹ The apocryphal Acts of Titus even contain a short passage about events occurring during Paul's and Titus's stay on Crete (Acts Tit. 5).

¹ Due to τοῦτου χάριν [...] ἵνα, the verb ἀπολείπω (in some manuscripts καταλείπω) comes close to “charge somebody with something” (cf. the Latin equivalent in Pliny, *Ep.* 10.32.1). Nevertheless, it is implied that Paul was himself in Crete and left Titus there (cf. the use of the verb in *IG* 12/5.1004, l. 2; *Teos* 29, l. 47 [abbr. of epigraphic editions in this article according to the inscriptions database of the Packard Humanities Institute, Los Altos, Calif., <https://epigraphy.packhum.org/biblio/>]; Polybius 3.35.4; 4.80.15; 1 Macc 3:32–33; 2 Macc 4:29, 31; 5:22–23; 13:23–24; Josephus, *A.J.* 14.297; 15.65; Plutarch, *Demetr.* 39.4; *Alex.* 9.1). Paul and Titus worked together on the island, now Titus is to settle what has been left unfinished at Paul's departure (τὰ λείποντα ἐπιδιορθοῦν).

While some researchers have tried to harmonize Titus with Acts² or otherwise to show the historicity of Paul's stay on Crete,³ the majority of modern scholarship has dismissed the Cretan mission in the Letter of Titus – and *a fortiori* in the Acts of Titus – as fictive.⁴ This is indeed the most plausible explanation, but the question then arises: Why Crete?⁵

In the following, I will show that the fictive Cretan setting of Titus is not just fortuitous or fanciful but plays a vital role in the argument of the letter.⁶ The Cretans serve as paradigmatic barbarians, who must be civilized. To achieve this end, negative stereotypes about Cretans stemming from the Hellenistic and early Roman periods are activated. The Acts of Titus are clearly dependent on the Letter to Titus. Nevertheless, their picture of Crete differs markedly from the negative one in the letter. Drawing, for example, on memories of Minos, king and lawgiver of the ancient Cretans, they use other, more positive aspects of the Cretan past, which were important for the local Cretan elite in the Roman Empire.

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- 2 Cf. esp. J. Herzer, "Zwischen Mythos und Wahrheit: Neue Perspektiven auf die sogenannten Pastoralbriefe," *NTS* 63 (2017), 428–450; id., "Lukas ist allein bei mir (2 Tim 4,11): Lukas, die Pastoralbriefe und die Konstruktion von Geschichte," in *Luke on Jesus, Paul and Christianity: What Did He Really Know*, ed. J. Verheyden and J.S. Kloppenborg, *BTS* 29 (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 27–58. The weakest point of his reconstruction is that κέκρικα in Tit 3:12 stands with an infinitive. Therefore, it *must* mean "to determine to do something" (cf. Acts 20:16; LSJ, s.v. κρίνω 8) and not "to judge that" (κρίνω with acc. and inf./ὄτι; cf. Acts 16:15; 2 Cor 5:14; LSJ, s.v. κρίνω 6). So, in contrast to Acts, Paul cannot be traveling as a prisoner (cf. M. den Dulk, "Pauline Biography and the Letter to Titus: A Response to Jens Herzer," *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 9 [2019], 52–61).
- 3 Usually by positing Paul's release and "second career" after Acts 28:30–31. Cf. on this issue, e.g., M. Prior, *Paul the Letter-Writer and the Second Letter to Timothy*, *JSNTSup* 23 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 61–90; S.E. Porter, "Pauline Chronology and the Question of Pseudonymity of the Pastoral Epistles," in *Paul and Pseudepigraphy*, ed. S.E. Porter and G.P. Fewster, *Pauline Studies* 8 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 65–88; R. Riesner, "Paul's Trial and End according to Second Timothy, 1 Clement, the Canon Muratori, and the Apocryphal Acts," in *The Last Years of Paul*, ed. A. Puig i Tàrrach, *WUNT* 352 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 391–409. The main problem with this theory is that ancient sources might perhaps imply a Spanish mission (1 Clem. 5:7; *Canon Muratori* 38–39; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.22) but certainly not a second mission in the eastern Mediterranean.
- 4 On the self-understanding of the Orthodox Church of Crete as an apostolic foundation, cf. O.F.A. Meinardus, "Cretan Traditions about St. Paul's Mission to the Island," *Ostkirchliche Studien* 22 (1973), 172–183.
- 5 Cf., e.g., J.M. Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, *ANTC* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 185: "If the letter is pseudonymous [...] the author's reasons for choosing a Cretan setting are unrecoverable."
- 6 This is the main difference between my approach and G.M. Wieland, "Roman Crete and the Letter to Titus," *NTS* 55 (2009), 338–354, who wants to show that Crete is a plausible actual destination for the probably authentic letter.

1 Roman Crete – History and Images

Crete is still best known for its so-called “Minoan culture,” the first advanced civilization in Europe, which flourished during the bronze age. In the last decades, however, the later phases of Cretan history and especially Roman Crete have been met with more and more interest.⁷ After a very short overview of the events during the Roman conquest of Crete and the social, political, and economical developments in Roman Crete in the first century CE, I will focus on memories and images of Crete and the Cretan past.

The Romans conquered the island, after a first, failed attempt under M. Antonius Creticus in 71 BCE (Diodorus Siculus 40.1; Livius, *Periochae* 97), between 69 and 67 BCE under Q. Caecilius Metellus (Velleius Paterculus 2.34; Florus, *Epitoma* 1.42). The campaign was related to the “war against the pirates,” which was waged under the extraordinary *imperium* of Cn. Pompeius Magnus in the eastern Mediterranean. Rome had benefitted for a long time from the piracy and the flourishing slave trade on Delos. However, when the grain supply was endangered, coastal towns were plundered, members of the Roman elite were kidnapped on journeys (Plutarch, *Pomp.* 24),⁸ and pirates hijacked the ship of a Roman consul ready to sail in the harbor of Ostia (Cicero, *De imperio Cn. Pompei* 12.33), Rome decided to intervene (Strabo 10.4.9). While some Cretan *poleis* offered bitter resistance to the Roman soldiers, others seem to have collaborated (cf. *IC* 2.23.14, the dedication of a statue to Metellus by the city of Polyrrhenia).

For Crete, the Roman victory proved to be ambivalent. On the one hand, Crete was now – for the first time in its history – under foreign rule. It is not clear whether the island became immediately part of the new province Creta et Cyrenae or only in 27 BCE (Cassius Dio 53.12.4; Strabo 17.3.25). Some of Crete’s famous *poleis* were totally destroyed, for example, the harbor town of Phalasarna, which had been one of the refuges of Cretan

7 The groundbreaking archaeological work on Roman Crete was the posthumously published dissertation by I.F. Sanders, *Roman Crete: An Archaeological Survey and Gazetteer of Late Hellenistic, Roman, and Early Byzantine Crete* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1982). For an easily accessible overview, cf. T. Bechert, *Kreta in römischer Zeit* (Darmstadt: von Zabern, 2011). Historical (esp. epigraphical) research on Hellenistic and Roman Crete has been carried out by Angelos Chaniotis. A summary of his work, which is readable also for non-specialists, is given in A. Chaniotis, *Das antike Kreta*, 3rd ed. (Munich: Beck, 2020). For a comprehensive treatment of Cretan history in English, cf. C. Moorey, *A History of Crete* (London: Haus, 2019), esp. 55–107.

8 The most famous victim was Iulius Caesar (Plutarch, *Caes.* 1.8–2.7; Suetonius, *Jul.* 4).

pirates.⁹ Cnossus was re-founded as Roman Colonia Iulia Nobilis Cnosus (CIL 10.1433; Strabo 10.4.9). Centuries-old social and political institutions were abolished and a new, Roman order was installed (Strabo 10.4.22; Livius, *Periochae* 99–100).¹⁰ Roman veterans and other Italians were settled on Cretan land (Cassius Dio 49.14.5; Velleius Paterculus 2.81). Roman merchants were now active on the island (IC 4.290: *c(ives) R(omani) qui Go[r]tynae negotiantur*).

On the other hand, all the negative aspects of Roman rule notwithstanding, the changes after the conquest seem to have contributed to the amelioration of the situation on Crete. After all, that Cretans had had to earn their living as pirates was the sign of a crisis. Hellenistic Crete had suffered from frequent wars between the independent city states, which competed for the island's economic resources. A fossilized archaic aristocratic political system and an extremely patriotic and militaristic ideology¹¹ had aggravated the situation. So, although one should certainly not deny that *pax Romana* was often synonymous with cruel exploitation, for Crete Roman rule brought indeed peace¹² and a remarkable increase in migration, trade, and infrastructure building.

Since both the Letter to Titus and the Acts of Titus are fictional texts,¹³ images of Crete are more relevant for us than historical events and developments. Ancient historians, orators, and poets did not try to understand the reasons for the economic and social crisis of Hellenistic Crete but blamed the Cretans for their bad habits (Polybius 24.2.3). Texts abound in which Cretans are denounced as ruthless pirates (Polybius 6.46–47; *Anthologia Graeca* 7.654; Cicero, *Rep.* 3.9.15; Livius 44.45.13; Florus, *Epitoma* 1.41.3), as faithless liars who even cheat each other (Plutarch, *Aem.* 23.10;

⁹ On the legendary one hundred cities of Crete, cf. Homer, *Il.* 2.649; Strabo 10.4.15; Vergil, *Aen.* 3.106; Horace, *Carm.* 3.27.33–34; Seneca, *Apol.* 12; Pliny, *Nat.* 4.58; Pomponius Mela, *De chorographia* 2.113; IC 4.373 (in Homer, *Od.* 19.174 and Ps.-Plato, *Min.* 319b the number is ninety). In reality, the number of independent city states had decreased already in Hellenistic times (cf. IC 4.179, the treaty between Eumenes II and thirty-one Cretan *poleis* in 183 BCE). In Roman times there were about twenty *poleis* on the island (Servius, *Aen.* 3.1076; Pliny, *Nat.* 4.59 mentions thirty-nine *oppida* by name).

¹⁰ Cf. Chaniotis, *Kreta* (see n. 7), 102–103; contra Wieland, “Roman Crete” (see n. 6), 340–344.

¹¹ Cf. Strabo 10.4.16, 20; IC 1.9.1, ll. 36–43, the oath of the ephebes of Dreros to hate the Lyttians and to cause them as much harm as possible.

¹² Strabo 10.4.11 describes Roman Gortyna as ἀτείχιστος (“without walls”).

¹³ For discussion about genre and pseudepigraphy of the Pastoral Epistles, cf. esp. T. Glaser, *Paulus als Briefroman erzählt: Studien zum antiken Briefroman und seiner christlichen Rezeption in den Pastoralbriefen*, NTOA 76 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009).

Lys. 20.2; Polybius 8.19.5; Ovid, *Am.* 3.10.19; *Ars* 1.298), as blasphemers who dare to show the tomb of Zeus (Callimachus, *Hymn.* 1.8; *Anthologia Graeca* 7.275; Lucanus, *Bellum civile* 8.883–885),¹⁴ and – in short – as among the worst people in the world (Suda, s.v. Διπλοῦν κάππα: Τρία κάππα κάκιστα Καππαδοκία, Κρήτη καὶ Κιλικία).

Beside this negative image of the Cretans there had always been the exaltation of Crete's Minoan past. Plato celebrates Minos as divinely inspired lawgiver only paralleled by the Spartan Lycurgus (cf. Plato, *Leg.* 624a–b; *Prot.* 342a; *Resp.* 544c; Ps.-Plato, *Min.* 319–320; cf. also Diodorus Siculus 5.78.3; Plutarch, *Lyc.* 4; Strabo 10.4.8, 18–19). Minos or his brother Rhadamanthys judge the dead in Hades (Plato, *Gorg.* 523e–524a). The Cretan Epimenides brought divine laws to Athens (Plato, *Leg.* 642d–643a; 677e; Plutarch, *Sol.* 12.7–9; Diogenes Laertius 1.110). Mount Ida is famous as Zeus's birthplace (Plato, *Leg.* 625b; Aratus, *Phaen.* 30–35).

Under Roman rule, in the first centuries BCE and CE, some of these memories of Crete's glory seem to have been revitalized.¹⁵ Local sanctuaries situated on borders, which had symbolized territorial claims of rivaling *poleis*, came into disuse, whereas pan-Cretan sanctuaries like the Idaean cave, the Asclepieum at Lebena and the Dictynnaeum began to flourish (Porphyrius, *Vit. Pyth.* 17; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.34). Coins showed Zeus Cretagenes, the local manifestation of Zeus whose birthplace and whose tomb were situated on Crete. Even the Romans discovered their “Cretan” roots, both collectively as a people (Vergil, *Aen.* 3.103–117) and individually as alleged descendants of legendary figures (Suetonius, *Galb.* 2).

¹⁴ This is a (deliberate?) misunderstanding of the Cretan cult of Zeus. The rituals at the birthplace and the tomb of Zeus seem to have originally been initiation rites of young men (cf. W.D. Furley and J.M. Bremmer, *Greek Hymns: Selected Cult Songs from the Archaic to the Hellenistic Period*, 2 vols., STAC 9 and 10 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001], 1.65–76 and 2.1–20). Only in euhemeristic interpretation – which is rationalistic but not negative – the buried Zeus becomes a divinized king, and only due to Callimachus's critical stance to euhemerism (cf. Callimachus, *Iambi* 1 = frag. 191), the Cretan cult becomes a lie. Lucian also mentions the tomb of Zeus twice (*Philops.* 3; *Tim.* 6), but his remarks have a different punchline than those cited above. His point is that *all* myths, not just the Cretan ones, are ridiculous.

¹⁵ For the following, besides the works cited in n. 4 above, see also S.E. Alcock, *Archaeologies of the Greek Past: Landscape, Monuments, and Memories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 99–131; I. Romeo, “Europa's Sons: Roman Perceptions of Cretan Identity,” in *Local Knowledge and Microidentities in the Imperial Greek World*, ed. T. Whitmarsh, *Greek Culture in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 69–85.

2 Crete and Cretans in the Letter to Titus

Research on Titus has dealt primarily with two aspects of the letter's Cretan setting: the disputed historicity of Paul's visit to the island (Tit 1:5; 3:12–14) and the famous liar paradox (1:12).¹⁶ The focus of scholarly interest has been on the “opponents” in this letter (or in all three Pastoral Epistles), which have often been identified as “Jewish/Judaizing gnostics” (1:10–16; 3:9–11).¹⁷ However, the verse cited in Tit 1:12¹⁸ should not be reduced to its first half, “Cretans are always liars,” and if the liar paradox is in view at all,¹⁹ it is certainly not the main point of the argument but is only used as a kind of rhetorical slander against the rival teachers.²⁰ Similarly, the fact that *some*²¹ of the rival teachers are identified as οἱ ἐκ τῆς περιτομῆς in Tit 1:10 should not lead to the assumption that Judaism or “Judaizing” is the main issue of the letter.

The central part of the letter body is an exposition of the sound teaching (2:1). A first section (2:2–10) gives instructions for specific groups within

16 Cf., e.g., A.C. Thiselton, “The Logical Role of the Liar Paradox in Titus 1.12, 13: A Dissent from the Commentaries in the Light of Philosophical and Logical Analysis,” *BibInt* 2 (1994), 208–223; P. Gray, “The Liar Paradox and the Letter to Titus,” *CBQ* 69 (2007), 302–314; J.A. Harrill, “Without Lies or Deception: Oracular Claims to Truth in the Epistle to Titus,” *NTS* 63 (2017), 451–472. The most comprehensive treatment of the history of the liar paradox is still A. Rüstow, *Der Lügner: Theorie, Geschichte und Auflösung* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1910).

17 Many commentaries list ancient testimonies for Judean settlement on Crete (1 Macc 15:23; Philo, *Legat.* 282; Josephus, *B.J.* 2.103; *A.J.* 17.327; *Vita* 427; Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 7.38; cf. also Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.2.1) or for the presence of “Jewish Christians” on Crete (Acts 2:11). If, however, the Cretan setting of the Letter to Titus is fictive, it is not clear at all what these texts should show apart from, perhaps, the author's aiming at some verisimilitude of his fiction (contra Wieland, “Roman Crete” [see n. 6], 352–353).

18 According to Theodoret of Cyrus, *Comm. Tit.* (PG 82.861) it is taken from Callimachus (but Callimachus, *Hymn.* 1.8 does only match the first half until the penthemimeres), according to, e.g., Clemens Alexandrinus, *Strom.* 1.59.2 and Hieronymus, *Comm. Tit.* (PL 26.606) it stems from Epimenides, *De oraculis*. Since this work is lost, this cannot be proven.

19 The liar paradox was known and discussed in antiquity (cf., e.g., Aristotle, *Soph. elench.* 180b; Diogenes Laertius 2.108), but it was only associated with Tit 1:12 in the form of the Cretan/Epimenides paradox in early modern times (cf. Rüstow, *Der Lügner* [see n. 16], 104).

20 The irony lies in the fact that the opponents condemn themselves, cf., e.g., Luke 19:22; Aesop 199; Theophilus, *Autol.* 3.8.

21 Contra T.C. Skeat, “Especially the Parchments: A Note on 2 Timothy IV.13,” *JTS* 30 (1979), 173–177. Πολλοὶ [...] μάλιστὰ οἱ [...] does not identify *all* rival teachers as οἱ ἐκ τῆς περιτομῆς (cf., e.g., the usage in Strabo 3.4.19; Plutarch, *Publ.* 3.2; *Cam.* 24.1; 1 Tim 4:10; 5:8, 17).

the congregation (old and young men and women, slaves).²² The passage in Tit 3:1–2 shows what behavior the author of the letter thinks to be necessary to live well together in a social and political community. These two sections are each followed by a passage that gives a theological basis for the required behavior (2:11–14, centered upon Christ’s saving work; 3:3–8, putting an emphasis on the influence of the *pneuma*). This main part of the letter is structured around the marked contrast between “then” and “now,” which corresponds to the much less prominent²³ contrast between “us” (the Christ-believers) and “them” (everyone else).²⁴ The former state is described as a cognitive deficit that leads to misguided emotions and motivations and results in antisocial behavior (3:3). In contrast, the present state is characterized by knowledge of truth (1:1) and virtues (2:12) resulting in socially desirable²⁵ behavior (2:14; 3:8).

This central part of the letter body is framed by two polemical passages (1:10–16 and 3:9–11). While, taken on its own, it sounds much like a fairly unoriginal example of popular moral philosophy,²⁶ read within its context, the text changes its character.²⁷ Titus instructs Cretans, and Cretans – as

22 As already pointed out by A. Weiser, “Titus 2 als Gemeindeparränese,” in *Neues Testament und Ethik*, ed. H. Merklein (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1989), 397–414, this passage is not a “household code.”

23 The “universalistic” tendency of the Pastorals (cf., e. g., Tit 2:11; 3:2, 8; 1 Tim 2:1, 4; 4:10) differs clearly from Paul’s sometimes very sharp dualism (cf., e. g., Phil 2:15). In the Letter to Titus the difference between “us” and “them” is only intimated in Ἦμεν γὰρ ποτε καὶ ἡμεῖς (Tit 3:3).

24 Since “also we” refers back to “everyone” in Tit 3:2, I do not think that it is possible to see here a reference to Paul as a Judean and to interpret the contrast as one between Judeans and Christ-believers; contra C. Gerber, “Antijudaismus und Apologetik: Eine Lektüre des Titusbriefes vor dem Hintergrund der Apologie *Contra Apionem* des Flavius Josephus,” in *Josephus und das Neue Testament: Wechselseitige Wahrnehmungen*, ed. C. Böttrich and J. Herzer, WUNT 209 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 335–363, here 354. It is generally implausible that the “we” in Tit 2:12–14 and 3:3–7 refers *primarily* to Paul and Titus and includes only secondarily the Cretans. Both passages are linked to the preceding paraenesis by γὰρ (Tit 2:11; 3:3). That means, their rhetorical aim is not to provide information about Paul and Titus but to ground the moral exhortation, which is directed to Titus’s Cretan audience.

25 That is, behavior that the author of the letter considers desirable.

26 I do not think that it is possible to discern specific Stoic or Platonic traits. On the combination of moral philosophy and theology, cf. S.C. Mott, “Greek Ethics and Christian Conversion: The Philonic Background of Titus II 10–14 and III 3–7,” *NovT* 20 (1978), 22–48.

27 Cf. for the following R.M. Kidd, “Titus as *Apologia*: Grace for Liars, Beasts, and Bellies,” *HBT* 21 (1999), 185–209; T.C. Hoklotubbe, “Civilized Christ-Followers among Barbaric Cretans and Superstitious Judeans: Negotiating Ethnic Hierarchies in Titus 1.10–14,” *JBL* 140 (2021), 369–390.

they themselves through the mouth of their own “prophet” must admit²⁸ – are “liars, wild beasts and idle bellies” (1:12).²⁹ Their former behavior conformed to this image. They gave in to their desires (2:12; 3:3), they were unruly and lived in constant internal struggles (3:3).³⁰ The Cretans come here into the role of paradigmatic barbarians, and the sound teaching of Titus is the civilizing force that makes them orderly, obedient, peaceful, and pious people.³¹

The *presbyteroi* whom Titus is to install in every polis are exemplary civilized Cretans. They and their households embody those virtues that belong to the “sound teaching” (cf. 1:6–8 with 2:2–8). Therefore, they are able to instruct and admonish others (1:9). In contrast, the competing teachers have dishonest motives (1:11b, 16), act like demagogues³² de-

28 I.L. Allen, “Paul the Bigot? Reading the Cretan Quotation of Titus 1:12 in Light of Relevance Theory” (PhD diss., Middlesex University/London School of Theology, 2019), <https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/28751/>, reads Tit 1:12b as a citation of what a leader of the Judean rival teachers has said (similarly already Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Tit.*, PL 17.527), and consequently Tit 1:13b as Paul’s (or the letter author’s) rebuke for the teacher’s ethnic prejudices. Then, Tit 1:13a should mean something like “He did say such awful things indeed.” I do not think that this is possible, and I cannot avoid the impression that Allen’s interpretation is partly guided by the wish to exonerate the Letter to Titus from the embarrassing statement in Tit 1:12b.

29 The reference of the personal pronouns in Tit 1:10–16 is notoriously unclear. If one reads the whole passage as referring *only* to the rival teachers – which is grammatically possible or even plausible – the text becomes somewhat self-contradictory: Titus shall silence the teachers so that *their* faith becomes sound, although according to Tit 1:16; 3:11 they are incorrigible. The teachers (or some/most of them) are οἱ ἐκ τῆς περιτομῆς (1:10), that is, probably Judeans, and at the same time Cretans. (The proposal of M. Vogel, “Die Kreterpolemik des Titusbrieves und die antike Ethnographie,” *ZNW* 101 [2010], 252–266, that, according to ancient ethnology, as Judean immigrants they combine the bad qualities of their country of origin with those of their current country of residence could be a possible explanation, but I do not think that the text aims at this argument.) Perhaps the best solution is to consider the text as somewhat sloppily worded. Then, Titus would have to silence the teachers for the sake of the *others’* faith, and the anti-Judean statements would refer to the teachers, whereas the ethnic stereotypes about Cretans would apply primarily to their audience.

30 Some modern commentators see an ironic connection between Crete’s alleged lack of wild animals (Pliny, *Nat.* 8.83; Plutarch, *Mor.* 86c) and the Cretan’s beastly character (cf., e.g., Kidd, “Titus as *Apologia*” [see n. 27], 190: “We have no need of predatory animals, we have predatory humans!”; R. Faber, “Evil Beasts, Lazy Gluttons: A Neglected Theme in the Epistle to Titus,” *WTJ* 67 [2005], 135–145, 139; similarly Wieland, “Roman Crete” [see n. 6], 347–349). To my knowledge, no ancient text makes this link.

31 That it is Epimenides of all people, the wise Cretan who gave sacral laws to the Athenians, who portrays his compatriots as barbarians makes the irony all the greater.

32 On demagogy that awakens the wild animal in the masses, cf. Plutarch, *Mor.* 802e; 807a; Polybius 1.81.5–9; 4.21.11; 6.9.8–10; Dio Chrysostomus, *Or.* 48.1–2; Acts 19:28.

stroying the hierarchical social order (1:11a), and appear all the more dangerous.

Titus himself does not seem to be a Cretan but, like Paul, comes from outside. This puts him *almost* in the role of a colonizer who subjugates the uncivilized for their own good.³³ His mission becomes virtually an analogy to the success story of Roman Crete, which has gone from being a pirate island to a thriving province of the empire. Only in Tit 2:11–15 and 3:3–8 the author of the letter makes it clear that *all* people, regardless of their ethnicity or culture, need the saving act of Christ in order to be freed from their slavery to sin to a virtuous life of good works.³⁴

3 Crete and Cretans in the Acts of Titus

The Acts of Titus can be dated to the sixth or seventh century CE.³⁵ Since some passages give the impression of being an epitomized version of a longer narration, it is possible that they are based on an earlier work (or earlier works).³⁶ They are obviously dependent on the canonical Acts of the

33 Cf. Alexander who founds *poleis* in the East to civilize barbarians (Plutarch, *Mor.* 328e) or the Romans who install a timocratic regime in Thessalia due to the wild nature of the inhabitants (Livius 34.514–6).

34 Hoklotubbe, “Civilized Christ-Followers” (see n. 27), thinks that the main reason for the letter’s author to portray Christ-believers as civilized at the expense of Cretans (and Judeans) was that they themselves were suspected to be superstitious barbarians. This might well be one aspect. However, in the Letter to Titus as well as in the Pastorals there are not many signs that Christ-believers were under pressure.

35 Greek text: F. Halkin, “La légende crétoise de saint Tite,” *AnBoll* 79 (1961), 241–256; ET: R.I. Pervo, “The Acts of Titus: A Preliminary Translation,” *SBLSP* 35 (1996), 455–482; id., “The Acts of Titus: A New Translation and Introduction,” in *New Testament Apocrypha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, ed. T. Burke and B. Landau, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2016), 406–415; Fr. trans.: W. Rordorf, “Actes de Tite,” in *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*, ed. P. Geoltrain and J.-D. Kaestli, vol. 2, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 516 (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 605–615; Ger. trans.: T. Nicklas, “Die Akten des Titus: Rezeption apostolischer Schriften und Entwicklung antik-christlicher Erinnerungslandschaften,” *EC* 8 (2017), 458–480, here 473–480. Cf. also id., “Neutestamentlicher Kanon, christliche Apokryphen und antik-christliche Erinnerungskulturen,” *NTS* 62 (2016), 588–609; M. Hartmann, “Vom Paulusbegleiter zum ‘Kalenderheiligen’: Rezeptionsgeschichtliche Beobachtungen zu Titus in der apokryphen Literatur,” in *Ein Meisterschüler: Titus und sein Brief*, ed. H.-U. Weidemann and W. Eisele, SBS 214 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2008), 175–189. In the following, if not indicated otherwise, I refer to rec. I (extant in cod. Parisinus Graecus 548 and Ottonianus 411; Halkin, “La légende,” 244–252).

36 Cf. on these questions C. Guignard, “Une légende non crétoise de saint Tite?,” *ETL* 92 (2016), 487–504, here 498–499, 501–502. He is skeptical about the theory that the Acts of Titus are an epitome, and he tries to reconstruct a source in which Titus is not a Cretan.

Apostles and the Acts of Paul. There are also clear references to the Letter to Titus. The work purports to be written by Zenas the lawyer whom Paul mentioned (Acts Tit. 1; cf. Tit 3:13), and one of Titus's main tasks on Crete is to ordain bishops in every polis³⁷ (Acts Tit. 4, 8; cf. Tit 1:5–9).³⁸ The image of Crete and the Cretans in the Acts of Titus differs, however, markedly from that in the Letter to Titus.

Titus's ancestor is Minos the king of Crete (Acts Tit. 1). That the main character is of noble lineage is "common in ancient fiction" and an "indication of Cretan local patriotism."³⁹ Perhaps it is even more than local patriotism. First, by making Titus a native of Crete, the impression given in the Letter to Titus that Christianity came to the island from outside as a colonizing and civilizing force is avoided. The Cretans themselves brought Christianity to their island. Second, as shown above, Minos was known as divinely inspired lawgiver.⁴⁰ So, the work begins with a hint to Crete as homeland of law and justice. These motifs are taken up in the passage about Titus's uncle, the proconsul⁴¹ of Crete. After consulting the leading men of the island⁴² he sends Titus together with some unnamed others to Jerusalem in order to inquire about the Lord Christ (Acts Tit. 2). Also here, the reader gets the impression of a well governed province in which the influential people are interested in and well disposed toward Christian faith. Similarly, when Titus and Paul arrive on Crete Rustillus, the husband of one of Titus's sisters⁴³ and (former?) governor,⁴⁴ does not oppose Christianity, although he does probably not convert (Acts Tit. 5).⁴⁵ Some time later, he is

37 Besides Gortyna (Titus's metropolitan see), the following cities are named: Knossos, Hierapytna, Kydonia, Cheronesos, Eleutherina, Lampa, Kosamos, Kantanos.

38 Cf. also Acts Tit. 5/Tit 1:10: οἱ ἐκ [τῆς] περιτομῆς. It is, however, not entirely clear whether in the Acts of Titus the Judeans on Crete or the Judeans in Rome are meant.

39 Pervo, "Preliminary Translation" (see n. 35), 466.

40 S. Andreas Cretensis in his encomium on Titus, which is certainly dependent on the Acts of Titus, even goes further into Cretan mythology pointing to Titus's "relatives whose ancestors were Minos and Rhadamanthys the sons of Zeus" (*Or.* 16, PG 97.1145).

41 In the first century CE the Roman governors of the province Creta et Cyrenae were only former praetors, and they did not stem from the local aristocratic families but came from Rome. In late antiquity, however, the *praeses* of the province was a *consularis* (cf. Chaniotis, *Kreta* [see n. 7], 104, 111). So, the author of the Acts of Titus seems to have projected the situation of his own time into the lifetime of Titus.

42 In Roman Crete a κοινὸν τῶν Κρητῶν represented the interests of the *poleis* before the governor; cf. Chaniotis, *Kreta* (see n. 7), 104.

43 According to Acts Tit. 10, another sister, called Euphemia, was a virgin.

44 He is said to have completed two terms of government (ἐπαρχία, the Greek equivalent to the Latin *provincia* in the sense of "area of responsibility").

45 In rec. II he converts to Christianity and is baptized with all his family after Paul has raised his deceased son.

elected consul in Rome, as Titus has predicted. This is a rare (fictional) career. We know of only few former Cretan governors who got into high offices and of few Cretans who became Roman senators.⁴⁶

The picture of the Cretan political elite in the Acts of Titus is remarkable in two respects. The stress on good and orderly government differs markedly from the image of Cretans as uncivilized barbarians and liars that is so prominent in the Letter to Titus. The stress on benevolence toward Christianity makes sense given that members of the Cretan aristocratic families are reported to have still adhered to the old cults even in late antiquity.⁴⁷

A similar tendency to combine the undeniable break caused by conversion to Christianity with the lasting appreciation of the Cretan past can be discerned concerning temples and rituals. When Titus arrives in Crete after Paul's death, the populace welcomes him with a procession to the sanctuary of Artemis (Acts Tit. 7). In contrast to Paul and Barnabas, who react with horror and disgust in a similar situation (Acts 14:11–18), Titus joins the procession, talks on friendly terms with the people, and begins to sing a Hebrew psalm. After a somewhat confusing incident concerning Artemis's speaking cult statue,⁴⁸ the crowd cries out a monotheistic confession and five hundred people come to believe in Christ. Although the story aims at the triumph of Christian faith over idolatry, it wants to retain a memory of the Cretan past. That it is about the cult statue of Artemis is perhaps neither coincidence nor a reference to Acts 19:21–40 or Acts John 42.⁴⁹ The Dictynnaeum, the sacred precinct of Artemis Dictynna, was one of the oldest and since Hadrianic times one of the most magnificent Cretan sanctuaries.⁵⁰

Even more striking is the story about a certain Secundus who is commissioned to build a temple by the emperor Trajan (Acts Tit. 9). Titus walks by the construction site (one may therefore conclude that it is located in his

46 C. Antius A. Iulius Quadratus, governor of Creta et Cyrenae became consul under Trajan and governor of Asia (Chaniotis, *Kreta* [see n. 7], 104); in the second century CE, L. Flavius Suplicianus Dorion Polhymnis was the first Cretan senator, few others are attested only from the fourth century on (ibid., 111).

47 Cf. a certain Plutarch, who writes that in 360 CE he visited the Idaean Cave and offered a sacrifice to Zeus (*IG* 12/6.584), and Oikoumenios Dositheos Asklepiodotos in 380 CE (*IC* 4.315–320; cf. Chaniotis, *Kreta* [see n. 7], 121).

48 In rec. I, the people think that the Hebrew words have made the statue speak, and therefore they try to repeat them. The statue seems not to have been damaged. In rec. II, the story is much clearer: Titus miraculously destroys the statue.

49 So Nicklas, "Akten des Titus" (see n. 35), 465.

50 Chaniotis, *Kreta* (see n. 7), 117.

hometown Gortyna) and sighs. On the next morning the building has collapsed. When Secundus, out of fear of the emperor, wants to kill himself, Titus helps him and tells him that he will be able to continue with the construction if he performs daily prayers to God. After the completion of the building, Titus explains to the people that it will become a place for Christian relics. This preservation of the architectural past might even have been visible to the author of the Acts of Titus (or of his source/sources) and his (or their) audience. The *praetorium* in Gortyna, which included a temple area, was probably built under Trajan and it was still in use in late antiquity, albeit after several renovations and alterations.⁵¹

In summary, one can describe the Acts' strategy to deal with cultural memories as follows: On the one hand, the author ingeniously uses Isa 45:16b–17a LXX, Acts 2:11, and Tit 1:5 to inscribe the foundation of the Cretan church into biblical history. On the other hand, although he rejects Greek cults and also to some degree Greek culture,⁵² he wants to preserve local Cretan traditions as a part of a new, Christianized Crete.

4 Why Crete?

Crete is the fictive destination of the Letter to Titus and the fictive location of the Acts of Titus. Attempts to demonstrate that the letter was actually written to Crete – or even that it is an authentic letter and that Paul and Titus worked together as missionaries on Crete, as is hinted at in the letter and narrated in the Acts of Titus – are not convincing. However, the island's history, culture, and reputation are not irrelevant. The Cretan setting is carefully elaborated and central for both works – albeit in very different ways.

The Letter to Titus portrays Christ-belief as a means of becoming a civilized and virtuous person. Therefore, Cretans, as they were imagined and memorized by Hellenistic and Roman authors, serve as a foil to Christ-belief. They are barbarians and liars, who were in constant conflict with other people and with each other. Against this background, Christ-believers and their local leaders, the *presbyteroi*, can shine. The rhetoric of the

51 Cf. Bechert, *Kreta* (see n. 7), 32–33. It is not identical with the so-called Agios Titos church in Gortyna nor with the five-aisled basilica in Mitropolis, which was probably the ancient cathedral of St. Titus (on these, cf. *ibid.*, 95).

52 In Acts Tit. 1, Titus is commanded to leave the poems and dramas of Homer and the other philosophers.

letter is not specifically directed against Cretans, they simply serve as an obvious example.⁵³

This might lead to the impression that the Acts of Titus was meant as refutation of the Letter to Titus or that their author even wanted to suppress the letter with its slander on Cretan morals.⁵⁴ This is, however, unlikely. As the only biblical text that testifies to the Cretan mission of Paul and Titus, the Letter to Titus is pivotal for his project.⁵⁵ Rather than contradict the letter, he appropriates it. He uses the letter's Cretan setting and makes it his starting point for building an apostolic memory for the Cretan church.⁵⁶

So, the remarkable difference between the images of Crete in the Letter to Titus and the Acts of Titus stems from their different aims. While the letter (ab)uses Crete to present Christianity as being compatible with civilizing Roman rule,⁵⁷ the Acts of Titus want to affirm a Cretan Christian identity.

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53 Therefore, I do not think that the letter's author wants to promote ethnic prejudices (as seems to be suggested by W. Stegemann, "Antisemitische und rassistische Vorurteile in Titus 1,10–16," *Kirche und Israel* 11 [1996], 46–61). He uses them in order to negotiate the status of Christ-believers within Roman imperial society.

54 This seems to be the interpretation of Pervo, "Preliminary Translation" (see n. 35), 461.

55 This does not mean that the Letter to Titus is the main or even only intertext for the Acts of Titus; their story relies much more on Acts and the Acts of Paul. However, it is not by chance that the Acts of Titus pretend to be written by Zenas. Through this *explicit* reference to a letter of Paul and to an eyewitness and one of his co-workers (Tit 3:13), the author creates his pseudepigraphical persona, which enables him to embark on his project.

56 On such attempts to construct apostolic foundations for local churches, cf. M. Rouquette, "Mémoire apostolique et pseudépigraphie: Une comparaison des Actes de Barnabé et des Actes de Tite," *Études théologiques et religieuses* 91 (2016), 703–712.

57 How well this works (or worked), one can see in the – from a contemporary view incredibly chauvinistic – statements of Western European visitors to Crete from early modern times to the beginning of the twentieth century that are cited in Meinardus, "Cretan Traditions" (see n. 4).