

A brief history of Crete and the Jews

Commentary on PowerPoint presentation. Numbers correspond to slides.

2 - Today Crete has 650,000 inhabitants, most of whom have abandoned the famous Cretan diet, high in cereals and pulses and low in animal protein. The island's main resource is tourism and there is still an American base in Souda, near Chania. My remarks will first describe the bronze age civilisation; then try to show the role of the Jews in Crete including the Shealtiel family during the Græco-Roman, Byzantine and Venetian periods, turn to the Turkish occupation and conclude with the modern era, in particular WW2.

3 - We first learn of ancient Crete from the classical writings of the Greeks, among them Homer in the Iliad, Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle; and then from archaeological findings in Egypt. At the beginning of the twentieth century the English archaeologist, Arthur Evans, fulfilled his dream of confirming the myths of Minoan civilisation by discovering and excavating the palace of Knossos. This revealed that Minoan civilisation was fully as advanced as others of the period.

THALASSOCRACY

3 (cont) - Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* (c400BC) described a Cretan *thalassocracy*, that is a civilisation with economic and military power over the seas.

4 - We still cannot read the earliest scripts, that is the hieroglyphs and Linear A. "Crete is a book with images but without text," said Charles Picard, a French archaeologist. Dating and interpretations are revised every year, but we are sure that:

- Crete had the first cities with regular street-plans.
- Crete had the first urban system of running water, central sewage, and storm drains.
- Cretan cities were the first jurisdictions to codify laws.
- From the end of Minoan civilisation, Crete contended with piracy.

This tiny island, two percent of the area of France, was an indispensable station for seafarers between Greece and Egypt, with good harbours and an accommodating north to south wind from June to September. Mountains and hills occupy 95% of the area, with small isolated plains, but agricultural resources are sufficient: water, wood to build boats and houses, clay, and good land for cereals, fruits, aromatic plants, olives, grapes and cattle. The sea provides fish, sponges and the murex snails making for "imperial" purple dye.

To summarise, as best we understand today:

- After the advent of the bronze age, c2900 to 2600BC, the population expanded and by about 1900BC the first palaces and well planned towns appear; this is the protopalatial, that is first palace, period.
- Two major earthquakes in 1760BC and c1628BC caused much damage but reconstruction took place; this is the neopalatial, that is new palace, period. This period saw prolonged growth up to 1450BC and represents the height of Minoan civilisation.
- Crete suffered the devastating effects of the Thera eruption. It seems that then the Mycenae invaded bringing widespread destruction: at this time almost all the palaces and main towns burned.
- In c1200BC, the "sea people", as Egyptian texts call them, invaded bringing destruction throughout the eastern Mediterranean.

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5 - Crete was part of an interconnected eastern Mediterranean civilisation.

- Tablets from Mari (an Assyrian city, now Tell Hariri, eleven kilometres northwest of the modern town of Abu Kamal, Syria) document the presence of Cretan traders and craftsmen, in particular shoemakers, in c1780BC.
- Tomb paintings from Egypt c1450BC show Cretan merchants bearing gifts to the Pharaoh Tutmus III.

6 - Three great civilisations had an influence on Crete, which went on to develop its own characteristically high levels of culture and art.

- Troy, a centre of the gold trade (2600 to 1275BC).
- Anatolia: home of the Hittites (2000 to 1200BC).
- Near East: including the city of Mari (3000 to 1680BC), part of the Assyrian Empire (1800 to 1375BC); and the ancient Levantine city of Byblos (2000 to 1600BC), whose cuneiform tablets have been deciphered.

7 – A reflection of these contacts is to be seen in the legend of Zeus assuming the form of a bull to ravish a maiden from the near east, Europa, and bringing her to Crete where she bore the future King Minos. This echoes a dynastic union intended to promote peaceful relations, when Ramses II married a Hittite princess.

8 - Evans' dating has been revised by Plato (Greek) and D Levi (Italian). To simplify, I will stick to Plato's schema.

9 - 10 – Economic Power. The resources of Crete were agricultural: you can still see workers singing while going for the harvest with a priest. Seeds discovered during excavations and remains in the *pithoi* (storage jars) show wheat, barley, peas, lentils, grapes for wine, wild plants for aromatic and medicinal purposes and olives...

11 - ...and maritime: fishes, murex snails for imperial purple, and sponges; this fisherman with mackerels is a young boy with his head almost shaven after the Egyptian fashion of the period. We also know that the Cretans ate red mullet. Food was grilled or stewed as no ovens have been found. Their diet was almost free of gluten or milk - as today in slimming diets.

12 - Crete's maritime superiority was based on

- A marine organisation embracing naval and trading ships based in the island's many defensible harbours;
- A military establishment; and
- International trade.

13 - The Cretan navy included square-sailed ships, able to traverse the Mediterranean to Egypt during the prevailing northerlies between June and September; as well as

14 - Ceremonial vessels with twenty-two oarsmen; and

15 - Small fishing craft.

16 - Modern archaeologists dispute the pacific theories of Evans, who believed that the Minoans presided over a prolonged period of peace. They believe that the Cretans deployed military force to intimidate their neighbours and eradicate Aegean piracy, as reported by Thucydides.

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16 (*cont*) - Mythology reflects this ascendancy: Jason and the Argonauts landed at “the fair haven of Dikte” (Palaikastro in the east of Crete) well before the end of the Trojan war (c1275BC). With Medea’s help they subdued Talos, the bronze giant given to Europa by Zeus to patrol the Cretan coast.

17 - A commander with hair falling to the waist, giving instructions to a soldier with a sword, bringing leather to make a shield. Here you see the famous Cretan shoes or boots which were exported to Mari.

18 - This *rhyton* (container of fluids) shows four types of athletic games: boxing at the top and the third level: boxers wear military helmets. Excavations have yielded shields, helmets and swords made from bronze (ninety percent copper from Cyprus; ten percent tin).

19 - A fresco in Akrotiri, Santorini, before the eruption of Thera, c1600BC, showing warriors protecting a city, with more static men and women taking care of animals. In the meantime, Minoan ships are defeating another ship, whose sailors are falling in the sea. Are they pirates?

20 - The soldiers wear helmets decorated in boars’ tooth, and square shields in ox-hide. In Book X of the Iliad, Meriones armed Ulysses with a “Cretan helmet in leather covered with boars’ tooth”.

21 - This type of helmet is also depicted in carvings at the museum.

22 - A shield in the final period of Knossos (1450 to 1300BC); and a bronze helmet; this find also included bronze armour, swords and shields.

23 - Weapons in bronze and gold from Mallia.

24 - *Thalassocracy*, that is power on the seas, also implying economic dominance. Money did not exist until invented in the eighth century BC by Croesus (alternatively his father). In Minoan times, trade occurred by way of exchanges of gifts between kings. In a biblical example, Hiram of Tyre gave wood to Solomon to build the temple in Jerusalem in return for which, Solomon gave Hiram olive oil.

25 - Cretans have left remains - mainly pottery - throughout the Aegean Sea, telling us where they traded. They exported agricultural products: olive oil, wine, wood, honey, saffron, opium, rock crystal, pottery, sponges, linen tinted with imperial purple and arms. Seventy percent of the arms from this period found in the near east come from Crete.

They imported linen and porphyry from Egypt, obsidian (for knives) from Melos and Troy, marble from the Aegean islands, liparite crystals from the Lipari islands, alum from Melos, copper from Cyprus (29kg bars were found in the palace at Zakros) and gold and silver from Spain.

26 - Ivory came from Syria into the eastern harbours of Palaikastro and Zakros. Elephant armour, ready for finishing but burnt in the final assault on the city, was found in Zakros. This ivory panel comes from Palaikastro

27 - Rhinoceros ivory was also imported. The Palaikastro *Kouros* (male figure) incorporates chryselephantine, that is wood overlaid with a composite of ivory, gold, gemstones and rock crystal.

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PROTOPALATIAL PERIOD

28 - At this time (1900 to 1700BC), four or five main palaces existed; none is fortified, which tells us that the Cretans enjoyed domestic peace and were free from fear of piracy.

29 - Map of the palaces of Knossos, Phaistos, Mallia and Zakros (each surrounded by a city) and also the cities of Gournia, Palaikastro, Mocholos. Aptera, Commos and Gortyn, as well as the linking roads.

30 – The palaces were built after 1900BC. These are similar to the palace of Mari, Syria, built 2200 to 1900BC, but the four Cretan palaces are singular, all following the same plan.

- One main courtyard on a north-south axis.
- A central square including the main courtyard (in grey) ; and a religious area with reception rooms on the west side.
- Royal apartments in the north or north west part.
- Large storage facilities in the south and west, required for a centralised economy and international trade.
- A west façade in large stones facing another courtyard leading to the city.
- Stone lined basements, with clay walls and wooden columns and frames.

31 – Palaces of Phaistos and Knossos.

32 – Palace of Zakros.

33 - At that time, the language was written in hieroglyphics. These include:

- Phase 1: depicting an object: pictograms.
- Phase 2: depicting an idea: ideograms.
- Phase 3: depicting a sound or syllable: phonograms, that is first syllabaries then alphabets.

Evans counted 135 hieroglyphics. We now recognise slightly more, too many to be phonograms but too few to be ideograms. Between 1900 and 1700BC, the script developed, conjecturally to a stage between phase 2 (ideograms) and phase 3 (phonograms).

34 - The Disc of Phaistos is the first printed document in the world, but its provenance is uncertain. Evans doubted it was Cretan as it is a “hapax”, that is the only example of its kind.

35 - What are the main concepts of this civilisation? Twentieth century archaeologists developed preliminary theories of a Minoan religion embracing deities similar to those elsewhere in the near east.

36 - A mother-goddess and/or an earth-goddess (e.g., Cybele)

37 - A young god, son of the mother-goddess, reborn and dying every year, reflecting the annual cycle of plant growth, e.g., Orion or Zeus Diktaion.

38 – Another young god, e.g., Zeus Diktaion or the giant Talos protecting the shores of Crete.

39 - Epiphany, that is a goddess coming from the sky.

40 - But, unlike other civilisations of the same period, no temples: instead, peak sanctuaries.

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41 - The contemporary temple of Mentuhotep, Pharaoh of the 11th dynasty.

In 2001, archaeologists discussed the twelve palaces now discovered around Cretan cities (e.g., Gournia). These have many religious objects but no evidence of kings. In consequence, archaeologists are now moving to the view that these “palaces” are rather temples, with the streets leading to what have always been recognised as shrines also belonging to the “palace”.

42 - 43 - Cretans, like Egyptians, contemplated a life after death. They did not cremate their dead, but decorated them with jewellery and buried them outside their cities.

44 - This *larnax* (clay coffin) shows a dead man in a sleeveless tunic before his tomb. He is erect following the Egyptian custom and slightly diminished as he is part-interred. Priests and priestesses wear tunics in ox-hide. As in Egypt, men conventionally are depicted with brown skin and women with white skin. Three priests are bringing offerings for the dead man's afterlife: two animals and a ship for his Stygian journey

On the reverse, a spotted bull is on the sacrificial altar, blood falling into a bucket. A priestess is placing offerings of fruits and wine before a palace or temple, decorated (extreme left) with a motif of the *labrys*, a two-headed axe signifying secular and spiritual authority, and double bull-horns.

45 – A bull is being sacrificed, its blood filling a bucket beneath its head. Two animals are below, signifying goats to be sacrificed. A man is playing music and a crowned woman assists.

Back to the first side (slide 44): a man and woman bring the buckets of blood from the bull which a priestess empties into another vessel between the *labrys*. This conveys that it is a gift to a temple in honour of the dead man.

46 - The goddesses brings the dead man to heaven in a chariot drawn by griffins, legendary creatures with the body of a lion and the head and wings of an eagle. This signifies the good fortune of the dead man according to near eastern beliefs.

47 - 48 - *Labrys* or two-headed axes. Labyrinth originally meant “the palace of the two-headed axe” and not the maze of the Minotaur.

49 - 50 - 51 - 52 - The bull, whose significance is not yet fully understood. Archaeologists surmise that bulls served as a sacrifice, possibly signifying fertility as in other near eastern religions. This would explain the myth of the minotaur: a mystic wedding of a bull to a priestess-queen (e.g., the legendary Pasiphae who wed King Minos represents the mother-goddess; she was the daughter of the sun-god Helios and the nymph Perse). The bull almost always has round spots.

53 - 54 - 55 – A man and a woman. Both are very slim; women wear long dresses.

56 - 57 - Minoan diet was almost the same as in the middle of last century. A study of skeletons in the cemetery of Arkanes shows that Cretans had

- Stature extending from 1.10 to 1.40m tall; in eastern Crete (Palaikastro), the average male height was 1.62m.
- An average lifespan of 35 years.
- A diet lacking milk and vitamins.
- Medical skills extending to limb-setting, trepanning (boring holes in the skull for magical reasons or to relieve cranial pressure) and dissection, contrary to early views by e.g., Warren.

58 - Frescoes of sports

59 - Boxing with gloves

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60 - 61 - Games with bulls for men with brown skin and women with white skin.

62 - A bull-leaper; a similar game, but with a deer instead of a bull.

63 - A comparison with Egyptian art shows that:

- The Minoans were expert in depicting movement. By comparison, Egyptian depictions of the same period were static.
- The Minoans moved from Egyptian conventions of bodily proportion (18 Egyptian units), to their own more elegant convention (21 Egyptian units).

64 - 65 - Jewellery termed “international style” with granulation.

66 - Comparison between Cretan jewellery and Egyptian jewellery of the same period.

67 - Pottery from Camares with free-form drawings.

68 - NEOPALATIAL PERIOD, 1700 to 1450BC

69 - Knossos was rebuilt after the earthquake of 1760BC, as were Phaistos, Mallia and Zacro after the second earthquake of 1628BC. Transactions were written in Linear A, writing still impossible to understand, for lack of tablets. Linear A is a syllabary with 85 characters; Linear B emerged c1425BC. This was a period of prosperity.

- The palaces were rebuilt on a larger scale and with greater luxury, including a water and sewerage system, private bathrooms with tubs, flush toilets and many ritual public baths
- The cities were well planned, with fine houses, a main road on an east-west axis, quadrangular buildings, many shrines, and squares surrounded by *baetyls*, that is sacred stones or pillars.

70 - 71 - 72 - 73 - Knossos seen and rebuilt in concrete by Evans, who believed that by then the king of Knossos had vanquished others to become the sole king, and that the other palaces were under his command. A legend tells the story of Minos’ brothers: Rhamamante was obliged to go to western Crete, and Sarpedon was banished.

74 – The palace of Phaistos.

75 – The city of Gournia.

76 - 77 - 78 - Frescoes of the towns: views of Cretan harbours or of Akrotiri in Santorini.

79 - 80 - The Minoans also left models.

- Like the palaces, private houses were built of clay and wood, with an earthquake-resistant basement lined in stone, now all we can see.
- Sometimes there is no window at ground level which served as storage.
- The windows were painted in red, with leather curtains.

81 - 82 - The eastern Mediterranean volcano of Thera (modern Santorini atoll) erupted catastrophically in or around 1530BC. The ruins of the town of Akrotiri in Santorini represent its Pompeii. Dated to c1600 to 1550BC, the settlement was a Minoan harbour, serving as an *entrepôt* for trade with the other Aegean islands. The city has houses with one or two stories, with walls in wood and clay; as well as streets and squares. Archaeologists have concluded that the inhabitants abandoned Akrotiri at least fifty years before the eruption, leaving almost nothing behind them.

83 – Domestic store-room.

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84 - Frescoes are the best legacy of Minoan civilisation

85 - Frescoes came into use earlier throughout the near east and Egypt, but the Minoan paintings convey a singular and characteristic vivacity, movement and colour.

86 - The “prince of the flowers” so-called by Evans. A new interpretation would be of a god-prince, returning to earth with the griffins of good fortune, for a new season of harvest and seafaring.

87 - Saffron-picking by a young boy according to Evans, but now recognised as a monkey amid flowers.

88 - The *Parisienne*, so-called by Evans for her elegance; now recognised by her large sacred tie as a priestess.

89 - 90 - Women with earrings and make up.

91 - The animals look vivid and natural: a jackal and a duck amid palm trees by a riverside.

92 - Comparison of a partridge in the Minoan and Egyptian style of the same period.

93 – Dolphins. Found in Knossos, from the final period of Minoan art.

94 - 95 - These pots (in the “marine style”) show similar freedom of expression and vitality by the painters.

96 - Naturalist pottery with barley.

THE END OF MINOAN CIVILISATION, c1530 to 1200BC

97 - 98 - Professor Marinatos believes that the eruption of Thera, less than 100 km from Crete, led to the collapse of Minoan power. He dates the eruption to 1450 to 1400BC. In 2007, an oceanographic study by the University of Rhode Island, concluded that there were many eruptions during the century from 1600 to 1520BC; and that the main eruption, four times greater than Krakatoa, occurred c1650BC give or take twenty years.

By contrast, archaeological evidence suggests a devastating eruption in 1530 to 1520BC, with plumes of ashes darkening the sky for days and polluting land and water. We may conjecture that tsunamis destroyed the Minoan fleet. Earthquakes undoubtedly destroyed houses and thick layers of pumice washed up on the shores of Crete. Recent excavations in Palaikastro tell us that 12 to 15cm of ash covered the ground, blocked the wells, water and sewerage systems, and destroyed the crops.

99 - It seems that regardless of the precise timing, Professor Marinatos is right in broad terms: the effects of the Thera eruption were so devastating that the Minoan system collapsed. This enabled the Mycenae who had previously traded with the Minoans to conquer Crete in c1450BC. The excavations point to a violent war: except for Knossos, every town and palace was consumed by fire. Knossos itself was partly rebuilt and reoccupied, surviving further earthquakes.

100 - Egypt. The text accompanying this painting describes Minoans bringing jars of oil, wine, and precious pots to the Pharaoh Tutmus. It conveys that the Cretan were vassals bringing tribute. It is not an exchange of gifts as formerly, for example ivory against olive oil. Was Crete weakened at that time by the Thera eruption?

101 - The legend of Theseus killing the Minotaur should be taken as a metaphor for the Mycenaean conquest of Crete and the fall of the Minoan dynasty.

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102-3 - Other evidence suggests that the Mycenaean incursion took place without long-lasting disruption. Certainly Crete continued to produce similar artefacts, albeit of declining quality. The Mycenae introduced their language, Greek written in Linear B, another syllabic script. In 1952, this was deciphered by Ventris and Chadwick from a list of agricultural products, accounts of herds and records of declining wool production.

104 - The Mycenae were warriors.

105 - As depicted on the wall of Ramses III's temple of Medinet Abou, c1200 the "sea people" devastated all the near east, including Crete and Ugarit in the Levant. They regrouped their forces in Gaza in 1176BC and tried to conquer Egypt in 1174BC. The account also mentions:

- Pulesata, that is the Philistines of the bible, showing their typical helmet.
- Zakaru, derived from Zakros, a site on the eastern coast of Crete.
- Akaiwasha, that is Achaeans or Mycenae.

GRÆCO-ROMAN PERIOD, c800BC to 1204AD

Hellenic period, 800BC to 67BC

106 - After a dark age of c400 years, Greek civilisation re-emerged in the eighth century BC.

107 – The cities of Crete were famous for their legal codes. Many authors of the classical or Hellenistic period mention this, among them Plato, Thucydides, Aristotle and Ephorus. Crete was the first jurisdiction to codify its laws and inscribe them in stone, well before mainland Greece, e.g., Athens or Sparta. The historian, Ephorus, wrote that eight Cretan cities had constitutions, also before mainland Greece. The first known text in alphabetic Greek is a four-line fragment from the constitution of the city of Dreros (modern Driros, near Neapolis in the district of Lassithi, Crete), c650BC. The fragment forbids the head of government from holding office for more than ten years.

108-109 - Gortyn was one of Crete's foremost cities. In the fifth century BC, that is the time of Pericles, it decreed that its civil code be inscribed on mural slabs. The inscription was in ancient Greek using an eighteen character alphabet; and in boustrophedon, that is a script running alternatively right to left and then left to right. It is a transcription of a seventh century BC law, that is contemporaneous with Draco, who established Athens' first written legal code and constitution. The laws principally concern family, inheritance and slavery, with arresting developments in each, decreeing:

- The rights of women.
- The rights of slaves.
- The restriction that civil injury be redressed only with money, not physical chastisement or mutilation, even for slaves. (Killing is absolutely prohibited for civil injury, as it is by the Draconian Code.)
- The requirement that testimony be affirmed by oath with a penalty for perjury.
- The obligation that judges take account of legal precedent.

After the death of Alexander the Great, the island became subject to the Ptolemies of Egypt, but Philip V of Macedonia encouraged the Cretans to raid Ptolemaic shipping. Thereafter Crete was once again a pirates' lair, also becoming a mart for slavers.

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Roman Empire, 67BC to 285AD

110 - The Roman conquest of the near east began with Pompey. Cicero writes of Rome almost starving as pirates interrupted the supply of Egyptian wheat. In 67BC, the Senate voted the *Lex Gabinia* which gave supreme power to Pompey, who suppressed piracy within three months. As part of Pompey's campaign, Metellus conquered Crete from west to east; Gortyn and Aptera helped the invaders and were left intact, the former becoming the capital of the Roman province. Pompey's prompt victories and his military readiness led the Senate to vote the *Lex Manilia* the following year, authorising him to conquer the near east. Once again he wasted no time, reaching the temple of Jerusalem by 63BC.

Pompey's great rival, Caesar, had only an indirect connection with Crete. He suffered from health so bad as to oblige a strict dietary regime, leading him to import and cultivate herbs from the island.

111 - Jews had been in Crete for some time when St Paul arrived in Gortyn to convert them to Christianity. Paul's disciple Titus, a Cretan Jew, became the first bishop of Gortyn, but failed to convert the Jews as he hoped. In chapter 1, verses 12 to 14 of Saint Paul's letter to Titus, the Evangelist gives vent to his frustration, writing

...The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slothful bellies. This testimony is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables.

112 – In 120AD, Rabbi Akiva stopped in Knossos to visit the Jewish Community.

Byzantine Empire, 285 to 1204AD

including Arab interregnum 824 to 961AD

113 - 114 - After Diocletian divided the Roman Empire in 285, Crete fell to the Eastern - eventually Byzantine - Empire.

In 824, Spanish Moslems launched an invasion from Alexandria. They remained for 150 years, surviving on piracy and fortifying Candia (modern Herakleion) as their base. Jews bore no specific restrictions under Arabic domination, though in common with all infidels they paid the *Karaj*. In 961, Nikephoros Phocas of Byzantium retook Crete to suppress piracy; he expelled the Arabs and introduced Slavs and Armenians into the population. In his *Itinerary* of 1162 to 1172 the Spanish Jew, Benjamin de Tudela, reported that Crete provided a home for 600 Jews.

Under the Byzantine Empire, Jews bore no restrictions as to costume and enjoyed unqualified freedom of religion and abode. In addition, many were wealthy, trading in imperial purple dye. Even so, they could not hold military or public office and were subject to specific taxes, collected by the community. These included:

- The *kephaletion*: a tax levied upon each Jew to support the monasteries; this applied throughout the Byzantine Empire
- The *kapnikion*: a hearth or household tax, replaced later by the *aerikon*, a tax on doors and windows.

VENETIAN RULE, 1204 to 1669

115 - In 1201-3, armies of the Fourth Crusade mustered in Venice which had agreed to carry them to Egypt. Before they embarked, Doge Enrico Dandolo called for payment for the ships Venice had built and was to crew and provision. This was problematic for the leaders of the Crusade who lacked sufficient funds.

An apparent solution then arose. Alexius III Angelus of Byzantium had banished his nephew, who promised to pay the Crusaders' balance with Byzantine treasure, provided they helped him recover his patrimony and the throne. The Crusaders agreed to divert from their original destination to Constantinople, which they took without difficulty.

In the event, however, the Byzantine treasure was insufficient to satisfy the Crusaders' obligations. Although the returned prince assumed the Byzantine throne as Alexius IV Angelus, he enjoyed it for just five months before he was deposed and poisoned in early 1204.

Smarting at their unpaid debt, the Venetians sacked Constantinople, also seizing art-objects including the four horses now in St Mark's Square and the lion and *pala d'oro* (cloth of gold) now in St Mark's Basilica. Byzantium was also forced to cede "one fourth and one half", that is three eighths, of its possessions. This included Crete, where Venice installed Boniface de Montferrat, one of the principals of the original crusade, after vetoing him as Emperor of Byzantium itself.

116 - The Genovese and Venetians fought in and around Crete because of its strategic importance. Venice fortified the island (e.g. at Chania) and built a fleet, taxing the Jews to pay for military expenditures. Campaigns were mounted against the Genovese and later the Ottoman Turks who invaded Anatolia, finally annihilating the Byzantine Empire when they took Constantinople in 1453.

117 - How many Jews came from Spain after the anti-Semitic disorders of 1391 or after the expulsion of 1492? Did the Shealtiel family come directly or did they spend time in Venice or elsewhere? Jews under Venetian rule numbered two thousand. Venetian state archives - principally dealing with economic matters, that is official complaints, financial transactions and lawsuits - attest to the position of Jews. Aleida Paulice, a student of Professor Nicholas de Lange, wrote a study of the Jews of Crete, in particular Eliahu Capsali, the *Condestabile* (constable or chief of the Jewish community) of Chania in the 1500s. Here is a summary.

- There were five communities, including Canea founded in 1252. The largest was Candia with four synagogues. Their culture and traditions were often vernacular, using Greek, Cretan and Italian, leading to the *Romaniote* rites and customs. They wrote in Greek as well as Hebrew.
- Jews were denied the status of citizens (as were rural Greeks); nor were they allowed Christian servants. They were nominally obliged to live separately from the rest of the population. Even so, a 1299 treaty between Venice and the Greek aristocratic family of the Kallergis, provided that Jews be allowed to reside at will.
- They had restricted property rights, despite which they achieved economic prominence. The Jews of Crete and Corfu had the same trading rights as other Venetian subjects, but were unable to own or alienate property; thus they were traders, artisans and money-lenders, albeit unable to issue mortgages as they could neither own land nor take it as security.
- At first, Jews lived both in the countryside and the cities. They financed agricultural production and exported agricultural produce to Mediterranean markets. They produced kosher wine for the Jewish communities of the island and exported it to Egypt and Constantinople, where it was sold in the Venetian quarter as well as the Byzantine districts. In 1450, the Byzantine Empire imported so much kosher wine from Crete that it instituted a special office for its taxation, *Scribania Vegetum Judeorum Venetorum* (Jewish Wine Supply Board).

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- After the late 1400s, the regulations legislating separation and prohibiting land-ownership were applied more strictly. This increasingly confined Jewish livelihoods to money-lending and quarters to the *Judaica*. This district was within the walls of Candia, occupying areas shunned by the Venetians due to the smell from the adjacent tanneries and the lack of fortification. Even then, however, archival documents reveal that separation was not fully enforced; for example, Jewish physicians treated both Jewish and non-Jewish patients.
- Cretan Jews were well educated. We know of the presence of Hebrew, Latin and Italian teachers. Many Cretan Jews sent their sons to study in Italy.
- They paid to redeem Jews from the slave market for which Crete was famous, importing slaves from the Ottoman Empire and supplying oarsmen for Venetian galleys. The Jews of Crete were often asked by their overseas coreligionists to ransom Jewish prisoners.
- Jews were greatly vexed by levies and taxes, which increased over the years. The community authorities were in charge of taxing the entire Jewish population, with imposts including an annual tax on all and extraordinary taxes to pay for the construction of naval hulls or fortifications against the Ottoman Turks. One quarter of the special levy on the nobility (*feudati*) and the urban population was collected from the Jews. There was also a tax for slaughtering animals. Given the small number of animals slaughtered in the *Judaica*, the community was instructed to elect its own representative to account to the authorities for this tax. To summarise, during the 1300s and 1400s, the Jews represented one or two percent of Crete's total population of 170,000, but ended up paying more taxes than the rest of the population put together.
- After the 1500s, the arriving *Sephardim* tried to introduce their own customs and laws. This generated Rabbinical disputation and expulsions from the community. Problems persisted when newcomers sought to marry local girls, as it was often subsequently discovered that the suitors were already married elsewhere.

118 - *Condestabile* Eliahu Capsali collected manuscripts and printed books, now partly in the Vatican Library. He sold them between 1541 and 1543, probably to raise funds for the community. His manuscripts deal with *Kabbalah*, philosophy, medicine, liturgical and biblical commentary. They principally come from Rhodes, Constantinople, Italy and Greece, but there are also some from the Ashkenazi world. Did the *Shealtiel Haggadah* come from Capsali's collection or were the Shealtiels able to hang on to it throughout their flight, over intervals and by routes unknown to us, from Aragon to Crete?

119 - Text on the front page of the *Haggadah* (from *Shaltiel*, Moshe Gracian Shaltiel).

A handwritten declaration by Avraham Hen "son of Yehudah, son of the physician and learned rabbi Emanuel Hen of the house of Shealtiel" on the last plate of the Haggadah states that he is its owner. The declaration is undated.

Even so, we can provide an approximate date as Iris Fishof of the Israel Museum has identified Avraham Hen as a noted Cretan bibliophile of the 1500s and the uncle of the principal in the Rabbinical controversy over the Shealtiel coat of arms (and see 120 below).

120 - Under Venetian law, any prominent person could seek a coat of arms and no restriction upon design was imposed. How did the Shealtiels qualify for their coat of arms? what services did they render the state? what was their economic importance? The rabbinical controversy to which it gave rise dates it to the middle of the 1500s.

121 - How long did the Shealtiels stay in Crete? There is no record of them after the end of the 1500s, when regulation became increasingly restrictive (and see 122 below).

A brief history of Crete and the Jews

OTTOMAN (TURKISH) RULE, 1669 to 1897

122 - In 1669 after forty years of war and the twenty-year siege of Candia, Crete fell to the Turks who held it for two centuries. Those wishing to leave Candia were granted a grace period to wind up their affairs and safe conduct for Venetian boats to evacuate them with what they could carry. Many Jews took advantage of this, presumably including the Shealtiels if they were still there. The Chartiels of Tunisia have a tradition of a Cretan origin; they share DNA with the North Sea line which enters the record in London, c1700. This invites us to speculate that the *Shealtiel Haggadah* became a grubstake for the refugees, as the manuscript came to light among the effects of a London collector in the late 1800s.

123 - After Greece won its independence from the Ottomans in 1822, Crete campaigned for its own freedom. The movement was led by the Orthodox Church which sought relief from repression. In 1866, Abbot Gavriil presided over a band of insurgents who declared independence at the isolated monastery of Arcadi. Turkey sent troops to suppress the rebellion. In reply, Greece sent Colonel Panos Koronaios with a token contingent. He saw that defiance was futile, but his qualms were dismissed by the Cretans. The insurgents, fewer than a thousand and including women and children, chose to make a stand against a host of 15,000 Turkish soldiers who breached the walls within two days. The Cretans found refuge in a cellar full of powder and set it on fire. The consequent explosion killed most of the defenders, with the Turks putting to death all but one or two survivors in the monastery's refectory.

MODERN PERIOD, 1897 to 1944

124 - From 1897 to 1908 Crete remained nominally Ottoman but under international administration.

125 - Eleftherios Venizelos, a barrister from Chania, organized an Executive Council to administer Crete. In 1913, the island voted to join Greece after Venizelos became the country's Prime Minister. In 1923, the Treaty of Lausanne organised an exchange of Turks from Crete for Greeks from Smyrna (now Izmir, Turkey).

Crete's strategic position drew it into WW2. The Germans wanted to obstruct passage through the Suez Canal, under British control, but Egypt was beyond the range of the mainland-based *Luftwaffe*, obliged to refuel in Crete. The island was also seen as a first line of defence for Egypt, so the Allies, that is England and New Zealand, offered Crete military assistance.

126 - Edwin Saltiel, a businessman from Salonica, fled when his city was invaded by German troops. He found the Greek mainland also coming under occupation and determined to go to Crete which was still free. He took ship for the naval harbour of Suda, near Chania. At this point, however, Göring launched Operation Mercury to take Crete. Some 17,000 parachutists were dropped on the three main airports, while the Allied positions were subject to aerial bombardment. Parachutists landing on the west coast took Maleme airfield after three days. Saltiel was in Crete from 19 to 29 May 1941. He was under the ten-day aerial bombardment of Chania where he wrote a daily account. He reported that the Germans seemed to know exactly where the English troops were; and that the Allies began to withdraw on the sixth day of the Cretan campaign, leaving the island effectively undefended. He himself fled to the east, running into English troops who were going south to the harbour of Chora Sfakion and who took him with them to Alexandria.

On 8 June 1944, the *Tanais*, a commercial steamer under German requisition, left Crete for the mainland with a cargo of prisoners. These included the Jewish population of the island who had been rounded up for deportation to Auschwitz, as well as recently captured resistance fighters. At 0312H on the morning of 9 June, the *Tanais* was torpedoed by *HMS Vivid*, an English submarine. All hands were lost, bringing the 2000-year history of the Jews of Crete to a tragic end.

Remarks by Beatrice Saltiel, Herakleion Crete, 24 June 2009