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Yiatrosafia yia ton Anthropon: Indigenous Knowledge of Medicinal, Aromatic and Cosmetic (MAC) Plants in the Utilisation of the Plural Medical System in Pírgos and Práitoria for Community Health Development in Rural Crete, Greece

Aiglsperger, J.

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Author: Aiglsperger, Judith

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Chapter IV RESEARCH SETTING: GREECE AND CRETE

Situated in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea as the largest island of Greece, Crete represents the research setting of the present study on people's patterns of health care utilisation. Any account on the natural, historical or cultural features of Crete involves a study of the characteristics of Greece at large. In this respect, the present chapter opens with an overview on the geography of Greece as a country of the Mediterranean Region and offers a synopsis of the rather extensive history of Greece. It concludes with an analysis of the recent events following the impact on Greece of the Eurozone financial crisis of 2009. Hereafter, the cultural environment of Greece is outlined not only from a historical point of view but also from a perspective of more recent developments, such as population exchange, labour migration, language uses and education schemes. In view of an analysis of these cultural patterns which are shaping everyday life of the Greek population, a brief description of the historical development and present-day expansion of the Greek Orthodox Church is also given.

The chapter proceeds with an assessment of the geography, history, socio-economy and culture of Crete, highlighting the distinctiveness of Crete in comparison to Greece at large. As Briassoulis (2003: 97) highlights: *'[Crete] has a historically strong and regionally diverse economic base, a strategic position, abundant natural and cultural resources, a spatio-temporally differentiated pattern of tourism development and a unique value system'*. The present chapter concludes with the presentation of a number of cultural icons of Crete, which have determined the image of the island considerably. In general, Chapter IV places the research setting of rural Crete in a wider perspective of Crete, Greece and the Mediterranean Region, providing a sound basis for the subsequent overview in Chapter V on the local characteristics of the research area.

4.1 Greece: Focus on the Mediterranean Region

4.1.1 The Geography of Greece in the Mediterranean Region

The Mediterranean Sea, including the Sea of Marmara, covers around 2.510.000 square kilometres with an extension of 4.000 kilometres from the Atlantic Ocean in the West to the Asian continent in the East and an average north-south distance of 800 kilometres, separating the European and the African continent (*cf.* Map 4.1). The Mediterranean Sea has long served as a geographical unifier for the countries bordering the intercontinental sea, known as the Mediterranean Region, the Mediterranean Basin or simply the Mediterranean. Scholarly attempts have been made to describe the Mediterranean Region on the basis of common natural and cultural features in sectors such as geography, ecology, climate, history, human settlement, cultivation, local belief systems and local customs. Climate conditions pertaining throughout the Mediterranean Region provide a sense of unity as they are characterised across countries by dry, hot summers and mild, rainy winters, whereas temperatures do not vary considerably. In the same fashion, historical movements and events have frequently had a similar impact on population groups inhabiting the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. Furthermore, geographical particularities have generated similar patterns of human settlement, particularly in rural areas, and practices of agriculture across countries. Cultural characteristics such as local customs, ritual practices, the belief in the 'evil eye', the system of dowry, political structures and the occurrence of internal conflicts have provided a sound basis on which the Mediterranean Region has been defined as a geographically distinct area (*cf.* Gilmore 1982). As Gilmore (1982: 181) explains: *'It is rather the combination of historical convergences with synchronic parallels in culture, all within a homogenous environment that provides both internal consistency and distinctiveness to the Mediterranean area'*.



Map 4.1 The Mediterranean Sea.
Source: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. (2014).

Despite the various commonalities identified, the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea differ greatly in sectors such as language, religion or social organisation and it has not been possible to link the Mediterranean Region to a form of political delimitation. Furthermore, the features classified as common are not necessarily unique to the Mediterranean Region, but may occur in different geographical settings. On the whole, the Mediterranean Region can be interpreted as a cultural area, which only partly overlaps with the distinct geographical region comprising all countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea (*cf.* Gilmore 1982; Hanepen 1997; Hagoort 1998; Heywood 1999; Pieroni *et al.* 2006; Britannica 2013). In this respect, Gilmore (1982: 177) concludes: ‘By definition, “Mediterranean” refers to the landlocked Sea’.

In spite of the difficulty to distinguish the Mediterranean Region as a unified geographical region, the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea have been identified as a major centre of biodiversity, in which a variety of endemic species is found. Favourable climate conditions and a regional diversity of soil types, particularly among the Mediterranean islands, have stimulated the growth of regionally distinctive annual species, which over time have adapted to environmental changes. The large number of wild plants available throughout the Mediterranean Region has since the earliest days of human settlement formed a useful basis for people’s livelihood, as plants have been used *i.a.* in the form of food, material, fuel and, most commonly, medicine (*cf.* Figure 4.1). The countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, particularly the poorer regions of Southern Europe, moreover produce a considerable variety of agricultural crops and account for approximately 97% of the worldwide production of olive oil (*cf.* Allen *et al.* 2006; Skoula & Johnson 2006).

While cultivation practices generally change the native vegetation patterns and advance the development of new species throughout the Mediterranean Region, phenomena such as human population growth and the increased demand for plant resources have recently resulted in an occasional overexploitation and extensive destruction of the rich natural diversity in the area. By consequence, the bio-cultural diversity of the Mediterranean Region, which has a positive impact on the health of the population, has been threatened with extinction (*cf.* Skoula *et al.* 1997; Heywood 1999; Delanoë & Montmollin 1999).

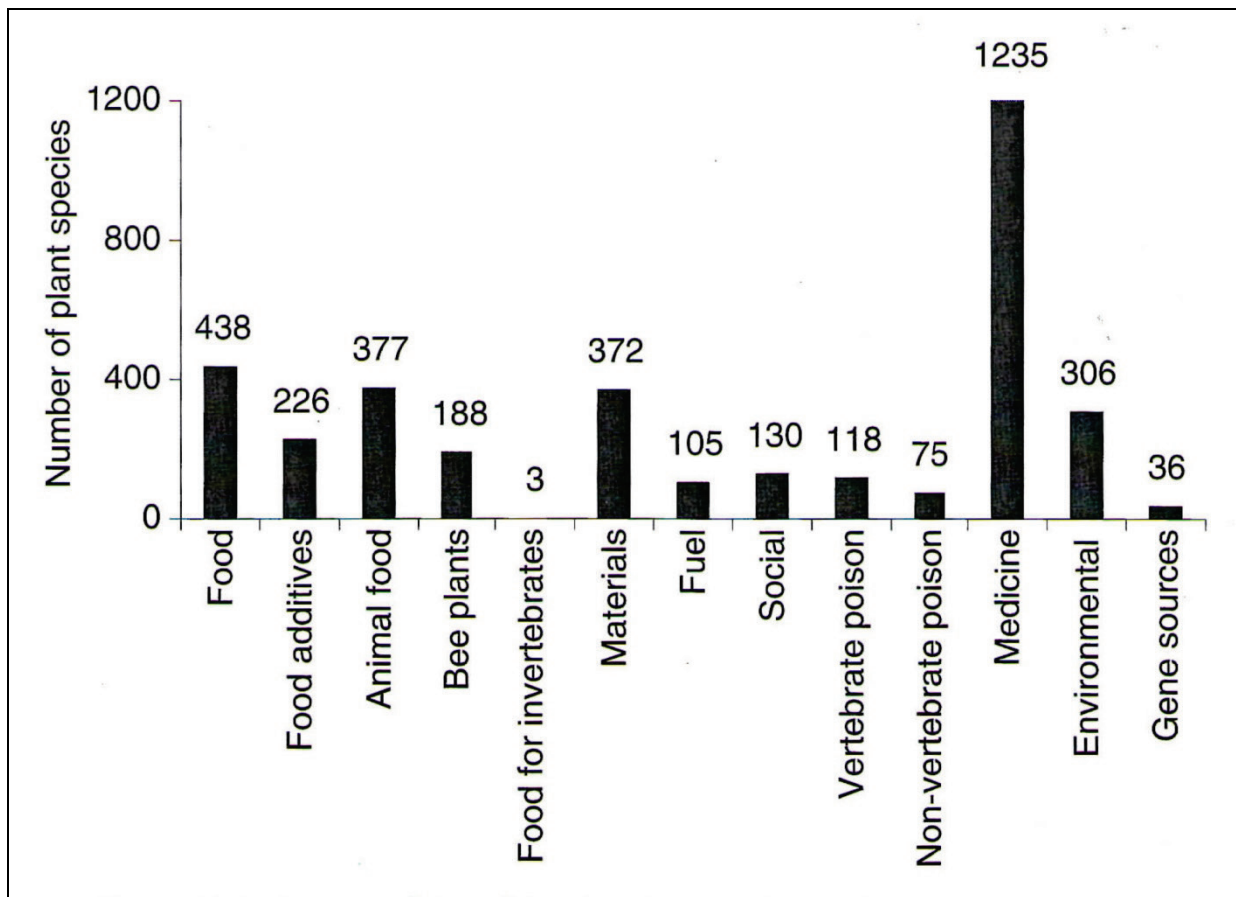


Figure 4.1 Uses of Wild Plants throughout the Mediterranean Region (Plants have been reported to the MEDUSA database and are all native to the Mediterranean Region).
Source: Skoula & Johnson (2006: 184).

Immediately surrounded by its waters, Greece is situated in the north-eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea in Southeast Europe where it approximates the continents of Asia to the East and Africa to the South, and forms the most southern country of the Balkan Peninsula (*cf.* Map 4.2). The entire surface of Greece amounts to 131.957 square kilometres and is shaped by sharp inlets of water forming an extensive coastline and by numerous islands, which cover around 19% of the area. The most compact part of the surface, roughly referred to as the Greek mainland, comprises the geographic regions of Macedonia and Thrace in the Northeast; the regions of Epirus and West Greece in the Northwest; the region of Thessaly in the East; and the region of Central Greece, including the peninsula of Attica in East-Central Greece, where the capital of Athens is located. The Gulf of Corinth as the most prominent inlet of the Ionian Sea separates the Greek mainland from its most southern region, the Peloponnese. The Peloponnese refers to a peninsula of 21.439 square kilometres, which is connected to the Greek mainland only through a narrow isthmus near the city of Corinth (4.1). The Isthmus of Corinth divides the Gulf of Corinth from the Saronic Gulf, an inlet of the Aegean Sea, but has been opened in 1893 by the Corinth Canal, which brought considerable advantages to the shipping traffic. Apart from dissecting the mainland, the waters surrounding Greece enclose an abundance of islands, of which Crete, Euboea or Evia, Lesbos and Rhodes are the largest. The majority of the Greek islands are found in the Aegean Sea, at times only at a minimal distance from the Turkish coast. While the Ionian Sea encloses the group of Ionian Islands west of the mainland, the waters south of the Peloponnese accommodate Crete, the largest of the Greek islands, as well as the Island of Gavdos south of Crete, which forms the most southern point of Greece and the European Continent (*cf.* Lafranchis & Sfikas 2009).



Map 4.2 Map of Greece.
 Source: Central Intelligence Agency (2014).

In addition to numerous inlets of water, the Greek landscape is distinguished by an extensively rocky, mountainous surface generated by tectonic movements, which have framed the relief of the country to this day. In addition to forming a chain of nowadays only partly active volcanoes

across the islands in the Aegean Sea, such as Santorini (Thera), the tectonic movements produce a drifting surface, which is noticeable in the continuous extension of the Gulf of Corinth as well as in signs of repeated seismic activity across the region. As Lafranchis & Sfikas (2009: 6) observe: *'Earthquakes, which are common in Greece though usually without consequence for man, remind us that Greece is still moving southwards, at a rate of up to 3.5 cm a year'*. The mountainous surface of Greece includes more than 1.600 peaks rising above 1.000 metres, of which the highest is found at Mount Olympus in North-Eastern Greece reaching 2.917 metres. The mountainous terrain of Greece moreover offers a number of deep and narrow gorges, which are carved into the rocky landscape by streams dissecting the country predominantly from the North to the Aegean Sea. In addition to a wealth of mountain chains, around one-fifth of the surface of Greece is covered by lowlands, namely by narrow mountain valleys and basins as well as riverine and coastal plains, whereby the largest plains are found in the regions of Macedonia and Thessaly (cf. Lafranchis & Sfikas 2009; Britannica 2013).

Although the climate of Greece is characterised by the typical Mediterranean features of hot, dry summers lasting from late May until September and mild, rainy winters, the mountainous shape of the surface creates regional and local differences. According to Lafranchis & Sfikas (2009: 16): *'Thanks to the topography, it is [...] possible to follow spring from early February by the sea to late June or even July in the shaded gullies at high altitudes'*. In general, most precipitations fall between the months of October and April, following autumn- and spring-waves of rain, whereas rainfall is highest in the Northwest and considerably lower in the Southeast of Greece. The most hours of sun have been recorded for the west coast of the Ionian Islands, the Cyclades and the eastern part of Crete, while the highest average temperatures, generally higher in the South and West of the country, are reached in the plain of Thessaly near Athens and in the southern part of Crete. Since the winters on the mainland are frequently accompanied by snowfall, high altitude regions above 1.500 metres usually remain covered in snow for several months. The climate of Greece is further characterised by the regular activity of seasonal winds roughly classified as 'Vorias', which blow from the North, 'Vorras', and 'Notias', which blow from the South, 'Notos'.

The geographical position of Greece at the crossing of three continents, the widespread occurrence of isolated areas, such as islands and mountains, the contrasts in altitude, as well as differences in local climate conditions and rainfalls have favoured the development of a rather distinct type of vegetation. The wealth of different natural habitats has provided a favourable environment for the development and preservation of an enormous variety of natural endemic species. Although research into the diversity of the Greek flora has not yet been completed as new species continue to be discovered, Greece offers the richest flora and the highest rate of endemism in Europe. In particular, the vegetation of Greece has around 5.800 species and subspecies, of which the majority grows in small numbers and approximately 12.8% (n=740) are endemic to the country, growing mostly on islands, mountains and in gorges (cf. Lafranchis & Sfikas 2009). The flora of Greece comprises: evergreen trees and shrubs; small, aromatic and spiny shrubs; bulbous plants, which flower during the spring; and a considerably high percentage of annual plants. Although most species bloom in spring, flowering times can be rather diverse, whereby the number of annual plants decreases in certain places early during the year in May, because of the predominantly hot and dry weather conditions. Although the flora of Greece finds its origins primarily among the territories surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, numerous species have been introduced to the country via extensive trading and plant migrations, such as through an east-west migratory route, which developed in early Miocene and had its origins in West Asia, and a north-south 'Alpine' migratory route, which developed at a later stage in Central, Northern Europe.

In the same fashion, human interference with the natural environment, which started in Greece around 10.000 years ago and included the cutting and burning of forests as well as the introduction of domestic animals, such as sheep and goats, has had a strong impact on the development of the Greek flora (cf. Iatrou & Kokkalou 1997; Tan *et al.* 2001; Lafranchis &

Sfikas 2009). As Iatrou & Kokkalou (1997: 67) show: *‘The Greek people, living in such a remarkably diverse country, rich also in indigenous plants, recognized the uniqueness of the flora since ancient times, and came to know their uses, both for food and for their non-food properties’*. The sometimes irrational management of ecosystems by humans has recently rendered the rich diversity of the Greek flora rather vulnerable to outside influences. Phenomena such as the regular occurrence of fires, the progress of urbanisation, the introduction of modern infrastructure, the growth of tourism at the coast and on mountains, the collection of aromatic plants for commercial purposes and the use of pesticides in agriculture in conjunction with the occurrence of overgrazing have threatened certain species with extinction (cf. Iatrou & Kokkalou 1997; Tan *et al.* 2001; Lafranchis & Sfikas 2009).

4.1.2 Greece: History and Recent Developments

Crossed by numerous mountain ranges enclosing rather secluded areas of settlement, the geographical features of Greece have favoured a course of history, which is largely characterised by the co-existence and interaction of different population groups in absence of a national entity. The continuous arrival of foreign invaders during historical periods of time, such as the Indo-European migration or the Barbarian Invasions, has prevented processes of unification and the formation of a Greek empire or state. Consequently, a status of entity has throughout history only been achieved following the intervention of foreign powers, which imposed unity on Greece from the outside, as it took place under the Roman and the Ottoman rule. Since the Greek State, as it is known today, only came into existence during the 20th century A.D., Greece looks back on a period of history, rich in cultural exchange and interaction.

Following initial forms of human settlement in the area of contemporary mainland Greece during the Palaeolithic Age, the first agricultural communities emerged in the Neolithic Age during the 6th millennium B.C. in the region of Thessaly near the city of Corinth (4.2). The Bronze Age introduced not only a general expansion of peasantry but also a period of general upheaval, provoked by the gradual arrival of Indo-European immigrants on Greek land from regions such as the Black and Caspian Sea, Asia Minor and the Balkan. These migratory movements contributed to the formation and development of the Cycladic civilisation on the Cyclades and the Helladic civilisation on the mainland, as well as to the emergence of the first ‘recognised’ culture of Europe, known as the Minoan civilisation in Crete around 3000 B.C. The merge of incoming and old-established religious beliefs and practices resulted in the development of a particular polytheistic belief system in which an Indo-European sky god has been identified as Zeus and Mount Olympus has been assigned home to the deities.

Furthermore, the first peasant communities in the Peloponnese have considerably been influenced by the Minoan culture and the religion of Crete, which maintained its dominance in the area until the rise of the Mycenaean civilisation on mainland Greece. During the 14th and 13th century B.C., the Mycenaean civilisation expanded rapidly and gained dominance in the Aegean region, particularly after the destruction of Minoan Crete, until power declined during the 12th century B.C. The heroism and warfare of the Mycenaean civilisation has been highlighted in accounts written on the Trojan War, most prominently in the Iliad and Odyssey of Homer, which refers to a legendary conflict between the inhabitants of mainland Greece and western Asia Minor. Later, the Greek land became home to: (1) the Achaeans, who inhabited the northern part of the Peloponnese and bore strong resemblance to the Mycenaean population in terms of language and warfare whereupon the names of both groups have been used interchangeably (4.3); (2) the Aeolians, presumably a group of descendants from the first wave of Indo-European immigrants, who migrated east during the 12th century B.C. and settled in the Island of Lesbos as well as along the west coast of Asia Minor; (3) the Ionians, who consisted of the Athenians living in the region of Attica and the Greeks inhabiting Euboea as well as several other Aegean islands; (4) and the Dorians, who invaded Greece from the Danube region in the North around 1200 B.C. and settled in the Peloponnese and in Crete. On the whole, the Achaeans, Aeolians,

Ionians and Dorians have been identified as the four primary subgroups of the so-called 'Hellenes', the speakers of various ancient Greek dialects and literal ancestors of the Greek population. The Hellenic population groups spread slowly across the Greek land and came to mingle with the indigenous population of Greece to varying degrees not at least favoured by the geographical features of the landscape which offered rather secluded areas of settlement (*cf.* Bengston 1988; Boardman *et al.* 2001; Waldman & Mason 2006).

The end of the Mycenaean civilisation marked the beginning of a period of transition to the politically, philosophically, artistically and scientifically advanced civilisation of Ancient Greece, which flourished roughly between the 12th and the 4th century B.C. Later, the phenomenon of the Greek city-state or '*Polis*' occurred during the 8th and 7th century B.C. as a place of political, religious, intellectual and economic life, which typically centred on one town and contained an acropolis, a citadel on raised ground and a marketplace, '*Agora*'. However, the emergence of the Greek city-states soon became overshadowed by the rise of the Spartan military state in the south-eastern part of the Peloponnese during the 8th and 7th century B.C. Following the integration of several adjacent territories, the city-state of Athens developed and came to be governed by a regime of tyranny, a form of sole reign, which emerged during the 6th and 7th century B.C. For reasons of overpopulation, social conflict, search for new land and trade as well as a newly developed feeling of unity among the speakers of the Greek language, Greece began to expand its territory to regions surrounding the Black and Mediterranean Sea during the Great Hellenic colonisation, which occurred approximately between 750 and 500 B.C. (*cf.* Bengston 1988; Britannica 2013) (4.4).

The 5th century B.C. marks the onset of the era of Classical Greece, which lasted roughly until the 4th century B.C. and is primarily characterised by the rise of the city-state of Athens to a commercial, cultural and intellectual centre of Greece. However, the growth of the Persian Empire posed a threat to the Ionian city-states along the west coast of Asia Minor and resulted in a series of Greco-Persian wars, during which the city-states of Athens and Sparta joined forces to fight and eventually defeat the Persian army mobilised under the Persian King Xerxes I during the 5th century B.C. Subsequently, Athens continued to strengthen its hegemony across the Aegean Sea under statesman Pericles, who encouraged the development of Athenian democracy and the Athenian empire.

Under the Roman rule, the population of Greece became exposed to the spread of Christianity, which had been approved an official religion under Constantine I, the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity. Gradually, Greece fell under the growing influence of the eastern city of Byzantium - today known as Istanbul - which was declared the Seat of the Roman Empire by Constantine I in 330 A.D. and was later renamed as Constantinople. Following the Fourth Crusade and the conquest of Constantinople in 1204 A.D., which resulted in the establishment of the Latin Empire, the territories of the Byzantine Empire were divided among Western magnates whereupon Greece came under the Frankish and the Venetian rule. After Constantinople was recovered by Byzantine powers during the 13th century A.D., the city of Mistra in the southern part of the Peloponnese emerged as a significant Byzantine centre and as Seat of the Byzantine despots. The advance of the Turks during the 14th and 15th century A.D. eventually put an end to the Byzantine hegemony in Greece although the naval powers of Venice and Genoa succeeded to maintain supremacy over parts of Greek land, particularly the Greek islands (*cf.* Kain Hart 1992; Britannica 2013).

During the extensive period of the Ottoman rule in Greece, which lasted from the capture of Athens in 1458 until the onset of the Greek War of Independence in 1821, the Greek population demonstrated considerable resistance against the Turks. Independence has been encouraged through the continuous opposition against the Ottoman rule by armed bandits, known as 'Klephts', and the Greek Orthodox Church (4.5). During the 17th and 18th century, tensions rose between the Ottoman Empire and the Great Powers of Europe, particularly France and Great Britain, and Russia regarding the control of the strategically crucial Bosphorus Strait. The European powers resorted to exert pressure on the Turks in order to secure European access to

Asia and to prevent Russia from gaining direct access to the Mediterranean Sea. As a result of these external strains, Ottoman hegemony weakened, thereby motivating the Greek population to declare the war of independence on the Turks in 1821, which lasted until 1829 and amounted to the Declaration of Greek Sovereignty, issued in 1830. Following the Conference of London in 1832, Greece was declared a monarchy by the Great Powers and Otto of Wittelsbach was appointed the first King of the Modern Greek state, which, however, did not cover the entire surface of contemporary Greece, but excluded certain areas such as the region of Thessaly and Crete. During the reign of King Otto, the phenomenon of the Great Idea, '*i Megali Idea*', namely a nationalistic idea to restore the Greek Orthodox Byzantine Empire and to unite all areas of Greek settlement, emerged, whereupon the King contemplated an intervention against Turkey in the Crimean War, which was fought between 1853 and 1856. In view of the King's failure to acquire any additional territory and the subsequent occupation of the harbour of Piraeus by French and British forces, King Otto has been forced into exile in 1862 and was replaced by King George I of Denmark, who reigned over Greece between 1863 and 1913. At the turn of the 20th century, Greek land expanded gradually as encouraged by the continuous decline of the Ottoman Empire and the Balkan Wars fought in 1912 and 1913. Through the mediation between the Great Powers rather than by armed conflict, Greece acquired not only the Ionian Islands and the Province of Thessaly but also parts of the Province of Macedonia and Crete. The first three decades of the 20th century witnessed the final expulsion of the Turks from the Balkan Peninsula, and brought substantial territorial and diplomatic gains for Greece. The socio-political developments in Greece have been largely dominated by the work of Eleftherios Venizelos, presumably one of the most prominent Greek politicians, who acted as Prime Minister of Greece during different periods of time between 1910 and 1933.

At the outbreak of the First World War, the contrasting politics of Prime Minister Venizelos, who advocated the participation of Greece in the war alongside the Entente Powers, and King Constantine I, eldest son of King George I, who insisted on the neutrality of Greece, led to an opposition of political views among the population. After King Constantine I was eventually forced to resign, the participation of Greece in the war led to the landing of Greek troops in the city of Izmir (Smyrna) at the west coast of Asia Minor, which became largely populated by Greek people in 1919. Following further tensions between Greece and the newly established Turkish Republic, the Conference in Lausanne in 1923 brought peace, where Greece and Turkey agreed on an exchange of population groups between both countries on the basis of religious affiliation. Consequently, Greece experienced the arrival of millions of Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians in exchange for the departure of thousands of Greek-speaking Muslims to Turkey. While the interwar-period has been characterised by political turmoil in Greece, the onset of the Second World War was marked by the invasion of Italian forces to Greece from Albania in 1940. Although Greek forces were able to reclaim their land from the Italians and to subsequently align with British forces, the German army crossed Greek borders in 1941 forcing King George II to flee to the Middle East, and maintained control over Greek territory until 1944. The German occupation of Greece was met with fierce resistance by Greek partisan groups, primarily the National Liberation Front, '*Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo (EAM)*', founded by the Communist party in 1941 and its military arm, the Greek People's Liberation Army, '*Ellinikos Laïkos Apeleftherotikos Stratos (ELAS)*', which controlled around two-thirds of Greece by the time German forces retreated in 1944 (*cf.* Herzfeld 1999; Britannica 2013).

After the retreat of German forces between 1944 and 1945 and subsequently between 1946 and 1949, the strong position of communist guerrilla forces in Greece amounted to a civil war between communist and conservative camps. After the end of the civil war Greece acquired the Dodecanese Islands and slowly took on the shape of its present surface. During the decades following the Second World War, Greece experienced a general increase in economic gains, urbanisation and living standards, which has been stimulated by the rapid development of the tourist industry during the mid- to late-1960s, and the money transfers made by migrant workers, working in Germany in particular.

Since the elections planned for 1967 were expected to bring another victory for the liberal party, while tensions had grown between Georgios Papandreou and King Constantine II, son of King Paul, a number of officers under the guidance of Colonel Georgios Papadopoulos launched a military coup the same year. Consequently, a military junta ruled Greece between 1967 and 1974, during which the monarchy was finally abolished and Greece declared a republic in 1973. The harsh regime of the military junta has been at times met with fierce resistance on the side of the Greek population, most prominently evidenced by the Athens Polytechnic uprising, which ended in a bloody oppression of protesting students by the military regime in November 1973. The military junta soon aspired the annexation of Cyprus and provoked an overthrow of the Cypriot government in 1974, which ultimately led to the invasion of Turkish troops in Cyprus and the subsequent division of Cyprus into a Turkish and Greek Cypriot political entity. After the decline of the military junta, Konstantinos Karamanlis founded the centre-right New Democracy, '*Nea Dimokratia (ND)*', in 1974. Karamanlis succeeded to guarantee the membership of Greece in the European Economic Community, which Greece effectively joined in 1981. Consequently, Greece became a major beneficiary of common European policies, whereby resources have been allocated in order to support the country's rather weak agricultural and industrial sector. Although economic gains have been made in the shipping and tourist industry, agricultural and industrial productivity remained low, while unemployment rates rose following the return of many migrant workers to Greece, which rendered the Greek economy one of the weakest within the European Union (EU) during the last decades of the 20th century.

Concurrent social transformations led to the overthrow of the government of Konstantinos Karamanlis by the centre-left Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement, '*Panellino Sosialistiko Kinima (PASOK)*', founded in 1974 by Andreas Papandreou, who became Prime Minister of Greece between 1981 and 1989. Since 1974, democracy in Greece has been characterised by a dual party system and a rather polarised political environment, in which political parties monopolise bureaucratic structures and personnel. As Davaki & Mossialos (2005: 147) argue: '*The state enhanced polarization by creating jobs and administrative posts to accommodate certain social groups and exclude others*'. Although Greece entered a process of industrialisation in the early 1960s, a strong working class has been never formed whereupon movements of the trade union have been rather limited. As Davaki & Mossialos (2005: 145) notice: '[...] [*Groups*] achieve their objectives either through government support - dependent on a subordinate relationship with the party in power - or by abusing their right to strike'. In view of the fragmented state apparatus, which accommodated practices of excessive government borrowing and misleading accounting, as well as a stagnating national economy suffering from limited natural resources, the Eurozone financial crisis of 2009 had a comparatively strong effect on Greece and amounted to a call of elections the same year (4.6).

As Greece had accumulated an enormous national budget deficit, the new government led by George Papandreou resorted to taking harsh austerity measures and eventually asked financial support from the EU and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In view of the threat, which the collapsing Greek economy posed to the Eurozone, of which Greece had become a Member since 2001, the country was granted financial support through the financing of a first and second Economic Adjustment Programme in 2010 and 2012. The elections of June 2012 introduced a shift from the rather traditional two-party alternation to a coalition formed between the ND, PASOK and the smaller Democratic Left, DIM.AR under the guidance of ND leader Antonis Samaras as Prime Minister. In Greece, the austerity measures in the form of budget cuts, reductions in benefits and pensions as well as tax increases coupled with massive rates of unemployment accompanying the economic adjustment programmes, however, have marked the beginning of a period of uncertainty (4.7). The austerity measures have regularly been met with great disapproval and have led to the organisation of violent protests and strikes, suicides and a general state of anxiety and depression among the Greek population (*cf.* European Commission 2014).

4.1.3 Culture, Population and the Greek Orthodox Church

Early writings of the era of Ancient Greece not only shed light on a period of history rich in cultural exchange and interaction, but also offer insight into the cultural and social values of the population at that time. The Greek poet Homer, for example, who has likely been active during the 9th and 8th century B.C., elaborates that conflict formed an intrinsic part of Greek society, as its members appeared to frequently engage in warfare. According to Hesiod, presumably active during the era of Archaic Greece in the 7th century B.C., the key-virtues of daily life in a Greek village refer to a general respect for the gods, for the powers of nature and for the community. In this respect, a number of ancient virtues, particularly the respect for nature and community, have survived the historical turmoil and may at times still be encountered among Greek communities today. In addition to creating an early impression of Greek culture and society, the writings of Homer and Hesiod contribute to the extension and shape of a regional religious belief system. In the absence of a formal church, these literal compositions connected the polytheistic belief in the Olympic gods to the belief in local deities and thereby produced an extensive corpus of religious and spiritual myths. Overall, the development of a polytheistic belief system as well as the introduction of Greek Orthodox Christianity at a later stage mark significant milestones in Greek history, which have shaped Greek society to this day. The virtues of conflict and respect coupled with a complex polytheistic belief system, however, form the evidence of a Greek society, which has since antiquity been characterised by the co-existence of different population groups and the constant interplay between culture areas, not at least encouraged by the geographical features of the country (cf. Blum & Blum 1965; Bengston 1988).

The history of migration, foreign occupation and warfare coupled with recent policies of assimilation has formed a population, rich in cultural diversity and strong in national identity. In general, the population of Greece comprises around 9.793.000 inhabitants, of which around three-fifths reside in urban areas, particularly in the capital of Athens, in Thessaloniki and Iraklion in Crete (cf. Map 4.2). The Muslim community of Thrace in North-Eastern Greece forms the only officially recognised minority, although ethnicities found across the country include Turks, Bulgarians, Albanians, Macedonians, Vlachs and Roma.

The language profile of Greece is characterised by the co-existence of Modern Greek, as one of the oldest Indo-European languages, and different local and regional dialects, at times enriched by idiomatic expressions of languages other than Greek, such as '*Kritika*' spoken in Crete, which finds its origin in the linguistic adaptations to languages spoken by foreign invaders. Also, several minority languages are spoken, such as Turkish, Macedonian and Albanian. In the tourist sector also English, French and German are spoken. Modern Greek finds its origins in the rather uniform Hellenistic Greek language, known as '*Koine*' and in the later Byzantine Greek, whereby the former was written and spoken as early as during the 4th century B.C. after which it has survived as the liturgical language of the Greek Orthodox Church. During the early 19th century, the language profile of Greece formed a discrepancy between, on the one hand, the written '*Katharevusa*', a corrected form of Modern Greek rooted in ancient Greek, and used mostly in law, administration and education, and, on the other hand, the spoken, uncorrected Demotic Greek. In 1974, after a rather extensive debate on the persistence of this form of bilingualism, the official status of *Katharevusa*, often interpreted as a means of the educated to exert power over the uneducated, was abolished and Demotic Greek, '*Dimotiki*' became what is known today as 'Modern Greek' (cf. Greger 1985; Herzfeld 1999; Horrocks 2010).

Nowadays, education in Demotic Greek, as the language of instruction is provided on the primary, secondary and tertiary level through both public - free - and private institutions and is compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 15. Primary education consists of one to two years of kindergarten and six years of attendance at the primary school, '*Dimotiko*' between the ages of 6 to 12 (4.8). Secondary education in Greece is divided into lower and higher secondary education. Lower secondary education corresponds to the compulsory attendance at the

‘*Yimnasio*’ between the ages of 12 and 15. Higher secondary education relates to three years of higher secondary school, ‘*Likio*’, or vocational secondary school, ‘*Epangelmatiko Likio (EPA.L)*’, attended between the ages of 15 and 18, or to formal level education provided by vocational training institutes, ‘*Instituta Epangelmatika Katartisis (IEK)*’. Finally, tertiary education is provided by Universities and Polytechnics as well as by so-called Technological Education Institutes and by academies for the military or the clergy. In general, the educational system of Greece is highly centralised and receives limited funding, as government spending for public education in Greece is the lowest among the countries of the EU. Admission to tertiary education is heavily restricted and the standard levels of education in Greece have been defined as rather poor, whereby a slight improvement in the educational status has been recorded alongside an increase in economic growth prior to the Eurozone financial crisis. To this day, the Greek educational system accommodates an extensive array of private education, ‘*Frontistiria*’, run by educational institutions and tutors, who operate at the primary, secondary and tertiary level, offering education primarily in the form of supplementary lessons or exam preparations in exchange for tuition fees.

Furthermore, the strict admission policy at the tertiary level encourages a growing number of students to attend universities abroad, thereby draining Greece from its foreign currency reserves and brainpower. The heavy reliance of the Greek economy on agricultural production furthermore creates little opportunity for students from rural areas to receive higher education and employment. Obtaining a tertiary education degree in Greece is usually accompanied by job security, high social status and personal prestige (*cf.* Giamouridis & Bagley 2006; Panagiotakos *et al.* 2008). Giamouridis & Bagley (2006: 11) notice that: ‘*a segregated educational system ultimately leads to a segregated social structure*’.

The Greek Orthodox Church, to which virtually all members of the Greek population belong, influences the cultural identity of Greece considerably and has been identified as the main symbol of modern Greek national identity. Prior to the introduction of Christianity, the Greek population shared a polytheistic belief in an array of gods, cults and legends, which have been tied to geographic space, as well as to festival times and concrete events in the religious year (*cf.* DeHart 1999). The Greek Orthodox Church owes its origin to the expansion of Christianity across the Roman Empire during the 4th century A.D. under Constantine I, founder of Constantinople, which became a significant patriarchate in 381 A.D. and the centre of Eastern Orthodoxy (4.9). Eastern Orthodoxy continued to act as a unifier among its adherents not only during the Byzantine Era, which ended with the fall of Constantinople in 1453, but also during the period of the Ottoman hegemony on the Balkan, which lasted until the beginning of the 20th century. Although affiliation with the patriarchate created a notion of unity among the followers of Eastern Christianity living in the Balkan, the diverse population groups retained their ethnical distinctiveness (*cf.* Kain Hart 1992; Roudometof & Makrides 2010; Britannica 2013).

Apart from historical accounts, folklore, poetry and literature, the Greek identity has been encouraged through religious symbolism and festivities, many of which formed part of ancient folk and religious traditions and have been reinterpreted as national celebrations (4.10). Following the establishment of the National Church of Greece in 1833 and the stimulation of Greek identity through religious education, the affiliation with the Greek Orthodox Church came to form a central component of Greek nationality (4.11). Although after the Second World War, tendencies towards equating national identity with religious affiliation reduced, the Greek Orthodox Church has remained a crucial institution in the political discussions on Greek identity, and has continued to occupy an integral position in the everyday life of rural communities to this day, particularly in the islands (*cf.* Kain Hart 1992; Roudometof & Makrides 2010) (*cf.* Illustration 4.1).

While the Greek Orthodox Church of today is integrated into the Greek state through the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, it is largely autocephalous, *i.e.* self-governing. The Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Greece under the current Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, Ieronymos II is given supreme religious authority over all bishops and clerics. In the

doctrines of the Greek Orthodox Church, bishops and members of the cloister are obliged to remain celibate, only allowing monks to be appointed as bishops, while priests and deacons are given the right to marry, provided that marriage precedes the ordination to priesthood. The members of monastic communities, such as the semiautonomous Republic of Greek Orthodox monks living on Mount Athos, known as '*Ayios Oros*', 'Holy Mountain', in North-Eastern Greece, settle primarily in remote locations where they continue to play an important role as teachers and guardians of traditional Greek Orthodoxy.

In general, the Greek Orthodox Church follows an annual canon of religious rituals and celebrations, which are organised around a liturgical calendar and include visits to the church on particular days, observation of periods of fasting and participation in seasonal festivities, such as Easter and Christmas. The liturgical calendar of the Greek Orthodox calendar is dedicated primarily to the veneration of Christ, the Mother of God, '*Panayia*', and the Saints and is predominantly expressed through the honouring of holy icons (*cf.* Greger 1985; Kain Hart 1992; Van den Akker 2002; Roudometof & Makrides 2010).



Illustration 4.1 Church of the Holy Trinity in Praitoria.
Photograph by J. Aiglsperger (2011).

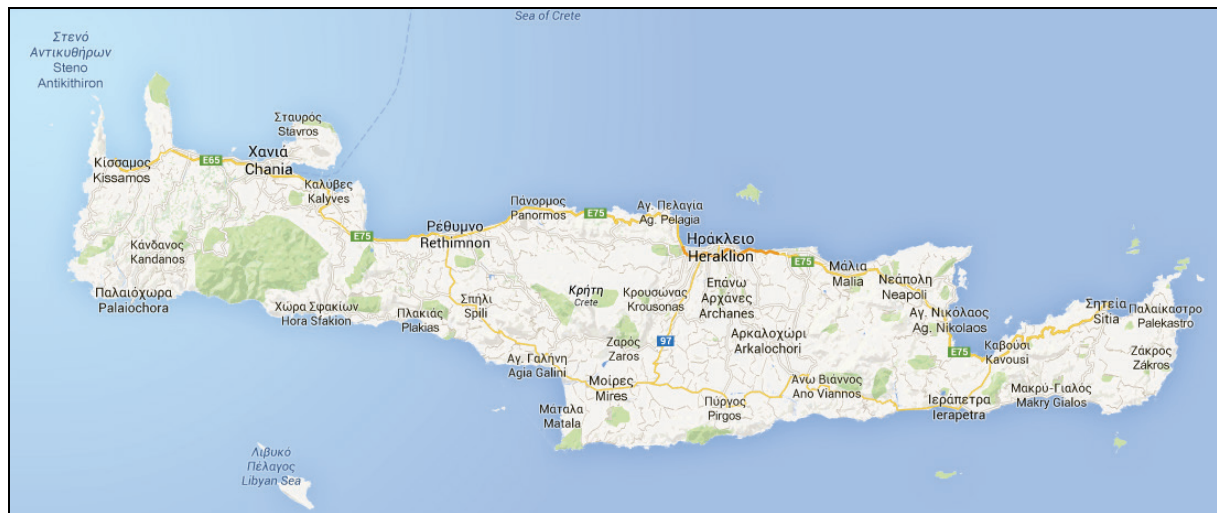
4.2 Crete: The Largest Island of Greece

4.2.1 Geography, Climate and Flora of Crete

Forming the fifth largest island of the Mediterranean Region as well as the largest island of Greece, Crete extends over a surface of approximately 8.729 square kilometres reaching 254 kilometres from the West to the East and between 12 and 56 kilometres from the North to the South. Crete is situated south of the Aegean Sea, roughly equidistant from the mainland of Greece in the North, Turkey in the East and Libya in the South, thereby bridging three different continents, which once have physically been connected (*cf.* Map 4.1). Surrounded by the Sea of Crete in the North and the Libyan Sea in the South, Crete approximates the Dodecanese Islands, particularly the Island of Kasos of the Karpathos island group, in the Northeast and the Island of

Antikithira to the Northwest (*cf.* Map 4.2). The administrative region of Crete similarly encloses a number of offshore islands, such as the Island of Dia north of Iraklion, the Island of Khrisi or Gaïduronisi south of Ierapetra and the Island of Gavdos south of Hora Sfakion.

The surface of Crete is shaped by an extensive coastline of approximately 1.040 kilometres, which stretches around several peninsulas at the north coast and herewith offers natural harbours to the island's major cities of Chania, Rethymnon, Iraklion and Ayios Nikolas. From West to the East, these cities are the capitals of the four prefectures of Crete, namely the Prefectures of Chania, Rethymnon, Iraklion and Lasithi respectively (*cf.* Map 4.3). The prefectures are governed by a prefect, '*Nomarhis*', who usually resides in the capital city (*cf.* Briassoulis 2003; Fielding *et al.* 2005; Lafranchis & Sfikas 2009).



Map 4.3 Map of Crete.
Source: Map data ©2014 Google.

The surface of Crete is largely mountainous, whereby around three-fifths of the area rises to 200 metres above sea level. The island is covered by various mountain ranges, including the *Lefka Ori* or White Mountains in the West, the Psiloritis Mountain in the Prefecture of Rethymnon, the Asterousia Mountains in the southern part of the Prefecture of Iraklion; and the Dikti or Lasithiotika Mountains in the East, which enclose the Lasithi Plateau on the northern slopes. In Crete, the areas of high altitude have been identified as scared, mythological places, particularly during the era of Minoan civilisation, and have frequently been attached to the life and veneration of Zeus, the Father of all Greek gods. The shape of the around 800 metres high Mount *Yiukhtas* south of Knossos, for example, which served as a peak sanctuary to the Minoan palace of Knossos, is said to resemble the lying face of Zeus (*cf.* Illustration 4.2).

The high altitude areas of Crete enclose a number of lowland regions, of which the Mesara Plain between the southern slopes of the Psiloritis Mountain and the northern slopes of the Asterousia Mountains in South-Central Crete has the most extensive area of flatland covering a length of approximately 29 kilometres. The great abundance of limestone and dolomite has favoured the formation of caves, plains, basins, craters and gorges, particularly in the area of South-Western Crete. The Samaria Gorge, which reaches a length of approximately 18 kilometres, forms the longest gorge of Europe (*cf.* Map 4.3). While only a few of the rivers running through Crete flow permanently, the majority carries water only during the winter partly as a result of modern irrigation works (*cf.* Rackham & Moody 1996; Iatrou & Kokkalou 1997; Briassoulis 2003; Fielding *et al.* 2005; Britannica 2013).

The typical Mediterranean climate of Crete is characterised by winters, which extend from November to March and are generally cool, albeit seldom frosty, and moist because of the rain brought from the Atlantic by north-westerly winds. The summers, which extend from June to

August, are generally hot and dry and are occasionally hit by storms owing to the activity of strong winds. Crete is exposed to the north-westerly winds, which blow during the winter month and the *Meltemi*, which reaches the island from the Aegean Sea during the summer. The *Sirocco*, blows during the spring and sometimes autumn, bringing dust from North Africa, which may colour the sky and landscape orange with sudden increases in temperature. The southern heat waves frequently result in extensive periods of draught, which may last for more than six months, from May to October. While lowlands usually remain dry, rainfall in Crete increases with altitude, but decreases from the West to the East as well as from the North to the South bringing the White Mountains around five times as much rain as the south-east coast. The temperatures increase slightly from the Northwest to the Southeast, where the percentage of sunshine is high and maximum temperatures of 40 degrees Celsius during the summer are rather common.



Illustration 4.2 Mount *Yiukhtas* seen from Iraklion.
Photograph by J. Aiglsperger (2010).

During the winter, minimum temperatures in Crete rarely fall below 0 degrees Celsius, whereby the average temperature reached in Iraklion during the winter months has been estimated at 12 degrees Celsius. Snow usually falls at higher altitudes during late October, whereas elevations above 1.600 metres may remain covered by snow until May (*cf.* Greger 1985; Rackham & Moody 1996; Chartzoulakis *et al.* 2001; Tan *et al.* 2001; Fielding *et al.* 2005; Kritsotakis & Tsanis 2009; Lafranchis & Sfikas 2009).

The geographical particularities of Crete at the crossroads of three different continents, in combination with differences in surface areas and climate conditions, have contributed to the development of a naturally diverse and highly endemic type of vegetation. In particular, the flora of Crete comprises around 1.735 native species, of which approximately 9.2% (n=159) are endemic to the island and around 8.1% (n=140) have been introduced by human activity (*cf.* Fielding *et al.* 2005). Routes of plant migration have reached Crete from the Mediterranean and the Euro-Siberian Region as well as from Asia and North Africa, by the result of which the island has acquired a great variety of natural plant species. Moreover, Crete provides a favourable environment for the growth of endemic plants, which are able to flourish in the inaccessible, protective habitats at high altitude cliffs and treeless mountain peaks, out of the reach of grazing animals (*cf.* Rackham & Moody 1996; Delanoë & Montmollin 1999; Fielding *et*

al. 2005; Allen *et al.* 2006; Lafranchis & Sfikas 2009). As Lafranchis & Sfikas (2009: 12) highlight: ‘Crete is an interesting example as several of the Cretan endemics have produced two closely related species, one in the western part and another one in the East’. Although the vegetation grows rather safely in areas of high altitudes, which are only occasionally affected by the overgrazing of animal flocks, the Cretan flora has recently been threatened by a variety of phenomena, such as invasive species, a lack of genetic diversity among isolated plant populations, fires, flash floods, earthquakes, soil erosion, deforestation, pollution due to the use of herbicides, harmful farming technologies, such as mechanical ploughs, urbanisation along the coast, tourism and over-collection of species by humans (*cf.* Delanoë & Montmollin 1999; Heywood 1999; Fielding *et al.* 2005).

4.2.2 The Unique History of Crete

On the one hand, the geographical location and mild climate of the island have prompted ancient scholars to refer to the Crete as the ‘*isle of the blessed*’ (Bengston 1988: 8). On the other hand, the strategically favourable location of Crete at the crossroads of three continental regions has throughout history attracted the interest of foreign invaders seeking to annex the territory on a pursuit of hegemony, exposing the island to continuous waves of outside occupations. As Rackham & Moody (1996: 88) observe: ‘*Each successive conqueror of Crete left at least a few people on the island*’. In general, the history of Crete sheds light on a series of events, which, despite a certain amount of disagreement among scholars on the exact course, are rather unique to the island and only partly overlap with the history of Greece at large. As Detorakis (1994: XIII) notes: ‘*The history of Crete is daunting, both in length and in the variety and number of events it includes. Nowhere in Greece can boast such a long and rich historical and cultural tradition as Crete, stamped as it is by such a distinct character*’.

The earliest evidence of human settlement in Crete, which has been reportedly established around 6000 B.C., is found in Knossos, south of Iraklion. Excavated by the English archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans by the end of the 19th century A.D., Knossos has been identified not only as the largest archaeological site of Bronze Age Crete but also as the presumably oldest city of Europe. Knossos formed the cultural and political centre of the ‘Minoan Civilisation’ between 3000 and 1100 B.C., a term coined by Sir Arthur Evans with reference to the mythical Cretan King Minos, son of Zeus and Europa. The Minoans established themselves in Crete and demonstrated remarkable skills in writing, producing sophisticated artwork, such as elaborate frescoes and pottery, undertaking extended trading activities and constructing palaces and cities across the island. In addition to Knossos, significant Minoan centres have been founded in Phaestus, west of the Mesara Plain in South-Central Crete, in Zakros at the east coast and in Malia at the north coast, east of Iraklion (*cf.* Watrous *et al.* 1993; Detorakis 1994; Herzfeld 2003; Britannica 2013) (*cf.* Illustration 4.3).

Around 1400 B.C., the massive eruption of a volcano on the Cycladic Island of Santorini (Thera) may have had a destructive effect on Crete, weakening the Minoan civilisation and rendering the island prone to foreign invaders. Consequently, Crete was annexed as a colony by the Mycenaeans and subsequently invaded by the Indo-Germanic population group of the Dorians, who ruled the island from 1100 to 69 B.C. The invasion brought an end to the Minoan civilisation and prompted earlier settlers to retire to remote mountain villages. During the era of Classical Greece, the city-state of Gortyn at the western end of the Mesara Plain gained dominance, as shown by the discovery in 1884 of an extensive law code, written on 12 tablets in an ancient form of the Dorian dialect. The Hellenistic Era introduced a period of internal conflict to Crete, as leagues of towns, which had been formed around the major city-states, such as Knossos and Gortyn, entered into a dispute over the rule of the island.

The Romans eventually subjugated the rather fragmented land in 67 B.C. whereupon Crete has been linked to the Roman Province of Cyrenaica in North Africa, while Gortyn became the capital of the island. Following the division of the Roman Empire in 395 A.D., Crete remained

under the rule of the Byzantine Empire until the Venetian conquest of the island in 1204 A.D. During the era of Byzantine hegemony, Crete was invaded by the Arabs in 824 A.D., who raided the island from Egypt in the South, destroyed Gortyn along with other urban centres and maintained control over Crete until 961 A.D. When the confusions of the Fourth Crusade culminated in the fall of Constantinople in 1204 A.D., Crete was handed over to the Boniface of Montferrat, who, however, lacked the means and experience to control the island. He eventually sold Crete to the Venetians for the meagre price of 1.000 silver marks. Shortly after the island was sold, the naval forces of the Republic of Genoa entered into a series of battles with the Venetians and managed to seize control over a large part of Central Crete before the Republic of Venice regained control in 1217 A.D.



Illustration 4.3 The Minoan Palace in Malia.
Photograph by J. Aiglsperger (2010).

Despite fierce resistance from the population of Crete, the Venetian rule continued until 1669 A.D., where the island emerged as a political and artistic centre known as the ‘Kingdom of Candia’, with Iraklion, designated as ‘Venice of the East’, as its capital. Crete soon entered the Renaissance, attracting scholars, artists and clerics from other parts of Greece and beyond. The strong influence of the Republic of Venice on the island’s population is still visible in the architecture, monuments and folklore today (*cf.* Detorakis 1994; Kokonas 1995; Papadopoulos 2009; Clark 2011; Britannica 2013). As Herzfeld (1991: 46) observes: ‘*The Venetian glories and the folklore traditions merge in the collective representation of a single Cretan past, grandly European in its architectural culture but folksily small-town in the intimacy of domestic space*’.

As the Venetian occupation of Crete remained a matter of dispute between outside powers, such as the Republic of Genoa and the Byzantine Empire, it was eventually the advance of the Turks in Greece during the 15th and 16th century, which brought an end to the Venetian rule over the island. The Cretan War between the Venetians and Turks from 1645 until 1669 ended with the fall of Candia after a siege of 20 years, and heralded the period of the Ottoman rule in Crete. The Ottoman hegemony, however, intensified the local struggle for independence of the Cretans who formed the resistance movement against the Ottoman forces. Following the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence in 1821, the Cretan population waged numerous uprisings against the Turks who sought help from the Egyptians, who invaded Crete in 1822. Although Greece

was declared a sovereign state in 1830, Crete remained under the jurisdiction of the Turks and was ruled by the Egyptians from 1830 until 1840 when the island was brought back under the Ottoman rule. The Cretan population eventually launched a major rebellion against the leadership of the Turks, which lasted from 1866 to 1869 and attracted worldwide interest (4.12). In an effort to end the rebellion, the Ottoman Sultan granted the Greek population of Crete a significant amount of self-government in the Pact of Halepa of 1878, but the Cretan population staged a final revolt against the Ottoman rule in 1897, which led to the ultimate defeat of the Turks. In 1898, Crete was declared autonomous (*cf.* Watrous *et al.* 1993; Detorakis 1994; Herzfeld 1999).

The autonomy of Crete was, however, soon challenged by voices demanding unification with Greece, most prominently raised by the Cretan lawyer and journalist Eleftherios Venizelos, Minister of Justice in the Cretan government between 1899 and 1901. In 1908, Crete officially joined the Republic of Greece under Prime Minister Venizelos in 1913, which marked the end of the independent history of the island. As Detorakis (1994: 430) concludes: *'Following the date of its union with Greece on 1 December 1913 [Crete] could not but share the same general history of the rest of Greece, of which it now comprised an organic part'*. Notwithstanding, the history of Crete has since continued to follow a distinct course shaped by events, which have contributed to the unique history of the island, such as the abduction of the German General Kneipe by British and Cretan resistance fighters in April 1944; the burning of entire villages, such as Anogia northeast of the Psiloritis Mountain in August 1944, by German forces; and the closing of the leper colony Spinalonga north of Ayios Nikolaos in 1957, which formed one of the last active leper colonies in Europe (*cf.* Detorakis 1994; Britannica 2013).

4.2.3 Socio-Economic Developments and Cultural Icons

In the aftermath of the Second World War, patterns of internal migration across the island of Crete created a drift towards urbanisation, which has been centred on the major towns along the north coast and on several inland regions, such as the Mesara Plain in South-Central Crete. Almost one quarter of the Cretan population of today, which comprises around 606.274 inhabitants, reside in the capital of Iraklion (*cf.* Briassoulis 2003). Migrant workers returned to Crete during the second half of the 20th century, marking the beginning of the arrival of migrants from various countries of the Middle East and the Balkan as well as from Eastern Europe. Crete gradually developed into a tourist destination during the mid-1960s, which further increased during the 1970s and 1980s. The growing tourist industry became the leading sector in the island's economy, creating a growing demand for employment in the tertiary sector. By the end of the 20th century, the mainly small- and medium-sized family businesses in the tourist industry in Crete had developed into the establishment of additional facilities, such as car rentals, travel agencies, water parks and golf courses.

Nowadays, about four-fifths of the tourist activities in Crete take place along the north coast in and around the major cities. Apart from the socio-economy development of the island, the accelerating growth of tourism has also negative consequences for the population of Crete in terms of environmental degradation, shortage of water and electricity, noise, illegal hotel businesses and the growth of socio-economic inequalities among the population. Inequalities emerge in particular between the North and South, the coast and the hinterland, and between urban and rural areas. Similarly, the population is being confronted with radical changes in traditional patterns of subsistence economy, traditional values and attitudes (4.13). Despite the strong impact of tourism in sectors of trade, transportation, accommodation and food service, the population of Crete has succeeded to maintain a certain degree of cultural autonomy (*cf.* Rackham & Moody 1996; Molenaar 1999; Briassoulis 2003). As Greger (1985: 113) observe: *'[...] [Villagers] sensibly continue their old system of welcoming strangers, offering them every hospitality and generally putting on a good show, while not trusting the visitor an inch'*.



Illustration 4.4 Tourism and caves along the beach in Matala.
Photograph by J. Aiglsperger (2011).

As a popular tourist destination, Crete has also become an attractive target for visitors from countries such as Austria, Germany or The Netherlands, who decide to settle or to build a second home in the island (4.14). In addition, the hippie movement of the 1960s and 1970s brought a large number of foreign visitors to Crete from all corners of the world. The coastal town of Matala in South-Central Crete became a centre of attraction among hippies, who travelled across Crete using cheap means of transport, such as donkeys, and at times decided to settle in the island. Some of them decided to inhabit and live in rather poor conditions in the caves situated along the beach of Matala, which had presumably been used as tombs during Roman and Byzantine times. Although the newcomers have been expelled from the caves during the mid-1970s by representatives of the local population, the church and the government, a number of settlers have since continued to live in Crete. The town of Matala has remained a popular tourist destination and in 2011 the first annual Matala Beach Festival was held as a reunion among hippies, who had lived in the caves (*cf.* Escher 2011) (*cf.* Illustration 4.4). After Greece's entry into the EU in 1981, Crete received a considerable amount of subsidies, which have strengthened the economy of the island, in particular the tourist and the agricultural sector, which eventually led to an intensification of crops, including fruits and olive oil. The cultivation of agricultural products, such as bananas and tomatoes, in greenhouses expanded and became an important part of the export business. The tourist sector, however, remained fairly dominant, dividing the socio-economic profile of Crete between activities undertaken in the tourist sector during the summer and activities undertaken in the agricultural sector during the winter. Since both sectors of tourism and agriculture require considerable amounts of water, the economic activities in Crete are largely dependent on geographical features and climatic fluctuations (*cf.* Rackham & Moody 1996; Herzfeld 1999; Chartzoulakis *et al.* 2001; Briassoulis 2003).

Cultural Icons

Living on an island, which has been identified as the birthplace of Zeus, Father of all Greek gods, and as the 'Cradle of European Civilisation', the population of Crete has been associated with a sense of origin and uniqueness. The life and work of a number of personages, who have been born in Crete and have risen to fame in Greece and beyond, shed light on the distinctiveness of the island and its population. Epimenides of Crete, for example, who presumably lived during the 7th and 6th century B.C., is to this day honoured as a local historian, seer, religious teacher, purifier, healer, literary figure and author of the famous 'Cretan Paradox': '[...] *Cretans are ever liars, evil beasts, lazy bellies*' (Strataridaki 1988: 217). He is the subject of various legends in which he is believed to have lived an extended life sleeping in a cave on the Dikti Mountains for 57 years and to have divinely inspired through dreams. The 'Cretan Paradox' of Epimenides emerged from a controversy between the traditional Cretan belief in Zeus as a mortal god and the widespread belief in Zeus as an immortal god, prompting Epimenides to denounce all Cretans as liars. The generally negative image projected on the population of Crete during ancient times has been further advocated during the Hellenistic Era when Cretans, who have been recruited as mercenaries by foreign armies, reportedly engaged in illegal activities mostly out of personal greed (cf. Strataridaki 1988; Van de Kerk 1993; Mackenzie 1995).

Born in Crete, the artist Domenikos Theotokopoulos (1541-1614) is the figurehead of the Venetian occupation of Crete, during which the island developed as a significant centre of post-Byzantine painting of icons. He received his initial training at the Cretan school before he left to Venice to develop his talents, where he became famous under the name of 'El Greco'. During the 16th and 17th centuries, the rise of Crete as a political and artistic centre under the Venetian rule also brought a peak in literary art, prominently shown in the work of the Cretan poet Vitsentzos Koronaros (1553-1614), author of the epic of '*Erotokritos*', written in a dialect of Eastern Crete. To this day, the epic is regarded as the masterpiece of Cretan literature and as a cornerstone of the Cretan '*Mantinades*', the recitative Cretan folk songs, which are traditionally accompanied by the sound of the lyre to express emotions (cf. Greger 1985; Herzfeld 1999; 2003; Horrocks 2010; Britannica 2013).

During the Ottoman occupation of Crete, Ioannis Vlakhos (1722 or 1730-1771), also known as 'Daskaloyiannis', one of the famous Cretan resistance fighters, staged a revolt against the Turks at the end of 18th century in the south-western region of Sfakia on the southern slopes of the White Mountains. Born in the village of Anopolis in Sfakia himself, the revolution led by Daskaloyiannis has since been related to the region of Sfakia as a whole, to this day known as a stronghold of Cretan resistance. As the inhabitants of Sfakia have continuously been engaged in their struggle for independence, using the natural wilderness and inaccessibility of the region for their protection since the Arab invasion, Sfakia is now regarded as one of the few places of Greece, which has never been fully occupied by outside forces (cf. Damer 1988).

The socio-political environment of the early 20th century has later well been represented by the Cretan author and philosopher Nikos Kazantzakis (1883-1957) in his famous novel 'Zorba the Greek'. His novel has since become the emblem of Cretan culture and mentality, and has been translated into several languages, and produced as the popular motion picture. The repertoire of Kazantzakis includes an abundance of letters, novels and translations, which have been principally written in Demotic Greek, which caused controversy among the rather conservative literary circles at that time. More recently, the student demonstrations against the military junta since the 1960s have been actively supported by the Cretan singer and composer Nikos Ksiluris (1936-1980). He opened the international stage to Cretan folk music, which is frequently accompanied by instruments, such as the lyre, and by dances, such as the '*Pentozalis*', expressing Cretan folklore and culture (cf. Greger 1985; Herzfeld 1999; 2003; Horrocks 2010).

While the examples of the cultural icons and traditions mentioned above have contributed to the image of Crete and its population on an international level, their names resound throughout the island far into the distant corners of the rural communities. As Herzfeld (2003: 282) confirms, these cultural features: '[allow] local scholars to claim for Crete a level of cultural sophistication that few other geographically outlying areas of Greece can even approach'.

Notes

- (4.1) The Peloponnese, '*Peloponnisos*' in Greek, refers to the island, '*to nisi*', of Pelops. According to Greek mythology, Pelops has been the grandson of Zeus and the son of Tantalus, who cooked and served his son to the gods at a banquet in order to test their observation. After his body has been restored, Pelops became the ruler of a large part of the Peloponnese and is regarded as the Founder of the Pelopid Dynasty (cf. Britannica 2013).
- (4.2) In Greek history, all dates preceding the 8th century B.C. are rather approximate (cf. Bengston 1988).
- (4.3) The Achaeans appear in the Iliad of Homer as a group of people, who formed part of the Mycenaean population and presumably sacked the city of Troy in 1184 B.C. (cf. Waldman & Mason 2006).
- (4.4) Socrates, revealing his opinion on the earth, explained that Greeks settled along the coast of the Black and Mediterranean Sea '*like ants or frogs about a pond*' (Plato: 109b cited in Perseus Digital Library 2013).
- (4.5) The Greek word '*kleftis*' is nowadays translated as 'thief'.
- (4.6) In Greece, the exportation of products, for example, has been negatively affected by a series of factors, including: unfavourable market mechanisms within the EU; high transportation and production costs; non-cooperation between Greek producers and the state; and non-cooperation among Greek producers themselves. By consequence, the Greek economy has not been able to yield the revenues expected from the export of domestic products, such as olive oil or wine. While Greece is the third largest worldwide producer of olive oil behind Italy and Spain with a notable 80% production of extra virgin olive oil, earnings are low standing at approximately two Euro per litre for the inhabitants of Pírgos and Práitoria. In this way, a considerable amount of Greek olive oil is sold to Italy, where it is blended with local olive oil and then sold, labelled as Italian olive oil, on the international market (cf. Happel 2011).
- (4.7) The gross domestic product per capita in Greece suffered a considerable decline from 17.100 Euro per inhabitant in 2010 to 14.900 Euro per inhabitant in 2012 with a -6.4% change in the gross domestic product on the previous year recorded in 2012. In October 2013, the unemployment rate for Greece has been estimated at 27,8% (cf. Eurostat 2014a; 2014b; 2014c).
- (4.8) '*Dimotiki*', 'Demotic Greek', and '*dimotiko*', 'primary school', are linguistically rooted in '*dimos*', which can be translated as 'community' or 'people', and hereby highlight the communal significance of both the demotic language and compulsory primary education.
- (4.9) The patriarchate refers to the office of a patriarch or bishop, who acts as the head of an autocephalous or independent Orthodox Church (cf. Oxford Dictionaries 2013).
- (4.10) Annunciation Day, which is traditionally celebrated on the 25th of March, for example, has been transformed into the national day of commemoration of the Greek revolution (cf. Roudometof & Makrides 2010).
- (4.11) During the 19th century, the legend of the so-called '*krifo skholio*', 'secret school', in which Orthodox clerics taught students religious doctrines and the Greek language secretly at night during the period of Ottoman occupation, became rather widespread (cf. Roudometof & Makrides 2010). In this way, the legend has lived on within a popular nursing rhyme, of which the following beginning '*Feggharaki mu lambro, fenge mu na perpato, na piyeno sto skholio, na matheno ghrammata, ghrammata, spudaghmata, tu Theu ta pramata*', has been roughly translated by Roudometof & Makrides (2010: 27) as: '*Oh bright moon/shine on me, so I would walk/and go to school/to learn things, God's own things*'.
- (4.12) In 1866, Ottoman forces encircled the monastery of Arkadi located southeast of Rethymnon where 300 armed rebels and 600 women and children had taken refuge under the leadership of the abbot of the monastery. Refusing to surrender to the Turks after three days of battle, the refugees blew up the powder magazine and reduced the entire monastery to ashes, sacrificing most of the Greeks, while killing hundreds of Turks (cf. Detorakis 1994).
- (4.13) The holiday resort of the coastal town of Malia northeast of Iraklion within the Municipality of Hersonisos, for example, nowadays forms one of the most popular tourist destinations of Crete, a favourite among young British tourists in particular. Every year during the summer months, the employees of the health centre in Malia reportedly deal with numerous injuries and deaths caused by excessive alcohol consumption among young tourists. One of the general practitioners employed at the health centre derogatively spoke about the drunkenness of tourists upon arrival as well as about the general affordability of holidays spent at the resort, which are facilitated by foreign tour operators whereupon it is often cheaper for foreigners to visit Malia than it is for Greeks.
- (4.14) In the research area of South-Central Crete, families from Germany and Austria have settled *i.a.* in the villages of Práitoria, Kharakas, Doraki and Kapetaniana.