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THE CRETAN *APOKOSMOS*

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The term *apokosmos* is recorded in two Cretan inscriptions from Axos and Lyktos dated at the end of the fourth and the early fifth century B.C. respectively¹. Although almost thirty years have passed from the first publication of the legal inscription from Axos containing the new term, a specific examination of its significance in a wider juridical, political and historical context is lacking. The main aim of this paper is to assess all the relevant evidence and the existent interpretations and to propose a new one.

First let us look at the direct evidence, i.e. the inscriptions:

1) Inscription from Lyktos, early fifth century B.C. (according to H. and M. van Effenterre, “Nouvelles lois archaïques de Lyttos”, *BCH* 109 [1985], 163, lines 1–7):

A	Θιοί. Ἐρ]αδε Λυκτίοισι ἀλ(λ)ο- πολιάταν ὅστις κα δέκσ[εται. . . .
	. . .]εν, αἰ μῆ ὄσω (ἀ)φῦτός τε καρτέ-
	ι καὶ τὸνς Ἴτανίωνς. Αἰ δέ κα[. . . .
5	. .]αι ἡ κοσμίω ἡ ἀπόκοσμο[ς.
	. . ἐ]ρφωλᾶς φαδᾶς ἐκατὸν λέβητ[ας . .
	. . ει] ἐκάστω ὄσος κα δέκσεται.

2) Inscription from Axos, end of the fourth century B.C. (according to F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques*, Paris 1969, 245–46, no. 145, lines 10–19):

10	θίνα (τα) τ' ἀρχαῖα [ό]τ(τα) [τε] θεῖη (ι)ν πάματα τὰ δοθέν-
	τα ἐπαράσαμε[v] Σωσοκλέος [- - - - -]νομω, Ικειτε-
	[. . Σο]άρχω καὶ Τομακλέος [κ]οσμιόντωγ καὶ φυλαῖς Φα-
	ξίων, Δονοκείω[v], Λατοσ[ί]ω[v . . .]ων· αἴ τις τᾶ(v) νῦν κοσμιό-
15	[ντ]ων ἡ ἀπόκοσμος τὰ [πάμα]τα ἡ ἀλλᾶι θεῖη (ἡ) τὰν ἰάρηι-
	αν ἡ τὸ τέμενος ἐτέλειτο, μῆ ἀκέσασθαι πρὶν τῶι
	Δηνὶ τῶι Ἀγοραῖωι ἐκατὸμ βοῦς καταθύσας, πάρβιος
	αὐτοῦ ἀβλοπίαι ὅστ' ἐπὶ Πυτίο(οι)ις ταί(ς) ἐταιρηῖαις
	δαττάμενος τ' ἀρχήας νιψάμενος·

So far we have three interpretations of the new term; the first, in chronological order, was made by G. Manganaro who claimed that *apokosmos* was the *kosmos* already appointed, pre-elected we could say, before the end of the tenure of the *kosmos* in charge². The second was made by the editors of the inscription from Lyktos, who argued that *apokosmos* was a discharged magistrate³. And the third was

* My thanks are due to Prof. Anna Missiou for her valuable suggestions on language and content of this paper.

¹ For the inscription from Axos see the first publication by Giacomo Manganaro, “Iscrizione opistographa di Axos con prescrizioni sacrali e con un trattato di *symmachia*”, *Historia* 15 (1966), 11–22, and also the re-publication, with slight modifications, by Franciszek Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques*, Paris 1969, no. 145, pp. 245–247. For the inscription from Lyktos, first publication by Henri and Micheline van Effenterre, “Nouvelles lois archaïques de Lyttos”, *BCH* 109 (1985), 157–188.

² Cf. Giacomo Manganaro, op. cit., 16.

³ Cf. Henri and Micheline van Effenterre, op. cit., especially 171–172, and also Henri van Effenterre, “Nouvelles inscriptions archaïques de Crète centrale”, *CRAI* (1985), 247–257, especially 253–254.

made by J. Chadwick who supported the view that the term indicated the “non-magistrate”⁴. I will focus, first, on this last interpretation.

J. Chadwick justified his view of the exact meaning of *apokosmos* on the grounds that “ἀπο-compounds in Cretan appear generally to have a negative sense, e.g. ἀπέταιρος”⁵. Nevertheless, according to Monique Bile, who studied the ancient Cretan dialect, the prefix *apo-* expressed in Cretan several meanings: sometimes it could express a process of renewal (“un procédé de renouvellement”), sometimes the achievement of an action (“l’achèvement de l’action”) and also a negative sense, i.e. “out of” (“hors de”). In this case, she adds, *apo-* qualifies an action either not yet realised or already finished; it is the semantic content of the word containing the prefix that determines its meaning⁶. In addition, it seems also true that, if the officials who drafted the laws from Axos and Lyktos intended to specify merely the “non-kosmos”, the “non-magistrate”, they could have done so by using a more common terminology, like that attested in other Cretan cities. Indeed, the “non-kosmos” is obviously depicted in the context of several Cretan inscriptions, either by paraphrasing the concept of the non-magistrate or by using a very simple vocabulary⁷. On the contrary, both the legal formulation and the political context of the laws from Axos and Lyktos indicate that the term *apokosmos* had a concrete and particular, not a vague and general, meaning. In both cases the term is used in juxtaposition with *kosmos*, the chief magistrate of the ancient Cretan cities. Since the clauses of these laws provide a prohibition against the *kosmion* or *apokosmos*, it is plausible that the latter implies a particular political significance.

G. Manganaro defined the *apokosmos* as the *kosmos* “designato”⁸, a point that he supported on linguistical grounds: he discerns in the new term a formation analogous with the compounds ἀπόδρομος, ἀπάγγελος, ἀπέταιρος, whose prefix *apo-* signifies a provisional exclusion from a certain state to which somebody is naturally or juridically appointed. This assessment is generally admitted (at least for the cases that Manganaro invokes) but the Italian scholar conceived the *apokosmos* in a restricted sense, without any reference to the political and social factors that may have contributed to the creation of the regulations of the two laws under consideration; nor did he examine the clauses of the law from Axos that he published in order to interpret the new term⁹.

The editors of the inscription from Lyktos, H. and M. van Effenterre, provided, in my opinion, an interpretation sounder and closer-to-the-exact meaning of the term by describing the *apokosmos* as “le cosme sorti de charge” and by connecting the provisions of this legal inscription with the self-defence of each Cretan city against any individual who might have held the highest office in Crete and who might have exploited his position to advance his economic or political interests¹⁰. Therefore, *apokosmos*, as

⁴ Cf. John Chadwick, “Some observations on two new inscriptions from Lyktos”, in ΕΙΛΑΠΙΝΗ. Τόμος τιμητικός για τον καθηγητή Νικόλαο Πλάτωνα, Heraklion 1987, 329–334, especially 331.

⁵ Cf. Chadwick, op. cit., 331.

⁶ For the use and semantic value of the prefix *apo-* in the Cretan dialect see Monique Bile, *Le dialecte crétois ancien*, École Française d’Athènes, Études Crétoises XXVII, Paris 1988, 274.

⁷ See *IC*, I, VIII, 13 (Knossos, 2nd century B.C.), line 28 : κ]όσμος ἢ ἄλλ[ος; *IC*, II, III, 1 (Aptera, end of 3rd century B.C.), line 10: οἱ κόσμοι καὶ ἄ(λ)λ[ο]ς ὁ βουλόμενος Ἀπτεραίων; *IC*, II, X, 2 (Kydonia, end of 3rd century B.C.), lines 25–26 : οἱ κόσμοι καὶ ἄλλος ὁ λῶν Κυδωνιατῶν; *IC*, III, III, 4 (Hierapytna, 2nd century B.C.), lines 47–49: αἱ δέ τις ἀδικοίη | τὰ συνκείμενα κοινᾷ διαλύων ἢ κόσμος ἢ ιδιώτας, ἐξέστω τῶι βωλομένωι δικάζασθαι.

⁸ See Giacomo Manganaro, op. cit., 16. In commenting the interpretation of the Italian scholar, the editors of the inscription from Lyktos, Henri and Micheline van Effenterre, op. cit., 174, pointed out: “Mais l’on doit y récuser la valeur de *cosmus designatus* proposée par l’éditeur, G. Manganaro, d’ailleurs sans discussion sérieuse. On voit bien que, dans la société crétoise, ἀπόδρομος ayant été compris comme «celui qui n’est pas encore *dromeus*», celui qui est trop jeune pour accéder pleinement au gymnase (*dromos*) et être ainsi vraiment citoyen, le savant italien a cherché une valeur similaire pour l’*apokosmos*: ce serait celui qui n’a pas encore pris ses fonctions. La subtilité constitutionnelle me paraît hors de propos. Le préfixe ἀπο- peut aussi bien vouloir dire que l’on a quitté sa charge.”

⁹ For a view similar to Manganaro’s see M. Bile, op. cit., 274: “Le nominatif singulier ἀπόκοσμος n° 12 A 5 (Lyttos, VI^e s.), n° 34 1.14 (Axos, IV^e s.) doit sans doute s’entendre comme un cosme désigné, qui n’est pas encore en fonction.”

¹⁰ See the articles listed in note 3.

kosmos, apparently was a word of the current political vocabulary of some Cretan cities. But which was the exact political status of these men called *apokosmoi* within the political reality of their cities? I believe that further evidence could contribute to clarifying this point.

In the well-known archaic law from Dreros (of approximately 650–600 B.C.) the re-election of a *kosmos* is forbidden before ten years have elapsed¹¹. It also adds that:

αἱ δὲ κοσμησίε, ἰ ὄ[π]ε δικακσίε, ἰ ἀφτὸν ὀπῆλεν ἰ διπλεῖ κάρτὸν
ἄκρηστον ἰ ἦμεν, ἰ ἄς δόοι, ἰ κῶτι κοσμησίε ἰ μηδὲν ἦμην. *vacat*

The term *akreston* raised a scholarly debate in the past: the first editors of the inscription considered the word *akreston* as an equivalent of the term *atimos*¹², but V. Ehrenberg rightly challenged this interpretation and proposed that *akrestos* was “an unemployable, useless, at least in a political sense. I should rather assume that the *akrestos* was merely not allowed to hold again the office of *kosmos*, or any other office. He became a citizen of minor rights.”¹³ It is tempting to connect these two rare terms, *akrestos* and *apokosmos*, and to regard them both as the actual political consequences of legal provisions similar to those we found in the law from Dreros.

In two cases, one in Dreros in the already mentioned archaic inscription and one in Gortyn¹⁴, the re-election of a *kosmos* was prohibited by law until a certain amount of time had elapsed. These provisions have been conceived by modern scholars as an attempt of these cities to protect their existing constitutions from the misconduct of any mighty magistrate¹⁵. The *apokosmos* case may fit aptly, I think, in this general context: just like the *akrestos*, the *apokosmos* must be the *kosmos* who was discharged due to his previous political actions during his tenure as *kosmos*. Furthermore, as the formulation of the laws from Axos and Lyktos implies, the *apokosmoi* were a distinct body, excluded from the group of the *kosmoi* in charge; this was probably, if we consider that *apokosmos* had a meaning parallel to *akrestos*, because the former had lost completely or partially his right to be elected in political offices.

Of course, our knowledge of the political organisation of Cretan cities remains fragmentary; we do know several terms of officials, political bodies and social groups with obvious political significance, but almost nothing about politics as a decision-making process. In spite of that, an overview of the evidence seems to prove that to a significant extent the constitutions of Cretan cities had substantial similarities among them; an assembly of the *demos* contributed to the decision-making policy and was responsible for the endorsement of the decisions on several issues; a board of magistrates with the *kosmoi* as heads were the main executive organs; and, finally, there was a council of elders, which was a honorary body but which retained some influence in making policy¹⁶. It seems, though, that the eligibility to the office of *kosmos* was not open to the entire citizen body, thus providing an oligarchic nuance to Cretan politics¹⁷. Especially for the *kosmoi* one can suppose that they were either a group of

¹¹ The first edition of the famous archaic law from Dreros was by P. Demargne and H. van Effenterre, “Recherches à Dréros”, *BCH* 61 (1937), 333–348. For a summary of the comments on the inscription see R. Meiggs and D. Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions*, Oxford 1975, no. 2, p. 2–3.

¹² See P. Demargne and H. van Effenterre, *op. cit.*, 335.

¹³ Victor Ehrenberg, “An Early Source of Polis-Constitution”, *CQ* 37 (1943), 16.

¹⁴ Inscription from Gortyn: *IC* IV 14 g-p 2.

¹⁵ For a summary of the previous literature see R. Meiggs and J. Lewis, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ For the main political bodies and institutions in ancient Crete see in general R. F. Willetts, *Aristocratic Society in Ancient Crete*, London 1955, 103–191.

¹⁷ See now the thorough analysis of the genealogical data of the known magistrates from Lato pros Kamara in Martha W. Baldwin Bowsky, “Epigrams to an Elder Statesman and a Young Noble from Lato pros Kamara (Crete)”, *Hesperia* 58 (1989) 115–129, and “Portrait of a *Polis*: Lato pros Kamara (Crete) in the Late Second Century B.C.”, *Hesperia* 58 (1989) 331–347.

magistrates composed by election from a restricted group of all-life politicians and according to their origin, in a rotary exercise of power, or they consisted of a number of citizens pertaining to a specific group of military, social or tribal character. The exact process by which the *kosmoi* were elected is also unknown but surely it had to do with the division of the Cretan society in tribes and clans and it must have reflected the particularities of the body of the eligible citizens. It is only too obvious that in such a system, in an oral society, we might expect that primarily members of the most powerful families and clans, and of noble origin, were elected to the high offices of their cities¹⁸.

Back to our inscriptions again, we might expect that in the case of Lyktos only a rich and socially strong man could invite and harbour an alien or, even more, buy and free a slave. This assumption is consistent with our evidence concerning the aristocratic nature of the Cretan polity and especially with the upper-class origin of the magistrates serving as *kosmoi*¹⁹. We provide evidence, at this point again, if our interpretation is valid, of the self-defence of the city of Lyktos against a potential usurper of state power.

Of course, I do not argue that almost similar terms such as *akrestos* and *apokosmos* co-existed, but simply that at least some Cretan cities reacted and defended their political stability against any abuse of power by adopting similar measures in similar circumstances. In short, we may suspect that problems and disturbances comparable to those that occurred in Dreros and Gortyn also occurred in, at least, two other cities: those of Axos and Lyktos, and that, consequently, a similar arrangement was established, i.e. the cities of Axos and Lyktos, too, took resort to their legal power to defend themselves from such individuals. The reasons for acting this way were obviously the same as those we invoke for the cases of Dreros and Gortyn: protection of the political stability of the city, given the gradual gain of strength on the part of the *kosmoi*. The result of this action is discernible in the laws of Dreros and Gortyn as well as in the reference of *apokosmos* in the inscriptions from Axos and Lyktos.

Athens

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¹⁸ There is no complete study of the Cretan *kosmoi*, their way of election and their competences. An interpretation of the sources regarding the election of the highest magistrates of ancient Crete was proposed by Stylianos Spyridakis, "Aristotle on the Election of Kosmoi", *PP* 24 (1969) 265–268; but cf. the remarks of G. Huxley, "Crete in Aristotle *Politics*", *GRBS* 12 (1971) 508, and also R. F. Willetts, *op. cit.*, 254–255, note 1.

¹⁹ See Arist. *Politics* 1272 a 31–35: "ἐκεῖ μὲν γὰρ (i.e. Sparta) διὰ τὸ τὴν αἵρεσιν ἐκ πάντων εἶναι μετέχων ὁ δῆμος τῆς μεγίστης ἀρχῆς βούλεται μένειν τὴν πολιτείαν· ἐνταῦθα (i.e. Crete) δ' οὐκ ἐξ ἀπάντων αἰροῦνται τοὺς κόσμους ἀλλ' ἐκ τινῶν γενῶν". Can we connect the regulations against the *kosmoi* recorded in the law from Axos and the political and social agitation in the Cretan cities in the fourth century B.C. which was provoked, according to Aristotle, by their political misconduct (a situation that he defined in *Politics* 1272 b 9–13 as *akosmia*)? It is very probable, as the general context and the chronological order of the evidence fit well. That would corroborate in one more point the outline of the Cretan political system as described by Aristotle.