

## Harding University in Greece (HUG): Spring 2014

Report #5

Dale W. Manor, professor of Archaeology and Bible

This year's experience differed from my previous four appointments to this role (I know it is a pain, but someone has to do it!) in that our finals occurred before the actual end of the semester. We had the same number of in-class sessions, but the cruise on the Mediterranean was reserved to after the finals. At least part of the reason was to wait for the weather to be more conducive to travel on the "high seas." The decision was a good one. We had a great four days of touring, plus it was



early enough in the season that the places we visited were not packed with visitors—in most ports we were the only ship!

These cruises are not your high end luxury cruises that are touted on the television, but are "destination cruises"—that is sight-seeing cruises designed to get from one point to the other; it was elegant enough though. We had shows we could attend each evening. A highlight for some of the students

was karaoke, usually dominated by Harding students and a couple of forays by un-named faculty!

After leaving Piraeus, the port-of-call for Athens, our first stop was the quaint island of Mykonos, which is part of the cluster of islands known as the Cyclades. Some might remember this as the location where Jason Bourne reunited with his first girlfriend at the end the *Bourne Identity*. The dominant scene is the area known as "Little Venice" (photo above right) and the nearby windmills (photo above left). These scenes are always picturesque. Almost all the buildings on the island are white with a variety of accent colors. The streets are curvy and narrow (photo right). One guidebook explains that the streets were "Built in a maze of narrow lanes to defy the wind and



pirate raids...”<sup>1</sup> It is easy to see how the street arrangements would confuse anyone raiding the town.

The windmills date from the 16<sup>th</sup> century and were built by the Venetians to grind grain. They continued in use into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but have generally been converted into houses, businesses or for other uses. Sails were attached to the frames, which then turned the grinding mills inside the buildings; I have never seen any sails on the frames.

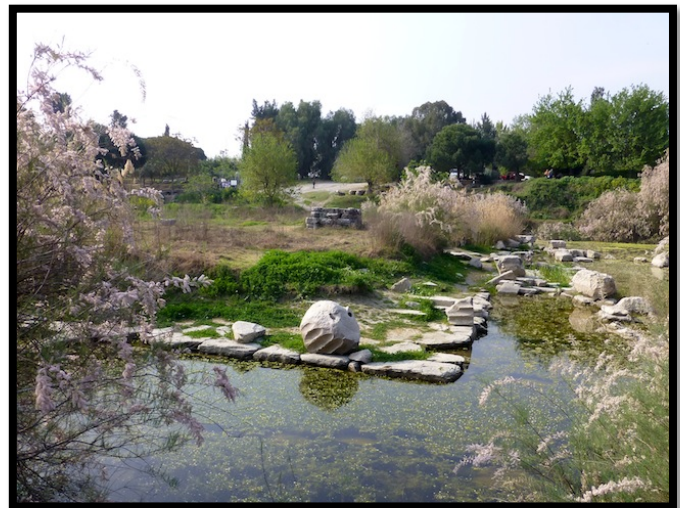
Little Venice was built in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century by rich merchants providing more direct access to the sea. These buildings have since generally been converted into houses and/or bars and cafes. Given the early date of our cruise, many were closed and in the process of being spruced up for the imminent touring season.

Overnight from Mykonos took us to the Turkish city of Kusadasi, which we had visited in our earlier tour of Turkey. The students spent their time in the cafes and walking around the port town. I, on the other hand, had another agenda. When we were here earlier, we had been unable to go to the site of the Temple of Artemis (more formally known as the Artemision), which had been one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. I was determined to get there—and indeed I did—by myself (with the help of Christian and Fotini of Aristotle Travel)! It was a great visit. I was able to go down to the ruins and walk among them. One of the frustrations I had encountered on so many earlier visits was the affirmation that there was nothing to see—only a column



reconstructed of random pillar drums (careful scrutiny reveals that these column drums do not belong to each other; peculiarly, a huge bird’s nest now rests on the top of the column; photo right).

The ruins of the temple rest under a deep mantle of alluvial deposit. This reality partially explains why the remains are largely immersed in a high water table, but components of the foundation of the temple still exist and can be seen. It is difficult to make out the outlines of the remains, but the photo (right) shows remnants of the altar of Hellenistic period temple that would have existed when Paul



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<sup>1</sup> Marc Dubin *et al.* *The Greek Islands* (London: Dorling Kindersley, Inc., 2000), p. 210.



worked in Ephesus. Two interesting other features were a family of geese and goslings that ran away from me in fear (photo left) and a huge number of turtles sunning themselves on the rocks (below right).

Even though the ruins were confusing to understand, I found satisfaction in visiting the site of another of the ancient “Wonders” (I have been fortunate to have visited the locations and/or seen elements of the remains of Pyramids in Egypt, the general location of the Colossus of Rhodes, the temple of Zeus

in Olympia which housed the statue of renown [remnants of the construction molds and pieces of the statue are on display in the museum], the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus, and pieces from the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus—the only two that I have not seen are the Lighthouse of Pharos in Alexandria and the location of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon).

The Temple of Artemis was eventually destroyed by the Goths in 125 AD. During the reign of Emperor Justinian (527-65 AD), elements of the Artemision were incorporated into the construction of the Church of St. John nearby as well as into the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, which was the largest church building in the world for over a millennium!



On an important side note, Ephesus was the meeting place in 431 AD for one of the great, early so-called Church Councils. The focus of the meeting was on the nature of Mary’s relationship to Jesus. Emperor Theodosius II joined the discussion along with over two hundred other representatives. The question was whether Mary should be considered only the mother of Jesus, the person (argued by Nestorius) or whether she was the “bearer of God”—Jesus as both divine and human. These meetings took place in the so-called “Church of the Virgin Mary” in Ephesus.

Leaving Kusadasi we went to Patmos, the island where John was exiled and where he saw the Revelation (cf. Rev 1:9). Both Thucydides (3.33) and Strabo (*Geog.* 10.5.13) refer to the island, but only as geographic references and descriptions. Tacitus (*Annals* 4:30), however, reveals that the Romans occasionally sentenced those who threatened the government to banishment on islands of which Patmos is thought to be a candidate. Patmos is a volcanic island

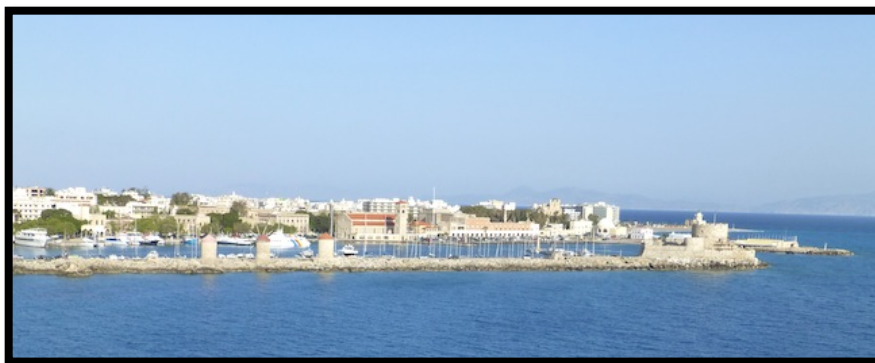


with northern and southern lobes joined by a narrow isthmus. The isthmus provides a nice bay and port (photo left). Our guide indicated that there was no natural water source on the island except rainfall, and that they import water to sustain the few thousand now living on the island. It is now a beautiful, quaint, picturesque island on which most modern visitors think "...and this would be punishment?" It is important,

however, to realize that John's banishment to the island would have largely restricted his evangelistic and ministerial work—at least so the Romans apparently thought! The image of John restrained in a dungeon type context, however, is not necessary. The guides, however, usually point out a cave as purportedly where John lived and where he received his revelation; there is even an element of veneration of his scribe whose name is said to be Prochorus and who supposedly wrote a biography entitled "Acts of John" (the manuscript dates from the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD). For some reason, this Prochorus is identified with one of the seven "servants" the apostles appointed in Acts 6:5 along with Philip and Stephen.<sup>2</sup> The Bible provides no evidence from which to infer that John and Prochorus developed any kind of association as implied in this tradition. As is customary with these kinds of settings, the cave is surmounted with a church commemorating the traditional association with John and Prochorus. There is no evidence to imply any real direct association with either of them. The monastery that stands further up the slope was built in 1088 AD.

Our overnight cruise brought us next to the island of Rhodes. Paul's travels took him briefly to the island when he was on his way to Jerusalem (Acts 21:1). Tradition places his docking at Lindos on the eastern side of the island, but there seems to be no intrinsic reason to exclude his stay at the northern port or Rhodes, which was also the location of the famous

Colossus of Rhodes.



The Colossus was a large statue dedicated to Helios, the sun god. Traditionally, it has been shown as straddling the harbor. This pose, however, is quite unlikely since that would have necessitated the

shut down of the harbor, upon which the Rhodians relied heavily (general view of bay; photo above). Others argue that it was a more traditionally postured statue at the end of a breakwater.

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<sup>2</sup> Jon Paulien, "Prochorus," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol 5. Ed. D. N. Freedman (NY: Doubleday, 1992), p. 474.

Other scholarly argument is that it was more inland, nearer the city. It was built to commemorate the end of the struggle on Rhodes between Antigonus (mainly through his son, Demetrius) and Ptolemy, generals of Alexander's army who contended over their respective territories (a rather detailed account of the siege of Rhodes appears in Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 20.81-88, 91-100). The Rhodians had sided with Ptolemy of Egypt while Antigonus claimed rights to the island. This broke out into war toward the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, but the conflict finally ended and the Rhodians built the statue to honor their patron god, Helios.

Pliny the Elder records that the statue was 105 feet tall (*Nat. Hist.* 35.18.41-42), which compares with the height of the Statue of Liberty in New York (from her heel to the top of her head, the Statue of Liberty is 111.5 feet tall).<sup>3</sup> According to Pliny, the Colossus only stood for 66 years after which an earthquake in 226 BC toppled it above its stone-filled filled core. The debris remained in place and he further describes that "...even lying on the ground it is a marvel. Few people can make their arms meet around the thumb of the figure, and the fingers are larger than most statues." Two centuries before Pliny, Philo of Byzantium (not to be



confused with Philo of Alexandria), who was a Greek engineer and physics in the mid-third century BC had witnessed the remains as well, apparently soon after its collapse.<sup>4</sup>

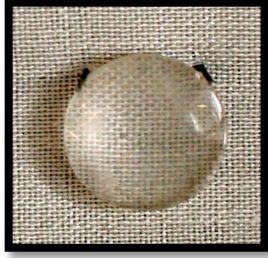
According to Theophanes the Confessor, who lived in the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD, the ruins remained in place until they were eventually sold to a Jewish merchant of Edessa (modern Homs in Syria) who transported them on a caravan of some 900 camels! Of course, we saw nothing of the Colossus except numerous trinkets peddled by merchants as mementos of its presence (and most of these showed the Colossus straddling the harbor opening).

The part of Rhodes that drew the attention of most of us was the 15<sup>th</sup> century Crusader castle much of which remains reasonably intact. Particularly quaint is the "Street of the Knights" (photo above), which was the road on which the European knights were headquartered in anticipation of yet another possible foray into the Holy Land to liberate it from Muslim control (which, of course, at this point in history never happened).

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<sup>3</sup>It is not clear to me if the height of the Colossus included the platform on which it stood or not. Some secondary sources that I have read, indicate that Philo of Byzantium (see note below) provides information that the statue stood on a platform some 45 feet tall, but I have not been able to access all of Philo's discussion.

<sup>4</sup>My information here is derived from an article in which Philo describes the construction of the Colossus. The article quotes part of Philo's work in Greek and provides an English translation and commentary. See D. E. L. Haynes, "Philo of Byzantium and the Colossus of Rhodes," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 77/2 (1957): 311-12.



Particularly fascinating items that I located on my typical “museum mission” were magnifying glasses dating from the 7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century BC Temple of Athena Polias on Rhodes. There was a sign forbidding photographs, with which I complied, but I found the attached one on Google images, which someone took from Rhodes (photo left; it does not look exactly the same as the lenses that I viewed). The lens size in the photo and other characteristics are similar to the ones in the Rhodes museum, but the museum exemplars included bronze frames on which were incised the various focal lengths of each lens, clearly indicating they were for magnification!

This magnification issue is something that I had never really thought about, but returning home, I began some investigation. Fairly easily accessible is a discussion in James and Thorpes’, *Ancient Inventions*<sup>5</sup> in which they present lenses found at least as early as the Assyrian period derived from Layard’s excavations at Nineveh (and which is now in the British Museum). They ask how did the ancient people do such fine, delicate carving for seals, cuneiform and artwork without the benefit of magnification? The typical answer states that the artisans were myopic, but significant evidence now points to the existence of magnification mechanisms to assist in their production.

There is reasonable ancient literary evidence to corroborate their realization not only of magnification, but also of heat concentration and generation through lenses. In 423 BC, Aristophanes refers to light being concentrated through a lens to melt the wax on a wax writing tablet (*Clouds*, lines 765-72). Pliny the Elder also refers to heat magnification: “...glass globes containing water become so hot when they face the sun that they can set clothes on fire” (*Nat. Hist.* 36.67). Seneca (mid-first century AD),<sup>6</sup> however, specifically notes the visual magnification: “...everything is much larger when you look at it through water. Letters, however, tiny and obscure, are seen larger and clearer through a glass ball filled with water” (*Nat. Quest.* 1.6.5).<sup>7</sup> I left the museum very enthused. (I want to thank Christian Nicolaides and Fotini Kiamou of Aristotle Travel in Athens/Glyfada for informing me of the existence of this museum—they are great tour agents!).

A final note about Rhodes... After Herod the Great made the serious *faux pas* of siding with Mark Antony in the tensions that arose surrounding Egypt and Cleopatra, Herod met with Octavian (later to be known as Caesar Augustus) at Rhodes to patch up his relationship with Rome. For some reason Octavian did not depose Herod (or have him executed), but essentially ratified his kingship in Judaea (see Josephus, *Ant.* 16.16-26).

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<sup>5</sup> Peter James and Nick Thorpe, *Ancient Inventions* (NY: Ballantine Books, 1994), pp. 157-63.

<sup>6</sup> Seneca was the brother of Gallio, before whom Paul had his hearing in Corinth (Acts 18:12-18). He also eventually became one of Nero’s tutors, although we cannot attribute Nero’s corrupt tendencies to Seneca’s tutelage.

<sup>7</sup> Two scholarly articles dealing with this topic are: George Sines and Yannis A. Sakellarakis, “Lenses in Antiquity,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 91/2 (1987): 191-96 and Dimitris Plantzos, “Crystals and Lenses in the Greco-Roman World,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 101/3 (1997): 451-64.



We left Rhodes in the evening heading to Crete. Most of the students went to the ruins of Knossos, however, I went again to the museum, but was greatly disappointed. Many of the items were not on display (and I did not know where they had moved them). Fortunately I had seen many of them on earlier visits to the island.



Our last stop on the cruise was to the island of Santorini, known in antiquity as Thera. It is the remains of a major volcanic explosion that occurred in the second millennium BC. From the boat, the view of the inner part of the krater preserves a polychromatic splay of stratigraphic, geological layers from the stages of the explosion (photo upper left). Our anchor was in the middle of the caldera and we were transported from the boat to the shore on tenders (the island in the photo behind the ship is

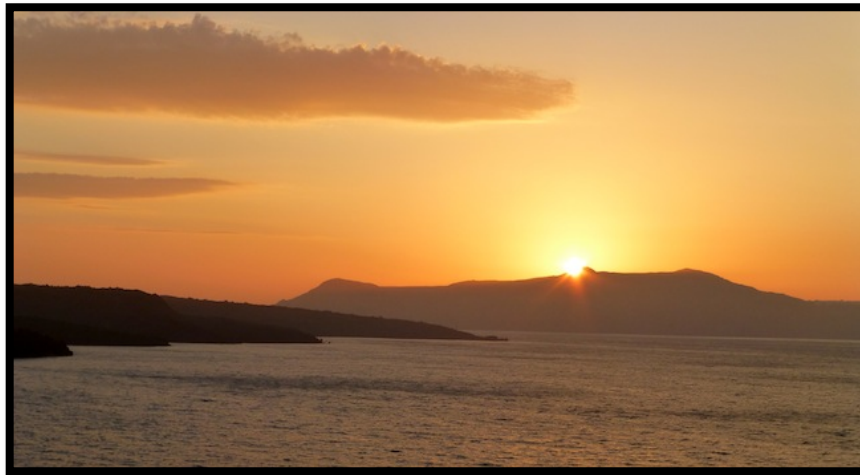


in the middle of the caldera and is growing because of current geologic/volcanic activity! photo middle left). From the port, there is a tall climb up the inner face of the rim to the town that hugs the edge (note the zig-zag pathway up the slope; photo left). All of the students ascended on the mules/donkeys, which is always a bit of an adventure. One never knows how cooperative they will be on the walk up. Sharon finds the trip on the mules quite unnerving and she almost always has some kind of problem with the animals. On this outing, I opted for the cable car.

Some scholars have connected the explosion of Santorini with the plagues of Egypt. However, regardless

of the traditional dates to which one would ascribe the Exodus (either the 15<sup>th</sup> century or the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC), the explosion occurred too early to have anything to do with the Exodus. The scholarly consensus is that the island catastrophe occurred in the 1600s BC.<sup>8</sup> By all accounts, however, it was a major event in the Mediterranean world; comparatively the explosion of Krakatoa in 1883 in the Indian Ocean pale beside it. Volcanologists propose that the magnitude of the Santorini explosion was factors greater than Krakatoa which had devastating effects hundreds of miles away. Given the grandeur of the remains that have been found buried at Akrotiri on the southern edge of the island, many believe that this is the basis for Plato's description of Atlantis, which he describes over a millennium later!

Today, most of the visits to the island focus on the beauty of the sunsets, which admittedly are spectacular and for which photographs fail to do justice (photo xxx 14).



This scene, however, serves as a suitable end to this series and as a fitting end to our Harding University in Greece (HUG) program—a nice wind-down to a hectic semester. My sincerest thanks to Jeff Hopper, Janis Ragsdale, Ashel Parsons, Audra Pleasant and Aleece Kelley of the International Studies Program, to Monte Cox of the College of Bible and Ministry who granted permission for me to do this, to Bruce Tully our security advisor, to Dino Roussos, Christian Nicolaides and Fotini Kiamou of Aristotle Travel, to Mike and Beth James and Steven Chandler of the HUG program along with the faithful support personnel, Vicki, Ianna, Mietek and Natassa (who kept us safe, clean, repaired and fed!). Thanks also to the great group of students who made the semester so rewarding.

Last and *by no means least*, my deepest thanks to my sweet wife, Sharon, who held down the fort in Searcy during my absence through the semester. I will never be able to repay her kindness.

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<sup>8</sup> A convenient discussion appears in Christos G. Doumas, “High Art from the Time of Abraham—Was This the Lost Continent of Atlantis? Did a Volcano Part the Red Sea?” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 17/1(1991): 40-51.