

Economy and the Persian Wars – the Case of Troizen

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The ancient polis of Troizen is situated on the northern slopes of the Adheres Mountains on the Argolid Peninsula (fig. 1). It consisted of two parts, the acropolis or upper polis in the south and the lower polis at the foot of the mountains. Today, the area of the lower polis and the necropoleis is covered by lemon and olive orchards. Excavations have not been performed systematically in this area. Nevertheless, findings of all periods from the Mycenaean up to the Byzantine period indicate that the Troizenia was settled continuously from the late Bronze Age until Byzantine times. Prominent traces of Mycenaean settlements were found in the *chora* on the so-called Great Magoula, and on the island of Modi east of Calauraia (fig. 1).¹ The continuous existence of the settlement of Troizen itself since the Geometric period is attested with certainty by the evidence of the necropoleis. Tombs of all times from the Geometric period to Late Antiquity came to light in a large area extending on three sides of the lower polis (fig. 2).²

The number of inhabitants of Classical Troizen can roughly be calculated by the numbers of Troizenian hoplites and triremes that took part in the Persian Wars. Altogether six triremes and 1,000 hoplites from the Troizenia are said to have taken part in the battles of Artemision, of Salamis and of Plataiai.³ A trireme usually had a crew of about 200 men on board. Consequently, there must have been at least around 1,200 Troizenians on the triremes. Since hoplites were usually accompanied by light-armed men, these were probably around another 2,000 Troizenian men. Altogether there must have been around 3,200 Troizenian men fit to serve. Thus, at the time of the Persian Wars the Troizenia may have had a population of at least about 10,000 inhabitants.⁴ The area controlled by the Troizenians, the Troizenia, covers ca. 345 km², only 96 km², i.e. 27%, of which are arable land.⁵ The largest part of the arable land is located north of the Adheres Mountains. The continuous settlement since the Mycenaean period and the population density in Classical times, provided the calculated numbers are correct, indicate that the Troizenia, in contrast to the Hermionis at the southern slopes of the Adheres Mountains, must have been a more attractive settlement area.

In 480/79 BC, when the Athenians on the advice of Themistokles decided to evacuate their families and household members, according to Herodotos,⁶ only some Athenians sent them to Salamis and Aigina, whereas most preferred to evacuate theirs to much more distant Troizen. According to a supposed Hellenistic copy of the so-called Themistokles decree found in Troizen, only elderly people and goods should go to Salamis, but women and children were sent to Troizen.⁷ Still in the 2nd century AD dedications of Athenian female refugees from the time of the Persian Wars are said to have existed in Troizen.⁸ This implies that Troizen was regarded on the one hand a much safer place than Salamis and Aigina, and on the other hand was considered to be able to provide food and water not only for thousands of refugees but also for part of the Greek navy that had, according to Herodotos, already assembled in the so-called

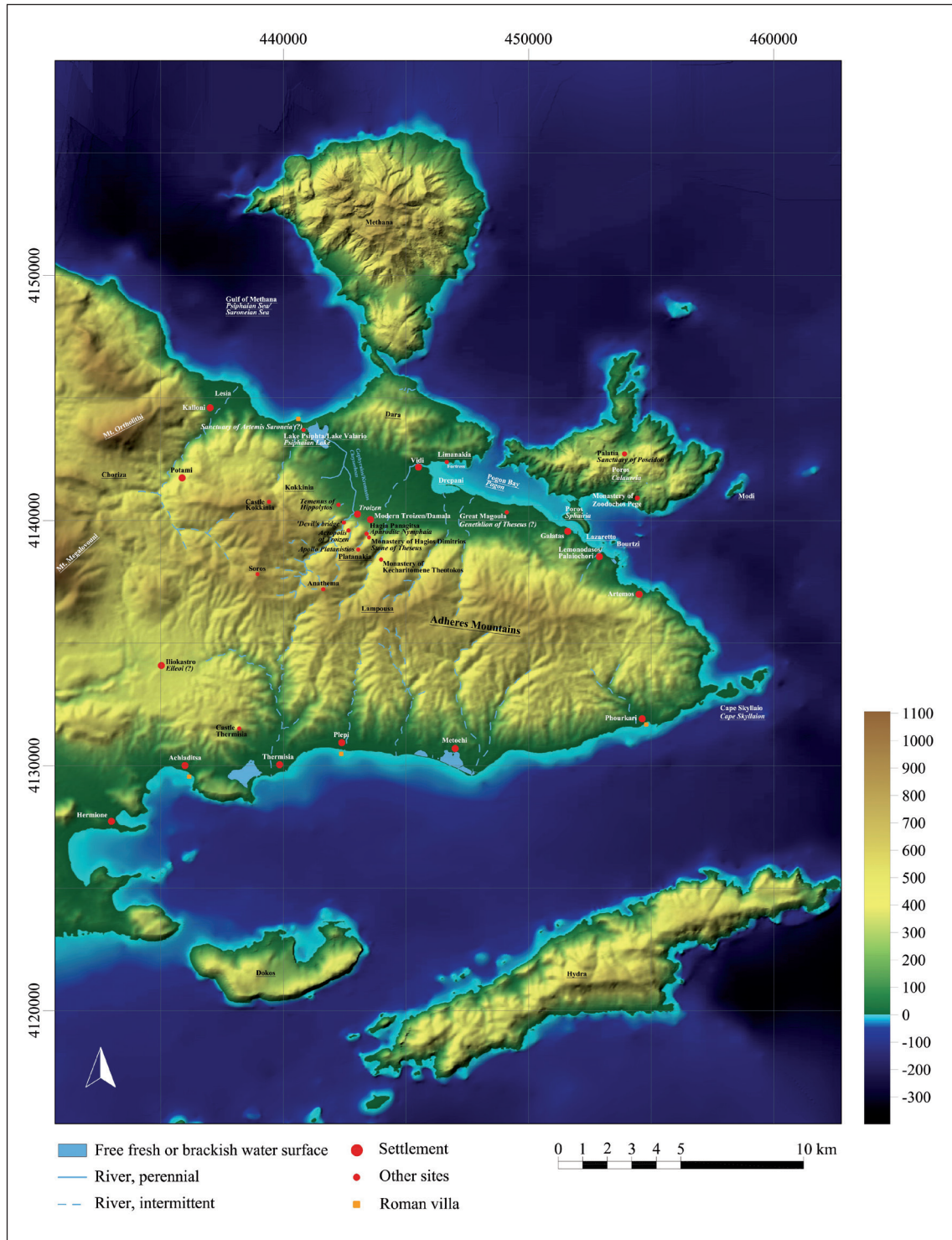


Fig. 1: Map of the southern Argolid peninsula. Ancient names are given in italics, names of regions are underlined.

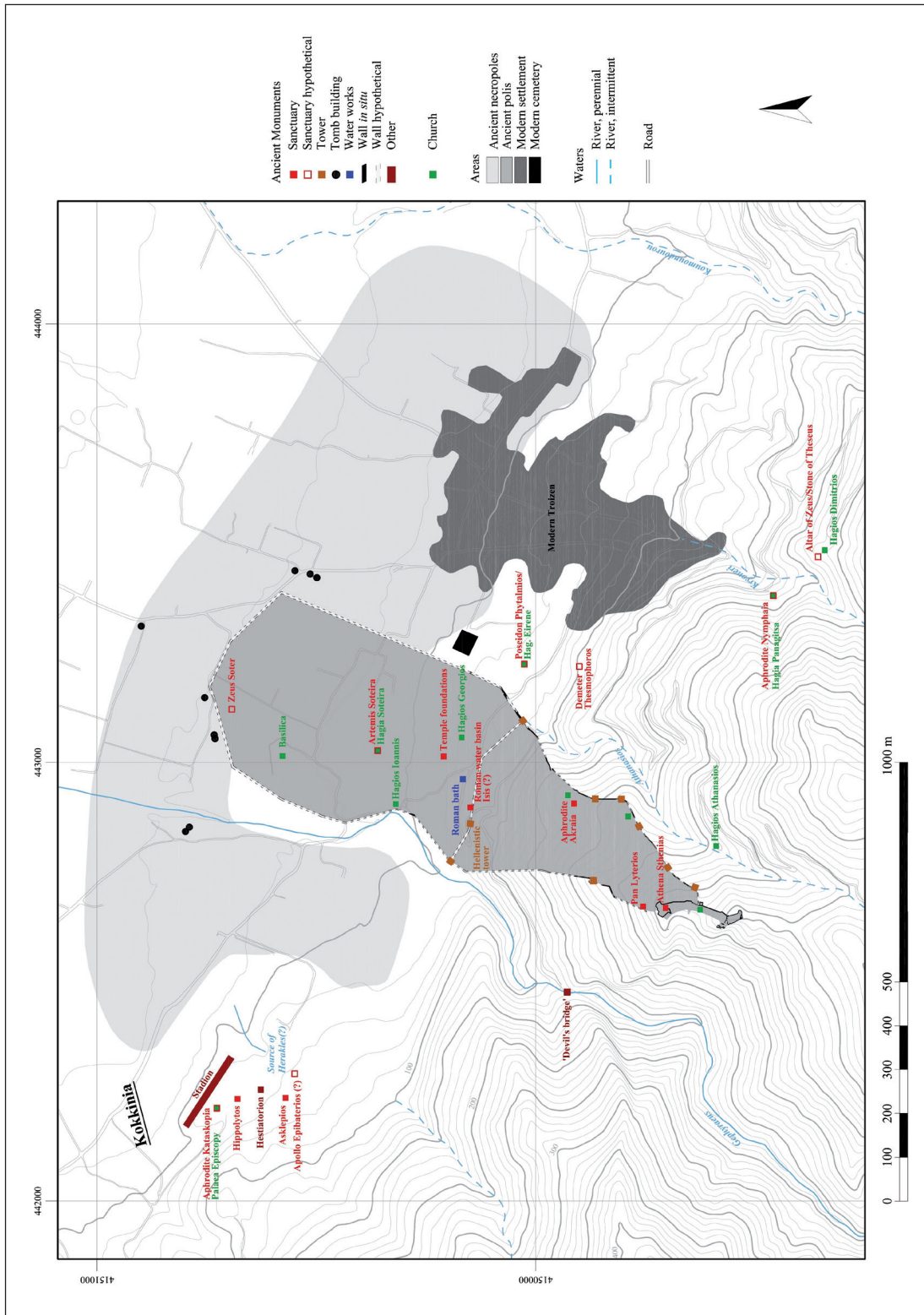


Fig. 2: Map of Troizen. Names of regions are underlined.

“Pogon”, a bay near Troizen, which is mentioned also in later sources as well-known sheltered anchoring place (figs. 6 and 7).⁹ Since Troizen was much smaller than Athens or Attica, respectively, it seems at first view hard to believe that the Troizenians were so prosperous that they were able to provide not only themselves but also thousands of refugees plus the crews of the triremes forming altogether a multiple of the number of the usual inhabitants of Troizen, with food and, what was even more important, with water. However, the facts, firstly, that during the Hellenistic period a supposed copy of the so-called Themistokles decree concerning the refuge was installed on the Troizenian agora,¹⁰ secondly, that in the 2nd century AD dedications made by Athenian female refugees were still to be seen in a stoa on the Troizenian agora,¹¹ and, thirdly, that the refuge the Troizenians offered to the Athenians is the most often mentioned event of the Troizenian history referred to by ancient sources which came down to us,¹² point to the significance and the effect it had even in antiquity. The prominence of just this event also with respect to later sources implies that the report of Troizen’s role as refuge during the Persian Wars was at any rate credible to the ancients, which, in turn, means that the Troizenia must have been, indeed, prosperous enough to be able to maintain thousands of Athenian refugees.

The archaeological remains of Troizen, i.e. mainly the necropoleis, and the ancient sources imply that Troizen did, indeed, belong to the more prosperous poleis of ancient Greece. Although the offerings found in ancient Troizenian tombs differ widely as to their quality and quantity, they demonstrate vividly that in Troizen there was at any time in antiquity a rich social upper class. A Geometric cist tomb excavated by Στάης already in 1889 contained two big amphoras and a golden diadem.¹³ A large Archaic inscribed octogonal column marked the tomb of Damotimos, son of Amphidamas.¹⁴ Fine Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic and Roman stelae came to light east and west of the ancient polis.¹⁵ Classical tombs with precious offerings were found also in the eastern necropolis, e.g. a limestone sarcophagus containing three female skeletons, several bronze vessels and mirrors as well as a Melian relief.¹⁶ Ruins of Roman tomb buildings are still to be seen just outside the city walls on three sides of the ancient polis (fig. 3). The quality of offerings and grave markers as well as the monumental forms of some of the Troizenian tombs imply the existence of a wealthy upper class in Troizen from the Archaic to the Late Roman period.

Whereas the tombs give us an impression of the prosperity of individuals, the numerous sanctuaries in and around the polis of Troizen point to the prosperity of Troizen as a whole since the Archaic period: Pausanias¹⁷ mentions a temple of Artemis Soteira on the agora of Troizen, the tomb of the *heros ktistes* Pittheus behind that temple and a sanctuary of the Muses near the temple of Artemis Soteira. Additionally, he mentions a temple of Artemis Lykeia near the theatre, a sanctuary of Apollon Thearios and a sanctuary of Zeus Soter.¹⁸ To the west of the ancient polis centre there is a temenos dedicated to Hippolytos mentioned by Pausanias.¹⁹ Inside this temenos there is said to have been an *agalma* of Asklepios and temples for Hippolytos, for Apollon Epibaterios



Fig. 3: Roman tomb in front of the northern city walls of Troizen.

and for Aphrodite Kataskopia, respectively (fig. 4).²⁰ On the acropolis to the south of the ancient lower polis there was a sanctuary of Athena Sthenias.²¹ Beneath the acropolis a sanctuary of Pan Lyterios is said to have existed.²² Lower on the slopes of the acropolis Pausanias²³ mentions a sanctuary of Aphrodite Akraia, and beneath it a temple for Isis founded by the Halicarnassians, who still had close relations to their mother polis of Troizen.

Outside the ancient polis next to the road to Hermione at the source of the River Hyllikos or Taurios a temple for Aphrodite Nymphaia is said to have existed.²⁴ At the same road Pausanias²⁵ mentions the sanctuary of Apollon Platanistios, and at the boundary of the *chora* of Troizen near Eilioi he describes a sanctuary of Demeter and Kore. Also outside the ancient polis there were, according to Pausanias²⁶ sanctuaries of Poseidon Phythalmios and of Demeter Thesmophoros. Near the road leading to the harbour at Kelenderis, which is still not localized with certainty, there was a temple of Ares.²⁷ Near the road to the Psiphaic Sea, which is in all probability identical with present-day Gulf of Methana (figs. 6, 7), there was a sanctuary of Artemis Saroneia.²⁸

According to the Troizenian tradition, which Pausanias refers to, most sanctuaries were founded by mythical heroes and consequently were supposed to be already ancient in Pausanias's day. Since fragments of Archaic or even older buildings are rare and often cannot be ascribed to certain buildings, the supposed ages of the sanctuaries can in



Fig. 4: Overview of the temenos of Hippolytos, Asklepios, Apollon Epibaterius and Aphrodite Kataskopeia. 1: Episcopos of Troizen built on the ruins of the temple of Aphrodite Kataskopeia; 2: Naiskos of Hippolytos; 3: Hestiatorion; 4: Temple of Asklepios.

many cases not be confirmed. However, in the case of the sanctuary of Apollon Thearios Pausanias²⁹ reports that it was the oldest temple building in Greece he knew – much older than the temple of Athena in Phokaia and the temple of Apollon Pythios in Samos. In the temple of Athena Sthenias Pausanias³⁰ reports to have seen a wooden cult statue by Kallon of Aegina, which implies an Archaic origin of this sanctuary. Near the small cella in the temenos of Hippolytos Welter³¹ found Geometric sherds, which indicate at least a Geometric age of this sanctuary. Fragments of an Archaic ceramic sima, some of which were found in the ruins of the sanctuary of Aphrodite Akraia, confirm the Archaic age of this sanctuary as well.³² Findings of numerous small lamps dating from the 6th century BC onwards led to the localization of the sanctuary of Demeter Thesmophoros and, thus, confirm the Archaic age of another Troizenian sanctuary.³³ The cult statue of Asklepios is said to have been made by Timotheos, who was active during the early 4th century BC.³⁴ The temple of Asklepios according to the architectural style was built in the 4th century BC. As to the chronology of the other sanctuaries, though

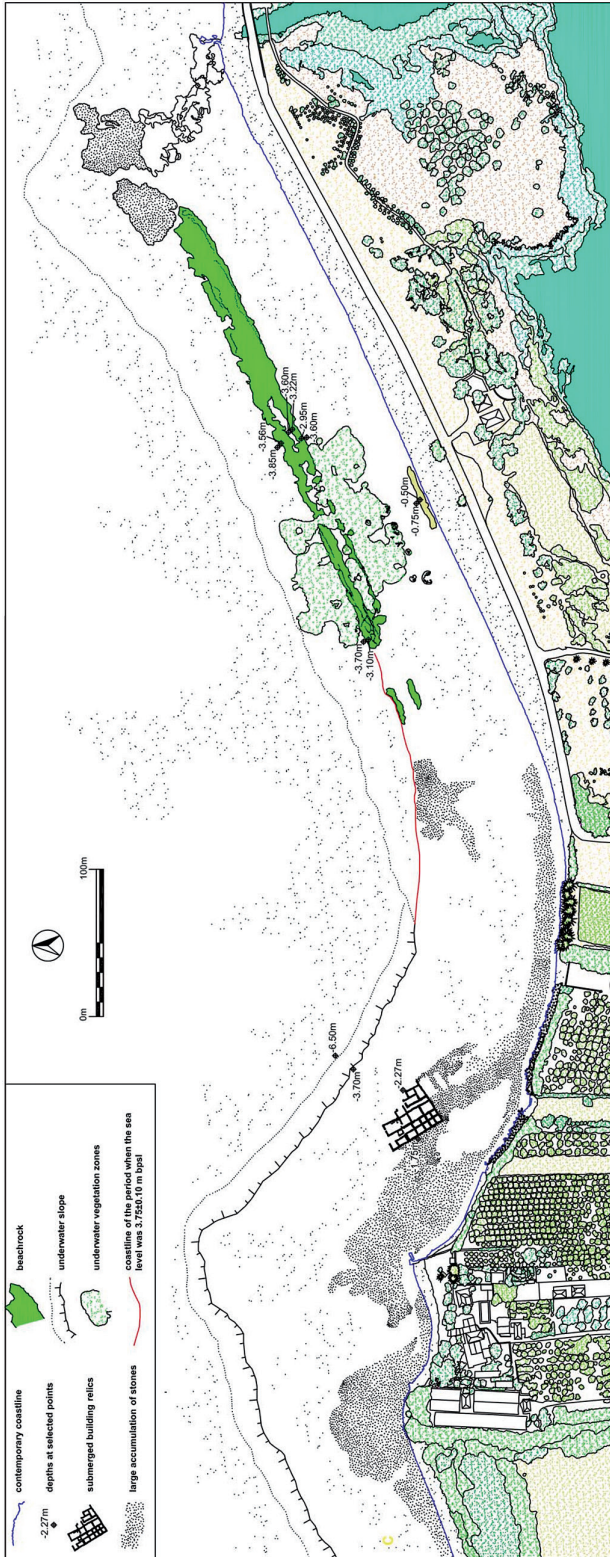


Fig. 5: Ancient and recent coastline near Lake Psiphta (right).

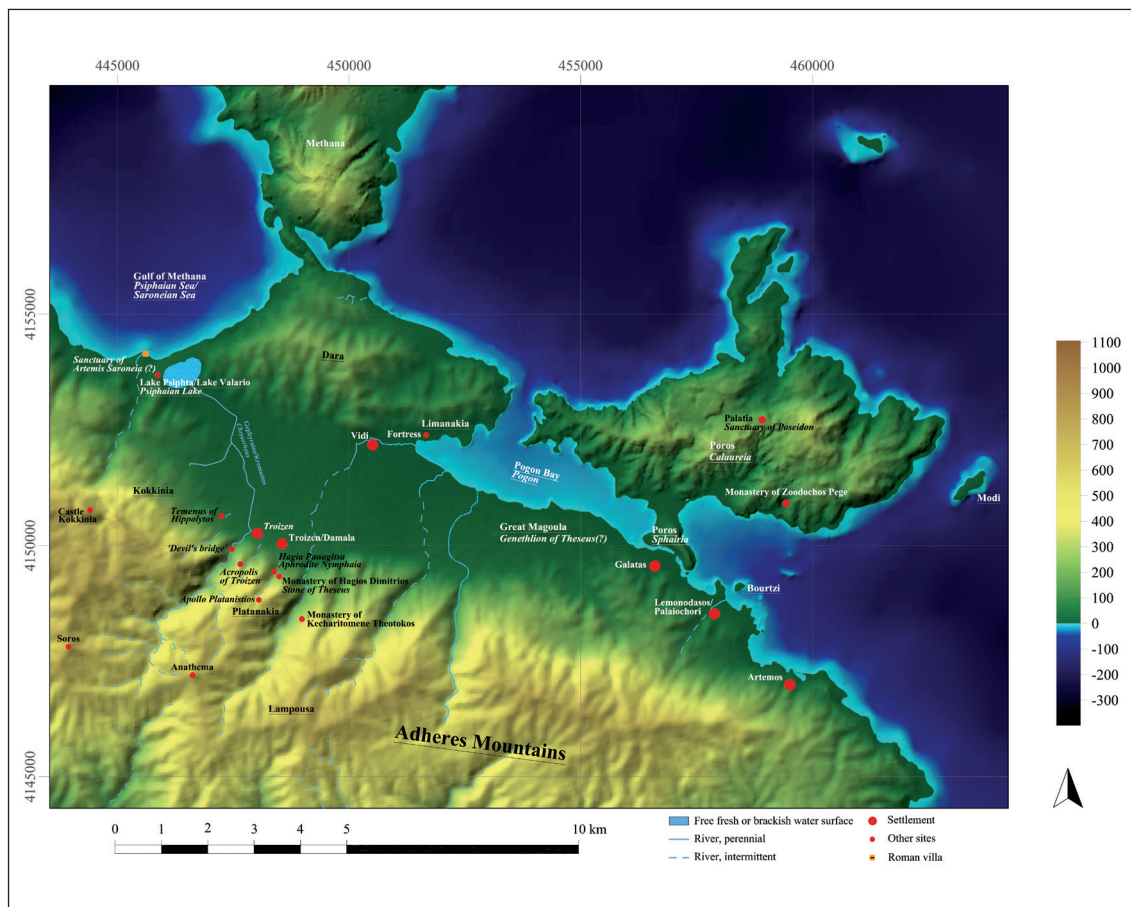


Fig. 6: Sea level during the 5th–4th century BC. Ancient names are given in italics, names of regions are underlined.

some may have been older, it can only be concluded with certainty from Pausanias that they existed during the Roman period.

During the 5th and 6th century AD two basilicas were built. The remains of the first one are still to be seen in the area of the ancient polis (fig. 2). The other one is the so-called “Palaea Episcopy”, which was built on the remains of the temple of Artemis Kataskopia (figs. 2 and 4).³⁵ Thus, the chronological distribution of the Troizenian sanctuaries indicates that Troizen was, indeed, at all times, since the Geometric up to the Byzantine period, relatively prosperous. However, from the later Byzantine period up to the present no significant or monumental buildings are preserved or referred to by any literary source. This indicates that after the Middle Byzantine period Troizen never reached the same level of prosperity and population density prevailing in antiquity.³⁶

So, what were the sources for the Troizenians’ prosperity? During the 2nd century BC Methana (fig. 2), then called Arsinoë, was an important Ptolemaic base. An agreement³⁷ concerning the boundaries between Arsinoë and Troizen refers to salt, fishing, stone

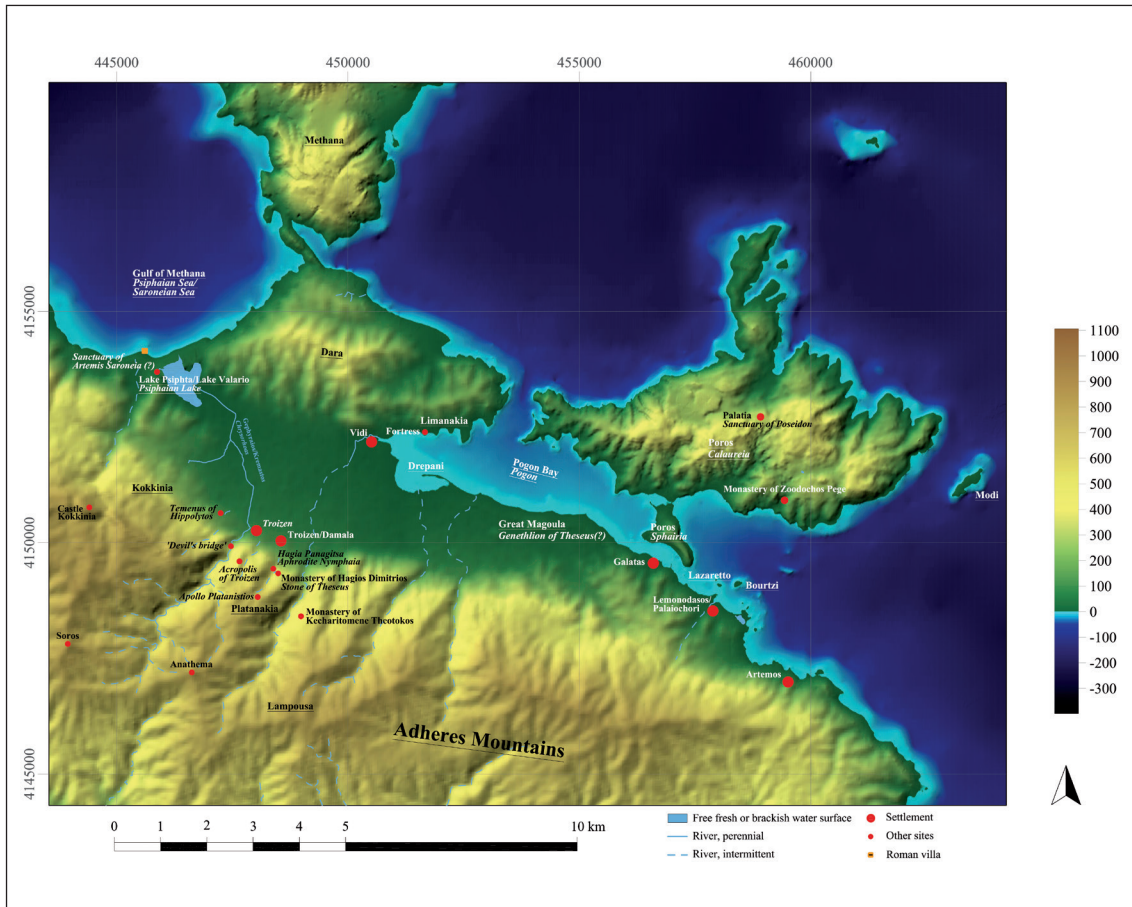


Fig. 7: Present-day sea level. Ancient names are given in italics, names of regions are underlined.

cutting and wood cutting as sources of income. In addition, the cults of Demeter and Poseidon Phytalmios mentioned by Pausanias indicate that Troizen was also heavily relying on agriculture. Among the agricultural products of Troizen grapes and wine may have played a prominent role in trade, since Athenaios³⁸ explicitly mentions three different sorts of Troizenian wine that would not have been known to him and worth mentioning if they never were exported. The same may also be true for olive oil.

The same inscription mentions “καταγωγαί” and “παραγωγαί”. The latter is supposed to be a place where goods could be “carried across”.³⁹ According to the inscription, the place must be located at the isthmus of Methana and may have consisted of a sort of diolkos, which facilitated the transport of ships or goods without going around Methana.⁴⁰ The existence of the “παραγωγαί” at the isthmus strongly suggests the existence of equally important landing places or harbours on both sides of the isthmus and of the Dara peninsula, respectively. The latter were probably, as already Meyer⁴¹ pointed out, identical with the *portus* or *sinus Schoenitas* mentioned by Pomponius Mela,⁴² and

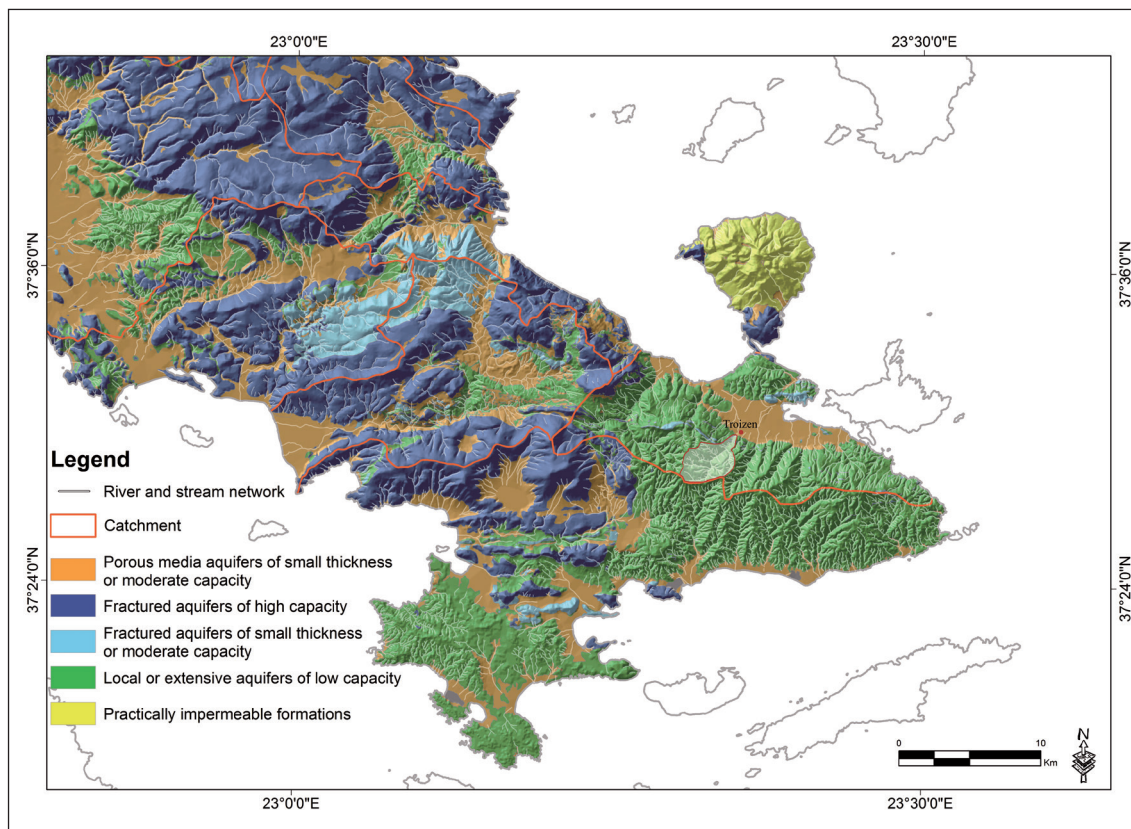


Fig. 8: Surface catchment of the Argolid peninsula; the small catchment south of Troizen highlighted in red is the surface catchment of the River Gephyraios.

with the Pogon mentioned as the harbour of Troizen by Herodotos⁴³ and Strabon,⁴⁴ respectively.

The fact that according to the inscription no tolls were to be paid for the export of products of the “salt works” is evidence for export from these harbours. Another fragmentary inscription⁴⁵ mentions “κεφάλειον” – capital, “τόκος” – interest, and “πίστης” – credit. Obviously, it refers to banking affairs, and, thus, supports that Troizen was a trading centre. The same is indicated by Pomponius Mela⁴⁶ who mentions the “Pogon” among the most prominent harbours along the eastern Peloponnesian coast, and by Skylax⁴⁷ who also mentions a harbour of Troizen in his *Periplus*, which may be the Pogon.

Recent investigations⁴⁸ have shown that the sea level at the Pogon and around Methana during Classical times was about 3.30 m ± 0.15 m lower than today and started to rise significantly only after 400 ± 100 a. AD (fig. 5). Before the rise of the sea level the Pogon Bay, which is rather shallow at the west end today, must have stretched considerably less far to the west. Moreover, there was only one entrance to the Pogon Bay from the north and, therefore, probably even less currents existed than today, when

the Pogon still is a prominent anchoring place for sailing boats (cf. figs. 6 and 7).⁴⁹ Pausanias⁵⁰ mentions that people could even walk to Sphairia (cf. fig. 6). Chronologically the sea-level rise correlates with Troizen's economic decline in Late Antiquity. Since the sea-level change did obviously not affect the harbours of Troizen significantly, the question arises, if it could, indeed, have had any effect on the prosperity of Troizen at all?

According to Pausanias⁵¹ the cult of Poseidon Phytalmios was founded because seawater had penetrated the coastal aquifers and had made the soil unproductive. With the rising sea level, seawater must have penetrated the coastal aquifer all the more often. The porous aquifer of the plain bearing potable water was, thus, all the more reduced and so was obviously also agricultural production. Nevertheless, the Troizenia continued to be settled, though to a reduced extent.⁵² Even with reduced capacity of its aquifers the Troizenia and especially the plain between Troizen and the Dara remained more prosperous than the southern slopes of the Adheres Mountains. Already during the 18th century lemon trees, which are in general high demand level crops,⁵³ were cultivated in the Troizenia.⁵⁴ This indicates, firstly, that the soil of the Troizenian plain is very fertile, and secondly, that there must still have been enough water available to irrigate the lemon orchards. Since geologically and pedologically the northern slopes of the Adheres Mountains are quite similar to the eastern and southern parts of these mountains⁵⁵ (cf. fig. 8) and the plains in front of the mountains consist of the detrital deposits of these same mountains, the continuous agricultural prosperity of the region around Troizen north of the Adheres Mountains in contrast to other regions of the Argolid Peninsula is in all probability not due to the existence of more fertile soils north of the Adheres Mountains, but to the availability of more potable water. Today the only perennial river on the Argolid peninsula is the River Gephyraios, which has its source in the Adheres Mountains, passes west of Troizen and debouches into the sea near present-day Lake Psiphta. As the Gephyraios is the only perennial river of the region, it is highly likely that it is the river Pausanias calls Chrysorhoas, which according to Pausanias was the only one in the region continuously bearing water during a drought that lasted nine years.⁵⁶ However, since the surface catchment of the River Gephyraios is not much larger than those of the other small rivers of the peninsula usually falling dry during summer months, the question arises where the water of the Gephyraios comes from.

In the region there is an average annual precipitation of about 500 mm most of which falls during the winter months, which is normal for Mediterranean climate.⁵⁷ The Adheres Mountains consist mainly of flysch, which has a rather low infiltration capacity and in case of rainfall supports high run-off rates. Groundwater recharge is, therefore, considerably lower than annual rainfall. High evapotranspiration rates result in ever lower groundwater recharge. This effect is intensified by the aquifer in the Troizenian plain being a phreatic one.⁵⁸ Consequently, the River Gephyraios must be supplied with water from a much larger subterranean catchment. Extended aquifers with high poten-

tial are located only west of the Adheres Mountains. Thus, the subterranean catchment of the Gephyraios in all probability stretches until or even beyond Mount Megalovouni west of the Adheres Mountains (fig. 8).

It is due to this catchment, that the Troizenia through time remained a popular settlement area even after the sea-level rise in Late Antiquity, and it is in all probability for this catchment and the lower sea level in Classical times that Troizen was able to sustain the Athenian refugees in 480 BC.

Notes

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¹ Κονσολάκη-Γιαννοπούλου 2009, 504–511. 514–517.

² Κονσολάκη-Γιαννοπούλου 2003a, 129–134. The author only mentions a “western” and an “eastern necropolis”.

³ Hdt. 7, 179f.; 8, 43; 9, 28.

⁴ Meyer (Meyer 1939, 624) estimates c. 8,000 inhabitants or even more, whereas Jameson, Runnels and van Andel (Jameson et al. 1994, 556–559) calculate on the basis of the Troizenian military contingents between c. 11,300 and 16,700 inhabitants.

⁵ Jameson et al. 1994, 18. For a reconstruction of the borders of the chora of the Troizenians see Meyer 1939, 620–625.

⁶ Hdt. 8, 41f.; Paus. 2, 31, 7.

⁷ Jameson 1960, 199 l. 6–11. Cf. Habicht 1961; Lehmann 1968; Meiggs – Lewis 1982, 48–52 no. 23; Johansson 2001.

⁸ Paus. 2, 31, 7.

⁹ Hdt. 8, 42; Strab. 8, 6, 14 (373); Mela 2, 49.

¹⁰ See footnote no. 9.

¹¹ Paus. 2, 31, 7.

¹² Hdt. 8, 41f.; Plut. Themistokles 10, 3; Hyp. 5, 31; Mela 2, 49; Nep. Themistokles 2, 8; Paus. 2, 31, 7; Cic. off. 3, 11, 48; Suda s. v. ἀνείλεν; Frontin. strat. 1, 3, 6; Demosth. ep. 2, 18f.; Schol. Bob. in Cic. Sest. 141 Stangl.

¹³ Στάης 1889, 163–165. Cf. Κονσολάκη-Γιαννοπούλου 2003a, 129.

¹⁴ IG IV 801.

¹⁵ Κονσολάκη-Γιαννοπούλου 2003a, 130f. 133; Γιαννοπούλου 2010–2011.

- ¹⁶ Κονσολάκη-Γιαννοπούλου 2003a, 131 f.
- ¹⁷ Paus. 2, 31, 1–3.
- ¹⁸ Paus. 2, 31, 6. 10. Both sanctuaries are also epigraphically attested (IG IV 748. 763. 766).
- ¹⁹ Paus. 2, 32, 1.
- ²⁰ Paus. 2, 32, 2.
- ²¹ Paus. 2, 32, 5.
- ²² Paus. 2, 32, 6.
- ²³ Paus. 2, 32, 6.
- ²⁴ Paus. 2, 32, 7.
- ²⁵ Paus. 2, 34, 6.
- ²⁶ Paus. 2, 32, 8.
- ²⁷ Paus. 2, 32, 9.
- ²⁸ Paus. 2, 32, 10.
- ²⁹ Paus. 2, 31, 6.
- ³⁰ Paus. 2, 32, 5.
- ³¹ Welter 1941, 34f.
- ³² Welter 1941, 19f. pl. 8. 27. Cf. Stupperich et al. 2019, 29 f.; Stupperich 2020, 46.
- ³³ Welter 1941, 20f.
- ³⁴ Paus. 2, 32, 4. For Timotheos cf. Lippold 1937; Stewart 2001. For the date of the peripteral temple cf. Stupperich 2020, 53 and 74.
- ³⁵ Meyer 1939, 630; Ορλάνδος 1939–1940, 18. 31; Welter 1941, 37f.; Κουρέντα-Ραπτάκη 1980, 99; Κοντή 1994, 255–257; Stupperich 2020, 73.
- ³⁶ Τόλης 2012.
- ³⁷ IG IV 1, 76f.
- ³⁸ Athen. 1, 31c.
- ³⁹ See Liddell et al. 1968, 888 s.v. καταγωγή; 1307 s.v. παραγωγή.
- ⁴⁰ Gill 2007, 102.
- ⁴¹ Meyer 1939, 633.
- ⁴² Mela 2, 50.
- ⁴³ Hdt. 8, 42.
- ⁴⁴ Strab. 8, 6, 14 (373).
- ⁴⁵ IG IV 835.
- ⁴⁶ Mela 2, 50.
- ⁴⁷ Skyl. 52, 1.
- ⁴⁸ Kolaiti – Mourtzas 2016.
- ⁴⁹ For the reconstruction of the ancient coastline cf. Stupperich – Stupperich (forthcoming).
- ⁵⁰ Paus. 2, 33, 1.
- ⁵¹ Paus. 2, 32, 8.
- ⁵² Cf. Τόλης 2012.
- ⁵³ Srivastata – Singh 2009; Srivastata 2012.

⁵⁴ In 1828 John Hartley (Hartley 1833, 314) saw thousands of lemon trees on Calareia and in Lemonodasos, the fruits of which were exported to Constantinopol and elsewhere.

⁵⁵ Ινστιτούτο Γεωλογικών – Μεταλλεύτικων Ερευνών 1984.

⁵⁶ Paus. 2, 31, 10.

⁵⁷ Κυριακάκης 2012, 9. 77f. 104f.; Yassoglou et al. 2017, 8.

⁵⁸ Μπεζές 1999, 5.

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Fig. 1: topography based on DEM of the Ελληνικό Κτηματολόγιο with additional information from Υδρογραφική Υπηρεσία του Πολεμικού Ναυτικού 1979; Υδρογραφική Υπηρεσία του Πολεμικού Ναυτικού 1988; Υδρογραφική Υπηρεσία του Πολεμικού Ναυτικού 2010; by Corinna Stupperich. – Fig. 2: by Corinna Stupperich. – Fig. 3: Photo: Reinhard Stupperich. – Fig. 4: Photo: Corinna Stupperich. – Fig. 5: reprinted from Kolaiti – Mourtzas 2016, 83 fig. 10i with permission of Elsevier; courtesy of E. Kolaiti and N. D. Mourtzas. – Fig. 6: topography based on DEM of the Ελληνικό Κτηματολόγιο with additional information from Υδρογραφική Υπηρεσία του Πολεμικού Ναυτικού 1979; Υδρογραφική Υπηρεσία του Πολεμικού Ναυτικού 1988; Υδρογραφική Υπηρεσία του Πολεμικού Ναυτικού 2010; by Corinna Stupperich. – Fig. 7: topography based on DEM of the Ελληνικό Κτηματολόγιο with additional information from Υδρογραφική Υπηρεσία του Πολεμικού Ναυτικού 1979; Υδρογραφική Υπηρεσία του Πολεμικού Ναυτικού 1988; Υδρογραφική Υπηρεσία του Πολεμικού Ναυτικού 2010; by Corinna Stupperich. – Fig. 8: courtesy of I. Matiatos; slightly modified by Corinna Stupperich.

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