

# Harbours and Anchorages in Corinthia and Argolis (North-Eastern Peloponnese) from the Early to the Middle Byzantine Period

The account of the miraculous sailing of Saint Gregorios Dekapolites (797-842) from Corinth to Reggio Calabria indicates that Corinth was a station on the saint's journey to Italy (833) and a regular hub for maritime communication in the early decades of the 9<sup>th</sup> century when Arab seafaring was still on the rise<sup>1</sup>. The episode is placed in the period of the reopening of the Gulf of Corinth, and this particular reference probably concerned Lechaion, the western harbour of Corinth. This harbour together with Kenchreai in the east of Corinth contributed in certain respects to the city's financial and commercial growth (see **fig. 1**)<sup>2</sup>. Corinth's location on the Isthmus, where land and sea routes meet, was also extraordinarily favourable for its vitality. Maritime traffic in the Saronic and Argolic Gulfs, which became increasingly intense as a result of the lack of investment in the overland road system and its maintenance in the Late Roman times, continued well into the Middle Byzantine period<sup>3</sup>. This micro-region's small coves and bays facilitated coastal sailing and the landing and beaching of lateen-rigged ships<sup>4</sup>. Sailing along the coast is well documented by archaeological remains revealed to date in key marine locations extending from the Isthmus of Corinth to Nauplion and to the fringes of the Myrtoan Sea<sup>5</sup> in the period between the Early and the Middle Byzantine period. Such data also confirm the exchanges between the coasts and the adjacent islands that served local or regional exigencies<sup>6</sup>, motivated and reinforced by the large-scale maritime movements<sup>7</sup>. The present analysis follows the development of harbour operations which granted special prosperity to the region before the 7<sup>th</sup> century and attempts also to sketch the naval traffic shaped locally by the subsequent strategic adaptations supported by the state defence and stabilising policies. The inhabited areas on the shores and the islands that were gradually subjected to defensive measures in which the presence of the state was evident, seemed to have adapted to circumstances which, in some cases, shifted the placement of harbours to new landing locations. Inland fortifications and

defensive works in certain islands were securing the sighting of the coasts and covered the protection imperatives of the period. Civilian and military authorities gained preponderance in the control of transactions and travel, supplanting the earlier practices of movement and individual voyages.

Travel accounts provide a rough idea of the movement along the north-eastern coast of the Peloponnese, although they deliver scattered and inconclusive data on official control or seaport topography. On his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Willibald, Bishop of Eichstätt, travelled from Sicily via Methoni and *Manafasiam* and thereafter *demittebant Chorintheos in sinistra parte*, then crossing the Aegean Sea before reaching several seaports on the coastline of Asia Minor (722-723)<sup>8</sup>. The same itinerary was later followed by the Carolingian ambassador Amalarius, Bishop of Metz (c. 775-c. 850), who sailed down to the Adriatic, navigated along the southern littoral of the Peloponnese to Aegina, possibly aboard a warship, and, eventually, reached Constantinople (813)<sup>9</sup>. Corinth was also mentioned later in the pilgrimage of Saewulf to Palestine (1102) and on the return sea voyage of two monks who used a Corinthian port, arriving from Smyrna and heading to Taranto (1126)<sup>10</sup>. The above examples illustrate the long-term maritime mobility in the region, without, however, specifying the means of transport or the actual conditions of the maritime way stations, while local features and topography are mentioned in passing.

Material evidence identified along this coastline, on the other hand, vividly testifies to the development of prosperous settlements with basilicas or residential ensembles, some of luxurious setting (villas), during the Early Byzantine period. These monumental and residential remains were either abandoned or reshaped to conform to the more degraded conditions after the 6<sup>th</sup> century, but their sites remained associated to a great extent with coastal mobility supported by structured administrative or commercial networks. The records of the status of this region's maritime centres registered in

1 Vita s. Gregorii Decapolitae (BHG 711) 22.9-13 (Makris 88). – Kislinger, Verkehrsrouten zur See 151-152. 173.

2 McCormick, *Origins* 198-203. 531-537. – Caraher/Pettegrew, *Imperial Surplus and Local Tastes* 165-171.

3 Gagtzēs/Leontsine/Panopoulou, *Peloponnēsos 477-478*. – McCormick, *Origins* 67-77. – Veikou, *Mediterranean Byzantine ports* 43.

4 Makris, *Ships* 95-96. – McCormick, *Origins* 419-421. – Cosentino, *Mentality* 72.

5 Koder, *Der Lebensraum* 16. 29. 72. – Malamut, *Les îles* 34-35.

6 Preiser-Kapeller, *Harbours and Maritime Networks* 2. 18-19.

7 Avramēa, *Le Péloponnèse* 108. 130-132. 140-142. – Caraher, *The Ambivalent Landscape* 157-159.

8 Vita Willibaldi 93.12-18. – McCormick, *Origins* 130-131.

9 Amalarius versus marini 427.28. – McCormick, *Origins* 138-143. 146.

10 Saewulf, *Peregrinatio* 59,25-29. – *Epistola Mauritiū Catanensis episcopi* 54-55.

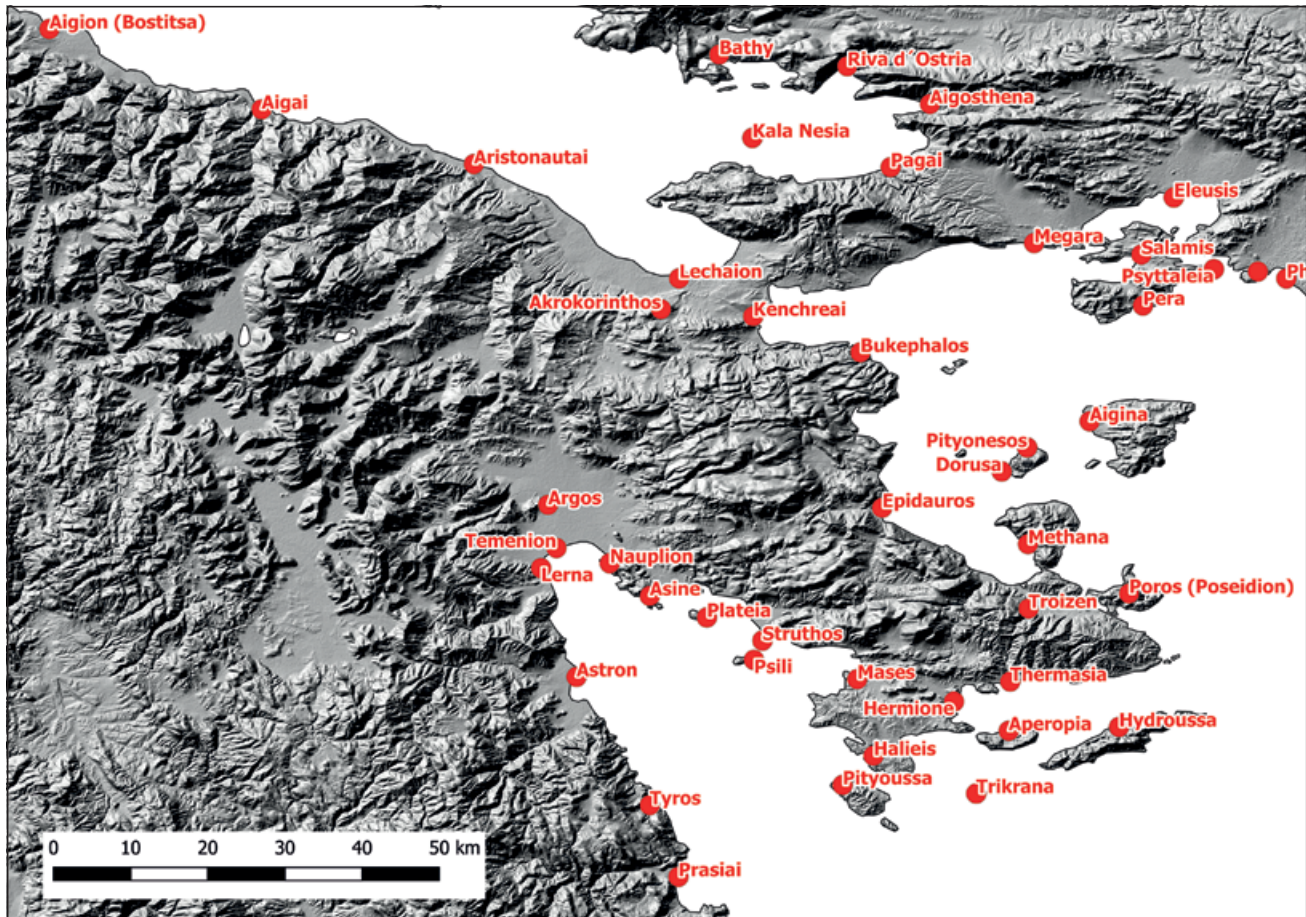


Fig. 1 Map of selected localities mentioned in the text. – (J. Preiser-Kapeller, 2020).

official lists are, in fact, consistent with the spatial distribution of these settlements as documented in the field. The *Synekdemos* of Hierocles and the *Notitia 3* (the so-called Iconoclast *Notitia*) depict the urban dynamics of this province between the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>11</sup>. Kenchreai is absent from the catalogue of Hierocles, which cites only Corinth, as well as the island of Pityoussa (*Poityoussa*, Spetses) and the coastal sites of Argolis: Methana, Troizen (*Tryzena*), Epidaurus (*Pilaura*) and Hermione (*Hiera Mionē*)<sup>12</sup>. *Notitia 3* possibly adds Kenchreai (*Kiknipeos*) and, except for Hermione, lists the same sites of Argolis, including also very likely Halieis (*Selikou*)<sup>13</sup>. Because of its importance as a highly frequented centre of the Eastern Mediterranean, Kenchreai was recognized as an episcopal see in Early Christian times<sup>14</sup>, which led to its later inclusion in the Iconoclast *Notitia*<sup>15</sup>. Thereafter Kenchreai, overshadowed by Corinth, disappeared permanently from the official lists even when the site was again more frequented in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Antiquarian references of the Cosmographer of Ravenna (AD

700) and Guido Pisano (12<sup>th</sup> c.) recording *Cenchrīs* and *Epi-tauron*, obviously marked the two known harbours of the district in ancient times<sup>16</sup>. Their absence from the administrative records of the region suggests the shrinking of their functions and hence their limited role in transport. Only the episcopal see of Troizen was recorded anew in the Middle Byzantine episcopal lists, under the name of Damalas. This latter name of ancient Troizen was confused with Epidaurus in the *Vita* of Hosios Nikon<sup>17</sup>, who landed there travelling directly from Crete (968). The hagiographer used this anachronism probably to recall the landmark of the ancient harbour in the area. The emergence of Troizen-Damalas and Nauplion, in the Middle Byzantine period, and the rise of their rank was apparently connected to the reorganisation of the maritime activities in the Argolic Gulf. This new hierarchical ranking was indicative of these harbours' position and the mobility dynamics shaped under the new circumstances<sup>18</sup>. Similar imperatives led to the establishment and the function of settlements on the islands,

11 Kountoura-Galake, *Eikonoklastike Notitia* 60-61. 68-71.

12 Hierokleous *Synekdemos* 646,1; 646,7; 646,11; 647,1-3 (Honigmann 17-18).

13 *Notitia 3* 45,732. 736-741. 751; 46,771 (Darrouzès 244-245).

14 *Diatagai tōn hagiōn apostolōn*, VII 46.10 (Metzger 110,10).

15 Rife, *Religion and Society at Roman Kenchreai* 425.

16 Ravennatis Anonymi *Cosmographia* V 13,2-3, V 22,10-11 (Schnetz 94,13; 99,53). – Guidonis *geographica* 111.8-9 (Schnetz 136,73).

17 *Vita s. Niconis* (BHG 1366. 1367) 21.51-53 (Sullivan 88-89). – Konti, *Αργολικά* 249-258.

18 Loseby, *The Mediterranean economy* 617-618.





**Fig. 2** Remains of the early Christian basilica in the harbour of Kenchreai. – (Photo C. Raddato, Remains of an early Christian Basilica and Temple of Isis at the ancient harbour at Kenchreai, one of the two ports of the inland city-state of Corinth, Greece, CC BY-SA 2.0).

which presupposed proper berthing facilities and infrastructures, as is acknowledged by field research. Except for the reference to the flight of the Argives to the island of Orovi and of the Corinthians to Aegina by the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, according to the Chronicle of Monemvasia<sup>19</sup>, written sources do not provide explicit information on population movements and the shifting of settlements.

Maritime connectivity corresponded to the prosperous conditions prevailing in the coastal settlements and on the islands until the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, as is well-illustrated by archaeological evidence. Religious monuments of the Early Byzantine period were solid markers of growth and movement. The founding of most of these monuments and the construction of residential facilities near the shores or on the islands fit into communication practices dating back to the Roman period. One well-documented case is Kenchreai, where the Early Christian basilicas ceased to function after

the 7<sup>th</sup> century (see **fig. 2**). The later erection of a chapel to the west of the basilica on the south mole of the harbour in the 9<sup>th</sup> century shows that there were adjustments to the degraded conditions that would also involve the use of the harbour. The second basilica discovered in the location of Bourtzi (1,5km north-east of the harbour), had fallen into ruins by the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century<sup>20</sup>. All the Early Christian monuments of the area had the same fate: the basilica close to the shore on the hilltop of the peninsula; others excavated in Methana (Palaiokastro, Kounoupitsa, Makryloggos); a probable one on the island of Poros; one along the shoreline of Hermione with a baptistery; one in Dalamanara (ancient Temenion); one in Asine (Kastraki or Palaiokastro of Tolo); one in Drepanon; and the basilicas on the island Spetses and the islets of Daskaleio, and Modi<sup>21</sup> (**Tab. 1**).

The quality of these religious monuments was connected to the living standards of the coastal villas which took over

19 Chronicon dictum Monemvasiae 12,93-95.112; 18,141-142.166. – Veikou, *Byzantine Histories* 179.

20 Kislinger, *Die Chronik von Monemvasia* 81-82. – Rife, *Religion and Society* 425-431.

21 Avraméa, *Le Péloponnèse 175-177* (Epidauros-Nesi peninsula, Spetses). – Bowden/Gill, *Late Roman Methana* 88-89 122-127. – Mee et al., *Catalogue* 132-133. 160. – Koukoulis, *Catalogue* 211-214 (Palaiokastro, Kounoupitsa, H. Nikolaos, Makryloggos). – Delvoye, *Historique sommaire* 1946, 259 (Poros). –

Jameson/Runnels/van Andel, *A Greek Countryside* 110-111. 591 (Hermione). – Piteros, *Άγιος Παντελεήμων* 242-247 (ancient Temenion). – Piteros, *Εξωκλήσι* 253 (Hagios Panteleimon). – Piteros, *Ασίνη* 266 (Asine). – Piteros, *Δρέπανο* 290-292 (Drepanon). – Avraméa 1997, 76. – Koilakou, *Ζογερία* 269-271 (Spetses, Zogeria). – Κυρου *Περιπλανήσεις αγίων λειψάνων* 108-118. – Blackman, *Archaeology in Greece* 36. – Κυρου, *Νησιωτικά καταφύγια* 511 (Daskaleio). – Konsolaki-Giannopoulou, *Ερημονησίδια Μόδι* 172. 176 (Modi). – On the prosperity of the Early Byzantine settlement of Spetses cf. Chrysos, *Πιτυούσα-Σπέτσες*.

Early Byzantine Coastal Sites / Islands	Basilicas
Kenchreai	•
Methana	•
Hermione	•
Poros	•?
Koronis islet	•
Daskaleio	•
Modi	•
Spetses	•
Drepanon	•
Asine	•
Temenion	•
Kounoupitsa	•
Hydra	•

**Tab. 1** Islands and Early Byzantine coastal sites of the Corinthia and the Argolis possessing churches (basilicas).

the locations of sea-marks and exploited the physical visibility of the maritime landscape to control naval passages<sup>22</sup>. Excavated remains of the sea-oriented villas show that their activities were maintained as late as the 7<sup>th</sup> century and were largely assisted by the local communications capacities. Villas and other residential installations established close to the coasts of Corinthia and Argolis exploited, moreover, the ease of access to the terrestrial road network in the interior<sup>23</sup>; however, this pattern did not apply in the same way to settlements situated on the littoral of Argolid (Epidauria, Troizenia and Hermionis). Especially regarding this region, connections were developed largely between the central and southern zones of southern Argolid<sup>24</sup>. A large residence situated to the north of Cape Sophia, to the south of the eastern end of the Hexamilion Wall, between Isthmia and Kenchreai had easy access to the sea from a private jetty and the ability to maintain contact with the hinterland of Korinthia. The owner may have been either a military officer in charge of the protection of the Isthmus area or a wealthy ship-owner, who possibly used the place for recreation<sup>25</sup>. This complex resembled the *villa maritima* located in Phourkari (in the far south-east section of the coastlines of the Argolid, opposite the island of Soupia). Both complexes seemed prosperous while similar establishments have been identified on the coasts of Argolis:

at Nesi and in the region of Metochi; at Methana, south-east of Cape Pounta-Methana; at the port of Vathy and in Vromolimni of Methana, also in Thermesia and Kaimeni Chora; at the cove of Ververonda, north of the lagoon; at Hermionis, on a hill north-west and on the east side of the Gulf of Dardiza, as well at Gializa (north-west of the Gulf of Flamboura); at Halieis (Porto Cheli, Southern end of the Argolic peninsula, see **fig. 3**), at the cove of Kouverta, south-east of Kineta; at the Monasteriaka site; at Alonia Thynni and Hagios Panteleimon in Kranidi; (see **Tab. 2**)<sup>26</sup>.

The settlements and baths discovered near the shore are further evidence of the activities in this coastal zone. The well-built bath in Spetses was not the same as the posterior roughly built one on the opposite shore of Halieis, but its modest construction is indicative of the new circumstances prevailing in the region<sup>27</sup>. The survival of certain parts of these complexes and the development of storage and industrial operations on the littoral front are eloquent testimonies to the resilience and adaptations that followed the activities in the area. Storage facilities and pottery workshops, identified on docking places, supported the refuelling needs of passing by ships or served the demands of inter-regional trading of local products at a regular pace. Their development was, as proposed, stimulated by the shipping movement that served the systematic provisioning of troops stationed in remote regions like the Danubian frontier. To these transportation activities, one should probably connect the shipwreck in Porto Cheli, containing LR2 type amphorae which could be part of a wider development of exchanges, as is acknowledged during this period<sup>28</sup> (**Tab. 2**). Such installations have been identified in Kalamianos (north of Cape Trelli, in the steep coastal zone of the Saronic Gulf), in Ancient Epidaurus, on different locations of Methana peninsula, in Lorenzo (Kosta), Kounoupi (Hermionis), in Halieis, also in Drepanon and Asine; on the islet of Chenitsa and in the islands of Spetses, Korakia and Poros<sup>29</sup>. Similar operations have been identified in a building complex excavated north west of the harbour of Kenchreai. It was destroyed at some point in the 6<sup>th</sup> century and was reoccupied for more utilitarian or industrial purposes until the 7<sup>th</sup> century<sup>30</sup>. The findings from this site offer new insights into local vitality, long-distance exchanges, and dynamic communications in the north-eastern Peloponnese during the

22 Horden/Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea* 125-126.

23 Wiseman, *The Land* 64. – Veikou, *Mediterranean Byzantine ports* 45. – Pettegrew, *The Isthmus* 48-50.

24 Jameson/Runnels/van Andel, *A Greek Countryside* 48-53.

25 Gregory, *An Early Byzantine Complex* 412-413. 420. 423. – Avraméa, *Le Péloponnèse* 127-128.

26 Frost, Phourkari. A villa complex 233-238. – Jameson/Runnels/van Andel, *A Greek Countryside* 108. 402 (Phourkari, Poros). – Bowden/Gill, *Late Roman Methana* 84. 88. 90 (Halieis and Vathy, port of ancient Methana). 89 (Palaiokastro, Methana). 86. 87. 88 (SE of cape Pounta-Methana, Vromolimni). – Foxhall, *Ancient Farmsteads* 262. 264. 265 (north and north-east of Vromolimni). – Sarri, *Αγροτικές εγκαταστάσεις* 229-230 no. 12a-b (Hagios Panteleimon, Alonia); 251-252 no. 23 (Taxiarches); 252 no. 23 (Ververouda); 252-253 no. 23 (Nesi of Cheli); 254 no. 23 (Metochi); 256-258 no. 23.1-4, 6-8 (Yaliza); 259-260 no. 23 (Monasteriaka, Kouverta); 261 (Thermesia); 264-265 no. 23 (Dardiza Ermionis). – Mee et al., *Catalogue* 131-132 (Kaimeni Chora).

27 Κυρου, *Νησιωτικά καταφύγια* 504 (Spetses). – Sarri, *Αγροτικές εγκαταστάσεις* 227 no. 11α (Halieis); 224-225 no. 9α (Asine). – Piteros, *Δαλαμανάρα* 189-191 (Dalamanara).

28 Karagiorgou, LR2 140. 145. 149.

29 Konti, *Βιοτεχνική δραστηριότητα* 339-341. 344. 345-349. – Tartaron et al., *The Saronic Harbors* 576. 577. 579. 608. 610 (Kalamianos). – Mee et al., *Catalogue* 129. 130-131. 146-148. 157-158 (Kypseli, Methana). – Mee et al., *Catalogue* 133-134 (Methana). – Sarri, *Αγροτικές εγκαταστάσεις* 210-211. 226 no. 9γ (Asine); 227-228 no. 11α (Halieis); 228-229 no. 11β. 268 no. 23 (Lorenzo/Kosta); 244-245 no. 23.5 (Chenitsa); 246 no. 23; 267-268 no. 23 (Kounoupi); 247 no. 23 (Korakia). – Piteros, *Δαλαμανάρα* 189-191 (Dalmanara). – Piteros, *Οικόπεδο* 130-131 (Drepanon). – Koilakou, *Σπέτσες* 69 (Spetses, Zogeria). – Piteros, *Επίδαυρος* 186-187 (Ancient Epidaurus). – Giannopoulou, *Πόρος* 237 (Poros).

30 Heath et al., *Preliminary Report*.





**Fig. 3** View of the harbour bay of Porto Cheli (Halieis). – (Courtesy of GoogleEarth).

**Tab. 2** Islands and Late Roman/Early Byzantine coastal sites of the Corinthia and the Argolis possessing buildings, villas, storage, and manufacturing units, correlated with harbor facilities and anchorages.

Late Roman / Early Byzantine Coastal Sites / Islands	Anchorage	Harbor facilities	Villas/Buil-dings/Baths	Storage/Manu-facturing units
Kavos Akra Sophia	•	•	•	•
Kenchreai	•	•	•	•
Korfos (Kalamianos)			•	•
Poros (Phourkari)	•?		•	
Epidauros-Nesi	•	•	•	•
Methana (Pounta, Vathi, Vromolimni)	•?		•	•
Hermione		•	•	
Kouverta			•	
Petrothalassa			•	
Metochi (Nesi)			•	•
Hermionis (Kounoupi)	•	•	•	•
Yaliza			•	•
Halieis	•	•	•	•
Ververonda (H. Nikolaos)			•	•
Korakia			•	•
Alonia-Thinni			•	
Koiladha (Monasteriaka)			•	
Dardiza	•?		•	
Thermesia			•	
Kaimeni Chora		•	•	
Asine	•		•	•
Kranidi (H. Panteleimon)			•	
Spetses	•?			•
Poros	•?			•
Chinitsa islet	•?			•
Drepanon	•?			•
Kosta (Lorenzo)	•?			•



Fig. 4 View of the Kounoupi islet, to the south of the Gulf of Kranidi. – (Courtesy of GoogleEarth).

Location	Lead seals
Chinitisa	7 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> c.
Daskaleio	6 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> c.
Kounoupi	8 <sup>th</sup> c.
Orovi	8 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> c.
Plateia	7 <sup>th</sup> c.

Tab. 3 List of islets where lead seals, mainly of the transitional period (7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> c.), have been discovered.

Early Byzantine period. Therefore, transport safety, storage capacity and other operations of a more day-to-day nature were amplified by maritime mobility in the region during the Middle Byzantine era. This survival pattern is impressively evidenced by the operations in the harbour of Kenchreai. In addition, the downgrading of the harbour should be taken into account, due to the intense seismic activity of the late 4<sup>th</sup> century, which led to a subsidence by c. 2 m, affecting also the adjacent shores. The dating of the submerging of moles and waterfront buildings is still not well-established<sup>31</sup>. Damages to harbour's facilities and other coastal infrastructures across the coastline of the north-eastern Peloponnese have also been attributed to erosion or aggradation<sup>32</sup>.

The revitalization of maritime activities took place within the state's initiatives to strengthen the defence system and

support the provincial administrative services. State intervention justified the presence of secular and ecclesiastical agents involved either in local affairs or using the region as an intermediate post. The passage of these officials or the circulation of their correspondence was served by the squadrons stationed, patrolling, and securing communications in the area. State-controlled mobility can be sketched behind the maritime traffic observed in the region. Lead seals, dating from the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century, and buckles discovered on islands and islets indicate the special importance of smaller mooring places: on Chenitsa islet (off the coast of Halieis), on Kounoupi islet, to the south of the Gulf of Kranidi (see fig. 4); on Romvi (Romvi, in the Tolos Gulf), further south on the islet of Daskaleio, further east on the islet of Plateia (Tab. 3). A specimen, found on the islet of Orovi, belonged, in all probability, to a bishop, who obviously had under his jurisdiction a population that had settled there and the adjacent inland areas; this maritime space might have also functioned as a base of civil and military administration in the 8<sup>th</sup> century<sup>33</sup>. Orovi was even suggested as a possible base for the warships that attacked Comacchio (north of Ravenna) in 809<sup>34</sup>. The movement of people and goods became more pronounced from the 9<sup>th</sup> century onwards as is implied by the lead seals that came to light, not only in urban centres like Corinth and

31 Rothaus/Reinhardt/Noller, Earthquakes and Subsidence at Kenchreai 63. – Koliai/Mourtzas, Sea Level Changes 75-77. 87.

32 Avraméa, Le Péloponnèse 47-49. – Sanders, Problems 170-172. – Preiser-Kapeller, Harbours and Maritime Networks 4-5.

33 Pennas, The Island of Orovi 171-173. – Avraméa, Le Péloponnèse 76. 99-101.

34 Vlyssidou, Η υποχώρηση 278 (with bibliography).





Fig. 5 View from the fortress of Akrokorinthos towards the sea. – (Photo Vancouverquadra, Akrokorinth Looking North).

Argos, but also in interior communication points such as the Kokkinia castle (on top of Mount Adheres, near Troizen), where a seal of a *basilikos spatharios* and *kommerkiarios* of the West was found (10<sup>th</sup> c.)<sup>35</sup>.

The repairs of the fortifications and the development of the insular settlements strengthened with defensive works (islands of Ovrios, Dokos, Orovi, Plateia) has been rightly considered a result of the central government's strategies aiming to secure anchorage places. The shift of urban or rural settlements to inland defensive sites after the recession of activity of the coastal areas in the 7<sup>th</sup> century was followed by the effort to bring under control the naval way stations functioning as refuelling posts or shelters<sup>36</sup>; coastal control is better documented after the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and population movements related to the Slavic raids were considered as possible results of such strategies in small islands<sup>37</sup>. The enhanced functionality of the fortifications in the interior was a measure progressively advantageous not only to inland activities but also to the protection of maritime mobility. Acrocorinth's ca-

pacities for inspection and advance warning of invasions (see fig. 5) protected the Kenchreai harbour and smaller berths as well as the area of Isthmus. It seems that these defence measures promoted maritime mobility, supporting primarily the movements of Byzantine fleets in the area. This is perceived in traces (burials, coins and pottery finds) found in different locations within the Kenchreai district<sup>38</sup>.

Naval activities were essentially revitalized by the expeditions organized by the capital. This is evident in the expeditionary missions of the Byzantine fleets to Italy which motivated the activation of the naval forces belonging to the themes of the Peloponnese, Hellas and Kephallenia<sup>39</sup>. Constantinople encouraged the operation against the emir of Tarsos Esman in Euripos (880)<sup>40</sup>. Warships sent directly from Constantinople under the command of the *patrikios* and *droungarios* of the fleet, Niketas Ooryphas, according to the narrative of the *Vita Basilii* (879/880), were anchored at a harbour near Kenchreai, recalling its ancient military function. The location of the warships' way station is not recorded

35 Penna, Two rare Byzantine lead seals 147-150.

36 Koder, Der Lebensraum 71-72. – Preiser-Kapeller, Harbours and Maritime Networks 8. – Veikou, Mediterranean Byzantine ports 39-40.

37 Gregory, Byzantine »Isles of Refuge« 195. – Lambropoulou et al., Συμβολή 196. 204-205. 220-223. – Κυρου, Νησιωτικά καταφύγια 515-519. – Veikou, Byzantine Histories 177-188. 205-206.

38 Rife, Πρόγραμμα 939. – Rife, Kenchreai Cemetary Project 348-349.

39 Vlyssidou, Η υποχώρηση 278. 318. 352. – Pryor/Jeffreys, The Age of the Δρόμων 46-50.

40 Theophanes Continuatus Chronographia V 59 (212 Ševčenko). – Kislinger, Verkehrsrouten zur See 164. – Leontsini, The Byzantine and Arab navies 195-197..

Early Byzantine Coastal Sites / Islands	Fortifications / towers
Asine	•?
Bourtzi (east of Poros)	•
Daskalio	•
Dokos	•
Epidauros-Nesi	•
Evraionisos	•
Halieis	•
Hermione	•
Isthmus	•
Kavos Akra Sophia	•
Kenchreai	•
Korakia	•
Methana	•
Nauplion	•
Plateia	•
Soupia	•
Spetses	•

**Tab. 4** List of islands and Early Byzantine coastal sites with a tower or ruins of fortification.

explicitly, and information on the harbour is completely absent from the account<sup>41</sup>. This narrative is well-known for describing a surprise attack on the Arab ships, ravaging the western coasts of the Peloponnese. The account, which was repeated by later Byzantine historians, referred also to an overland dragging of the warships to the Gulf of Corinth; the trackway of the Diolkos however, was not operational during the Middle Byzantine period, according to archaeological investigation<sup>42</sup>. The mooring place existing to the south of the present canal or another site located close to Kenchreai would likely have been used for the operation. The portage of ships from the Saronic Gulf to the Gulf of Corinth is once again referred to as a commonplace transport practice for small ships in the area by the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Arab geographer Al-Idrisi, without specific reference to Diolkos<sup>43</sup>.

The state planning of safeguarding the region against external attacks is further documented by an inscription which, according to all indications, comes from Acrocorinth and commemorates the establishment of a fire-signal communication by an emperor Leo, most probably Leo VI (886-912). Its operation was associated with a rectangular tower dated the earliest to the 7<sup>th</sup> and perhaps to the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The fire-signalling post could transmit signals to the inner regions

of the Peloponnese and other observation points, including the harbour of Kenchreai<sup>44</sup>, as part of a system protecting the local populace and guarding strategic roads and routes<sup>45</sup>. This defensive arrangement was part of state-run policies applied in the framework of Constantinople's military actions to confront Arab attacks. The safeguarding of coastal sites was thus dependent on inland fortifications. The Acrocorinth's defences, according to recent research data, were enhanced at that time to ensure effective supervision of Corinth and to control the vital coastline sites<sup>46</sup>. Similarly, the Kastron (Acronauplia) was closely connected with Nauplion's harbour, a point of growing importance after the 9<sup>th</sup> century, which gradually proved to be a vital communication berthing position for the inland centre of Argos<sup>47</sup>. Reconstructions or fortification repairs carried out in the Middle Byzantine period were associated with the new defence-related priorities<sup>48</sup>. Although it is not clear, the fortifications of Corinthia and Argolis may have constituted a defence network. To the monumental defensive works of Corinth and Nauplion (Acrocorinth, Acronauplia), one must add the small fortresses identified in areas vital for safe traffic, such as the islands of Spetses, Dokos, Orovi (Romvi) and Ovrios (Evraionissos), as well as atop the heights of the Epidauros-Nesi peninsula, and on the Bourtzi islet<sup>49</sup> (tab. 4).

It is therefore assumed that the defensive positions played an essential role in protecting the seafront. Defensive strategies were amplified in the 10<sup>th</sup> century by the reorganisation of the local naval forces<sup>50</sup>. A naval squadron belonging to the Peloponnese theme was able to intervene on the spot, and, although we have no accounts of its bases, its operational character is confirmed by other sources. This flotilla was under the command of an officer subordinate to the *strategos* of the Peloponnese, called the *tourmarches tes paraliou* (τουρμάρχης τῆς παραλίου), commanding four *chelandia*, according to the list of the naval forces planned to take part against the Arabs of Crete in 949<sup>51</sup>. This unit is also mentioned in other sources describing 10<sup>th</sup>-century events, such as the *Lives* of Saint Peter and Saint Theodoros, the patrons of Argos and Kythera, respectively. Both *Lives* refer to Nauplion's prosperity; the former *Life* also offers evidence for the surveillance of the eastern shores of the Peloponnese by regular naval forces<sup>52</sup>. Saint Peter of Argos intervened miraculously in the chase of an Arab pirate ship with captives on board. After being captured by a Byzantine trireme using liquid fire, the enemy ship appeared the next day in the port of Nauplion, towed by the trireme,

41 Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia* V 61 (Ševčenko 216-219). – Savvides, *Prosopographical Notes* 84-96. – Pryor/Jeffreys, *The Age of the Δρόμων* 61. 385.

42 Pettegrew, *The Isthmus* 61-62. 113-134. 241-242.

43 Al-Idrīsī, IV 150 (Jaubert 123).

44 Rife, *Leo's Peloponnesian Fire-Tower* 281-306. – Athanasoulis, *Acrocorinth* 41-42.

45 Haldon, *Information and war* 384. 387.

46 Athanasoulis, *Acrocorinth* 42-44.

47 Savvides, *Nauplion in the Byzantine and Frankish Periods* 112-119.

48 Konti, *Συμβολή* 194-195. – Athanasoulis, *Acrocorinth* 26-28. – Armstrong, *Trade* 176-177. – Athanasoulis/Manolessou, *Ἡ μεσαιωνική Κορινθία* 537-538.

49 Konti, *Βιοτεχνική δραστηριότητα* 345-347. – Kardoulias/Gregory/Sawmiller, *Bronze Age* 14-17. – Tartaron et al., *The Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey* 481-483. – Kardoulias, *From Classical to Byzantine* 53. – Kislinger, *Die Chronik von Monembasia* 77-78.

50 Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer* 90. 111.

51 Kōnstantinos Porphyrogennētōs, *De cerim.* (Haldon) 220, 221.32. – Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer* 51 n. 7. – Nesbitt/Oikonomides, *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals* 62.

52 *Vita s. Theod. Cyth.* (BHG 2430) 287.186-189. – μία τῶν φυλακίδων τριήρης cf. *Vita s. Petri episcopi Argivorum* (BHG 1504) 15 (Kyriakopoulos 246,55). – Konti, *To Ναύπλιο* 131-132. – Caraher, *Constructing memories* 269-271.



which had probably been patrolling the area and attacked the ship from an ambush on an island. The saint knew in advance that the pirate ship would anchor at the cape, which suggests the existence of an early warning system between the coast and the hinterland of Argolis. Messengers who announced the matter to the saint were obviously in charge of and sustained such duties. Nauplion is also mentioned as an anchorage where captives were ransomed annually under the charitable protection of Peter of Argos<sup>53</sup>. Its harbour must have become an important operating space. The horizontal fragmentation of the coasts of Argolis favoured safe landing and facilitated manoeuvres and tactical surprise attacks, as set out in Byzantine naval war manuals, which underline the crucial importance of the distance between the coasts and the spots of the naval conflicts<sup>54</sup>.

By the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Nauplion was among the privileged centres for Italian traders, along with Argos and Corinth<sup>55</sup>. The development of Nauplion's harbour was also associated with the economic growth of Argolis and the emergence of local authorities enhanced with political and military power<sup>56</sup>. The topography of increased maritime traffic is marked in an 11<sup>th</sup>-century Arab geographic treatise which records also Corinth, Poros-Kalavreia, Argos, Damalas, Nauplion, and Pityoussa; a Latin portolan of Pisa (c. 1200) refers also to the maritime space on the eastern shores of Corinth<sup>57</sup>. The prosperity and the maritime dynamics of this latter part of the Middle Byzantine period is attested to by an incident mentioned in a transaction document that refers to a Venetian ship, carrying at least 43 000 litres of oil and cured olives on its way from Nauplion to Constantinople. After its operators were informed of the Latin's massacre in

the capital in the spring of 1182, they directed eventually the ship to Alexandria<sup>58</sup>.

The episode shows that the area functioned again as an intermediate bridge in the communications with the coasts of Asia Minor and the islands of the Aegean Sea, having surpassed the functions of the more dispersed and smaller scale marine transactions of the Early Byzantine period. The marked posts of the north-eastern Peloponnesian harbours in the nautical guides of this period indicate the region's improved position in the Mediterranean marine movement. The vitality of the area's harbours increased in the time interval between the voyage of St. Gregorios Dekapolites (833) and the naval operation of *patrikios* Niketas Ooryphas (879/80) and testifies to the strengthening of the local but also the inter-regional naval dynamics which was based on the earlier distribution of port operations and was prioritizing Corinth. The economic growth of Nauplion which became the region's new maritime centre during the Middle Byzantine period, altered this equilibrium, taking the lead from Corinth and Kenchreai and offering a sign for changes in spatial structures and transactions.

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53 Vita s. Petri episcopi Argivorum (BHG 1504) 14-15 (Kyriakopoulos 244. 226-246. 265).

54 Naumachiae Syrianiou magistrou 9.12; 9.42-44 (Pryor/Jeffreys 466. 478. 480).

55 Chrysobullum 1082 2.8 (Pozza/Ravegnani 40). – Privilegium Alexii Constantinopolitani imperatoris 11.15 (Pozza/Ravegnani 130).

56 Anagnostakis, »From Tempe to Sparta« 146-147. 155.

57 Book of Curiosities 2.16 (Rapoport/Savage-Smith 486. 487). – Liber de existencia riveriarum 112.68; 113.84; 145.1156.1161; 149.1295.

58 Documenti del commercio veneziano no. 331. 326-327. – Jacoby, Rural Exploitation 235. – The coin finds in the Saronic Gulf region both in the islands (Spetses, Hydra) and in the coastal settlements of the north-east Peloponnese attest also to the recovery of the trade: Galani-Krikou, *Αρχαιολογία* 211.

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## Summary / Zusammenfassung

### Harbours and Anchorages in Corinthia and Argolis (North-Eastern Peloponnese) from the Early to the Middle Byzantine Period

Historical sources mention the existence of harbours in the north-eastern Peloponnese from the Early to the Middle Byzantine period, but do not provide information on their facilities. Roads departing from the coastline ensured access to inland urban centres and other settlements in the interior of the Peloponnese and facilitated regional or long-distance exchanges. Defensive strategies, storage needs, and population movements are suggested as factors that dictated the creation of various settlements and infrastructures of different types and quality on the coastal areas and the islands. Anchorages have been more clearly identified in some cases (e.g., Kenchreai, Halieis, Chenitsa), while in others they are recognized based on the relation of the fortress and harbour connections resulting from the combination of written testimonies and archaeological evidence (e.g., Nauplion). Sailing along the shorelines took advantage of infrastructures

created during the Roman era. In the Early Byzantine period, the existence of basilicas and residential and production units (villas) close to the shores was related to a prosperous way of living, a situation that changed in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The increasingly difficult conditions, which were also affected by the change of the coastline, by erosion or deterioration, influenced navigation and the use of the organized harbours as way stations or communication points. The limited number of harbours or anchorages in Corinthia is also connected to the geomorphology of the area. Berths on islands and islets near the coastlines may have served as refuge, offering protection from raids, but also functioned as way stations for the Byzantine navy. A turning point in the direction of a revival in relatively steady coastal shipping came with the strengthening of the inland fortifications and the local presence of naval forces.

## Häfen und Ankerplätze in Korinth und Argolis (Nordostpeloponnes) von der Spätantike bis zur mittelbyzantinischen Zeit

Historische Quellen erwähnen die Existenz von Häfen auf der nordöstlichen Peloponnes von der Antike bis zur mittelbyzantinischen Zeit, geben jedoch keine Auskunft über ihre Einrichtungen. Von der Küste ausgehende Straßen sicherten den Zugang zu städtischen Zentren und anderen Siedlungen im Inneren des Peloponnes und erleichterten den regionalen Austausch sowie den Fernhandel. Verteidigungsstrategien, Speicherkapazitäten und Bevölkerungsbewegungen werden als Faktoren vorgeschlagen, die die Entwicklung verschiedener Siedlungen und Infrastrukturen unterschiedlicher Art und Qualität an den Küstengebieten und auf den Inseln beeinflussten. In einigen Fällen (z. B. Kenchreai, Halieis, Chenitsa) wurden Ankerplätze deutlicher identifiziert, in anderen Fällen werden sie anhand des Verhältnisses der Festungs- und Hafenstrukturen ermittelt, das sich aus der Kombination schriftlicher Zeugnisse und archäologischer Beweise ergibt (z. B. Nauplion). Der Seeverkehr entlang der Küste nutzte die während der Römerzeit geschaffenen Infrastrukturen. In der

frühbyzantinischen Zeit war die Existenz von Basiliken sowie Wohn- und Produktionseinheiten (Villen) in Küstennähe mit einem prosperierenden Wirtschaftsleben verbunden, das sich im 7. Jahrhundert änderte. Die zunehmend schwierigeren Bedingungen, die auch durch die Veränderung der Küste, durch Erosion oder Degradation beeinflusst wurden, beeinflussten die Navigation und die Nutzung der Häfen als Zwischenstationen oder Kommunikationspunkte. Die begrenzte Anzahl von Häfen oder Ankerplätzen in Korinth hängt auch mit der Geomorphologie des Gebiets zusammen. Liegeplätze auf Inseln und Inselchen in Küstennähe dienten möglicherweise als Zuflucht und boten Schutz vor Überfällen, fungierten aber auch als Zwischenstationen für die byzantinische Marine. Ein Wendepunkt in Richtung einer Wiederbelebung der relativ stabilen Küstenschifffahrt kam mit der Stärkung der Binnenbefestigungen und der lokalen Präsenz der byzantinischen Seestreitkräfte.