

Geopolitics and Strategic Interests

[T]he land for private ownership is to be divided in half, one part in the borderlands, the other part by the city, in order that, two lots having been distributed to each citizen, everybody shall have a share in both places. Thus this is equal and just and more conducive to agreement on wars with neighbours. For wherever this is not the case, some citizens care little about hatred of neighbours, while others worry about it a lot, indeed beyond what is good. For that reason among some there is a law that those who live by the borderlands should not participate in deliberation about wars against them on the ground that because of private interest they cannot deliberate well.

—Aristotle, *Politics* 7.1330a

In his *Politics*, Aristotle develops his model city and expounds his view on the division of the polis' lands. This envisions awarding plots of land in both the city and the borderlands to ensure citizens had an equal share in the polis' property under jurisdiction. A more pressing issue in Aristotle's opinion is the balanced outlook on neighbourly warfare it brings. People living in the borderlands were inclined to vote against war, fearing the impending damages on their properties, whereas city people would be easily swayed to withstand invasion and devastation, since their lands would suffer the least. Although this is a hypothetical situation and such an ideal mixture was not commonplace, his remark is apropos the matter at heart in this chapter: the borderlands. Aristotle recognises that people living in close proximity were less likely to risk enduring warfare with each other, as it conflicted with their interests.¹ That is precisely the point I will be making. Contrary to scholarly orthodoxy, the Boiotians and Athenians were less preoccupied with fighting over borderland desiderata, since they suffered more than they gained. Rather, they were more compatible. Collaboration was more a natural extension of their geographical entwinement, instead of inherent hostility.

Of course lands were still disputed, but the attachment to territory that is so typical of modern interstate relations needs to be subtracted from the evaluation of geopolitical interests in antiquity. Our source material is richly filled with debates over borders and boundaries, demonstrating that the subject mattered to the Greeks.² Claims over disputed parts did exist. These claims within the borderlands, which stretches from the slopes of Mount Kithairon to Mount Parnes plus the Oropia, were presented or invented to vindicate the ownership thereof. Thierry Lucas argued that these lands even constituted ‘a cultural unity’, founded upon their distinct borderland culture and attitude.³ Numerous tools were at the disposal of the neighbouring polities to claim these lands. These ranged from mythological histories aimed at cementing their claims to ritual connections between core and periphery and the construction of military structures to ensure their grasp over the region.⁴ I will here contradict the long-held scholarly pre-occupation with border disputes as the governing mode of interaction between neighbouring polities and argue that disputes over borderlands arose *after* war had broken out, rather than being the impetus for its outbreak. This acute sensitivity over borders stems from a modern nationalist perspective, with its connotation of attachment to territory, which was less prominent in ancient Greece.⁵

Moving beyond the prism of border disputes as the mode of interaction opens up different possibilities for analysing the geographical entwining of the two regions in question. Typically, the negative ramifications of this geographical proximity have been stressed. No obstacle, like other poleis or narrow passageways such as the Isthmus, lay between the Athenians and Boiotians, in contrast to the far-away Spartans, as remarked upon by the

² Mitchell 2022. ³ Lucas 2019.

⁴ Chaniotis 2004. De Polignac 1995 [1984]; 1991 developed a core-periphery model, which Malkin 1996 criticised. Novel approaches towards border sanctuaries emphasise ‘central functions’ and their place for negotiation: McInerney 2006; de Polignac 2011; 2017.

⁵ Elden 2013: 21–50 for an analysis of ‘territory’ in ancient Greece. However, he focuses on literary sources and ignores other sources, such as *horoi* and other indications of territorial demarcation: Fachard 2014; 2016a. Rousset 1994’s investigation of epigraphical material demonstrates that *horoi* were exceptional. Natural landmarks more often were specified in treaties or other accounts to delineate borders. Paga 2021 demonstrates that there was ‘border awareness’ in the late sixth century. Autochthony, so prominent in Athens and Thebes (Beck 2020: 43–75), had more to do with their heritage stemming from the home soil than with borderlands.

An interesting discussion takes place among the Boiotians and Athenians in the aftermath of the Battle of Delion, which involves notions of what constitutes territorial gain: Allison 2011; Polinskaya 2020.

speaker Prokles of Phlius in Xenophon.⁶ This entanglement has hitherto been overlooked and requires an interpretation that stresses the essential role Boiotia occupied in the defence of Attica, making their compliance more paramount to Athenian success than any Spartan military support could be. This vital role can be partly retraced to the central position of Boiotia within Greece. Connecting Northern Greece to the Peloponnese were various roads crossing through Boiotia, transforming its inhabitants into involuntary participants in multiple battles fought during the Classical and Hellenistic periods (see Figure 4.1).⁷

The long border entwining Attica and Boiotia meant the latter was the ideal partner to shield the former's hinterland. A friendly neighbour could do wonders for the protection of Attica.⁸ It was a more affordable option than garrisoning and fortifying all the passes through the mountainous and porous terrain, an unviable solution.⁹ Conversely, a hostile neighbour could inflict horrible damages upon the Athenians or open the floodgates to Attica for potential enemies to enter unobstructed. These considerations undoubtedly factored into the decision-making process and ensured a more flexible and innocuous attitude towards collaboration.

But Boiotia's appeal as an advantageous neighbour goes beyond the borderlands. Its harbours, an oft-neglected part of its geographical outlook, provided direct access to the Corinthian Gulf and fostered a distinct maritime perspective for western Boiotia. On the other seaboard, there were harbours offering close connections to Euboia and routes into the Aegean and the Hellespont. The close geographical proximity of Euboia to the eastern Boiotian seaboard made any grasp over that pivotal island by foreign powers precarious. A friendly neighbour therefore was an invaluable ally for the Athenians if they desired to keep the rich and fertile island within their nexus.

A different perspective of the geographical proximity allows for a more rewarding analysis. The entwinement impacted their relations more positively than normally assumed. It creates a nuanced picture of the two neighbouring regions that focuses more on their compatibility and the possibility to cooperate, rather than stressing the antagonistic effects of disputed lands that has been so dominant in previous discourse.

⁶ Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.39: 'For to have the Thebans, who are unfriendly to you and dwell on your borders, become leaders of the Greeks, would prove much more grievous to you, I think, than when you had your antagonists far away.'

⁷ Alcock 1993: 149 offers the routes for the Roman period.

⁸ Van Wijk 2020.

⁹ Fachard et al. 2020a calculates the garrisoning of fortresses.

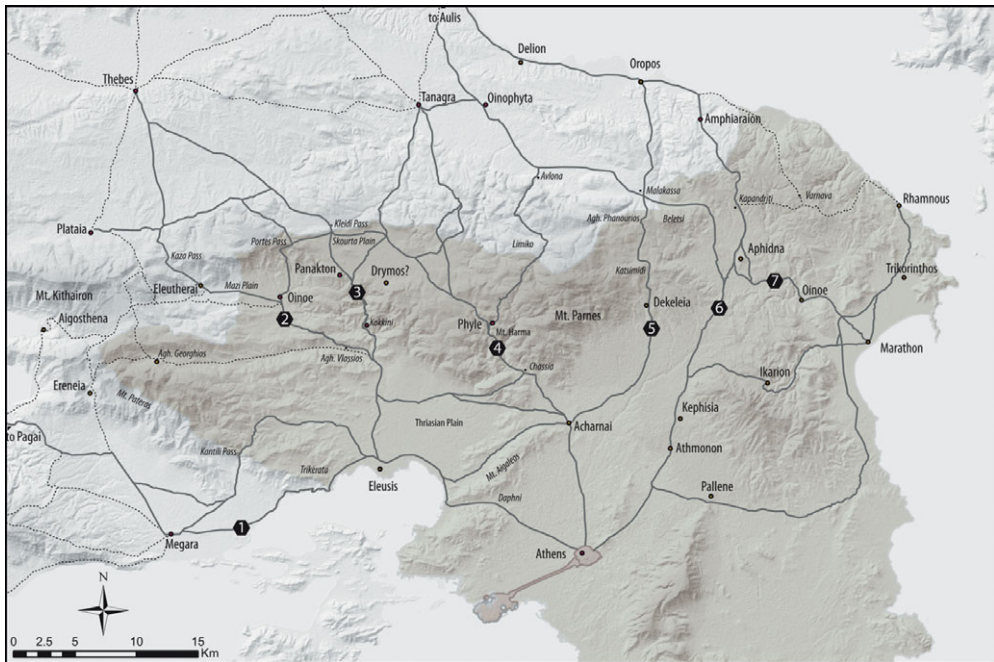


Figure 4.1 Routes of Attica. The borders, reflected in contrast to the highlighted Athenian *chora*, are those of 366–335 BCE.

(Source: © Sylvian Fachard)

4.1 Where the Wild Things Are: An Introduction to the Borderlands

A mountain range stretching from the Corinthian Gulf to the Euboian Gulf separates the two neighbouring regions. Bookmarking both ends are two imposing topographical features: Mount Kithairon in the west and Mount Parnes in the east (see Figure 4.2). Along their slopes are some of the most fertile lands in Central Greece. This crescent comprised the Mazi and Skourta plains, Plataia and the Parasopia, and Oropos and the Oropia. These borderlands were termed *ta methoria* (τὰ μεθόρια), contested lands between the Athenians and Boiotians constantly eluding permanent control.¹⁰

Dictating the desirability of these regions was their economic potential, as Sylvian Fachard pointed out.¹¹ Blessed with large forests, these areas

¹⁰ Plataia and the Oropia were technically not part of ‘τὰ μεθόρια’, but did play an important role in the attempts to control this mountain range.

¹¹ Fachard 2017 treats this phenomenon, and a large part of the economic analysis is based upon his insights into the borderlands as an area of exchange.

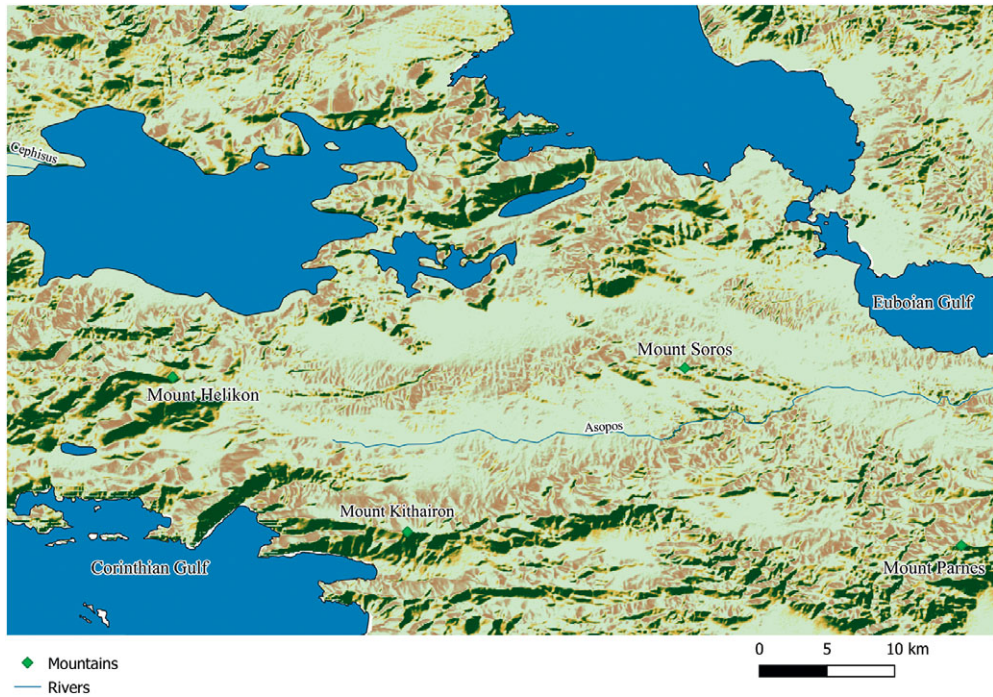


Figure 4.2 Map of natural features demarcating the borderlands.

could be lucratively exploited through hunting, apiculture or logging.¹² These forests largely consisted of pine, which allowed for the extraction of a tar for the production of a resin indispensable for the preservation of wine and the maintenance of fleets.¹³ The limited availability of this product throughout Central Greece reinforced the allure of controlling these borderlands.¹⁴ Besides the copious products the woods offered, the rich alluvial soil was another pull factor, especially for the Athenians. Their arid lands paled in comparison to the rich harvests of barley and grain stemming

¹² Konecny et al. 2013: 21–2. The density of the woodland has been debated. Bintliff 1993: 141 estimates woodlands covered about one-sixth of Boiotia, with the fifth to third century presenting a downward trend; Meiggs 1982: 189–90 suggests there was plenty of wood on Kithairon.

¹³ Trintignac 2003 on pine tar production and its uses. Knoepfler 2012: 452–3 argues this tar lay at the heart of Oropos' status as a neighbourly desideratum. Fachard and Pirisino 2015: 146 believe the product must have been exploited elsewhere (in Attica), because control over the Oropia was elusive and thus an unreliable source. For other occupations of the woodlands: Papazarkadas 2009a: 176–7; Fachard and Pirisino 2015.

¹⁴ Febvre 1970: 200.

from the borderlands.¹⁵ In a world where the Athenians, and possibly the Boiotians – depending on high or low population estimates – were perpetually dependent on grain imports, the yields from the borderlands offered a welcome relief.¹⁶ A final source of income was the pastoral activities in the plains, its rocky outlines sustaining an impressive array of plant life capable of feeding large herds and flocks.¹⁷

Strategic interests also played a role. Josiah Ober's thesis of 'road control' and a unified defensive system created *ex novo* in the fourth century – as set out in his magisterial *Fortress Attica* – has been criticised.¹⁸ Fortresses do not lend themselves to road control and were incapable of hermetically sealing off areas from invasion.¹⁹ Yet the towns of Oropos and Plataia did occupy strategic locations that added to their importance. Plataia overlooked the passes at Mount Kithairon and the most direct road between the Peloponnese and Boiotia. Oropos exerted a controlling presence over Euboea, creating a more tractable relationship with this economically important island.²⁰ These territories were thus vital regions to control, as reflected in the recurrent changes in ownership.

Markers in the physical landscape reflected these changes in political alignment. The construction of military buildings like fortresses, the erection or expansion of walls, or the appropriation of cults that were tied to their respective territories were meant to symbolise the takeover of contested lands.²¹ Communities had a wide array of ways to announce their control over a region and the τὰ μεθόρια of the Attic-Boiotian frontier (see Figure 4.3) provided plenty of examples that reveal their role in the neighbourly relations.

Delineation of borders was another matter. Clearly demarcated borders sometimes remained elusive and their confirmation fuzzy, but the process of demarcation became increasingly common in the later Archaic period.²²

¹⁵ The Skourta Plain produced circa 10 per cent of the total Athenian grain and wheat production: Bresson 2016: 407–9; Munn and Zimmermann-Munn 1990. For the Oropia: Cosmopoulos 2001: 7, 75.

¹⁶ Hansen 2006; 2008 based on his higher population numbers contra Bintliff 2005. Boiotia could become dependent on grain imports: Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.56–7. Akrigg 2019: 176 argues an Athenian population of 400,000 was possible before the Peloponnesian War, making imports even more essential.

¹⁷ Rackham 1983. ¹⁸ Ober 1985a.

¹⁹ Lohmann 1987; Munn 1986; 1993. Hardin 1988; 1990 found fault with the notion of a defensive mentality arising after the Peloponnesian War. Daly 2015 retrojects this part of Ober's thesis to an earlier date.

²⁰ Hammond 1954; Thuc. 8.60.

²¹ De Polignac 1995; Malkin 1996. For examples of cults: Chapter 3.5. ²² Raaflaub 1997.

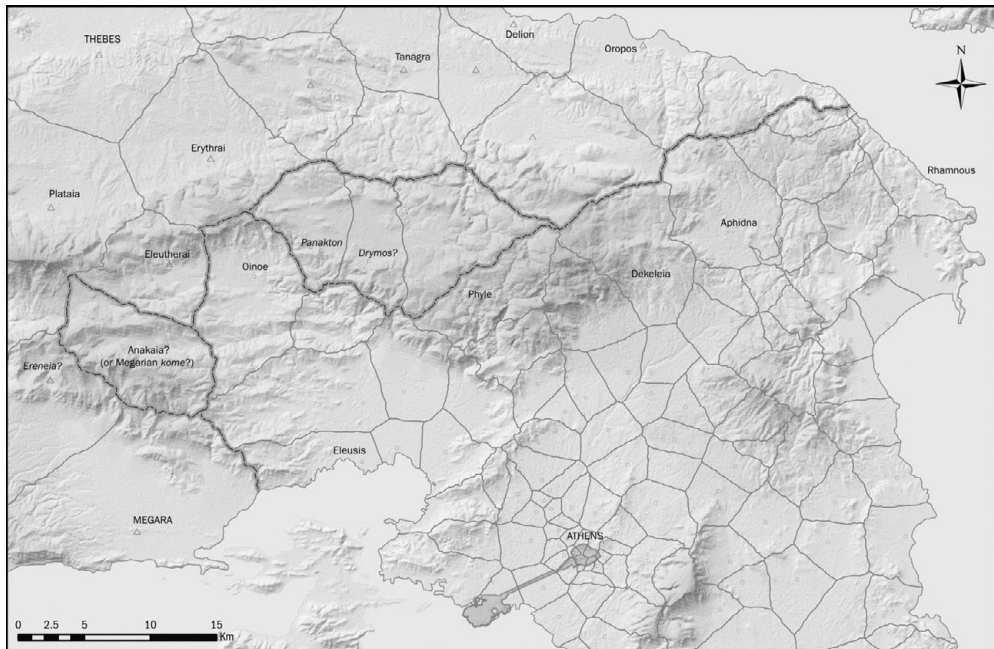


Figure 4.3 Athens and its borderlands.

(Source © Sylvian Fachard)

This process was probably stimulated by population growth, with demographic pressure impelling populations to move towards previously uninhabited areas. In Boiotia and Attica, the first demographic growth occurred in the sixth century, especially in its later decades.²³ This ‘internal colonisation’ of the territories required clear agreements concerning the borderlands. The territories of poleis expanded gradually, filling up uninhabited zones that used to delineate the borders between polities.²⁴ Borders were also marked by rock indicators such as *horoi*. In other cases, claims over political borders were more lavishly demonstrated, through the construction of temples that created a connection between core and periphery, or by other monumental buildings.²⁵ Having established these perimeters for the study of the borders and their fluctuations, we now turn to the case studies.

²³ Farinetti 2011: 225; Fossey 1988: 423–4; Osborne 1996: 70–81. But see Akrigg 2019: 85–8 for difficulties with survey data to estimate population numbers.

²⁴ A late archaic *horos* probably records the border between Akraiphnion and Kopai: SEG 30.440. For ‘empty’ zones between polities demarcating border areas: Bintliff and Snodgrass 1985.

²⁵ Paga 2021: 175–246.

4.1.1 The Skourta and Mazi Plains

Despite the difference in habitation and settlement patterns, the Mazi and Skourta plains are analysed together because interventions in these plains frequently took on a similar character.

The Mazi Archaeological Project demonstrated that the plain was suitable for viniculture and possessed fertile agricultural and pastoral lands.²⁶ Dominating the plain were the settlements of Eleutherai and the Athenian deme Oinoe of the Hippothontic tribe. The nucleus around Eleutherai and Oinoe formed the core of the settlements, with secondary hamlets and *komai* spread around them, similar to what we see in Acharnai.²⁷ This situation evolved more extensively in the fourth century. Eleutherai grew into an impressive town with a substantial size, whereas Oinoe possibly became the largest deme in Athens in terms of surface area.²⁸ The roots of both settlements can only be retraced to the last quarter of the sixth century, based on inscriptional evidence, in contrast to the scant archaeological material.²⁹

The Skourta plain witnessed less permanent occupation, as the survey by Munn and Munn-Zimmermann showed.³⁰ At the end of the fifth century, but most certainly by the second half of the fourth century, smaller, secondary hamlets and farmhouses started to appear around the edges of the plain. Earlier traces of occupation were found at the site of later fortresses, such as Panakton and Phyle, yet these did not pre-date the late sixth or mid-fifth century. It was on account of its fertile lands that the plain was an enviable stretch of land. If the area known as Drymos was located close to the plain, arboriculture may have played a significant role too. However, its precise location has been debated. Other habitational forms took the shape of farmsteads, located around the edges of the plain.³¹

The Skourta plain is the highest extensive area of cultivable land within the Kithairon-Parnes mountain range, at an average elevation of just over 530 meters. The basin is located between the summits of the mountains that bookmark the range separating Attica from Boiotia. It is wider than it is long: approximately twelve kilometres wide from east to west and about

²⁶ For the project: www.maziplain.org/; Fachard 2013; 2017; Fachard et al. 2015; 2020a; 2020b; Knodell et al. 2016; 2017; Papangeli et al. 2018.

²⁷ For Eleutherai and Oinoe: Knodell et al. 2016. Kellogg 2013b: 26–34 for the case of Acharnai.

²⁸ Knodell et al. 2016: 160–1. For Oinoe as the largest deme in surface area: Fachard 2016a: 207.

²⁹ Knodell et al. 2016: 161. ³⁰ Munn 2010: 195; Munn and Munn-Zimmermann 1989; 1990.

³¹ Schachter 2016a: 92 finds it unlikely that a wooded area called 'Drymos' would be in the plain itself. Perhaps it was an adjoining area, which equally fell inside τὰ μεθόρια. Farmsteads: Munn 2010.

four kilometres north to south. The plain is surrounded by mountains, creating a natural defensive mechanism against intruders, while isolating it from areas such as the Parasopia to the north(west) or the Eleusinian plains to the south. The shortest route between Athens and Thebes passed through the plain, which was often taken by travellers.³²

This is a markedly different habitat from the Mazi plain.³³ This small valley is located between the Kithairon and Pateras mountain ranges, but lies lower and is better connected with roads to Athens, the Megarid and Thebes. A natural route to Boiotia goes through the gully at the Kaza pass, linking the Mazi plain to the Parasopia. The Mazi plain was located at the crossroads of interregional traffic, since major arteries between the Megarid, Attica and Boiotia lay across it.³⁴ The combination of fertile lands and valuable thoroughfares created two enclaves of highly valuable districts lodged in between Attica and Boiotia.

Despite the appearance of various military structures around these plains, their strategic value was limited.³⁵ These towers and forts were refuges for the population, or could be used as advanced scouting structures to locate oncoming hostile forces.³⁶ Their placement was related less to military considerations, such as confronting invading armies, and more to economic ones. Dominating the roads allowed for taxes to be levied on travellers importing goods, and fortifications protected those working the fertile lands around the settlement.³⁷ These fortified buildings ensured some form of control over these plains. When the entire plains were under control of one party, then routes between one place and another could be controlled.³⁸

Besides Athenian and Theban interest, the Mazi plain also attracted the Megarians. A recent find from Thebes attests to this interest. The Tanagraians had stakes in the Skourta plain, just like their Theban and Athenian neighbours, as Albert Schachter has shown.³⁹

Demographically, the plains had their own unique pattern of growth. Attestations of Bronze Age occupation were found in the Mazi plain survey, but subsequent periods saw a decline in population and settlements.⁴⁰ There is a possible Geometric occupation of the Mazi plain, but

³² Farinetti 2011: 395–7. ³³ Fachard et al. 2014. ³⁴ Fachard and Pirisino 2015.

³⁵ Munn 2010.

³⁶ The Tsoukrati towers in the Skourta plain (Munn 1989) and the Velatouri tower in the Mazi plain (Papangeli et al. 2018: 161–2).

³⁷ Fachard 2013; Fachard et al. 2020a; Munn 2010. For the visibility: Farinetti 2011: 256 fig. 31.

³⁸ Fachard 2013; Fachard et al. 2020a. ³⁹ Schachter 2016a: 92–4.

⁴⁰ Knodell et al. 2016: 149: ‘After the Mycenaean period, we encounter an occupational hiatus in the Mazi plain. Confidently-dated Geometric pottery is still absent from our survey collection,

the ceramic evidence points to a rather small population, if there was permanent habitation at all. Early Archaic pottery has been found, but only at the Cave of Antiope.⁴¹ This is a cave steeped in mythological tradition, intimately tied with Theban foundation legends.⁴² On account of its mythological importance, the cave may have attracted people from further afield who came to worship at the site. Perhaps the large amount of Corinthian *aryballoi* found at the location indicates the cave was a locus for interaction, in a similar vein to the shrine at Mount Parnes, for which see below.⁴³ Considering the wealth of material found at the cave, it is plausible to assume a small settlement at Eleutherai in the late seventh century, but there is no conclusive evidence for it.⁴⁴ In the (later) Archaic period more elements are detectable, with finds concentrated around the later deme site of Oinoe. On the other side of the plain, evidence of occupation at Eleutherai is rather scarce, but picks up near the late sixth century. Epigraphic evidence demonstrates that it certainly existed by the last quarter of that century.⁴⁵

In the Skourta plain the board is barer, with no archaeological traces until the late sixth century after a four-century hiatus. The fortress at Panakton was not constructed until the mid-fifth century, but there are traces of habitation in the Proto-Geometric period before a long lay-off.⁴⁶ At the end of the sixth century, habitation picks up again. The recent attestation of Phyle in the late sixth-century *kioniskos* from Thebes aligns with the archaeological findings.⁴⁷

Perhaps a shift of the Atheno-Boiotian border towards the Skourta plain in the late sixth century can be detected in the cultic pattern at Mount Parnes.⁴⁸ A shrine dedicated to Zeus was frequented by Boiotians and Athenians alike during most of the sixth century, acting as a sanctuary shared between the two regions or at least as a *place*-based shrine, with

and the only clearly Archaic pottery comes from the so-called cave of Antiope (late 7th to early 6th century).⁹

⁴¹ Fachard et al. 2015; 2020a; Knodell et al. 2016; 2017; Papangeli et al. 2018.

⁴² Paus. 1.38.9; Kühr 2006: 118–32. ⁴³ *Aryballoi*: Knodell et al. 2016: 147.

⁴⁴ Knodell et al. 2016: 160.

⁴⁵ Fachard et al. 2015: 182. For the epigraphic evidence: Matthaiou 2014.

⁴⁶ Munn 2010: 194–5.

⁴⁷ Farinetti 2011: 395–7 summarises the Skourta Plain survey's findings. For the *kioniskos*, see below.

⁴⁸ Palaiokrassa-Kopitsa and Vivliodetis 2015. Arrington 2021: 216 mentions the pottery at Parnes was often pierced or burned, suggesting ritual activity. Rönnerberg 2021: 222–3 suggests it formed part of a wider abandonment of many peak cults, except Hymettos. Perhaps the cult was moved to Athens: Parker 1996: 32.

visitors coming from surrounding areas. Boiotian visitors are particularly present in the dedicatory record through the inscribed sherds and the banquet material left behind. Previously, the significant amount of metal knives found at the shrine were perceived as a formative response by Athenian elites marking their territory.⁴⁹ Recent analyses, however, stressed that these knives were connected to animal bones and related to banqueting.⁵⁰ These knives were consecrated to the god after use at the banquet, with the worshippers' provenance of a subsidiary importance. The amount of Corinthian pottery found at the shrine indicates a strong Boiotian presence, since no other Attic mountain shrine has yielded similar deposits, whereas the dissemination of Corinthian pottery in Boiotia was widespread. Interestingly, around 500 the dedications started to dry up. This indicates the shrine's function as a border demarcation or negotiatory space possibly ceased.⁵¹ Dwindling activity at the shrine suggests the Skourta plain may have become an early indicator of an agreed-upon border between the Athenian, Theban and Tanagraian lands at the end of the sixth century after the conclusion of hostilities.

It is around this time the Mazi and Skourta plains enter the historical record. Herodotus mentions the Boiotians captured 'the remotest demes of Hysiai and Oinoe' during the invasion of Attica in 507/6.⁵² His phrasing is odd, since Hysiai was never an Athenian deme or included in Attic lands at this time.⁵³ Herodotus probably uses the word 'deme' for the remotest regions of Attica and retrojects a later state of affairs onto the past when Hysiai became Plataian territory in the aftermath of the invasion. Kevin Daly proposed a different interpretation: he argues Herodotus' description of Hysiai as a deme reflects the later fifth-century tendency in Athenian historiography to include non-Attic lands into a concept of a 'Greater Attica' that stretched beyond the geographical and political edges of the peninsula.⁵⁴ The deme status of Hysiai is of minor importance. What matters are the quarrels over the Parasopia and the Mazi plain in this account. Herodotus' remark was the standard version of events for a long time, until his account was partially confirmed and expanded upon by a *kioniskos* found in Thebes:

[-----]ος φοινόας και Φυλάς
[-----] ηελόντες κέλευσῖνα

⁴⁹ Vanden Eijnde 2011; Matthaïou 2021. ⁵⁰ Palaiokrassa-Kopitsa and Vivliodetis 2015.

⁵¹ Palaiokrassa-Kopitsa and Vivliodetis 2015; Lucas 2019.

⁵² Hdt. 5.74: ἀπὸ συνθήματος Οἰνόην αἰρέουσι και Ἰστιάς δήμους τοῦς ἐσχάτους τῆς Ἀττικῆς.

⁵³ Daverio Rocchi 1988: 33; Whitehead 1986: 48 n. 39. ⁵⁴ Daly 2015.

[-----]αι Χαλκίδα λυσάμενοι
 [-----]μῶι ἀνέθεισαν

... of Oinoe and Phyle
 ... having taken also Eleusis
 ... Chalkis... having freed
 ... dedicated to...⁵⁵

Found in the early 2000s, the inscription differs from Herodotus in one aspect: instead of Hysiai, the *kioniskos* mentions the Boiotians capturing Phyle. Vassilis Aravantinos adds that the broken part of the column may have mentioned Hysiai.⁵⁶ While this is possible, advertising an attack on a neighbouring Boiotian town in the context of attacking Attica would be striking, but not impossible. Hysiai lies within the Parasopia and would have been part of the Theban *chora*, independent, or, as likely happened after the invasion, part of the Plataian *chora* (Chapter 4.1.3).⁵⁷ If Simon Hornblower correctly views the split between books 5 and 6 of Herodotus' *Histories* as a Hellenistic intervention, then the mention of Hysiai takes on added importance.⁵⁸ Perhaps the mention of Hysiai fits in with the narrative of the Plataian alliance. Herodotus elaborates that the Plataian alliance was an outcome of the earlier Boiotian attack on the Parasopia. Reconstructing what actually occurred in this case is difficult, but the inclusion of Hysiai among the list of captured *topoi* appears to be a Herodotean error or conflation. Another explanation is that by swapping Hysiai for Phyle, the success rate of the invaders is portrayed as more limited than it was. It shifts the emphasis from the Mazi plain and the corridor connecting Attica to the Parasopia to a much larger stretch of borderland by incorporating the edges of the Skourta plain.⁵⁹ The capture of Phyle, which is located on the furthest southern edges of Skourta plain, amplifies the initial successes of the invaders against the Athenians.⁶⁰ However, it is just as likely that the people setting up the *kioniskos* put a positive spin on the event in the wake of the subsequent defeat. Irrespective of the weight one assigns to each account, what seems clear is that both sides stressed the capture of these borderlands, as a strident effort either to demonstrate resolve or to ascribe positives to what became a disastrous campaign.

Both Herodotus and the *kioniskos* indicate that control over the borderlands was, or *became*, a pertinent issue. It was not a dispute over

⁵⁵ SEG 56.521. ⁵⁶ Aravantinos 2006: 374. ⁵⁷ Hdt. 6.108.5–6; Fossey 1988: 114–15.

⁵⁸ Hornblower 2013. ⁵⁹ Beck 2014.

⁶⁰ Munn 2010: 194 for Phyle bordering the Skourta Plain.

borderlands that inspired the Boiotians' involvement in the invasion (Chapters 2.2, 3.1.1). In the transitional period from the limited Peisistratid control to the democracy, the issue of agency in the borderlands could have taken on added importance. Perhaps the Boiotian coalition chose to strike pre-emptively. If Isagoras was installed in place of Cleisthenes and his reforms, the integration of borderland towns into the Theban *chora* could be presented as a *fait accompli* to the new leadership. They presumably would have accepted the situation, considering Isagoras would have owed his power to the military force of the neighbours.

The Boiotian coalition, led by the Thebans, would then have chosen to strike the iron while it was hot. The biggest benefactors of expanding these lands would be the Thebans and Tanagraians, since they directly bordered the Mazi and Skourta plains. Even with the expanding populations moving into the Mazi and Skourta plains, most of these communities remained politically unaligned. The Athenian tyrants undertook little effort to vindicate their claims beyond the confines of Mount Hymettos, Pentelikon and Aigaleios.⁶¹ With the Athenians in disarray, and a possible new leadership indebted by *charis*-led debt, expanding into these borderlands was now possible. The Tanagraians could have benefitted from establishing themselves in the Oropia (Chapter 4.1.2) and the Skourta plain. For the Thebans, the integration of places alongside the Mazi and Skourta plains substantially increased their *chora*, as their interests in the Mazi plain from epigraphic evidence shows.⁶²

Epigraphic material from Thebes, of which only phrases have been offered in a preliminary study by Angelos Matthaiou, revealed that the earliest relations between Thebes and Eleutherai went deeper than initially assumed. One of the bronze plaques is concerned with the ruling on a territorial dispute between the Megarians and the Thebans and Eleutherians.⁶³ The two communities were collaborating against foreign intrusion of their soil. The Thebans functioned as the guardians of the Mazi plain, defending these fertile lands from Megarian encroachment. Salient about the Theban-Eleutherian relationship is the wording used to describe their connection. In lines 5–6 it reads: κένικασε ἡ πόλις ἡα

⁶¹ Anderson 2003: 34. ⁶² Matthaiou 2014: 213–15.

⁶³ Matthaiou 2014: 213–15; Thebes Museum no. 35913; *SEG* 60.506. A new study is currently underway by Angelos Matthaiou and Nikolaos Papazarkadas. Considering the geographical relation between Eleutherai and Megara, the disputed land was located somewhere in between. Was it part of the *hiera orgas* the Athenians and Megarians later disputed? Topographical studies have placed it in the northern stretches of the Megarid: *RO* 58 = *IEleusis* 144; Papazarkadas 2011: 146.

Θεβαί|ον κέλευθεραίο[ν].⁶⁴ This wording is reminiscent of later instances of *sympoliteia*, a phenomenon more associated with the Hellenistic period. Arguably, one can postulate a similar hierarchical relationship here.⁶⁵ Eleutherai was then part of the Theban *chora* that stretched into the Mazi plain. This explains the interest in Oinoe. By capturing this town on the other side of the Mazi plain, the fruits of this bountiful plain would be secured for the Thebans and prevent further encroachments while pushing back the Athenians *and* Megarians.

The *kioniskos* mentioned above confirms the importance of the Mazi and Skourta plain for the dedicants, with their ambitions stretching to Eleusis.⁶⁶ Eleusis is not part of the Mazi or Skourta plain, and although arguably integrated into the Athenian polis since the earlier sixth century, the capture details the continued debate over its alignment.⁶⁷ The capture by the Boiotian coalition made sense. The town was at a strategic crossroads between the Megarid and Athens, and the Thrasian plains produced an abundance of grain.⁶⁸

The *kioniskos* probably concerned a ritual transfer of the captured territories, conceptualising the Boiotian attack on Athens as a pre-emptive strike.⁶⁹ The ritual transfer vindicated the capture of these lands and reaffirmed their conquest, since land won by the spear counted as a rightful reason for claiming dominion over an area. These considerations were probably not the main instigator for the Boiotian coalition; installing a friendly regime was much more compelling. If the *kioniskos* was set up after their defeat, it would have acted as a memento for their claims to these lands, especially after the Athenians established their connection with the borderlands during the Cleisthenic reforms.

⁶⁴ SEG 60.506.

⁶⁵ SEG 47.1563 l. 14: ὑπαρχούσας Πιδασεῦσιν καὶ Λατμίοις; RO 14 l.2: Μ[α]ν[τ]ινεῦσ[ι] καὶ Ἐλιφρασίοις. It is very early for such a status, but Dreher 2003 describes the process of similar early compacts. He argues these were often a response to powerful neighbours. Corsten 1999: 158–9 argued that *sympoliteia* could be used for expansion. I thank Nikolaos Papazarkadas for referring me to the similarities.

⁶⁶ There was a fifth-century Boiotian claim to Eleusis (Lavecchia 2013); the extensive defensive walling built around the town has reaffirmed Athenian control in the wake of the attack (Paga 2021: 179–87). For Eleusinian-Theban relations: Beck forthcoming.

⁶⁷ Rönnberg 2021: 68–71, 239–45 dates the integration of Eleusis into the Athenian polis in the latter half of the sixth century, basing himself on IG I³ 991 = *IEleusis* 3. He argues that the Athenian Eleusinion had been inhabited by Demeter, but not necessarily in her Eleusinian guise, contrary to Miles 1998: 19, 21–3.

⁶⁸ Bresson 2016: 410; Hammond 1954; *IEleusis* 177.

⁶⁹ Mackil 2014. The *kioniskos* was presumably a base for a tripod: Aravantinos 2006. For the symbolical transfer of territory through the dedication of tripods: Papalexandrou 2008: 266–8.

These reforms were a process of several years but the duration is up for debate. Stuart Elden argued the lack of measuring tools and cartography meant it was a long-drawn-out process to detail where the boundary lay and which area or town belonged to which part of Attica.⁷⁰ His work is hindered by a lack of engagement with the archaeological and epigraphic material. According to archaeological data, more than seventy sites were occupied outside of Athens that later became demes by the time Cleisthenes enacted his reforms.⁷¹ The pre-existence of communities alongside their territory would have negated the need to traipse around the Attic countryside with a chisel in hand to demarcate the borders.⁷² What Cleisthenes' reforms did do was to create a shared polity to connect these settlements. Communities and their adjacent lands, previously unattached, were now integrated into a larger polity that connected its political heart – Athens – with the outstretched villages and towns spread across Attica. This included places such as Oinoe and Phyle and their respective territories.⁷³ Because the reclamation and integration of these places into the Athenian polity was not conceived of *ex novo*, nor finished within a matter of months, the inclusion of these borderland towns was likely in direct conflict with Boiotian claims, and established the Athenian presence in the fuzzy situation that was the borderlands.⁷⁴ Perhaps this explains why Oinoe and Phyle received deme status, whereas other places such as Panakton did not.

Here the archaeological evidence comes into play. The process of assigning deme status is not fully understood. Most scholars believe that people registered at what they considered to be their home.⁷⁵ This act of self-identification underlines the importance of locality before any political loyalty at this early stage.⁷⁶ As the Mazi and Skourta plains at this time were sparsely populated and only recently inhabited, the appeal of

⁷⁰ Elden 2013: 31–7. For a treatment of the Cleisthenic reforms: Russo 2022: 23–60.

⁷¹ Fachard 2016a.

⁷² Fachard 2016a. Kienast 2005 for 'proto-demes'. For boundary-making and territoriality: Daverio Rocchi 2007.

⁷³ Ober provocatively proposed Oinoe was founded after the creation of the deme system: Ober 1995: 112 n. 41. Yet the *kioniskos* confirms it existed prior to the reforms; perhaps it became Athenian afterwards. Archaeological material from the Mazi plain seems to confirm this: Fachard et al. 2020a. On the Attic settlements centuries prior to the Cleisthenic reforms: Rönneberg 2021.

⁷⁴ Badian 2000b; Eliot 1962; Rhodes 1972: 191–3; 1981 support the long chronology of the reforms. Andrewes 1977; Thompson 1971 supported the 'short theory'.

⁷⁵ Humphreys 2008; 2018: 775.

⁷⁶ Whitehead 1986: 55–6. For the importance of place: Beck 2020: 43–74.

registering at places such as Drymos, Panakton or Eleutherai could have been limited. This does not preclude the designation of these areas as demes – the irregularity of the deme system demonstrates that in certain cases, the status was meant to articulate claims to areas – but with other options available, the Athenians may have abstained from doing so in these cases. One possibility is that people were offered two options: either to register as an independent deme or to register at another, nearby deme.⁷⁷ Perhaps most people preferred to register at Phyle or Oinoe. In the latter's case, this could explain *why* it was such an extensive deme size-wise, with many surrounding inhabitants choosing to register there. Another explanation is that the Athenians appointed deme status to an area to stake a claim to the contested area.

One way to validate claims was by constructing fortresses or temples in the borderlands. At places such as Rhamnous or Sounion monumental works were erected to signal Athenian ownership. At the same time, it was a concerted effort to shore up the defences in the wake of the invasion and the repeated attacks by Thebans and Aeginetans (Chapter 2.2).⁷⁸ Another expression of the connection between the Attic core and its peripheral areas was the maintenance and construction of new roads. These roads linked the new territories to the political centre, thereby forging a stronger tie with the liminal areas and ensuring that the inhabitants of τὰ μεθόρια would not feel isolated and alienated from their brethren in the *asty*.⁷⁹ Finally, hero cults could be established that were rooted in the locality to emphasise the connection between the inhabitants and place, as Emily Kearns details.⁸⁰ The expansion of the Athenian polis likely occurred in the wake of the first hostilities and was designed to prevent a recurrence. It significantly altered the relationship between the regions. The Athenians went from nearby friends to actual neighbours of the Thebans and Tanagraians, not to mention the possible extension of the Athenian influence into the Parasopia (Chapter 4.1.3). The timing of the expansion was not amiss. According to Alain Bresson, the Athenian polis entered a state of external grain dependency from the sixth century onwards.⁸¹ The stimulus of demographic growth might have pushed the Athenian democracy to expand its border and procure more resources in the wake of its victory. The victory allowed them to challenge the Theban and Tanagraian claims in a much more vigorous form, of which the deme assignment, the

⁷⁷ Humphreys 2008; 2018: 775.

⁷⁸ Paga 2021: 176–245. Rhamnous' protection was linked to its fertile hinterlands: Oliver 2001.

⁷⁹ Fachard and Pirisino 2015. ⁸⁰ Kearns 1989. ⁸¹ Bresson 2016: 410.

construction of monumental works and the construction of roads were the physical and political expression.

In some cases the Athenians went further than merely delineating their borders. In the years after the invasion, they annexed Eleutherai, controlling the Mazi plain and its resources.⁸² How the new political situation was articulated remains unclear as Eleutherai was never incorporated into the Attic deme system.⁸³ This may have been the choice of people living there or reluctant Athenian governing bodies, considering Oinoe lay close by and became a substantial settlement in its own right. Another option is that Eleutherai, like Panakton and Drymos in the Skourta plain perhaps, became an Athenian cleruchy.⁸⁴

If the introduction of the Dionysos Eleutherios cult can be connected to the conquest of Eleutherai, its introduction may have been an ostentatious display of domination over this settlement and the Mazi plain (Chapter 3.5). While there is no proof of a *pompe* to ritualise the link between core and periphery, a new sanctuary was built in Dionysos' honour on the south slope of the Athenian Akropolis following the trajectory of other 'liminal' places whose deities found their way to the centre of Athens, such as Brauron and Eleusis.⁸⁵ Whether a (new) temple at Eleutherai was built to signify the new connection is uncertain.⁸⁶ The cultic introduction clarified that the Mazi plain was part of Athens, rather than the Theban *chora*.

Shifts also occurred in the Skourta plain. The aforementioned shrine at Mount Parnes lost its function as a border shrine.⁸⁷ Another indication of border fluctuations comes from the Zeus temple in Olympia, where a

⁸² Connor 1989; 1996; Scullion 2002; West 1989. Archaeological evidence from Dionysos Eleutherios' shrine in Athens supports this date. The shrine's first phase is dated to 500–475: Paleothoros 2012: 51–67.

⁸³ The exclusion from the deme system is not decisive in assigning the annexation date: Ehrhardt 1990. A casualty list from 447 mentions an Eleutherian among the fallen: *IG I³ 1162 = OR 129*: Ἐλευθερῶθεν Σεμυχίδες; Taylor 2002. For a parallel with Plataians buried in Athens: Paus. 1.29.11–12, *SEG* 52.60.

⁸⁴ Bresson 2016: 405.

⁸⁵ The *xoanon* was carried from the god's sanctuary in Athens around the city. The only proof stems from a much later epehebic procession: *IG II² 1028 ll. 17–18, 48 (100/99)*; 1008 ll. 14, 69 (118/7); *SEG* 15.104 (127/6).

⁸⁶ There is a Dionysos temple in Eleutherai, but the remains are dated to the fourth century: Stikas 1938. Tiles from the fifth century were found in recent surveys of the site, but these were out of context and cannot provide any clues, as Sylvian Fachard informs me. Pottery fragments (Boiotian *kantharoi*) associated with the god's cult, dated to ca. 500, have been found on site, which could indicate the presence of a shrine in his honour: *SEG* 35.36.

⁸⁷ Palaiokrassa-Kopitsa and Vivliodetis 2015.

bronze shield was dedicated at the turn of the sixth century. The dedicatory inscription mentions a victory over the Tanagraians by an unknown assailant:

- 1)]|ONIO..X APMAT] ..E
- 2)
- 3)]N TANAGPAI . . . ELONTEΣ.⁸⁸

Albert Schachter suggests this dedication referred to an Athenian victory over the Tanagraians by providing the following restoration:⁸⁹

Διὶ Ἀθηναῖοι ἀνέθεσα]ν
 Ταναγραί[ο υ ἡ]ελόντες.

The Athenians give this to Zeus
 Taken from the Tanagraians.

If his hypothesis is correct, the battle occurred somewhere in the borders between Tanagra and Athens; the Skourta plain is a likely candidate. As the war between the neighbouring regions waged on until the end of the century – with fluctuating intensity – this could have been offered after the defeat of the Boiotian forces in the invasion or in a different battle involving just the Athenians and Tanagraians. Then it would not conflict as much with the *quadriga* set up after the monumental victory over the invaders (Chapter 5.2.2). However, since the restoration depends on a lot of speculation, there is no certainty that the neighbours waged an ongoing war over the Skourta plain and its exploitation.

The designation of Phyle as a deme of the Athenian polis would nevertheless make more sense within this context on two grounds. The first is more top-down. If the impetus came from the Athenian leadership, the designation of Phyle was a clear-cut case of demarcating the furthest extent of Athenian control over the Skourta plain. Panakton, after all, became ‘visibly’ Athenian as a fortified position only in the mid-fifth century. Since Phyle encroaches the Skourta plain, rather than is situated within it, the lack of further habitation along the plain at this time possibly reflects an arrangement that left the plain to be tended by various surrounding communities as part of a treaty, as will be argued below. It is striking that Phyle, unlike Rhamnous or Eleusis, was not monumentalised, nor did it attain an influential cult place to distinguish it as an influential

⁸⁸ NIO 128.

⁸⁹ Schachter 2016a: 109–10. SEG 46.82; NIO 127; Matthaïou 1992–8: 173 might be added.

border area, or have its cults ‘imported’ to Athens, like Eleutherai. Another, bottom-up, possibility for why Phyle became a deme rather than Panakton lies with the choices made by the people living there. Phyle can be viewed as lying closer to the rest of Attica than Panakton, and perhaps there was more attachment to this place for people living near the Skourta plain than other settlements. Arguably, people from around Panakton may have registered at Phyle, rather than registering at Panakton, meaning the lack of a deme status for Panakton does not indicate a lack of Athenian interest in claiming the Skourta plain. The designation of deme status at Phyle suggests this part of the borderlands was regarded as Athenian, but it was never explicitly materialised in the physical landscape, allowing for a fuzzier situation in the Skourta plain than elsewhere.⁹⁰ The lack of physical validation suggests the plain was purposely maintained as a shared region.

The integration of these borderlands boosted Athens’ position vis-à-vis other polities in Central Greece and recalibrated the political landscape, as exemplified by their actions following the victory of 507/6. Eleutherai was annexed, erasing any existing border in the Mazi plain. According to Herodotus, the neighbourly dispute lingered on and the borderlands were probably at the heart of this continued hostility.⁹¹ The end date of these hostilities is unknown, as was its outcome. Eleutherai likely remained in Athenian hands for the first decades of the fifth century, further secured by the Athenian alliance with Plataia (Chapters 3.1.1, 4.1.3). Matters were perhaps different in the Skourta plain. Four sites are attested for the late sixth to early fifth century: Phyle, Panakton, Stefani and Agios Dimitrios.⁹² The extent of habitation at these sites remains unclear, but they remained unfortified for the first half of the fifth century.⁹³

Could this be subscribed to the difficulty of claiming these border sites? Or were these sites perhaps established after the events of 507/6? Or, finally, were they left unfortified to remain within the terms of an agreement concluded after hostilities ended? The Boiotians refer to an agreement about the exploitation of the Skourta plain after the destruction of the

⁹⁰ If one maps the monumentalisation efforts in Paga 2021: 175–246, it would cross the Mesogeia from Rhamnous to Eleusis and cover other more ‘obvious’ borderlands such as Sounion, but avoids the Skourta plain and anything north of Mount Parnes. Perhaps this illustrates the lack of clarification there, unlike in the Mazi plain.

⁹¹ Hdt. 5.78–81.

⁹² Farinetti 2011: 395–6, fig. 4 and table 1. These sites all lay on the ‘Athenian’ side of the plain.

⁹³ Could this coincide with a period of relative stability and peaceful co-existence between the neighbours? Fachard 2016b: 227 refers to the lack of border fortifications in the Eretrian as a possible consequence of their good relationship with the neighbouring polis of Chalkis.

Athenian fortress at Panakton in 421. These ancient oaths stipulated that the Skourta plain should remain uninhabited and be common grazing land for the surrounding communities, arguably the Thebans, Athenians and Tanagraians:

found [the Spartan ambassadors] that the Boiotians had themselves razed Panakton, upon the plea that oaths had been anciently exchanged between their people and the Athenians, after a dispute on the subject, to the effect that neither should inhabit the place, but that they should graze it in common (περὶ αὐτοῦ ὄρκοι παλαιοὶ μηδετέρους οἰκεῖν τὸ χωρίον, ἀλλὰ κοινῇ νέμειν).⁹⁴

Mark Munn traced these ancient oaths to the Geometric period, when the plain was abandoned.⁹⁵ But I find this highly doubtful. While the lack of datable material for the eighth and seventh centuries inevitably raises the question of whether the abandonment was deliberate, the oath may have been concluded at the end of the sixth century.⁹⁶ There is an ancient tradition concerning a duel between mythological Athenian and Boiotian kings (Xanthus and Melanthus) over Oinoe and Panakton, and these start to appear in our sources around the late sixth century or even fifth century.⁹⁷ Boiotian counter-claims to Panakton can be found in the *aition* for the *tripodephoria* from Thebes to Dodona.⁹⁸ This rite is associated with a Theban war against the Pelasgians, inhabitants of the area around Panakton.⁹⁹ The lack of monumentalisation at Panakton and Phyle could reflect such an agreement, making the Athenian presence in the Skourta plain less obvious than elsewhere.¹⁰⁰

Moreover, Thucydides uses the word ‘παλαιόν’ to refer to ancient oaths and agreements made relatively recently, in some cases less than thirty years ago. As the first disputes over these borderlands appear in our sources

⁹⁴ Thuc. 5.42.1. Νέμειν can be interpreted differently, but its opposition to οἰκεῖν points towards a translation of ‘grazing’: Chandezon 2003: 349 n. 123.

⁹⁵ Munn 1989. ⁹⁶ Chandezon 2003: 331–90 treats other similar arrangements.

⁹⁷ Munn 1989: 236–9; Prandi 1989; Robertson 1988. The story of Melanthus is connected to the Apatouria festival, and (later) evidence of sacrifices for the festival at Panakton exist: *IEleusis* 196 (234/3); Vidal-Naquet 1986: 109. Sometimes the dispute is placed at Melainai but this place should not be located in the Mazi or Skourta plain (Lambert 1997: 196). Rönnerberg 2021: 69 shows that the stories of Eleusis’ integration into the Athenian polis started in the fifth century to explain the integration of that border area.

⁹⁸ Pind. Fr. 59; Ephoros *FGrH* 70 F 119 = Str. 9.2.4: *COB* III 154–5.

⁹⁹ Munn 1989: 236–42. Papalexandrou 2008: 268–9 links it to the Thebageneis (Chapter 4.1.3) and regards the *aition* for the *tripodephoria* as an articulation of Theban claims to Panakton and its surroundings.

¹⁰⁰ The sacrifices for the Apatouria festival at Panakton (*IEleusis* 196) could counter this, but these date to 243 and are therefore harder to accept as evidence for an earlier festival.

only at the end of the sixth century, the mythological tradition was a possible later Athenian retrojection to validate their claims. The Skourta plain could then have been left uninhabited as part of an agreement reached by the communities exploiting these lands: the Athenians, Thebans and Tanagraians.¹⁰¹ No military structures or extended sites of habitation are attested before the mid-fifth century around the plain, when hostilities broke out again (Chapter 2.4).¹⁰² This settlement was probably the most reasonable and profitable arrangement to put an end to the ongoing war between the neighbours. It is a further testimony to what I stated above: territory became a problem between the Athenians and Boiotians only when agreements over borders were broken or ignored. Control over borderlands was not necessarily an ingredient for hostile relations.

This is supported by events in the aftermath of the Persian Wars (480–479). An ostrakon found in the Athenian Agora, dated to the 470s, condemns the Alcmeonid Megakles ‘on account of Drymos’ (Chapters 2.3, 3.2.1).¹⁰³ If Mark Munn is correct in interpreting the ostracism as the result of internal disputes over the exploitation of the Skourta plain, the period after the 470s was marked by a remarkable conviviality in the border territories, which coincides with a relative dearth of neighbourly hostilities in our historical sources.¹⁰⁴

The attitude towards the exploitation of the borderlands changed, however, when relations turned sour in the mid-fifth century. It was a period of upheaval in Boiotia. Within a decade, the Athenians subdued all of Boiotia before being forced to withdraw from the region after the defeat at Koroneia in 446. The precise settlement remains enigmatic – Thucydides mentions the Boiotians reclaimed their *autonomia* – yet we can conjecture some of the possible outlines of this settlement (Chapter 2.4).¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Maybe the Athenians afterwards suffered a loss against the Tanagraians. The Tanagraians dedicated a shield at Olympia (525–500) but the opponent is ineligible: *NIO* 127 (Ταναγραῖοι τῶν ---).

¹⁰² Munn 2010: 194–5: ‘Two decades before the Peloponnesian War’ (Panakton). Munn 1993: 9 for Phyle. Judging from Farinetti 2011: 395–6, fig. 4 and table 1, the sites on the ‘Boiotian’ side of the plain were inhabited later.

¹⁰³ *SEG* 46.82.

¹⁰⁴ Munn 2010. Fachard 2017: 45–6 reviews the evidence to illustrate how aristocrats could find a way to make profits in the border regions. These would then have been made at the expense of poorer fellow citizens, thus demonstrating how the borderlands could be the stage for inequality between (Athenian) citizens.

¹⁰⁵ Thuc. 1.113–14.

Eleutherai probably reverted to Boiotian control at this time. Thucydides calls Oinoe the border between the Athenians and Boiotians, suggesting Eleutherai became Boiotian sometime after 507/6, but before the start of the Peloponnesian War (431).¹⁰⁶ This may have been expressed in the sacred landscape through the instalment of a Herakles shrine. Albert Schachter interprets the arrival of such cults throughout Boiotia as indications of Theban control over the territories in question.¹⁰⁷ If his interpretation is correct, that could be the case in Eleutherai. Deposits of Boiotian pottery found in the town refer to a Herakles cult and are dated to the period 425–400.¹⁰⁸ Of course, such cultic activity is far from conclusive.

How the territory was divided, or how settlements were politically aligned, is more difficult to retrace. The results from the survey detail that in the fifth, and especially the fourth century, secondary settlements and hamlets emerged around the plain, with Eleutherai and Oinoe as nuclei. According to the Mazi Archaeological Project, the ceramic densities in the plain itself were lowest, suggesting a border ran between Oinoe and Eleutherai with Rachi Stratonos a possibility (see Figure 4.4).¹⁰⁹

The increase in sites makes it difficult to pin down which places belonged to whom, but settlement patterns might be insightful.¹¹⁰ Oinoe was the nucleus for a nexus of dispersed hamlets and settlements. At Eleutherai the settlement pattern was much more centralised around the town. This led to Eleutherai growing larger than Oinoe. Another difference is the lack of fortification at Eleutherai, while Oinoe was walled. The early fortress at Eleutherai may have granted protection to the population there and this may have made any fortification at the town unnecessary.¹¹¹ Could this indicate a difference in the exploitation of the plain, with the Boiotians focusing on the western half around Eleutherai, while the Athenians tried to cultivate the east? If that is correct, it suggests an arrangement concerning the exploitation of the plain. Recent events may have led to a clear division of who would cultivate what. Another option could be to view the fortification of Oinoe (prior to the Peloponnesian War) and the contemporaneous construction of a fortress near Eleutherai as conspicuous attempts to ensure the exploitation of parts of the plain for

¹⁰⁶ Fachard 2013; Thuc. 2.18. ¹⁰⁷ Schachter 2016a: 105–6.

¹⁰⁸ Hornbostel 1984; Ober 1987b. ¹⁰⁹ Knodell et al. 2016: 161.

¹¹⁰ Knodell et al. 2015: 145; Knodell et al. 2016: 161.

¹¹¹ Fachard et al. 2020a; Knodell et al. 2017: 156. Chandler 1926: 12 first recognised an earlier construction.

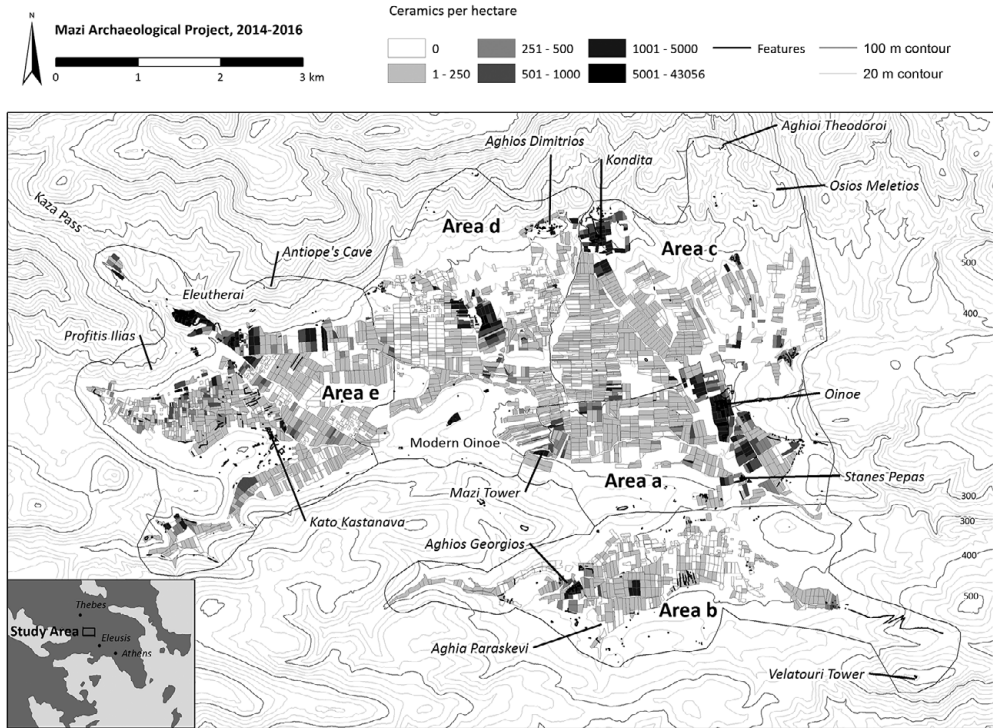


Figure 4.4 Close-up of Mazi plain map.
(Source: Mazi Archaeological Plain Project)

the people living there.¹¹² Following Sylvian Fachard's observations, the construction at Eleutherai was probably Boiotian, as the Athenians would not construct two fortifications that close to each other, considering the investment involved in constructing these enclosures.¹¹³ The construction of two fortified sites on opposite sides of the plain suggests that prior to the Peloponnesian War, a political border cut across the plain, with both the Athenians and Boiotians taking a share, as argued by Sylvian Fachard.¹¹⁴ The exact course of that political demarcation is harder to trace, and we may assume there was plenty of contact between both communities. The impetus for the fortifications was more likely the result of mutual suspicions in Thebes and Athens than a reflection of local animosity.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Thuc. 2.18.1–2. Earlier studies of the fortifications were unable to clarify the date of the fortifications, but new excavations have revealed the fifth-century foundations: Fachard et al. 2020a; Papangeli et al. 2018: 157.

¹¹³ Fachard 2013; Fachard et al. 2020a. ¹¹⁴ Fachard 2013, 2017; Fachard et al. 2020a.

¹¹⁵ Fachard 2017 on cross-border interaction.

The fortification of important sites also occurred at the Skourta plain.¹¹⁶ Panakton was fortified in the mid-fifth century, possibly because of the loss of influence in Boiotia.¹¹⁷ It was connected to other important (border) demes such as Oinoe and Eleusis via a new engineered path.¹¹⁸ The road signified that Panakton formed part of Attica. The fortified site served to protect the farmers when they were working the plains or as a refuge in times of danger.¹¹⁹ What it did not do was block the route from Boiotia into Attica: 'In strategic terms, the fortress and its garrison asserted control only in the sense that it prevented foreigners, in this case, Boeotians, from taking up residence and exploiting a valuable resource in grazing and farmland.'¹²⁰ Considering the lack of Boiotian habitation or military structures on the other side of the plain, the preventive purpose of Panakton seems to have been successful.¹²¹ The fortification helped to ensure the (partial) exploitation of the Skourta plain by settlers from Panakton and perhaps Phyle. It came at an opportune moment as well. Population increases between the Persian Wars and the Peloponnesian War made the nutritional supply in Athens increasingly precarious.¹²² The alimentary penury perhaps inspired the abrasive behaviour of *fortifying* Panakton and claiming partial exclusivity, rather than accepting a shared exploitation.

Because the excavations at Panakton offered no clear-cut date, the fortified site may have been constructed before the Battle of Koroneia (446) (Chapters 2.4, 3.2.3). In that case, the fortification may be more cynically seen as an abuse of power by the Athenians, who wished to monopolise part of the Skourta plain at the time of their domination over Boiotia. Their actions then perhaps triggered resentment among their subjects. Considering the Athenians' 'loose grasp' over Boiotia during their decade-long domination, however, such antagonism would be remarkable since most poleis had a pro-Athenian regime. Conversely, it fits better after Koroneia. The militarisation of the plain did not deteriorate neighbourly relations, since these had already reached a nadir at that point. Personally, I am more inclined to favour this latter interpretation. During times of

¹¹⁶ Phyle's fortification remains uncertain: Munn 1993: 9. Ar. *Ach.* 1022–3 mentions garrison duties in 425; Thrasyloulos captured the fortress at Phyle in 403: Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.29–30; 3.5.5.

¹¹⁷ Munn 2010: 194–5. ¹¹⁸ Vanderpool 1978: 236–40. ¹¹⁹ Fachard and Pirisino 2015.

¹²⁰ Munn 2010: 198.

¹²¹ Judging from the walking distances from Thebes and Tanagra, the Skourta plain was a 100- to 120-minute walk (Farinetti 2011: 199, 219), making understandable the preference for pastoralism of the inhabitants of Thebes and Tanagra. That normally involved longer periods away from home, rather than the stationary profession of farming.

¹²² Akrigg 2019: 139–70.

harmonious co-existence there was less incentive to cut off Boiotian neighbours from exploiting the lands, especially as it could gravely endanger the fragile friendship with the Boiotians, who controlled a region of instrumental value to the safety of Athens.¹²³ In times of heightened hostility, the case was different. The recent hostilities with the Boiotians could have triggered the fortification of Panakton to ensure at least some share of the Skourta plain benefitted the Athenian people.¹²⁴ Their actions aggravated an already tense relationship with the Boiotians. The latter now had sufficient reason to openly strive for hostilities with the Athenians but remained aloof until the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War.

With the onset of the Peloponnesian War (431), these grievances came to the fore. The belligerents expected a quick end to the war. Thus, the Boiotians aimed to occupy as many contested places as possible to create the strongest negotiating position; possession is nine tenths of the law.¹²⁵ That is demonstrated by the allied forces' attacks on Oinoe. This fortified site was not on the direct route into Attica and its attack was not predicated on military interests. Some men in the invading army of the anti-Athenian coalition openly doubted its necessity.¹²⁶ Precaution perhaps warranted an attack on Oinoe. It is dangerous to leave the back of the army vulnerable to an enemy garrison. Boiotian objectives are a more likely motivation. Occupying Oinoe meant they could monopolise control over the Mazi plain by capturing the key hub in its web of settlements. They could then present the Athenians with an ultimatum in a future treaty or obtain ownership of more parts of the plain.¹²⁷ The sites of Panakton and Phyle must also have been harassed by Boiotian forces, with attacks on the Skourta plain attested in the mid-420s.¹²⁸ These moves imply a desire to rectify Athenian violations of the arrangements in the borderlands, as well as obtain the most advantageous position at the negotiation table.

Frustrations over Athenian actions in the Skourta plain emerged in the years 422–421. Panakton fell into Boiotians hands in 422 through

¹²³ Van Wijk 2020.

¹²⁴ Munn 2010. It is striking the Boiotians did not try to mitigate the effects of the Panakton fortress through their own military buildings. Such structures arose during the fourth century: Munn 1988; Cooper 2000.

¹²⁵ Hunt 2010: 135–7. Occupying territory does not by itself vindicate a claim to a piece of land, only a pre-existing claim enabled this: Chaniotis 2004: 187–90.

¹²⁶ Thuc. 2.18.

¹²⁷ Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.2; Winter 1971: 44 for the dangers of an enemy garrison in the rear.

¹²⁸ Ar. *Ach.* 1022–35; 1071–80 mentions an Athenian farmer from Phyle whose oxen have been stolen by the Boiotians. If Phyle was targeted by the Boiotians, we may assume Panakton was harassed as well.

subterfuge.¹²⁹ This granted them a substantial advantage in the peace negotiations of 421. Their actions during these talks demonstrate the impact of the Athenian fortifications. In the original arrangement, the fortress was to be returned to the Athenians by the Spartans, but the Boiotians were unwilling to hand it over.¹³⁰ In exchange for its possession, the Boiotians demanded a separate Spartan alliance to prevent their exclusion from a bilateral Atheno-Spartan treaty (Chapter 3.1.2). Panakton was eventually yielded to the Spartans, but only after the fortress had been destroyed. Incensed by this action, the Athenians wanted to have their claim to the Skourta plain validated in an agreement. If their claim was accepted by all parties, the Athenian fortification of Panakton was justified and accepted as the new status quo. Understandably, the Boiotians rejected this premise and justified the destruction of the fortifications by referring to the ancient oaths that guaranteed the neutrality and accessibility of the Skourta plain to the surrounding communities:

the Lacedaimonian ambassadors, Andromedes, Phaedimos, and Antimenidas, who were to receive the prisoners from the Boiotians and restore them and Panakton to the Athenians, found that the Boiotians had themselves razed Panakton, upon the plea that ancient oaths had been exchanged between their people and the Athenians, after a dispute on the subject, to the effect that neither should inhabit the place, but that they should graze it in common. (my translation)¹³¹

The centrality of Panakton, and the Skourta plain in general, during these negotiations is striking: the Athenians were willing to return Spartan prisoners and the strategically advantageous outpost on Pylos in exchange for Panakton and its fortress.¹³² Their insistence on its return is particularly salient when compared with their standpoint on Plataia. Its restitution came up during the negotiations, but the Athenians were persuaded to leave the matter in exchange for their control over the harbour of Nisaia on the Saronic Gulf.¹³³ Perhaps they realised Plataia could not be salvaged, or, more cynically, the Plataike simply did not matter as much as the Skourta plain. A treaty was acceptable, as long as the Athenian militarisation and claim to the Skourta plain remained in place. It was precisely those

¹²⁹ Thuc. 5.3.5.

¹³⁰ Thuc. 5.17–18. Echoes of this sentiment can be found in both Plutarchan references (*Alc.* 14.4; *Nic.* 10.3).

¹³¹ Thuc. 5.42.1; 5.39–42. Thucydides leaves the question of the legitimacy over the Boiotian claims untreated, but parallel border arrangements – with quarrelling neighbouring polities agreeing to a shared exploitation – are attested elsewhere in Greece: Chandezon 2003: 331–90.

¹³² Thuc. 5.18. ¹³³ Thuc. 5.17.2.

demands the Boiotians rejected. If the Athenians were willing to share the fruits of the borderlands equally, the Boiotians were amenable to a peace treaty. Boosting their resolve were the recent developments in the Peloponnesian War. Rather than being treated as a subordinate to the Spartans, they desired respect. With that came a demand to revert the Skourta plain to the prior status quo (Chapter 3.1.2). These inclinations demonstrate that control over the borderlands did not prohibit friendly relations. Clear agreements over the exploitation of marginal lands were conducive to peaceful co-existence. The Boiotians made that point: it was the Athenians' disregard for the established agreements over the exploitation of the Skourta plain that negatively affected the neighbourly relations.

Another border-related issue was the betrayal of the Athenian fortress at Oinoe in 411. According to Thucydides, the disposed Athenian oligarchs fled to Oinoe and convinced the garrison to surrender the fortress to the Boiotians as part of the conditions for the Athenians' surrender.¹³⁴ What did the fleeing Athenian oligarchs wish to accomplish by handing over the fortress to the Boiotians? Was it an attempt to precipitate the end to the war by relinquishing a disputed territory to the Boiotians? Or simply a way of appeasing their new hosts?¹³⁵

Unfortunately, Oinoe has not been the subject of extensive excavations, with only trial trenches dug to determine the extent of the fortifications.¹³⁶ Therefore it is unknown what happened with the fortress after the betrayal. There is no mention of a destruction in other sources, unlike Panakton. If the fortress was not dismantled, we can speculate about possible reasons. Was it that the Boiotians did not perceive Oinoe as a threat? Was it because of the manpower and money involved in dismantling the fortifications?¹³⁷ Or maybe the fortification of Oinoe did *not* conflict with previous arrangements concerning the Mazi plain? Until there is more evidence from excavations, we cannot tell. In all likelihood, the fortification reverted back to the Athenians after the war. The swift turnaround in Atheno-Boiotian relations could have helped the situation (Chapters 2.4, 2.5, 3.2.2).

The situation in the Skourta plain seems to have reverted to a state of co-exploitation. Insofar as the survey results provide any conclusions, the Panakton fortification remained in ruins after the Peloponnesian

¹³⁴ Thuc. 8.98. Xen; *Hell.* 1.7.28 where the responsible oligarch, Aristarchus, is still remembered as the one who handed over Oinoe to the Thebans.

¹³⁵ Simonton 2017: 46–7. ¹³⁶ Munn 1993: 8; Papangeli et al. 2018.

¹³⁷ Fachard and Harris 2021 make this point regarding the destruction of cities. Although this is on a different scale, it could have inhibited the Boiotians from investing anything into its dismantling.

War.¹³⁸ This ‘abandonment’ coincides with a period of harmonious Athenian-Boiotian relations, culminating in an alliance in 395.¹³⁹ Whether that was a conspicuous move is difficult to confirm, but perhaps there were more pressing matters to attend to rather than rebuilding the fortress. It may indicate a friendlier relationship between the neighbours leading to the older status quo of co-existence, but it cannot be ascertained.¹⁴⁰ The lack of fortifications does not mean the plain was completely deserted. Small habitation sites started to appear around the plain at the end of the fifth century.¹⁴¹ But the absence of military structures to thwart the exploitation of the plain by other communities like the Tanagraians suggests the fertile lands were available to all surrounding polities. The reluctance to refortify Panakton could have been the result of the collaborations between the Athenians and Boiotians shortly after the Peloponnesian War, and the enduring friendship it created throughout the first forty years of the fourth century. Another factor could have been decreasing Athenian population numbers and thus less pressure on the grain supply.¹⁴²

The alliance of 395 materialised at a time of reduced revenue for the Athenians and a Boiotia that was about to be invaded by the Spartans. A self-interested polity, as assumed by Realist theory and its supporters, would have exploited the situation to monopolise the Skourta plain, especially when the loss of revenue needed to be compensated by the hinterland.¹⁴³ The Athenians’ reluctance to push these claims not only argues against the Realist interpretation of interstate relations, but also implies that clear and fair agreements concerning territorial boundaries were pivotal to friendly neighbourly interaction. Realising that enmity with their neighbours had wreaked the most havoc on their countryside, as evidenced by their occupation at Dekeleia, it may have dawned on them that sharing these borderlands was more profitable in the long run.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁸ Munn 1989: 235. Out of almost 500 datable sherds, 63 per cent belong to the Classical period. From this era, 26 per cent can be placed in the 450–400 range, and 53 per cent in the 350–275 range. These results imply a limited occupation in the intermittent period, especially with no artefacts from Panakton that can be dated to the years 420–370. Munn 2010: 195 states construction of farmhouses starts in the late fifth century and became more common after 350.

¹³⁹ RO 6.

¹⁴⁰ Fachard 2016b: 227 on the case of Eretria and Chalkis, whose friendly relations led to few fortifications in the borderlands.

¹⁴¹ Munn 2010: 195; Munn and Zimmermann-Munn 1990: 37–8. ¹⁴² Akrigg 2019: 139–70.

¹⁴³ Perhaps the tempting suggestion by the Boiotian delegates that they could be a part of a renewed Athenian empire mitigated the need to reclaim these lands: Xen. 3.5.10, 14–15.

¹⁴⁴ For the destructive effects of Dekeleia’s fortification: Funke 2000.

Oinoe and Eleutherai remained fortified, demarcating the respective territories of the Boiotians and Athenians in the Mazi plain.¹⁴⁵ The demarcated borders in the Mazi plain could be perceived as tokens of suspicion and hostility. First, though, these fortifications had not been dismantled. There was no need to change the status quo, especially considering the costs involving in building these constructions.¹⁴⁶ Unlike the Skourta plain, these constructions did not conflict with a previous situation that caused dismay, but probably reflected the earlier arrangements concerning the exploitation of the Mazi plain. The increase in settlements around the plain could also have necessitated this sort of demarcation.¹⁴⁷ Second, these fortified sites served an important military purpose during the Corinthian War as military bases. The Spartans invaded Boiotia repeatedly in the opening phases of the war and often took the most direct road to Boiotia from the Peloponnese. This road led through the Mazi plain and made the garrisons at Oinoe and Eleutherai even more vital, not in repelling an invasion, but as bases for raids on the supply lines of attacking armies.¹⁴⁸

A reluctance to fortify Panakton during the years of alliance fits in with the picture painted above, yet the Athenians abstained from fortifying it even after the King's Peace of 387/6 and the end of their alliance. That is even more remarkable considering pro-Spartan regimes were in place in Thebes and Tanagra from 382 to 379, possibly creating friction. The Athenians decided to refortify Panakton only in the later fourth century (see below). Their reasons remain enigmatic. It was a period of expanding habitation around the Skourta plain with isolated farms arising at various places around the plane, especially in the later fourth century.¹⁴⁹ Similar habitation is not attested for the earlier half of that century. The earliest datable artefacts at Panakton pick up again around 370, after a half-century hiatus. This is just around the time that the Boiotian-Athenian alliance dissipated (Chapter 3.1.3).

In comparison to the apogee of tensions over the fertile plains in τὰ μεθόρια between 425 and 400, the period after the Peloponnesian War provides little evidence. Eleutherai is mentioned only once during the

¹⁴⁵ According to Raubitschek 1941 the Athenians honoured Eleutherians for their help in restoring the democracy in 403 by mentioning them in a decree (the decree of Archinos). The decree omitted other foreign helpers and could be viewed as an Athenian attempt to proclaim Eleutherai as a part of Attica. But Taylor 2002: 389–91 concedes there are problems with the restoration and whether Raubitschek's argument holds.

¹⁴⁶ Fachard et al. 2020a.

¹⁴⁷ Fachard et al. 2015; 2020b; Knodell et al. 2016; 2017; Papangeli et al. 2018.

¹⁴⁸ This would align with the flexibility of the *peripoloi* in charge of patrolling the frontier and the countryside: Chaniotis 2008; Couvenhues 2011.

¹⁴⁹ Munn 1989: 235–6; Munn and Zimmermann 1989; 100.

Boiotian War as a place for a united front against the Spartans.¹⁵⁰ Even in times of hostilities, like the 360s and 350s, our sources remain relatively silent on the Mazi and Skourta plain.¹⁵¹ It is only in the later fourth century, when a real threat of neighbourly conflict was on the horizon, that these borderlands became topical again in the literary record (see below).

Although one should be careful to create correlations where there are none, it seems plausible that the Athenians, unburdened from their desire to maintain cordial relations with the Boiotians, openly defied the agreements concerning the Skourta plain by fortifying Panakton. The fortification of Panakton during times of increasing animosity demonstrates the disruptive effects the appropriation of the borderlands could have. Whereas in other disputed territories there was no opportunity to physically dominate the landscape, the Skourta plain provided the perfect opportunity to establish a new military presence in the borderlands. The lack of earlier fortifications allowed for such a statement and prevented the neighbours from exploiting the previously shared farmlands.

On the other side of the border, the Boiotians instigated an elaborate fortification scheme. It was meant to safeguard fertile lands from invasion and plunder, among them Eleutherai (see Figure 4.5).¹⁵² Its monumental fortress was the most grandiose expression of the scheme. Although the masonry cannot provide a date set in stone, there are signs of expansions in the excavated structures that date to the fourth century.¹⁵³ Arguably, the work started after the Boiotian Wars of 375–371, in which Boiotia was the target of repeated Spartan invasions (Chapter 2.5). Whether the impetus for the construction came after the cessation of the Athenian-Boiotian alliance of 369 is unclear, but perhaps this led to more effort and resources flowing into the Eleutherai fortress. The fortress granted the Boiotians control over the commercial and civilian traffic coming from the Mazi plain. It secured the western side of the Mazi plain and offered a large enough refuge for the inhabitants of Eleutherai to flee in time of peril as

¹⁵⁰ Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.13–15.

¹⁵¹ According to Xen. *Hell.* 6.2.1 the costs of guarding the countryside (indirectly) led to the Peace of 375 with the Spartans (Munn 2021). Could it be that the financial costs of defending the countryside precipitated a lack of interest in refortifying Panakton, even during times of hostility with the Boiotians?

¹⁵² Cooper 2000; Fossey 1993.

¹⁵³ Fachard 2013: 91; Fachard et al. 2020a argue for a period of 375–325 with work on the fortress continuing through this period, contra Camp 1991; Cooper 2000 proposes a limited timeframe.



Figure 4.5 Fortress at Eleutherai.

(Source: Author)

Sylvian Fachard convincingly argued.¹⁵⁴ The symbolic aspect of the building mattered too. The Boiotian fortress dwarfed its Athenian counterpart at Oinoe and sent a clear message to the Athenians: the Boiotians were the dominant power in the Mazi plain, not their southern neighbours.¹⁵⁵ Since this was the time of expanding habitation in the plain, the message would have resonated even more.¹⁵⁶ New hamlets sprang up east and north-west of Eleutherai, and there is evidence of new habitation to the south of Oinoe and near the Mazi tower and Stanes Pepas. This increased habitation perhaps necessitated the Boiotian expansion of the fortress at Eleutherai to secure a larger population and prevent Athenian encroachment. Again, the tensions over control of valuable farmland mounted during times of

¹⁵⁴ Fachard 2013.

¹⁵⁵ Fachard 2013: 90–1, 95–6. The fortifications at Oinoe do not seem to have undergone expansion or reinforcement around this time. The construction of new towers appears to date to the late fourth/early third century: Papangeli et al. 2018: 158.

¹⁵⁶ Knodell et al. 2016: 161.

hostility; these matters could be solved diplomatically if the involved actors were willing.

The territories of Eleutherai, Oinoe, Phyle or Panakton do not show up in our sources for the 360s and 350s, although we do not possess a contemporary annalistic historical work for this time. The lack of references is nevertheless striking, as the Athenians did struggle with the Megarians over the borders of the *hiera orgas*, the sacred (fertile) lands between Eleusis and Megara. They pressed their claims in 352/1 and sent an army into the Megarid in 350/49 to re-establish boundaries.¹⁵⁷ Escalations in the Attic-Boiotian borderlands were mitigated by the Common Peace treaties of 366/5 and 362/1. After the Battle of Mantinea, both the Athenians and Boiotians were war-weary. The subsequent Third Sacred War (357–346) drew the Boiotians into a drawn-out and costly conflict with the Phocians. The financial strain of this war put any Boiotian ambitions in the borderlands on hold, rendering any attempt to stake a claim to the Skourta plain – and thereby risk a two-front war – unlikely.¹⁵⁸

The Peace of Philokrates (346) changed matters. The end of the war freed the Boiotians from the financial and military morass of the Third Sacred War. They could now turn their gaze southwards to the Skourta plain. In 343/2 Demosthenes warned his Athenian audience that they must now march out to protect Drymos and the land around Panakton against the Thebans, instead of recovering Oropos.¹⁵⁹ He implies there was a sudden threat to the Athenian exploitation of the Skourta plain. This contrasts with previous years, when the Boiotians were pre-occupied with the war in Phocis. The picture of an ungarrisoned and unkept fortification at Panakton is confirmed by the discovery of an inventory of weaponry and tools from the fortified site.¹⁶⁰ The decrepit state of some of the weaponry handed over to the newly installed general suggests the infrastructure had been standing idle for several years before Panakton became a pressing matter again. The inventory is dated to the archonship of Pythodotos

¹⁵⁷ [Dem.] 13.32; Androtion FGrH 324 F30; Philochoros FGrH 328 F 155; *IEleusis* 144; Matthaïou 2020. Concerns over encroachment of lands were vented by the Amphictyony, warning possible assailants of the ensuing sanctions: *CID* IV.2; Rousset 2002: 188–92.

¹⁵⁸ Schachter 2016a: 113–32; 2016b. ¹⁵⁹ Dem. 19.326.

¹⁶⁰ Munn 1996; 2010; 2021. Ober 1985a: 218 adds these were regular forces and acted as support for the stationed garrison at Panakton. Munn 2021: 289–90 notes Panakton is the only border fortress where inventories of weaponry were found, which could indicate it was a key cog in the border defence.

(343/2), which coincides with the year of Demosthenes' speech. A year prior, the troops had been mobilised to reoccupy Panakton.¹⁶¹

There might thus be a kernel of truth in Demosthenes' exhortations, although there is no proof of an attack occurring.¹⁶² The archaeological record offers some support to Demosthenes' claims.¹⁶³ If the watchtowers along the northern edges of the plain were indeed Boiotian constructions, as is likely, then the Boiotians started to assert themselves in the area around this time. These towers prevented further encroachment by Athenian farmers. Considering the near bankruptcy of the *koinon*, their decision to invest in the exploitation of the Skourta plain becomes more understandable.¹⁶⁴ The fertile lands provided valuable resources and its revenues could not be relinquished to the Athenians. The Peace of Philokrates tied the Athenians and Boiotians to Philip of Macedon, who was the *koinon*'s ally. The *koinon* must have felt emboldened, knowing the Athenians were in no position to challenge the Boiotians *and* the Macedonian king over the exploitation of the Skourta plain. The *koinon*'s leadership thereby demonstrated an acute awareness of the geographical implications of their political alliances with regard to the relationship with their Athenian neighbours: now was the time to claim their share of the Skourta plain and boost their economic recovery.

The terms of the alliance against the Macedonians in 339/8 provide another example of the delicate nature of borderlands in negotiations. More was needed this time for a rapprochement than the dismantling of the Panakton fortress. The *koinon*'s leadership insisted on the recognition of the Theban claim over Boiotia. Whether this included the Skourta and Mazi plain is unclear. These were *τα μεθόρια*, and thus not officially part of Boiotia. Considering the Athenians' predicament, the Boiotians could have pushed to include these plains, yet refrained from doing so (Chapter 3.4.4). They did not hesitate to demand financial concessions from the Athenians, so why the reluctance to push for these profitable lands?

The military situation in both plains might provide some indication. Unlike the militarisation of the Skourta plain during the Peloponnesian War, which was rather one-sided, the situation may have changed. That depends on whether the Tanagraians and Thebans had shielded their share

¹⁶¹ Munn 2021: 292; Traill 2021. ¹⁶² MacDowell 2000: 348.

¹⁶³ The Tsoukrati and Limiko towers were built in the period following the Sacred War (Munn 2010: 196). Munn 1988 argued for a Boiotian origin contra Vanderpool 1978.

¹⁶⁴ It is equally possible the Athenians exploited the Boiotians' destitution during the Third Sacred War and monopolised the usage of the Skourta plain, as seen in the increase in farm buildings: Munn 2010: 195.

by constructing the Tsoukrati and Limiko towers or whether these were Athenian constructions.¹⁶⁵ If Boiotian, these towers limited the Athenians' capacity to encroach upon these lands and may reflect a status quo in which each side respected a division or a shared exploitation of the lands. Perhaps this was the case in the Mazi plain as well, where the mutual fortifications on either side provided a refuge for the populations and ensured none of the powers at play were strong enough to monopolise the fertile plains.¹⁶⁶ This could reflect a shared exploitation or an agreement concerning the cultivation of the lands, thanks to a border running through the plain. A delicate balance in these plains could have assured there was no need to push for further concessions if that could disrupt the negotiations.

Interesting in this light is the refurbishment or strengthening of the fortifications at Phyle in 334/3 or 333/2 after the destruction of Thebes. Perhaps the same occurred at Oinoe.¹⁶⁷ With the other main player in the Mazi and Skourta plain taken out of the picture, the Athenians may have aimed at reinforcing their claims to these lands, especially with other Boiotian communities gobbling up parts of the Theban *chora*.¹⁶⁸

In sum, the Mazi and Skourta plains were desirable plots of fertile lands located in the frontier zone between Attica and Boiotia. In the sixth and early fifth century, control over the Mazi plain fluctuated between the neighbours. The situation changed in the late fifth century, when each side built fortifications, resulting in a status quo in which each cultivated its own share of the plain. This situation lasted throughout the fourth century. In the Skourta plain, the situation was different. A less developed settlement pattern in the fifth century provided a breeding ground for disputes, leading to the Athenian militarisation of the plain to ensure their grasp over it. This culminated in the destruction of the fortifications at Panakton. The early fourth century saw the return of a friendly co-existence and co-habitation of the plain, before the rebuilding of the Panakton fortifications in the mid-fourth century signalled the return of frictions. The situation stabilised somewhat after the Third Sacred War (357–346) with the Thebans and Tanagraians staking their claim to the desirable plots through

¹⁶⁵ Fachard 2016b: 212. Fachard 2017: 37 appoints the Tanagraians as the likely candidates.

¹⁶⁶ Fachard 2013; Fachard et al. 2020a for the notion that both sides staked a claim to their share of the plain by fortifying settlements like Oinoe, or through building the fortress at Eleutherai, in addition to other constructions meant to observe the plains like the Mazi tower.

¹⁶⁷ Phyle: IG II³ 1 429, l. 10. Oinoe: Papangeli et al. 2018.

¹⁶⁸ Arr. *Anab.* 1.9.9; Diod. 18.11.3–5; Din. 1.24; Gullath 1982: 77–82.

the construction of watchtowers to keep the Athenians at bay, before the matter seems to have been settled with the conclusion of the Theban-Athenian alliance in 339/8.

In the era of Macedonian domination, the importance of the Mazi and Skourta plains in manipulating neighbourly relations was not lost on Alexander's successors. Pretenders to the Macedonian throne would retain possession of the Athenian border fortresses to stymie opposition, or return the occupied fortified sites to the Athenians to curry favour.¹⁶⁹ Nor did the Athenians forget about the centrality of the hinterland, which gained a much larger role when their power was eclipsed by the Macedonian kings.¹⁷⁰

4.1.2 *Where the Earth Swallowed Amphiaraos: Oropos and the Oropia*

Another perennial bone of contention was Oropos and its adjacent lands, the Oropia (see Figure 4.6). Its inhabitants suffered from the precarious position of the region, wedged between the Athenians and Boiotians, with the Eretrians across the water wielding an equal amount of influence. The district is a maritime plain through which the river Asopos flows into the sea and extends some five kilometres along the shoreline in current times, though the region may have been slightly larger in earlier periods. Inland it is separated from Tanagra by a chain of hills, creating a natural demarcation. These hills did not obstruct travel, as the towns shared an easily traversable boundary.¹⁷¹ Geographically, it belonged to Boiotia, but politically it changed sides frequently, sometimes voluntarily, other times not.

In most cases, Eretrian involvement altered Oropos' political alignment.¹⁷² Although the roots of the town date to the early Iron Age, Oropos' early political affiliations remain shrouded in mystery.¹⁷³ There

¹⁶⁹ Munn 2010: 197; 2021. He adds a dedicatory inscription from Panakton with a Theban co-dedicant: Munn 1996: 53–5; 2021. He refers to the inscription *IG II³ 4 281 = IEleusis 195*, an Eleusinian decree with the 'Athenians stationed at Panakton' honouring Demetrios of Phaleron. However, as Tracy 1995: 43–6, 171–4 noted, the decree is dated to a later period, with the honours aimed at Demetrios' son.

¹⁷⁰ Oliver 2007. Fortifications were built at Megalouvono in the south-eastern part of the ridge in the Skourta plain: Farinetti 2011: 395.

¹⁷¹ Gomme 1911–12: 199 notes the easy traversable route between the towns.

¹⁷² Bearzot 1989. The Eretrian influence is found in the local dialect and language. Oropos is an Eretrian version of Asopos, the river that ran close by the polis: Knoepfler 2000; von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1886.

¹⁷³ Mazarakis Ainian 1998: 210–14; 2002; 2007; Mazarakis Ainian, Lemos and Vlachou 2020. An eight-century stone disc with an inscription in Eretrian dialect complicates the picture (*IOropos 769*).

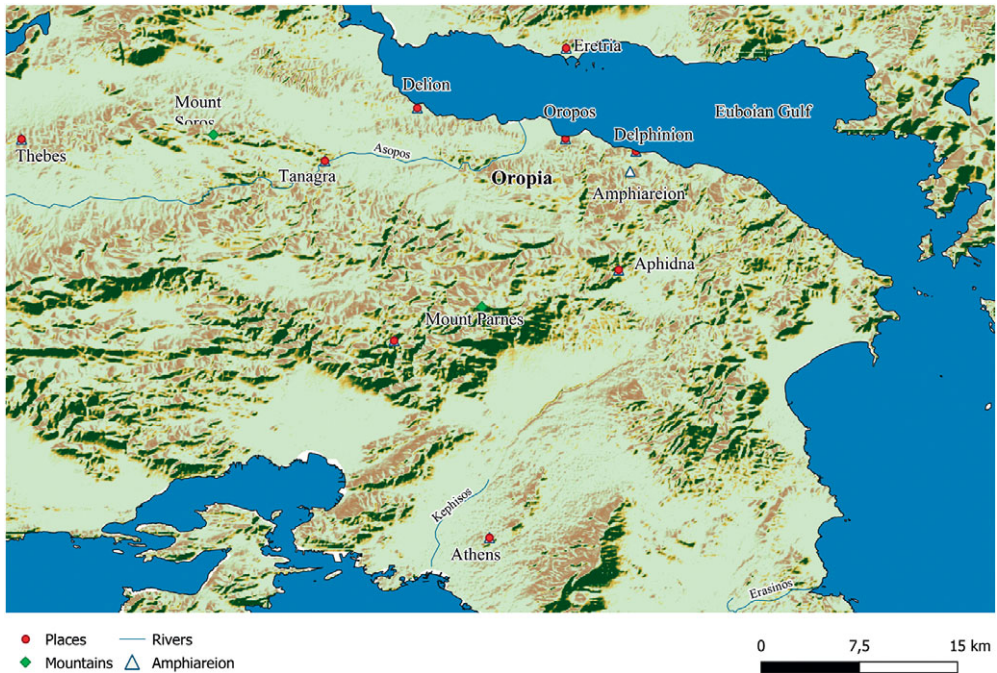


Figure 4.6 Map of Oropos and Oropia in relation to Athens and Thebes.

was an undeniable close link with Eretria. Whether Oropos was an Eretrian colony, as claimed by the third-century historian Nikokrates, is debated.¹⁷⁴ The connection remains problematic, as the remains at Oropos appear to pre-date those at Eretria.¹⁷⁵ Therefore, Nikokrates' testimony may reflect a later Eretrian tradition that emphasised the connections with Oropos. The increased prominence of the town and its illustrious healing sanctuary of Amphiaraos may be the reason for it.

So when did the Oropia become a neighbourly desideratum? The debate over the date of the first Athenian occupation of the Oropia is ongoing. Peter Funke argues it was part of Peisistratid Athens. Denis Knoepfler prefers a date after the 470s and contends the Oropia had been an Eretrian possession until then.¹⁷⁶ Yet I would contend there is a possibility the Oropia was Theban and *became* Athenian after the convulsions of 507/6.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Knoepfler 1985.

¹⁷⁵ Mazarakis Ainian 1998: 210–14; 2002; 2007; Mazarakis Ainian, Lemos and Vlachou 2020.

¹⁷⁶ Funke 2001; Wallace and Figueira 2011. Sineux 2007: 448–9; Walker 2004: 156 argue Oropos became Athenian after Eretria's destruction in 490, following Knoepfler.

¹⁷⁷ Bresson 2016: 407–9; Petrakos 1995 date the Athenian takeover of the Oropia to 507/6 but say little about its previous ownership. Parker 1996: 148 argues Athenian control can only be

Admittedly, the literary sources are inconclusive. Oropos' exclusion from the deme system suggests it was not part of the Athenian sphere before the Cleisthenic reforms. Yet other areas such as Brauron and Salamis certainly belonged to that nexus prior to the reform and were equally excluded.¹⁷⁸ There were other methods to express political affiliation, but there is little to no evidence from Oropos that details an Athenian connection, such as an eponymous hero cult or another connection to the Amphiareion (Chapter 5.3).¹⁷⁹ Nor is there evidence for Athenian involvement in the wake of the invasion of 507/6. The lack of monumental works at Oropos, in contrast to Rhamnous, would imply the Oropia was not perceived as a border requiring fortification or further elaboration.¹⁸⁰ Yet the situation in Skala Oropou, with the modern town built over large parts of the ancient polis, complicates the matter.

Herodotus' account of the Athenian cleruchs' flight from Chalkis in 490 when they heard of the pending Persian attack is more illuminating:

When Aeschines son of Nothos, a leading man in Eretria, learned of both designs, he told the Athenians who had come how matters stood, and asked them to depart to their own country (προσεδέετό τε ἀπαλλάσσεσθαι σφέας ἐς τὴν σφετέρην) so they would not perish like the rest. The Athenians followed Aeschines' advice. So they saved themselves by crossing over to Oropos.¹⁸¹

The cleruchs at Chalkis 'returned to their own country', after which they landed at Oropos. The language utilised by Herodotus suggests the Oropia belonged to the Athenians at this point, even if it is not specified that the region constituted 'home' for the cleruchs and the description may have reflected Herodotus' own time. Matters of convenience were not at stake here: it did not constitute the shortest route to mainland Greece. That distinction would have belonged to Boiotia. The narrowest crossing in the Euboian Gulf is no more than fifty meters between Chalkis and the mainland. If flight was of the utmost concern, and without any notion of neighbourly hostility, these cleruchs could have crossed over to Aulis first before heading to Athens. Yet in their attempt to escape the Persian

ascertained by the 450s, but an earlier date cannot be excluded. For a possible Boiotian occupation of Oropos before 507/6: Wilding 2021: 40–5.

¹⁷⁸ Ehrhardt 1990. Perhaps Oropos was a 'clérouquie dissimulée' like in the fourth century: Knoepfler 2012.

¹⁷⁹ Wilding 2021: 20–1.

¹⁸⁰ Paga 2021: 200–9. Rhamnous could act as a lookout for incursions from Chalkis, but then Oropos would be even more important to Athenian defences.

¹⁸¹ Hdt. 6.100.3–101.1.

onslaught, they went over to Oropos first. If they were willing to sail across the strait to a safe place, why would they have stopped at Oropos, rather than sail all the way to Athens itself? Even if the Eretrians possessed the Oropia, their friendly relations with the Athenians guaranteed a safer landing ground than the alternative of staying in Chalkis, but it would not entail ‘returning home’. I contend Herodotus’ language suggests the Oropia was a part of Athens in 490 and could have been since 507/6 or shortly after, when significant changes took place in the borderlands.

But the question of Athenian conquest after 507/6 hinges on whether Oropos was a Boiotian or Theban possession to begin with, rather than Eretrian.¹⁸² An exciting discovery from Thebes could shed new light on this issue. In 2014 the *editio princeps* of a dedication from the Apollo Ismenios temple at Thebes was published by Nikolaos Papazarkadas.¹⁸³ Originally, it was inscribed in Boiotian script somewhere around the end of the sixth century and reinscribed in Ionic script either in the 360s or after Thebes’ restoration in 316.¹⁸⁴

[σοῖ] χάριν ἐνθάδ’, Ἄπολλο[ν, - -]
 [κἔ]πιστὰς ἰαρῶ στᾶσε κατ[ευχσά]μενος
 [μα]ντοσύναις εὐρὸν ἡυπὸ ΤΑ[. . .]ΟΙΟ φαεννάν
 [ἀσπ]ίδα τὰγ φροῖσος κα[λφ]ὸν ἀγαλ[μα θέτο?]
 [Ἄμ]φιαρέοι μνᾶμ’ ἀρετ[ᾶς τε ὄλβου τε[- -]
 [..]μεν ᾗ ἐκλέφθε ΦΟ[- - - - - - - - - - -]
 [Θε]βαίοισι δὲ θάμβος Ε[- - - - - - - - - - -]
 [..]πιδα δαμονίος ΔΕ[- - - - - - - - - - -]

5

Here as an offer of thanks [to you], Apollo . . . [Indeed,] the supervisor of the shrine set it, having made a vow, discovering through his prophetic arts . . . the shining shield, which Croesus [set up?] as a beautiful pleasing gift to Amphiaraios, a memorial of his excellence [and wealth/fortune] . . . which was stolen . . . and amazement to the Thebans . . . by divine power.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf 1886: 107 believed Oropos was Eretrian and became Theban after the Lelantine War. But the war’s date and historicity are unclear: Hall 2002: 233–4 contra Walker 2004: 156. Eretria did control the Euripos strait sometime in the sixth century: IG XII 9 1273/4; Walker 2004: 189–91.

¹⁸³ Papazarkadas 2014.

¹⁸⁴ Thonemann 2016 proposed a radical interpretation of the dedicant’s identity, but this should be rejected: Renberg 2021; Tentori Montalto 2017a offer new readings. Simonton 2020 connected the inscription to the Pindaric corpus. Foster 2018: 148–52 contextualised the inscription differently, by viewing the inscription as an attempt by the priests of Apollo Ismenios, and their connection to Delphi, to ‘bankrupt the Amphiaraios-oracle’.

¹⁸⁵ Text and translation: Mili 2021.

The dedication was made by the sanctuary's priest, who had miraculously recovered a shield offered to Amphiaraos after it had been stolen from his sanctuary in Oropos.¹⁸⁶ Although the context of this 'theft' remains enigmatic, its concurrence with a possible Theban loss of Oropos is striking. The invocation of the Oropian deity par excellence, Amphiaraos, and the help of Apollo Ismenios, a deity whose shrine was the locus for the expression of Theban territorial domination within Boiotia, suggests the Thebans were here promulgating a claim to the Oropia in the wake of its loss.¹⁸⁷ I would not be surprised if Apollo Ismenios' priest decided to demonstrate his patriotic fervour at a time when the Thebans were planning a new expedition to reclaim Oropos.¹⁸⁸ The uniqueness of the metric dedication – the only one on stone from the Apollo Ismenios temple – suggests the dedication's singularity could be connected to a contemporary political context, as it stood out among the jungle of dedications at the shrine.¹⁸⁹ It strengthened the connection between Apollo Ismenios, Thebes and Amphiaraos, and the territory he inhabited – the Oropia – and could have vindicated their claim to these lands, seized by the Athenians. This reconstruction of events must remain conjecture. It is not implausible that the Oropia was shared by the Thebans and Tanagraians and belonged to Boiotia politically, or was politically independent prior to or perhaps after the invasion.¹⁹⁰

An Athenian takeover would have altered the power relationship between the neighbours in the Euboian Gulf.¹⁹¹ The Euboian Gulf was the conduit for seafarers heading eastwards from Boiotia to the Black Sea region, an area well connected to Boiotia.¹⁹² These maritime connections went through the Euboian Gulf, and from the Cyclades to the Black

¹⁸⁶ The origins of the Amphiareion have been debated: Wilding 2021: 19–46. But it's hard to pinpoint, because of the flooding in Early Iron Age Oropos, which may have caused the sanctuary to be moved too: see Mazarakis Ainian and Mouliou 2008; Knoepfler 2010 : 87–8.

¹⁸⁷ Paparzakadas 2014: 245–7 notes Apollo Ismenios' promantic skills were needed since the Thebans could no longer consult Amphiaraos himself (Hdt. 8.134). Wilding 2021: 44 remains uncommitted. Renberg 2021 suggests there might have been a *heroon* to Amphiaraos in the Ismenion.

¹⁸⁸ Herodotus suggests the Thebans and Aeginetans ganged up on the Athenians afterwards: Chapter 2.2. Ma 2016: 35 n. 12 believes the inscription belongs to the context of a Theban expedition.

¹⁸⁹ Tentori Montalto 2017a: 4. For the dedications: Pind. *Pyth.* 11.4–5.

¹⁹⁰ Schachter 2016a: 82–4 on the Tanagraian border with Oropos; see his remark on the Amphiaraos cult consulted by the Persians prior to the Persian Wars: Schachter 2016a: 97.

¹⁹¹ Moreno 2007: 116 n. 174. He suggests Oropos provided a bridge to Euboia since 506.

¹⁹² Fossey 2019: 88–94. Goods from Boiotia were found in the Black Sea region and political and ethnic ties existed. On Boiotia's connections in the Eastern Aegean: Schachter 2016a: 98, 101.

Sea.¹⁹³ For the Athenians, who could travel via Euboia and Scyros, the route was perhaps less important for the grain trade. But Oropos mattered as a way to control Euboia and safeguard it from Boiotian interference (Chapter 4.2.2). The town was one of the more hospitable harbours in the Euboian Gulf and acted as a primary port for the commodities coming in from Euboia and the Black Sea region.¹⁹⁴ Oropos' annexation was essential for the maintenance of the Athenian cleruchy at Chalkis, established in 507/6, and to exert considerable influence on Euboia.¹⁹⁵ The district's annexation strengthened the Athenians' control over the contested waters of the Euboian Gulf and made the connection between the Chalkidians and Boiotians more vulnerable, which could prevent another unified effort against the young democracy.

Occupying the Oropia deprived the Thebans and Tanagraians of highly fertile lands, capable of producing substantial amounts of wheat and barley. Considering the Athenians' dependence on grain imports from the sixth century onwards, these fertile lands provided a powerful incentive to annex the Oropia.¹⁹⁶ The annexation of Oropos also acted as a buffer against future Tanagraian or Chalkidian incursions. The Oropia, together with the Athenian cleruchy at Chalkis, acted as an advanced strategic post and undermined a collaboration between the Chalkidians and Boiotians. It particularly shielded the eastern fringes of Attica, such as Rhamnous, with its fertile arable lands.¹⁹⁷ By dislodging Oropos from the Boiotian or Euboian nexus, the Athenians secured their borders, strengthened their grasp on the Euboian strait and increased the security of their food supply.

So how are we to describe the relationship between the Athenians and the Oropia? It likely took the form of a dependency with the inhabitants tilling the soil, while the Oropia was Athenian territory.¹⁹⁸ These lands were perhaps owned by wealthy Athenians, since plots in the Oropia were sold after the Mutilation of the Herms affair in 415.¹⁹⁹ The Oropians and their territory were employed as a buffer zone, possibly independent, but politically subservient to the Athenians. Maybe the status of Oropos was comparable to Plataia's: a protectorate of the Athenians, who could act as buffers against Boiotian aggression (Chapter 4.1.3).²⁰⁰

¹⁹³ Morton 2001: 175. ¹⁹⁴ Thuc. 7.28.1; Horden and Purcell 2000: 128.

¹⁹⁵ Thuc. 8.60; 8.95; Arnaud 2005: 57; Igelbrink 2016: 175–84; Moreno 2007: 77–123; Morton 2001: 38–45.

¹⁹⁶ Bresson 2016: 407–9. Could the expansion of farming in the Oropia after the Archaic period be related to an intensification of grain production? Cosmopoulos 2001: 58, 73–5 hesitates to overinterpret the survey results.

¹⁹⁷ Oliver 2001. ¹⁹⁸ Wilding 2021: 49–52. ¹⁹⁹ *IG I³* 428.

²⁰⁰ Thuc. 2.23.3 describes this situation for the year 431; Gschnitzer 1958: 82.

While the early political affiliations of the Oropia and its position along the Attic-Boiotian frontier cannot be certified, we are on firmer ground from the mid-fifth century onward. Following the Euboian revolts of 446, the Athenians decided to secure their ownership of the island and establish a cleruchy at Histiaia in 446/5.²⁰¹ In the decree detailing these arrangements, the ferry tariffs between Oropos, Chalkis and Histiaia are described within the context of piracy to ensure the safety of the ships traveling between these sites.²⁰² The inscription, although dealing with another settlement, illustrates the importance of Oropos within the ‘small world’ of the Euboian Gulf. The Athenian control over the Oropia cemented the grasp over Euboea. The connection with this valuable dominion, exemplified by the renewed establishment of cleruchies on the island, had become more tenuous after the Boiotian revolt in 446 and the Athenians’ subsequent withdrawal from Boiotia.

What more can Oropos’ alignment with the Athenians after 446 tell us? Although Athenian power was removed from Boiotia, it remained in place in the Oropia. Was the Oropia not perceived as Boiotian territory? Or was it part of the settlement that saw the Athenians possibly give up Eleutherai but not Oropos? Or did the Oropians revolt, but were subdued by the Athenians? Thucydides is characteristically cursory in his treatment of the affairs after the Battle of Koroneia in 446, including the treatment of Oropos.²⁰³ His silence may indicate nothing occurred in this region. Oropos and its lands were seemingly not the desideratum between the two neighbours at this point. Or maybe the Boiotians hoped to incorporate the district after a successful Euboian rebellion, as the collaboration with their island neighbours frequently factored in dislodging Oropos from Athenian control. The subjugation of these revolts, and the subsequent Athenian settlement, prevented that ambition from materialising.

The Oropia re-enters the stage during the Peloponnesian War (431–404). The Boiotians became more invested in securing and strengthening their hold on the border and joined with the Eretrians to detach the Oropia from Athenian control. Facilitating the takeover was the instalment of a hostile garrison in nearby Dekeleia in 413.²⁰⁴ Its instalment

²⁰¹ Thuc. 1.114.3; Plut. *Per.* 23.4. We also find the first attestation of Oropos as a toponym in a dedication (450–400) at Dodona: Dakaris, Vokotopoulou and Christidis. 2013: 296a.

²⁰² IG I³ 41 ll. 67–71: ξ[στο δὲ τοῖ προθμῆουonti ἐκ Χ][α]λκίδος ἐς Ὀροπόν πρ [ἀττεσθαι τρεῖς ὀβολός. ἐάν δ][ε] τις ἐχς Ὀροπό ἐς ηεστ[ίαιαν] ἢ ἐς Δίον ἢ ἐκεῖθεν ἐ]ς Ὀροπόν προθμῆυει, πρ[αττέσθο ηεπτ ὀβολός. ἐάν δ][ε] τις ἐκ Χαλκίδος ἐς ηεστ[ίαιαν]. . .

²⁰³ Thuc. 1.113; Diod. 12.6.1–2.

²⁰⁴ Thuc. 6.91.6; 7.19; Diod. Sic. 13.72.3–9 mentions a 900-strong cavalry unit at Dekeleia in 408. Hunt 1998: 112–13 for the influx of slaves and wealth into Boiotia. For the fortification’s effects on the north-east: Funke 2000.

isolated the garrison in Oropos by disconnecting its main axis with Athens. In 411 the time was ripe to deliver the final blow. According to Thucydides, the Boiotians took over Oropos by treason.²⁰⁵ The surrender of the garrison had been plotted by Eretrian and Oropian exiles, but the choice to hand over the town to the Boiotians was dictated by circumstance, as the Eretrians were still under the Athenian yoke.

Thucydides records the motive for this intervention, connected to the inner-gulf dynamics between the island and the mainland: 'For it (Oropos) was opposite Eretria and it was impossible that so long as the Athenians held it, it would not be to the harm of the Eretrians and the rest of Euboia.'²⁰⁶ These exiles understood the local dynamics of power. With Oropos secured, any future external incursion in Euboia would be met with fierce Athenian resistance. The removal of their garrison weakened their position along the Euboian Gulf and took away a vital launching point for attack.²⁰⁷ The Boiotians realised the importance of Euboia for the survival of Athens and the central role played by the Oropia in maintaining the grasp over the island and the Euboian Gulf. The expulsion of the garrison struck the Athenians where they were weakest and strengthened the Boiotian position in Central Greece.

Instead of annexing the Oropia to the *koinon*, or to the Theban or Tanagraian *chora*, the external powers were satisfied with detaching the district from Athenian control.²⁰⁸ What was the incentive for this decision? Reputation could have played a role. If the Oropians were viewed as victims of Athenian exploitation, occupying these lands in a war for Hellenic *eleutheria* could have caused outrage throughout the Greek world. Another factor is the Boiotian-Euboian relationship, with the Eretrians in particular. The recent collaboration had forged a new identity for the *koinon* as the leader of the opposition in Central Greece. A takeover of a recently liberated district would have disturbed the delicate friendship, or the Oropians could have taken the initiative to remain independent.

After a brief decade of independence, *stasis* troubled Oropos in 402. Disgruntled exiles were unsuccessful in recapturing the city and approached the Thebans for help against the city's forces. Backed by these

²⁰⁵ Thuc. 8.60.

²⁰⁶ Thuc. 8.60.1. Knoepfler 2000 demonstrates the entanglement of Eretrian-Oropian affairs.

²⁰⁷ Knoepfler 2013 argues the Eretrian oligarchic revolution that followed enabled the Athenians' defeat in the battle for the Euboian strait.

²⁰⁸ Bearzot 1987 dates the *stasis* in Oropos and the Theban intervention shortly after 411 but Buck 1994: 123–6 prefers a period of Oropian independence between 411 and 402.

forces, the exiles succeeded. Shortly after, a drastic measure was taken according to Diodorus, who bases himself on Theopompos:²⁰⁹

The Thebans took the field against the Oropians, and becoming masters of the city, resettled the inhabitants some seven stades from the sea; and for some time they allowed them to have their own government, but after this they gave them citizenship and attached their territory to Boiotia (μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα δόντες πολιτείαν τὴν χώραν Βοιωτίαν ἐποιήσαντο).²¹⁰

Two things stand out.²¹¹ First, moving the city land inwards embedded the Oropians firmly into the geographical fabric of Boiotia and made it less susceptible to external intermingling. The external threat is usually perceived to be the Athenians. Considering the previous attacks on the eastern Boiotian seaboard, that is understandable. The contemporary friendly neighbourly relations contradict this, however. Nor did the move inland quell the possibility of Athenian troops marching overland to Oropos. As Ludwig Preller argued long ago, the more pressing danger loomed from across the water: the Eretrians.²¹²

The other salient feature is the combination of transforming the Oropia into Boiotian territory and extending citizenship to all Oropians. This unprecedented act of expanding the franchise to a ‘non-ethnic’ Boiotian polis is remarkable. In Emily Mackil’s view, this means the Thebans made Oropos ‘Boiotian’ rather than Theban and granted it an independent status as a member of the *koinon*.²¹³ Her suggestion is problematic, however, since Oropos is not mentioned as a separate member of the *koinon* by the author of the Hellenica Oxyrhynchia when describing the situation in 395:

All the inhabitants of the country had been divided into eleven units, and each of these provided one Boiotarch, as follows: the Thebans contributed four, two for the polis, and two for the Plataians with Skolos and Erythrai and Skaphai and the other places which originally were part of their (the Plataians’) polis but which were, at the time of which I write, absorbed into Thebes. The Orchomenians and Hyettians provided two Boiotarchs, the Thespians with Eutresis and Thisbai provided two, the Tanagraians one; the Haliartians, Lebadeians and Koroneians sent, each one of them in turn, a further one; and in the same manner one came from

²⁰⁹ Diod. 14.17.2–3.

²¹⁰ Diod. 14.17.2–4; Theopompos FGrH 115 F12. My translation adapted from the Loeb edition.

²¹¹ The move was possibly made to the hill named Lavovouni to the north-west of Skala Oropou. Tombs dating to the fifth and fourth centuries were found there: Mazarakis Ainian 1998: 211.

²¹² Preller 1852; Knoepfler 1995 made a renewed case for it. It was not the first time Oropos shifted: Mazarakis Ainian 2002.

²¹³ Mackil 2013: 45.

Akraiphnion and Kopai and Chaironeia. This, then, is the way in which the units provided the magistrates. (trans. A. Schachter)²¹⁴

Either this took place after 395 and the conclusion of the Atheno-Boiotian alliance – an unlikely suggestion – or the Oropians became incorporated into the Tanagraian territory and acted as a subservient Boiotian polis similar to Aulis or Anthedon, as proposed by Robert Buck.²¹⁵ After all, the border between the Tanagraike and the Oropia was fluid and undefined. The ‘Boiotianisation’ of Oropos prevented any future confusion over these lines.²¹⁶ An additional issue is the conflation of ‘Boiotians’ and ‘Thebans’ in Diodorus, who writes with the hindsight of the Theban hegemony and often mentions Thebans in lieu of the Boiotians.²¹⁷ A likely scenario is that the Oropia was made a dependency of the Tanagraians, with the Thebans in Diodorus’ description acting as representatives of the *koinon*.²¹⁸

Yet the majority – if not all – of the Oropia became part of the Tanagraian *chora*. This explains why the Oropians received undefined citizenship, but their territory became Boiotian. Their situation mirrored that of those poleis and towns in the Parasopia and elsewhere that *synoikised* with the Thebans during the Peloponnesian War.²¹⁹ The exploitation of these fertile lands was a benefit to the *koinon* and the Tanagraian polis. The incorporation of this district into Boiotia proper ensured any future qualms over the Oropians’ political affinity could be dispelled. ‘Boiotianisation’ of Oropos thus cemented the *koinon*’s claim to the territory. In any future disputes the case for ascribing these lands to Boiotia was solid. Should a polity accept a treaty with them, the other party would implicitly accept the Oropia as part of the *koinon*.

So how did the Athenians respond to the integration of the Oropia into the *koinon*? Admittedly, our sources remain silent about the issue. The silence suggests the Athenians did not regard inference in Oropos as an affront. The recent support for the Athenian democrats possibly abetted their restraint (Chapters 3.2.2, 3.3, 5.2.7).

²¹⁴ Hell. Oxy. 18.3 (Behrwald). Schachter 2016a: 51–2 with remarks on the translation of Ἰσθαῖοι as Hyettians.

²¹⁵ Buck 1994: 123–6. Gonzalez Pascual 2006: 31–2 argues Oropos became part of the *koinon* after 395. He hypothesised that ‘Oropos was . . . included in the Boiotian Confederation as compensation in place of Orchomenos.’ But why was there a need for compensation?

²¹⁶ For these fluid boundaries between the Oropia and Tanagraike: Thuc. 4.90–1; Schachter 2016a: 85–8.

²¹⁷ Sordi 2005. ²¹⁸ I would like to thank Peter Rhodes for this helpful comment.

²¹⁹ Hell. Oxy. 20.3.

The Athenians were reluctant to transform the Oropia into a source of antagonism. In 395 they agreed to an alliance with the *koinon*, which included accepting the Boiotians' claim to the Oropia. Perhaps they had hopes of reclaiming the Oropia by making Boiotia part of the new Athenian empire, as the Theban ambassador implies in Xenophon's *Hellenica*.²²⁰ We have to ascribe either an incredible premonitory vision to Athenian leadership or an unwillingness to force a dispute over the Oropia if it threatened a possible liaison with the *koinon*.

Nor did the Oropia stand in the way of future relations between the neighbours. The King's Peace of 387/6 forced the Boiotians to grant the Oropia's inhabitants their independence.²²¹ This was short-lived, as the Oropians returned to the Athenian fold in 374, at a time of renewed successful neighbourly collaboration (Chapters 2.4, 3.4.3).²²²

According to the Isocratic pamphlet *Plataicus*, there were concerns in Oropian society over the recent Theban expansionism within the region, prompting their approach for Athenian protection. Following Isocrates this protection came with a loss of independence and territory. In exchange parts of the precious Oropian woodlands were offered to the Athenians, as suggested by Denis Knoepfler.²²³ Isocrates writes the following: 'And yet what man would not detest the greedy spirit of these Thebans, who seek to rule the weaker, but think they must be on terms of equality with the stronger and who begrudge your city the territory ceded by the Oropians, yet themselves forcibly seize and portion out territory not their own?'²²⁴

This private pamphlet is dated to 373, acting as a *terminus ante quem* for the Oropia's allegiance to Athens. Isocrates' virulent anti-Theban attitude, combined with the nature of the *Plataicus* to act as a foil for expressing a localised dispute and excoriation of the heinous deeds enacted against the Plataians, make for an explosive mix. The private circulation of the piece further clouds the murkier aspects of the political shift. The Oropians are portrayed as acting in unison. Yet the approach only involved smaller segments of society rather than the whole community. It thus excludes parts of Oropian society less encumbered by Theban advances. Voluntarily relinquishing one's independence for protection is quite remarkable.

²²⁰ The ambassador suggests that the Boiotians would form of this empire: Xen. *Hell.* 3.5.10, 14–15.

²²¹ *RO* 27.

²²² Knoepfler 1986. I have trouble accepting the Oropians' omission from the list of allies in the Second Athenian Confederacy implies an earlier date for Athenian control, as Buckler and Beck 2008: 39–40 suggest.

²²³ Knoepfler 2016b. ²²⁴ Isoc. 14.20.

As described above, discord raged in Oropia on other occasions, so it is more likely the Athenians took advantage of a febrile situation in the border town to ensure its allegiance. Isocrates' claims can be doubted, but control over the Oropia is confirmed by Pandios' decree concerning the maintenance of the sanctuary of Amphiaraos, dated to 369/8.²²⁵ In Denis Knoepfler's terms, the Oropia became a '*clérouquies dissimulée*', a hidden cleruchy. It is an elusive term, but implies that control over the district was firm and top-down, with Athenian elements occupying leading positions and owning and distributing lands that previously belonged to the original inhabitants.²²⁶ The mechanisms of Athenian occupation therefore appear to have been less benign than Isocrates would like us to believe.

Yet the question remains: Why were the Athenians interested in annexing part of the Oropia, or even subjugating the entire region, if it could endanger the delicate alliance with their Theban neighbours, an important ally in the war against the Spartans? One needs to look at the recent events in Boiotia for a better understanding of the situation. The Theban attacks on Plataia and Thespias were probably incentivised by the renewal of hostilities with the Spartans in 373. These poleis occupied a front-line position and had acted as stepping-stones for Spartan invasions. Reinforcing the defences of the *koinon* at these places, even violently, made strategic sense, also for the Athenians. Oropos, however, lay outside the scope of a renewed Spartan conflict. Its inclusion into the *koinon* offered no benefits to the Athenians. The potential repercussions for accepting the Oropians as protectorates may have been assuaged by their willingness to transfer some of the town's precious woodlands to the Athenians in exchange for protection against the Thebans.²²⁷ The economic exploitation of these woodlands included apiculture and hunting, but, more importantly, the pine resin so essential for preserving ships. With the previous war's economic burdens lingering in Athens, the opportunity to obtain such profitable land was too tempting to refuse.²²⁸

The Theban response has not been preserved. Maybe they were as enraged as Isocrates holds, but his known prejudice against them, plus its

²²⁵ Knoepfler 1986.

²²⁶ Knoepfler 2012. Knoepfler illuminates the striking similarities between Oropos and the cleruchy at Samos (Shibley 1987: 140–3), established in 366.

²²⁷ Isoc. 14.20. Knoepfler 2016b: 234 argues it concerned the woodlands bordering Attica. Knoepfler proposes the division of Oropian territory, known from Hyperides' *In Defence of Euxenippos*, originally transpired in the period 374–366. If he is correct, that adds to the economic benefits the citizens gathered from the territory.

²²⁸ Xen. *Hell.* 6.2.1.

reference in the highly acerbic *Plataicus*, diminishes its historicity. The private nature of the pamphlet further restricts its value as a reflection of Theban attitudes, considering its limited audience already may have harboured negative views of the neighbours. The repetition of the familiar trope of their baseness adhered to their previous assumptions. Perhaps there were some dismayed Thebans, but the majority embraced the Athenian alliance. The Oropia's appealing aspects were less stringent for the Thebans than they were for the Athenians. There were no plans for maritime domination as Boiotia needed to be pacified first. As long as the Athenians abstained from intervening in that policy, it was an acceptable status quo. Finally, the Oropians were independent prior to their new alignment. Their Athenian alliance did not subtract from Boiotian territory but did take away the possibility of convivially reintegrating the Oropia into the *koinon*.

In the wake of Athenian hesitance to act against Theban expansionism within Boiotia, I would contend the takeover of Oropos was accepted by the Thebans either as a *quid pro quo* or as a fortification of their ally's position.²²⁹ A final possibility is that the Thebans were unwilling to act, as they valued the alliance and regarded their involvement in Oropos less obtrusive than a possible involvement in Plataia or Thespias. Considering their later actions and adherence to the alliance until after Leuktra (see Chapter 3.1.3), that is a likely suggestion.

Oropos thus was not the cause of friction or, worse, a dissolution of friendly relations. In the years following the Athenian takeover of the Oropia, proponents of a pro-Theban policy were still dominant in Athens and vice versa. Only when relations foundered because of the alliance with the Spartans did the Oropia revert to a desideratum (Chapter 3.1.3). The breakdown in relations reignited tensions over the borderlands.

The cold war in the borders turned warm in 366. Oropian exiles plotted with the Eretrian tyrant Themison to expel the Athenians and install a different regime. A Theban intervention prevented further escalation as Athenian forces approached, but instead of reverting control to the Eretrians, the Thebans decided to retain control over the city. The Athenians marched to Oropos but declined to engage in combat, hamstrung by their allies' unwillingness to fight the *koinon* and violate the

²²⁹ The *hagemonia* treaty between Euboian Histaia and Thebes is important here (Aravantinos and Papazarkadas 2012). Histaia joined the Athenian Confederacy in 375 without complaints from the Thebans: Chapter 2.5.

peace.²³⁰ Instead, the matter was parlayed to an interstate arbitration to determine the rightful owner.²³¹ The arbitrators decided in the Thebans' favour and vindicated their claim to the territory.²³² The basis for this decision cannot be established. Xenophon omits the outcome of the arbitration, but Kallistratos, the architect of the anti-Theban stand, was tried shortly after the loss of Oropos for his role in the affair.²³³ How these events unfolded is indicative of the Athenian position. Having forfeited their alliance with the Boiotians, their border security became increasingly tenuous. Their allies' lacklustre response demonstrates they were unwilling to sacrifice money and manpower to uphold Athenian ambitions.

This event made clear to the Athenians the fragility of their control over the borders and demonstrated the dangerous potential of Theban-Euboian cooperation. The loss unveiled the weaknesses in the Athenian military organisation because of an inadequate response to the threat. Inadvertently, it could have led to a re-organisation of the defensive command structure to improve the border defences and increase the military expertise in defending the frontier by creating the office of 'general of the countryside' (στρατηγὸς ἐπὶ τὴν χώραν).²³⁴

The decision to retain control over the Oropia fulfilled the Boiotians' desire to establish a stronger presence in the Aegean and erode Athenian power diplomatically, as reflected in their naval programme of the 360s.²³⁵ The Oropia and its pinewoods granted them access to a large reservoir of resin, essential for the maintenance of their fleet. The harbour added to the infrastructure required for the construction and maintenance of the

²³⁰ Plut. *Phoc.* 9.4, where the famous general implored his countrymen to fight the Boiotians over Oropos with words, in which they were superior, rather than swords.

²³¹ Aeschin. 3.85 appears to confirm the Oropia was lost during peacetime.

²³² Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.1; Diod. 15.76.1. This reluctance in my opinion adds credibility to Knoepfler's assertion (Knoepfler 2012) that the Oropia was a form of cleruchy, which violated the terms of the Second Athenian Confederacy. Although Oropos was not a member, this action would have resonated badly in the Greek world.

²³³ Ar. *Rhet.* 1364a; Plut. *Dem.* 5.1; Hansen 1975: 92–3, nos. 83 and 84; Tritle 1988: 104–5.

A historical anecdote detailing a discussion between Athenians and Boiotians over a town called Sidai, presumably located in the Oropia, supports this notion: Agatharchides FGrH 86 F 8 (Athen. 14 (650 F)); Buckler 1977. It contradicts the claims by Demosthenes and Aeschines, who decried the recovery was illegal.

²³⁴ Munn 1993: 190; Ober 1985a place the inception of this office between 386 and 371. This office is first attested in 352/1: RO 58 = *IEleusis* 144 ll. 16–23. The inscription deals with a dispute over the Megarian-Athenian border. Xen. *Mem.* 3.6.10–11; Arist. *Rhet.* 1360a on the effects of improved border defences.

²³⁵ Perhaps the recapture of Oropos was celebrated by the re-inscription of the retrieval of Amphiaraios' shield: Papazarkadas 2014. Whether the capture of Oropos was the impetus to start the programme, or the result of its conception, cannot be answered: Mackil 2008: 181.

proposed fleet. At the same time, the capture of Oropos weakened the Athenian economy and its position in the Euboian Gulf, ensuring the recent Boiotian-Euboian alignment remained firmly in place.

The repercussions of the Oropia's loss were felt in Athens. Chabrias and Kallistratos, the responsible generals, were prosecuted but acquitted for their role.²³⁶ Indirectly, they were held responsible for steering the Athenians into a pro-Spartan policy that resulted in the Theban takeover of Oropos. It is tempting to interpret these actions as deeds by the regretful Athenians, who were worried over further territorial losses.

What this suggests, in my opinion, is that territorial disputes emerged during hostile times and were the result, rather than the cause, of hostilities. Otherwise, the Thebans would not have waited several years before capturing the Oropia during peacetime, nor would they have neglected to act against the Athenians should the occasion arise. It is not my intention to exculpate the Boiotian *koinon* of any wrongdoing. Obviously, the decision was made to retain the Oropia for their own purpose, rather than to offer it to the Eretrians or to grant it independence. Yet their willingness to settle the matter in an arbitration shows their 'spear-won' land did not prevent them from looking for a diplomatic solution. Either the Boiotians thought their role as guarantors of the Common Peace of 366/5 propagandistically prohibited them from starting a war over disputed lands or they were not willing to let the friction over the ownership of the Oropia escalate into a war with the Athenians.

In 366/5 we witness the potential of the Oropia as a tool for external powers to influence the political landscape of Central Greece. One of the terms of the Common Peace of 366/5 enforced by the Boiotians and Persian King was the acceptance of Boiotian claims to Oropos. The treaty was accepted in exchange for a vindication of Athenian claims to Amphipolis, according to Demosthenes.²³⁷ If the compact is historically trustworthy, the willingness to relinquish the claim to Oropos is significant, even in return for the claim to Amphipolis, a loss that had been lamented for the last sixty years. The treaty shows how external powers were able to establish stability or alter the political landscape of Greece with the help of

²³⁶ Hansen 1975: cases 83–4. Kallistratos was condemned for a later, other charge (case 87).

²³⁷ Dem. 9.16 mentions the Oropos-Amphipolis swap: 'Tell me now: when he sends mercenaries to the Chersonese, your claim to which has been recognized by the king of Persia and by all the Greeks.' The historicity of this treaty is debated: Jehne 1992. Demosthenes (6.30) later claimed his opponents believed Philip would return Oropos for Amphipolis: 'and restore to you Euboia and Oropos in lieu of Amphipolis'. There is no consensus over Athenian and Persian involvement in the Peace of 366/5: Cawkwell 2005: 292–9; Stylianou 1998: 485–9.

settling disputes over contested areas.²³⁸ The disputed borderlands, Oropia included, were thus not an unsurmountable challenge to normalising relations between the Athenians and Boiotians, or the root cause of conflict.

The loss of the Oropia embodied the anti-Theban course the Athenians pursued since 369. It was a hotly debated issue in the Assembly, considering its recurrence in Athenian oratory. This reflects the repercussions of the growing Boiotian power at the expense of the Athenians. Indeed, there was no worse neighbour than a hostile, powerful *koinon*, and it showed through the loss of the Oropia.²³⁹ Of course, this partly depends on our source material. There are hardly speeches left from the fifth century. The lack thereof makes it harder to gauge whether the Oropia entered the political debate, as it did during the height of Atheno-Boiotian tensions in the mid-fourth century. Since the Oropia remained in Athenian hands for most of the fifth century, other areas like the Skourta plain or the Parasopia were more likely used as exemplary results of hostile relations with the Boiotians.

Other powers were aware of the Oropos' status as a desideratum. Demosthenes' speech *On Behalf of the Megapolitans* offers a glimpse. In 353/2, convulsions in the Peloponnese led to a situation in which the Athenians could act against Spartan interests by supporting the Megalopolitans, an ally of the Boiotians. The Spartans promised the Athenians the return of Oropos for their support in reclaiming the Spartan dominance over the Peloponnese:

But supposing, on the other hand, it should become clear to us that unless we let the Lacedaimonians subdue the whole of the Peloponnese, we shall not be able to take Oropos, then I think it the better policy, if I may say so, to let Oropos go, rather than sacrifice Messene and the rest of the Peloponnese to the power of Sparta. For I do not think that Oropos would be the only subject of dispute between us.²⁴⁰

The Athenians rejected the Spartan offer. Yet the dangling of the Oropia as a reward shows they were aware of topical debates in the Assembly. Their best option to persuade the decision-makers was the recapture of this region. At the same time, the rejection of the proposal shows the Oropia

²³⁸ Hyland 2017 shows the King's insistence on establishing stability as the main tenet of his policy in an earlier period (450–386). The Common Peace was employed by the Persian King to counter further Athenian infringement upon Asia Minor while he was dealing with rebellious satraps in the region. Athenian encroachment was an acute problem as the takeover of Samos in 366 proves: Ar. *Rhet.* 1384 b32; SEG 45.1162; IG II² 108.

²³⁹ Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.39; *Mem.* 3.5.4. ²⁴⁰ Dem. 16.18. Oropos is mentioned at 16.11 and 16.16.

was not enough of an incentive to wage war on the Boiotians.²⁴¹ Even when the *koinon* was at their weakest after several harrowing defeats in the Sacred War, the Oropia was not worth the risk for many Athenians. It was easier to decry the Boiotians' 'unlawful' possession of the Oropia, rather than act to recover it. Similarly, the looming threat of a Boiotian attack on the Skourta plain – which never materialised – prompted Demosthenes to decry the current state of affairs in Athens. Rather than march out to capture Oropos, the Athenians were clinging to their possessions.²⁴²

That Athenian attitude is also reflected in the aftermath of the Third Sacred War (357–346). Despite a defeat at the hands of Philip and his Boiotian allies, pro-Macedonian segments believed Philip would grant Oropos in exchange for accepting his claim over Amphipolis.²⁴³ Unbelievable as it seems that the Macedonian king would punish his Boiotian allies for the convenience of verifying his capture of Amphipolis, the improbable proposition demonstrates some Athenians put their hopes with external powers to retrieve the Oropia, rather than risk a war with the Boiotians.

Their ambivalent attitude towards Oropos – boastful and warlike in the Assembly, but reluctant and careful in the field – is confirmed by the Athenians' willingness to relinquish their claims to the Oropia for an alliance with the *koinon* in 339/8. Their amenable decision was partially prompted by the fear of a Macedonian attack but equally shows disputed territories could be bartered for and formed no obstacle to harmonious relations (Chapter 3.4.4).

These conditions changed with the Macedonian victory at Chaironeia in 338. Shortly after, Philip's grand designs for Central Greece began to take shape. The king granted the Oropians their independence.²⁴⁴ By detaching them from the *koinon*, he guaranteed himself a loyal enclave between Athens and Boiotia. The independence of Oropos moreover created a buffer to weaken the *koinon*'s defences, in addition to other changes in the political landscape of Boiotia.²⁴⁵ Scholars viewed the detachment of the Oropia as a punishment for the *koinon*, which it clearly was. But at the

²⁴¹ Milns 2000 argued Demosthenes' plea was too convoluted but that does not diminish the lack of appeal for recapturing the Oropia.

²⁴² Dem. 19.326: 'Instead of recovering Oropos, we are making an armed expedition to secure Drymos and the lands around Panakton.'

²⁴³ Dem. 5.9–10; 8.64; 9.11; 19.35–8, 41, 44, 68; Aeschin. 1.169; 2.119. How credible these accusations are coming from Demosthenes is debatable.

²⁴⁴ Knoepfler 2001b: 371–85. ²⁴⁵ Gartland 2016b.

same time, it endangered Athenian defences. Philip could now land troops close to the Attic border and march in should the situation require it.

The detachment of the Oropians also had a more devious effect: it transformed the territory into something that could be used to influence the Athenians or the *koinon*. Unlike the Persian King or the Spartans, who could only confirm the status quo or promise the recapture of the territory, Philip's military power enabled him to actually grant these lands to loyal allies. Whether he was planning to eventually grant the Oropia to another polis is unknown. Perhaps he would have done so after a successful campaign against the Persians. Regardless of future intentions, he created a situation in which he or any future Macedonian king could use it as a reward for unconditional loyalty, a prerogative unavailable to earlier powers.

His foresight was confirmed during the Theban rebellion at the start of his son's reign (335). After Alexander subjugated the Thebans and destroyed their city, Oropos was reverted to the Athenians for the latter's loyalty and to punish the Oropians for supporting competitors for the Macedonian throne (Chapters 2.7, 5.3). By putting them under Athenian control, he availed himself of this opportunity to reward the Athenians for their reticent attitude during the Theban revolt and strengthen the position of his loyal subjects in Central Greece. The Oropia was thus the perfect pawn for Alexander to play on the chessboard that was Central Greece.

The subsequent treatment of the district by the Athenians reveals the economic impact of the Oropia's return. In addition to the lavish celebrations to commemorate its return, the exploitation of its lands demonstrated the profits the citizens garnered from the new lands. A law on the Lesser Panathenaia details the conditions for funding the sacrifices to the goddess Athena from the proceedings of leases on properties in the Nea.²⁴⁶ Another law details the allocation of territory in the Oropia along tribal lines.²⁴⁷ These changes formed part of the extensive Lycurgan programme, aimed at rejuvenating the economy and strengthening its military.²⁴⁸ The important place of the Oropia within the Lycurgan scheme is clear from the increased efforts to promulgate Athenian control at the sanctuary of Amphiaraios. The clearest indication thereof comes from the ephebic presence at the

²⁴⁶ RO 81. Whether the Nea comprised all of the Oropia (Knoepfler 2012), or only a part (Papazarkadas 2009) is debated. Langdon 1987; 2016 locates Nea elsewhere, but his suggestions (small volcanic islets) are unconvincing.

²⁴⁷ *Agora* XVI 84; Knoepfler 2012; 2016b; Papazarkadas 2009a; 2011: 22.

²⁴⁸ Humphreys 2004: 77–130.

Amphiareion, confirming the sanctuary and its lands belonged to Athens, guarded by its forces (Chapter 5.3).²⁴⁹

In contrast to earlier times, there was no Athenian garrison in the Oropia. One possible explanation is the presence of a garrison at Rhamnous. Another holds that a garrison-free Oropos was imposed by Alexander.²⁵⁰ If this is correct, the de-militarisation of the zone means Alexander could intervene in Oropos should the Athenians resist him, reminding them how this liminal land served as a gateway to Attica for the Macedonians. The gift of the Oropia was a friendly gesture, but equally a reminder of the new state of affairs in Greece. Nevertheless, the decision to grant Oropos to the Athenians was a sound one. Actions against the Macedonians would now inevitably be weighed against the territorial repercussions of a rebellious attitude, especially since Philip and Alexander had shown no qualms about enforcing territorial changes to regulate the Greek poleis' behaviour towards the Macedonians. Judging from the rapid succession of political changes in the Oropia's fortunes under the Diadochoi, it seems the successors to the Macedonian throne took a page from the same book, employing the Oropia as the ideal tool to recalibrate and sway the loyalties of poleis in Central Greece.²⁵¹

In sum, the Oropia was a bone of contention between the Athenians and Boiotians, possibly as early as the sixth century. The fortunes of its inhabitants were often dependent on the fluctuations of power in Central Greece, with waning Athenian influence giving way to Eretrian involvement and Boiotian control. Its status as a desideratum is undeniable. Yet it became only one in the fourth century, when the Oropia became a frequent *topos* in Athenian oratory to signify the state of affairs since the rise of Boiotian power. What is striking is the different treatment of the Oropians. Whereas the Athenians exploited the lands like a cleruchy, the Boiotians integrated the Oropia into their *koinon*, rather than keeping it as a separate territory to be exploited.²⁵² Perhaps this attitude, combined with the change of fortunes in Boiotian power, explains why the Oropia was always forcibly

²⁴⁹ The Boiotian military convention of 287 demonstrates their military control over the region, as cavalry forces patrol and protect the Oropia: Etienne and Roesch 1978.

²⁵⁰ Knoepfler 2012: 454.

²⁵¹ The Athenians lost control over the Oropia in 323, after their participation in the Hellenic War. In 312 Oropos became Boiotian by virtue of Antigonos' general Polemaios (Diod. 19.57–61). In either 307 or 304 Demetrios Poliorketes reverted the Oropia to the Athenians (Roesch 1982: 429). In 295 the Oropians were perhaps independent, before becoming a member of the *koinon* in 287 (Etienne and Roesch 1978: 374).

²⁵² Wilding 2021: 47–190.

detached from the *koinon* by external forces, but chose to detach itself from the Athenians when the occasion arose.

That difference in attitude is reflected in later times. Two examples suffice to illustrate the point. In 295 the Oropians proclaim their utility to the Boiotian *koinon* should they obtain the funds to repair the city's walls, demonstrating a willingness to belong to the *koinon* and contribute as a member.²⁵³ The situation was different during Roman rule. The *koinon* had hardly been disbanded by the Romans before the Athenians launched a full-scale attack on the Oropia to reconquer this territory. Undoubtedly their audacity was fuelled by their friendship with the Romans, but they were severely punished.²⁵⁴ The longing for this district continued inexorably, as ephebes visited the shrine on their obligatory tour of Attica in 122/1, as if it belonged to Athens.²⁵⁵ The Oropia continued to occupy the minds of the Athenians long after their position in the Greek world became dependent on external powers such as the Macedonians and the Romans. It was these external powers who determined the political alignment of the Oropia instead of direct neighbourly interaction, a fate in which the Boiotians perhaps acquiesced more than the Athenians did.

4.1.3 *In the Shadow of Mount Kithairon: Plataia and the Parasopia*

Nestled beneath the slopes of Mount Kithairon, Plataia and the Parasopia were the ideal guardians to discourage hostile forces from entering Boiotia (see Figure 4.7). The passes over Mount Kithairon connected the main axis between the Peloponnese and northern Greece running through the Corinthia and Megarid.²⁵⁶ The inclusion of Plataia into a common Boiotian polity was of paramount importance. Conversely, from an Athenian perspective the town could act as the perfect outpost to obstruct incursions into Attica from Boiotia.

The Parasopia runs from Mount Kithairon in the south to the Soros range in the north. The eastern border is marked by the Asopos gorge to the east of the modern town of Asopia. A defining feature of the district is the Asopos river, which flows through the entire region as it hugs the border between Thebes and Plataia.²⁵⁷ In the south lies the town of Hysiai, which acts as the gateway to the Mazi plain, which can be reached through

²⁵³ *Ioropos* 303 l. 5 (295–285); *Ioropos* 302 (Circa 285); Post 2019.

²⁵⁴ Buraselis 2018: 152 n. 30. The Oropians rewarded an Achaian who helped prevent the takeover: *Ioropos* 307.

²⁵⁵ *IG* II² 1006 ll. 70–1. ²⁵⁶ Konecny et al. 2013. ²⁵⁷ Farinetti 2011: 179–80.

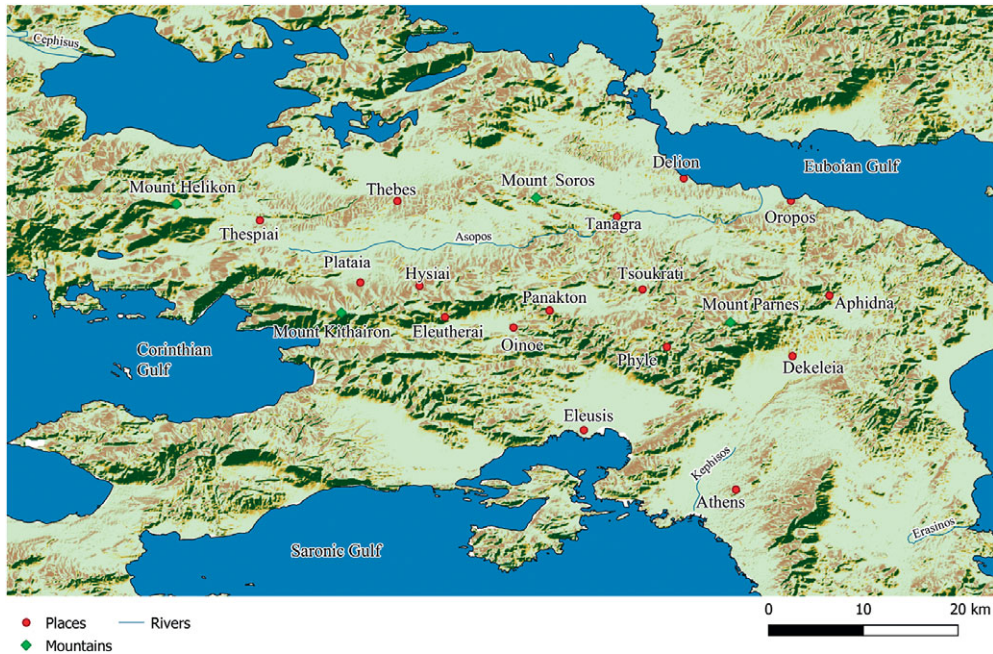


Figure 4.7 Plataia and its relation to Thebes, Athens and other borderlands.

the Kaza pass.²⁵⁸ The Parasopia is dominated by plain landscapes, even at a higher altitude, with the exceptions of those parts lodged beneath Mount Kithairon. The river provides further alluvial deposits, creating a long, narrow stretch of fertile lands located on easily reachable lands.

On a local level, the fertile lands of the Plataike, courtesy of the alluvial deposits from the Asopos river, were eyed by their more prosperous and stronger neighbours in Boiotia, the Thebans and the Tanagraians.²⁵⁹ The latter should not be overlooked, despite the lack of interest in their role by previous scholars.²⁶⁰ There was thus a tripartite intra-regional rivalry for the resources of the Parasopia. The convulsions on the Attic-Boiotian frontier, including Athenian interference on behalf of the Plataians, should be seen from that perspective.

The earliest clashes occurred at the end of the sixth century. Around that time a pattern of 'Boiotian' expansionism in the Parasopia can be detected

²⁵⁸ Fachard et al. 2020a.

²⁵⁹ The Tanagraian border in the Parasopia probably hugged the town of Skolos: Schachter 2016a: 95–6.

²⁶⁰ The defeated enemy in *NIO* 127 (525–500) is ineligible (Ταναγραῖσι τὸν . . .) but perhaps the Tanagraians fought the Plataians over a border dispute.

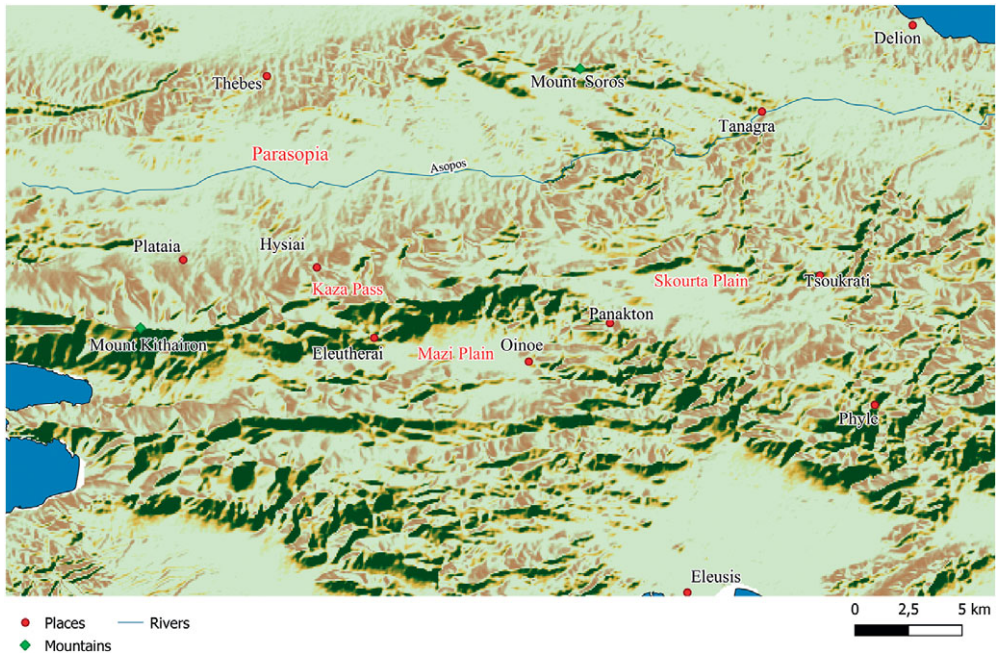


Figure 4.8 Close-up of Parasopia.

(see Figure 4.8). Ephoros describes a group called the Thebagenis, which were communities added to Thebes:

As to what the difference is between Thebagenis and the Thebans, in his second book Ephoros says: ‘The latter were counted amongst the Boiotians; the former enjoyed independence on the border with Attica, until many years later the Thebans annexed them. They were a mixture from many places and dwelt in the land beneath Kithairon and that opposite Euboia; their name was Thebagenis, because they were added to the other Boiotians by the Thebans.’ (trans. E. Mackil)²⁶¹

The symbolical expression of this dependency came in the form of tripods, dedicated at the temple of Apollo Ismenios in Thebes.²⁶² These

²⁶¹ Mackil 2013: 48–9; Ephoros FGrH 70 F21. Another source for the identification of the communities comes from *Hell. Oxy.* 19.3 (Behrwald), who enumerates the communities that *synoikised* with Thebes during the Peloponnesian War: Erythrai, Skaphai, Skolos, Schoinos, Aulis and Potniai.

²⁶² Dedications: Keramopoulos 1917: 64. Certain tripods support a restoration of Parasopia communities: Mackil 2013: 159: [- - - Ἀπόλλωνι Ποτινίῃς . . .]. Integration Potniai: Strabo 9.2.24; SEG 22.417; SEG 31.504; Keramopoulos 1930-1: 106: [Ἀπόλλωνι] ἡσιμ[ενίοι- - -] - - - - - εἶες κα- - - - - (; [Ἀπόλλωνι] ἡσιμεινίοι [- - -] μιο ἄρχοντος [- - -] νεῖες ἀνέθειαν. COB I 83 n.2, 81 n.2 suggests [Θεβαγεν]εἶες or [Θεβαγε]νεῖες. A dedication from the sanctuary to the hero

dedications were an open admission of loyalty to the Thebans as Nassos Papalexandrou clarifies.²⁶³ It could have occurred in the context of the border conflicts at the end of the sixth century, with the Thebans establishing a firmer grasp over these disputed lands.

Because these communities were all located in the Parasopia, the Thebans, acting as proxies for the Boiotoi, may have wished to confirm their loyalty. It firmed up their control of the borderlands, especially in the wake of their attack on Attica in 507/6. Perhaps the Plataians were asked for a similar display due to their previous ties to the Athenians, or because the Thebans required the support of this strategically important polis. This pressure led to the Atheno-Plataian alliance in the later sixth century (Chapter 3.1.1).

That interpretation tallies well with Herodotus' account. The Plataians were hard-pressed by the Thebans to contribute to the Boiotoi.²⁶⁴ Normally, the verb 'πικρῶ' is used in the *Histories* to denote control over resources and often involves border disputes. Presumably, the Thebans and Tanagraians were pressuring the Plataians for resources in the campaign against the Athenians, or for the subjugation of the Parasopia. The subsequent settlement by the Corinthians of this intra-Boiotian dispute, in which the outlines of the respective *chorai* of both poleis were affixed with parts of the Parasopia granted to surrounding Boiotian communities, supports this interpretation. This can be gathered from Herodotus' remark that the Athenians, after their victory over the Boiotians, went beyond the boundaries set by the Corinthians. They then fixed the boundary between Thebes and Plataia at the Asopos river.²⁶⁵ An additional clause prohibited the Thebans from (militarily) acting against communities unwilling to 'τελέειν' to the Boiotoi.²⁶⁶

The translation of this verb has caused some debate. Emily Mackil proposed an interpretation that incorporates the financial connotations of the verb in Herodotus' work by translating the phrase as 'contributing to the Boiotoi'.²⁶⁷ These contributions could have taken the form of

Ptoios at Kastraki (c. 500) is attributed to the Thebageneis: *SEG* 44.406 ([--]ἐνιες); Ducat 1971: 430 no. 278. *COB* III 13 suggested both Erchomenies (Orchomenos) or Thebageneis. A Theban epitaph reads Thebageneis, suggesting they were perceived as a separate community: *Inglese* 2012: 23.

²⁶³ Papalexandrou 2005: 37–42; 2008: 266–8. ²⁶⁴ Hdt. 6.108.2: πικρῶς ἐύμεινοι ὑπὸ Θηβαίων.

²⁶⁵ Hdt. 6.108.6. This will be treated more in detail below. ²⁶⁶ Hdt. 6.108.4.

²⁶⁷ Mackil 2013: 27. Most scholars translate it as 'joining the Boiotoi'. There are precedents for this translation, but it disregards the financial connotations of the verb in Herodotus' work: Bakhuizen 1994: 309–16. Waanders 1983: 111 suggests 'to be counted amongst' (compare

economic support or a demonstration of loyalty similar to those made by the Thebageneis. The latter interpretation carries economic connotations: transferring territory equally included its resources. This was a radical departure from the previous relationship, based on the (unpublished) bronze plaques found in Thebes detailing the sales of lands from all over Boiotia. These mention Theban-owned possessions in the Parasopia (ἐπ' Ἀσοπῶ; δι' Ἀσοπῶ and ποτ' Εὐάκροιδι' Ἀσοπῶ), suggesting the borders had not been an issue hitherto.²⁶⁸ One could even claim the neighbours lived in peaceful co-existence.²⁶⁹

If it concerned a transfer of territory under the guise of sharing in *ta patria* of the *koinon*, the Plataians' reluctance to 'contribute' is more understandable. Surrendering the land was not just symbolic; with it came a loss of autonomy, unlike the Athenian alliance. Although the relationship was hierarchical, a status as an Athenian protectorate was preferable, because it shielded the Plataians from further aggression in exchange for their political autonomy, but without relinquishing their *chora* (Chapters 3.1.1, 3.5).²⁷⁰ For the Athenians such an arrangement was preferable too. As an emerging power, the support of a subordinate polis granted them not only prestige, but also manpower. The Plataians, through their strategic location overseeing the passes at Mount Kithairon, could act as a buffer against Boiotian aggression and possibly offered direct access to a harbour on the Corinthian Gulf.²⁷¹

The Plataians and Athenians may have forged a symbolic physical connection of their symbiosis. If Plutarch's testimony of the Battle of Plataia in 479 is to be accepted, the Plataians removed their *horoi* demarcating their border with the Athenians prior to the battle. This created a contiguous territory, in accordance with an oracle that proclaimed the battle would be won on Athenian soil in the plain of Eleusinian Demeter and Kore. Apparently, an abandoned shrine dedicated to the goddesses was found on the border, implying the cult had been established there. This probably reflects a later tradition. If it does not, the shrine may have been a vestige of the late sixth century, with the sanctuary demarcating the border,

Schachter 2000: 13–14). Hammond 2000 suggested 'to subscribe to the Boiotoi'. He mentions τελέειν normally implies 'to pay taxes'.

²⁶⁸ Matthaiou 2014.

²⁶⁹ Thuc. 3.61.2 for Theban claims of an ancient Plataian alliance during the trial in 427 (Chapter 3.1.1). Perhaps the lack of any fortifications at Plataia is a further indication as well: Hüllden 2020: 368–70.

²⁷⁰ Plutarch details the peculiarities of the border: Plut. *Arist.* 11.7–8; Prandi 1985.

²⁷¹ Freitag 2005: 315 refers to an undocumented Plataian harbour. Konecny et al. 2013: 51 mention a late archaic statue of Poseidon indicating a temple near the town's harbour but see *BE* 2014 no. 209 against this identification.

since Demeter's temples frequently fulfilled that role. The cult was used in other contexts to articulate kinship ties or, more forcibly, the expansion of the Athenian sphere of influence (Chapter 3.5).²⁷² The reference to separate *chorai* conforms with the outline of the Plataian-Athenian alliance and implies the possibility of a cultic exchange. The cult then articulated the border and was part of an effort to strengthen the relationship.

Plataia's alliance with the Athenians tallies well with the context of the Athenian politicisation of the borderlands in the wake of the invasion of 507/6. Theban actions and insistence on displays of loyalty drew the Plataians into the conflict and allowed the Athenians to mingle in Boiotian affairs, which they did with great effectiveness. Fresh from their victory over the Boiotians in 507/6, the Athenians took affirmative actions to stymie the possibility of future incursions into their territory. One preventive step was the alliance with the Plataians. Their territory was expanded to buttress their role as a buffer against Thebans and Tanagraians: 'The Athenians went beyond the boundaries the Corinthians had made for the Plataians, fixing the Asopos river as the boundary for the Thebans in the direction of Plataia and Hysiai.'²⁷³

It was an obvious boost to the Plataians. But the original arbitration is even more striking, since it favoured the Thebans and the Tanagraians. Otherwise, the Athenians could not have surpassed the Corinthian demarcation by affixing the Asopos river as the new boundary, since the river is equidistant from both Thebes and Plataia and cuts across their respective *chorai*.²⁷⁴ The new border arrangement strengthened the Plataians' position within Boiotia by incorporating Erythrai and Hysiai, adding manpower and resources while removing them from the Thebans and Tanagraians.²⁷⁵ Drawing the border at the river, moreover, added a barrier against future incursions, with its currents slowing down enemy troop movements.²⁷⁶ The Asopos river symbolically represented the recalibration of the political relations in the Parasopia. While the river is invisible from the Cadmeia or Thebes, the inhabitants of Plataia and other Parasopian communities could see it, understanding that it served as a natural

²⁷² Beck forthcoming. ²⁷³ Hdt. 6.108.6.

²⁷⁴ Farinetti 2011: 189. Plataia is closer to the river than Thebes but a straight line between the communities intersects at the river and the intersection point is about 8 km from both centres.

²⁷⁵ Amit 1973: 86–8; Badian 1993: 109–24; Prandi 1988: 79–93 date it after the Persian Wars but Herodotus' account contradicts this. Population calculations – extrapolating a force of 600 men at Marathon in 490 to a population of c. 5000 free citizens – support an earlier date.

²⁷⁶ Thuc. 2.5; Dem. 59.99; Ain. Tac. 8.1.

testament of the Plataians' increased power.²⁷⁷ The addition of these lands to the Plataian territory functioned as a shield against encroachment on the Skourta plain.

These shifts can be perceived as aggressive expansion at the expense of others, but, at the same time, the demarcation of a new border stabilised the situation in southern Boiotia. Geographical boundaries, like the Asopos river, were more permanent and could diminish the likelihood of another dispute over the delineation of the Plataian, Theban and Tanagraian territory.²⁷⁸ It proved very effective, considering the borders between these Boiotian polities were never again an issue. Future conflicts revolved around the incorporation of the *entire* Plataike, rather than a re-shuffling of the borders between the Boiotian neighbours.

Plataia again occupied a central place in the Atheno-Boiotian relations during the Persian Wars (480–479). After the fall of Thermopylai, the Boiotians changed sides and fought on behalf of the Persians. The Plataians continued to resist the invaders and were punished by having their town burned to the ground.²⁷⁹ Its destruction allowed the Thebans and Tanagraians to retract the changes made in 507/6 by incorporating the Plataike into their territory. Combined with the destruction of Athens, the Boiotians now controlled the Mount Kithairon-Parnes range, which could be guaranteed by a Persian victory.²⁸⁰

That victory never happened. The Hellenic League drove the Persian troops from the mainland after the Battle of Plataia in 479. This victory had a discernible effect on Plataia and its territory. In recognition of their sacrifices and to honour the lands in which freedom was won, the members of the Hellenic League granted the Plataians a form of territorial inviolability after the war.²⁸¹ This special status was similar to that of Panhellenic sanctuaries. The Plataike now existed as a neutral zone that rose above Greek interstate politics.²⁸²

Technically, this meant a diminution of Athenian influence. The protection of the Plataians was no longer their prerogative, but the responsibility of all the members of the Hellenic League. In practice, however, the

²⁷⁷ Gartland 2012: 84. My personal observations confirm his conclusions.

²⁷⁸ L'Homme-Wery 1996: 37; Ober 1995: 115. ²⁷⁹ Hdt. 8.50.

²⁸⁰ Gartland 2020. Destruction Athens: Hdt. 8.50.

²⁸¹ Alluded to by the Plataians in 427:

Πλαταιεῦσι γῆν καὶ πόλιν τὴν σφετέραν ἔχοντας αὐτονόμους οἰκεῖν (Thuc. 2. 71.2). Prandi 1988: 57–72.

²⁸² A later fourth-century date for the *Eleutheria* festival is more likely: Wallace 2011; Yates 2019: 71–4 contra Jung 2006. For Plataia as a later *lieu de memoire*: Kalliontzis 2014.

Plataians continued to entertain an intimate relationship with their Athenian neighbours.²⁸³ The ‘Panhellenic’ skein of diplomatic relations was meant to ensure the site’s neutrality and prevent the Athenians from monopolising the site of Plataia as a *lieu de mémoire*.²⁸⁴ In light of the increased tensions between the Spartans and Athenians after the war, and the eventual dissolution of the Hellenic League in the early 470s, the struggle over Plataia is unsurprising.²⁸⁵

Strategic considerations also played a role. The Plataians controlled the passes into Boiotia from the Peloponnese. Its neutrality kept the route into Central Greece open. The ‘Panhellenic’ protection of the polis was a security against future Boiotian expansion.²⁸⁶ Reinforcing this role were the fortifications of the town. The size and dimensions of the walls may have been expanded or the walls were constructed for the first time.²⁸⁷ *Intra muros* there was now enough space to shelter the population of the surrounding communities in the event of an attack, symbolising Plataia’s role as a regional refuge.

Another function of the walls lay in its symbolic significance. These imposing fortifications not only protected Plataia from outside harm, but reflected its contrasting position on the Boiotian border. Ethnically, the Plataians always regarded themselves as Boiotians. Their ancient role as a locus of Boiotian mythology confirms that.²⁸⁸ Politically, the situation was different. Plataia had deliberately separated itself from Boiotia at the end of the sixth century and these walls were a manifestation of that division. The fortifications served as a testimony to the division, with the Plataians performing the role of dissenters whose recalcitrance fractured the security of Boiotia in the interest of external powers.

In the following decades, the Plataians continued to foster this ambivalent attitude. They loyally followed the Athenians on most campaigns,

²⁸³ Crane 2001. The Spartans invoked this neutrality during the Peloponnesian War: Thuc. 2.71.3 with Bauslaugh 1991: 129–31. For the heroisation and memorisation of Plataia: Boedeker 2001.

²⁸⁴ Jung 2006: 291–2 on the transition of Spartan prominence in the commemoration of the Battle of Plataia to an increased emphasis on the Athenians.

²⁸⁵ Yates 2015.

²⁸⁶ Jung 2006: 264, 270 argues the Plataians maintained the graves and annual rites for the fallen of the Greek alliance, in exchange for this guarantee of independence. But the Plataians’ actions during the Peloponnesian War contradict this, as the Athenians determine their policies: Crane 2001.

²⁸⁷ Konecny et al. 2013: 28–9, esp. n. 103. See Hüllden 2020: 375–80 on the possible lack of archaic fortifications at Plataia.

²⁸⁸ Herakleides Kritikós BNJ 369a; Kühr 2006: 118–33. Archaeologically, the city’s roots can be traced back to the Mycenaean times: Konecny et al. 2013: 24–5.

including the help for the Spartans against the Messenian revolt in the 460s.²⁸⁹ They also started the construction of the temple of Athena Areia. Its sculptural and pictorial programme displayed the Plataians' view of the Persian Wars as an internecine struggle, a fraternal conflict between the Plataians and their Boiotian brethren.²⁹⁰ They remained anxious of their neighbours and fostered a more antagonistic attitude towards medism than the Athenians did, even when the latter fostered friendlier relations with the *koinon*.

Yet the Plataians appear to have voluntarily joined the *koinon* after the Battle of Koroneia in 446. That is implied by the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia's* author when he describes the *koinon's* federal system in 395: 'the Thebans contributed four (Boiotarchs), two for the polis, and two for the Plataians with Skolos and Erythrai and Skaphai and the other places which originally were part of their (the Plataians') polis but which were, at the time of which I write, absorbed into Thebes.'²⁹¹

Without a Plataian participation in the *koinon*, the Theban incorporation of their votes after the town's destruction in 427 makes no sense. They must have been members, since other interpretations involve convoluted reconstructions or retrojections.²⁹² It appears the Plataians had their cake and ate it too. The participation in the *koinon* did not sever their alliance with the Athenians.²⁹³ That they were included in the new federal structure despite this arrangement is a testament to their importance for the regional security of Boiotia.²⁹⁴ A hostile Plataia could act as a doorstep for hostile armies wishing a secure entry into Boiotia. By convincing the Plataians to join a more equal *koinon*, there was a chance for the *koinon* to

²⁸⁹ Thuc. 3.52–4; Hdt. 9.64. ²⁹⁰ Yates 2013.

²⁹¹ *Hell. Oxy.* 19.3 (Behrwald); translation from Schachter 2016a: 52.

²⁹² Against inclusion: Bruce 1968: 190; Prandi 1988: 79–91; Sordi 1968: 70. For inclusion: Amit 1973: 87; Hansen and Nielsen 2004: 450; Larsen 1968: 34, 132–3; Roesch 1965: 40. Mackil 2013: 336–7 n. 39 adds it would be striking that the Thebans gained two additional districts after the destruction of Plataia in 427 if they were not part of the *koinon*. Bruce 1968 argues this resulted from proportional representation after the annexation of Plataia's *chora*, with the additional wealth creating a larger share of Theban citizens. Sordi 1968: 71–2 argues the two districts were created after the Theban annexation, but this is unnecessarily convoluted. Konecny et al. 2013: 29 n. 109 argue, based on the relatively small garrison defending Plataia in 431, that their control over the Parasopia ceased by 447. But garrisons normally did not include the entire available military population.

²⁹³ Thuc. 3.68.5; *IG* I³ 1353 = *OR* 130: the funerary epitaph for Pythion, a Megarian who led Athenian forces to safety from Boiotia, presumably by way of Plataia.

²⁹⁴ Mackil 2013: 336–7 n. 39 adds the continuation of the Athenian alliance may have been a concession to the Plataians to compel them to join.

procure this polis for the defence of the region. It shows that Theban control over the Plataiake was not essential to normalise their relations.

It was a precarious arrangement, but one that demonstrates the value of these lands for both polities. For the Plataians it was a preferable arrangement. Previous attempts to incorporate the Plataians into the Boiotoi involved the surrender of territorial sovereignty. Their participation in the new, more equitable *koinon* required no such submission. The combination of maintaining their territory while participating in the *koinon*, which diminished the possibility of a renewed conflict with the Thebans or Tanagraians, was the perfect deal.

The delicate arrangement was short-lived. Plataia must have seceded from the *koinon* sometime between 446 and 431, leaving the Boiotians vulnerable. This awareness explains the clandestine manoeuvre by a group of Thebans colluding with their Plataian peers. They intended to overthrow the current regime and bring the polis back into the *koinon's* fold.²⁹⁵ Thucydides adds they undertook this action in anticipation of war. The conspirators hoped to achieve a peaceful reconciliation, reintegrate the Plataians and sever ties with the Athenians.²⁹⁶ But the clandestine operation failed, and the escalation of the situation within Plataia's walls led to the brutal slaughter of the Theban intruders. Soon afterwards, the town was besieged by Peloponnesian and Boiotian forces (Chapter 2.4).

The siege was meant to elicit a response from the Athenians, which never came. Their restraint is remarkable, considering Plataia's strategic importance, let alone the emotional ties. They were aware of possible repercussions of the murder of the Thebans in Plataia, as a garrison was sent out to reinforce the town.²⁹⁷ Perhaps they expected the oaths of 479 to be intact, which would prevent a Spartan-Boiotian collaboration against Plataia. The town's connotations with the hallowed grounds of freedom made it difficult to attack without exhausting other options.

The Spartans insisted on the Plataians' neutrality to avoid the appearance of violating their oath to defend the town. The Plataian rejection of the offer left the Spartans with little choice but to accomplish militarily what could not be done diplomatically: the abrogation of the Athenian-Plataian alliance. The preferred option was a surrender after a prolonged siege. A surrender took away the diplomatic option of restoring Plataia as an unlawfully conquered

²⁹⁵ Thuc. 2.2; *CT* I 241–3. ²⁹⁶ Thuc. 2.2.3–4; Chapter 2.4.

²⁹⁷ Thuc. 2.7.1. That the attack was meant to elicit a response from the Athenians as an affront to their prestige and honour (Lendon 2010) is a credit to the Boiotian understanding of the politics involved.

territory. The Boiotians technically had no rightful claim and could not rely on the argument of ‘spear-won’ land. A voluntary surrender, however, annulled the efficacy of any arguments for its restoration or as a bargaining chip to be exchanged for geopolitical interests.²⁹⁸

The Plataians surrendered in 427. Megarian exiles and pro-Theban Plataians inhabited their lands afterwards. When the year passed, the entire town was razed save for its sanctuaries, its territory granted to wealthy Thebans on ten-year leases.²⁹⁹ Interestingly, they were the only ones to directly profit from the incorporation of the Plataike, apparently leaving the Tanagraians out of the proceeds. Their exclusion could be the result of the re-arrangements in the *koinon’s tele* after 446, which granted the Tanagraians territory on the eastern seaboard.³⁰⁰

Physically, the town no longer existed, but the remaining citizens continued to form a community under Theban aegis. Presumably, the pro-*koinon* Plataians moved to Thebes, whose massive fortifications provided the necessary security, symbolising its role as a safe haven for Boiotia and its communities. This negated the need for the Plataians to live in the ruins of their town as the lands of the Parasopia could be tilled from Thebes.³⁰¹ The construction of accommodations and a new temple for the Hera cult were signs of continuity and symbolised the care taken by the Thebans to preserve the town’s cult.³⁰² At the same time, the new buildings in the sacred landscape promulgated novelty, inaugurating a new period for the Parasopia under the *koinon’s* wings. One possible expression of Plataia’s incorporation was the re-organisation of the Daidala festival. The festival was intimately connected to Plataian history and involved the delineation of the town’s *chora* in a ritual procession.³⁰³ Could it be that the Daidala cult developed from a local celebration into a cult with a pan-Boiotian twist

²⁹⁸ This is the Theban argument against restoring Plataia in a peace deal: Thuc. 5.17.2.

²⁹⁹ Thuc. 3.68.3. For a treatment of the leases: Bruce 1968: 196–7; Papazarkadas 2011: 60 n. 183, 219 n. 30. Although one may question to what extent the town was razed: Fachard and Harris 2021.

³⁰⁰ Schachter 2016a: 81–91.

³⁰¹ Demand 1982: 11–12. The Theban fortifications were the largest in mainland Greece and could contain up to 100,000 inhabitants. Bintliff et al. 2007: 136 for the 5-km radius as a useful limit for regular intensive cultivation; Farinetti 2011: 189 fig. 9 shows the Parasopia to mostly fall in that range.

³⁰² An early Heraion was identified in the late nineteenth century (Washington 1891: 403; Iversen 2007: 388) but this is now rejected: Konecny et al. 2013: 141–4. *COB I* 244 n. 5 argues there was no temple pre-426.

³⁰³ The festival’s origins remain enigmatic: Chaniotis 2002; Knoepfler 2001a: 362–8; Strasser 2004: 341–2.

at this time? In that case, the cult enacted the ritual unification of Boiotia, suturing the Plataia-sized wound in the landscape.³⁰⁴

The integration of the Parasopia into the Theban *chora* not only served strategic purposes, but also symbolically represented the cohesion of the *koinon* against external threats. Plataia had been a thorn in the Boiotians' side for some eighty years. Even a brief interlude of integration after Koroneia (446) did not remedy this wound. As long as the town existed as an Athenian bulwark, it would threaten the unity of the *koinon* and its borders. The safety of the *koinon* was promulgated by the Thebans in the aftermath of Plataia's destruction when several communities from the vulnerable borderlands and the eastern seaboard *synoikised* with the Thebans to protect them against Athenian incursions in 426 and 424.³⁰⁵

As soon as the war broke out between the Athenians and Lacedaimonians, the Thebans experienced a significant rise in their overall prosperity; for when the Athenians began to threaten Boiotia, the inhabitants of Erythrai, Skaphai, Skolos, Aulis, Schoinos, Potniai and many other such towns, which had no walls, *synoikised* (συνωκισθησαν) with Thebes, which doubled its size.³⁰⁶

In one swift move, the Thebans tethered large swaths of Boiotia to its *chora* and obtained a harbour on the eastern seaboard, ensuring it was the dominant polis in the region.

Their strategy seems to have worked. Restoring Plataia by force ended in failure, thus the Athenians resorted to a diplomatic restoration in the negotiations for the Peace of Nicias in 421. They insisted on Plataia's restitution under the terms that every party involved in the peace agreement should return the possessions captured in the war. The Boiotians retorted by stating Plataia was not captured but had willingly surrendered and did not constitute territory won by the spear:

Each party was to restore its conquests, but Athens was to keep Nisaia; her demand for Plataia being met by the Thebans asserting that they had

³⁰⁴ Mackil 2013: 227–30. Contra COB I 248, who argues the Daidala became pan-Boiotian in the late fourth century. Prandi 1988: 22–4 proposed a seventh-century date but this claim cannot be corroborated.

³⁰⁵ Thuc. 3.91; 4.76–7; 90–101.

³⁰⁶ *Hell. Oxy.* 20.3 (Behrwald). I have left συνωκισθησαν untranslated. McKechnie and Kern 1988 prefer 'were gathered'. Bruce 1967: 114 translates it as a voluntary decision. Mackil 2014: 41 considers it a forceful Theban move. Some postulated a date at the start of the Peloponnesian War (Demand 1990: 82–5) or in its early phase (Hansen and Nielsen 2004: 441) but I believe the integration was possible only after Plataia's destruction. Salmon 1978: 82–3 places the *synoikism* in 447/6 as a reward, but who would be rewarded in this case?

acquired the place not by force or treachery, but by the voluntary agreement of its citizens; and the same, according to the Athenian account, being the history of her acquisition of Nisaia.³⁰⁷

This argument was accepted by the Athenians so they could retain Nisaia. They were willing to accept the Plataike as part of the Theban *chora* to conclude a peace treaty but insisted on the return of Panakton.³⁰⁸ This palliative was a tough pill to swallow for the Boiotians, who refused the treaty, instead preferring to subsist on ten-day truces (Chapter 3.1.2). It is striking that the Athenians were more adamant about the return of Panakton than Plataia (Chapter 4.1.1). Were they simply not willing to relinquish Nisaia for Plataia, or were other factors at stake? Perhaps they believed Panakton could be returned, whereas the restitution of Plataia created more issues. A more cynical interpretation is that the Plataike simply was not worth the hassle for the Athenians, whereas the exploitation of the Skourta plain directly benefitted them. In addition, the Plataians were a valuable additional source of manpower for the Athenians, whose forces had been drained by a decade of war and plague.³⁰⁹ Hopes of ending the Plataians' exile with a return to their homeland vanished when the treaty was confirmed, and the Athenians used Skione in northern Greece to establish a Plataian cleruchy.³¹⁰

What stands out about this episode is the Athenian willingness to sacrifice the Plataians for a stable relationship with the Boiotians by way of a binding treaty. It is a recurring theme in the Atheno-Boiotian relations from this point onward. The Boiotians made a valid point about the wilful surrender of the town. Unlike the Athenian fortification of Panakton, the capture of Plataia did not constitute a major breach of an intact treaty and was therefore less of an impediment to neighbourly relations. Plataia did not directly provide the Athenians with bountiful harvests and fertile grazing lands, unlike the Skourta plain. Neither did the town's strategic benefits outweigh a stable relationship with the Boiotians, especially in a situation like 421 when they posed the most imminent threat. Retaining the empire in exchange for the Plataians was a small sacrifice to make if it meant an end to hostilities.

³⁰⁷ Thuc. 5.17.2, adapted translation from the Loeb. Buck 1994: 15 argues their argument was correct, since pro-*koinon* Plataians lived in Thebes after the *synoikism*. Restoring the pro-*koinon* Plataians remained possible as the walls were only demolished at key positions, rendering its defences useless, but allowing for a quick repair: Konecny et al. 2013: 31 n. 131.

³⁰⁸ Thuc. 5.18. ³⁰⁹ Thuc. 4.67.1. Akrigg 2019: 171–204 for population decreases.

³¹⁰ Thuc. 5.32.1.

That overall strategic Athenian considerations outweighed the Plataians' plight becomes clear after the Peloponnesian War. In 395 the Athenians and the Boiotians agreed to an alliance. The reference to the 'Boiotoi', rather than Xenophon's Thebans, means that the Athenians accepted their claims over the Plataike.³¹¹ The Plataian exile community in Athens must have exerted significant pressure to raise their restitution in the Assembly. Nevertheless, the advantage of a Boiotian alliance weighed heavier than their restitution. The situation allowed for such a demand. With Spartan armies on the borders, the Boiotians were in a predicament, yet the Athenians neglected to press for the town's restoration. Acting as an Athenian buffer, the *koinon* was a more valuable ally than the Plataians.

The Athenians' behaviour must have aggrieved some Plataians. It was this grief and 'abandonment' the Spartans exploited in 387/6 when they used the terms of the King's Peace to end the Plataians' exile.³¹² The restoration of Plataia served a multifocal purpose. By fulfilling their long-cherished wish and forging an alliance with the Plataians, the Spartans assured themselves of a loyal enclave that guaranteed unobstructed access over the passes of Mount Kithairon and hindered a Atheno-Boiotian united front against forces coming in from the Peloponnese.³¹³ Moreover, the Plataian hinterland acted as an ideal stepping-stone to land troops from the Peloponnese via the Corinthian Gulf, should the passes over Mount Kithairon be obstructed by hostile forces.³¹⁴

Although the Athenians lost no possessions because of the King's Peace, the dissolution of the *koinon* and the establishment of pro-Spartan enclaves weakened their position by negating Boiotia's role as a buffer for Attica. A bonus for the Spartans was the propagandistic value of restoring Plataia. They championed the unification of the Greeks to fight the Persians in a

³¹¹ *RO* 6; *Xen. Hell.* 3.5.17. The Plataians in Athens (*Lys.* 23.5–6) surely felt indignant over the acceptance of an alliance with their tormentors in 395. Some Athenians must have spoken on their behalf in the Assembly, but as customary in Xenophon speakers whose proposals were not accepted were 'muzzled': Buckler and Beck 2008: 142–63.

³¹² *Xen. Hell.* 5.2.28, 32; *Diod.* 15.20.2; *Paus.* 9.1.4. Kirsten 1950: 2309 dates Plataia's re-foundation to 382. He links the restitution to the seizure of the Cadmeia, because the pacification of Thebes removed a substantial obstacle. Yet that ignores that the restitution of Plataia aimed to curb Theban influence: Prandi 1988: 121–33.

³¹³ The Plataians contributed to several Spartan campaigns against Thebes: *Xen. Hell.* 5.2.25–32; 5.4.10; Buck 1994: 65–80. Another possible campaign took the Plataians north to fight Olynthus: Kalliontzis 2014: 333–41. He dates the campaign to 348 but Pritchett 1974–91: IV 216 no. 77 offers other dates.

³¹⁴ Most of the mainland fighting revolved around the control over the Corinthian Gulf (Mackil 2013: 63). Controlling these poleis thus realised that ambition for the Spartans.

Panhellenic campaign from the start of the fourth century. Within this context of rampant Panhellenic fervour, guaranteeing the safety of an important *lieu de mémoire* in the commemoration of the Greeks' struggle against the Persians was especially prestigious. The restoration improved the Spartans' Panhellenic credentials while at the same time smearing the Athenians, who were unable to restore the Plataians and fought alongside the medizers. Strategically, the creation of a pro-Spartan enclave at the gates of Mount Kithairon kept the Thebans in check and weakened a future Athenian-Boiotian union against the Spartans.

The Spartan sponsorship became problematic for the Plataians after the Peace of 375. The treaty stipulated the removal of Spartan garrisons from Boiotia, making Plataia's position increasingly precarious. Earlier Theban attempts to reintegrate the Plataians in the *koinon* were rejected as the Plataians clung to their alliance with the Spartans. But it was imperative for the Thebans to cement the *koinon*'s hold over this important border territory, so they launched a successful surprise attack in 373. The Plataians were forced to leave and hand over their town.

Our sources offer conflicting motives for the attack. Diodorus, perhaps reflecting a Theban tradition, lays the onus on the Plataians, who had handed their city to an Athenian garrison in a despairing attempt to cling to their alliance. Yet that alliance is nowhere mentioned between 386 and 373. Their flight to Athens was logical in the wake of their past collaborations and their shared history: the Athenians always considered Plataia as a pseudo-protectorate.³¹⁵ Plataian culpability is contradicted by the accounts of Xenophon and Isocrates. Xenophon's bias requires no introduction, while Isocrates' *Plataicus* was written as a defence of the Plataians. Despite their flaws, the accounts fit the situation better. They portray the Plataians (and Thespians) as cleaving to their Spartan connection, leading to their expulsion. If the war with Sparta recommenced in 373, this would explain the lack of Athenian reprisals in the aftermath of Plataia's destruction (Chapter 2.5).³¹⁶

The Plataike and Parasopia were subsequently incorporated into the Theban *chora*, akin to other subdued neighbours.³¹⁷ Sanctuaries and cults were left intact, with the Thebans appropriating them to celebrate the unification of Boiotia.³¹⁸ It is a testimony to the central place occupied

³¹⁵ Xen. *Hell.* 6.3.1; Diod. Sic. 15.46.6; Paus. 9.1.8; Isoc. 14.9.

³¹⁶ Cawkwell 1963a; Gray 1980; Hamilton 1991: 116.

³¹⁷ Bakhuizen 1994; Gonzalez Pascual 2006: 34–8; Mackil 2013: 296.

³¹⁸ Maybe Korinna's poem on the mythological connections between the Parasopia and Boiotia was commissioned at this time. The dedication of new statues to Hera and the celebration of

by the Plataike in the region. After repeated invasions of their countryside, the Thebans solidified the security of their borders and could no longer tolerate the presence of recalcitrant pockets of resistance close by.³¹⁹

As before, the Plataians fled southwards to Athens where they received citizenship with certain limitations.³²⁰ Xenophon and Isocrates describe an overt outrage over the treatment of Plataia, but despite their appeals, the Atheno-Theban alliance continued. Perhaps fear of confronting their allies hamstrung the Athenians. What I find more plausible is that they did not want to agitate the Thebans over a town that recently collaborated with the Spartans, who were the target of the Confederacy (Chapter 3.4.3).³²¹ Isocrates himself nebulously admits the protection offered by the alliance outweighed the plight of the Plataians (Chapter 4.3).³²²

It is a recurrent theme of the fourth century, in which Plataia's importance as a strategic ally for the Athenians slowly dissipated when a Boiotian alliance could be procured. Conversely, the restoration of the Plataians re-emerged in the Athenian conscience when relations turned sour. Throughout the period of hostility (369–339) orators clamoured for the restoration of Plataia.³²³ For instance, Demosthenes' plea in *On Behalf of the Megapolitans*:

In order, then, that this unwillingness may not stand in the way of the weakening of the Thebans, let us admit that Thespiai, Orchomenos and Plataia ought to be restored, and let us co-operate with their inhabitants and appeal to the other states, for it is a just and honourable policy not to allow ancient cities to be uprooted.³²⁴

References to the destruction of Plataia were meant to demonstrate the depravity of the Thebans. Their arguments were undoubtedly helped by the presence of refugees.³²⁵ Bolstering their efforts was the situation from the early 350s onwards. The Third Sacred War (357–346) pitted the Athenians against the Boiotians and their 'barbarian' ally, Philip of Macedon. This Boiotian-barbarian synergy put Plataia, and the deeds of its inhabitants during the Persian Wars, back into the forefront of Athenian minds and helped rekindle their self-proclaimed role as defenders of Greek *eleutheria*

the Daidala then occasioned the poem: Schachter 2016a: 236–44. Berman 2010 dates Korinna's floruit to 335–320 but others view her as Pindar's contemporary: Larson 2002.

³¹⁹ Similar measures were taken against Thespiai and Orchomenos, with the Thebans settling or incorporating their territories: Bakhuizen 1994; Gonzalez Pascual 2006: 34–8; Mackil 2013: 296.

³²⁰ Canevaro 2010. ³²¹ RO 22 ll. 9–12. ³²² Isoc. 14.33.

³²³ E.g., Dem. 5.10; 6.30; 19.20; Isoc. 8.17, 115; Prandi 1988: 133–44. ³²⁴ Dem. 16.25.

³²⁵ Marsh-Hunn 2021.

in the face of foreign aggression. Plataia thus continued to play a role as a *lieu de mémoire*. Appeals to restore the Plataians not only were reflective of strategic interests but also served to promote Athenian propaganda.

Yet intentions of restoring Plataia at the expense of the Boiotians remained in the realm of words. During the Third Sacred War, the Athenians took no action to weaken the *koinon*, instead focusing their efforts elsewhere. Perhaps they were unable to enforce the restoration of Plataia, but any inclinations thereto were absent. The Boiotian-Macedonian victory in the Third Sacred War impeded any further hopes of restoring the town, despite the fantasies harboured by some Athenians that Philip would punish his allies and return the Plataians to their native home.³²⁶ Plataia, in sum, was a perfect ideological stick to hit the Boiotians with at suitable times, but the town's fate never realistically dominated Athenian objectives after the 420s.

Embodying this ambivalent attitude was the Athenian-Boiotian alliance forged in 339/8. Contrary to all the beautiful words proclaimed in the Assembly in support of the Plataians, its fortunes were sacrificed on the altar of expediency when the opportunity to join forces with the Boiotians presented itself. This decision was precipitated by the threat of a Macedonian invasion, but there were no scruples in accepting the Thebans' claim to *all* of Boiotia (Chapter 3.4.4). Similar to the situation in 395, the Theban occupation of Plataia and its lands formed no significant obstacle to a neighbourly alliance. Sacrificing an unattainable goal like the restoration of Plataia for the cooperation of one of the strongest land powers that guarded the passes into Attica did not impede Athenian-Boiotian collaboration.

The Athenian willingness to abandon the Plataian cause in exchange for Boiotian support does not mean other powers were unaware of the site's value, both strategically and symbolically. The role of Plataia's protector was dutifully taken up by Philip after his victory at Chaironeia in 338. Compared with his other interventions in the political landscape of Boiotia, the king's intention to end the Plataians' odyssey after nearly fifty years was his *pièce de résistance*.³²⁷ His sponsorship of the town served a multifocal purpose. It curbed Theban power by reducing its *chora* and re-installing a

³²⁶ Ellis 1982; Konecny et al. 2013: 32 accept the veracity of Philip's intentions to restore Plataia prior to Chaironeia, but Cawkwell 1978b refutes this.

³²⁷ Gullath 1982: 12–14; Prandi 1988: 138–44. Plataia's re-foundation in 338 is uncertain, but Delphic lists record Plataian *naiopoiioi* from 337 onwards: Kirsten 1950. From 331 they provided *hieromnēmones*: *CID* II 86 l.13.

hostile neighbour loyal to the Macedonians in its vicinity, whereas it was a subtle jibe at the Athenians. Philip could now rightfully claim to be the *prostates* of *autonomia*, which was of particular importance for the new Common Peace he enforced after the Battle at Chaironeia. The restoration of Plataia allowed Philip to present himself as the champion of *eleutheria* and Panhellenism, an important ideological statement in preparation for his war against the Persians to exact revenge for their sacrilegious transgressions during the Persian Wars.³²⁸

Philip's premature death prevented the maturation of his plans, but his son Alexander continued the project, propelling Plataia to greater heights, especially after the destruction of Thebes in 335. Alexander granted the Plataians a significant share of the Theban *chora* and later proclaimed in 331 that the town was to be rebuilt in grandiose fashion, in recognition of its contributions during the Persian Wars of the fifth century.³²⁹ His decision to sponsor the Plataians paid dividends for his successors, as the Plataians opposed the Athenians in the Hellenic War of 323.³³⁰

In conclusion, Plataia was not a significant obstacle towards neighbourly cooperation in the fourth century. Initially, the obstinate attitude of its inhabitants vis-à-vis the burgeoning *koinon*, combined with the town's strategic importance, made the Plataians a valuable ally to the Athenians within the mosaic of the borderlands. Acting as a buffer against Spartan-Boiotian collaboration, Plataia became a key feature of the Athenian defences. The town continued to occupy this position throughout the Persian Wars, which granted it a Panhellenic grandeur as the site where freedom was won. From an Athenian standpoint, Plataia's relevance subsisted in the spheres of history as the legendary place of Xerxes' downfall, its inhabitants fighting for the Greek cause against foreign aggression, as opposed to their Theban neighbours. Therefore, the Plataians were the perfect propagandistic tool for the Athenians to employ whenever there was a need to castigate the Thebans.

In an ideal situation, the Athenians possessed both the intimate alliance with the Plataians and the protection offered by a friendly Boiotia, as in the

³²⁸ Diod. 16.89.2, 91.2. Philip's Panhellenism: Wallace 2011: n. 13; Yates 2019: 202–48.

³²⁹ Plut. *Alex.* 34.1–2, *Arist.* 11.9. Konecny et al. 2013: 33 n. 147 suggest this date, contrary to Plutarch's (328). Irrespective of the dates, the message would be similar. The city walls and fortifications were significantly expanded to transform Plataia into the most dominant polis in southern Boiotia in lieu of Thebes: Konecny et al. 2013: 35–6. On the transformative effects the reconstruction had on Boiotia's landscape: Gartland 2016b.

³³⁰ The Athenian-Plataian relations possibly remained as close-knit as before: *RO* 94; *IG* II² 345; *SEG* 27.60; perhaps *IG* VII 2869. For Plataia during the Hellenic War: Wallace 2011.

450s. Realistically, however, its importance as a strategic asset, a purpose that it had served so dutifully for almost a century from 506 onwards, had vanished in the 420s. More often than not, the town was sacrificed for more valuable territories such as the Skourta plain, or courtly relations with the *koinon*, whose strategic value outweighed Plataia's. What factored into this tendency was probably that Plataia and the Parasopia, unlike other contested areas like the prosperous Skourta plain, were never directly owned by Athenians and therefore offered no benefits in terms of resources.

4.2 Boiotia and Its Ports

Boiotia's ports are an oft overlooked aspect of its strategic appeal. Yet these ports offered the Athenians significant advantages. The Boiotian ports on the Corinthian Gulf promontory and the eastern seaboard bordering the Euboian Gulf could act as gateways for Athenian conquest of Boiotia or as launching pads for attacks on the Peloponnese (see Figure 4.9). These maritime connections added to the region's strategic value and influenced neighbourly relations.

The harbours did not perform similar duties. Oropos, for instance, had two harbours: one for the city itself, presumably where the goods from Euboia were brought in, and one, the Delphinion, for pilgrims visiting the Amphiareion.³³¹ Others, such as Aulis on the eastern seaboard, were ideal for lodging and launching large fleets. Harbours like Anthedon were mostly used for commercial practices and fishing, rendering their strategic benefits of secondary importance. Finally, the smaller harbours on the Corinthian Gulf, such as Kreusis and Siphai, were ideally suited for stationing smaller fleets to raid the Peloponnese. These harbours demonstrate that Boiotia had the foundations for maritime ambitions.

Strabo, who bases himself on Ephoros, provides the best description of Boiotia's prowess for maritime connections: 'Ephoros declares that Boiotia is superior to the countries of the bordering *ethne*, not only in fertility of soil, but also because it alone has three seas and has a greater number of good harbours.'³³²

In light of these reflections, it is surprising that Boiotia's role as a conduit for maritime warfare – from an Athenian perspective – has generally been overlooked. Although Ephoros exaggerated the number of good harbours,

³³¹ Cosmopoulous 2001: 59; Papazarkadas 2011: 49; *IOropos* 303, ll. 45–9.

³³² Strabo 9.2.2.



Figure 4.9 Harbours and places mentioned.

with only Antheion and Aulis qualifying for such a distinction, there is merit in the historian's observation that Boiotia was not landlocked.³³³ According to Emily Mackil, Ephoros' views were inspired by the maritime exploits of the *koinon* in the 360s.³³⁴ Its connections to the Black Sea region and the Aeolian coast of Asia Minor stretch back to earlier times, as shown by the various material deposits found in these areas and cultural links.³³⁵ The participation of the Boiotians in the colonisation of these areas shows these connections were profound. The eastern seaboard of Boiotia possessed good harbours with various links to important economic areas like the Pontic region, an area that increased in importance for the Athenians from the mid-fifth century onward (see Figure 4.10).³³⁶

The Boiotian harbours on the Corinthian Gulf promontory were not as secluded as assumed by John Buckler and Hans Beck.³³⁷ Recent scholarship has demonstrated the connectivity of harbours such as Siphai and Kreusis to other communities across the Corinthian Gulf.³³⁸ Far from being

³³³ Beck 1997: 86 n. 10; Buckler and Beck 2008: 180–98 argue that only Aulis and Antheion qualified as good harbours. Wallace 1979: 9–13 offers a more favourable interpretation.

³³⁴ Mackil 2013: 284. The Boiotians were well connected and sometimes controlled other harbours further afield, such as Skroponeri, Larymna and Argosthena: Farinetti 2011: 49.

³³⁵ Fossey 2019: 88–94; Schachter 2016a: 99–101. ³³⁶ Moreno 2007.

³³⁷ Beck 1997: 86 n. 10; Buckler and Beck 2008: 180–98. ³³⁸ Bonnier 2014: 114–16.

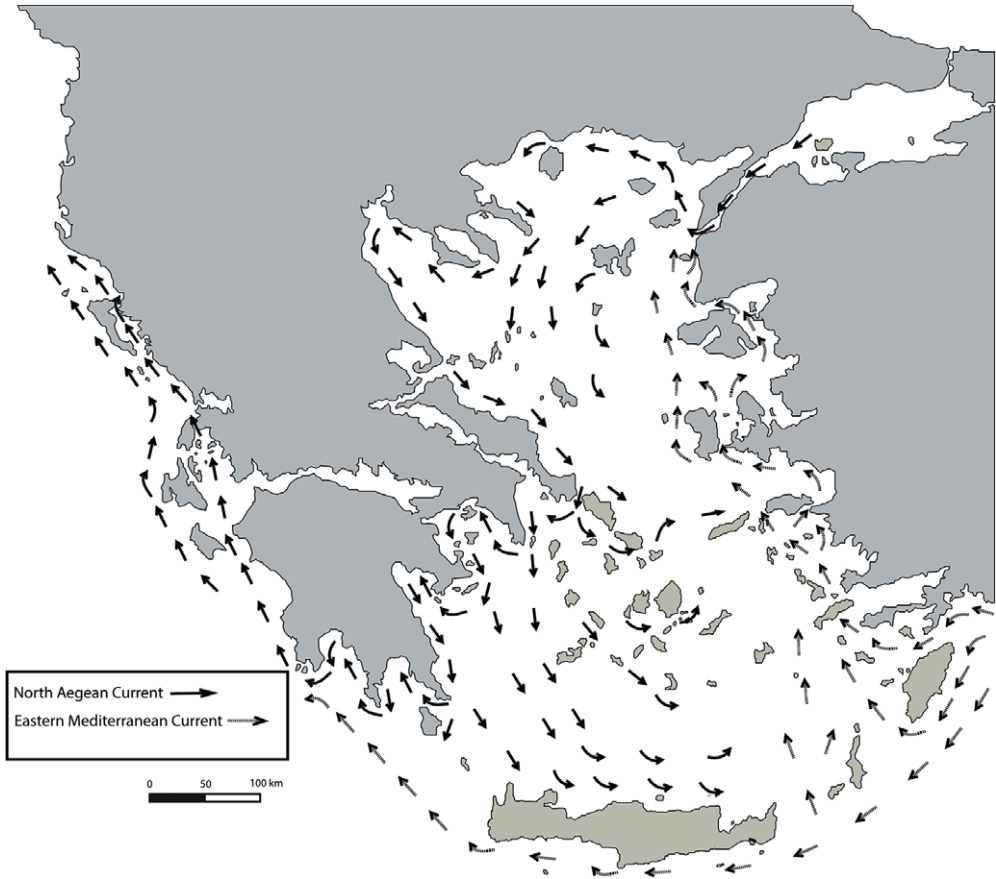


Figure 4.10 General sea flows in the Aegean.

(Source: © Tartaron 2013: 98–9 based on Papageorgiou 2008: fig. 3)

isolated hamlets, these harbours were better connected to their counterparts across the Gulf than to their inland neighbours. They were the ideal base for launching attacks on the Peloponnese. Possession of these harbours allowed direct raids against the Peloponnesian allies of the Spartans without having to circumvent the peninsula through the treacherous waters of Cape Maleas.³³⁹ In addition, these harbours offered quicker connections to important economic regions such as Sicily, the Adriatic and the poleis of

³³⁹ Morton 2001: 41, 83. A comparison between Tolmides' campaign against the Peloponnese in 457/6 and Pericles' in 453/2 is illuminating. Tolmides had to circumvent the Peloponnese to attack the Sicyonians, whereas Pericles sailed out from Pagai in the Megarid and saved valuable time and resources: Thuc. 1.108, 111. Freitag 2005: 304–39 analyses the military 'function' of the Corinthian Gulf.

the Ionic Sea.³⁴⁰ Control of harbours on the Corinthian Gulf promontory was therefore a vital asset for the Athenians at all times, and more so during times of hostilities with the Spartans.

4.2.1 *The Corinthian Gulf*

The Corinthian Gulf promontory was home to several harbours. The largest and best known were Siphai, Kreusis and Chorsiai. All three were located in the territory of Thespiiai, which explains the Athenians' interest in maintaining cordial relations with this polis throughout the fifth century.³⁴¹ Control of the harbours was possibly lost after the King's Peace of 386, rendering each independent, explaining the relative lack of attestations for friendly ties between the Thespiians and Athenians during that period.³⁴² With the rise of Theban power after 371 and the integration of large swaths of Boiotia into their *chora*, we may assume, as John Buckler does, that these harbours became part of the Theban territory.³⁴³ As will be argued below, the Thebans realised the importance of these harbours for the defence of Boiotia from the later fifth century onward. During their hegemonial heyday the Boiotians secured these coastal towns from foreign invasion via extensive fortifications. These works mitigated one of the *koinon's* defensive weaknesses.

Siphai and Kreusis

Siphai (modern-day Aliko) and Kreusis, located near the modern town of Livadostro, were nestled into natural harbours that offered space for smaller fleets to lay anchor for the night. Siphai, in particular, commands a protected bay along the north shore of the Corinthian Gulf.

Both harbours were harder to reach for larger armies and therefore the perfect base for landing troops to establish footholds in Boiotia without the threat of a fierce defensive effort. One example is the Athenian attacks in

³⁴⁰ The Boiotians were maybe involved in the colonisation of Italy: Roller 1994. For their Adriatic connections: D'Ercole 2010. For the Adriatic's increased importance for Athens in the fourth century: RO 24; 100 = IG II³ 1 370; OR 149. For Corcyra's connections to the Adriatic: Kiechle 1979.

³⁴¹ NIO 5; Schachter 2016a: 51–65. These harbours were arguably located in the territory of Thisbe, but since this town belonged to the Thespian sphere, one can argue Thespiiai controlled these harbours.

³⁴² *IThesp* 38 specifies these towns as separate entities to Thespiiai, unlike earlier inscriptions such as NIO 5.

³⁴³ Buckler 1980b: 22; Roesch 1965: 50–2, 54–8.

424: Siphai and Kreusis were supposed to be betrayed to the general Demosthenes.³⁴⁴ Although the plan ultimately failed, the intended creation of two enclaves on the Corinthian Gulf, combined with the planned takeover of Chaironeia, would have granted the Athenians full control over the Corinthian Gulf promontory in Boiotia and an easily defensible foothold from which to hollow out the unity of the *koinon*.

In addition, Kreusis was the most important harbour on the coast and arguably Thespias's corridor to the wider Mediterranean Sea.³⁴⁵ This commercial function would have enhanced the appeal of controlling the harbour and, with it, the imports into Boiotia from the commercial networks stretching across the Corinthian Gulf and beyond. The precariousness of the harbour's defences and its economic prominence were probably the main factors for the construction of the city's defences that can be seen to this day and which were constructed during the heyday of Theban hegemony or shortly thereafter.³⁴⁶

On the basis of its remains, Siphai received the most extensive fortifications out of all the coastal towns on the Corinthian Gulf (see Figure 4.11). The fortifications dominated the town's Akropolis, with its curtain walls cascading down into the sea to protect the harbour.³⁴⁷ Apparently, the strategic outweighed the economic in this case. Considering the recent experiences of the Boiotians – with the Spartans using Siphai as the entrance point into Boiotia in 371 – that comes as less of a surprise.³⁴⁸

Chorsiai

Chorsiai (modern-day Khostia or Prodomos) is located above the bay of Hagios Sarandi. Similar to Kreusis and Siphai, it formed part of the Thespias *chora* during the fifth century, before gaining independence and finally being integrated into the Theban *chora*. While the archaeological record left a less impressive legacy of fortification remains than the other harbours on the Corinthian Gulf, excavations revealed that fortifications were in place by the early 360s. These must have included a circuit wall around the Akropolis, in addition to the remaining gate and tower that remain standing.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁴ Thuc. 4.76.

³⁴⁵ Bonnier 2014: 219. For Kreusis' proximity and importance to Thespias compared with other harbours: Farinetti 2011: 155–65. It is interesting that the helmsman of the Argonauts, Tiphys, came from Siphai: Ap. Rhod. 1.105.

³⁴⁶ Fossey and Gauvin 1985b; Roesch 1965: 218 fig. 4. ³⁴⁷ Cooper 2000; Schwandner 1977.

³⁴⁸ Xen. *Hell.* 4.5.10; 5.4.16–17; 60; 6.4.3; 6.4.25; Ages. 2.18. ³⁴⁹ Fossey 1981: 51–61.



Figure 4.11 Siphai fortifications.

(Source: Author)

Compared with its counterparts, however, Chorsiai was more isolated as it lay further away from Thespias and closer to the Phocian border. Additionally, it occupied a strategic location on a vital axis in the central plains of Boiotia.³⁵⁰ It was of more importance to northern and western neighbours, such as the Phocians, who utilised Chorsiai as a base for further operations in Boiotia in 347/6.³⁵¹ The town's potential as a stronghold was realised by Philip, who returned the town and harbour in the Peace of Philokrates in 346 but not before demolishing its walls.³⁵² Obviously, it was meant to hinder any future Phocian incursions, but it also removed an obstacle for the Macedonians to enter Boiotia and the possibility for hostile forces to establish an enclave at an important cross-roads and harbour within Boiotia.

³⁵⁰ Farinetti 2011: 167–78. For Chorsiai's strategic location on transport axes: Freitag 2005: 314–15.

³⁵¹ Diod. 16.58.1. ³⁵² Dem. 19.141.

The Corinthian Gulf as a Strategic Asset for the Athenians and Spartans

The best example of Athenian maritime interest in employing Boiotia was simultaneously one of the anomalies of neighbourly relations: the period of Athenian domination over Boiotia (458–446). During the early stages of the First Peloponnesian War, the Spartans landed troops in Phocis to intervene in a local dispute. Their return to the Peloponnese by way of the Corinthian Gulf was prevented by the Athenian navy, forcing the Spartan forces to march overland via Boiotia (Chapters 3.2.3, 4.3).³⁵³ In the ensuing Battle of Tanagra the Spartans gained control over Boiotia, before the Athenians recaptured it after the Battle of Oinophyta (Chapters 2.3, 3.2.3). The swift response indicates the importance of Boiotia to the Athenians.

By (re)occupying the region, the Athenians guaranteed themselves of more harbours in the Corinthian Gulf, with Kreusis and Siphai as bases for raids on the Peloponnese. That allowed them to take the initiative and keep the Spartans from marching out of the Peloponnese. The move to secure the Corinthian Gulf came in 456/5, when the Athenians settled Messenian refugees at Naupaktos, a town they had captured the year before.³⁵⁴ This created a loyal enclave at the narrowest entry point to the Corinthian Gulf. Fleets could be stationed here to control the shipping into the Gulf and guard against hostile ships hoping to enter it.³⁵⁵ The harbour also served as a base for operations for expansion in north-western Greece. The settlement would not have been possible without the occupation of Boiotia.³⁵⁶ It provided the security needed for the Athenians to comfortably extend into north-western Greece and curtail Spartan ambitions in Central Greece, making their strategy one-dimensional by forcing the Spartans to march overland if they desired to attack Athens or Boiotia.³⁵⁷

It is with this maritime perspective in mind – control over the Corinthian Gulf – that the Athenian decision to gain mastery over Boiotia *and* Phocis after the Battle of Oinophyta (458) should be viewed. Scholars view this occupation of two ‘landed’ regions as an Athenian

³⁵³ Perhaps the Athenians stationed a fleet in the Corinthian Gulf at one of these harbours to hinder the Spartan return by sea. The translation of the participle ‘περιπλεύσαντες’ (Thuc. 1.107.3; *CT I 170*) suggests the Athenian ships were already in the Gulf, rather than having to sail around the Peloponnese.

³⁵⁴ Thuc. 1.103.3; Diod. 11.84.7. I follow Thucydides in putting the capture before Tolmides’ expedition against the Peloponnese; Diodorus places it in the same campaign: Kallet 2016: 16 n. 5.

³⁵⁵ Kallet 2016. For Naupaktos’ importance within the Corinthian Gulf: Freitag 2005: 67–93, 338.

³⁵⁶ Badian 1990: 367–8. ³⁵⁷ Freitag 2005: 336.

attempt to create a landed empire in Central Greece, deviating from their maritime credo focused on the Aegean.³⁵⁸ I would contend that the control of both Boiotia and Phocis had less to do with the creation of a land empire, and was more in line with the maritime outlook of the Athenian empire, by securing harbours around the Corinthian Gulf.³⁵⁹

Such a 'maritime interpretation' also accords better with the Athenians' strength, their navy and their goal of neutralising threats from Corinth and the rest of the Peloponnese. This interpretation takes on added importance in the wake of Diodorus' remark that the Athenians failed to take charge of Thebes in their period of domination (458–446). According to the first-century historian, the general Myronides became master of all the cities of Boiotia:

A battle took place at Oinophyta in Boiotia, and since both sides withstood the stress of the conflict with stout hearts, they spent the day in fighting; but after a severe struggle the Athenians put the Boiotians to flight and Myronides became master of all the cities of Boiotia with the exception of Thebes.³⁶⁰

Considering the centrality and importance of Thebes within the construct of Boiotia as a region, this may seem unlikely. But his remark makes more sense if it occurred after the collapse of a pro-Athenian regime in Thebes, perhaps shortly after Oinophyta (Chapter 3.2.3). Keeping these rebels in check would require the instalment of a garrison and accompanying costs. Allowing *stasis* to continue, however, neutralised the possibility of a strong Thebes and prevented its inhabitants from exerting its gravitational pull on its neighbours, leaving the rebellious elements in Boiotia without a central city to rally around.

Strategically, Boiotia could be controlled without holding Thebes. The city could be bypassed en route to the Corinthian Gulf. Nor did it control all routes from Attica into Boiotia. The roads through Tanagra and Plataia were viable options that ignored Thebes altogether.³⁶¹ This stresses the importance of the coastal areas of Boiotia (and Phocis), rather than the inland poleis. This interpretation illuminates why in his 446 campaign

³⁵⁸ Cartledge 2020: 106; Conwell 2008: 64; Green 2010: 84 n. 110; Hornblower 2011: 33; Mackil 2013: 33. The Athenians campaigned against Thessaly to install a befriended ally (Thuc. 1.111), but I contend this aimed to secure Thessaly with an eye on the Chalkidike rather than to create a land empire.

³⁵⁹ Hence the occupation of Phocis. The decision to take prominent Opuntian Locrians as hostages fits into this scheme (Thuc. 1.108). If a landed empire was the intention, Locris would have been occupied, rather than neutralised.

³⁶⁰ Diod. 11.83.1. ³⁶¹ For the routes: Fachard and Pirisino 2015.

against rebels in Boiotia, Tolmides targeted Chaironeia as a base of operations, rather than Orchomenos. It was about re-asserting control in the poleis that controlled the passage into Phocis and the routes to the Corinthian Gulf, while Orchomenos exerted influence on neither.³⁶² The occupation of Boiotia and Phocis had less to do with creating a landed empire and more to do with capturing harbours on the Corinthian Gulf, a vital advantage against the Spartans.

The Spartans realised this too. It explains their decision to intervene in Boiotia after the Battle of Tanagra and transform it into a hostile enclave on the Athenian doorstep, but also to deny the Athenians further access to Boiotia's harbours. In the peace treaty ending the First Peloponnesian War, the Spartans demanded the Athenians relinquish most of their harbours along the Corinthian Gulf, such as those in Achaia. The Athenians had already lost Boiotia's harbours thanks to the Boiotian rebellion.³⁶³ Control over the Corinthian Gulf was one of the pivotal disputes of the First Peloponnesian War, as shown by the Spartan demands. Kleon's demands for the return of these harbours in the peace negotiations of 425 is equally revealing:

He [Kleon] persuaded them [the Athenians] to give this answer: That they in the island ought first to deliver up their arms, and come themselves to Athens; and when they should be there, if the Lacedaimonians would make restitution of Nisaia and Pagai and Troizen and Achaia, which they had not won in war but had received by former treaty when the Athenians, being in distress and at that time in more need of peace than now, then they should have their men again, and peace should be made for as long as they both should think good.³⁶⁴

These demands were a fancy of Kleon's, but the Gulf's importance did not wane in subsequent decades. The Athenians maintained Naupaktos, which continued to serve as an important naval base for their operations, especially during the Peloponnesian War (431–404).³⁶⁵ A firm presence in the Corinthian Gulf was not only more pertinent with the rise of Corcyra as

³⁶² The importance of Chaironeia is shown by its early sophisticated fortifications, signifying its role in guarding the crossing between Phocis and Boiotia: Fossey 1988: 375–9. Chaironeia formed a key component in the Athenian campaign in Boiotia in 424, probably because of its accessibility from the Corinthian Gulf: Thuc. 4.89.

³⁶³ Thuc. 1.115.1–2. They retained control over Naupaktos. The harbours in Boiotia had already been lost.

³⁶⁴ Thuc. 4.21.2–3. The Spartans could not hand over control over Boiotia, as the Boiotians were a 'free' and 'autonomous' member of the Peloponnesian League: Bayliss 2017.

³⁶⁵ Kallet 2016.

a potential Athenian ally; it equally served as the foundation to launch new attacks on Boiotia during the first decade of the war. On two occasions, the Gulf acted as the conduit for Athenian troop movements *into* Boiotia. In 426, aided by the earthquakes ravaging the Peloponnese that handicapped the Spartans, the Athenians set out on a ambitious new aggressive policy.³⁶⁶ Attacking Boiotia formed part of it, as they were adamant about reintegrating it into the empire. One example is Demosthenes' campaign in Aitolia. His campaign aimed to subdue the Aitolians with the future prospect of marching into Boiotia unopposed.³⁶⁷ The second example is the illustrious Delion campaign of 424. A two-pronged attack on the Boiotian seashores was supposed to create Athenian enclaves to further deconstruct the cohesion of the *koinon*. Demosthenes would land forces on the Corinthian Gulf promontory, where two towns – Chaironeia and Siphai – were to be betrayed to him, but the plan was revealed to the *koinon*, thwarting its execution.³⁶⁸ Regardless of the outcome, the outlines of the plan reveal the importance of the Corinthian Gulf as a conduit for warfare. Control over the Gulf meant the Athenians could launch devastating attacks against the Boiotians, with the aim of subduing their neighbour and concluding the war against the Spartans in their favour. The disastrous end to the Delion campaign put an end to Athenian aspirations of conquering Boiotia and, with it, the Corinthian Gulf as an entrance into Boiotia.

From now on, the Athenians were dependent on obtaining the goodwill of the Boiotians for the use of the harbours, as they would during the Corinthian War (395–386). Perhaps it was with the strategic importance of the Corinthian Gulf in mind that the Spartans decided to decimate the *koinon* and establish garrisons in Plataia and Thespiiai after the King's Peace. These not only served as buffers against Theban expansion, but simultaneously offered the Spartans unhindered access into Boiotia by way of the Corinthian Gulf, should the overland route be blocked. These pro-Spartan enclaves and the fortress at Mavrovouni ensured a safe landing and entry of troops into the Boiotian heartland.³⁶⁹ The wisdom of this strategy

³⁶⁶ Thuc. 3.89; Diod. 12.59.1.

³⁶⁷ Thuc. 3.95. A full-scale attack on the Tanagraike was simultaneously launched from Athens, both by sea and by land. This was probably the precursor to the two-pronged naval attack on Boiotia in 424.

³⁶⁸ Like many Boiotian harbours, Siphai was a good natural harbour for boats, but offered more difficulties for armies trying to reach the plains: Farinetti 2011: 176.

³⁶⁹ The fortress at Mavrovouni can be dated to the period of Spartan occupation in the 370s: Fossey 2019: 95–135. The decision to construct a fortress at an uninhabited place must have

was proven in the Boiotian Wars (379/8–371). With the passes at Mount Kithairon obstructed by Athenian and Theban forces, the Spartans constructed a plan to starve Athens into submission by blocking the Piraeus with a fleet, while at the same time landing forces in either Phocis or Kreusis.³⁷⁰ In response, the Athenians acted upon a Theban request for aid by sending a fleet around the Peloponnese to raid the territory of the Spartans and their allies. This diversion prevented the Spartan naval plan from materialising and led to the Athenian victory at Alyzia, which instigated the peace negotiations.³⁷¹ If the Athenians would have had access to the Boiotian harbours at Kreusis or Siphai, the Spartans would not have been able to land troops in Boiotia. The vulnerability of these harbours was realised by the Boiotians. After their break with the Athenians in 369 (Chapter 3.1.3) significant effort was put in fortifying the harbours on the Corinthian Gulf, ensuring its defences were capable of withstanding invasions and taking away the possibility of hostile troop landings.³⁷² In wars against the Peloponnesians, the Boiotians were thus a valuable ally not just because of their armies, but equally because of their harbours on the Corinthian Gulf promontory.

4.2.2 *The Euboian Gulf*

The best harbours were found on Boiotia's eastern seaboard. The finest natural harbour in the Euboian Gulf was Aulis, where Agamemnon once launched a thousand ships against Troy.³⁷³ Other harbours included Anthedon, further north, and Oropos and Delion to the south.³⁷⁴ These harbours provided safe havens along the strait's treacherous waters and temperamental winds.³⁷⁵ These harbours were useful commercial bases for ships navigating this important channel. Militarily, they appear of subsidiary importance for a long time from the Boiotian perspective. These harbours were mostly exploited by foreign powers, until the decision to create a substantial fleet in the 360s. In contrast to the harbours on the

been deliberate to dominate this part of the territory. The Thebans realised its potential after Leuktra (371). They took over and constructed a Boiotian-style tower within the walls of the Spartan enclosure: Fossey and Tomlinson 1970: 260–1.

³⁷⁰ Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.60–2. ³⁷¹ Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.62–6.

³⁷² Cooper 2000 overviews this fortification scheme, though he controversially incorporates Aigosthena and Pagai into the scheme.

³⁷³ Buckler and Beck 2008: 180–98; Gehrke 1992.

³⁷⁴ Harbours such as Larymna or Halai, while situated on the extensions of the Euboian strait, were only Boiotian possessions for shorter periods of time and will therefore not be treated.

³⁷⁵ Gehrke 1992.

Corinthian Gulf promontory, harbours like Delion, Anthedon, Oropos and Aulis did not receive substantial fortifications, despite repeated Athenian attacks in the fifth century. The inhabitants of Aulis and other coastal towns were *synoikised* with the Thebans in the early phases of the Peloponnesian War, but no other measures were taken. Perhaps the collaboration with the Euboians from 411 onwards safeguarded these harbours. A similar situation may have existed after the Battle of Leuktra in 371 (Chapter 2.5). Maybe the fortifications did not survive for posterity. Or another reason for the lack of fortifications on this promontory is that, unlike their counterparts in western Boiotia, these harbours were never fully integrated into the Theban *chora*, with the exception of Aulis.

From Where Agamemnon Once Sailed: Aulis

Aulis was the harbour on this coastline most suited for military ventures and should be viewed as *the* military harbour for the *koinon*.³⁷⁶ The harbour was known in antiquity for the launch of Agamemnon's massive fleet to besiege Troy. Due to its current-day dimensions, that seems striking, but geoarchaeological investigations revealed the extent of the harbour in ancient times, which was substantially larger than its contemporary size.³⁷⁷

These military connotations suggest that the twenty-five Boiotian ships constructed for the Peloponnesian fleet during the Peloponnesian War were likely stationed at Aulis. The *synoikism* with the Thebans during that conflict would make it the ideal harbour for launching ships into the Aegean. The purpose of the proposed fleet was to convince wavering Athenian allies to rebel and support the Euboians in an uprising (Chapter 4.1.3).³⁷⁸ The Spartans also chose Aulis as their main naval base for their campaigns in Asia Minor in 396. While Agesilaos wanted to emulate Agamemnon, the decision to sail from Aulis was equally based on logistics, as it could house a substantial fleet and was the best departure point for Asia Minor.³⁷⁹ The Athenians included the Thebans in their Second Athenian Confederacy because of similar considerations, besides matters of reputation and long-standing collaboration (Chapter 3.4.3).

³⁷⁶ Buckler and Beck 2008: 180–98 contra Fossey 1979, who prefers Skroponeri, located between Anthedon and Larymna.

³⁷⁷ Ghilardi et al. 2013. ³⁷⁸ Thuc. 8.3.2; 106.3.

³⁷⁹ Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.3. The choice for Aulis was not just predicated by strategic concerns, as it could be used for propagandistic purposes as well: Cartledge 1987: 212; Cawkwell 2011: 245–6.

They are the only polis in the list of members that can plausibly be termed 'land-locked', unlike the other members, who had a more maritime character because they were island or seaboard poleis. The *synoikism* of Thebes with various smaller Boiotian poleis during the Peloponnesian War included the famous port of Aulis, annulling the land-focused nature of the Theban war effort.³⁸⁰ Their access to the Euboian Gulf must have been a major boost to the Confederacy. The Boiotians utilised Aulis as their base to launch their own naval campaign in the 360s against the Athenians, demonstrating that the harbour continued to occupy an important role in neighbourly relations.³⁸¹ The strategic importance of the harbour would later be acknowledged by Macedonian generals, who chose Aulis as the main port to station their fleets.³⁸² In sum, Aulis was *the* military harbour for the *koinon* as it was easily defensible, properly suited for stationing large fleets and perfectly located to influence the Euboian Gulf and the Euboian poleis. Hence it was less useful for the Athenians, who possessed good natural harbours from which to sail the Cyclades and Euboian Gulf. Aulis nevertheless posed a daunting challenge whenever the harbour was used by hostile forces.

The Other Harbours: Oropos, Delion and Anthedon

In contrast to Aulis, the other harbours on the eastern seaboard of Boiotia – Oropos, Delion and Anthedon – fulfilled different functions along the Euboian Gulf. Anthedon, for instance, left very few archaeological traces and those that remain date to the sixth century CE.³⁸³ The harbour seems to have been of local economic importance, as can be gathered from the fish pricing lists found in Akraiphnia. It concerned the transport of salt-water fish to this inland polis, and the most likely origin of these fish is Anthedon. As Emily Mackil argued, the town of Anthedon was exceptional as its economy was heavily dominated by the extraction of marine resources, based on the fish lists and the description of the third-century traveller Herakleides Kritikós.³⁸⁴ This town and its harbour mostly served to provide the rest of Boiotia with salt-water fish, emphasising its economic role in the *koinon*'s economy.

³⁸⁰ Hell. Oxy. 20.3 (Behrwald). I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for this insightful remark, which transforms the inclusion of Thebes in the list. Nevertheless, the epithet 'land-locked' refers to the polis' inland location. Regardless of the expanse of their power, their urban environment had no harbour attached to it.

³⁸¹ Van Wijk 2019. ³⁸² Diod. 19.77.4; 77.1; 20.82.4; 100.5; Liv. 35.51.6.

³⁸³ Buckler and Beck 2008: 187. ³⁸⁴ Mackil 2013: 269–70. Her. Krit. 23–4.

Delion and its harbour remain more enigmatic. It was probably the main port of the Tanagraians until they took control of Aulis in the later fourth century. Throughout the Classical period, Delion consisted only of a sanctuary, with archaeological evidence for settlement from the Hellenistic period onwards.³⁸⁵ Thucydides' narrative of the Battle of Delion appears to confirm this image.³⁸⁶ Its strategic value as a possible enclave on Boiotian soil was recognised by the Athenians in the Delion campaign of 424, but this failed attack is the only attempt to capture the harbour and sanctuary. The lack of any infrastructure on site before the Athenian landing suggests the harbour was of lesser importance than other Boiotian harbours at the time.

A more convincing angle to pursue is the religious one. Delion was the harbour for Apollo's sanctuary. Its relative lack of infrastructure and the dearth of references indicate that the sacred function of the harbour outweighed any other function it might hold. This appears to be supported by Herodotus' account of the retrieval of Apollo's statue in 470 from Delos, which created a ritual link between Delion and Delos, and Boiotia and the Delian League (Chapter 3.5).³⁸⁷ Perhaps the lack of strategic and military importance made Delion an intriguing option for the Athenians in 424, as a landing would not be expected nor defended that easily.

A final area of interest was Oropos. Its biggest harbour was presumably located near the town and was the place where the foodstuffs from Euboa and other products from elsewhere arrived, to be transported overland to Athens.³⁸⁸ Its military purpose was limited. We hear of no 'landings' or other endeavours at this harbour. On the contrary, what is stressed is its 'economic' function. Supporting this notion is the inscription from the 450s detailing the ferry fees for ships sailing between Oropos and Euboa.³⁸⁹ It details the payments required for a safe voyage, the Athenian efforts to control the Euboian Gulf and the 'economic' traffic flowing from Oropos. Clearly, the Athenians were aware of Oropos' economic potential in the maritime network of the Euboian Gulf. Another

³⁸⁵ Farinetti 2011: 214–15; Schachter 2016a: 80–112. ³⁸⁶ Thuc. 4.90. ³⁸⁷ Hdt. 6.118.

³⁸⁸ Thuc. 7.28.1; Horden and Purcell 2000: 128.

³⁸⁹ *IG I³* 41 ll.67–71:

ξ [στο δε τῶι πορθμεύοντι ἐκ Χ]-
 [α]λκίδος ἐς Ὀροπὸν πρ[άττεσθαι τρεῖς ὀβολός· ἐάν δ]-
 [έ] τις ἐχς Ὀροπὸ ἐς ἡεστ[ίαιαν ἢ ἐς Δῖον ἢ ἐκεῖθεν ἐ]-
 ς Ὀροπὸν πορθμεύει, πρ[αττέσθω ἡεπτ' ὀβολός· ἐάν δ]-
 ἐ τις ἐκ Χαλκίδος ἐς ἡε[στία]ιαν πορθμεύει, πρ[αττ]-
 ἐ σθω τέτταρας ὀβολός[ς21]

aspect of its appeal was the sacred harbour leading to the Amphiareion, the Delphinion,³⁹⁰ which was a smaller harbour whose sole purpose was to provide an accessible landing spot for pilgrims wanting to visit the Amphiareion. This could mean that the harbour was initially of minor importance, but with the growth of the cult's popularity, it is easy to envision the harbour becoming an intriguing part of the Oropia's appeal for external powers, especially since this harbour was closer to Athens than the town.

The Euboian Gulf as a Strategic Conduit for the Athenians

For the Athenians access to the Euboian Gulf was less important, since they could bypass the strait altogether to reach the Black Sea region. What the Boiotian harbours on the Euboian Gulf did offer to the Athenians, however, was an entry point into Boiotia when the overland routes were obstructed. Another appealing point was the close connection between the Euboian harbours and their Boiotian counterparts. The Athenian hold over Euboea was always precarious, especially with the small body of water separating Chalkis from Boiotia. The Boiotians could therefore easily threaten the Athenian hold over the Euboians. Both aspects of the harbours will be briefly analysed here.

The first point is perhaps the most vital and another reason why it was imperative for the Athenians to maintain firm control over Boiotia. The small body of water separating the two geographical regions led Ephoros to comment that 'Euboea has been made a part of Boiotia by the Euripos, since the Euripos is so narrow'.³⁹¹ It was probably with that in mind that the Athenians established a cleruchy at Chalkis in 507/6: to secure their grasp over the island and hinder access to Euboea for the Boiotians.³⁹²

Two examples of Boiotia's influence on Euboea illustrate the devastating effects its hostility could have on the Athenian empire. In 446 the fire of rebellion spread from Koroneia to Euboea, prompting the Euboians to revolt against the Athenians. Since Euboian exiles participated in the Boiotian revolt, the latter likely returned the favour. This situation is unimaginable without the Athenians losing control over Boiotia in 446. Although they subdued the Euboians eventually, it came at a great cost of

³⁹⁰ Cosmopoulos 2001: 59–60; Str. 9.2.6.

³⁹¹ Strabo 9.2.2: προστίθησι δὲ ὅτι καὶ τὴν Εὐβοίαν τρόπον τινὰ μέρος αὐτῆς πεποίηκεν ὁ Εὐριπὸς οὕτω στενός. Even 'sea-hating' Hesiod had no qualms in sailing from Aulis to Euboea: Constantakopoulou 2007: 224.

³⁹² Coulton et al. 2002; Igelbrink 2016: 175–84.

manpower and resources without ever neutralising the danger Boiotia posed to the island.³⁹³ Another example is the aftermath of the Athenian garrison's expulsion from Oropos in 411. With the Athenian presence in the strait diminished, the Euboians revolted, working in tandem with the Boiotians. They constructed a bridge across the narrowest point of the Euboian Gulf to ensure unhindered cooperation and prevent the Athenians from isolating the Euboians from their mainland supporters.³⁹⁴ While the bridge did not pose a terminal threat to Athens – the grain fleets arrived at Oropos by 'island hopping' through the Cyclades – it was a physical manifestation of defiance at a time when Athenian hopes were spiralling downward. It demonstrated the damage the Boiotian-Euboian collaboration could inflict. The blockage prevented the Athenians from crossing into the northern edges of Boiotia to raid the coastline, as they had done in 413 with their barbarous attacks on Mykalessos.³⁹⁵ Supporting the revolt was the fleet of the Peloponnesian League, which was stationed along the eastern seaboard of Boiotia.³⁹⁶ Without the help of these marine contingents, the revolt would have succumbed. If Boiotia had been an Athenian possession or ally, as envisioned by the attacks on Delion, the Spartans could never have employed these harbours as bases to erode Athenian power in Euboia and the Aegean.

Another example of the Boiotian maritime threats is the naval programme of the 360s. Although its success rate has been debated, the route travelled by Epameinondas shows that the proximity to Attica affected not only the borderlands but the Cyclades as well. Setting out from Aulis, the Boiotian fleet probably instigated a rebellion on Keos and may have stirred the people of Delos.³⁹⁷ The success in dislodging the Byzantines from the Athenian alliance, a serious blow to their grain supply, shows the naval ramifications of a hostile relationship with the Boiotians.³⁹⁸

Conversely, Boiotian harbours offered the Athenians entry points into Boiotia and locations for establishing footholds in the region. Even during hostilities, these harbours, for example, Delion, allowed the Athenians to play to their own strengths and create bulwarks against the *koinon* from which to expand in the region. This became particularly pertinent in the Delion campaign of 424. Two years prior they had utilised their own

³⁹³ Thuc. 1.114.3; Diod. 12.7; Plut. *Per.* 22.1–2; *AIO* papers 8 and 9.

³⁹⁴ Diod. 13.47.3–4; Bakhuizen 1970. No other primary source mentions the construction of the bridge.

³⁹⁵ Thuc. 7.29–30; *CT* III 598. ³⁹⁶ Thuc. 8.3.2; 5.2; 106.3; Freitag 2005: 342.

³⁹⁷ Delos: Tuplin 2005: 55–8; Keos (*RO* 31). ³⁹⁸ Russell 2016.

harbour at Oropos to land troops and march overland to Boiotia, but the strategy this time was different. The aim was to create a stronghold at Delion that could be supplied by the Athenian fleet.³⁹⁹ This vulnerability to maritime attacks was perhaps one of the incentives for the Thebans to *synoikise* with towns on the eastern seaboard, to shield them from the Athenians and prevent these harbours being turned into enclaves from which to launch further attacks.⁴⁰⁰

Whereas the eastern seaboard was of less immediate strategic interest to the Athenians, the eastern Boiotian harbours still constituted an additional benefit and a reason to either control or befriend the Boiotians. The close connections with the Euboians could prove troublesome, as their geographical proximity could hardly be thwarted. Keeping the Boiotians on friendly terms ensured these harbours were not used by enemies to base their fleets, denying them direct access into the Aegean and the base of Athenian power.

Conversely, the Boiotian influence on Euboia could be beneficial. The Thebans concluded an alliance in 377/6 with the Histaian, on the north point of Euboia, granting them full mastery over their new ally (Chapter 2.5).⁴⁰¹ The town had defiantly resisted any inclusion into the newly formed Second Athenian Confederacy – the only Euboian city to do so – and was released from the Spartan grasp in 377.⁴⁰² The Thebans presumably convinced the town to become a member of the Confederacy in 375.⁴⁰³ If the date of the *hagamonía* treaty is correct, it is a testimony to the efficiency of the Theban-Athenian synergy of those years and the manner in which Boiotia's eastern seaboard could work to the benefit of the Athenians.

In sum, Boiotia's marine connectivity should not be overlooked when approaching the region's value to Athens. In contrast to other Greek powers, such as the Spartans, the Boiotians offered direct access to the Corinthian Gulf, and with it, north-western Greece. Further afield, Italy and the Adriatic beckoned. Similarly, the eastern Boiotian harbours granted the Athenians a more defensible path to invade the region during times of hostility. These harbours could act as bases for hostile fleets to launch attacks on Euboia and the Aegean. Keeping the Boiotians friendly, or even subduing them, was predicated on two elements: first, the

³⁹⁹ The support of fleets is suggested by the Athenians fleeing to their ships after the battle: Thuc. 4.96.7–8; Diod. 12.70.4; Pl. *Sym.* 220d–221c.

⁴⁰⁰ Hell. *Oxy.* 20.3 (Behrwald). ⁴⁰¹ Aravantinos and Papazarkadas 2012. ⁴⁰² Diod. 15.30.

⁴⁰³ RO 22 l. 114: [Ἔσ]τιαιήσ.

advantages the *koinon* offered the Athenians in terms of maritime warfare and, second, the defence of the Attic hinterland, to which we shall now turn.

4.3 Keeping the War from Attica's Borders: Boiotia as a Buffer

Courtesy of its geographical location, Boiotia was the ideal buffer for the Athenians. It was positioned at a crossroads between northern Greece and the Peloponnese and shared a long border with Attica, stretching from the Corinthian Gulf to the Euboian Gulf. While the idea of creating an impenetrable wall on the outskirts of Attica was not completely unrealistic, the porosity of the borders made it impossible to control roads into Attica or block an invading army (Chapter 4.1). Most defensive structures in Attica were aimed at protecting the fertile areas surrounding it, rather than opposing any significant hostile forces.⁴⁰⁴ Additionally, the costs of garrisoning, constructing and maintaining numerous fortifications on the border was a significant investment, even for a wealthy polis like Athens.⁴⁰⁵ With no guarantee of staving off invading armies from ravaging the countryside, it was better to keep the war away from Attica altogether. Far from an *ex novo* conception in the fourth century as a result of the psychological and economic devastation caused by the invasions during the Peloponnesian War, as Josiah Ober holds, there were already discernible concerns to protect the countryside in an earlier phase of Attica's history.⁴⁰⁶ A key role in that scheme was performed by the Boiotians. In fact, the Periclean scheme during the Peloponnesian War – the withdrawal behind the Long Walls and the reliance on the navy to supply Athens – was an anomaly and should not be regarded as the common defence strategy of the Athenians.⁴⁰⁷ During the first half of the fifth century in particular this was an untenable strategy: the Long Walls were yet to be

⁴⁰⁴ Munn 2010; Fachard 2013. ⁴⁰⁵ Fachard et al. 2020a.

⁴⁰⁶ Ober 1985a discerns a more stringent concern with protecting the Attic countryside in the fourth century. His views were severely criticised: Harding 1988; 1990; 1995; Lohmann 1987; Munn 1986; 1993. Admittedly, in a footnote in *Fortress Attica*, and an article that appeared in the same year, Ober acknowledges that border defence was a pressing problem before the fourth century: Ober 1985a: 65 n. 28; 1985b. Daly 2015 interprets Athenian fortifications in the sixth century as reflections thereof. He regards these structures as capable of withstanding significant armies. The structure he mentions on the Megarian border could be dated to the fourth century, however, as Sylvian Fachard informs me.

⁴⁰⁷ Spence 1990.

constructed, leaving Athens and its harbours vulnerable to enemy attacks.⁴⁰⁸

Ensuring the enemy never reached the borders of Attica was therefore necessary to safeguard the city and its hinterland. That is the conventional concept of the buffer defence strategy. Josiah Ober, in his seminal work *Fortress Attica*, follows Adcock and Mosley when he gives this description of the buffer strategy for protecting the countryside:

It is predicated on persuading – through alliances – or coercing the states on one's borders to resist the [incoming enemy]. These poleis therefore serve as buffers against the enemy, who must fight through the marshes before reclining one's own state. The idea is, of course, to exhaust or defeat the enemy within the buffer before he ever reaches the frontier.⁴⁰⁹

Enter the Boiotians. The Athenians shared their longest border with them. They could act as the perfect buffer state, especially since armies were nominally required to ask for permission to cross a polis' territory.⁴¹⁰ A cordial relationship was especially vital in the case of an invading army from the north, like the Persians in 480/79 or the Macedonians in 339/8. Boiotia also shielded Attica from invasions from the Peloponnese. Attacking Attica with a hostile Boiotia in the back would leave any invading army in a precarious situation and worked as a deterrent.⁴¹¹ Convincing its inhabitants, whether voluntary or forcefully, to shield the Athenian hinterland was key. Another aspect was the provisioning of armies. Greek armies were dependent on the goodwill of neutral or friendly polities to provision their troops while on campaign, for instance, through markets. In most cases, the presence of such markets had to be requested. Breaking with the established norm was seen as a gross violation. Demanding provisioning was possible only with overwhelming force, something unattainable even for the Spartans at the apogee of their power.⁴¹² Therefore, rather than view the Athenian occupation of Boiotia in the 450s, or their sudden alliance with them in 339/8, as predicated by the circumstances, I contend that maintaining a fruitful relationship with

⁴⁰⁸ Conwell 2008: 37–63.

⁴⁰⁹ Ober 1985a: 72, basing himself on Adcock and Mosley 1975: 131–2.

⁴¹⁰ Mosley 2007. Thuc. 4.78 on Brasidas needing his *xenoi* from Pharsalus to escort him through Thessaly.

⁴¹¹ Alluded to by the Athenian general Hippocrates on the eve of the Battle of Delion in 424: Thuc. 4.95.1–3.

⁴¹² O'Connor 2022.

the neighbours, either through direct occupation or alliance, was a common thread of Athenian relations with Boiotia.⁴¹³

Initially, the Athenians employed smaller poleis, like Oropos and Plataia, as buffers to hold off Boiotian advances. That mentality changed with the approach of the Persian King Xerxes and his army in 480. At the onset of the war, Boiotians and Athenians stood together against the invaders (Chapter 2.3). Either the border disputes were laid to rest for the time being, considering there was a larger threat looming, or perhaps the Athenians and Boiotians had to stand together because neither would survive on their own.

It was decided to halt the Persian advance at Thermopylai, since its narrow passes formed an ideally defensible position and, when supported by a navy on its flank, could not easily be circumvented (Chapter 2.3). When this plan failed and Boiotia medized, there was no stopping the Persian troops from entering Attica and destroying the countryside and city. What's more, the Spartans decided to retreat to the Peloponnese to form a line of defence at the Isthmus, leaving the Athenians defenceless:

The Athenians requested them to put in at Salamis so that they take their children and women out of Attica and also take counsel what they should do. They had been disappointed in their plans, so they were going to hold a council about the current state of affairs. They expected to find the entire population of the Peloponnese in Boiotia awaiting the barbarian, but they found no such thing. They learned that they were fortifying the Isthmus instead and considered the defence of the Peloponnese the most important thing, disregarding all the rest.⁴¹⁴

Herodotus might be retrojecting attitudes here. By painting the Spartans as unreliable, the Athenian decision to stand against the Persians shines all the more brightly. His account is nevertheless not to be rejected, since his embellished portrait of the Athenians still depicts a genuine concern of the population. This Spartan unreliability – though understandable – confronted the Athenians with the harsh nature of their position in mainland Greece, and their dependency on their neighbours' goodwill, since others

⁴¹³ Van Wijk 2020. [Xen.] *AP* 2.5 underlines the notion: 'those who rule over land cannot travel many days' journey from their own land. For journeys are slow, and it is not possible to carry provisions for a long time if one travels on foot. An army traveling on foot must either pass through friendly territory or fight and conquer.' Translation by Osborne 2004.

⁴¹⁴ Hdt. 8.40.1–2. The Athenians continued to hold this against the Spartans: Queyrell-Bottineau 2014b.

would not commit to Attica's defence.⁴¹⁵ The Boiotians' role as a guardian was crystal clear: with Boiotia overrun, Athens was unable to keep the invaders from their doorstep.

This realisation probably lay at the root of the Athenian-Boiotian rapprochement after the Persian Wars. Whereas the Spartans could sail a more confrontational course in Central Greece, as changes in the political landscape affected the Peloponnese less, it was the reverse for the Athenians (Chapters 2.3, 3.2.1).⁴¹⁶ The Persian threat had not dissipated yet, nor were there guarantees the Spartans would come to Attica's aid. Keeping the Boiotians friendly could pay dividends in the future. Perhaps a more reconciling attitude concerning the disputed border areas like the Skourta plain fitted that purpose (Chapter 4.1.1). With a friendly Boiotia at the doorstep, any prospective opponents could be met outside of Athenian territory.

The need to maintain a friendly or firm grasp on Boiotia re-emerges during the initial hostilities with the Spartans in the First Peloponnesian War (460–446). The Spartans had despatched an army into Central Greece in 458 with the intention of protecting its kin in Doris against overbearing Phocian neighbours. Their intervention was successful, but according to both Thucydides and Diodorus, a maritime return to the Peloponnese by way of the Corinthian Gulf was no longer an option. The presence of an Athenian fleet prevented it, so they could intercept the Spartan forces on their march home, as Thucydides writes: 'The route by sea, across the Crissaian gulf, exposed them to the risk of being stopped by the Athenian fleet (Ἀθηναῖοι ναυσὶ περιπλεύσαντες ἔμελλον κωλύσειν) that across [Mount] Geraneia seemed scarcely safe, the Athenians holding Megara and Pagai. For the pass was a difficult one, and was always guarded by the Athenians.'⁴¹⁷

Diodorus, however, implies the Athenians took the initiative to attack the Spartans on their march home from Phocis, inevitably ending up in Boiotia if the route went overland:

⁴¹⁵ The Isthmus at Corinth is one of the few cases where a significant investment of resources and manpower could create an impermeable defensible position: Pettigrew 2016.

⁴¹⁶ Cozzoli 1958 argues the opposite, namely, that the Spartans kept the Boiotians intact as a counterweight to Athens. In a sense this proves the centrality of the Boiotians' goodwill for Athenian safety.

⁴¹⁷ Thuc. 1.107.3. *CT I* 170 comments on the translation of the participle 'περιπλεύσαντες' as the fleet already present. This contrasts with other translations that view the naval interception as a possibility.

When the Athenians learned that the Lacedaimonians had concluded the war against the Phocians and were about to make their return home, they decided to attack the Lacedaimonians while on the march. Accordingly they dispatched an army against them, including in it Argives and Thessalians; and with the intention of falling upon them with fifty ships and fourteen thousand men, they occupied the passes about Mount Geranea.⁴¹⁸

Considering the placement of these troops and the probable route to the Peloponnese, the plan to induce a battle in the Parasopia, near their Plataian allies, is not inconceivable. But the Spartans marched to Tanagra, forcing a change in plans (Chapter 3.2.3).⁴¹⁹ The assertive defensive manoeuvre could nevertheless be a worthwhile gamble if successful. Hence the Athenians went out in full force (πανδημει). It shows they preconceived the idea to use Boiotia as a buffer, as confirmed by the presence of Thessalian and Argive troops since Boiotia occupied the middle ground between them.⁴²⁰ The Athenians were simply unwilling to let the Spartans approach the Attic borders and effectuate a revolt or, worse, attack the city. In both cases Boiotia acted as a shield, either in Plataian territory or, as it transpired, in the Tanagraike.

One may assume the Boiotians were on friendly terms with the Athenians to allow them to march their troops into the Tanagraike.⁴²¹ The Spartan victory threw the plans into disarray, and anti-Athenian regimes were installed throughout the region. Confronted with a hostile Boiotia, the Athenians marched back into Boiotia only sixty-two days after the Battle of Tanagra, defeated the new regimes at Oinophyta and regained control over the region (Chapter 3.2.3). They wasted no time and reinstalled friendly elites. Not only did they restore their friends; they prevented the Spartans from marching in and out of Central Greece on their own volition and forced them to wage the war on Athenian terms.

⁴¹⁸ Diod. 11.80.1–2. Holladay 1982 makes a convincing case for the implausibility of blocking the Megarid and preventing a passage. For Mount Gerania passes occupying the routes from Boiotia: Pettigrew 2016: 49.

⁴¹⁹ Diod. 11.80.2. Perhaps this was permissible because the Thebans were now on the Spartan side, unlike before.

⁴²⁰ The Argives sent a thousand men. A substantial amount of them fell, as can be perceived from the casualty list dedicated in their honour after the battle: Papazarkadas and Sourlas 2012. Ober 1985a: 192 regards it more as an offensive measure to trap the Spartans, rather than a defensive measure to safeguard Attica's borders. Yet I would contend that the notion of trapping the Spartans in central Greece was meant to shield Attica, as evidenced by the decision to march to Tanagra before the Spartans gathered at the Athenian borders.

⁴²¹ During the 426 campaign (Thuc. 3.91), the march into the Tanagraike from Oropos presumably took place during the night (. . . ὑπὸ νύκτα δὲ σχόντες εὐθύς ἐπορεύοντο οἱ ὅπλιται ἀπὸ τῶν νεῶν πεζῆ ἔς Τάναγραν τῆς Βοιωτίας).

With Boiotia secured, there would be no more Spartan attacks on Attica. After the battle, the Spartans appear relatively lacklustre in their attempts to venture outside the Peloponnese *in toto*, eventually leading to a truce with the Athenians shortly after.⁴²²

The events after the Battle of Koroneia (446) put the Athenians in a predicament again. Not only did the revolt inspire rebellions in Megara and Euboia; it also removed their safety blanket against Spartan incursions. That became more apparent during the (Second) Peloponnesian War (431–404). During the first five years of the war, the Athenians were beset by invasions of their countryside. When an earthquake in 426 put a temporary halt to these Spartan invasions, the Athenians immediately set their sights on re-establishing a foothold in Boiotia. Aitolia was attacked with the prospect of invading Boiotia by land, whereas the full Athenian army invaded the Tanagraike to test Boiotian defences.⁴²³ The Boiotians responded adequately, providing useful intel for the Athenians to further develop their plans.

The plan to conquer Boiotia came to fruition in 424. The Spartans were momentarily incapacitated due to their misfortunes at Sphacteria. The Athenians now saw an opportune moment to attack Boiotia on three fronts. The three-pronged attack was supposed to create friendly enclaves in the region, to subsequently undermine the *koinon* and eventually remove it from the Spartan alliance. The general Hippocrates invokes the foundational motive of the plan when he exhorts his men prior to the Battle of Delion in 424: 'If we win [at Delion], the Peloponnesians will never invade your country without the Boiotian cavalry, and in one battle you will conquer Boiotia and in that manner free Attica.'⁴²⁴

The campaign and the battle ended in unmitigated disaster. But that a general on the verge of battle evokes the safety of Attica as the consequence of a victory on Boiotian soil is a telling testimony to its strategic importance for the defence of Attica and its function as a buffer against Peloponnesian incursions. A victory at Delion would have radically altered the war in Athens' favour. Transforming Boiotia into a friendly enclave, akin to the 450s, would have constricted the Spartans to the Peloponnese, reducing the

⁴²² Thuc. 1.112–13.

⁴²³ Thuc. 3.91. Thuc. 3.95: 'To this plan Demosthenes consented, not only to please the Messenians, but also in the belief that by adding the Aitolians to his other continental allies he would be able, without aid from home, to march against the Boiotians by way of Ozolian Locris to Kytinium in Doris.'

⁴²⁴ Thuc. 4.95.2.

theatre of war significantly and perhaps concluding the war in the Athenians' favour.⁴²⁵

From Thucydides' narrative we can gather the conquest of Boiotia took precedence over other pressing matters. The Spartan general Brasidas was about to campaign in Thrace at the time of the Delion campaign.⁴²⁶ The target of the march was Amphipolis, a vital source of wood and metals for the Athenians. But rather than invest in the protection of Amphipolis and its resources, the Athenians prioritised the capture of Boiotia. Although Thucydides presents it as a strategic error of great proportions – the eventual loss of Amphipolis had personal ramifications for the general and certainly coloured his assessment – the overthrow of the pro-Spartan regimes in Boiotia could have cut off Brasidas' possibility to return overland, or isolated him in Northern Greece and given the Athenians the opportunity to launch a full-scale defence of Amphipolis after the Delion campaign.⁴²⁷ A pro-Athenian Boiotia thus also acted as a buffer against Spartan ambitions in Northern Greece.

The Corinthian War (395–386) proved the advantages of a pro-Athenian Boiotia when the Athenians and Boiotians were working in unison against the Spartans (Chapter 2.5). The terms of their collaboration were particularly striking. The alliance of 395 was agreed between the *Boiotoi* and the Athenians. At that time, the Thebans had annexed Plataia and integrated Oropos into the *koinon* (Chapters 4.1.2, 4.1.3).⁴²⁸ The question remains as to why the Athenians were willing to relinquish their territorial ambitions. One part of the answer is the recent help the Athenians received from the Thebans, a point Thrasylbulus himself makes in the Assembly (Chapters 2.5, 3.2.2).⁴²⁹ The other reason lay in the strategic value of Boiotia. During the Peloponnesian War, the neighbourly hostility had led to a host of vicissitudes for the Athenians and a Boiotian alliance prevented a repeat. With the Long Walls still under (re)

⁴²⁵ Cawkwell 1997: 51 notes the Spartans would have been confined to the Peloponnese, thereby altering the entire outlook of the war.

⁴²⁶ Thuc. 4.78.1: Βρασιδᾶς δὲ κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν χρόνον τοῦ θέρους πορευόμενος ἑπτακασίοις καὶ χιλίοις ὀπλίταις ἐς τὰ ἐπὶ Θράκης. Thuc. 4.70.1: Βρασιδᾶς δὲ ὁ Τέλλιδος Λακεδαιμόνιος κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον ἐτύγχανε περὶ Σικυῶνα καὶ Κόρινθον ὄν, ἐπὶ Θράκης στρατείαν παρασκευαζόμενος. Thucydides' narrative of Delion is interrupted by the description of Brasidas' campaigning in Thrace, suggesting the decision to attack Boiotia was related to the Spartan plans in northern Greece.

⁴²⁷ CT 256–7 noted the impact of Thucydides' personal experience on his assessment. For Amphipolis' resources: Kallet 1993: 176.

⁴²⁸ RO 6. ⁴²⁹ Xen. *Hell.* 3.5.17.

construction, the city was more vulnerable to Spartan attacks, heightening the need for a buffer defence.⁴³⁰

The shared hostility towards the Spartans would be a simple answer, but to interpret the alliance as the result of one against the other would, in my mind, be an oversimplification of the geographical dynamics between the Athenians and Boiotians. It ignores the repeated Athenian attempts to integrate Boiotia as a buffer for Attica from the Persian Wars onwards. Just before the alliance was concluded in 395, the Theban ambassador reminds their hosts of the potential the neighbourly collaboration would have: 'And we were certainly valuable allies to the Lacedaimonians, as you so well know, but now we can be expected to be of even greater service to you [Athenians], more than we were to the Lacedaimonians' (my translation).⁴³¹

In my opinion, the ambassador realises that a neighbourly alliance fulfilled a long-cherished Athenian wish. Of course, it was precipitated by their recent friendly cooperation, alluded to by Thrasybulus. But at the same time, the Athenians knew they could not risk warring with the Spartans without the help of the Boiotians. Attica would again be overrun, and leaving the Boiotians to battle the Spartans alone could lead to a situation similar to the Peloponnesian War, negating any possibility of rising against the Spartan hegemony in the future. Considering the dire situation the Boiotians were in at the time of their approach – the Spartan armies were on their doorstep – the Athenians could have pressed for considerable compensation should they have wanted to. From a Realist perspective, that would have made sense. The concessions, for instance, restoring Plataia or handing over Oropos, would have strengthened the Athenians, even if it came at the expense of a potential ally.

Yet none of these proposals were made. For the Athenians, Boiotia held the keys to the kingdom and retaining their support would probably lead to a re-establishment of the empire. The Boiotians – the contested territories in the Oropia and Plataike included – could become a part of that empire, as subtly suggested by the Theban ambassador.⁴³² The delegates were

⁴³⁰ The finishing of the Long Walls has been variably dated, but the consensus places it in 394 after the battle of Haliartos: Conwell 2008: 116. The Boiotians were particularly helpful in assisting with the reconstruction: *RO* 9b = *IG* II² 1657; *Xen. Hell.* 4.8.9–10; *Diod.* 14.85.2–3.

⁴³¹ *Xen. Hell.* 3.5.14.

⁴³² *Xen. Hell.* 3.5.10, 14–15. Whether the Athenians had fallen for the conviction that a land-based hegemony was more sustainable than a maritime-based one, as prevalent in the writings of contemporary writers such as Xenophon and the author of the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* (Occhipinti 2016: 116–30) is unclear. Hopes of extending the Athenian nexus of influence in familiar territory can be perceived from their alliance with the Eretrians in 394: *Tod* II 103 = *IG* II² 16; Knoepfler 1980.

aware of long-cherished Athenian hopes not only of recapturing their empire but also of controlling Boiotia. Because it was one of the last arguments made, one must assume its weight was substantial, as it would resonate best with the audience. The flattery of Athenian feelings of justice notwithstanding, it was the tantalising allure of regaining their empire through the help of the Boiotians that mattered.

I would add that the Athenians must have realised the importance of keeping the Boiotians friendly, and that territorial ‘concessions’ would be beneficial for harmonious relations in the long run. That made the restoration of Plataia less important. In exchange for accepting the status quo in Boiotia, they received the strategic benefits of the entire *koinon*.

Those benefits became clear in the opening phases of the war. The first major battles against the Spartans were fought at Haliartos and Koroneia, far from the Attic borders. On both occasions the Athenians sent troops to the defence of the *koinon*, but also to ensure the Spartans did not reach the border.⁴³³ In both cases, these Spartan armies were meant to be intercepted by an allied army. Although there were different outcomes to these battles, the Athenians clearly utilised Boiotia as a swamp in which to strand Spartan forces.

These battles were remembered in Athenian memory as instrumental in defending their country. In his *Funeral Oration* from the 390s, Lysias praises the fallen men for having safeguarded Attica, keeping the war away from its lands by giving up their lives on foreign soil.⁴³⁴ While the delivery of the eulogy is questioned due to Lysias’ *metic* status, the speech shows the awareness of these lands – Boiotia and the Corinthia – acting as buffers.⁴³⁵

The sentiment that the Boiotians were vital allies, and essentially fighting for the preservation of Attica, is also echoed in [Andocides’] *On the Peace* of 391. Its authenticity is debated, but that matters less here, as invocations of Boiotia as a defender of Attica still mattered at a later time for the possible imposter to use it as an example (Chapter 3.4.2). In this oration, the author pleaded with his countrymen to accept the agreed-upon peace treaty with the Spartans. His entreaties are made under the pretence that the Boiotians had accepted the Spartans’ peace offer. Despite this false

⁴³³ The Athenians were too late to participate at Haliartos. Dem. 18.96 still it remembered as a heroic feat. The Long Walls of Athens were probably finished after Haliartos (Conwell 2008: 116).

⁴³⁴ Lys. 2.70.

⁴³⁵ Todd 2007: 149–64 for the status of the text and its date. He persuasively argues to assign authorship to Lysias and proposes that the *Funeral Oration* was a display piece, rather than meant for delivery.

claim, the argument remains upright. He repeatedly places the Boiotians on a pedestal compared with other allies in the war, ranging from the joyous day when the alliance was concluded to their efforts in the war.⁴³⁶

It was presumably with this role in mind – Boiotia as a buffer for Attica – that the Spartans pushed for a dissolution of the *koinon* after the Corinthian War. Splintering the *koinon* into loyal pro-Spartan enclaves was aimed not only at weakening the Thebans; it weakened the Athenians too. With the major routes through Boiotia under Spartan control, the Spartans were guaranteed to have entry points into Attica, rendering the neighbourly cooperation less effective. This emerges most clearly in the campaign leading to the instalment of a pro-Spartan junta in Thebes in 382 (Chapter 3.2.3). Spartan armies easily moved between the Peloponnese and the Chalkidike to prevent Olynthian expansion, while keeping Athenian ambitions in the region in check.

Despite these profound changes to the political and physical landscape of Boiotia – the re-establishment of Plataia the most prominent among them – the Athenian desire to employ Boiotia as a buffer remained unchanged (Chapter 4.1.3). Throughout the years of Spartan juntas (386–379) the Athenians were in contact with the Thebans, who were one of the founding members of the Second Athenian Confederacy after the expulsion of the Spartan garrison in 379. The Thebans are the only participating polis in the list of allies that can plausibly be termed ‘land-locked’, despite the possible inclusion of Aulis in their *chora*, whereas the other members are either island or coastal poleis. The notion of attaining a strong land power to act as a buffer for a renewed claim to power – the Second Athenian Confederacy – therefore had stuck, partially explaining the Thebans’ inclusion (Chapter 4.2.2). The impetus for forming the tighter bond may have come from the Athenians. Additionally, the Thebans appear to have occupied a special position within the Confederacy (Chapters 2.5, 3.4.3). Their membership was thus not a convalescence of fortunate events, bringing together two befriended enemies of Sparta. The Athenians had worked to ‘re-obtain’ their buffer before ensuing hostile actions against the Spartans and in return granted the Thebans a special place in the Confederacy’s structure.

Following the expulsion of the Spartan garrison from Thebes in 379, the subsequent conflict – the Boiotian Wars – was mostly fought in Boiotia. The fighting was concentrated on the Theban plain, demonstrating the

⁴³⁶ And. 3.24–5.

Spartans' awareness of its inhabitants' centrality to Athenian defences. The Spartan plan was to starve the Thebans by occupying their fields and preventing the harvest, facilitated by the garrisons at Plataia, Thespiai and Tanagra and the fortress at Mavrovouni.⁴³⁷

The Athenians willingly complied with this strategy by steering the conflict towards Boiotia because fears over the possibility of a Spartan invasion of Attica lingered.⁴³⁸ The Corinthian War had demonstrated the benefits of fighting the Spartans away from Attica, but the situation had changed. This time the only other co-belligerent was Thebes. The Spartans had loyal enclaves in Boiotia pinning down the Thebans, making a defence in the entirety of Boiotia unlikely. Either the Spartans would march on Cadmus' city or they would take a page from the book of the Peloponnesian War and invade Attica. With Athenian and Theban forces defending the vicinity of Thebes, it was necessary to prevent the Spartans from marching to Attica. Athenian forces guarded the passes over Mount Kithairon at Eleutherai, forcing the Spartans to take a route into Boiotia that would lead away from Athens.⁴³⁹ The other preventive measure was the construction of the Dema wall, obstructing the passage between Mount Parnes and Aigaleos. Supported by enough troops, the wall could withstand a much larger army and halt the advance of the Spartan army beyond the Eleusinian plain.⁴⁴⁰

The war was eventually won through Athenian naval victories, with the war grinding down by thwarting the Spartan plans in Boiotia. Their naval assertiveness was in part supported by the security blanket offered by the Thebans. The latter started to assert themselves more within Boiotia after the renewal of war, leading to the destruction of Plataia in 373. Yet Isocrates, the staunch anti-Theban orator, proclaims in his acerbic *Plataicus* in 373:

and to those who wish to speak on their behalf only this that Boiotia (ἡ Βοιωτία) is defending your country (τῆς ὑμετέρας χώρας), and that, if you put an end to your friendship with them, you will be acting to the detriment of your allies; for it will be a matter of great consequence if

⁴³⁷ Fossey 2019: 95–135, 156–71.

⁴³⁸ Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.19; later sources: Plut. *Pel.* 14.1; Dem 2.24; 4.3; 9.47, 20.76. Sphodrias' attempted raid of the Piraeus must have played on their minds.

⁴³⁹ Xen. *Hell.* 5.4.14. The Spartans bypassed Eleutherai and climbed the mountains by the road leading to Plataia. This is Hammond's 'Northern Road' (Hammond 1954). According to Ober 1985a: 211, the Spartans avoided Athenian territory, although he wrongly assigns an Athenian status to Eleutherai at this time.

⁴⁴⁰ Munn 1993: 98–102 for a 370s date of the Dema Wall and its strategic benefits.

the city of Thebes takes the side of the Lacedaimonians. (my translation adapted from the Loeb edition)⁴⁴¹

Considering the proclamation was made after Plataia's destruction, there must have been a considerable proportion of Athenian leadership unwilling to defend the Plataians against the Thebans, as the latter were fighting on their behalf. The wording employed by Isocrates is of importance here. It is *Boiotia*, rather than the *koinon* or the Boiotians, that is defending the Athenian *chora*. The benefits of having Boiotia as a buffer for the Attic hinterland outweighed the plight of the Plataians. This resolve was strengthened by the Plataians' recent collaboration with the Spartans, who were the target of the Confederacy.⁴⁴² To risk a vital alliance over the fortunes of a treacherous polis was not an option. In harsh *Realpolitik* fashion, the Athenians preferred the comforts of a Boiotian buffer over the emotional appeals of the Plataians.

Only after the demise of Spartan power did the Athenians reconsider this outlook, swapping the protection offered by Boiotia for a far-away friend. What previously had been a boon to the Athenians suddenly became a bane (Chapter 3.1.2).⁴⁴³ The repercussions of this change are reflected in local sources. Throughout the period of Athenian-Boiotian hostility, roughly from 369 to 339, there are numerous references to a possible Boiotian invasion of Attica and its consequences.⁴⁴⁴ And while these fears never materialised, they testify to the dangers a hostile Boiotia posed to the Athenians.

The utility of Boiotia for Athenian designs became more apparent during the Third Sacred War (357–346). Fighting on opposite sides, the Athenians and Boiotians were remarkably reluctant to engage each other directly. Matters changed when Philip, already at war with the Athenians, joined the war on the Boiotians' side in 353 (Chapters 2.6, 2.7). The first premonitions of a possible Macedonian invasion tormented the Athenians, prompting Demosthenes to suggest a rapprochement with the Boiotians to prevent it. He even notes that the Boiotians have always shown themselves more valuable collaborators than the Spartans, and perhaps this notion is

⁴⁴¹ Isoc. 14.33. ⁴⁴² RO 22 ll. 9–12. ⁴⁴³ Xen. *Hell.* 6.5.39.

⁴⁴⁴ Xen. *Mem.* 3.5.4; *Eq. Mag.* 7.1–2. Aeschin. 2.105–6 later claimed Epameinondas intended to remove the Propylaia from the Akropolis and place them on the Theban Cadmeia. Later authors echo the sentiment. Polyaeus 3.9.20 mentions a planned Theban invasion of Attica, which became public knowledge when the Athenian general Iphicrates revealed to the Assembly that he was planning to orchestrate a coup in Thebes. According to [Plut.] *Mor.* 193e, Epameinondas claimed he would cut all the trees in the Athenian *chora* to cook the meat Alexander of Pherai, a Boiotian enemy, had granted the Athenians.

related to their role as a guardian of Attica (Chapter 3.4.4).⁴⁴⁵ The difficulties of dealing with a hostile Boiotia and the threat of a powerful northern enemy became clear in the wake of the Macedonian victory at Crocus Field in 352. The Athenians were so alarmed they sent a significant force to occupy the Thermopylai pass. This was possible only with the support of the Phocians and Spartans and, more importantly, the weakened state of the *koinon* due to their strained finances and vicissitudes suffered in the war.⁴⁴⁶ The blockade worked, yet showed the difficulties the Athenians encountered to slow down Macedonian advances now that the Boiotians were hostile to them.

The fears of a 'barbarian' invasion, abetted by the Boiotians, were also expressed in the Ephebic Oath and the Oath of Plataia, which were inscribed on a stele in the deme of Acharnai. Although there are doubts about the historicity of these oaths, they reflect the contemporary fears of a devastation of the countryside. In no situation shall the ephebes abandon their fatherland against foreign attacks, not to mention the explicit mention of the prospective punishment of the Thebans after the repulsion of the barbarians (Chapter 5.2.8).⁴⁴⁷

The war ended without a Macedonian invasion of Attica, much to the relief of Athenian leaders. Yet unease remained. Embers of discontent between the enemies continued to burn, accentuating the Boiotians' role as buffer in the Athenian mind-set. Demosthenes was aware the Boiotians would suffer in an ensuing conflict due to their central geographical position:

For if we should hereafter come to blows with Philip, about Amphipolis or in any private quarrel not shared by the Thessalians or the Argives or the Thebans, I do not believe for a moment that any of the latter would be dragged into the war, least of all hear me before you shout me down – least of all the Thebans. I do not mean that they regard us with favour or that they would not readily oblige Philip, but they do realize quite clearly, for all the stolidity that people attribute to them, that if they ever fight you, they will have to take all the hard knocks themselves, and someone else will sit quietly by, waiting for the spoils. Therefore they would never make such a sacrifice unless the war had a common cause and origin.⁴⁴⁸

This common cause could be resisting the ambitious king. Regardless of the cause, however, they would suffer severely because in every situation they would bear the brunt of the war because of their geographical

⁴⁴⁵ Dem. 16.29. ⁴⁴⁶ Diod. 16.37.3, 38.1; Dem. 19.84, 319; Schachter 2016a: 113–32; 2016b.

⁴⁴⁷ RO 88. ⁴⁴⁸ Dem. 5.14–15. Demosthenes was a *proxenos* of Thebes: Aeschin. 2.141–3.

situation. War with the Macedonians was renewed in 340, but fortunately for the Athenians, there was increased friction between the king and his Boiotian allies, opening the possibility for a neighbourly rapprochement (Chapter 3.4.4).⁴⁴⁹ Little help could be expected from the Spartans. Therefore it was important to the Athenians to convince the *koinon* to function as a shield. The *koinon*'s leadership saw the writing on the wall. The Athenians were a logical ally – their hostility towards Philip combined with previous fruitful collaborations against common enemies – but certain issues needed to be ironed out before they would accept the approach.

The ensuing deal with the Athenians shows the acute awareness of the *koinon*'s leadership in recognising their powerful position, by demanding the Athenian acknowledgement of its claim over Boiotia. It prohibited future claims for the release of poleis such as Oropos or Thespiiai, or the restitution of Plataia, and was an implicit acknowledgment of the status quo. These Boiotian towns had been primary *topoi* in the Athenian Assembly, with Macedonian sympathisers regularly arguing for these measures to be taken against the *koinon*. It demonstrates the Boiotians could be assuaged to act as an Athenian ally and protector by concessions over disputed lands. Sacrificing Plataia and Oropos in exchange for Boiotian support was a small price to pay, especially as it constituted an acknowledgement of the status quo, rather than a transfer of disputed lands. Effectively, it was a repeat of the situation of 395, only this time the Boiotians held the cards. That makes their relative leniency all the more striking. Perhaps this suggests the neighbours were more favourable to each other and how their geographical entwinement inevitably placed them together as natural allies, rather than enemies.

The Boiotians now had no choice but to defend their borders, making it easier for the Athenians to keep Macedonian armies away from Attica. The defence was drawn up at Chaironeia. The loss of the battle, however, had severe repercussions for the neighbours. The Macedonian king's interventions in the political and geographical landscape of Boiotia demonstrate his acute understanding of the geopolitical dynamics of Central Greece.⁴⁵⁰

Thebes was punished for its insolence by the instalment of a Macedonian garrison. Outside the city, other measures were taken to curb

⁴⁴⁹ If Ober's thesis of road-control would stand, the advancements in artillery warfare in the fourth century made fortifications more fragile than their fifth-century predecessors. Ober 1985a: 219 concedes Philip's advancements made the notion of defending the borders futile; see also Gabriel 2010: 88–93.

⁴⁵⁰ Gartland 2016b.

their power. Orchomenos and Thespias were reinstated as independent poleis. Oropos was granted its independence and detached from the *koinon*. The pièce de résistance, however, was the intended restoration of the Plataians (Chapters 2.7, 4.1.2, 4.1.3, 5.3). These modifications aimed at muzzling the Thebans. Yet the ramifications of these changes went beyond the borders of Boiotia, as the instalment of pro-Macedonian enclaves throughout the region meant that the Macedonians could march on Attica at any given time. This ‘puncturing’ of the region neutralised the Athenians’ strongest ally and took away their buffer against any Macedonian incursions. While neither Philip nor his successor Alexander saw the full effects of their recalibration of Boiotia, the Diadochoi fighting for the Macedonian throne enjoyed the advantages of these friendly enclaves in Boiotia during the Hellenic War of 323, in which the Athenians initially struggled to unite with their allies and were eventually defeated.⁴⁵¹ Interestingly, in the aftermath of the war, Phocion, Demades and others were sent to negotiate with Antipater in Boiotia. They explicitly requested the Macedonian general to stay in Boiotia and *not* invade Attica, which he accepted.⁴⁵² Their request demonstrates the functionality of the region as a buffer.

But what about the Boiotian perspective? Insofar as it is possible to reconstruct, the Athenians wanted to maintain a good relation with the Boiotians because of the strategic advantages the region offered as a buffer. On numerous occasions, however, the Boiotians were willing participants. The question remains why. That question might be harder to answer considering the scarcity of sources detailing their viewpoint. Combing through our sources nevertheless allows for an insight into possible motivations.

The early roots of Boiotian acquiescence can be retraced to the Persian Wars. Notwithstanding the lack of a concerted, region-wide effort to counter the invading threat at Thermopylai, the overall negligence of the Hellenic League to confront the Persians outside of the Peloponnese with the full force of its military power troubled both Boiotian and Athenian minds. Even if the *koinon* was deemed an untrustworthy ally, the same could be said of the Thessalians. Yet the defence of the Tempe valley involved a much larger force. The relative ease with which Central Greece was abandoned by the Peloponnesians, much to the chagrin of its inhabitants, confronted these peoples with the necessity of figuring out

⁴⁵¹ Habicht 2006: 56–61.

⁴⁵² Plut. *Phoc.* 26.3; cf. Diod. 18.18.3.

their own defences.⁴⁵³ Herodotus offers a glimpse in his eighth book when he tells of Athenian hopes of setting up a common defence in Boiotia to protect the poleis east of the Isthmia that then fell flat, with the Peloponnesians withdrawing to the Peloponnese.⁴⁵⁴

A defence of Central Greece materialised only in the latter stages of the war. Yet the Battle of Plataia was an offensive manoeuvre, not a defensive one. If the Boiotians participated in the Tempe valley defence, combined with the contribution of *some* elements of Theban society to the mission at Thermopylai (Chapter 2.3), there must have been disappointment among their ranks about the lack of enthusiasm to defend Central Greece, even if Herodotus is here portraying the Athenian dejection. Although this is speculation, it is not too far-fetched to imagine that the Boiotians, who were willing to fight the Persians, were dejected at the Peloponnesian selfishness. The Athenians, on the other hand, may have been perceived as like-minded people when it came to the defence of Central Greece. The Persian Wars, despite the various outcomes and the dissipation of an advanced defence, may have sowed the seeds of mutual trust for a committed defence. Of course, this could conveniently be forgotten when the situation was called for, but Spartan abandonment equally remained vivid in the Athenian *imaginaire*.⁴⁵⁵ The Athenians could at least be trusted to defend areas away from their borders against invasions from the north, unlike the reluctant Peloponnesians, whose epichoric outlook dominated their decision-making.

So what was it in for the Boiotians to act as the wall of Attica? Obviously, they were to suffer the consequences of war on their soil. However, the region's fertility would at least mitigate these cauldrons of destruction by providing a safety net for the incurred destruction. A more salient point, in my opinion, is that it granted the Boiotians the lead in decision-making. Their central location within the geography of Greece bound them to a destiny as a stomping ground for crossing armies. Nothing could be altered about that. By assertively approaching the Athenians they could at least enjoy a form of autonomy in steering the outcome of wars fought on their soil. That way they were assured of support instead of having the war inflicted upon them. Another benefit was their knowledge and familiarity of the terrain, an aspect that should not be underestimated.⁴⁵⁶ Unlike the invading armies, familiarity with the terrain and its natural environment

⁴⁵³ The Tempe valley was easier to defend than Thermopylai, since there was not a possibility for a 'backstab action': Robertson 1976.

⁴⁵⁴ Hdt. 8.40. ⁴⁵⁵ Queyrel-Bottineau 2014b. ⁴⁵⁶ Konijnendijk 2017: 72–94.

granted an advantage during battle. A prime example of this is the ambush laid by the 'Orchomenizers' for the Athenian army under Tolmides, which resulted in the expulsion of the Athenians from Boiotia.⁴⁵⁷ These factors explain at least part of the Boiotian disposition to act as a buffer for the southern neighbours under the right conditions.

Their actions in 395 best exemplify that attitude. An anonymous Theban ambassador presents the Athenians with the option of fighting against the Spartans with the Boiotians and elaborates their utility to the neighbours:

And we certainly were valuable allies to the Lacedaimonians, as you so well know; but now we can be expected to support you altogether more stoutly than we supported the Lacedaimonians then; for it is by no means on behalf of islanders or Syracusans, or in fact of any alien people, that we shall be lending our aid as we were then, but on behalf of our own injured selves.⁴⁵⁸

The ambassador here demonstrates a keen insight into the psyche of his audience, but also evinces a distinctly Boiotian perspective on the upcoming war. Acting as a buffer was less of a burden, since it would be in defence of their own country. Regardless of the Athenian decision, war was destined to reach his home region, with a Spartan army on its doorstep. Rather than having to face the danger alone, Athenian support could be obtained by keeping the wars from *their* borders. Additional support also guaranteed, or created more of an impetus, to keep the battlefields from the 'embryonic core' of Boiotia, roughly the Theban plains, as can be seen in the locations of the main battles of the Corinthian War: Koroneia, Haliartos and further afield. Neither can be deemed the 'Theban' heartland of Boiotia.

A final factor is prestige, which emerges most strongly in the anti-Macedonian alliance of 339/8. The opportunity to lead a 'Panhellenic' alliance against a new foreign, barbarous invader led the *koinon* to act as the last gate to southern Greece. This chance granted a long-cherished wish, as this entailed an implicit acknowledgement of the Boiotians' role as hegemon of Greece (Chapter 3.4.4). Their disposition to act as the buffer for not just Athens, but all of Greece, was thus instilled by an acknowledgement of their central role in Greek affairs. The costs for the Athenians

⁴⁵⁷ Thucydides reveals little, but Diodorus (12.6.2) writes: 'Tolmides, the Athenian general, seized Chaironeia. And when the Boiotians gathered their forces and caught Tolmides' troops in an ambush, a violent battle took place at Koroneia, in the course of which Tolmides fell fighting and of the remaining Athenians some were massacred and others were taken alive.'

⁴⁵⁸ Xen. *Hell.* 3.5.14.

this time were certainly more cumbersome than earlier collaborations, as evidenced by the concessions given, but demonstrate that the Boiotians could be buoyed into acting as a buffer. Mostly this came at their own instigation and therefore demonstrates that fighting on their own soil with the support of others was the result of the Boiotian understanding of their unavoidable fate as the ‘Dancing Floor of Ares’.

4.4 Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was to delineate how geopolitical considerations affected the Atheno-Boiotian relations from the sixth to the fourth centuries. From a geographical point of view, Boiotia was a natural ally for the Athenians. The *koinon* held the keys to the kingdom for the Athenians because of their role as a possible buffer, their access to the Corinthian Gulf and the influence they exerted on Euboea. Keeping the Boiotians as friends safeguarded the Athenian empire, while at the same time providing invaluable protection against potential enemies. Despite these geographical elements thrusting the neighbours towards collaboration, their proximity also caused friction. Control over the borderlands such as Oropos or the Skourta plain, with their economic advantages, often formed a bone of contention between the neighbours. Although these disputes could disrupt the peaceful co-existence or cooperation, the chronic emphasis on the *negative* effects of these borderlands overlooks the manners in which these disputes could be resolved. Mainly, it was the delineation of boundaries or the affirmation of unequivocal agreements over the exploitation of the fertile lands that stabilised and harmonised the neighbourly relations. War did not sprout from territorial disputes. Frustration over territorial claims frequently remained dormant, only to emerge when hostilities had already broken out.

The military and strategic importance of Boiotia was often an impetus for the Athenians to (temporarily) relinquish their claims to the borderlands, if it meant obtaining an alliance with the *koinon*. This ‘buffer’ function against incoming forces proved a more sustainable strategy to protect the hinterland than military structures could provide. The ‘sacrifice’ of contested territories was an easy one to make for the benefit of the *koinon*’s alliance. Another benefit of friendly relations was the direct access it granted to the Corinthian Gulf, of vital strategic importance throughout the Classical period as it provided a direct connection to the Peloponnese and beyond, an essential advantage in the struggle against the Spartans.

In sum, the geopolitical situation of Attica and Boiotia may have caused friction and disputes, but there was an undeniable entwining of their fortunes, which made collaboration a far more profitable endeavour. It was a realisation that seems to have remained a common thread throughout the Classical period, especially in times of shared troubles. As such, Boiotia can plausibly be termed an advantageous neighbour for the Athenians, which was only truly disrupted by the emergence of the Macedonian kings who recalibrated the political landscape of Central Greece according to their preferences, thereby equally impacting the natural synergy between the Athenians and Boiotians.