

TIR-Greece: From map to gazetteer and back again

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ABSTRACT

The *Tabula Imperii Romani* project, as the name indicates, began as a map. However, due to the vast amount of archaeological data produced by numerous excavations in the areas of the Roman Empire, TIR volumes were converted into gazetteers. Maps gradually became a mere supplement to this index. More recently, with the aid of GIS mapping and databases, maps have regained importance.

The Academy of Athens has participated in the TIR project since 1972. The first volume (Philippi) was published in 1993. Over the last decade, an intense effort has been made to publish volumes devoted to the entire area of Greece. Six new volumes are now available, covering the area from Epirus and Thessaly to Attica and the Aegean Islands.

The TIR-Greece research group is currently exploring new ways of presenting and analysing archaeological, historical and spatial data. The first example of this process covers western Greece (Aitolia-Akarnania and Epirus). In this paper, we present changes in settlement patterns in western Greece after the Roman conquest and we attempt to address historical issues, such as the impact of the Roman presence on the area.

KEYWORDS: *Tabula Imperii Romani*, Greece, Epirus, Aitolia, Akarnania, Roman period.

1. INTRODUCTION (MAP 1)

The *Tabula Imperii Romani* project began in 1928 when O.G.S. Crawford, archaeological officer of the British Ordnance Society, proposed the creation of maps depicting the main geographic, historical and archaeological features of the Roman Empire (Gardiner 1973, 107). This was one of the first major attempts to visualise data on maps of the Roman Empire. The Academy of Athens published the first volume of the TIR-Greece in 1993. This volume covers a considerable part of northern Greece (eastern Macedonia and Thrace). It contains two sheets with a 1:500,000 scale and a 65-page pamphlet. The next volumes, all published from 2012 onwards, significantly differ from the first book. As demonstrated in the

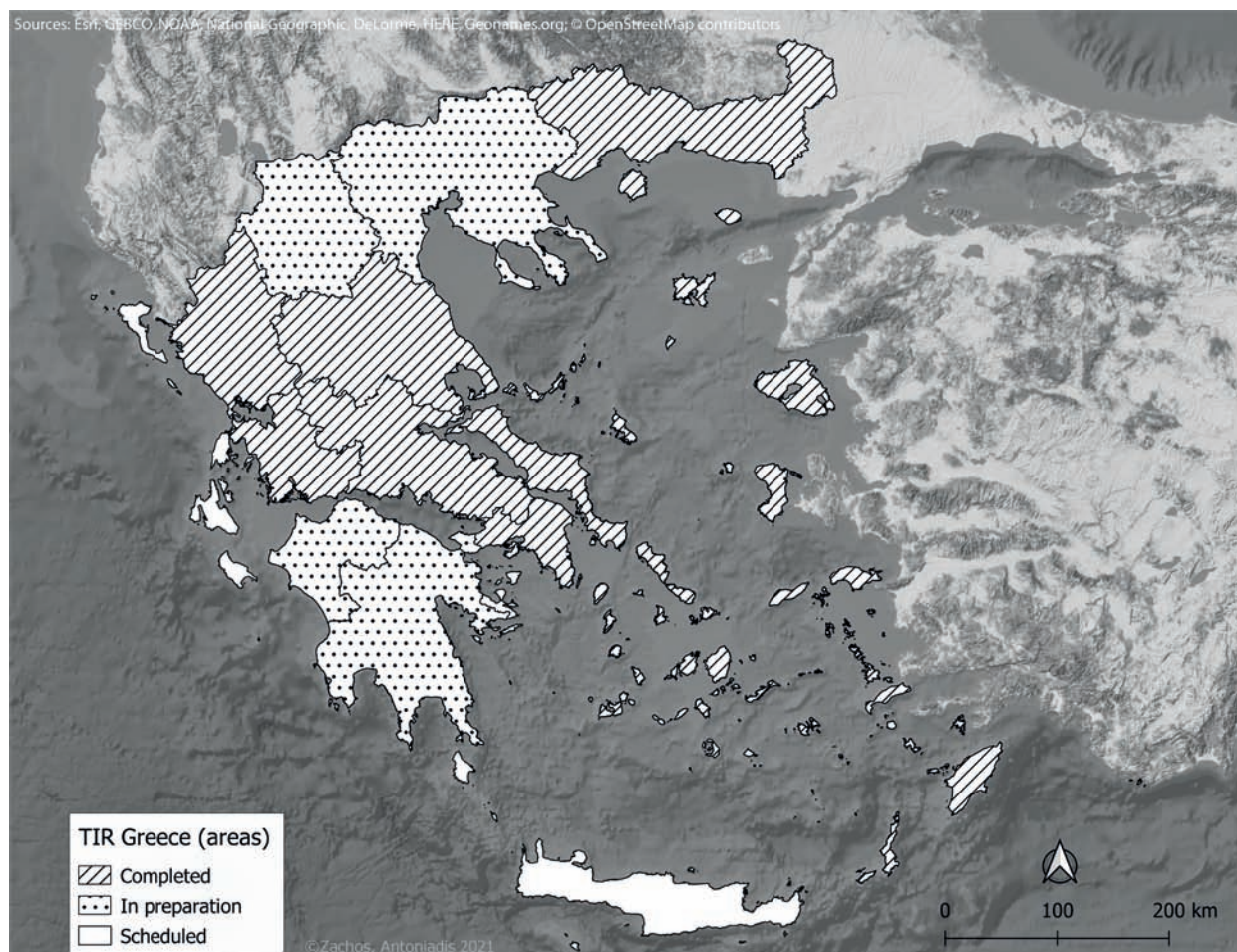
following table, they are extended gazetteers of sites with many corresponding maps included.

In a recent presentation on the various stages and inherent problems of the TIR, Richard Talbert (2019, 79-86) asserts that changing the format of the editions from one sheet accompanied by “a pamphlet containing a short commentary, bibliography and index of names” to a “fully annotated gazetteer (in one language), with town plans, area diagrams and other accessories... has resulted in a kind of delay that Crawford wished to avoid”. He concludes by pointing out that “the continuation of revived *TIR* may have served to discourage others from trying to map the Roman Empire more effectively” (Talbert, 85-86). Talbert, however, does not consider a major advantage of this new approach: by changing the project from simple maps accompanied by a pamphlet (e.g. K35, i: Philippi, in the case of TIR-Greece) to maps accompanied by a complete gazetteer (all

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TIR-Greece Authors	Year Publ.	No. Pages	No. Maps
Avramea, Karanastasi	1993	65	2
Karvonis, Mikedaki	2012	252	44
Antoniadis	2016	79	8
Zachos	2016	237	13
Karvonis	2016	352	11
Mikedaki	2019	128	7
Zachos	2021	130	8



MAP 1: The present state of the TIR program in Greece. Map made by the authors. QGIS, Basemap ESRI and STAMEN.

TIR-Greece volumes published after 2012), it was transformed from a cartographic into a topographic project. The amount of information now contained in the indexes allows any researcher of the Roman world to easily access the data needed for his or her own study.

Furthermore, with the aid of GIS mapping, the authors of the TIR volumes can now digitally process a significant amount of data. This process has converted the TIR project from a static into a dynamic one. The combined case study analysed below demonstrates the dynamic nature of the TIR-Greece project regarding the synthesis of different kinds of data. It was decided to present examples from two regions of western Greece (Aitolia-Akarnania and Epirus) because, in both regions, Rome imposed very important changes in the settlement pattern and hierarchical model. Two important Roman centres were created, Patras and Nicopolis. While the colony of Patras is outside the study areas, its establishment brought about dramatic changes in Aitolia. Likewise, the city of Nicopolis was the main driver of change in Epirus and Akarnania. Rome's interest in this part of western Greece is explained by the desire to exert political and economic control over the two areas of the Greek world closest to the Italian peninsula.

2. EPIRUS (MAP 2)

Before 168 BC, Epirus was inhabited by a number of different *ethne*, with Chaonians, Molossians, Thesprotians, and Cassopaians being the most important among them³. According to Polybius⁴, the Romans conquered the entire region of Epirus after the battle of Pydna in 168 BC. After a few months, the Romans decided to destroy 70 Epirote walled settlements and to enslave 150,000 people, mostly Molossians. In the 1st century BC, Thracian invaders and the Roman Civil Wars devastated the countryside and

cities such as Ambracia were looted⁵. This resulted in the desolation of the region. After the battle of Actium in 31 BC, Augustus founded Nicopolis, laying the foundations for the economic revival of southern Epirus.

Regarding the Epirote economy in the Late Hellenistic period, immediately after 167 BC people came from all over Italy to settle in Epirus and engage in agricultural, pastoral and commercial activities (Zoumbaki 2019). The TIR project's research in central and southern Epirus (Antoniadis 2016) suggests the first post-167 BC Roman settlements followed a pattern guided by their political and economic agenda, to which this research pays particular attention. In addition to residing in the Epirote cities devastated by the events of 168/7 BC, they settled in sites which they could defend easily against possible riots and, gradually towards the mid-1st century BC, they converted a few of these into *villae rusticae* and large farmsteads. These sites also provided the new rulers of the land with a great opportunity for extensive agriculture and pastoralism⁶.

The most important sites for this period (167 to 31 BC) are located in the Kokytos and Acheron valleys, and near the Ionian coast of Thesprotia (Antoniadis 2019). The Roman villa from the mid-2nd century, built upon the destroyed walls of the Hellenistic fort at Agios Donatos, is one of the earliest examples of this process (Forsén, Reynolds 2011, 248-264). From this site, Romans could control the fertile valley of the Kokytos river and the small farmsteads and villages located in this area (Antoniadis 2016, 62-64). The fortified site at Mesopotamos, built close to the Acheron river and including the sanctuary of Necromanteion, was not converted into a villa but continued its complex function as a major agricultural centre after 167 BC. The villa at Mastilitsa (Preka-Alexandri 1994, 427-429) was probably built on top of a Hellenistic house after the Roman conquest. A similar process must have occurred for the contemporary villa at Troube in Nea Seleukeia (Vaseiliadis et al 2018, 333). These two villas

3. This case study focuses on the present-day administrative region of Epirus in the north-west of Greece. This region corresponds to ancient central and southern Epirus. The region of Chaonia, located in present-day Albania, was not initially included in the TIR-Epirus volume.

4. Livy 45.34. Polybius 30.15.

5. Strabo 7.7.3, 7.7.9. Plutarch *Aemilius Paulus* 29.

6. Varro *De Re Rustica* 1.17.5; 2.1.2; 2.6.16; 2.9.3. For a detailed analysis of this settlement pattern in Epirus see Antoniadis 2021.



MAP 2: Map of sites dating from the Late Hellenistic to the Late Roman period in ancient southern and central Epirus. Map made by the authors.

from the mid-2nd century BC were both located on low hills, offering protection in case of an emergency.

In the other areas of southern and central Epirus, no such Early Roman structures have been recovered so far. In Molossis, very few small villages and isolated farmsteads in the Ioannina basin seem to have survived the Roman conquest. Most of them are located south of Pamvotis lake, at Episkopiko, Pedini, Serviana, and Dramesioi (Pliakou 2018, 133-151). In the same period, very few rural sites were located at Cassopaia and in the territory of Ambracia, a former Corinthian colony and capital of Pyrrhus and his dynasty. None of these rural sites seemed to attract the interest of the Romans. Only a handful of sites at Ambracia continued their function as small agricultural units from the Hellenistic to the post-167 BC period (Antoniadis 2016, 23-26).

After the battle of Actium and the *Pax Romana*, the Romans populating Nicopolis no longer feared riots or civil wars. Additionally, most of the population of the new city was made up of Greeks who had been forced to abandon their settlements in the surrounding areas. The centuriation of the Nicopolitan territory transformed the landscape of southern Epirus and small agricultural units began to appear all over the Agios Thomas peninsula. A late 1st-century BC *villa rustica* was discovered in the modern settlement of Taranas (Riginos 2012, 355). Most of the small farmsteads, however, date from the 1st century AD (Riginos, Sakkas 2018, 441-454). In this hitherto uncultivated area, the people of Nicopolis must have carried out a large number of economic activities apart from agriculture, such as aquaculture at Mazoma lagoon and the production of purple dye at Vathy bay (Stein 2001, 67-69).

The prosperous 1st century AD resulted in further economic growth and, from this period onwards, spacious *villae rusticae* began to appear all over central and southern Epirus, even in hitherto abandoned areas. In Molossis, these villas appear at Ktismata⁷ (Kleitsas 2010, 780-78), at Kranoula (Giannaki et al 2017), and perhaps at Kerasovo (Vlachopoulou-Oikonomou 2003, 157). At Cassopaia, most villas appear close to or on the coastal route of the Ionian Sea, the most important being at Riza and at Kastrosykia (Angeli, Katsadima 2001, 94-100). Other villas have been discovered at the Louros Springs (Zachos, Choinas 2006, 687) and at Chalikia (Zachos 2012, 344). In the Ambracia Gulf, an important *villa rustica* stood at Strongyli (Douzougli 1993, 282-285). *Villae rusticae* dating from the 2nd century AD have also been found in Thesprotia. The most important of these was discovered at Zavali (Lazari 2019, 403). This villa was located near the important Roman and Late Roman coastal settlement of Ladachori, where many workshops and port facilities were discovered (Antoniadis 2016, 67-69). This coastal settlement must have held particular importance for the largely unexplored colony of Photike, located in the heartland of Thesprotia (Forsén 2019, 28).

3. AITOLIA-AKARNANIA (MAP 3)

Aitolia and Akarnania represent a different settlement pattern, with a predominance of sites along communication routes facilitating Roman exploitation of the region.

Ancient literary sources, as well as modern investigation, have painted a picture of Aitolia and Akarnania as deserted during the Roman period. Cicero's *amissa*⁸ and Strabo's *ἐρημία*⁹ were common *topoi* (or rhetorical *tropoi*) in the discipline's terminology for this region (Alcock 1993, 26-27. Isager 2001. Isager 2009, 205-2010. Ljung 2012, 190-192). However, archaeological research in the last few decades has begun to overturn this general view. The data come from

7. This villa was probably constructed earlier, in the 1st century AD.

8. Cicero, *In Pisonem* 96.

9. Strabo 8.8.1.

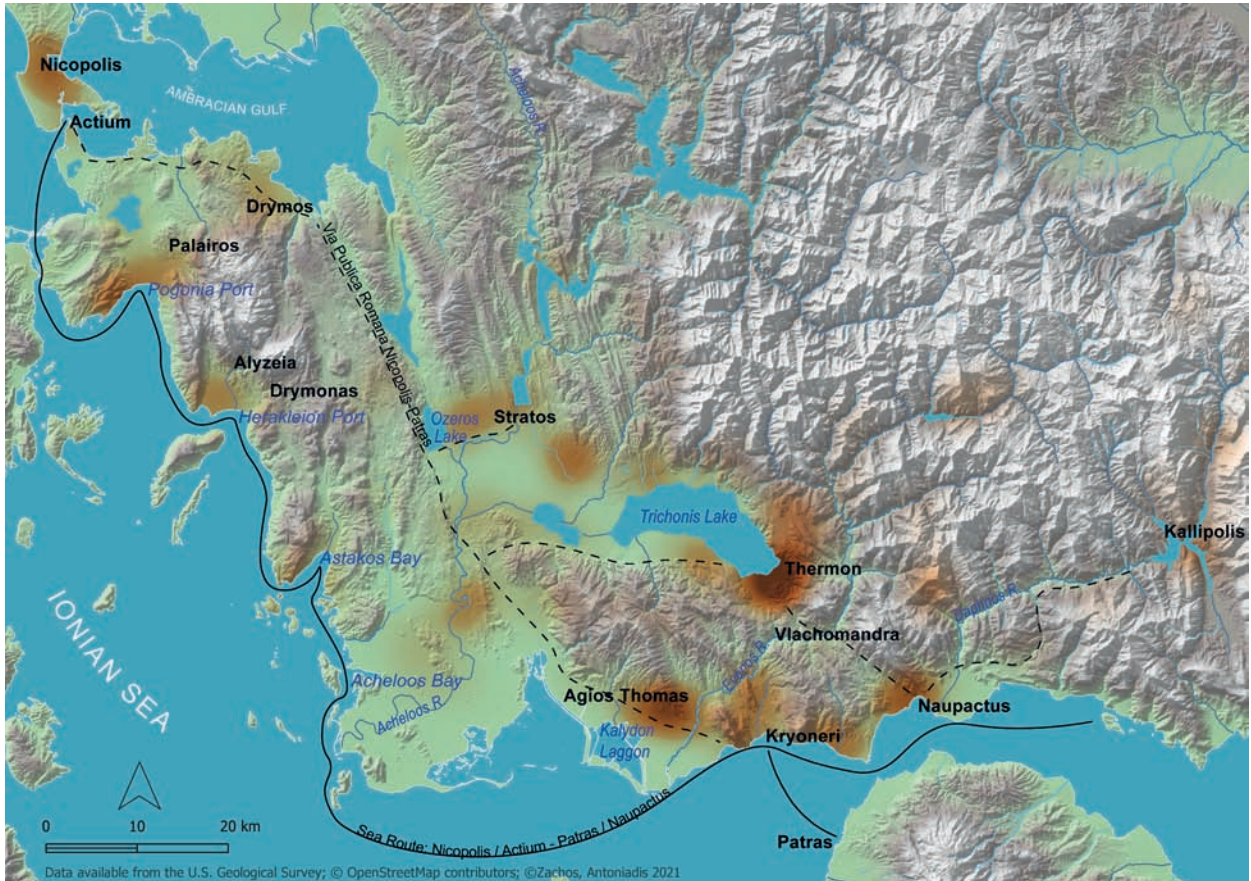
studies on the *via publica romana* that linked Patras to Nicopolis, the two major cities of western Greece, from sporadic finds in the rural countryside and from new sites coming to light in the course of recent large public works projects (especially the construction of the Ionian National Road). Based on this research, it seems that both areas were not as desolated as they appear to be from the sources.

It is true that the cities had already started to decline in the 2nd century BC, the final blow coming with the founding of the *Colonia Aroe Augusta Patrensis* and the *Actia Nicopolis*, and with the movement of the remnants of their population a few decades later. However, small cities managed to survive and new sites appeared on the coast and further inland (Ljung 2012, *passim*, esp. 185-190. Zachos, in press). In this section, this process will be illuminated by two bodies of data deriving from Roman literary sources: A) evidence concerning road networks and sea routes, and B) evidence concerning the financial exploitation of the region.

The first body of data includes the journeys made by Cicero in 51 and 50 BC from Actium to Patras and vice versa¹⁰ (Rizakis 1988, 454-456). The information from this source is quite illuminating because it comes from the period before the founding of Nicopolis and the colony of Patras and refers to a sea route that continued to be in use in Middle and Roman times, as depicted in *Itinerarium Antonini* and in *Tabula Peutingeriana* (Miller 1916, T.P. Strecke 79, It. Ant. 325). The *stationes* Perdioricto (in the narrow sea passage between Leukas and Akarnania), Halisso (ancient Alysia), Acheloum Fl. (possibly the Gulf of Astakos)¹¹, Eveno (the estuary of Evenos), Calidon (the port in Kryoneri) of the *Tabula Peutingeriana* are

10. Cicero, *Ad Atticum* 5.9, *Ad Familiares* 16.1-9.

11. Oeniadai was the main port of the Hellenistic period at the mouth of Acheloos R. The city's shipyards were destroyed in the Hellenistic period and the harbour probably fell out of use until the middle Roman period, silted up by deposits from the river. On the other hand, the Roman and Late Roman sites (among them an impressive *villa rustica* with mosaics and baths) around the nearby bay of Astakos are good evidence to locate the *statio* Acheloos of the *Tabula Peutinger* in this area (Zachos 2016, 203-204, 208-209).



MAP 3: Map of sites dating from the Late Hellenistic to the Late Roman period in Aitolia and Akarnania. Map made by the authors.

definitely parts of an *itinerarium maritimum* (Axioti 1980, 197-205).

One should bear in mind that a port is not simply the jetty but a place where ships and travellers can find supplies, water, fresh food and a resting place. As we can see on the digital map, farmsteads that would presumably serve these needs are always located close to the port.

Alyzia, for example, had a population of 30,000 in the time of Cicero¹². It is located on the mainland at the modern site of Kato Kandila but Strabo mentions a sacred port called Heraklion, with a *temenos* of the hero and sculptural works by Lysippos¹³. Although Alyzia became a dependency of Nicopolis after 31 BC, it retained its significance on the sea route from Nicopolis

to Patras. A burial monument of a rich landowner dated to the 2nd century AD was found on the shore (Flämig 2007, 144) and the temple in Drymonas Archontochoriou was repaired in the Roman period. Also, several *villae rusticae* were found on the north side of the bay on the shore of the Palairos peninsula. Dated to the Roman-Late Roman period, their products were probably transported from the old small harbour of Palairos at Pogonia to the port of Alyzia. A funerary inscription from the 3rd/4th century AD, found in the Pogonia port, mentions Aurelius Kyriakus, a freedman responsible for the *hierotato tameio* of the Familia Caesaris in Nicopolis (Zachos 2016, 205, 209-211. Antonetti 1996, 152).

Some of the *villae* on the Palairos peninsula and in Astakos bay (site: Agios Panteleimon) are characterised by luxury finds (i.e. mosaics),

12. Cicero, *Ad Familiares* 16.2

13. Strabo 10.2.2, 10.2.9, 10.2.21

suggesting wealth greater than that of a simple farm owner (Zachos 2016, 204). Bearing in mind the scattered nature of the information on Roman investors in western Greece (Zoumbaki 2011, Zoumbaki 2012), one can imagine that a villa near a port on a major sea route was an attractive location for someone who did not necessarily spend the entire year in the not so cosmopolitan Aitolia-Akarnania.

Another reason for mentioning a harbour in an *itinerarium maritimum* is its connection with the hinterland. Significantly, there are numerous habitation sites in the area of Kalydon (Gavrolimni area) and at the mouth of the Evinos river (Makyneia area), where a strong concentration of farmhouses, inns and villages has been found (Zachos 2016, 163-164, 184-185, Saranti, Georma 2018). It is from this area, specifically from Kryoneri (the port of Kalydon), that the paved road begins, a *via publica romana*, mentioned by Strabo that connects the colony of Patras with Nicopolis through the Aitolian-Akarnanian mainland (Axioti 1980, 191-197. Arnaud 2005, 178-179, 193 table 8, 194).

A milestone found in the area of the Agios Thomas settlement next to the public Roman baths attests to the presence of this road. The settlement was founded on the route of the *via publica romana*, replacing an adjacent Hellenistic settlement (Petropoulos 2007, 198-199. Zachos 2016, 192). The construction of the impressive *thermae* in the early 2nd century AD coincides with the repair of the road (Petropoulos 2004). Some architectural remains to the south of the monument must belong to a farmhouse. The region could therefore supply the ships or offer a place to rest for anyone wanting to travel inland. Inns may have provided food and accommodation along this route, as did the Late Roman building with bath facilities found in Drymos Vonitsas (Chamilaki, Delavinias, Goumplia 2018).

At the height of Lake Ozeros, this *via publica romana* met a secondary road leading to the territory of ancient Stratos, revived in the Roman-Late Roman period (Zachos 2016, 208, 212-213).

Amongst the goods transported along this *via publica romana* to the port of Kryoneri, and then to the large market of Patras, would have

been the fish caught in the lagoon of Kalydon (exploited by the Romans of Patras according to Strabo)¹⁴ (Rizakis 1995, no. 538, Rizakis 1996, 295), as well as products from Lake Trichonis (fish, vegetables, livestock products). The latter region, however, also had access to the coast via the road leading from Thermon, through the territory of the ancient *kome* in Vlachomandra, to the port of Naupactus (Zachos 2016, 197. Saranti 2018, 321-322), an important *statio* in the *itinerarium maritimum*.

As far as the region of Trichonis Lake is concerned, it is significant that although the old sites (sanctuaries, small towns) which survived the turbulent times of the 2nd and 1st centuries BC are scattered all along the perimeter of the lake, the highest density of sites is located on the south-east bank, exactly where the road coming from Naupactus ends. This site density consists almost exclusively of rural sites, farms and *villae rusticae* from the Roman-Late Roman period. The finds from these sites indicate that cultivating the plain around the lake and livestock farming in the hilly areas, as well as exploitation of the lagoon fishery, must have been the main activities for the inhabitants (Gerolymou 2013).

The Alyzia settlement pattern, with many farms located close to the city, is also observed in Naupactus (Saranti, Staikou 2013. Zachos 2016, 165-171). The territory of Naupactus was not exploited by the Roman colonists but rather by the Greeks of Patras, whose land had been given to the Roman settlers, according to Pausanias¹⁵ (Rizakis 1995, no. 364. Rizakis 1998, 281-284). The layers of grape seeds and the *lenoi* found at these rural sites confirm the preference (not, of course, as a monocrop) of the farmhouses around the cities for viticulture, since there was a constant demand for wine (Rizakis 2013, 38-39).

Naupactus not only survived in Roman times but also flourished in the Late Roman period (Papageorgiou 2004. Saranti 2018, 194-197). From the port of Naupactus, the surplus of the production not absorbed by the local market could be easily shipped to the opposite coast (Patras, Corinth) (Zachos, in press). Indeed, an urban centre with amenities and a halo of rural

14. Strabo 10.2.21.

15. Pausanias 10.38.9.

sites around it conforms to the classic model of a city that manages to survive into the new era (Rizakis 2018, 138-139).

In addition to the roads leading to Trichonis lake or the area of Kalydon, also starting from Naupactus, is the old road leading to Kallipolis, an important city for Hellenistic Aitolia. Kallipolis was transformed in Roman and Late Roman times to a mountain hub surrounded by a group of farming or pastoral communities, away from the geopolitical influence of Patras and Nicopolis (Zapheirou 1982. Zachos 2016, 186-187. Zachos, in press).

The evidence of human activity on the plateau of Kallipolis suggests this mountainous road, leading from the coast of the Corinthian Gulf to the valley of Spercheios, never fell into disuse, although it may have been downgraded to a secondary route after the dissolution of the Aitolian League in the 1st century BC (Sotiriadis 1907, 303-320. Avramea 2002, 73).

CONCLUSIONS

Placing sites on maps for the TIR volumes is a rather complicated but very fruitful process. Especially in terms of topography, it provides greater insight regarding the motives of the Romans in settling specific areas of western Greece. A comparison of the maps of previous surveys with those of the TIR volumes confirms the dramatic decrease in sites but also reveals a new model of settlement that is directly related to the new geopolitical situation and economy established from the time of Augustus onwards. The coasts of Epirus, Akarnania and Aitolia became part of the larger network of sea routes between the Italian peninsula and the Greek mainland. These routes started from the Adriatic coast and passed through the channel between the Ionian islands (Zoumbaki 2018) and the western Greek mainland, ending at the major ports of the province of Achaia and, from there, connecting to the land route network leading inland. This story of trade and human activity is what lies behind the strange symbols on the TIR maps.

The examples of Epirus and Aitolia-Akarnania demonstrate the importance of the dialogue between the maps and the TIR Index,

each one informing the other. Thus the aim of the revived TIR is not just to place symbols on a map but to interpret these via the rich topographies of the Index.

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