World War II: the Italian occupation of Asine (1941-1943)

German forces invaded Greek territory in April 1941, after the collapse of the Greek front. The Germans arrived in Argos and Nafplion on the 27th of April, and that same day, at the site of Lakka-Kaminiaki (near the football field of Tolo), the advancing army engaged in a long battle with Australian, New Zealand and British Allied forces, who were trying to embark on warships off the coast of Tolo.

During the Occupation, naval units of the German and Italian fleet were based in Tolo (fig. 1). The Axis forces decided to fortify the acropolis of Asine for fear of an Allied landing on the nearby beaches of Plaka in Drepano and Tolo. Hence, they installed at Asine the 433rd Mechanized Battalion of the 29th Division of Piemonte, under the command of Captain Bagliolesi from Pisa, as Italian troops were responsible for the defense of the coastal areas of Argolis (figs. 2, 3).

The Italians undertook an extensive project of converting the peninsula into a contemporary fortress, conscripting locals for this purpose. They reinforced the ancient walls with dry-stone superstructures, widened the Hellenistic cisterns and wells to store ammunition and supplies, built small auxiliary stone buildings, stone staircases and paths and installed pillboxes, outposts and bases for antiaircraft weapons, which communicated through a complex network of trenches (fig. 4). The building material used in the construction was taken from the ancient buildings that had been excavated in the 1920s, resulting in the almost complete destruction of the remains in the Lower Town and on the top of Barbouna hill opposite. The coastal zone of Drepano and Tolo was also reinforced with pillboxes and minefields on land and in the sea.

The Italians remained at Asine until their capitulation in September 1943. The full extent of the damage was revealed after the Greek Liberation in 1944 (fig. 5). According to the official 1946 report by the Greek Directorate of Antiquities and Historic Monuments the destruction of ancient Asine was "final, radical, and complete". The full extent of the destruction was "final, radical, and complete".