



Water in Athens Then and Now

Maria Christaki and the Phd Committee Team

National Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece (ritachristaki@yahoo.gr)

The presentation examines the water sources and the water supply projects in Athens in relation to the historical, urban and demographic development since 3500 BC.

Athens and the Athens basin were inhabited from the Late Neolithic period (about 5300-4500 BC.). In recent years, after thorough investigations and excavations in the north and south side of the Acropolis, the Agora and the Dipylon, conclusions were drawn regarding the historical construction and residential development of Athens. The findings show that the Athenians had settled permanently on the sides of the Acropolis from Hysteroneolithic or Final Neolithic period (3500-3000 BC.). The water provision was primarily secured by using wells and natural springs, such as the Neolithic wells near the Klepsydra spring.

The climate in Attica is dry Mediterranean with sunny and dry summers and wet and mild winters. The annual precipitation in the city of Athens is about 400 mm and long dry periods are been detected in historical times all the way to today.

Since prehistoric times, the city of Athens and the wider region of Attica did not contain many natural water sources so aquatic reserves were never adequate to meet the needs of residents, as these changed over time. The lack of water in Attica drove its inhabitants to study the flow of rivers and penetration of rain into the earth to discover and extract hidden waters. This enabled Athenians to acquire technical expertise and develop a significant hydrotechnologic culture, as evidenced by their works.

As the population of Athens and the need for water increased residents - among others - turned to obtaining water from distant sources and construct aqueducts that brought water into the city using gravity. In the mid of 6th century BC (tyranny of Peisistrateidon) and while the population was 300,000 the Peisistrateio aqueduct built. After the 6th. century BC there were, fountains, cisterns, reservoirs and aqueducts throughout the city. In Roman Athens, the requirement for large volumes of water brought about the construction of the brilliant Hadrian's aqueduct in 140. AD that supplied water to Athens for 1800 years. The large population explosion in 1922, (as Athens welcomed refugees) and the increased population of 800,000 by 1928, led to the construction of the dam of Marathon. The population of Athens in the decade 1950-1960 was 1,850,000 and opened a new water supply project, the lake Hylike. In 1981 the population of the capital region exceeded 3,000,000 and a new dam was constructed along the Mornos river. In 2001 the diversion of the Evinos river into Mornos was completed.