

The ancient harbour city of Ainos and its environs - Palaeoenvironmental reconstructions based on sedimentological and microfaunal evidence

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The ancient harbour city of Ainos (Enez) at the Aegean Sea in Turkish Thrace was an important trading site and administrative centre from the Classical Greek to Byzantine period. So far, the exact location of the harbour(s) could not be identified. Three vibracores were taken around the castle hill of Ainos in order to reconstruct the history of the surrounding lagoons and to identify potential ancient harbour sites. Analyses were carried out in a multi-proxy approach, relying on micropalaeontological (Foraminifera, Ostracoda), sedimentological, and geomagnetic data. The records start about 8000 years ago when the castle hill was surrounded by a confined lagoon, but was still connected to the mainland. The marine transgression caused increasing salinities and water depths with a maximum around 5000 years ago when the castle hill became an island. During early Imperial Roman times at the latest, the lagoons were separated from the sea by a barrier-beach complex as indicated by characteristic lagoonal microfaunas. The Hebros delta reached the north of the city around 400 AD, causing a closure in the north and subsequent siltation of the smaller lagoon east of the castle hill. Regarding connection to the sea and water depth, potential harbour sites lay in the larger lagoon from early Imperial Roman times to the late medieval period. Another possible location may have been close to the Hebros river course in the north. However, no distinct harbour structures have been found to date, but geophysical prospection and geoarchaeological evidence point to a site close to the Basilica within the former smaller lagoon available for ship traffic in Roman times up to the Roman/Byzantine transition as indicated by micropalaeontological and sedimentological data.

