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A GEOARCHAEOLOGICAL TALE OF TWO CITIES: PALAEOGEOGRAPHY, SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL INTERACTION AND COASTAL LANDSCAPE EVOLUTION AROUND ANCIENT ABDERA (THRACE, GR.)

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Long-term socio-environmental interaction is the main factor in the development of Mediterranean landscapes. Within the TransLands project, focused on the landscapes of Greek colonization, we undertook the geoarchaeological study of Abdera, a phocaeen colony founded in VIIIth c. BC in coastal Thrace. We implemented an integrated approach including remote sensing, geomorphological mapping, borehole drilling, radiocarbon dating and archaeological data. The main objective was to reconstruct Holocene coastal dynamics, and landscape changes related to the colony. Detailed litho-stratigraphic and sedimentological data from 19 coring points distributed in five transects, together with 32 14C dates, allowed to outline the palaeogeographical evolution from the Neolithic to the Antiquity. Small coastal valleys were submerged by marine transgression since c. 5000 cal BC, and beach-barrier systems with lagoons developed quickly and remained stable during several millennia. The Klazomenians settled at c. 650 cal BC in a rocky promontory dominating a large bay, which was gradually silted as a result of accelerated coastal progradation from IVth c. BC, perhaps due to anthropogenic forcing. The harbour area itself was likely silted by sediments coming directly from the colony. The relocation of the city slightly southwards in this period, although coastal advance was only incipient and the bay was probably still navigable, suggests that the causes of this displacement were rather historical events. By the late Roman period the coastline was very close to its present-day position. Lagoons were almost totally silted and had become shallow marshes. Abdera's decay since the IVth c. AD was certainly reinforced by a high energy marine event, likely a tsunami, which devastated the coastal lowlands in the Vth c. AD. Forthcoming multiproxy palaeoenvironmental and geoarchaeological analyses will certainly provide a more comprehensive perspective of socio-environmental interaction and landscape change in the area around the colony.

Keywords

Geoarchaeology, Geomorphology, Socio-Environmental Interaction, Paleogeography and Landscape Evolution,

Note/comment