

# Fortifying Harbour Cities on the Southern Thracian Coast in the Early Byzantine Era – Case Studies on Ainos and Anastasioupolis

For a long time during the Roman Empire the southern part of Thrace was, thanks to the *pax Romana*, not involved in military conflicts. Along the coast of the northern Aegean, harbour towns like Abdera, Maroneia and Ainos had been continuously settled since the times of the Greek colonisation (fig. 1). Between the Rhodope Mountains and the coastline, the via Egnatia ran from the Adriatic Sea (Dyrrachium) to the Sea of Marmara (Perinthos). The peaceful era ended in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, when coastal settlements became victims of Germanic raids by sea<sup>1</sup>. During the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, Thrace became a victim of several raids, especially by the Goths and Huns, but it is often impossible to identify which

parts of the provinces were involved<sup>2</sup>. Also, the via Egnatia was used for mass migration such as the one of the Ostrogoths on their way to the West in 481<sup>3</sup>. The fortification measures during the reigns of emperors Anastasius I and Justinian I (which will be discussed below) were focussed on the endangered areas.

## Ainos

Ainos, the modern Enez, is located in the West of Turkey, in Thrace, in direct vicinity to the mouth of the River He-



Fig. 1 Southern Thracian coast with Ainos and Anastasioupolis (Peritheorion) in Byzantine times. – (From Soustal, Thrakien).

1 Wolfram, *Goten* 62-65. – The sources do not mention destructions on the southern Thracian coast. The fleet passed Lemnos and anchored on the eastern coast of Athos.  
 2 Overviews on the history of early Byzantine Thrace: Soustal, *Thrakien* 62-74. Küzler, *Ostthrakien* 76-96.  
 3 In 481, the Ostrogothic king Theoderich Strabo died in Stabulum Diomedis. Cf. Wolfram, *Goten* 344 and n. 6. Pantos, *Grab* 488.



Fig. 2 Ainos (Enez) with the river Hebros in the North and the surrounding lagoons. Satellite picture – (From Worldview 2).

bro which marks the border to Greece at present. It discharges into the Aegean Sea by creating an extensive deltaic floodplain. An up to 25m high limestone promontory is surrounded by two lagoons, the Taşaltı Gölü and the Dalyan Gölü (fig. 2). The modern city is placed above parts of the ancient and Byzantine settlement. The sediments of the Evros caused a siltation process, as a result of which modern Enez is 4 km distant from the shoreline. If one considers the oldest known map of Piri Reis (fig. 3), the environmental change becomes obvious. Ainos had been situated on an open bay although it was already so shallow that bigger ships had to lighten in front of the coast. However, it was still a harbour city and had been one in earlier eras. Due to its position at the mouth of the river Hebros, it was a hub between the Mediterranean Sea and inland Thrace<sup>4</sup>. This is the main basis for its development and wealth.

### History of Ainos

Ainos was at first founded by settlers from Alopekonesos, a town on the west coast of the Thracian Chersonese, and later from Mytilene and Kyme, two Aeolian cities in Asia Minor. The original name of the city was Poltymbria. The Archaic and Classical periods were the focus of historical and archaeological research. Ainos, a member of the Delian league, is mentioned quite often in literary sources. The number of tributes and especially the extensive coin production from the late 5<sup>th</sup> century BC attest to the importance of the city. The production of wine and its export is proved by stamps on amphorae of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, when Ainos was counted amongst the wealthiest cities of the Northern Aegean<sup>5</sup>. The city's role as a hub to the interior in Classical times can be shown by the distribution of amphorae along the river Hebros and its tributaries<sup>6</sup>. In the Hellenistic Era, the city belonged to the sphere of influence of the Ptolemies and

4 The interdisciplinary research project »The Thracian harbor city of Ainos in Roman and Byzantine times« (2012-2018) was conducted by the author and Prof. Dr. Helmut Brückner (University of Cologne) within the DFG priority »Harbours from the Roman period to the Middle Ages«. – Results: Schmidts et al., Ainos.

5 History in Archaic and Classical times: May, Ainos. – Isaac, Settlements 140-157. – Brückner et al., Ainos 53-54.

6 Tzocher, amphorae 97-98 with pl. 55-56.

the Seleucids. It has been suspected that the city declined during this period according to the reduced coin production and during Roman Imperial times<sup>7</sup>. The foundation of Traianoupolis and the fact that Ainos was not located on the Via Egnatia as the main road in Roman Thrace were also blamed for this development. However, the archaeological evidence (see below) seems to prove a wealth that does not support the assumption of a radical decline. A further considerable point is an inscription from the Roman period that mentions a shipowner (*naukleros*)<sup>8</sup>. In the Roman province of Thrace, it is the only testimony with this occupational title; it hints at Ainos' role as a harbour city.

The city certainly boomed during early Byzantine times from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>9</sup>. Ainos' function as a bishop's see and the fact that it was mentioned first among the towns of the province of Rhodope in the *Synekdemos* of Hierokles may indicate its importance<sup>10</sup>. In the Middle and Late Byzantine eras, Ainos was still a trading hub. Late Byzantine sources, in particular, convey commercial activities across the river Hebros. For this period, Ainos was characterised as a medium-sized harbour city, comparable to Smyrna. The people of Ainos were involved in maritime trade<sup>11</sup>. From 1265, the Venetians maintained a trading post at Ainos, and between 1384 and 1453 it was ruled by members of the Gattilusio family from Genoa<sup>12</sup>.

### Procopius on Ainos

Procopius reports works on the fortifications of Ainos (translation H. B. Dewing): »The circuit-wall of this place was easy to capture not only because of its lowness, since it did not rise even to the necessary height, but because it offered an exposed approach on the side toward the sea, whose waters actually touched it in places. But the Emperor Justinian raised it to such a height that it could not even be assailed, much less be captured. And by extending the wall and closing the gaps on every side he rendered Aenus altogether impregnable. Thus, the city was made safe; and yet the district remained easy for the barbarians to overrun, since Rhodopè from ancient times had been lacking in fortifications.«<sup>13</sup>. Procopius thus describes the restoration of an older city wall and he also stresses the seaside. For this fortification he uses the Greek term *περιβόλος*.



Fig. 3 Detail of the chart of Piri Reis from 1528 with Ainos and Samothrace. – (After Piri Reis, Kitab 1).

### Archaeological research

Archaeological research in Ainos began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and has been carried out continuously by Istanbul University since the 1980s<sup>14</sup>. The archaeological works focused on the cemeteries, which yielded remarkable burial objects, especially from the Archaic and Classical period. The development of the topography in ancient and Byzantine times is still unclear in many aspects (fig. 4). The traces of the ancient city are few. The so-called Roman villa (fig. 4, 8) an urban house with mosaics, and the well-built section of a street at least give an indication that the city was not such a poor place in Roman times as the study of the local coinage would suggest<sup>15</sup>. The fact that some large buildings were also erected in the Roman era can be proven by architectural elements that have been discovered in secondary use in recent decades<sup>16</sup>.

7 Strack, Münzen 139-142.

8 IGR I 826.

9 Soustal, Thrakien 170-172 on the sources for Byzantine Ainos.

10 Hier. 634,5. – According to Soustal, Thrakien 170 »wohl nicht zufällig«.

11 Avramea, Communications 68. 85– Makris, Ships 97. – Matschke, Economy 468 (comparison to Smyrna). – Matschke, Commerce 796.

12 Cf. Wright, Gattilusio Lordship.

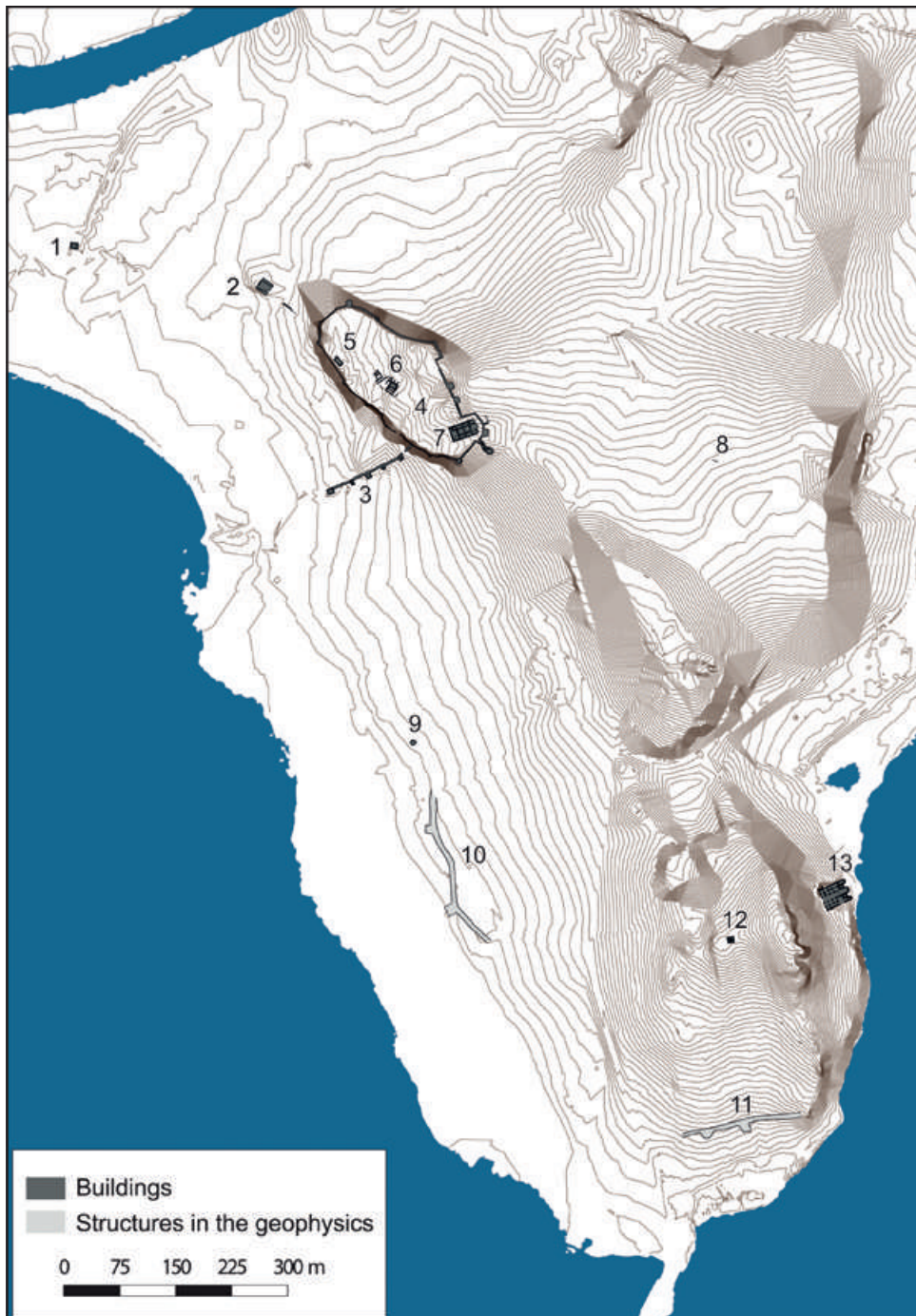
13 Proc. aed. 4, 11, 2-6: ταύτης ὁ περιβόλος εὐάλωτός τε ἦν τῷ χθαμαλῶς εἶναι· οὐδὲ ὅσον γὰρ ἐς τὸ ἀναγκαῖον ἀνείχεν ὕψος· καὶ ἀναπεπταμένην τινὰ εἴσοδον κατὰ τῆς θαλάσσης τὸ γειτόνημα εἶχεν, ἀμηγέτη ἐπιψαύοντος αὐτοῦ τοῦ βόθιου· ἀλλὰ βασιλεὺς Ἰουστινιανὸς ἀνέστησε μὲν αὐτὸν ἐς ὕψος, μὴ ὅτι ἄλωνα, ἀλλὰ καὶ

ἀποπειράσθαι ἀμύχανον. ἐπεξαγαγὼν δὲ καὶ πανταχόσε φραζάμενος ἀνάλωτον Αἶνον παντάσῃ κατεστήσατο· καὶ ταύτη μὲν ἡ πόλις ἐν τῷ ἀσφαλεῖ ἐγεγόνει· ἔμεινε δὲ τοῖς βαρβάροις ἡ χώρα καταθεῖν εὐπετῆς· ἐπεὶ Ῥοδόπη ὄχρωμάτων ἐκ παλαιοῦ ὑπεσπᾶνιζεν.

14 Overview on the archaeological research: Başaran, Excavations. Başaran, Ausgrabungen. – For the results of the annual excavations cf. the reports in the volumes of Kazı Sonuçları Toplantıları.

15 Başaran, Ausgrabungen 75. – Başaran, Excavations 221. – The excavations are not published in detail.

16 Schmidts et al., Ainos §§ 101-109. 357-358.



**Fig. 4** Map of Ainos with selected remains: **1-3** Byzantine fortifications beneath the castle – **4** Byzantine castle. – **5-6** Byzantine churches. – **7** Byzantine church (Fatih camii). – **8** Roman villa. – **9** Byzantine church. – **10-11** Ancient city wall – **12** Byzantine tower. – **13** Byzantine church (Kral Kızı Kilisesi). – (A. Cramer / Th. Schmidts, 2018).

The multidisciplinary research project »The Thracian harbour city Ainos in Roman and Byzantine Times – Development of a hub in a changing environment« was conducted by the author and Prof. Dr Helmut Brückner (University of Cologne) and funded by the German research foundation (2012-2018) as part of Priority Programme 1630 »Harbours from the Roman Period to the Middle Ages«. It included an extensive survey of the shore areas, with geophysical and geoarchaeological prospections. Some of the major goals were the creation of a ground model and a plan of all ancient and Byzantine remains, the identification of the harbour sites and the reconstruction of the historical landscape and environment<sup>17</sup>

### Byzantine Fortifications – the localisation of the Justinian building measures

The Byzantine castle (fig. 4, 4) was built on a hill near the lagoon on a place that was considered to be the ancient acropolis. The enclosing wall and the towers are well preserved and partly restored. The castle is situated on a rocky promontory. It therefore does not fit into the description of Procopius.

<sup>17</sup> Preliminary results: Brückner et al., Ainos. – Schmidts et al., Ainos. – Heike Bücherl investigated the fortifications beneath the castle and will analyse them in the forthcoming final publication of the project.

**Fig. 5** Ainos. View from the Byzantine castle to the East toward the Dalyan Gölü. Beneath the castle, the Byzantine wall with towers. – (Photo Th. Schmidts).



**Fig. 6** Ainos. Byzantine Fortification near the Dalyan Gölü. – (Photo H. Bücherl).



Remains of fortifications are also located west and north-west of the castle, facing the larger lagoon, the Dalyan Gölü (figs 4, 1-2; 5-6). Their investigation was an essential part of the research project mentioned above. The southern wall faces the lagoon. It is 130 m long with five towers located at the outer southern side. About 300 m north of the end of the wall are remains of a large tower with indications of a connecting wall towards the citadel. Another tower near the Evros ca. 400 m north-west of the

forementioned tower was not part of the fortification facing the lagoon<sup>18</sup>. The area between the wall and the big Tower was interpreted as an inner harbour<sup>19</sup>. Consequently, the area up to the promontory hill of the Byzantine castle had to be filled with water. To prove this, ge archaeological drillings have been carried out. However, this assumption could not be verified. According to the first analyses of the cores, the water was not located within the walls but in front of them<sup>20</sup>.

18 Brückner et al., Ainos 57-63 and Schmidts et al., Ainos §§ 44-64 on the new investigations.

19 Başaran, Straßennetz 345. – Başaran, Ausgrabungen 72.

20 Brückner et al., Ainos 64. 72. – Schmidts et al., Ainos §§ 37-39.



**Fig. 7** Ainos. Detail of a wall section of the Byzantine castle. – (Photo Th. Schmidts).

The south wall with five towers was a promising object for further investigation due to its state of preservation. The entire monument was documented digitally using the »structure from motion« method and sketches. The three round towers are connected to the wall; they belong to an earlier period. As the two large rectangular towers were attached to the wall, they belong to a later period. They are dated by an emblem of the Gattilusi family to the year 1413<sup>21</sup>. Parts of the wall were built from larger blocks that could have come from an earlier construction phase or were spolia. To decide this question, we made a small trench in a corner between one of the round towers and the wall. No evidence of older building activity has been found. The wall had been built in the Middle Byzantine era, probably not before the 11<sup>th</sup> century, according to the first analysis of pottery. This also fits with the results of the geoarchaeological survey that the site was filled up shortly before the wall was built. The large tower in the north is now also interpreted as a monument from the Middle and Late Byzantine period. An emblem of the Gattilusi of 1385<sup>22</sup> also proves building activities in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, research on these monuments, which formed a protected area on the former shore of the lagoon below the castle, has not yet been completed. However, we can conclude that the buildings activities described by Procopius did not happen in this area. An major result of the fieldworks is the evidence of an ancient city wall, which has been detected by geomagnetics south of the city in the southern part of the land tongue. Two sections of the wall are known until now (fig. 4, 10-11). The section

in the south is 130m long with two towers, the section in the west is approximately 200m long and follows a zig-zag line with towers at the outer points. Drillings were conducted within the anomalies to show their state of preservation and to gain dating material<sup>23</sup>. Besides the described sections of the ancient city wall, we have no further evidence for its course. The main argument for a Hellenistic era is the zig-zag shape of the western section, which is known from several sites of this period<sup>24</sup>. This dating can also be confirmed by the analysis of the drillings. As a decline of Ainos was supposed in Hellenistic times, this building activity is remarkable and shows that a reassessment is necessary. At least the area of the western section is so low that Procopius' description that the water might have touched the wall is not unlikely. Some late Roman finds were discovered in the drill cores in the same layers as Hellenistic pottery. Without excavations, it is not possible to decide whether restauration or demolition work were done at this section of the city wall during the Late Roman or Early Byzantine era.

The position of the detected city wall segments could be an argument against their interpretation as the fortification mentioned by Procopius. If a reduction of the settlement area happened in Late Antiquity, it would be unlikely that the whole Hellenistic wall was restored in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The distance from the approximate centre of the town, which was probably around and north of the castle and reached up to former bay, now riverbanks of the Hebros, must be taken into consideration. Rock-cut tombs on the tongue east and north-east of the sections of the city wall might support the

21 Asdracha, *Thrace I* 260-261 no. 30.

22 Asdracha, *Thrace I* 259-260 no. 29.

23 Seeliger et al., *City Wall*. – Schmidts et al., *Ainos* §§ 43. 83-85.

24 Winter, *Fortifications*. – Müth/Ruppe, *Phänomene* 238.

idea of a reduction of the urban space, but it is impossible to decide this question on the basis of the current state of archaeological research.

To conclude: We cannot prove where the fortification measures described by Procopius were carried out. Byzantine fortifications under the castle and, of course, the citadel itself can be excluded. The Hellenistic city wall in the south does not seem very likely either. An ancient city wall in the north of the city towards the sea, which has not yet been discovered, however existed according to a literary source<sup>25</sup>.

### Ainos in early Byzantine times beyond Procopius

The visible parts of the fortification of the Byzantine castle appear to have been built in the Middle Byzantine period. Inscriptions attest to restoration work in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century and early 14<sup>th</sup> century<sup>26</sup>. A section of the wall on the east front south of the main gate might have been erected in an early Byzantine or more likely in a Byzantine Dark Ages construction phase. The masonry of this section is characterised by a high proportion of spolia, blocks and column parts, which were integrated in the wall in its lowermost part (fig. 7). Above this follows a brick layer consisting of three ribs. Whether the larger blocks above the brick layer also correspond to this earlier phase is unclear. Nevertheless, the different construction of this lower section of the wall indicates an earlier date than the other visible parts of the fortification.

A large church building is situated south-east of the city near the Taşaltı Gölü (fig. 4, 12). It is known as Kral Kızı Kilisesi, which can be translated as »the kings' daughter church«. Excavations were carried out between 1984-1992 and from 2009 onwards. Results of the recent works are published as part of the annual excavation reports. Ousterhout dated the church to the period from the late 6<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> century<sup>27</sup>. More recent excavations show that the building is larger than the Ousterhout's plan suggests, in which its length is given as 27 m. Earlier construction phases are attested, e. g., at the apses of the church. The architectural sculpture found inside the building can be dated to the Justinianic period, such as the fold and impost capitals with pinecone and vine leaf decoration and with zigzag ornamentation<sup>28</sup>.

The best-known monument of Byzantine Ainos is situated inside the castle (fig. 4, 7). The church was used until the 1960s as a mosque (Fatih camii), when it was damaged by an earthquake. It is a large building of 21 to 38 m without the apses. According to Robert Ousterhout, the architecture closely relates to the developments in 12<sup>th</sup> century Constantinople<sup>29</sup>. It is larger than almost all Middle and Late Byzantine churches in Constantinople and probably served as the cathedral of Ainos. A fresco at the main entrance with the Virgin as a central figure contradicts the traditional view that it was a Hagia Sophia<sup>30</sup>. In 2017, the reconstruction of the mosque began, accompanied by excavation activities. Results have not been published until now, so it is not known whether there was an Early Byzantine predecessor building. At least the dimensions might be an indication for this assumption.



Fig. 8 Ainos, early Byzantine capital of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Spoil exhibited in front of the Byzantine castle. – (Photo M. Dennert).

Architectural elements, especially capitals, indicate large and well-equipped churches of Early Byzantine times. Some are reused in later buildings like the Fatih camii inside the castle or stocked like in the Kral Kızı Kilisesi; other building elements have been discovered in modern Enez in secondary use (fig. 8)<sup>31</sup>.

Moreover, public building activities are attested by an inscription from the 4<sup>th</sup> century<sup>32</sup>. It mentions a *pretōrion*, the *vicarius* of the diocese of Thrace and the governor of the province of Rhodopē. The meaning of the term *pretōrion* or Latin *praetorium* is not clear. The range of meanings comprises, e. g., residential buildings of a governor or high-ranking official or military commander as well as buildings for accommodation of authorised travellers<sup>33</sup>.

The Late Roman pottery demonstrates that Ainos was part of long-distance trade networks. The range of pottery finewares consists mainly of Phocaeen Red Slip and African Red Slip ware and shows a constant supply until the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, as is common in cities of Asia Minor<sup>34</sup>.

25 Polyæn. strat. 2, 22, 1. – Schmidts et al., Ainos § 122.

26 Asdracha, Thrace I, 254-257 no. 25-27.

27 Ousterhout/Bakirtzis, Monuments 42-44.

28 Cf. Schmidts et al., Ainos § 113 with notes 132-133 with further references to the excavation reports.

29 Ousterhout, Enez. – Ousterhout/Bakirtzis, Monuments 23-31.

30 Ousterhout/Bakirtzis, Monuments 31.

31 The documentation of the Byzantine architectural elements was conducted by Dr. Martin Dennert who will discuss them in the final publication of the project. – Cf. n. 28 for the capitals of the Kral Kızı Kilisesi. – Dating: Bulletin Épigraphique 2000, 810 (D. Feissel).

32 Kaygusuz, Inschriften 67 no. 4. – Asdracha, Thrace IV 287-289 no. 117.

33 Lavan, Praetoria 39-43 with further references.

34 Lätzer-Lasar, Handelsnetz.



**Fig. 9** Satellite picture. **1** Anastasioupolis – **2** Silted harbor area – **3** fortification, aqueduct. – (From Google Earth).

## Anastasioupolis

Anastasioupolis was located in the West of Thrace between Xanthi and Komotini, south-east of the village of Amaxades, on the northern shore of Lake Vistonis, which is now a lagoon connected to the northern Aegean (fig. 1). Its location and strategic function are obvious, considering that here was a narrow point of only 2 km between the Rhodope mountains and the shoreline on the course of the Via Egnatia. Due to a siltation process the remains of the city are today far from the shore of the lake (fig. 9). It is beyond any doubt that it once was a harbour City. Anastasioupolis was founded by Emperor Anastasius I. A foundation date after 498 has been proposed in consideration of the resettlement of the Isaurians in Thrace<sup>35</sup>.

### Procopius on Anastasioupolis

The description of Procopius is interesting because it portrays fortification works that are directly connected to the harbour: »The city of Anastasioupolis in this region was indeed walled even before this, but it lay along the shore and the beach was unprotected. Consequently, the boats putting in there often fell suddenly into the hands of the barbarian Huns, who by means of them also harassed the islands lying off the coast there. But the Emperor Justinian walled in the whole sea-front

by means of a connecting wall and thus restored safety both for the ships and for the islanders. Furthermore, he raised the aqueduct to an imposing height all the way from the mountains which rise here as far as the city«<sup>36</sup>. Even Procopius cannot deny that this city was founded and fortified by Anastasius I. A main problem was the unprotected harbour area, but it is unclear if it was only a section of the shore or artificial installations. The fact that the episode of the robbery of the ships by the barbarians and the consequences were mentioned by Procopius shows that the importance of the harbour area and the number of ships should not be underestimated.

### City wall, harbour fortification and the »aqueduct«

The city wall of Anastasioupolis is well preserved in a forest that was planted some decades ago. Until now, the site has not been in the focus of archaeological research<sup>37</sup>. There are only a few short articles or references in historical or archaeological publications. The most extensive work is an article by Kyriakides from 1931<sup>38</sup>. A small-scale ground plan of the fortifications (fig. 10) was published by Ch. Bakirtzis<sup>39</sup>. Most of the visible sections seem to be a result of building activities in Late Byzantine times during the reign of the Palaeologues. Brick monograms can be dated to 1341<sup>40</sup>. Traces

35 Soustal, Thrakien 401.

36 Proc. aed. 4,11, 11-13: Ἀναστασιούπολις δὲ ἡ τῆδε οὖσα τειχίρης μὲν καὶ πρότερον ἦν, ἐν δὲ τῇ παραλίᾳ κειμένη ἀφύλακτον εἶχε τὴν ταύτην ἡῖονα. τὰ πλοῖα πολλάκις ἀμέλει ἐνταῦθα καταίροντα ὑποχείρια βαρβάροις Οὐννοῖς ἐξαπιναιῶς γεγένηται· ὥστε καὶ τὰς νήσους ἐνθένδε τὰς τῆ χώρα ἐπικειμένας ἠνώχλησαν. Ἰουστινιανὸς δὲ βασιλεὺς διατειχίσματι τὴν παραλίαν περιβαλὼν ὄλην, ταῖς τε ναυσὶ καὶ τοῖς νησιώταις τὴν ἀσφάλειαν ἀνεσώσατο. ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν τοῦ ὕδατος ὄχετον ἐκ τῶν ὀρῶν ἃ ταύτῃ ἀνέχει μέχρι ἐς τὴν πόλιν ἐς ὑπέρογκον ἀνέστησεν ὕψος.

37 I visited the site in 2016 and I thank the director of Antiquities of Rhodope Dr. Chryssa Karadima and her team for the support.

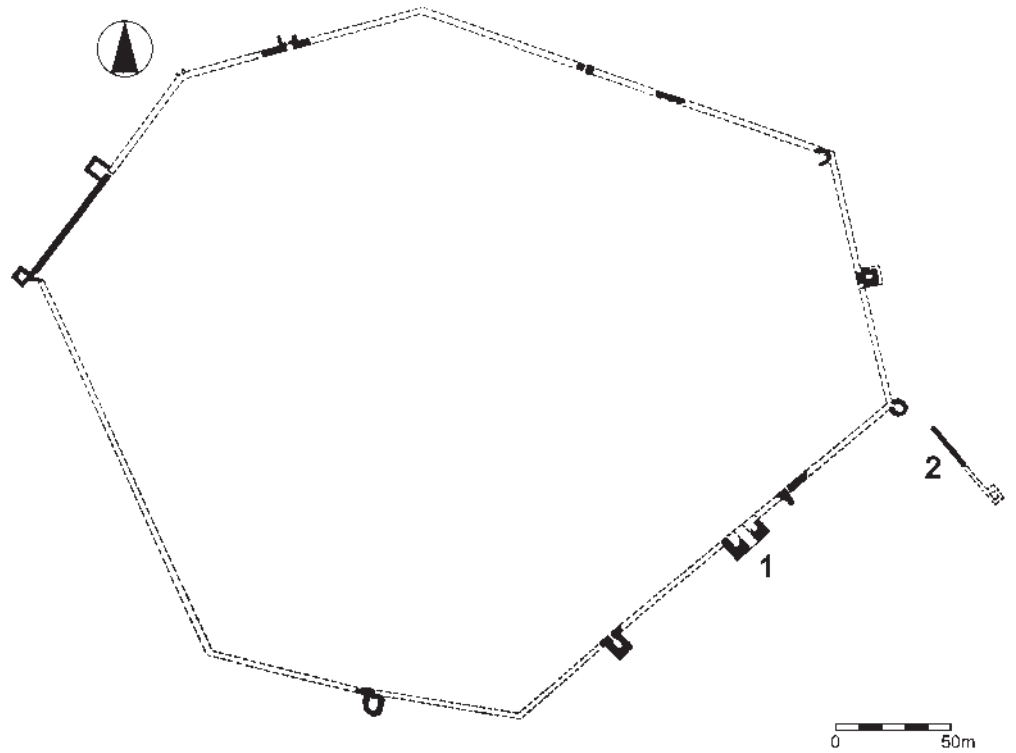
38 Kyriakides, Anastasioupolis.

39 Bakirtzis, Thrakien 164.

40 Asdracha/Bakirtzis, Inscriptions byzantines 246-250 no. 1-7. – Cf. Kyriakides, Anastasioupolis 205-209.



**Fig. 10** Plan of Anastasioupolis.  
**1** Harbour gate – **2** Presumed harbour wall. – (After Bakirtzis, Thrakien).



**Fig. 11** Anastasioupolis. Harbour gate from north-east. – (Photo Th. Schmidts).



of an older construction phase show that the course of the wall was probably unchanged since Early Byzantine times. They are characterized by regular brick lines. According to the documented sections of the wall (fig. 10) the size of the city is max. c. 330m x 360m and covers an area of c. 7.3ha.

The harbour area can be located at the south-east side of the city. The gate is flanked by two towers (fig. 11). Tile monograms show that the visible part of the walls belongs

to the Palaeologian construction phase. An earlier phase with a higher amount of tile is visible in parts where stones of the masonry shell have been removed. A section of a wall depicted in the ground plan (fig. 10, 2) is still visible today. It is 1 m high and ca. 9 m long, consisting of a double-leaf masonry system (fig. 12). It seems likely that this is a part of the fortification of the harbour area described by Procopius<sup>41</sup>. A. Regel's late 19<sup>th</sup> century description mentions two solidly built

41 Schmidts, Befestigung 295-296.



**Fig. 12** Anastasioupolis. The presumed harbour wall after removing the vegetation in 2016. – (Photo Th. Schmidts).

walls and another gate<sup>42</sup>. The dimensions and the course of the walls are unclear, but it is likely that the harbour area must be located here. The dimensions of the gate and the orientation are arguments in favour of this interpretation.

A protected harbour, as described by Procopius, is an exceptional construction in the Early Byzantine era. Literary sources convey a few examples for the fourth to sixth century: Cyzicus<sup>43</sup>, the Mandracium harbour in Carthage<sup>44</sup>, as harbours closed by a chain, and Syracuse<sup>45</sup>, which is generally described as a fortified harbour. However, it is unclear whether these were older constructions still in use or reused and maintained in the Early Byzantine era, which seems at least possible<sup>46</sup>. An iconographic source for a fortified early Byzantine harbour is the famous mosaic of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna which shows the harbour of Classis well protected by towers (fig. 13). The two towers are on land, which does not seem to be a realistic scenario<sup>47</sup>. Although an Early Byzantine construction seems probable, there are no hints to the exact date of this fortification. More common than a fortification in this period seems to have been the defence of a harbour by ships<sup>48</sup>.

Procopius mentions an aqueduct leading from the mountain to the city, but he does not mention that it follows a fortification wall. It is still largely visible and covered by brushwood. Its course from the northern city fortification towards the flanks of the Rhodope Mountains is straight and 2.2 km long. The remains are up to 2 m high. Three towers,

two facing east and one facing west, are visible in the course. According to the descriptions of Kyriakides in 1930, there were two walls with a space of 1 m between them<sup>49</sup>. He also interpreted the monument as a fortification wall built by Anastasios<sup>50</sup>. Apart from a brief notice, this fortification has not been mentioned in more recent times. We agree to the date of the wall to the Anastasian rather than the Justinian era and it seems likely that Procopius concealed the activity of Anastasios<sup>51</sup>.

Taking into account the monuments and the descriptions of Procopius, Anastasios had probably built the fortified city and the fortification wall towards the Rhodope Mountains. A second building programme of Justinian comprised the protection of the harbour area as well as an aqueduct that followed the older fortification wall. Despite all these measures, Anastasioupolis was conquered in 562 by the Huns. It was one of the few cities for which a successful siege is attested during the reign of Justinian I<sup>52</sup>.

### The fortification measures in context

The fortification measures in Ainos and Anastasioupolis are, of course, not unique (fig. 14). Following the Thracian coastline to the west and south of Constantinople, we can find further comparable building activities by Justinian that have been handed down by Procopius. In Selymbria (Silivri), which

42 Regel, Anastasiopole 149-150. – Schmidts, Befestigung 295 on the possible location of the second wall.

43 Amm. 26, 8, 8-9.

44 Prok. BV 1, 20, 15.

45 Prok. BG 3, 40, 12.

46 Schmidts, Befestigung 299.

47 Summaries of sources and archaeological records: Reddé, Mare 177-186. – Mauskopf Deliyannis, Ravenna 26-30.

48 Schmidts, Befestigung 299-300.

49 Kyriakides, Anastasioupolis 200-202.

50 Kyriakides, Anastasioupolis 205-207.

51 E.g. Meier, Anastasios 142 and 148-149 on the concealment of the performance of Anastasios by Procopius. – Especially on the province Rhodope: Soustal, Thrakien 72. – Haarer, Anastasios 230-245 on the building measures of Anastasios.

52 Sarantis, Wars 355.

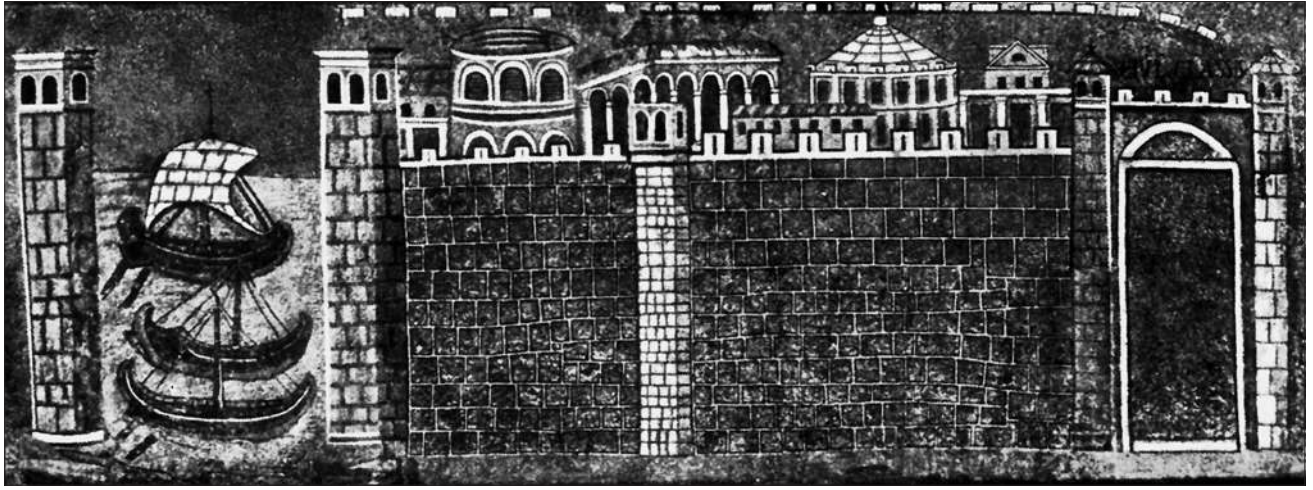


Fig. 13 Ravenna, Sant' Apollinare Nuovo. Mosaic depicting the protected harbour of Classis. – (After Deichmann, Ravenna fig. 100).

is located within the Long Walls, the Makrá Teichē, parts of the city walls were restored<sup>53</sup>. Procopius stresses the well-situated harbour of Rhaidestos (Tekirdağ) and its value for the commercial navigation. As it was not fortified, it fell victim to raids, so the merchants neglected and abandoned this port in view of the risks. So, a city was built with a strong wall of exceptional size<sup>54</sup>. On the Thracian Chersonesus, which was also protected by the Agoraion Teichos<sup>55</sup> in the north of the Peninsula leading from East to West, fortifications for three harbour cities are also mentioned. Kallipolis (Gelibolu) was fortified, and storage buildings were built to supply the army<sup>56</sup>. At Sestos, in the absence of older fortifications, a fortress was constructed on a hill, of which Prokop said it was inaccessible<sup>57</sup>. At Elaious, the city at the southern end of the Thracian Chersonesus, a fort was also built on a rock next to the sea<sup>58</sup>. It can be seen that the danger of raids by sea and the risks to maritime trade were perceived and the construction and reinforcement of fortifications were measures to protect harbour cities. As the supply of Constantinople depended on an effective functioning of commercial shipping, the harbours in the forefront of the capital played an important role. The importance of the agricultural production of the Thracian Chersonesus should also not be underestimated and the protection of the peninsula by the Agoraion Teichos tells its own tale<sup>59</sup>.

It is obvious that work on the fortifications of Herakleia, the ancient Perinthos (today Marmara Ereğlisi) is not mentioned by Procopius. This important city had already been

fortified in two steps in the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century and probably in the late 5<sup>th</sup> or early 6<sup>th</sup> century<sup>60</sup>. Considering that Selymbria had also been fortified after its foundation under Arcadius<sup>61</sup> and that the sea walls secured Constantinople since at least from the 5<sup>th</sup> century onwards<sup>62</sup>, it is probable that the measures of Justinian could be seen in a context of enlargement of the fortified maritime landscape of the Constantinople front.

In contrast to the harbour cities on the Sea of Marmara, the fortification measures of those on the coastline of the Aegean are few and less dense, and it is doubtful whether they should be seen in context with those. The importance of Ainos is related to its role as hub between the river Hebros and the North Aegean. It is obvious that commodities of the fertile Thracian hinterland were shipped via Ainos. For Anastasioupolis, the situation was different. The reason for the construction of the city wall and the fortification across the strait towards the Rhodopes during the reign of Anastasios was the strategic position at a time of danger caused by barbaric raids via the Via Egnatia. The construction of the harbour fortifications was an attempt to eliminate a weakness in the existing local fortification system, which became apparent when the barbarians stole ships, as Procopius relates. That the safety of the other coastal cities should be improved is due to this event. However, the protection of the harbour itself is not common in Early Byzantine times. The preferred measures were to build or reinforce the city walls, as the other examples had shown.

53 Prok. aed. 4, 9, 12. – Crow, Cities 343 on the chronology of the walls. – Külzer, Ostthrakien 635 and 641. – Sarantis, Wars 183. – Rizos/Sayar, Dynamics 94.

54 Prok. aed. 4, 9, 17-21. – Külzer, Ostthrakien 607. Rizos/Sayar, Dynamics 98.

55 Cf. Külzer, Ostthrakien 238-239.

56 Prok. aed. 4, 10, 22-23. – Külzer, Ostthrakien 425-426.

57 Prok. aed. 4, 10, 24-25. – Külzer, Ostthrakien 646.

58 Prok. aed. 4, 10, 26-27. – Külzer, Ostthrakien 345.

59 Cf. Külzer, Chersones.

60 Crow, Cities 343. – Külzer, Ostthrakien, 405 dates according to Crow 2001. – Rizos/Sayar, Dynamics 89-90. – Westphalen, Basilika 40 (on the brick stamps). –

The 5<sup>th</sup> century date for the walls in the lower town is verified by brick stamps. Crow proposed a later date for a section and tower of the inner wall of the acropolis because of a different construction.

61 Rizos/Sayar, Dynamics 94.

62 According to Mango, Shoreline 24 the entire seawall of Constantinople was not erected under the reign of Theodosius II. But it is in discussion whether sections of the seawall may already have been built in the Constantinian era. Cf. Asutay-Effenberger, Landmauer 2.



**Fig. 14** Thracian seaports mentioned in the text: **1** Anchialos. – **2** Mesembria. – **3** Constantinople. – **4** Herakleia/Perinthos. – **5** Selymbria. – **6** Rhaidestos. – **7** Kallipolis. – **8** Sestos. – **9** Elaious. – **10** Ainos. – **11** Maroneia – **12** Anastasioupolis – (Graphics K. Hölzl, RGZM, 2018).

Far more harbour cities existed in Southern Thrace in Byzantine times than those named by Procopius<sup>63</sup>. A good example of a flourishing harbour city in the early Byzantine era which was not mentioned by Procopius was Maroneia, about 50km north-west of Ainos. However, it is unclear whether fortification works were carried out in more port settlements than those mentioned by Procopius in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Many of the settlements existed continuously until the Late Byzantine era, so that older structures might

have been destroyed or overbuilt. A reassessment through archaeological research would be necessary to quantify the 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century building activities in the harbour cities of southern Thrace. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the harbour cities were endangered and that fortification measures were undertaken to protect them.

The truthfulness of Procopius' descriptions will not be discussed here. Whether under Justinian or one of his predecessors – especially Anastasios – it is obvious that fortification measures of harbour cities in Thrace along the shores of the North Aegean and the Sea of Marmara had been undertaken in the early Byzantine period.

For two main Thracian harbour cities north of Constantinople on the shore of the Black Sea, Anchialos and Mesembria, no fortification measures are conveyed by Procopius. However, they are mentioned for *Aquae Calidae*, a nearby spa town<sup>64</sup>. At least at Mesembria, which had already been fortified in Antiquity, remains of Late Antique or Byzantine fortifications with walls reaching into the sea are known<sup>65</sup>. Perhaps there had been no reason to reinforce the fortifications in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Building activities, especially concerning churches of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, can be documented by several inscriptions<sup>66</sup>.

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- 63 The density of harbours and anchorages can be proved by the *Tabula Imperii Byzantini* volumes (Külzer, Ostthrakien; Soustal, Thrakien) with their excellent maps and the results of the project on »Harbours and landing places on the Balkan coasts of the Byzantine empire (4<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries)«, published online: [https://www.db-thueringen.de/receive/dbt\\_mods\\_00038384](https://www.db-thueringen.de/receive/dbt_mods_00038384) (03.02.2021).
- 64 Proc. Aed. 3, 7, 18-23. – Soustal, Thrakien 175-177. Heher et al., *Balkanküsten 107-110 zu Anchialos und den Thermen*.
- 65 Soustal, Thrakien 355-359, esp. 357. – Heher et al., *Balkanküsten 109-110* with fig. 13-14.
- 66 After Beševliev, *Inschriften 102-116* no. 153a-g1 (brick stamps, Justinianic), no. 154-155 (brick stamps, 6<sup>th</sup> c.). 156. 161-162 (inscriptions, 6<sup>th</sup> c.). no. 166 (5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> c.). – Soustal, Thrakien 357-358 with a comment on the buildings and other datable features.

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## Summary / Zusammenfassung

### Fortifying harbour cities on the southern Thracian coast in the Early Byzantine Era – Case Studies of Ainos and Anastasioupolis

Procopius conveys building activities for Ainos and Anastasioupolis, two cities located at the coast of Southern Thrace. The harbour city of Ainos was settled continuously since Archaic times. It was important as a commercial hub because of the nearby mouth of the river Hebros. Also, in the early Byzantine era the settlement was still important. Procopius describes a restoration of the older city wall to protect the seaside of the city. Although traces of the ancient city wall were detected by geophysics for the first time within a research project financed by the German Research Foundation, it is not possible to locate this building measure. In contrast, Anastasioupolis was a small, fortified settlement founded by the emperor Anastasios around 500. It is located at a strait between the Rhodope Mountains and the lake Vistonis. This strait was closed by a wall which was also probably built by Anastasios. Procopius mentions the erection of a protected harbour as a building measure of Justinian. This was caused by barbarian invasions when ships were stolen and used for raids in the Northern Aegean. The harbour area can be located but only a small section remained of its fortification. Protected harbours are exceptional buildings in Early Byzantine times and can be found only in a small number. Further literary or archaeological evidence for fortification measures of Thracian harbour cities in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> exists especially for the Western coast of the Sea of Marmara.

### Befestigungsmaßnahmen in Hafenstädten an der südthrakischen Küste in frühbyzantinischer Zeit – Fallstudien für Ainos und Anastasioupolis

Für die im südlichen Thrakien gelegenen Städte Ainos und Anastasioupolis werden von Prokop Baumaßnahmen Justinians überliefert. Ainos war eine seit archaischer Zeit kontinuierlich besiedelte Hafenstadt. Ihre Bedeutung als Knotenpunkt des Handels ergibt sich aus der Lage an der Mündung des Hebros. In frühbyzantinischer Zeit dürfte die Siedlung relativ bedeutend gewesen sein. Prokop beschreibt Restaurationsmaßnahmen an der alten Stadtmauer zur Sicherung der Seeseite der Stadt. Diese Maßnahme lässt sich allerdings momentan nicht eindeutig lokalisieren, obwohl Spuren der antiken Stadtmauer erstmals geophysikalisch durch neuere Forschungen im Rahmen eines von der DFG geförderten Projektes nachgewiesen werden konnten. Bei Anastasioupolis handelt es sich hingegen um eine relativ kleine, von Kaiser Anastasios um 500 gegründete befestigte Siedlung. Sie befindet sich an einer strategisch wichtigen Engstelle zwischen den Rhodopen und dem Vistonis-See, durch die die Via Egnatia verläuft. Diese wurde durch eine von der Stadt ausgehenden Mauer gesperrt, die mutmaßlich ebenfalls auf Anastasios zurückgehen dürfte. Prokop beschreibt als Baumaßnahme Justinians die Anlage eines befestigten Hafens, da zuvor bei barbarischen Einfällen Schiffe entwendet und für Raubzüge in der Nordägäis genutzt worden waren. Das Hafenareal lässt sich lokalisieren, von der Befestigung selbst sind aber nur geringe Reste bekannt. Befestigte Häfen bilden eine Besonderheit in frühbyzantinischer Zeit und sind nur selten nachweisbar. Weitere literarisch oder archäologisch nachweisbare Befestigungsmaßnahmen von thrakischen Hafenstädten sind vor allem an der Westküste des Marmarameeres für das 5. und 6. Jahrhundert nachweisbar.