Geophysical Research Abstracts
Vol. 14, EGU2012-12419, 2012
EGU General Assembly 2012

Palaeoenvironmental changes in the Marmara region (Turkey) during late Pleistocene and Holocene. Implication for Neo- and Palaeolithic communities.

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The Marmara region is a geographical bottleneck for the transcontinental dispersal of modern humans from the Near East to the Balkans. Thus, climate and environmental reconstructions of this key area are of uttermost importance to test hypotheses postulating migration periods influenced directly or indirectly by external forces. Lake Iznik is located in the study area and holds a continuous sediment archive sensitive to climate and environmental changes. We recovered sediment cores of max 39.0 cal kyr (17 m sediment depth) enabling us to reconstruct the environmental history and climate patterns on local and regional scale during the reestablishment of human habitats after the Last glacial maximum and the dispersal of Neolithic economy (15,000-7,000 a BP). Geomorphological findings in the lake basin and geochemical analyses hint to prevailing east or west winds at least since 36 cal. kyr BP and lasted until c. 11 cal. kyr BP. This supports the theory of a climate pattern decoupled from North Atlanic oscillations. The scarce palaeolithic findings in the surrounding area were evaluated under this aspect to gain new information of human migration in the eastern Mediterranean.