



## Human activity and landscape change at Adjayska Vodenitsa, central Bulgaria

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The Classical and early Hellenistic settlement located at Adjayska Vodenitsa, near Vetren, in the centre of ancient Thrace, is somewhat unusual in displaying well-preserved evidence for the commercial and cultural interactions associated with a river port. The settlement evolved through a series of phases, with traces of activity emerging around the beginning of the fifth, advancing to a progressive close in the second century BCE. The settlement at Adjayska Vodenitsa owed its *raison d'être* to river traffic, with the river as the primary means for importing commodities (non-local amphorae and roof tiles). The Pistiros inscription indicates that overland traffic was also important, presumably over the Rhodopes Mountains to the south. The relationship between the site and the Maritsa River is thus important. Located towards the head of the Maritsa basin downstream of the Momina Klissoura gorge near Belovo, the settlement is perched on a steeply-edged toe of the Vetren tributary alluvial fan, with the bluff trimmed by the migrating River Maritsa. The site is c.12-14 metres above the current bed of the River Maritsa, high and dry away from contemporary flooding, intriguing given evidence for flooding during occupation. The fluvial system has clearly been dynamic and changed much during the last 3000 years. Changes in the Maritsa have been constrained with radiocarbon ages obtained for two fan terrace levels. Active channel and overbank environments of the higher B1 terrace are dated to c. 520-400 cal. BC and provide a terminus post quem for the incision to the lower terrace (B2). The radiocarbon dating of basal contexts from the lower terrace palaeo-channels provides a terminus ante quem for abandonment of the higher terrace of cal. AD 1010-1150. Thus basal lowering and a shift to greater lateral channel activity appear to coincide with the abandonment of Adjayska Vodenitsa. Upstream of the Momina Klissoura Gorge evidence for heightened geomorphic activity probably reflects processes during the late Holocene, with the low level hill slopes flanking the river littered with small agricultural communities. It is easy to envisage the landscape as one made susceptible to erosion by human activity feeding materials through the Momina Klissoura Gorge to the Belovo fan near the settlement at Adjayska Vodenitsa. Sharp increases in non-arboreal pollen during the period 2880-1620 BP, associated with Greek and Roman times, in the Rila Mountains, have been attributed to seasonal animal husbandry in the higher mountains, with associated permanent settlement in the surrounding lowlands.