

Avkat Survey

A new diachronic survey of the Avkat region (known in ancient times as Euchaïta) was launched in 2007. It hoped specifically to look at some of the long-term landscape changes and to see the way socio-economic structures had developed in rural Anatolia. As a region without a major metropolis it provided an ideal opportunity to observe an inland and rural area.

The first season was undertaken in August and September 2007 and the second in July and August 2008. During the first two years, they were successful in surveying 6.42km² of the region as well as plotting the artefact scatter. The village was confirmed as being Euchaïta based on the fieldwork, and as work continued additional information was gathered about its cultural, historical, and geographic context. Evidence of prehistoric occupation was found. By virtue of its location – only 20km away from Şappinuwa, a Hittite site of some importance – it was assumed that Avkat likely had Hittite connections, and late Bronze Age burnished ceramics were found. No records of Hellenistic or Roman occupation were known, but spolia and artefacts from Roman to early Byzantine times allowed team members to approximate the path of a Roman road in the valley. Late Roman and Medieval spolia were discovered, as were bronze coins. Architectural elements found by team members showed that local limestone was quite commonly used in construction. Inscribed tombstones were discovered, as was a church. A geophysical survey was conducted on Kale Tepesi, revealing a large structure, a ditch, and a defensive wall. The ceramics discovered during the first two seasons showed an uninterrupted occupation from the Early Bronze Age through the Ottoman period, though early Roman wares were poorly represented. Settlement patterns in antiquity were found to largely resemble modern ones: isolated settlements, and farmsteads.

From mid-July to mid-August 2009 the team spent four weeks at Avkat, focusing on intensive survey work but also using other methods to obtain more information about the region. 9.1km² were covered. A village survey group recorded spolia in Beyözü and Elmapınar and followed the city wall for a stretch. This team also visited museums in the region. An in-depth survey was undertaken around the upper church in the village, and at the small Roman cemetery south of Elmapınar. In an effort to uncover ancient communication routes used in the region, researchers conducted some desktop studies using GIS. In addition to this, more than 70km of path was traced on foot. Ceramic finds were studied, and it was noted that there were very few imports, particularly of finewares.

The fourth season lasted for three weeks between mid-July and mid-August 2010. Survey work continued. Additionally, researchers carried out isotropic and anisotropic analyses on communication routes, then team members tested them in the field. Some palaeoenvironmental studies were conducted around Çorum and Amasya, and a lake was found with potential for coring (which would then provide palynological data regarding the area's historical agricultural activity and climate). Pottery analysis also continued. It became clear through survey work as well as from historical texts that the material record around Beyözü changed around the sixth century AD, probably due to receiving civic status. Occupation continued into Medieval times, and the castle was dated to around the 13th century. Its later history was also further elucidated, including the period it spent under Ottoman control and the immigration and emigration it saw during the 18th and 19th centuries.

In 2011 the team members did not conduct fieldwork but investigated the possibility of excavation work at the site. They also held a two-day workshop where they presented the results and conclusions of the Avkat project. Ceramic analysis also continued, as did a study of some late antique column capitals. Finally, the lake identified the previous season (lake Gölünyazı or 'Soğuk Su') was sounded and investigated to further assess whether it could be cored for palynological data.