

Introduction

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The Avkat Archaeological Project (hereafter AAP) grew out of our interest in the fate of urban settlements in Byzantine Anatolia in the period from the fifth to eleventh century CE and in the relationship between settlement, landscape, communications and the state in that period. But it rapidly turned into a full-scale archaeological survey project with more ambitious aims as the historian and the archaeologists who formed the core of the team began working together and re-thinking priorities and possibilities. We were not able to answer all the questions we began with, but in the course of our work we generated new questions to which we could suggest answers, we developed new approaches to integrating historical and archaeological fieldwork, and we created the basis for a much broader project that would address issues of the history and evolution of a landscape and its occupants over more than two millennia. Given the nature of our data and the sources of much of the documentary evidence, the focus tended to be on the period from Late Antiquity until the arrival of the Seljuks in central Anatolia and the consequent loss of the region to the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire. The project is important because it is still one of the few that have focused on a region of central Anatolia. Much of the data on their own are coarse, but when the different historical, archaeological and palaeoenvironmental evidence is integrated, it helps both in establishing an interpretative framework for the evolution of such settlements on the northern edge of the Anatolian plateau as well as providing a baseline for future endeavours. Until we have the results of archaeological excavation, a more exact chronology for some of the phenomena discussed remains a desideratum, but the survey provides the essential groundwork for such an investigation as well as an analysis in its own right of key aspects of the region. And given our own historical and archaeological foci, we have concentrated for the most part on the Late Roman and Medieval periods. This volume represents a preliminary statement of some of our results, focused on one key aspect of the larger project, namely the settlement centre at Avkat/Euchaïta across the period from the third-fourth centuries to the nineteenth century CE.

The ancient site of Euchaïta (or Avkat until the 1960s), now Beyözü, has been occupied since prehistoric, and certainly since Hittite times: the modern village, which partially occupies the Roman lower city, is dominated by two hills, a Bronze Age site and what is currently taken to be the location of a Byzantine/Seljuk fortress. Beyözü/Avkat is located on the northern edge of the central Anatolian plateau. Historical information about such sites in the Medieval period in particular is extremely sparse, and exploration of the region around the site at Beyözü as well as the settlement itself gives historians and archaeologists an exceptional opportunity to fill a gap in our knowledge. During the Roman period Euchaïta was a fairly unimportant settlement. But from the middle of the fourth century it began to gain a reputation as the centre of the cult of St Theodore Tiro ('the Recruit'), was walled in the early sixth century and was raised to the status of a bishopric by the Roman emperor Anastasius before 518. From the seventh century, with the Arab conquest of the eastern Roman provinces and the retreat of the Roman frontier into Anatolia, Euchaïta became a military base behind that frontier. It remained a provincial centre until its conquest at the time of the Seljuk occupation of eastern Asia Minor in the later eleventh century. Thereafter its importance dwindled and through most of the Ottoman period was a small village below the acropolis or fortress, which itself had fallen completely into ruin at some point before the later sixteenth century. Yet the district itself remained economically important and the history of the several villages in the region can be traced through the Ottoman archival documents right up to the later nineteenth century.

The historical and archaeological significance of the site lies in four areas. First, unlike nearly all excavated or surveyed urban or fortified centres of the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods – sixth–eleventh centuries – Euchaïta was never a major metropolis, cultural centre or extensive urban site. In contrast, it was a small, if at times strategically significant, provincial town, something of a backwater for much of its history. In this respect, therefore, it is probably much more typical of the 'average' urban or fortified centre of Asia Minor, yet we know almost nothing about such sites because none has yet been excavated with a view to following such long-term changes. Archaeologists have concentrated for the most part, and for a range of reasons, on major ports and cities whose history is relatively well-known at least in their broad outlines (Ephesos, Amastris, Pergamon, Ankara, for example) or that became significant in the conditions that prevailed after the middle of the seventh century (such as Amorion), whereas sites such as Euchaïta, which are sparsely occupied and thus offer superb possibilities for survey and excavation, have been largely ignored.

Indeed, the Late Roman and Medieval settlement hierarchy and the nature of the different types of settlement in the region have remained almost entirely unexplored, along with much of the central Anatolian plateau. While other broader surveys have by no means limited their coverage to the period ending with Late Antiquity, our picture of the historical evolution of substantial parts of Asia Minor tends to become increasingly vague after the sixth/seventh century, although that situation is slowly improving, and one of our aims was specifically to try to engage more with the period from the fifth to eleventh century for which we have documentary evidence, if not beyond into the Seljuk and Ottoman centuries. Our knowledge of several regions of Anatolia is certainly better today than even 10 years ago, thanks to surveys of Paphlagonia, the Sinop peninsula, the Konya plain, parts of Cappadocia, the Göksu Valley, the Sagalassos region and those around the ancient centres of Aphrodisias and Ephesos.¹ These have all added substantially to our knowledge, but have also shown how important it is to distinguish between regions and within regions in terms of both the human impact on the landscape and the environmental and physical geographical impact upon human societal evolution. Amorium in Phrygia, as just noted, has been the object of an intensive and long-lasting archaeological campaign; the site at Çadır Höyük, some distance to the south of Euchaita, has likewise now been subjected to a detailed survey and excavation, and seems to represent the only example currently extant of an Early-Middle Byzantine rural complex. And at Germia in Galatia, another centre of Christian pilgrimage has been surveyed.² All of these are very different in character and function from Euchaita. A full survey of the site and its wider environs was both highly desirable and possible, therefore, with minimal disturbance to the local population and minimal complications from later settlement. Beyözü itself offers a unique opportunity to research the history of a Late Roman town and pilgrimage centre from its receipt of civic status under Anastasius onwards, along with the small fortress which grew up on the hill behind it after the middle of the seventh century. A fortified 'semi-urban' site (see further discussion of site typologies in Chapter 8), it formed an important element in the network of urban settlements of the Middle Byzantine world, playing a role in the defences of the empire along

¹ Matthews and Glatz 2009; Doonan et al. 2014; Doonan 2004; Baird 2004; Ousterhout 2005; Jackson 2009; Elton 2006*; Vanhaverbeke et al. 2004, 2009; Ratté and De Staebler 2012, 2011; Ladstätter and Daim 2011; Zabełlicky 1999.

² General summaries of this work: Ivison 2007, 2010; Vardar et al. 2013; Niewohner and Rheidt 2010; Cassis 2009.

the eastern frontier until the later ninth century, and perhaps representing the 'norm' of provincial fortified sites in its region; as well as a typical rural province within the Ottoman Empire right up to the twentieth century. It also offers an opportunity to establish an environmental and landscape history of the region and relate this directly to the pattern of human activity across several millennia.

Second, its history is not undocumented. Casual references in ancient texts and some epigraphic data provide evidence of its status in later Roman times; a collection of medieval miracles of the later seventh or eighth centuries CE offers important information about life in such a town at that time; the letters of its bishop, John Mauropous, who held the see in the eleventh century describe many aspects of life there; Ottoman documents provide information about the local population, their tax-status and occupations, from the sixteenth century onwards. There is in addition a good deal of incidental material in chronicles of both Byzantine and Islamic origin, as well as epigraphic and sigillographic material, especially with regard to its ecclesiastical history. Travellers who visited the region between the sixteenth and early twentieth centuries, both Turkish and European, have also left reports or comments on the site or its district.

Third, its role as a military base, situated as it was near an important military road in Byzantine times, together with the opportunity to conduct a detailed palaeoenvironmental survey of the region around it, makes it a good focus for work on reconstructing its medieval landscape, and to relate this to the archaeological and palynological evidence for land-use and food-production during the ancient, medieval and early modern periods.

Finally, Avkat in the Ottoman period was a small village typical of the Asia Minor hinterland of the empire, and in comparison with many larger and more substantial centres, both commercially and in terms of local industry, offers a useful opportunity to study such a rural settlement in its larger historical context.

The project has two methodological foci: first, an archaeological-historical dimension, including palaeoenvironmental research into ancient and medieval land-use and resource production, demographic and settlement-pattern analysis, the mapping of ancient paths and trackways, as well as research into the history and evolution of the major site and satellite sites in the region. Second, GISs, spatial modelling and a variety of visual technologies are at the forefront of this development, and make the complex modelling of the effects of human behaviour on landscapes and the environment an attainable target. With the development of computer technologies that permit the manipulation and visualisation of complex,

spatially referenced geographic and mathematical data in complex situations, we wanted to generate a much more detailed and functionally useful account of the survey area than had usually been possible or attainable in such projects, and to create a template for similar projects in the future.

Since Euchaïta can be investigated both as a central place (within its own region) and a peripheral place (within, for example, the context of Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman provincial administrative structures), the major aims of the project from the historical perspective were to answer the question of whether Avkat was Euchaïta, to add to our understanding of the rural economy of the Late Antique and Byzantine periods, and to increase our knowledge of the small semi-rural semi-urban settlements of the Anatolian hinterland away from the major provincial urban centres. We also wanted to understand more about the role of Euchaïta in the economic and social as well as administrative and religious life of the region through time, and to explore how changes in site distribution around Euchaïta correlate with known political-administrative and military developments (through extensive survey, geophysical and remote-sensing survey, and through computer-modelling).

As part of this broader framework we also planned to collect, collate, edit and interpret the epigraphic material from the region; to reconstruct the ancient and medieval environment through palaeobotanical and geomorphological analyses; to apply and further develop analytical information technologies (e.g. geographic information systems, relational databases, CAD programs, digital imagery, etc.); and last, but by no means least, we wanted to train undergraduate and graduate students in the theory and method of field archaeology and survey, palaeoenvironmental techniques, regional social-economic studies and related specialist fields.

In addition, we had planned to document settlement patterns and, if possible, cemetery distribution in the region and to explain changes in site distribution, and in particular to create a material culture sequence from at least the Late Roman through the Ottoman periods for the region. At present, no such sequence exists, owing to the lack of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental work in the area. Excavation of Euchaïta and its dependent district would thus create the material cultural sequences which will become the reference standard for the region. This is crucial to the ceramic history of the Byzantine period, for example, for which the establishment of regional ceramic sequences is still in its infancy. Unfortunately, we were unable to extend the survey and excavate, so these targets remain to be achieved. Finally, we also intended to document the changes in the traditional modes of life in the region in more recent times. A good deal

of data was collected for this purpose, but this has yet to be analysed and assessed in detail.

Regional studies have a long history, but from the 1980s there has been continued development of methodologies of archaeological field survey, as well as remote-sensing techniques and satellite imagery. However, the integration of these archaeological techniques with historical documents into a unified project design has rarely been achieved. In part this is because of the technical difficulties of integrating divergent datasets, but the development of GIS (Geographic Information Systems) has now reached a point where such complex problems are more easily handled. When the project began, GIS had been used infrequently to its full potential as a means to develop questions or address complex phenomena in archaeological or historical research. In seeking answers to these broad research questions, the project sought to integrate traditional archaeological survey work and historical research with other disciplines into a 100% digital project exploiting the full capacities of modern technology. Few projects had such an approach built in from the beginning, but by further developing and expanding the use of GIS we hoped to enhance our understanding of the past by incorporating and integrating large archaeological datasets with non-archaeological material (e.g. large volumes of text, economic statistics, climatic/palynological data, vegetation and geological classifications derived from multi-spectral satellite imagery). The AAP thus involved a challenging process of integrating a complex range of datasets into a unified approach to a region, while at the same time fully exploiting GIS both to enhance this understanding of the past and to create a web-accessible site with full access to datasets for a broad range of constituencies.

The questions we have been able to address thus provide the framework for what follows, and the structure of the volume will, we hope, make it possible to appreciate the results of the survey to date: an initial chapter setting the physical, geographical and historical context; a chapter on the geomorphology, climate and environment of the region today and in the past; a discussion of the survey methodologies and practise together with a presentation of results and an initial interpretation of the data for the hinterland of Euchaita/Avkat; chapters on communications in the hinterland of the settlement, and on patterns and trajectories of land-use and agricultural productivity; a chapter on the ceramic data generated by the survey, together with a functional analysis of ceramic materials and a discussion of diet; a chapter on the archaeology of the city itself and the results of the survey; and finally a chapter surveying the history of Euchaita in light of the findings of the survey and the data it has generated.

As noted above, we have not by any means achieved all the goals or aims set out in the foregoing, so that this publication should be seen as both provisional in many of its results and preparatory in respect of further fieldwork, analysis and eventually excavation. But we have achieved enough in the initial five-six years of the project to set out some results that we hope will be of value to scholars in both the historical and archaeological fields.

A note on illustrative material: The cost of this volume would have been prohibitive had we included the very large number of colour images, maps, figures and tables required to illustrate and support our arguments in full, and as a consequence we decided to exclude much of this material from the printed version of the volume. Only those maps and figures which we felt were absolutely essential for the reader's orientation have therefore been included in this volume. Instead, we have established an online resource where the full version of the text and all the illustrative material can be found as a pdf that can be downloaded and, if appropriate, printed. Additionally, links will be found there to give access to the other data collected by the project in the course of the fieldwork and analysis. Readers will see that the URL for this is printed on all pages of the volume where a map, illustration or figure would be expected. While we appreciate that this is an unusual procedure, we felt it important to make the book accessible to more than archaeologists alone who would be familiar with the technical aspects of a field survey, but rather to attract a broader historical and general readership and hence permit a wider appreciation of the project and its results.