

Recent Late antiquity researches in Turkey with the scope of Bithynia

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Since 1979 all excavations and surveys were presented to the scholars and interested parties in different cities of Turkey. Presentations were published the following year. Based on the economy, in particular when infrastructure projects increased, there is a bigger number of excavations around the country. Excavations in Turkey categorized as:

1. Turkish excavations Approved by the Cabinet Ministers
2. Foreign excavations Approved by the Cabinet Ministers
3. Excavations done by the Museums
4. Salvage excavations
5. Underwater excavations

Among these, Underwater excavation and researches count the least, 8 at its peak in 2016. On the other hand there is a dramatic change in the number of Salvage excavations especially after 2014. 203 in 2014; 232 in 2015; 218 in 2016 and 180 in 2017 respectively. Turkish excavations Approved by the Cabinet Ministers reached 111 after 2010 and currently 120. On the other hand Foreign excavations Approved by the Cabinet Ministers vary yearly, due to political and economical conditions. Their number were 39 in 2006, hit the bottom in 2016 with 29 and currently 33.

As in most of the countries in Turkey too Roman and Greek archaeology is revered as most important, hence considered as Classical Archaeology. One disadvantage of this is in most of the archaeological sites in order to reach the Classical Archaeological artifacts other periods were either neglected or in some rare cases omitted. Fortunately recent trend in specializing on different periods had its impact in Turkey as well. As a result some of the excavations

might be considered entirely as Late antique and Byzantine. Though not big in number, it is a promising development. By training more specialists for certain periods and cultures not only Turkey but the entire region will benefit.

Most of the settlements in Turkey are by Aegean and Mediterranean seas. Due to this most of the excavations traditionally were held there. Recently there is an increase in the Black sea coast and inland areas. As a result of surveys and excavations light were shed on some unknown parts Roman and Early Christianity. For instance ancient Sebastopolis modern Sulusaray in Tokat a large Roman bath a church and numerous Jewish epitaphs were discovered recently, thanks to the excavations led by the Tokat museum in collaboration with the local Gaziosmanpaşa University.

In recent years one of the biggest discoveries were made in Gaziantep. Around this city ancient settlements such as Zeugma, which was the base for a Roman legion and became prosperous through trade activities, Oylum höyük and individual areas yielded enormous collection of mosaics, including pieces from Early churches, housed in Gaziantep Mosaic Museum currently.

Another recent discovery in Sarıkaya / Yozgat is a thermal Roman bath which still has hot water in it. Local administration acted promptly and pulled down houses occupying the area of the bath so that the complex could be excavated easily.

Laodiceia has been an important excavation site in recent years thanks to nearly whole year around excavation and financial support from different sources. Numerous churches have been discovered and the biggest of them, formerly a Roman bath, was named as the Church of Laodiceia housing both Roman imperial opus sectile pavement and tessera mosaics when it was partially converted into the church.

Similar case was observed approximately 20 kms away in Hierapolis, where the grave of Saint Philip is believed to have been discovered.

Bithynia, which was neglected for a long time, has provided the scientific world with several monastic settlements on the settlements of Uludağ (Mount Olympus) by Bursa. Recently during the restoration of the city walls a 6th century church was discovered and excavated partially.

In Nicaea / Iznik, during the cleaning of two major gates of the city, two churches were discovered. Another one was added to these new discoveries at the construction site of the museum building. Geophysical research unyielded another church which was unknown prior.

In Istanbul, recent years witnessed discoveries of numerous Late antique-Early christian period substructures. Two years ago during the restoration of the public library in Beyazıt area an Early christian basilica with later period traces of frescoes in the synthronon was discovered.