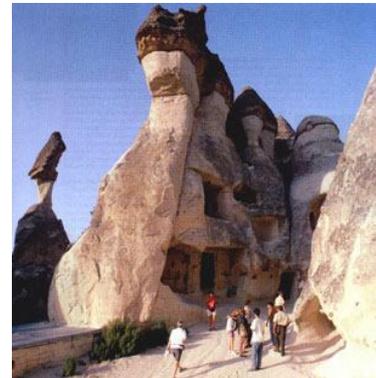


Nevşehir, The Capital Of Cappadocia



In the mythology of the Hittites and the Phrygians, the region of Nevşehir lies on the planet of Cappadocia, whose creation was the work of the Gods of the Volcanoes and which was shaped by the soft and magical hands of the Gods of the Rains and the Winds. Cappadocia represents a site where Nature and History have commingled in the most beautiful fashion in the world. While geographical circumstances created the Fairy Chimneys, human beings in the course of the historical process sculpted the interiors of these Fairy Chimneys to construct their dwellings and churches, which they decorated with frescoes that have survived as witnesses of civilizations thousands of years old. To preserve this incredible cultural treasury and prevent its capture by others, Thales of Miletus himself divided the Kızılıрмаğrı river (the ancient Halys) into two sections to facilitate the crossing by the forces of the Lydian king to oppose the Persian invading forces. The first scientific calculations in history were also carried out here. Nevşehir constitutes the capital city of the planet Cappadocia. But, the renown of Cappadocia has so intensified as to extend beyond the nation's boundaries and overwhelm that of Nevşehir itself, which has nearly been forgotten.

Historically, Cappadocia was first known as "Katpatuka" in the Persian period, signifying a region where fine horses were bred. It has not yet been resolved whether the word is of Hatti, Luwian, Hittite or Assyrian origin. Surviving documents make mention of horses and horsebreeding in this area. During the Great Kingdom period (1460-1190 B.C.), the Hittites assigned great importance to horses and horsebreeding. Correspondingly, they imported expert horsebreeders from the land of the Mitanni and transmitted their expertise to future generations by inscribing their words on clay tablets.



The history of Cappadocia began in prehistoric times. Hatti culture (2500-2000 B.C.) had its way during the Bronze Age and in about the 2nd Millennium B.C. the Hittites settled in the region. Soon the Assyrians (2000-1800 B.C.) had established their trading posts. Phrygians probably ruled Cappadocia from 1250 BC., but the Lydians were expelled by the middle of the 6th century BC by the Persians who ruled until 334 B.C. In AD 17 the region became a Roman province, trade and military routes were built and urban centers and settlements were encourage. Once Asia Minor came under Christian influence, the first Christian communities appeared in Cappadocia and those persecuted for their religious beliefs elsewhere sought refuge in the region. Cappadocia thus became a melting pot of a variety of ethnic groups, all of which have influenced the culture and religious beliefs. Basilius the Great (329-379 A.D.), bishop of Caesarea (modern day Kayseri), inspired many religious colonies and for a thousand years an active

monastic way of life endured throughout Cappadocia. Invasions first from Turkmenistan and Mongolia and then from Seljuks and Ottomans put an end to the movement.

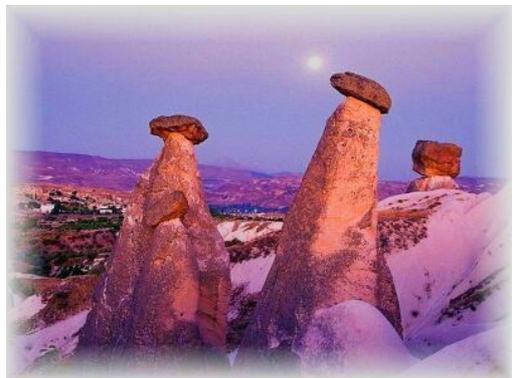
Earliest Evidence Of Human Habitation In The Region

Though paleolithic remains can be identified in the area, this cultural phase occurs fairly late and possibly represents the last paleolithic era. In any case, this is supported by all the data that has been thus far recovered. The reason may be that the Würm glacier covered the Anatolian plateau for long ages and that the eruption of volcanoes, in particular, would have made human occupation impossible. Yet, despite the absence of evidence, it is undeniable that the valleys of the Cappadocian region where the



river banks and sources of fresh water are abundant offered extremely favorable living conditions for early human settlement. It should not be an error to assume that tufa represented a warm habitation space for human life, because it could usually be easily worked-by obsidian, for example, a much harder stone-without the need for metal. The rocky heights along the sides of the valley were also obviously appropriate for protective purposes. We know that for hundreds of thousands of years human communities maintained their existence by gathering fruit and hunting and fishing and that they settled along river banks because of their critical dependence on water. In this respect, the Kızılırmak river undoubtedly served an historical function. The lack of confirming evidence for these events is a consequence of living nature in Cappadocia; over time, successive communities reworked the traces they encountered, and each resettlement effaced and obliterated the older imprints. This has made it very difficult and even impossible to date the spatial volumes in the rocks of Cappadocia.

Near Gelveri, in addition to the notable settlements and artefacts of Hittite origin, which bear a prehistoric connection to Continental European cultures, English archeologists have recovered paleolithic and neolithic stone tools at Avla Tepesi, eight kilometers southeast of Ürgüp. Similarly, the British Archeological Institute of Ankara discovered quite interesting finds in a study of prehistoric sites conducted between 1964-66. The results of this surface field research headed by Ian Todd identified a number of settlement sites-the earliest of which was Neolithic-most of which were in the Nevşehir and Niğde areas. The towns of İğdeli Çeşme, Acıgöl and Tatlar, which lie within the provincial boundaries of Nevşehir, are a few of the sites that witnessed very large Neolithic era settlements. The excavations of Açıntumulus being conducted at Yeşilova near Tuz Gölü (at Tat),



which lies 18 kilometers northwest of the town of Aksaray, are of prime interest. The finds from the dig can be assigned dates ranging from the late fourth to the mid-seventh centuries. A settlement with houses arranged in a regular fashion has come to light beneath Byzantine structures. The artefacts suggest that this was an undefended settlement occupied with agricultural cultivation. The level (Level 3) postdating the Byzantine settlement, which is no doubt Roman, produced pottery of Hellenistic character and may be dated to the first century B.C.-first century A.D. The cultural stratum of approximately four meters that lies beneath this level is also associated with the Hellenistic period. These settlements, which comprise four structural levels, all exhibit evidence of fire and earthquakes. Level 4 settlement was terminated by a violent fire. Level 5 preserves the terror of earthquake with the remains of two elderly persons in tortured postures, caught in the act of attempting to protect themselves from the onslaught. The twisted bodies of two youths were found in Level 7 which had been leveled by fire. After Level 8, houses of megaron make their appearance. A wall of sundried brick was uncovered in Level 16, which had been laid on a terrace of fill. Level 17, dated to 600-500 B.C., contained burnished red earthenware with geometric motifs. Cultural artefacts of the Hittites and the Early Bronze age occurred in Levels 19-24. City wall fragments exhibiting a simple technique and pots of Hittite style were recovered from Levels 19, 20 and 22. Remains of the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze ages up to 4,000 B.C. were common. The excavations begun in 1968 in the vicinity of the Hacibektaş tumulus (Sulucakara tumulus), which contains relics dated to the Early through Middle Hittite periods and the Phrygian, Roman, Late Roman and Byzantine periods. Those undertaken in 1967 by the Italians at the tumulus of Topaklı have brought to light settlements from the Early Bronze age to the Byzantine period in 24 structural strata. These furnish proof that the Nevşehir region is a very ancient site of human habitation.



Cappadocia from Views of European Travelers

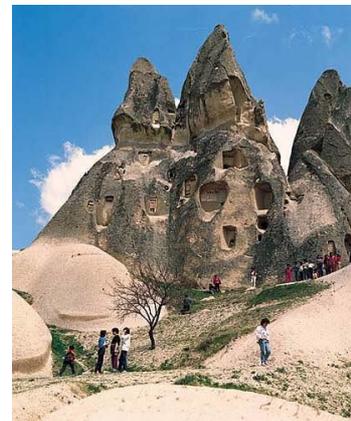
On his way from Ankara to Kayseri in the month of August 1705, Paul Lucas, who had been commanded by the French king Louis XIV to conduct research in the countries of the East, was astonished upon his arrival in the vicinity of Avanos and Ürgüp. The geological structure-which closely resembles a fairytale land the curious spatial units of rock in which the inhabitants dwelled, the churches and the colorful world of their interiors left him in a state of amazement.

After Lucas returned home, he published his notes in a two-volume book of travels in Paris in 1712. Describing his observations in the Cappadocian region, he produced a rather fanciful



description heightened by his imagination, thus: "...When I first came upon the ancient structural ruins lying on the opposite bank of the Kızılırmak, I fell into a state of utter bewilderment. Here stood countless-heretofore unknown-pyramidal formations.... Each of these formations possessed a beautiful door, a charming staircase by which to gain entrance and large windows in all the rooms to secure illumination. Within a single rock mass had been hewn a number of living quarters, each lying one above the other.... They numbered not several hundreds, but more than a couple of thousand. At first, I assumed that these pyramids represented dwellings that had formerly belonged to monks. For their shapes recalled that of ecclesiastical caps. Afterwards, however, I detected that they possessed a variety of forms."

On his second journey through the region in 1714, he characterized the Fairy Chimneys as the "ancient cemetery of a vanished city." This prompted a great scandal in the court of King Louis XIV. The members of the Court were convinced that Paul Lucas was a pathological liar (mithom,anie); in fact, the French ambassador in Istanbul asserted that he wanted to make a personal investigation of the region to determine whether or not Paul Lucas was telling the truth. Comte Desalleurs confirmed that the facts of the circumstances were true and that pyramidal shaped entities existed. When the book of travels was published it aroused a great public debate in Europe. Ürgüp and vicinity, which were shown in the engravings, represented quite a remote locale for the Europe of that day. Moreover, the information supplied by Lucas was not supported by ancient sources on this subject. The fantastic depiction furnished by Lucas was very tantalizing to the West, but for some it was beyond belief and greeted with incredulity. The German writer, C.M. Wieland (1753-1814) expressed such criticism, as follows: "It is impossible to give credence to the claim that such a great number of houses in the shape of pyramids exists when the subject is not given the slightest notice by any of the ancient writers or travel books."



Places to visit in Cappadocia

There are many places to "must see" in Cappadocia like; Fairy Chimneys, Göreme Valley National Park and rock churches, underground cities of Kaymakli, Derinkuyu or Ozkonak, Zelve Valley and Pasabag, Avanos with its pottery and carpets, Uçhisar-Ortahisar rock fortress, Ürgüp, Ihlara valley, Soganli, Sinasos and Hacibektas.

We wish you a nice travel to Cappadocia, Nevşehir.
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