

Estratto da:

OPERA IPOGEA

Journal of Speleology in Artificial Cavities

2 / 2016



ISSN 1970-9692

Rivista della Società Speleologica Italiana



Commissione Nazionale Cavità Artificiali



Doğanlı underground shelter (Cappadocia – Turkey)

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Abstract

Today, the region known with its ancient name as “Cappadocia” includes the Turkish provinces of Nevsehir, Aksaray and Kayseri. In this region, different underground structures such as houses, barns and churches were excavated by the locals for centuries in the tuffaceous rocks spewed out of volcanoes active in the late Pliocene and Pleistocene period. However, the most interesting of these structures, without a doubt, are the underground shelters. These structures, carved for defensive purposes probably between 7th and 12th centuries, are found in almost every part of Cappadocia. Thus far, only a small part of those hypogea have been surveyed. This article describes surveys and explorations conducted by OBRUK Cave Research Group on Doğanlı (Forty Steps) Underground Shelter located at a fairly remote place in the south of Kayseri, the capital of ancient Cappadocia.

KEY WORDS: Cappadocia, Kayseri, Doğanlı, underground shelter.

Riassunto

RIFUGI SOTTERRANEI DI DOĞANLI (CAPPADOCIA – TURCHIA)

Oggi, la regione conosciuta con il nome antico di “Cappadocia” comprende le province turche di Nevsehir, Aksaray e Kayseri. In questa regione diverse strutture sotterranee, come case, stalle e chiese sono state scavate dalla popolazione locale per secoli nelle rocce tufacee prodotte dai vulcani attivi nel tardo Pliocene e nel Pleistocene. Tuttavia, le più interessante tra queste strutture, senza dubbio, sono i rifugi sotterranei. Queste opere, scavate a scopo difensivo, probabilmente tra il VII e il XII secolo, si trovano quasi in ogni parte della Cappadocia. Finora, solo una piccola parte di questi ipogei è stata rilevata e documentata scientificamente. Questo articolo descrive le indagini e le esplorazioni condotte dall'OBRUK Cave Research Group nel rifugio sotterraneo di Doğanlı (“quaranta passi”) situato in un luogo abbastanza remoto nel sud della provincia di Kayseri, la capitale dell'antica Cappadocia.

PAROLE CHIAVE: Cappadocia, Kayseri, Doğanlı, rifugio sotterraneo.

INTRODUCTION

Doğanlı Village is located at 90 km south of Kayseri (Caesarea) on the border of Nigde province (Fig. 1). Even though this region is a part of the ancient Cappadocia, this village is distant from all large and significant settlements (Fig. 2). Gergeme was the earlier name of this village, which is still referred to as by the locals (HILD, 1977; HILD & RESTLE, 1981).

The area lies in Mid Anatolian Volcanic Province and it's one of the most important volcanic areas of Turkey. Volcanic activity around this area continued during the Middle Miocene period, 16-11.6 million years ago

and developed the post-clash regimes after the Upper Miocene period. Some volcanoes of the area were only small vents, but a total number of 68 volcanoes around Kayseri had been active until Pliocene-Pleistocene times. That eruption phase piled up more than 100 m of thick volcanic rock all around the region (LEPETIT et al, 2014). In antique *Caesarea*, this soft rock was dug by the local people; houses, churches and underground settlements were built into those rocks and a troglodyte civilization had been established. Similar to the majority of other settlements of Cappadocia, also in the rock cliffs of Doğanlı Village there are many cave dwellings and rock-cut graves. Since no archeological

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