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Underground shelters of Tomarza (Kayseri – Turkey)

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Riassunto

I rifugi sotterranei di Tomarza (Kayseri - Turchia)

Anche se la regione nota come “Cappadocia” fa attualmente parte della provincia di Nevşehir in Anatolia (Turchia), la capitale della Cappadocia in tempi antichi era la vicina antica Cesarea, che oggi è conosciuta come Kayseri. Analogamente a Nevşehir, nell’antica Cesarea il tufo vulcanico fu scavato dalla popolazione locale. Case, chiese e insediamenti difensivi sotterranei furono scavati in quelle rocce e vi fiorì una civiltà trogloditica. Le strutture più interessanti realizzate scavando le rocce sono probabilmente i “rifugi sotterranei”. Tali strutture, utilizzate per scopi difensivi, si trovano frequentemente in tutta la Cappadocia. Le caratteristiche più importanti di tali strutture sono evidenti negli spazi abitativi e nei magazzini, collegati tra loro da cunicoli sotterranei e dotati di porte macine a difesa delle strutture. Ventinove rifugi sotterranei precedentemente sconosciuti sono stati esplorati e rilevati fino ad oggi nella provincia di Kayseri, dove abbiamo iniziato il nostro progetto nel gennaio 2014. Dopo due anni di esplorazioni nella città di Kayseri e dintorni, abbiamo iniziato ad indagare nel distretto di Tomarza. Questo articolo descrive otto diversi rifugi sotterranei situati in quel distretto che sono stati esplorati e rilevati fino ad oggi.

Parole chiave: Kayseri, Tomarza, rifugi sotterranei

Abstract

Although the region known as “Cappadocia” is currently a part of Nevşehir Province of Anatolia (Turkey), the capital of Cappadocia in ancient times was the neighboring antique Caesarea which is known as Kayseri today. As the same in Nevşehir, in antique Caesarea the volcanic tuff as dug by the local people. Houses, churches, and protective underground settlements were excavated into those rocks and a troglodyte civilization had been established. Some of the most interesting structures realized by digging rocks are probably the ‘underground shelters’. These structures used for defense purposes, are frequently found throughout Cappadocia. The most important characteristics of these structures are evident in the living spaces and warehouses, connected by underground tunnels and equipped with millstones doors to protect the structures. Twenty-nine previously unknown underground shelters were explored and surveyed to date in Kayseri Province, since we began Inventory of Underground Structures of Kayseri Project in January 2014. After two years of survey in and around Kayseri city, we started to survey in Tomarza District. This article describes eight different underground shelters in that district that were explored and surveyed to date.

Key words: Kayseri, Tomarza, underground shelters

Introduction

Volcanoes that became active 11 million years ago, ejected tuff to Mid Anatolian Region, in an amount that reached 200 meters height at some places (Ketin, 1995; Sen et.al, 2003; Güçtekin & Koprubaşı, 2009). This easy to carve soft rock has been dug by local people since antique periods, and a troglodyte civilization was established in the region that is known as Cappadocia today. The academic work and surveys of underground shelters of Cappadocia begun very lately and few different inventories have

been prepared so far (Yorukoglu et al., 1989; Bixio, 2012).

During the Byzantine Empire, Cappadocia was the cradle of Christianity and the capital of the region was Caesarea. There are countless cave dwellings, rock churches and underground shelters carved into the tuff around this province, the modern name of which is Kayseri. We, as OBRUK Cave Research Group, began to survey the underground settlements and cliff dwellings located in Kayseri Province four years ago. To date, twenty-nine underground settlements/shelters and cliff dwellings have been explored, surveyed

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